

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jack Price
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk



THE GUILDHALL
WEST STREET
AXMINSTER
DEVON
EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Axminster Town Council: Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council.

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED.

Held on Monday 14th September 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllrs. Price (JP) (Chair), Dowdeswell (MD) (Vice Chair), Dunsbury (RD), Hayward (AH), Hurren (WH), Leat (SL), Margetts (BM), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP), Walden (JW) and Warwick (TW).

(Meeting was declared as quorate with eleven members present).

Also present:

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (also representing EDDC and DCC)

Seven members of the public were in attendance.

The Chair welcomed all in attendance and ran through meeting procedure and protocol.

The Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.

Public Forum session.

Speakers from Light Up Axminster made a representation to the Councillors regarding the cessation of their volunteer activity and governance/administration and their wish that the Town Council take on the responsibility for festive lighting and events in 2026 and thereafter. Noted. (see later agenda item FC26/331). The Chair thanked the speakers for attending and for their efforts over many years to provide Christmas Lighting and other festive events and attractions.

The Chair sadly reported that former Councillor Paul Bridge had been involved in a motor accident and was recovering in hospital. Members sent their best wishes for a swift and full recovery.

Subsequently, the Presiding Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.17 pm.

FC26/310

To note members of Council present:

Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

Continued overleaf

FC26/311

To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies for absence and reasons therefore:

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Farrow. Unwell.

The Chair proposed that a 12- week leave of absence be approved while Cllr. Farrow recuperated. Members sent their best wishes to Cllr. Farrow. Seconded by DW. Resolved.

Cllr. Willey. Work commitment.

Subsequently, the Chair proposed that these absences, and the reasons provided, be noted and approved. Seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/312

To note members of committee not otherwise present and to receive any other apologies for absence:

None, other than to note the apologies received from EDDC Councillors, Simon Smith and Sarah Jackson.

FC26/313

To receive any declarations of interest from members of the committee in relation to items of business on this agenda and to note any dispensations previously afforded:

A declaration at this point does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that they may become aware of during the course of this meeting.

Cllr. David Willey was afforded a dispensation relating to the hire of the Guildhall venue (Section 33 of The Localism Act 2011) on the 9th February 2026 [Reason: that Councillors considered it appropriate to grant a dispensation for other reasons (E)]; this dispensation will remain in force until the member resigns, or until May 2027, whichever comes first.

MD declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item FC26/330 as a member of the Axminster Royal British Legion. BM declared an "affects NRI" in agenda item FC26/2331 as a volunteer with Light Up Axminster.

FC26/314

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 13th July 2026.

The Chair proposed that the approval of these minutes be deferred until the next meeting of the FULL Council. Seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/315

To consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Deferred.

FC26/316

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 10th August 2026 as previously circulated to members and published online.

Approval proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/317

To consider any matters arising from the minutes of that meeting.

None raised

Continued overleaf

FC26/318

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Thursday 27th August 2026 as previously circulated to members and published online.

Approval proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved nem con. (TW abstained).

FC26/319

To consider any matters arising from the minutes of that meeting.

None raised

FC26/320

To consider and review the draft minutes of the following meetings of committees of the Town Council as listed below (as previously circulated to members and published online):

None to be considered.

FC26/321

To note the decisions and recommendations of the Committee Meeting as listed above, as previously circulated to members and published online, and to consider approval or adoption by this Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council, namely:

None to be considered.

FC26/322

To consider any additional matters listed on this agenda that Councillors consider should be dealt with as confidential business as per the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. [See FC26/338-341 inclusive].

The Chair proposed that agenda item FC26/327 (Planning Matters) be brought forward to allow a representation from the applicant. The Chair also proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to permit that representation within the Council session. Seconded by SL. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/327

To consider planning matters:

a) To consider any planning applications received prior to the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision):

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.

- i) 26/1590/FUL Land east of Pudleylake Road, 300m south of A358 junction
Change of use of agricultural barn and associated land to private café and event venue.

Mr. Hugo Shuttleworth spoke in support of his application.

Members asked questions about drainage, traffic volumes, access, noise/light pollution concerns, access to staff members along dark, country lanes without a means of transport.

SL proposed that Council should NOT support over concerns relating to drainage and traffic.

Seconded by JW. Note resolved and therefore motion failed.

