

# Axminster Town Council

Office Hours  
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday  
10am – 12 noon

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow  
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

[www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk)



THE GUILDHALL  
WEST STREET  
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Tel. 01297 32088

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## Axminster Town Council:

### Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee

**DRAFT MINUTES – YET TO BE APPROVED; Part ONE Minutes (redacted)**

**Held in person on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.**

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Walden (JW), Bridge (PB), Dowdeswell (MD), Dunsbury (RD), Hurren (WH), Keen (JK), Leat (SL), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP), Price (JP), Thew (MT) and Willey (DW).

*(Meeting was declared as quorate with 13 members present).*

Also present:

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (PH)

No members of the public in attendance.

*Chair welcomed all in attendance and ran through meeting procedure and protocol.  
Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.*

#### **Public Forum session.**

No public representations.

No members of the committee wished to speak in public forum at this point of the meeting.

As such, Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm

#### **SF25/001**

**To note members of committee present:**

Attendance at meeting shown above.

#### **SF25/002**

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Burrough. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

Cllr. Warwick. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

**Chair proposed that these absences and reasons be approved. Seconded JW. Resolved.**

*Continued overleaf.*

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## SF25/003

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

None.

## SF25/004

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 may arise during this meeting.*

No declarations of interest put forward by members.

## SF25/005

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held 2nd December 2024 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

*Approval of minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.*

**Matters arising:**

None.

## SF25/006

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: None raised by committee members other than to note that item already listed on this agenda (SF25/020 and 021(IC)).

**Strategy & Finance Business to be considered:**

## SF25/007

To receive a report from the RFO on forthcoming meeting with the internal auditor (to undertake the end-of-year Full Internal Audit for this authority).

Report received and noted. RFO confirmed that the date of the meeting with the IA had been set for the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025 to review all Town Council accounts, financial reports, governance requirements and to review the draft AGAR submission prior to consideration by FULL Council in May.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## SF25/008

**To receive an updated report from RFO in relation to the EDDC CAP24 grant funding agreement and to consider progress with the project completion (Guildhall De-carbonisation and Energy Efficiency).**

Report received. Chair asked that the project (when completed) be widely and positively publicised as both a testament to the Council's wish to act decisively on its previous Climate Change Emergency Declaration but also to demonstrate that the Council sought out external grant funds where available to improve town facilities and amenities without placing a financial burden upon taxpayers. Noted. RFO: Please note & action accordingly.

## SF25/009

**Committee to receive most recent Bank Reconciliation, Balance Sheet and Summary (Budget) Monitor report for Q1 to Q3 and partial Q4 (financial information) as per recommendation of FULL Council.**

Chair confirmed that all reports had been received from RFO as recommended and that Committee members will have read and considered these (noting that FULL Council also receives the same reports monthly). No further action required.

## SF25/010

**To consider draft wording of Council's annual budget and precept statement for the forthcoming financial year.**

RFO had forwarded the draft wording to all members of committee and the Chair had made some minor revisions to grammar and tone. **It was proposed from the Chair that the statement be approved for publication. Resolved unanimously.**

RFO: Please note and execute revisions as discussed and publish on all available media channels, the Council's website, on noticeboards and make available for consideration at the forthcoming Annual Parish Meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

## SF25/011

**To consider report from RFO on previous and anticipated Cemetery income, and potential future revenue and capital expenditure (as per recommendation of the Internal Auditor).**

Report received and noted. RFO confirmed that cemetery income for FY25-26 was due to be placed into a ring-fenced reserve and not included in Council's income budget calculations for that period. The ensuing discussion covered the proposed/anticipated works necessary at the Town Cemetery to accommodate future burials for the period 2025 to 2035 and the additional issues of potential S106 developer contributions towards alternate facilities in the town as house building increase as per recent EDDC Strategic Planning housing allocation decisions.

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RFO will report back to the IA in April that his recommendation has been taken forward and adopted as financial policy. No further action required at this time.

## SF25/012

### To consider virements between reserve funds in light of anticipated expenditure within cost centres prior to financial year end.

RFO provided a schedule of forecast EOY financial figures and the current earmarked reserves. The following virement decisions were proposed and seconded.

- i) That the P3 reserve (made up of FY24-25 P3 grant and residual funds from earlier years) be vired into general funds as the Council has bought equipment and allocated staff resource within the year and that these costs should be taken into account.*
- ii) That the residual £9105 Grant Award Funds be vired into General Reserves as the Grant Scheme had been formally closed by earlier resolution of the Council.*
- iii) That no additional funds be vired into the current ACAG reserve, mindful of the additional £2000 to be allocated to the fund in the approved FY25-26 budget proposals.*
- iv) That the £50,000 CCIF earmarked reserve be vired into General Reserves pending return of the monies to SWR and the D&CCRP as per their pending funding request.*

**Substantive proposal by Chair, seconded by EP. Resolved unanimously.**

## SF25/013

### To consider the RFO statement on Council's Investments, Deposits and Reserves incl. the draft FY24-25 CIL Statement (subject to revision and finalisation by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025)

Report noted.

**Chair proposed that the Town Council should seek the transfer of the £270,000 S106 allocated to Axminster (in relation to improved play amenity) from EDDC to facilitate swifter and more efficient spending on the projects. Seconded JW. Resolved unanimously.**

RFO: Please note and make the request to EDDC accordingly.

**Chair also proposed the adoption of the CIL FY24-25 Return figures. Seconded JW. Resolved.**

RFO: Please submit to EDDC as per the statutory timetable for this action.

## SF25/014

### To consider and review the Council's draft Internal Financial Control Review for FY25-26.

**Chair proposed adoption subject to one minor spelling correction in appendix 2. Seconded JW. Resolved unanimously.**

RFO: Please correct and publish approved version on the Council's website and provide a copy for the internal auditor with the AGAR1 return submission.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## SF25/015

**To consider and review the Council's adopted Investment and Borrowing Strategy Policy**  
Chair proposed adoption subject to two minor grammatical corrections in Part B)iv).  
Seconded JW. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please correct and publish approved version on the Council's website and provide a copy for the internal auditor with the AGAR1 return submission.

## SF25/016

**To note progress with the ongoing FY24-25-26 Town Council risk management & assessment review and to consider draft Risk Management / Assessment Report;**  
RFO to present report.

Chair thanked RFO and the GH/admin team for their work on the risk management and assessment schedule prior to presentation to the committee.

Chair proposed 7 edits to the schedule in terms of risk ratings and procedures followed.

Substantive RMA document proposed for adoption by S&F Committee, and recommended to FULL Council for their approval adoption on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025. Seconded JW. Resolved

RFO: Please execute/action edits and amendments as directed and publish the final draft for FULL Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> March.

## SF25/017

**To consider any matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion/notation only.**

Clerk advised that the LGPS has given the Council's pension reporting and Governance submissions a clean bill of health in their interim February report. Noted.

Clerk also reported that correspondence had been received from South Western Railways regarding the retained CCIF funds (see above) but that an agenda item would be added for the FULL Council meeting on 10/3 to formally vote upon the request. Noted.

## SF25/018

**To note the date of the next scheduled meeting of this committee;**

See agenda listing for the future proposed dates of the committee's meetings in 2025.

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## SF25/019

JW 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) 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. JP seconded the proposal. Resolved.

**Part ONE recording was stopped at this point and the meeting moved into Part TWO (Confidential) session whereupon recording was resumed.**

## Committee business to be considered in Part Two:

### SF25/020 (IC)

**To consider update report on matters pertaining to allotment assets and amenities.**

(To bring members up-to-date on legal discussions, advice received and responses)

*RFO to present report.*

Members considered the “wish-list” submitted by the Allotment Association at their recent meeting with the Clerk and the Admin team. Committee recognised the desire for improved amenities but also reflected upon the loss-making financial position of the amenities (at the current fee structure) and felt that this matter should be considered by the Operations Committee in the first instance to determine what was necessary, what was affordable and what was realistically deliverable. Clerk provided an update to members on discussions between ATC and EDDC in respect of potential future S106 developer contributions to amenities of this nature. Noted.

Chair proposed that Clerk be directed to begin formation of a Town Allotment Strategy document to be considered by the committee in the near future. Seconded by JW. Resolved.

Clerk: Please note.

### SF25/021 (IC)

**To consider update report on matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse.**

*RFO to present report.*

Chair reminded all members of the strictly confidential nature of this matter and that all members must abide by the requirements of the adopted Code of Conduct in respect of the disclosure and discussion of Part Two matters in public. Noted.

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RFO provided a verbal report (in conjunction with the briefing report) on the matter to be considered. After further debate, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW that six actions be taken by the RFO on behalf of the committee and the council, and a report brought back to the committee as soon as possible with the outcomes. Resolved by majority vote.** RFO: Please action accordingly and bring a report back to the committee as swiftly as is possible.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.15pm.

Chair thanked all committee members for their time and attendance.

Signed ..... Date: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025

**Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee.**

**DRAFT MINUTES – YET TO BE APPROVED; Part ONE Minutes (redacted)**

**Held in person on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.**