

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 FULL Council **MINUTES APPROVED 9TH February 2026; Part ONE version (redacted)**

Held in person on Monday 12th January 2026 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Price (JP) (Vice-Chair), Ashkettle (JA), Bridge (PB), Dowdeswell (MD), Dunsbury (RD), Hayward (AH), Hurren (WH), Leat (SL), Osborn (RO), Walden (JW) and Willey (DW).

(Meeting was deemed quorate with twelve members present).

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (PH) (also representing EDDC and DCC)

Cllr. Sarah Jackson (representing EDDC)

Ten members of the public also present.

Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.

i) Announcement of the winner of the 2026 Robin Cross Award (Axminster Citizen of the Year) and Presentation of the Award.

The Chair presented Kay Pike (representing Plastic Free Axminster) with the 2026 Robin Cross "Citizen of the Year" Award in recognition of her community involvement and volunteering activities in Axminster over many years, and thanked her for all of her efforts on behalf of the entire town.

Kay received the award and gave a short presentation to councillors, officers and members of the public present.

ii) Open Public Forum session (limited to 15 minutes or as otherwise agreed by Chair presiding).

Representations from a member of the public regarding proposed advertising planning proposal for roundabout at junction of Shand Park / Trafalgar Way

The Chair subsequently closed the public forum session of the meeting at 7.15pm

FC26/001

To note members of Council present:

Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

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FC26/002

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Paice. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

Cllr. Warwick. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

**The Chair proposed that absence and reason be approved. Seconded by Vice-Chair.
Resolved.**

FC26/003

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

None. Apologies received from EDDC Cllr. Simon Smith. Noted.

FC26/004

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.

None declared.

FC26/005

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 8th December 2025.

**Proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair, that the minutes be approved.
Resolved unanimously.**

FC26/006

To consider any matters arising from those minutes:

- i) Progress update on FP69 (footbridge replacement)
- ii) Letters to commercial landlords (re: Section 215) confirmed as sent by Clerk.
- iii) Letter to Secretary of Carnival Committee confirmed as sent by Clerk.
- iv) Confirmation that MD was happy to act as Light Up Axminster liaison representative.

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FC26/007

To consider and review the draft minutes of the following meetings of committees of the Town Council as listed below (as previously circulated to members and published online):

i) Strategy & Finance Committee – 5th January 2026
Minutes reviewed and noted.

FC26/008

To note the specific recommendations arising from that committee meeting and to consider whether Council wishes to approve their adoption.
No specific recommendations for consideration.

FC26/009

To consider any additional 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. [See FC26/021 to 023(IC) inclusive].
None raised at this time other than those already listed on the agenda for Part Two discussion.

FC26/010

To consider matters pertaining to the casual vacancy that exist for the town ward seat.

Clerk outlined the casual vacancy protocol and co-option procedure.

One eligible nomination had been received; Laurence Norman.

It was proposed by JA, seconded by JW, that Mr. Norman be co-opted to the role of Town Councillor. Resolved unanimously.

Mr. Norman signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, witnessed by the Proper Officer, and (having already received a copy of the agenda summons) then joined the Councillors at the Council table.

Clerk: please liaise with Cllr. Norman to undertake member induction, arrange for ROI to be completed and any other matters requiring attention. Please notify EDDC of the co-option.

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FC26/011

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments schedule for December 2025. **Payments for December 2025 (£71,910 net) proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved nem con with two abstentions.**

b) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the Bank Reconciliation for December 2025. **Bank reconciliation for December 2025 was proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please arrange for these documents to be signed by a non-bank signatory (MD volunteered to complete this task).**

c) To receive, and note, Responsible Financial Officer's report and financial pack for December 2025 (Q1 to Q3) (also published online) incorporating the Q3 budget monitor (summary) and associated reports. **Received and noted.**

d) To consider the current VAT return position (Q3) for the Town Council (incl. Guildhall). RFO provided report and confirmed that VAT claim for Q3 had been submitted with receipt pending from HMRC as at the 12th January 2026. **Noted.**

e) Questions to the RFO on these accounts / financial reports from members. A question was raised about the timing and pace of replacement cemetery assets. RFO provided the information required by Vice-Chair.

f) To review and approve the Direct Debit / Standing Order schedule for forthcoming bank transactions (2026).

Schedule of automated payments proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by JA. Resolved nem con, with one abstention.

g) To consider Council's Investment and Borrowing Strategy Policy; to consider whether the Town Council should take advantage of a Local Authority sector Investment service offered by Insignis Group to maximise credit interest revenue opportunities.

RFO provided a report (and confirmed that this matter had previously been discussed by Strategy & Finance Committee). Chair asked members for their thoughts and comments. broad consensus of agreement, both in terms of administrative time savings, security, and better returns on Council's reserve funds held on deposit.

It was subsequently proposed by the Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair, that the Town Council should proceed to open an Insignis Trust Deposit account with three Council signatories (plus the RFO) for the management and deposit of Council's reserve surplus funds.

Resolved nem con (with two abstentions).

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RFO: Please make the necessary amendments to the Town Council's previously approved and adopted Investment and Borrowing Strategy Policy to reflect this resolution and decision and bring to next meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee for review and adoption.

FC26/012

Planning matters:

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

1) 25/2349/FUL – The Red House, Axminster, EX13 5SE

Construction of 1 x new timber framed single storey reception building.

Proposed by SL, seconded by JW, that Council supports this application, but would seek a condition limiting use to commercial activities connected with the existing business on site and with no independent overnight accommodation permissible. Resolved unanimously.

2) 25/2366/ADV – Trafalgar Way / West Street roundabout

Erection of 4 no. non-illuminated sponsorship panels.

JP proposed objection on the grounds of negative highway/visibility impact and the visual impact of the proposed signage/panels on the street-scene at this location. In addition, it was noted that the Town Council already had an agreement with DCC to provide aesthetic planters at the roundabout and this application would adversely affect that public amenity. Seconded by SL. Resolved nem con with two abstentions.

3) 25/2490/FUL – The Heathers, Beavor Lane, Axminster, EX13 5EQ

Single storey rear extension

Proposed by SL, seconded by JW, that Council supports this application.

Resolved nem con.

4) 25/2588/FUL – Lower Westwater Farm, Westwater, EX13 7JD

Erection of purpose-built calf rearing shed.

Proposed by SL, seconded by JW, that Council supports this application.

Resolved nem con.

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 in consultation with the members of the Council's Committee.

None to be considered.

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

25/2544/TCA – St Marys Church, Axminster, EX13 5NU

Tree works to T1: Cherry (fell to ground, and replant adjacent)

Support proposed by SL, seconded by JW. Resolved nem con.

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

None advised.

e) To consider any Planning Correspondence received.

None received since last meeting.

Other Council business to be considered:

FC26/013

To note any recent correspondence from DALC and NALC.

None received for reporting / update purposes.

Clerk asked members if they wished to receive the electronic newsletters from NALC/DALC by default. After debate, it was agreed that any member who wished to receive the various newsletters should contact the Clerk directly and make that request; by default, the Clerk would not send out everything received unless the information contained therein was deemed relevant or important or critical to the business of the Town Council.

FC26/014

To receive a report on matters pertaining to:

a) The Axminster Chamber of Commerce;

AH and MD provided reports on recent Chamber activity and events. Noted.

b) Plastic Free Axminster (PFA);

RO provided an update report for members as Town Council's representative on PFA. Noted.

c) Axminster Climate Action Group:

Nothing to report from JW. Noted.

d) Light Up Axminster:

MD provided an update report. MD also reported on the recent (new) Carnival Committee inaugural meeting. It was felt that the Council should have a standing agenda item for Carnival Committee Liaison; MD offered to act as Town Council representative for the time being. Members agreed and thanked MD to stepping into the role.

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Clerk: Please add a relevant agenda item to subsequent FULL Council agendas to discuss / consider Carnival Committee Liaison business.

FC26/015

To receive an update report from Clerk on matters pertaining to Devon Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Clerk provided a verbal report on activity since last FULL Council meeting. Noted.

