Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jack Price
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.

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED.

Held on Monday 8th June 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllrs. Price (JP) (Chair), Dowdeswell (MD) (Vice Chair), Ashkettle (JA), Hayward (AH), Leat (SL), Norman (LN), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP) and Walden (JW). (***Meeting was declared as quorate with nine members present***).

Also present:
Town Clerk, Paul Hayward
Deputy Clerk, Sarah Jackson
Five members of the public were in attendance.

The Chair welcomed all in attendance and ran through meeting procedure and protocol.
The Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.

Public Forum session.
No representations/questions from the public or from those members present.
The Chair thanked all of the volunteers who had given up their time and effort (in appalling weather conditions) to plant flowers in the Minster Green borders, the Guildhall planters and on the West Street roundabout.

Subsequently, the Presiding Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.03 pm.

FC26/205
To note members of Council present:
Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

FC26/206
To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies for absence and reasons therefore:
Apologies received from:
Cllr. Dunsbury. Reason for absence noted and accepted.
Cllr. Farrow. Reason for absence noted and accepted.
Cllr. Hurren. Reason for absence noted and accepted.
Cllr. Warwick. Reason for absence noted and accepted.
Cllr. Willey. Reason for absence noted and accepted.
The Chair proposed that these absences, and the reasons provided, be approved.
Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/207

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

None, other than to note the apology received from EDDC Councillor, Simon Smith.

FC26/208

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 other declarations of interest made by members.

FC26/209

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 18th May 2026.

The draft minutes were proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, to be approved. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/210

To consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Two matters were raised, which the Clerk responded to.

i) Inclusion of the ATC works van in the 2026 carnival procession. Noted.

ii) A request to check the Zurich Council Insurance Policy for business interruption cover.

Clerk: Please action and respond to all members with answer when received.

FC26/211

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): None to be considered.

FC26/212

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

None to be considered.

FC26/213

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 FC26/238-241 inclusive].

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

Continued overleaf

FC26/214
To confirm date for the forthcoming "Good Councillor" Training session with Devon Association of Local Councils: 23rd July 2026 – start time 18.30
Noted. The Clerk also advised that EDDC were hosting an online Teams "Code of Conduct" training session for town and parish councillors on Tuesday 21st July 6-8pm.

FC26/215
To consider matters pertaining to:

a) Axminster Chamber of Commerce; Cllr Dowdeswell / Cllr. Hayward presented a report.
Nb. Chamber of Commerce AGM to be held on Monday 22nd June at The Guildhall.
Taste of Axminster food events to be held on Friday 31st July, 28th August and 25th September on the Minster Green 3.30pm until 9.30pm.
b) Plastic Free Axminster; No report provided.
c) Axminster Climate Action Group: Cllr Walden presented a report.
Clerk was directed to arrange a free-to-attend public showing of the People's Emergency Briefing film at the Guildhall on the earliest possible free date. The group's preference would be for 2 showings, one in afternoon, and one in early evening. Noted.
d) Light Up Axminster: Cllr Dowdeswell presented a report but asked that this matter also be discussed in confidential session (see FC26/237).
e) Axminster Carnival Committee: Cllr Dowdeswell present an update report.

FC26/216
To consider any matters pertaining to Axminster's Emergency Planning protocol and policy (and Working Party deliberations and activity).
Clerk advised that members of the working party had been submitting their preferences for dates/times for a meeting of the WPG and that a date would be announced shortly. Noted.
No further actions at this time.

FC26/217
To consider any updates pertaining to Local Government reorganisation and devolution; in particular, the issues relating to Devon County (and the relationship between the County Council, the Unitary Councils, the District Councils and the smaller local authorities – town and parish councils); Clerk to provide any updates received from higher-tier authorities.
Clerk and Chair presented a short update report to members. Clerk was asked to circulate the recent letter from DCC (amongst many signatories) to the Secretary of State. The Chair advised that he and the Clerk would be attending a DCC "Larger Council" conference at County Hall on the 22nd June. Noted.

