

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 Annual Meeting of the FULL Council

MINUTES APPROVED at FULL Council meeting held 9th June 2025.

Held in person on Monday 12th May 2025 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Presiding Chair), Bridge (PB), Dunsbury (RD), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP), Price (JP), Walden (JW), Warwick (TW) and Willey (DW).

(Meeting was quorate with nine members of Council present).

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (TC).

Sarah Jackson (EDDC Councillor).

3 members of the public.

Presiding Chair highlighted the building fire precautions, alerted those present to the fire exits and outlined the meeting procedure, protocol and member's declarations and interests.

Public Forum session.

The Presiding Chair opened the meeting and paid tribute to two former councillors, Martin Spurway and Susan Clarke, who had passed away recently. A minute's silence was observed in their memory.

A member of the public spoke to thank all members of Council for their continued service, and to thank the Mayor for her dedication to the role. Noted.

With no other speakers, the Presiding Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm.

FC 25/129AM

To elect the Chair (Mayor) of the Town Council

JW proposed that JW (himself) be elected as Chair (Mayor) for the forthcoming Council year (until May 2026). Seconded by DW.

TW proposed that JF be elected as Chair (Mayor) for the forthcoming Council year (until May 2026). Seconded by RD.

Both nominees accepted their nominations. No other nominations for the position of Chair of the Council were received. A paper ballot of members was held, overseen by the Clerk. By a majority vote, it was resolved that Cllr. Jill Farrow be elected as Mayor, and as Chair of the Town Council, for a further 12 month term.

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FC 25/130AM

Signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Chair (Mayor).

JF signed the declaration, duly witnessed by the Proper Officer.

FC 25/131AM

Opening remarks to the Annual Meeting from the Chair (Mayor).

The Chair thanked those members present (and the public) for their support and stated that it was her honour and privilege to serve the Council and the wider community for a further 12 months and that she would do so to the best of her ability. The Chair thanked all members for their hard work and enthusiasm, the Council's officers and staff for their diligence and professionalism and the countless volunteers throughout the town who give up their time and energy to make the town a better place.

FC 25/132AM

To elect the Vice-Chair (Deputy Mayor) of the Town Council

Chair proposed that JP be elected as Vice-Chair (Deputy Mayor) for the forthcoming Council year (until May 2026). Seconded by JW. JP accepted the nomination.

No other nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Council were received.

Resolved *nem con*. Chair congratulated Cllr. Price on his election.

FC 25/133AM

To note members of committee present:

The Clerk confirmed that those in attendance at this meeting were as shown above.

FC 25/134AM

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

Cllr. Burrough (KB). Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Dowdeswell (MD). Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Hurren (WH). Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Leat (SL). Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Acceptance of absences and apologies proposed from the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

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FC 25/135AM

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

It was noted that Cllr. Keen was not present and had not sent his apologies or a reason for his absence.

Cllr. Smith (EDDC) had sent his prior apology for absence. Noted.

FC 25/136AM

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.

None declared.

FC 25/137AM

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 14th April 2025 as previously circulated to members and published online, and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

Approval and adoption of minutes proposed by the Chair. Seconded by EP.

Resolved unanimously.

There were no matters arising from those minutes.

FC25/138AM

To review and note the minutes of the Committee Meeting of the FULL Council held as listed below, as previously circulated to members and published online, and to consider matters arising from those minutes.

There were no matters arising from those minutes.

FC25/139AM

To note the decisions and recommendations of the Committee Meeting as listed above, as previously circulated to members and published online, and to consider approval by this meeting of the FULL Council.

a) Strategy & Finance Committee 28th April 2025.

Minutes/decisions noted and recommendations therein approved without dissention.

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FC 25/140AM

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 members other than to note the agenda item already listed FC25/161AM to FC25/163AM inclusive as detailed below.