FC26/016

To note the date for the forthcoming Councillor/Employee joint training session in January 2026; 20th January 2026 – PM (starting at 1pm in the Guildhall)

Noted. The Chair outlined the reasons for the event and encouraged all members, including those recently co-opted to attend.

FC26/017

To receive an update from the RFO pertaining to ongoing sale of The Old Courthouse buildings in Church Street.

Received and noted. No questions / issues raised.

FC26/018

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

Three urgent matters raised:

i) Grit / Salt bins. Due to the sudden onset of colder weather, the Council had received multiple requests for additional grit/salt stores/containers across the town, especially on the newer estates where the roads were not yet adopted. Members agreed that the Town Council could assist.

It was proposed (under their duly delegated authority) by The Chair, seconded by JW, that the Council should purchase a number (11 qty) of yellow 20 litre store units and a supply of grit salt (To be determined) and that a concurrent application be made from the Town Council to the Devon County Council Locality Fund (to be submitted by the Deputy Clerk) for £1500 net to cover the costs of such procurement. Resolved nem con. Deputy Clerk/Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Once received, please liaise to arrange site agreements with land-owners for the positioning and filling of the units at the key locations identified.

ii) The PCC (Minster Church) had formally written to the Town Council thanking them for their £500 grant under the 1967 Church Clock agreement. Noted.

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iii) There was a 3rd Matter of Urgency topic which the Clerk asked be considered in Part Two session due to the confidential nature of the subject to be discussed (financial/legal matters). As per agenda item FC26/004 (above) it was agreed to discuss this matter in Part Two.

FC26/019

To confirm the date of the next scheduled FULL meeting of the Town Council on Monday the 9th of February 2026, and other Council committee meeting dates.

Noted. Chair advised newly co-opted member, LN, of his default membership of the Strategy & Finance committee, the Operations Committee and the Planning Committee. Noted.

FC26/020

Recommendation: that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act namely, the financial affairs or business affairs or employment affairs of the Town Council by virtue of the fact that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Proposed by the Vice-Chair. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

The meeting moved into Part Two session. All members of the public left the room.

The agenda items below are considered confidential due to the commercially sensitive subjects/topics to be discussed and the involvement of 3rd parties which would necessitate disclosure of confidential information during the discussions.

PART TWO COUNCIL BUSINESS TO BE CONDUCTED:

FC26/018

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

c) Ongoing financial dispute with utility provider.

Clerk provided an update to membership based on ongoing correspondence and interactions with utility provider after discussions with the Energy Ombudsman.

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Subsequently, the Chair proposed remedial action (redacted due to reasons of commercial confidentiality). Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved nem con.

RFO: Please note and action accordingly. Please advise members when action completed.

FC26/021 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse and correspondence received.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive due to the subject to be discussed.

Clerk provided update on progress with sale. Noted.

FC26/022 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to The Town Cemetery buildings and associated plant, equipment and materials.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive due to the subject to be discussed.

Clerk provided an update and a revised timeline of proposed works and procurement value. Noted. Clerk also provided provisional costs and supplier details for upgraded security works and enhancements at the chapel/cemetery site. Noted

Noting that the likely costs of the cemetery security works (from Contractor W) had risen, but mindful that a Procurement Exemption resolution had been passed in December, and noting that no procurement or re-occupation of the chapel(s) could be completed until the urgent security works were complete and finalised, Chair proposed that the Town Council should commission Contractor W to provide the security upgrade works at the chapels in line with the exemption resolution previously agreed upon. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly as per resolution to proceed.

FC26/023 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to Guildhall building projects (in particular, reconfiguration of office & administrative & storage facilities and associated works).

Clerk co-presented an initial conceptual report to members with the Vice-Chair. Members noted the initial proposals and options, but felt that a wider overview needed to come to Council via the Employment Committee (next meeting 2nd Feb) with their recommendations to be taken forward in conjunction with these initial proposals as a combined project.

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Noted. Clerk: Please liaise with Employment Committee Chair prior to, and after, the next scheduled meeting and prepare a further report/update for members accordingly.
No further action on this agenda item at the present time subject to directions above.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.35pm.

Signed Date: 9TH February 2026

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