FC26/218
To consider any updates/proposals pertaining to potential future asset and/or service provision transfers that could affect the Town Council's financial or operational functions as a result of the ongoing LGR process, and to discuss Council's aims, objectives and aspirations in that regard; Clerk to provide outline report to members.
Clerk provided an update report. Members asked the Clerk to collate (as much as possible) a schedule of assets owned by both higher tier authorities for consideration. Noted.
The Chair confirmed that an extraordinary meeting has been arranged for the 10th August 2026 to consider one single item of business ie. The outcome of the decision by the Secretary of State for Homes and Communities and Local Government, likely to be announced on the 16th July. Noted.

FC26/219
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) 26/0952/VAR – Land adjacent to Cloakham Lawns / Chard Road (Weycroft) Variation of condition 21 (23/0685/MOUT); Economic assessment / impacts.

SL proposed that the Town Council should not comment on this planning application but maintain its original position of opposition to the entire scheme for the reasons previously submitted. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.
Clerk: please notify EDDC planning department accordingly.

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 at time of agenda publication.

c) 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 at time of agenda publication.

d) To consider any Planning Correspondence received.
To note MHCLG Consultation Outcome statement on matters pertaining to planning committees and the National Scheme of Delegation (draft guidance for local planning authorities in England) effective 31st October 2026.

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 or at future meetings of these two EDDC planning committees.
None to be considered at time of agenda publication.

f) To consider any other planning matters not already included above, including representations from members on such matters *(eg. planning decisions, enforcement, planning legislation, Tree Protection Orders etc)*
To note the EDDC Cabinet meeting held on 3rd June 2026 which had a confidential item of business relating to dangerous structure in Axminster; for notation purposes only.

Continued overleaf

FC26/220
To consider Council's financial matters:
a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments schedule for May 2026.
Payments for May 2026 (£51,827 net) proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

b) To receive, and note, the Responsible Financial Officer's report and financial pack for May 2026 and to approve the Bank Reconciliation for the 31st May 2026.
Bank reconciliation for May 2026 was proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by JA. Resolved unanimously.
Clerk: please arrange for these documents to be signed by a non-bank signatory.

c) Questions to the RFO on these accounts / financial reports from members.
No questions / queries / concerns raised.

d) To note submission of Section ONE (Governance Statement) and Section TWO (Accounting Statements) of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR-3) to the External Auditor, and publication of the statutory Notice for the Period of Public Rights.
Noted.

e) To note that Axminster Town Council has been chosen for an additional intermediate audit review by PKF Littlejohn.
The RFO confirmed that all requested additional financial information has already been submitted to PKF Littlejohn LLP. Noted.

f) To note Council's Reserve Balances and to consider any virements between reserve funds considered necessary or appropriate by members.
Noted.

Other Council business to be considered:

FC26/221
To further consider the wording of the draft/revised Policy documents listed below and, if thought fit, to approve and adopt those policies:

a) Delegation Policy (draft)
b) Biodiversity Policy (draft)
c) Enquiries & Complaints Policy (revised)
d) Risk Management Policy (revised)
e) Website Policy THIS REVIEW HAS BEEN DEFERRED PENDING FURTHER EDITING.
f) Social Media Policy THIS REVIEW HAS BEEN DEFERRED PENDING FURTHER EDITING.
It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by EP, that the policies listed above a) to d) inclusive be approved and adopted for publication with no further edits or revisions. Resolved unanimously.
Clerk: Please liaise with the Administration Services Officer to convert the draft policies into the standardised design template versions and then circulate to all members and publish on the website. Clerk: please also progress with the submission of the NALC Quality Bronze Award application.

FC26/222

To note an EDDC (alcohol) Licensing Application for The Pommerie, Old Manor Lodge, Lodge Lane, Axminster, EX13 5RT; *to consider whether to submit any formal comments in respect of that application.*

The decision of the Council was not to comment on this application, but simply to note.

