

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 5th October 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 pm.

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

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

Also present:

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

Deputy Clerk, Sarah Jackson (also representing EDDC)

Five 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.

Representation from Eve Chubb regarding the Axminster Skatepark and funding thereof.

Representation from Bernie Steadman regarding ACAG and environmental challenges.

Chair paid tribute to the Axminster Carnival Committee volunteers for a very successful carnival event.

Subsequently, the Presiding Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.21 pm.

FC26/342

To note members of Council present:

Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

FC26/343

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Farrow. Unwell.

Cllr. Leat. On leave.

Cllr. Warwick. Work commitment.

The Chair proposed that these absences, and the reasons provided, be noted and approved.

Seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/344

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

None, other than to note the apology received from EDDC Councillor, Simon Smith.

FC26/345

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.

FC26/346

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 agenda items below 346 to 351 inclusive be deferred as the minutes were not yet available. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/347

To consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Deferred.

FC26/348

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 14th September 2026 as previously circulated to members and published online.

Deferred.

FC26/349

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

Deferred.

FC26/350

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):

- i) Operations Committee 21st September 2026
- ii) Strategy & Finance Committee 28th September 2026

Deferred.

FC26/351

To note the specific recommendations arising from that committee meeting and to consider whether Council wishes to approve their adoption.

Deferred.

Continued overleaf

FC26/352

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 FC26/370-375 inclusive].

FC26/353

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.*

c) Axminster Climate Action Group:

No report presented.

d) Light Up Axminster: Clerk provided a verbal report on the outcomes of recent liaison / transition meetings. *Noted.*

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

It was proposed that SV & MV take over the roles of Carnival Representatives.

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by the -Vice-Chair. Resolved.

Clerk: Please amend committee membership matrix accordingly.

FC26/354

To consider applications for co-option to the role of Town Councillor (Town Ward) following receipt of notice CVP4 from East Devon District Council.

Clerk confirmed that 3 eligible nominations had been received. As there were only two vacancies, a ballot of members was therefore required. The meeting was adjourned for 5 minutes to allow members to review all nomination paperwork. Meeting resumed at 19.36.

After the ballot votes were counted, Shannon Vickery and Michael Vine were duly co-opted to the Town Council by a majority resolution. Chair thanked all candidates for their interest and asked the Clerk to contact the unsuccessful candidate accordingly.

Cllrs. Vickery and Vine signed their Declarations of Acceptance of Office, which were witnessed by the Proper Officer, and both received a copy of the Members Code of Conduct.

Cllr. Vine joined the members at the Council table.

Clerk / Deputy Clerk: Please arrange for new member induction training to take place and for the Register of Members Interests (RoMI) to be completed within the statutory 28-day timeframe.

Please notify EDDC so that their records can be duly amended.

FC26/355

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.* It was noted that Devon LGR had been postponed following a decision by the new Secretary of State and that, as a result, the EDDC elections would be held in May 2027 (as a continuing authority). Members were also briefed on the ongoing developments with regards to the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) and the proposals for a Mayor of a Strategic Mayoralty Authority for Devon (including Plymouth).

Continued overleaf

FC26/356

To note any recent correspondence from DALC and NALC.

None to be discussed.

FC26/357

Planning matters:

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

None to be considered.

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 in consultation with the members of the Council's Committee.

i) 26/1888/AGR – Bagley Hill Farm, Lodge Lane, Axminster, EX13 5RT
Erection of agricultural livestock building

ii) 26/1856/FUL – Windyridge, Charmouth Road, Axminster, EX13 5SZ
Demolition of garage and erection of single storey extension to east elevation; addition of raised decking platform.

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

Proposed by the Chair (in the absence of SL), seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

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

Members noted a late Tree Application 26/2000/TCA and agreed that the application should be supported. Proposed from The Chair. Resolved.

d) To consider any Planning Correspondence received.

Members considered the Dorset Council Local Plan Scoping Consultation exercise 2026 document and it was proposed by the Chair that the Town Council should not submit a corporate response to this consultation which runs until the 26th of October 2026. Resolved unanimously.

