

Axminster Town Council

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

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
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 Strategy & Finance Committee

MINUTES APPROVED 2nd June 2025; Part ONE Minutes (redacted)

Held in person on Monday 28th April 2025. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.

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

(Meeting was declared as quorate with 10 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 7.02pm

Chair read a statement expressing sadness at the recent passing of former Councillor, and Freeman of the Parish, Martin Spurway, and also at the passing of former Councillor, Sue Clarke, both of whom served the council with dignity and devotion over their respective terms and who will be greatly missed.

SF25/022

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

Continued overleaf.

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SF25/023

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Hurren. 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.

SF25/024

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

Cllrs. Burrough and Keen. Absence noted.

Chair asked the Clerk to contact both members to remind them of the need to send apologies for absence if unable to attend.

SF25/025

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.

SF25/026

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held 24th February 2025 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

Approval of minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved nem con, with one abstention (RD).

Matters arising:

CAP24 project. Chair asked Clerk to arrange installation of a suitable plaque at the Guildhall to highlight the de-carbonisation project and the benefits to the community.

Furthermore, that suitable publicity via press and social media be arranged once project complete.

In addition, publicity around the new community orchard to be arranged.

Continued overleaf.

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SF25/027

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 (SF25/037(IC)).

Strategy & Finance Business to be considered:

SF25/028

To receive and consider draft copies of the end-of-year Annual Governance Return and Accounting Statements for this authority prior to internal auditors visit (final approval of the AGAR must be undertaken by the Full Council).

RFO provided report with copies of draft AGAR submission forms. Noted with thanks.

No questions to RFO.

SF25/029

To consider revisions to the Council's bank signatory register.

No changes, deletions or additions proposed at this time. Noted.

SF25/030

Committee to receive most recent Bank Reconciliation, Balance Sheet and Summary (Budget) Monitor report (financial information) as per recommendation of FULL Council. Noted.

SF25/031

To consider whether the Council should accept sponsorship for non-statutory amenities and facilities such as the Community Orchard, Jubilee Field etc.

In principle, members of committee supported a limited sponsorship scheme for the Community Orchard [CO] project (with any future receipts specifically ring-fenced for CO expenditure) but not for communal areas such as Jubilee Field at the present time.

RFO was asked to bring a report back to FULL Council at the earliest opportunity for further debate and decision, with supplementary draft sponsorship policy and case history from other similar sized local authorities. Noted

SF25/032

To consider NALC revisions to the Model Template (National) Standing Orders (following recent national amendments).

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by LP, to adopt the draft Standing Orders reviewed and to publish online, once FULL Council had ratified this committee decision. Resolved Unanimously.

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SF25/033

To consider revisions to the Council's Financial Regulations (current approved version October 2023)

It was proposed by JW, seconded by SL, that the substantive Financial Regulations (taking into account several amendments proposed by members during the debate and incorporating elements of both the NALC Model Template and the extant ATC Financial Regulations) be adopted by the Town Council for use with immediate effect. This recommendation to be ratified by FULL Council at the next opportunity. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note and action accordingly.

SF25/034

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

Chair advised that she would not be available to attend the scheduled meeting of the Blackdown Hills Parish Network on 15/5 and asked for a volunteer to deputise on that occasion. JW offered to attend. All committee members were in agreement.

Clerk: Please forward online joining instructions to JP as soon as possible.

RFO sought confirmation from committee that the previous decision to enter into a Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) agreement was still something that Council should proceed with. Members confirmed that this was still their intention to improve revenue into the Town Council's accounts (to reduce precept reliance) and RFO was to proceed under the existing delegated authority. Noted.

RFO advised that £600 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had been received from EDDC. Noted.

SF25/035

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.

SF25/036

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.

Continued overleaf.

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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:

SF25/037 (IC)

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

This matter was discussed in Part Two due to the commercially sensitive and confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

Clerk provided a verbal update to members on this subject. Noted.

Clerk was asked to keep committee members abreast of further developments and correspondence as and when received. Noted.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.10pm.

Chair thanked all committee members for their time and attendance.

Signed Date: 2nd June 2025

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