An alternative proposal was put forward by the Chair that Council should support the application in principle but seek guidance from EDDC Planning Team regarding the concerns aired.

Seconded by EP. Resolved 9 votes for, 2 against. Carried.

Clerk: Please convey decision to EDDC and seek guidance as directed. Please advise members accordingly when that advice is received.

b) To ratify planning decisions made by way of delegated authority afforded to Chair of Planning Committee, Cllr. Leat, and the Council's Proper Officer.

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.

Three applications to be considered for ratification of support.

i) 26/1360/LBC *Old Manor Lodge, Lodge Lane, Axminster, EX13 5RT*
Fenestration replacements in listed building (as per application details)

ii) 26/1741/TCA *Stepsway, Market Square/Symes lane, Axminster, EX13 5NJ*
Felling a Magnolia Tree (in the conservation area)

iii) 26/1730/CPE *Unit D, Musbury Road, Axminster, EX13 5JR*
Certificate of lawfulness for existing use of development (Class B8 – storage and distribution).

Under the delegated authority afforded to Cllr. Leat as Chair of the Planning Committee, it was proposed that support for all three applications above is ratified by the Town Council.

Proposed by SL, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

c) To consider any planning applications received after the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision) – published on a supplementary agenda (if applicable):

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.

None to be considered.

d) To note planning correspondence received (if any).

To note an appeal by Mr. David Henderson against the refusal of planning consent (26/0520/FUL) for the retrospective erection of a garage to the front elevation of 127 North Street, Axminster.

e) To note any matters relating to planning that have arisen as a result of EDDC Planning Committee or Strategic Planning Committee meetings since the last FULL meeting of Council or at future meetings of these two EDDC planning committees.

None to be considered.

f) To consider any other planning matters not already included above, including representations from members on such matters (eg. planning decisions, enforcement, planning legislation, Tree Protection Orders etc)

None to be considered.

The Chair proposed that Standing Orders be resumed, and that the published agenda running order be reverted to. Resolved.

FC26/323

To consider matters pertaining to:

a) Axminster Chamber of Commerce;

Cllr. Hayward presented a report on chamber activity and future events. *Noted.*

b) Plastic Free Axminster; Cllr. Osborn provided an update report. *Noted.*

Continued overleaf

FC26/323

To consider matters pertaining to (continued):

c) Axminster Climate Action Group:

Cllr. Walden presented a verbal report / update on ACAG activity and confirmed that group meetings were planned for the coming months. Noted.

The Chair reported on the twin-screenings of the People's Emergency Briefing film, held at the Guildhall, and thanked ATC staff and ACAG volunteers for hosting and organising the event.

d) Light Up Axminster: No report required as the matter was being considered under agenda item FC26/331.

e) Axminster Carnival Committee: Cllr Dowdeswell present an update report. Noted.

FC26/324

To note that TWO casual vacancies exist, following the resignations of former councillors, Joanna Ashkettle and Laurence Norman, for the roles of Axminster Town Councillors (both in the Town ward); to note that the Town Council has commenced the statutory Casual Vacancy process in conjunction with the District Council Electoral Services Team and that the period during which 10 electors can petition the District Council for an election to fill those vacancies will end on Thursday 17th September.

Noted. Clerk to advise members after the 17th September if an election was petitioned or whether the Council can fill the vacancy by way of co-option.

FC26/325

To consider any updates pertaining to Local Government reorganisation and devolution; in particular, the issues relating to Devon County (and the relationship between the County Council, the Unitary Councils, the District Councils and the smaller local authorities – town and parish councils); *Clerk to provide any updates received from higher-tier authorities.*

Clerk and Chair presented a short update report to members. Noted. Members were advised that the LGR process was only "paused" and not cancelled, and so the Town Council must wait to hear from MHCLG as to what will happen in the coming months. District Council elections are now due to be held in May 2027, alongside Town Council elections (all seats are open for contest).

FC26/326

To note any recent correspondence from DALC and NALC.

None to be discussed other than matters pertaining to LGR postponement and the forthcoming DALC Annual Conference in October.

FC26/327

Planning matters:

Consider earlier on this agenda (see minute entry above).

Continued overleaf

FC26/328

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments schedule for July and August 2026. **Payments for July 2026 (£52,525 net) and August 2026 (£66,283 net) were proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.**

b) To receive, and note, the Responsible Financial Officer's report and financial pack for July & August 2026 and to approve the Bank Reconciliation for the 31st August 2026.