FC25/141AM

To invite nominations for co-option to fill the casual vacancy that exists for the Town Council Town Ward Seat following the confirmation from EDDC Returning Officer that no petition was demanded to fill this vacancy by election (CVP4).

Clerk was directed to advertise the vacancy via usual channels/methods and noted that Council would consider those persons nominated at their meeting to be held on 9th June 2025.

FC25/142AM

To consider the review and, if thought fit, the re-adoption of the Town Council's Code of (Member) Conduct policy which accords with the adopted EDDC Code of Conduct Policy

Re-adoption proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

FC25/143AM

To remind all members of the Town Council to submit (if necessary) a revised and up-to-date Register of Members Interests pro-forma to the Proper Officer for onward publication by EDDC.

Clerk referred all members to the blank Register of Members Interests forms on their tables and asked that members complete these to provide an up-to-date record of their interests for publication on the EDDC website as per The Localism Act 2011. Noted.

FC25/144AM

To consider nominations for Axminster Town Council's Hon. Footpath (P3) Warden

Clerk confirmed that Mr. John Vanderwolfe had kindly agreed to remain in post as the Hon. Footpath Warden but that he is keen to encourage others to come forward to take on the role in the future. Chair thanked Mr. Vanderwolfe for his time and efforts in the role.

Vice-Chair proposed that Mr. Vanderwolfe be formally re-appointed as the Town Council's Honorary (P3) Footpath Warden. Seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

TW kindly offered to support JV as his deputy and asked Clerk to make arrangements for a suitable training session for that role. Noted.

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FC25/145AM

To consider nominations for Axminster Town Council's Hon. Tree Warden.

Clerk confirmed that Mr. Michael Davis had kindly agreed to remain in post as the Hon. Tree Warden. Chair thanked Mr. Davis for his time and efforts in that capacity.

Chair proposed that Mr. Davis be formally re-appointed as the Town Council's Honorary Tree Warden. Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC25/146AM

To consider and approve Councillor membership of the following Town Council committees, working parties and partner organisations:

- a) Employment Committee. No change proposed.
- b) Operations Committee. No change proposed but reference to term "ex-officio" to be removed from committee matrix and papers. Noted.
- c) Planning Committee. JP offered to serve on this committee. Proposed Chair, seconded DW. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please amend committee membership records and email contact group accordingly.
- d) Strategy & Finance Committee. No change proposed but reference to term "ex-officio" to be removed from committee matrix and papers. Noted.
- e) Town Council representative to Axminster Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
No change proposed. WH as Chair.
- f) Town Council representative to Axminster Climate Action Group
No change proposed. JW as Chair.
- g) Town Council representative to Chamber of Commerce
No change proposed. MD to represent the Council at Chamber meetings/events.
- h) Town Council representative to the Axminster Twinning Association
No change proposed. MD to represent the Council at Twinning Association meetings/events.
- i) Town Council representative to the EDDC Arts and Culture Forum
No change proposed. JP to represent the Council at ACF meetings/events.
- j) Town Council representative to Plastic Free Axminster
No change proposed. RO to represent the Council at PFA meetings/events.
- k) Town Council representative to DALC. No change proposed. JF to attend as Chair.

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FC 25/147AM

To consider planning matters:

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

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.

1) **25/0918/VAR** – Hunthay Farm, Hunthay, Axminster, EX13 5RJ

Variation of condition 1 – alterations to existing dwelling.

(Variation to approved application of 24/1887/FUL)

Support for application proposed by JW. Seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

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.

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.

1) **25/0767/FUL** – 5 First Avenue, Axminster, EX13 5HP

Replacement of front porch, creation of courtyard and single storey rear extension.

Support proposed by delegated authority of the Planning Committee Chair.

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

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references. None advised.

d) To note planning correspondence received (if any).

None received as at time of agenda publication.

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.

Application 24/0096/MFUL (BESS development at Blackpool Corner, Axminster) will be considered at the EDDC Planning Committee meeting to be held on Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 10am (at Blackdown House, Honiton).

It was proposed by PB, seconded by EP, that the Town Council should withdraw its support for the application in light of new information that had come to light that caused members concern. Resolved (7 votes for the motion, 2 against).

Clerk: Please convey this decision to EDDC Planning Officers as a matter of urgency.

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f) To consider any other planning matters not already included above, including representations from members on such matters (e.g. Planning, enforcement, planning legislation, TPO's etc):

None received as at time of agenda publication.

FC 25/148AM

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To note the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) for 2025-26 (employed role). RFO explained that the formal appointment by way of a vote was not necessary as Mr. Hayward was employed (by virtue of a contract of employment) as both Clerk and RFO to the Council but that it is customary to note the role in the formal minutes. Noted.

b) To consider payment of Chair's (Mayor's) Allowance for 2025-26 in the context of previous budgetary decisions of this Council.

It was proposed from the Chair that no allowance be used/expended in this financial year (FY25-26) in light of the budgetary constraints facing the Council. Resolved unanimously.

Members also indicated that they did not wish for the allowance for FY26-27 to be included in any forthcoming budgetary discussions or forecasts. Noted

c) To consider payment of Councillor Allowances for FY 2025-26; *RFO outlined legislation.* Members noted the report from the RFO. Any members (elected but not co-opted) wishing to claim their allowance should contact the RFO to discuss the relevant arrangements. RFO confirmed that any such allowances claimed would be publicised in the Council's records for public scrutiny as per legislative requirements around transparency and accountability.

d) To consider Council's Insurance matters for the forthcoming year;

RFO re-confirmed that the Council had previously entered into a 5-year FTA (fixed term agreement) to ensure consistency and control of insurance expenditure. No further action necessary as renewal was approved under a previous resolution for that 5-year period and budgeted for within Council's annual cost forecast. Noted.

e) To consider whether to commission a formal revaluation of Council's building assets for insurance valuation and indemnity purposes;

Clerk was directed to bring quotes for this revaluation exercise to the Strategy & Finance Committee at the earliest opportunity for members to consider. Noted.

f) To reconfirm Council's bank signatories and to revise/amend as deemed necessary and/or appropriate;

As per Strategy & Finance Committee recommendations, no changes/revisions to bank signatory mandate were proposed. Noted.

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g) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments for April 2025.

Chair proposed that these payments, totalling £75,032 net, be approved. Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

h) To receive, and note, the Responsible Financial Officer's report and financial pack for April 2025 in the new format (also published online) and to approve the Bank Reconciliation for the 30th April 2025.

Received and noted.

i) Questions to the RFO on these accounts / financial reports from members. None raised.

j) To consider the FY24-25 Internal Auditor report and to approve its acceptance/adoption prior to submission to PKF Littlejohn LLP in June 2025

TW asked about the specific Internal Audit recommendation re: bank balance certification and RFO was asked to ascertain if any other small local authorities had been asked to

investigate/consider such a financial issue. JW proposed that RFO be directed to seek advice from NALC/DALC in respect of this specific matter and report back to the Strategy & Finance Committee accordingly.

Notwithstanding that action, JW proposed that the Internal Audit report be noted, accepted and approved for submission to the external auditor as part of the overall AGAR submission process. Seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

k) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve Section ONE (Governance Statement) of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR-3) for Axminster Town Council in respect of the Financial Year 2024-25 and to authorise that this be signed on behalf of the Town Council and submitted to the External Auditor.

Approval proposed by JW, seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

Section ONE duly signed by Chair for submission to PKF Littlejohn LLP.

l) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve Section TWO (Accounting Statements) of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR-3) for Axminster Town Council in respect of the Financial Year 2024-25 and to authorise that this be signed on behalf of the Town Council and submitted to the External Auditor.

Approval proposed by JW, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Section TWO duly signed by Chair for submission to PKF Littlejohn LLP.

m) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve supplementary and supporting financial documents and reports for Axminster Town Council in respect of the Financial Year 2024-25 and to authorise that these be submitted to the External Auditor as required within the AGAR legislation.

Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

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n) To note the provisional dates for the publication of the Notice Period for the Exercise of Public Rights for the previous financial period FY24-25:

Revised dates proposed: Tuesday 3rd June 2025 to Monday 14th July 2025 inclusive.

Noted. RFO: Please submit to PKF accordingly and publicise as per legislation.

o) To review schedule of Council's automated payments (standing orders and direct debits) and to approve their continued use and mandate authority.

Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

p) To review and, if thought fit, to approve the adoption of the Town Council's Strategic Policy for Investments and Borrowings.

(This document was recommended for adoption by Strategy & Finance Committee in Feb. 2025)

Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

q) To review and, if thought fit, to approve the adoption of the Town Council's Internal Financial Control Review Policy. *(This document was recommended for adoption by Strategy & Finance Committee in Feb. 2025)*

Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

r) To consider any virements between previously allocated reserve funds considered necessary or appropriate by members.

None considered necessary.

s) To formally ratify approval of the Council's Risk Management Assessment Review for 2025-26. *(This document has been recommended for approval by the Strategy & Finance Committee in Feb. 2025)*

Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

t) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the Asset Register Figure as at the 31st March 2025 and to note the revaluation of the Town Council's primary building/land assets as per the recommendation of the Internal Auditor in accordance with JPAG guidance (2024 version).

Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Other Council Business to be considered:

FC25/149AM

To note the result of the Devon County Council election on 1st May and to consider how the Town Council wishes to approach future co-operation with that authority in liaison with the elected Division member.

Chair congratulated Cllr. Hayward on his election. Vice-Chair noted the duality of his new role (in addition to that required for EDDC business) and suggested that any matters that required reporting to Council should be clearly shown in **purple text** within any emails or reports to indicate that this information was pertinent to Cllr. Hayward's elected role and separate to his employed role as Clerk/RFO. Agreed.

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Furthermore, it was agreed that Cllr Hayward would be invited to provide a verbal report (or supplementary report) on EDDC and/or DCC matters during Council meetings if the presiding Chair felt that this would be conducive and beneficial to the Council, councillors and the wider public. Noted.

FC25/150AM

To seek agreement from all members that they consent to the delivery of agenda summons and associated documents by the Clerk via email for the forthcoming council year ie until the date of the next Annual Meeting in 2026.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

FC25/151AM

To consider and, if thought fit, to resolve that Axminster Town Council will abide by the requirements of the Transparency Code Regulations 2015 and will publish all relevant information at the financial year end in accordance with the requirements of that legislation.

RFO confirmed that the Town Council was in full compliance with the TCR2015 and had published all necessary and mandatory (and recommended) information on the website.

Resolution proposed by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC25/152AM

To approve the re-adoption of the Town Council's extant Standing Orders

(as per version considered and recommended for approval by Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held on 28th April 2025)

Re-adoption of the Town Council's Standing Orders was proposed for approval by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please publish accordingly.

FC25/153AM

To approve the re-adoption of the Town Council's revised Financial Regulations.

(as per version considered and recommended for approval by Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held on 28th April 2025)

Re-adoption of the Town Council's revised Financial Regulations was proposed for approval by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please publish accordingly.

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FC25/154AM

To consider whether the Town Council wishes to co-operate with other organisations in the town to promote and facilitate a safeguarding scheme similar to the national 'Ask For Angela' initiative.

After a lengthy debate on the merits (and potential pitfalls) of such a scheme in the town, and the legal, governance and safeguarding issues around such a scheme, it was agreed that EP would liaise with the Rotary Club & Pippins to ascertain what they were planning and to bring the matter back to Council for a further discussion in the future. Noted.

FC25/155AM

To receive a report from Cllr. Price on the outcome of the recent East Devon District Council Arts and Culture Forum meeting held 16th April 2025.

Verbal report provided by JP. Chair thanked JP for attending and it was felt that there was merit in a Town Council representative continuing to attend in the future so that all members could be aware of matters such as grant opportunities, training events and networking sessions, especially in relation to the operation and management of The Guildhall venue.

FC25/156AM

To note that a road closure (TTRO 2561763) will be in force on Monday 26th May 2025 (Bank Holiday) to support the Axminster Gate to Plate event between 7am and 7pm and will affect; Silver Street & Church Street.

Noted.

FC25/157AM

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair and to receive any announcements from the Chair of the Council.

Four urgent matters raised:

- i) Notification of a meeting of the Plastic Free Axminster Group on 14/5/2025 – 7 to 8pm.
- ii) Notification of a CPRE (Devon) Planning Training / Awareness Event on May 20th.
- iii) A request had been received for the flying of the Pride Flag outside the Guildhall during Pride Month (June). **Proposed by Vice-Chair, seconded by RD. Motion not carried (3 for/4 against/2 abstentions).**
- iv) One final matter relating to Jubilee Field was deferred to Part Two due to the 3rd party nature of the business to be considered. Noted (see below).

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FC25/158AM

To confirm the date of the next scheduled Ordinary FULL meeting of the Town Council - **9th June 2025**.

FC25/159AM

To confirm the date of the next scheduled ANNUAL meeting of the Town Council - **11th May 2026**.

FC25/160AM

The 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. Seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

All members of the public left the meeting at this point.

Other Council Business to be considered (Part TWO – Confidential)

FC25/157AM (IC)

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair and to receive any announcements from the Chair of the Council (continued):

iv) [See above]

A request had been received from a resident, whose property adjoins Jubilee Field, seeking the Council's consent to bring a vehicle onto our field (at a time and date to be agreed upon) for the purposes of off-loading (and ultimately re-loading) scaffolding for works at the rear of their property which cannot be accessed from the front of the property.

Clerk confirmed that this should be acceptable subject to the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding confirming that the resident (or their contractor) would make good any damage caused to Council property (incl. hard-standings) and that they would provide details of their Public Liability Cover prior to works commencing. *Chair proposed that this request be approved with no charges levied/sought. Seconded by EP.*

Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please liaise with resident accordingly and ensure all necessary paperwork in place prior to works proceeding. No charge to be levied for access.

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FC25/161(IC)AM

To consider matters pertaining to the Old Courthouse complex

This agenda item is being conducted in Part Two (closed session) due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

Clerk provided an update for members. Noted.

Clerk was directed to proceed with administrative tasks and bring the matter back to Strategy & Finance Committee in the first instance, whereupon any recommendations can be taken before FULL Council for final approval and decision.

FC25/162(IC)AM

To consider matters pertaining to the licensing of the Town Council's intellectual property rights.

This agenda item is being conducted in Part Two (closed session) due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

This matter was again deferred due to the absence of Councillor Dowdeswell.

Clerk: Please liaise with MD to discuss the necessary arrangements and bring a report back to FULL Council once all administration matters in place ready for a Council decision.

FC25/163(IC) AM

To consider matters pertaining to the Axminster Guildhall and building/staff security.

This agenda item is being conducted in Part Two (closed session) due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

Clerk provided a verbal report to members on the current issues and security challenges at the GH offices. After debate, Clerk was directed to prepare a further briefing paper for Strategy & Finance Committee with initial costings / estimates for the necessary/proposed works whereupon further consideration can be given to the matter. Clerk thanked members for their time and patience as the arrangements relating to his new role were worked through.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Signed Date: 9th June 2025

**Axminster Town Council: Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the FULL Council
12th May 2025**

MINUTES APPROVED at FULL Council meeting held 9th June 2025.

ATC Approved Minutes Annual Meeting of the FULL Council 12/05/2025 Part One version.