

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

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Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Monday, 7th July 2025 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall.

Minutes approved 15th September 2025: Part One version (redacted)

Present: Cllrs Walden (JW) (Chair), Bridge (PB), Dowdeswell (MD), Farrow (JF), Hayward (AH), Leat (SL), Osborn (RO), Price (JP) and Willey (DW).

The meeting was quorate with nine members present.

Also in attendance was the Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward.

No members of the public were in attendance.

The meeting began at 7.00pm.

The Presiding Chair of the Committee, JW, welcomed all in attendance and outlined the fire precautions, exits etc. and ran through the agenda procedure and protocol, noting the agenda statements as published.

Public Forum:

As there were no members of the public present, the Chair asked if any members of the committee wished to speak in the public forum. No member wished to speak.

The Chair subsequently closed the public forum session at 7:05pm.

OC25/038

To elect a Chair of the committee:

JF proposed Cllr. Walden (who accepted nomination). Seconded by PB. No further nominations.
Resolved. Cllr. Walden is therefore elected as Chair of the Operations Committee.

OC25/039

To elect a Vice-Chair of the committee:

JF proposed Cllr. Price (who accepted nomination). Seconded by MD. No further nominations.
Resolved. Cllr. Price is therefore elected as Vice-Chair of the Operations Committee.

OC25/040

To note members of the committee present:

As detailed above.

OC25/041

To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies (and reasons for absence). (LGA 1972 S.85 (1))

Apologies were received from Cllrs Dunsbury, Hurren, Paice and Warwick. These apologies were noted, along with the reasons for them. Chair proposed that these apologies be accepted. Seconded by MD. Resolved.

OC25/042

To note members of the Committee not otherwise in attendance.

Cllr Keen was noted as absent.

OC25/043

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.

No declarations of interest were made.

OC25/044

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 31st March 2025 and to consider any matters arising.

The Chair proposed approval of these minutes.

Seconded by Vice Chair. Approval of minutes was resolved unanimously.

Action: The Chair signed the approved minutes accordingly.

Matters Arising.

There were six matters arising raised which Clerk was asked to progress/complete:

- i) Purchase of Guildhall tables
- ii) Conflict resolution training
- iii) Erection of additional emergency stores
- iv) Investigations into GH hearing loop
- v) Allotment regulation updates
- vi) Investigations into glyphosate alternatives for weed control.

Noted.

OC25/045

To consider any 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.

One matter was already tabled for Part Two consideration - agenda item OC25/053(IC). No further matters were considered to be considered in Part Two business.

Operations Committee business to be considered:

OC25/046

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

i) To ratify the decision of the Chair (under their delegated authority) to approve expenditure of £105 for annual membership of the ICCM. Reason: To access the cemetery / burial information service provided by that professional body.

Proposed by JF. Seconded by SL. Resolved unanimously.

ii) To consider whether further dedicated burial space should be set aside within the Axminster Cemetery for the interment of ashes of those persons under the age of 16 at the time of their death; Burial Officer to provide a report on this matter for members.

After debate, it was agreed that no further dedicated space should be set aside within the existing Garden of Remembrance for ashes interments of those persons under the age of 18 (as there is sufficient plot space presently available within existing rows to accommodate anticipated requests for such interment).

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

OC25/047

To consider matters pertaining to Town Amenity and services:

i) To consider extending the Town Council contract with Devon Investigations for a further 12m at a cost of £990 plus VAT; Clerk to provide a report on this matter for members.

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

ii) To consider conjoining the existing Dog Free Zone at Jubilee Field with the existing play area (and installing a connecting play-compliant gate) to provide a more accessible recreation space for users.

After debate, there were no proposals to support this consideration. Therefore, no further action was to be taken. Clerk was asked to bring a paper to the next Operations Committee meeting regarding a proposal that the DFZ be removed entirely.

OC25/048

To consider matters pertaining to the Guildhall building and venue.

i) To consider a proposal for the purchase of stage "riser platform" for performance use at a cost of approximately £800; Clerk to provide a report on this matter for members.

It was suggested that this matter be deferred until after the consideration of the Guildhall Business Plan to assess the value and benefit to the venue against likely use / hire charges etc. Noted and agreed.

ii) To consider a proposal for the installation of the necessary fixings and fixtures within the GH toilet facilities to provide "Stoma Friendly" amenities at a cost of approximately £200. *JW to present a short report to members. It was proposed by Chair, seconded by DW that the Council should proceed with this installation upto the value shown above (net). Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please liaise with Guildhall Manager accordingly and publicise suitably once complete.*

iii) To consider a request from local Fire service to use the Guildhall (when not otherwise in use) for fire training exercises (no fire risk or damage anticipated); Clerk to provide a report on this matter for members. Noted and agreed with delegated authority afforded to Clerk in conjunction with Guildhall Manager to arrange subject to building availability.

OC25/049

To consider matters pertaining to H&S / Risk Management

i) To consider a request for co-operative working between a town NFP organisation and the Town Council relating to provision and availability of shared inspection and assessment services.

After debate and consideration of the legal, liability, compliance and insurance elements of the request, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by MD, that the request be refused, and notification of that decision passed to the enquirer accordingly. Resolved unanimously.** Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

OC25/050

Chair's Announcements / Matters of Urgency for discussion only to be noted:

The Clerk had received correspondence regarding the unlawful occupation of 3rd party land and a request that the Town Council intervene to address the issue. Members noted that the Town Council was not the responsible party for the land and a suggestion was put forward that the Clerk offer details of the Enforcement Organisation used by the Council to the landowner in question. Agreed. Clerk: Please action accordingly.

The Chair also outlined a decision made under delegated authority to reimburse a community volunteer for their vehicle insurance premium (uplift) for the sum of £100 in recognition of the contribution that party plays in maintaining and watering flower displays (Reason: The costs of covering the same volunteer activity with paid staff/GMO resource over the year would be significantly higher). Noted.

Continued overleaf

OC25/051

Date of next scheduled meeting for the Committee; 15th September 2025 – 7pm (Guildhall).

Future committee meetings: See the 2025 meeting calendar.

OC25/052

Vice-Chair proposed that [under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, (as amended by the Local Government Act 1972)] the public, (including the press) should be excluded from the meeting as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Seconded by MD. Resolved unanimously.

Matters to be considered in committee session (Part Two)

The items of business listed below and any others from this agenda to be agreed upon by members of the Committee if and when appropriate (see OC25/045).

OC25/053 (IC)

To consider a matter pertaining to data management / DPA compliance / AGAR FY25-26 (Assertion 10).

This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to commercially sensitive information.

Clerk presented a report from Supplier B (a DALC preferred contractor) who have created a Compliance Toolkit for smaller local authorities to ensure compliance with the new Assertion 10 (AGAR) requirements in FY25/26. After debate, it was proposed by JF, seconded by RO, that Council should proceed with the commissioning of this service for the sum of £495 (already discounted by £200) and that financial regulations should be suspended to permit procurement from one supplier without further comparative quotes being sought. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 20.15 hrs.

Signed Date: 15/09/2025

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