Bank reconciliation for August 2026 was proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously. RFO report was duly noted.

Clerk: please arrange for these documents to be signed by a non-bank signatory.

c) Questions to the RFO on these accounts / financial reports from members.

RFO confirmed that credit receipts from interest / investments were significantly higher than originally budgeted due to improved interest rates and higher reserve balances. This would assist the overall financial position for the Council. Noted.

d) To note that the statutory period for the publication of the Notice of Completion of Audit ended on 23rd August 2026 at 5pm (30 days after first publication).

Noted. No further action required.

e) To note Council's Reserve Balances and investment deposits, and to consider any virements between reserve funds considered necessary or appropriate by members.

Noted. Members did not wish to consider any virements or fund movements until the costs for the proposed Guildhall works (and thus the possible contribution from reserves) was known.

Other Council business to be considered:

FC26/329

To note that Axminster Carnival will take place on Saturday 19th September.

Noted. Members were also aware that a street trading licence application was currently under consultation and agreed that no objections would be submitted; delegated authority afforded to the Clerk to respond accordingly to EDDC licensing team.

FC26/330

To note that Axminster Remembrance Parade / Remembrance event will take place on

Sunday 8th November; and that a rolling road closure has been arranged from 10.30am until 11am to allow for a walking procession along the following route; From South Street car park, then southwards along South Street, turning right onto Silver Street, continuing along Church Street, turning left onto West Street, proceeding eastwards until parade reaches Trinity Square.

Noted. Clerk to liaise with carnival committee to seek volunteers for marshalling duty.

Continued overleaf

FC26/331

To consider expenditure in relation to Christmas / festive lighting and associated items such as trees, lighting, safety materials, consumables etc.

Further to the presentation in public forum from members of the LUA group, Councillors considered the options open to them. RFO confirmed that there was £2000 within the FY26-27 budget for such expenditure presently but that the status and condition of the lights was currently unknown, as with the timers, cabling, wiring, fixtures and fittings. RFO also confirmed that LUA was not a constituted (registered) charity, but rather an “unincorporated association” and therefore, their financial accounts did not require formal submission and auditing. Following a lengthy discussion and debate, the following proposals were put forward:

That the Town Council should take on responsibility for the lighting project in 2026 and in future years.

That the Town Council would provide (without charge) a small (3-4ft) tree for eligible premises (with an external secure mounting bracket) to be lit with festive lighting. Donations would be accepted from recipients towards future lighting activity / costs.

That the Town Council would fund the purchase of a single larger (15ft+) tree for siting on the Minster Green, to be dressed & illuminated by volunteers / ATC staff / Councillors.

That a Christmas Lights Working Party be convened / created in the New Year to meet and plan for future displays / investment / infrastructure in the town.

That the budget for FY27-28 should consider increased expenditure for Christmas Lighting and festive events from 2027 onwards.

That the Town Council would fund the costs of a cherry-picker (lift) to safely erect and test the lighting wires across West Street.

That the Town Council could not reasonably commit to arranging and facilitating a Christmas Event at this late stage of the year, but would work with other organisations to determine if a smaller low-key event could be arranged and supported. There was a commitment to being responsible for (and funding) such an event in 2027.

That the Town Council would add an additional £1000 (taking budget from £2000 to £3000) in this financial year to cover any additional costs that arose during the transition period.

Substantively proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk to liaise with the Chair and Deputy Clerk to issue a joint public statement with the LUA organisers to be publicised on website, noticeboards and on social media.

Clerk to begin preparation and coordination for Christmas Lighting 2026 with LUA volunteers and administrators, and the “in-house” ATC GMO team.

Clerk to also liaise with Council’s insurers to determine any additional premium or risk assessments required. Noted.

FC26/332

To consider options for the re-naming / re-designation of LSOA’s (Lower Super Output Areas) in the Axminster ward area (an EDDC exercise currently ongoing).

The following redesignations were put forward for consideration:

Axminster North: WEYCROFT.

Axminster Central: MINSTER

Axminster East: SECTOR

Axminster South: ABBEY GATE

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair that these local designations be submitted to EDDC as requested. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please submit.

Continued overleaf

FC26/333

To receive an update from Clerk/RFO as to the ongoing matters relating to the sale/disposal of the Old Courthouse building asset.