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 at time of agenda publication.

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 at time of agenda publication.

Continued overleaf

FC26/358

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments schedule for September 2026. **Payments for September 2026 (£71,458 net) proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved nem con.**

b) To receive, and note, the Responsible Financial Officer's report and financial pack for September 2026 and to approve the Bank Reconciliation for the 30th September 2026. **Bank reconciliation for September 2026 was proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by WH. Resolved nem con.** 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. Further to a question from WH, the RFO confirmed that a meeting of the Budget Working Party (BWP) would be held on the 12th October and stressed to all members that the working party had no decision-making powers and that any recommendations from the working party as to budget setting and precept calculations would have to be subsequently considered by the Strategy & Finance Committee, prior to the final decision being taken by the FULL Council in an open, public session of the Town Council. Noted.

d) To note receipt of the sale proceeds from the Old Courthouse asset disposal and to note that a new earmarked reserve fund has been subsequently created to hold these monies for future town and parish capital projects as per previous resolution.

Noted. The Chair thanked the Clerk/RFO, the Deputy Clerk and the grounds-team for their hard work and efforts in getting the property ready for handover on completion day.

Other Council business to be considered:

FC26/359

To consider any matters pertaining to Town Centre Christmas Lighting and any expenditure required in that respect.

The Clerk had circulated a draft press statement created in liaison with the Light Up Axminster group which explained the transition from LUA to the Town Council, set out of the programme for 2026 illuminations and festivities, and thanked all previous volunteers, helpers and benefactors. A couple of minor typographical changes were made, and the Chair proposed that the Clerk be afforded delegated authority to publish on all relevant channels and platforms available to the TC. **Resolved unanimously.** Clerk: Please action accordingly.

FC26/360

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

The Clerk reported that the building sale was completed on the 30th September 2026 and all proceeds banked and invested as per previous council resolutions. All keys have been handed to new owner together with deed pack (hard copy) and epitome of title schedule. The Clerk will continue to liaise with the new owner in matters such as redirection of post, public enquiries, queries about the building etc. Noted

Continued overleaf

FC26/361

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.

Due to resourcing constraints, a report from the Clerk was unavailable for this meeting and so the Chair deferred the matter to November's meeting. Noted.

FC26/362

To note the ongoing Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) consultation exercise which ends on the 28th October 2026; Whether the Authority should become a Mayoral Strategic Authority, led by a mayor elected by people across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. <https://devolutionindevon.commonplace.is/>

Noted. Members agreed that no formal corporate submission should be made on behalf of the Town Council but that individual members should be free to submit in their own words if they had strong opinions on the consultation topic. Noted.

FC26/363

To consider a proposal from the Town Mayor (Chair) in relation to ProjectYOUTH (youth services provision in the Axminster area).

The Chair spoke to a report previously circulated to all members on this subject.

Summary of debate:

Members were in favour of the principle of the Town Council employing the relevant officers to deliver the out-reach service in Axminster Parish.

Members noted the anticipated costs and asked that these be integrated into the draft financial budget for FY27-28 with allowance made for a contribution from non-earmarked reserves.

A suggestion was made that the Town Council (once GPoC has been acquired) should seek to create a stand-alone CIO/CIC to manage the service in the future as additional grant funding could be sought using that charitable vehicle.

Members accepted that a location for a youth "hub" was not available at present and so the initial offering for the town should only be "outreach" at this time until the service could be developed (subject to funding and further council agreement).

Members suggested that a working group be established to assist in the service provision and delivery, and this is a topic to be discussed at a later meeting in relation to membership, terms of reference, budgets etc.

The Chair proposed that the proposed recruitment of the new paid officer be added to the next Employment Committee agenda for further consideration and decision. Seconded by JW.

Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

Continued overleaf

FC26/364

To note the launch of the 2027 “Robin Cross Citizen of the Year” award (award presentation ceremony in January 2027).

Noted. Clerk & Deputy Clerk were asked to begin publicity and promotion of the 2027 award and to seek nominations to be considered at December’s FULL meeting.

i) Members to consider whether any revision to the voting process for the award is necessary.

After a lengthy debate on the merits of alternative voting methods (such as PV, STV), it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by EP, that the voting system remain unchanged for the time being. This proposal also confirmed that “runners-up” would not be publicised or contacted for fear of causing offence or disenchantment amongst those nominated but not winning the award. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/365

To consider recommendations to Council arising from the recent screening of the Public Emergency Broadcast film (and facilitated post-screening discussion) and to decide upon future/forward progress in that regard.

Members received a draft report from the Deputy Clerk and their agreement was sought to publish the report for public review and reference and to also agree a series of recommendations from the Council for further environmental action and improvements within the parish.

The Chair proposed publication of the report without substantive revision (Clerk: Please check for spelling and grammar before publication). Seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/366

To consider an EDDC Licensing Application for The Seagull, Unit 7, St. Georges, Castle Hill, Axminster, EX13 5DL (alcohol sales).

Members felt that the proposed hours for alcohol service were too extensive for this location (having previously been a retail premise only) and suggested reduced hours for Monday to Saturday, Sundays, Bank Holidays and New Year Eve events. These were agreed and Clerk was asked to submit to EDDC licencing accordingly and within the timeframe for statutory comments.

Noted. Clerk: please action.

FC26/367

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 about “Glow on the Green” on 31st October, a community event. A request from the Chair was that the Council make their gazebo, one flag and a table available for promotion of the town council. Agreed. Clerk: Please arrange availability with the Chair.
- ii) Chair also sought councillor opinion about hosting a volunteer event in the Guildhall in 2027 to promote volunteering opportunities. Members were agreeable. Deputy Clerk was asked to create a suitable advertising poster. Noted.
- iii) The Clerk updated members as to progress / commencement of the Jubilee Field pathway extension works and confirmed timeframe for completion and associated works. Noted.

Continued overleaf

FC26/368

i) To confirm the date of the next scheduled Ordinary FULL meeting of the Town Council - 2nd November 2026.

FC26/369

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 JW. Resolved unanimously.**

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:

FC26/370 (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.

Nothing further to add that wasn't raised / discussed earlier under FC26/360. Noted.

FC26/371 (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.

FC26/372 (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 16th November.

The Vice-Chair proposed to suspend Standing Orders at 9.00pm to permit the meeting to progress beyond the 2-hour limit. Seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf

FC26/373 (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 updated members on a range of topics relating to town centre place-making projects and matters of infrastructure delivery and enhancement. The Clerk confirmed that applications for grant-funding had been submitted to the relevant funding bodies, alongside letters of support from our MP, Richard Foord, the Rural DCP Inspector for Axminster, EDDC and DCC Economy Teams, the higher-tier authority councillors and other key stakeholders. Noted with thanks.

FC26/374 (IC)

To consider a matter pertaining to contractor invoicing that requires a corporate decision on forward action.

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

Clerk / RFO provided an update to members, providing copies of invoices and correspondence. After debate and discussion on the merits of the relevant invoices, **it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by BM, that 2 of the 3 invoices be paid, and correspondence to be sent to the 3rd party contractor setting out why the 3rd invoice was not considered eligible for settlement. Resolved nem con.**

RFO: Please note and action accordingly.

FC26/375 (IC)

To consider a proposal from Cllr. Willey for Council participation in a community safety advertising campaign based around darker evenings and protection of property.

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

DW provided an update for members on the reasoning behind the proposal and how it could be delivered within the community. Members were in broad agreement with the aims and objectives of the proposal but suggested a minor revision to the advertising material prior to publication.

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by MD, that the Town Council should support the initiative and promote it accordingly with that one substantive revision. Resolved nem con (DW abstained).

DW to liaise with Deputy Clerk to amend publicity material and then circulate / publish accordingly. Noted.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.20 pm.

Signed

Date: 2nd November 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council.

Held on Monday 5th October 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 pm.

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED