

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 13TH April 2026; Part ONE version (redacted)

Held at The Guildhall on Monday 9th March 2026 at 7.00 p.m.

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

(Meeting was deemed quorate with thirteen members present).

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

One member of the public also present.

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

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

There were no public representations. No members of Council wished to speak in public forum.

The Chair subsequently closed the public forum session of the meeting at 7.01pm

FC26/055

To note members of Council present:

Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

Councillor Hurren arrived at 19.25 and is noted above.

FC26/056

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Norman. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

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

FC26/057

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

EDDC Councillors Sarah Jackson and Simon Smith.

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FC26/058

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 they may become aware of during the course of this meeting.

Cllr. David Willey was afforded a dispensation relating to the hire of the Guildhall venue (Section 33 of The Localism Act 2011) on the 9th February 2026 [Reason: that Councillors considered it appropriate to grant a dispensation for other reasons (E)]; this dispensation will remain in force until the member resigns, or until May 2027, whichever comes first. No further declarations of interest made.

FC26/059(A)

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 9th February 2026.

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by MD, that the minutes be approved.

Resolved unanimously.

FC26/059(B)

To consider any matters arising from those minutes:

i) Progress update on member completion of data consent & skills audit forms.

Chair asked members to respond to Clerk by 16/3. Noted.

FC26/060

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) Planning Committee – 26th February 2026

ii) Strategy & Finance Committee – 26th February 2026

Draft minutes were reviewed and noted.

FC26/061

To note the specific recommendations arising from that committee meeting and to consider whether Council wishes to approve their adoption.

i) To adopt the approved wording of the Town Council's annual budget and precept statement for the forthcoming financial year (FY26-27). (SF26/026)

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, that the wording of the Town Council's annual budget and precept statement be approved by Full Council. Resolved unanimously.

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FC26/061

To note the specific recommendations arising from that committee meeting and to consider whether Council wishes to approve their adoption (continued).

ii) To adopt the Town Council's approved Internal Financial Control Review for FY26-27. (SF26/031)

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair, that the Internal Financial Control Review for FY26-27 be approved by Full Council. Resolved unanimously.

iii) To adopt the Council's revised Investment and Borrowing Strategy Policy for FY26-27. (SF26/032)

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair, that the revised Investment and Borrowing Strategy Policy for FY26-27 be approved by Full Council. Resolved unanimously.

iv) To adopt the substantive Town Council Asset Register, correct as at date of agenda publication (subject to relevant and appropriate revisions and amendments at year end). (SF26/033)

Proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair, that the substantive Town Council Asset Register be approved by Full Council. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/062

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 FC26/079 to 082(IC) inclusive].

None raised at this time other than those already listed on the agenda for Part Two discussion.

FC26/063

To note that a casual vacancy exists following the resignation of former Councillor Paul Bridge for the role of Axminster Town Councillor (Town ward) which the Town Council is permitted to fill by the process known as co-option.

Clerk to outline the casual vacancy protocol, co-option procedure and timeframe for process.

Update noted. Clerk to advertise vacancy online and via social media until 3rd April 2026 so that any eligible nominations can be considered at the FULL Council meeting on 13th April.

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FC26/064

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments schedule for February 2026. **Payments for February 2026 (£56,982 net) proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.**

b) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the Bank Reconciliation for February 2026. **Bank reconciliation for February 2026 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.**

c) To receive, and note, Responsible Financial Officer's report and financial pack for February 2026 (Q1 to Q4) incorporating the Q1-3 budget monitor (summary) and Q4 forecast, and associated reports. **Received and noted.**

d) Questions to the RFO on these accounts / financial reports from members. Vice-Chair raised a query regarding expenditure position relating to replacement of cemetery equipment and assets post theft incident in October 2025. RFO confirmed current spend position in context of insurance settlement previously received and delivery timetable for heavier plant and grounds equipment still pending.

e) To consider whether the Town Council wishes to re-adopt the extant Financial Regulations and approve a wording revision relating to Insignis Investment Platform (as per SF26/032)

The Chair proposed some minor edits to draft wording, and sought clarity on two clauses within the substantive document. RFO clarified. Noted. **It was subsequently proposed by the Chair, seconded by DW, that the Town Council should adopt these substantive financial regulations and publish them. Resolved unanimously.**

f) To note the successful completion of the Insignis Investment Account application and to consider any specific investments/deposits that the Town Council may wish to execute, or to delegate such investment/deposit decisions to the Strategy & Finance Committee Chair in conjunction with the Town Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

Members noted the successful completion of the account opening process. No specific investments were proposed at this time (ie balance to remain at £0 for the time being) but this matter to be included on next Strategy & Finance Committee in April (after year-end accounts close-down) for further deliberation. Noted.

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FC26/065

Planning matters:

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

1) 26/0416/DOC – 1 West Street, Axminster (El Chapo)

Discharge of condition for 25/0983/FUL: Condition 4 – litter and waste plan

SL supported application but noted that approval had already been granted by EDDC.
No comment submission required.

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.

1) 26/0342/FUL – Coomb Bank Farm, Cooks Lane, Axminster, EX13 5SJ

Proposed new porch to front door.

Support proposed by Planning Committee Chair (Cllr. Leat) under their delegated authority.
Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

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

1) 26/0390/TRE – 1 West Close, Axminster. EX13 5PE

T1: Oak. Crown lift, removal of branches, crown reduction.

Mindful of advice received from Honorary Tree Warden (HTW), SL proposed that Council did not support these tree works as they were felt to be unnecessary on this healthy, distinctive and prominent tree. Seconded EP. Resolved unanimously.

2) 26/0392/TRE – 2 Linseed Drive, Axminster, EX13 5FR

T1: Oak. Crown lift, removal of branches, pruning, deadwood removal.

Support proposed by SL following advice of HTW. Seconded EP. Resolved unanimously.

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

None to be considered.

e) To consider any Planning Correspondence received.

Clerk updated members about the ongoing status of applications 25/0300/FUL & 26/0301/LBC (Symonds and Sampson) – Installation of CCTV (single camera) on frontage of Grade 2 listed building, Trinity Square. Noted.

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Other Council business to be considered:

FC26/066

To note any recent correspondence from DALC and NALC.

Clerk provided an update for members. Noted.

A recent event on the 5th March was highlighted re: Local Government Reorganisation which was attended by the Chair and Clerk of the Council. The Vice-Chair asked when the DALC AGM 2026 was likely to take place. *Clerk will seek confirmation and return to all members accordingly.*

FC26/067

To consider matters pertaining to Axminster Emergency Planning (EP) protocol and policy.

WH outlined recent activity. Clerk reminded all members that the Emergency Plan Working Group was created to gather information together, and to report back to Council for further deliberation and decision. Noted. Clerk was asked to seek a meeting with members of the working group to bring together their recent findings and research for the purposes of preparing a report for councillors.

FC26/068

To receive reports/updates on matters pertaining to:

a) Axminster Chamber of Commerce; MD/AH presented a verbal report.

b) Plastic Free Axminster (PFA); RO presented a verbal report.

c) Axminster Climate Action Group (ACAG); JW presented a verbal report.

Clerk: Please add ACAG-related expenditure programme to next Operations Committee agenda

d) Light Up Axminster (LUA); MD presented a verbal report.

e) Axminster Carnival Committee (ACC); MD presented a verbal report.

FC26/069

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

Update report received from Clerk on recent progress / developments / meetings. Noted.

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FC26/070

To consider any revisions/changes to the existing format of Annual Parish Meetings (in terms of dates, timings, locations, agenda order, speakers, presentations etc);

The Chair thanked all members of the public (and the invited speakers) for their attendance on the 2nd March, and expressed their delight at the extremely high level of public interest (58 attendees) and the enthusiasm and community spirit highlighted by those presenting.

Summary of debate regarding possible format changes:

EDDC/DCC presentations to be higher up the agenda listing in future.

Speaker time limited to be more rigidly applied to ensure a shorter meeting for attendees.

Fewer themes to be considered at each meeting.

Date of meeting (March) was felt to be ideal and should not be altered.

All noted.

FC26/071

To consider whether the Town Council wishes to take advantage of an offer by Light Up Axminster to occupy a Community Engagement Stall (space) at the Axminster Vehicle Extravaganza in June 2026 (Sunday 28th).

It was proposed by RO, seconded by RD, that the Town Council should accept this offer and provide a stand for the event as a community engagement exercise. Initial offers of support and help in hosting the stand from RD, The Chair, AH and WH.

Clerk: Please circulate dates/times to all members and seek volunteers for the event rota.

FC26/072

To consider a proposal by Cllr. Willey that the Town Council should resume meetings of the (currently suspended) Guildhall Sub-Committee, rather than that business being considered under Operations Committee meeting agendas.

DW spoke in favour of this proposal. Members spoke both for and against the proposal on the grounds of increased GH business, existing officer workload and meeting schedule pressures and membership (quorum) concerns. It was ultimately felt that GH business should remain within the overview of the Operations Committee but that the standing agenda item for Guildhall business be brought up the agenda running order in future.

Noted. (Clerk: Please action accordingly).

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FC26/073

To consider whether the Town Council wishes to comment on the re-advertising of the EDDC Licensing Application for The Community Waffle House – deadline for comments and representations (for or against) is the 16th March 2026.

The Chair proposed that no further comment be submitted on this subject. Resolved.

FC26/074

Motion: To resolve that Axminster Town Council will enter into a grant agreement with East Devon District Council for Section 106 funding to provide an inclusive and accessible play facility on leased land at First Avenue Millwey Rise Axminster and that this agreement will be signed by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Town Council, witnessed by the Council's Proper officer, as set out in the Town Council's adopted and approved Standing Orders (our constitutional document) [clauses 16.1 and 16.2 refer]. Proposed by MD, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and notify EDDC accordingly so that the necessary legal agreements can be drawn up and the funding released.

FC26/075

To note any updates/information from the Clerk/RFO pertaining to ongoing sale of The Old Courthouse buildings in Church Street.

Clerk provided a verbal report to members on progress. Heads of Terms (draft) had been prepared between our legal representatives and the solicitors representing the prospective buyers. It was proposed by The Chair, seconded by DW, that these Heads of Terms be accepted and used for the progression of the sale transaction. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please notify Council's legal team accordingly.

FC26/076

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

i) To note a meeting of the SWR Stakeholders Forum in Honiton on 12/3 and also online. Cllr. Walden offered to attend on behalf of the Town Council. Noted.

ii) To note forthcoming SWW roadworks around The George at end of March which may have an impact on town centre traffic movements. Noted.

The Vice-Chair mentioned that the rail-line was closed on the Bank Holiday weekend 3-6 April and that a rail replacement (bus) service was operating over that period and so it was essential that roadworks were completed by the close of business on the 2nd. Noted.

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FC26/077

To confirm the date of the next scheduled FULL meeting of the Town Council on Monday the 13th of April 2026, and other Council committee meeting dates.

- i) Operations Committee – 23rd March 2026 - 7pm
- ii) Employment Committee / Extraordinary Town Council - 26th March 2026 – 7pm
- iii) Employment Committee – 20th April 2026 - 7pm
- iv) Strategy & Finance Committee – 27th April 2026 - 7pm
- v) Annual Meeting of the FULL Town Council – 18th May 2026 – 7pm start.

FC26/078

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 the Chair. 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:

FC26/079 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse and to note any correspondence received, and to receive update from Clerk on any confidential or commercially sensitive issues arising since last FULL Council meeting.

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

Clerk provided commercial update on progress with sale. Noted.

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FC26/080 (IC)

To receive a verbal report from Clerk pertaining to recent discussions on matters relating to tourism, economy and visitor attractions (where the Town Council has a specific power to act ie. Local Government Act 1972, s.144

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

Clerk provided a verbal report on a tourism-related event in the Axminster division that might be of interest to the Town Council as it was linked to the Rail200 celebrations and was connected with active travel from Axminster railway station. Members were supportive of the project and whilst no financial support was required at this time (or envisaged), it was felt that further reports should be brought before Council as and when required. Noted.

FC26/081 (IC)

To receive a first draft of the FY26-27 Annual Town Council Risk Management and Assessment; for review and revision if deemed appropriate:

RFO to provide report. This matter is considered confidential due to the subject to be discussed.

With the Chair's agreement, this matter was deferred until a later meeting of the Council to allow additional time for the assessment / review to be compiled ready for member's consideration. Noted.

The Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the meeting to progress beyond the two-hour limit. Seconded DW. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/082 (IC)

To consider requests for Section 106 Open Space and Sports/Recreation funding:

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

Clerk provided an update for members on potential projects for Section 106 (S106) spending within the framework of the EDDC Participatory Budgeting Process.

After member discussion, and review of the projects on the table, it was proposed that the Council should enter into dialogue with the Trustees of Cloakham Lawns Sports Centre in relation to the potential future use of the former MUGA recreation area (opposite the skate park) for the purposes of providing play amenity on the Cloakham Lawns estate. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Please bring this matter back to Full Council as and when a response has been received from the Trustee Board. Noted.

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With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

Signed Date: 13th April 2026

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