Noted. Clerk advised that sale completion was now scheduled for 30th September.

FC26/334

To receive an update from Clerk/RFO as to the ongoing matters relating to the Guildhall improvement works and the status of the Project Management Plan, including provisional costs and timeframes; to additionally update members as to the funding options available, including borrowing via the Public Works Loan Board.

Noted. Clerk was asked to maintain this agenda item as a standing business matter on all future FULL Council, Operations Committee and Strategy & Finance Committee meetings given the importance and complexity of the project, and the likely costs involved. No decisions were possible as yet as to funding options, and possible borrowing terms and durations.

FC26/335

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair and to receive any announcements from the Chair of the Council / Clerk to the Council.

Three matters were raised:

- i) The Chair reminded members that the DALC Annual Conference was taking place on 7th October and that some places were still available.
- ii) WH advised that, following the resignations of JA and LN, there were now only two remaining members of the Emergency Plan Working Group and that he would welcome additional members. BM and Bernie Steadman kindly offered their support. Paul Stevens (EDDC) had also offered his help. Noted.
- iii) Furthermore, with the resignation of JA, there was a need for a replacement representative for the EDDC Arts and Culture Forum. MD offered to cover that role. DW as substitute.

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by EP. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please advise EDDC accordingly and circulate agendas, correspondence etc when received.

FC26/336

- i) To confirm the date of the next scheduled Ordinary FULL meeting of the Town Council - 5th October 2026.

The Chair proposed suspension of the Standing Orders to allow the meeting to progress beyond the 2-hour limit. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/337

Recommendation: that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act namely, the financial affairs or business affairs or employment affairs of the Town Council by virtue of the fact that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Proposed by the Vice-Chair. Seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf

The meeting moved into closed session. All members of the public left the room.

The agenda items below are considered confidential due to the commercially sensitive subjects/topics to be discussed and the involvement of 3rd parties which would necessitate disclosure of confidential information during the discussions.

CONFIDENTIAL COUNCIL BUSINESS TO BE CONDUCTED:

FC26/338 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse and to note any correspondence received, and to receive update from Clerk on any confidential or commercially sensitive issues arising since last FULL Council meeting.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of 3rd party tenants.

RFO provided a report on a matter pertaining to the sale completion which required additional financial advice relating to VAT exemptions. RFO was afforded delegated authority to proceed to obtain such advice up to a spend limit of £1000 (net) to ensure that the completion was finalised by the 30/9 deadline as previously resolved. Noted.

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/339 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Field recreation area and adjoining curtilage.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of a 3rd party landowner.

Clerk provided a verbal report for members. Noted. No further action proposed at this time.

FC26/340 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to Axminster Town Council current and future recruitment.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed.

Clerk provided a verbal report for members. Noted. Further discussion on this subject was deferred to the Employment Committee meeting scheduled for the 7th October. Members were keen that any such recruitment be completed within the core Winter period as workload for existing administration team was generally lighter at that time. Noted.

FC26/341 (IC)

To receive an update report from the Clerk on matters pertaining to potential Town Centre / Place-making enhancement projects.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of a 3rd party landowner.

The Clerk provided members with a conceptual proposal for a major town-centre place-making project. The main outcomes would be:

- 1) Economic uplift for the town centre.
- 2) Improved visibility and illumination to prevent ASB and disorder.
- 3) Enhanced social and community goodwill and sense of belonging.

Continued overleaf

FC26/341 (IC)

To receive an update report from the Clerk on matters pertaining to potential Town Centre / Place-making enhancement projects (continued):

The RFO confirmed that grant funding opportunities were available, which could cover a considerable proportion of the estimated costs, and that co-operation between the PCC, EDDC, DCC and other stakeholders would be a critical part of the project brief. Noted.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by WH, that the Council supported the concept project in principle and that the Clerk would be afforded delegated authority to start making enquiries and approaches to stakeholders to evaluate the logistics and practical aspects of the project, and also to submit an application to the “Lets Celebrate Towns” grant fund accordingly. Resolved unan.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Please keep members apprised of progress and developments. Please seek support from our elected representatives and local authorities to bolster the chances of grant-funding success.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.45 pm.

Signed

Date: 2nd November 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council.

Held on Monday 14th September 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 pm.

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED