

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
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EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

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 1st December 2025. Meeting started at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Price (JP) (VC), Dunsbury (RD), Hayward (AH), Leat (SL), Osborn (RO), Walden (JW), Warwick (TW) and Willey (DW).

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

Also present:

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (PH)

Deputy Town Clerk, Sarah Jackson (SJ)

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 7.32pm

SF25/083

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

SF25/084

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Ashkettle. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

Cllr. Bridge. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

Cllr. Dowdeswell. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

Cllr. Hurren. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

Cllr. Paice. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

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

Continued overleaf.

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SF25/085

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

None.

SF25/086

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.

SF25/087

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held 29th September 2025 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

Approval of minutes was deferred by Chair as members had not received advance copies prior to meeting. Noted. Clerk: Add to next agenda for review and approval.

Matters arising:

None raised.

SF25/088

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 (SF25/095 to 96(IC) inclusive).

Strategy & Finance Business to be considered:

SF25/089

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

Noted October's Financial Report. November report had been created on the date of the meeting (from 30/11) and members had no had opportunity to review and consider.

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SF25/090

To consider any updates/developments with regards to Local Government Reorganisation and/or MCHLG Devolution programme that may impact upon the Town Councils FY26-27 financial stability, fiscal planning and the subsequent budget and precept considerations.

Verbal report from Clerk/RFO received and noted.

SF25/091

Consequently, to consider 2nd model of draft budget / expenditure (and precept calculation) plan for FY26-27 as per direction previously given to RFO for the creation of this budget (as considered by Budget Working Party & Employment Committee including their recommendations)

RFO presented options for budget and precept FY26-27 including all directions and decisions previously put forward by Full Council and Committees.

Chair opened the discussion by explaining the previous deliberations via the budget training session, the budget and precept working party, and the intervening meetings of the relevant committees. RFO provided explanation for the various option A to G.

After significant discussion, it was proposed by Vice-Chair (JP) that Council should approve the FY26-27 expenditure budget at £687,400 (including forecast inflationary pressures and Guildhall costs) with a balancing precept demand of £555,335, an increase of 10% (£50,485) on the previous year precept demand of £504,850. Presuming no variation in Town Taxbase, this would equate to a Band D equivalent Council Tax charge of £188.37, an increase of £17.12 per annum or 33pence per week. Seconded by RD. Resolved unanimously.

This is the recommendation of the Strategy and Finance Committee to Full Council (who have the final decision-making responsibility for budget and precept setting) but RFO advised that the final decision on precept may wish to be deferred until such time as EDDC publishes their forecast taxbase figures for FY26-27 as this will provide the final piece of fiscal information. Noted.

SF25/092

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

(Matters not clearly shown on the agenda may not be decided upon or resolved – LGA 1972 S.100B)

None raised.

Continued overleaf.

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SF25/093

To note the date of the next scheduled meeting of this committee;
5th January 2026 (this date may be subject to change).

SF25/094

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) 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. The Chair 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:

SF25/095 (IC)

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

As this agenda item relates to commercially sensitive business, this item will be considered as a Part Two confidential matter.

RFO provided an update on matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse. Noted.

SF25/096 (IC) To receive update report on matters pertaining to recent theft at Axminster Municipal Cemetery

As this agenda item relates to commercially sensitive business, this item will be considered as a Part Two confidential matter.

Report received from Clerk. Noted. No further action for the time being.

Clerk will bring a further costed report to FULL Council on 8th December 2025.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.05 pm.

Chair thanked all committee members for their time and attendance.

Signed Date: 5th January 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee.

Held in person on Monday 1st December 2025. Meeting started at 7.30 p.m.

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