FC26/223

To note receipt of correspondence from Devon County Council regarding proposed ANPR Traffic Data Capture project, and to consider whether the Town Council wishes to provide match-funding to the project to allow for two tranches of data capture rather than just one.

Members had a lengthy debate on the benefits and quality of the proposed data to be capture and ultimately felt that a second tranche of data would provide useful comparisons to the first tranche. The Clerk was given direction to request that DCC provide the 2nd tranche of data capture and collation "free-of-charge" on the basis that road closures on the A35 would adversely affect the movement of vehicles during phase one data period and thus the data could be unrepresentative. But, it was also proposed by JW, seconded by EP, that the Town Council should agree to pay for a 2nd tranche of data capture later in the year (possibly, Autumn/Winter) at a cost to the Council of up to £5000, that sum to be taken from general reserves. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

FC26/224

To receive an out-turn report from the recent Eats Festival / Gate To Plate event held on Bank Holiday Monday 25th May 2026, and to consider whether the Town Council wishes to financially support the event for a further period.

Members discussed the recent event at length and observations were made regarding pitch and/or supplier numbers, guest numbers and footfall, advertising, impact on other town centre businesses, traffic and congestion. Clerk was asked to discuss alternative dates with the organisers (as opposed to the late Bank Holiday Monday in May).

Subject to clarity on date availability, and discussions over enhanced advertising (locally and further afield), the Chair proposed that the Town Council should support the ongoing Gate to Plate event for a further 3 years (2027-2028-2029) at a cost of £3000 per annum (fixed). Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly, bringing back any relevant information or updates to members as soon as available.

FC26/225

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Fountain (Trinity Square) in relation to future place-making projects and traffic congestion mitigation measures.

After a significant debate over the heritage value of the fountain, its present condition and consequences of its position, and noting the various stakeholders required to agree any actions proposed, the Clerk was given delegated authority to begin discussions with all key agencies (such as EDDC Planning, DCC Highways, English Heritage, Axminster PCC etc.) to bring forward a report to members whenever possible for further consideration and discussion over the principle of works and the potential costs. Noted.

Continued overleaf

FC26/226
To receive a report on the potential for the creation of an Axminster Business / Economy Award sponsored by the Town Council to promote community engagement and provide support for the retail / service economy in Axminster.
Clerk was directed to liaise with the Chair and Deputy Clerk to arrange a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, to discuss the potential of an award event / competition in 2027 in the spirit of supporting and maintaining a vibrant and economically active high street retail area. Please note and action accordingly.

FC26/227
To discuss whether the Town Council wishes to consider participating in a wider local bus service (currently operating between Lyme Regis and Bridport [LB1] for the purposes of promoting the Axminster economy, the Guildhall, and encouraging Active Travel options).
The Chair introduced the agenda item and asked members for their thoughts and views. Subsequently, the Clerk was directed to discuss this matter with DCC officers, the Devon County Councillor for Axminster and the DCC Bus Forum to investigate whether any additional funding can be found to extend the range and journey time of the LB1 service. Noted.

FC26/228
To note the receipt of the recent Environment Agency (EA) Report on River Axe improvements and river restoration work (feasibility study assessment) and to consider any actions necessary/appropriate at this time.
Noted, although members were acutely aware that the conceptual proposals are, as yet, unfunded at the EA and therefore unlikely to proceed in the near future. No further action proposed at this time.

FC26/229
To note any recent correspondence from DALC and NALC.
Noted, as circulated to members by the Clerk as requested.

FC26/230
To consider a request from the local community that:

" Axminster Town Council confirm their support for the installation of a LINK cash machine at the premises of the Banking Hub in Trinity Square for the benefit of Axminster's retailers, the town's tourism economy and hospitality sector, and for the wider public amenity"
After a lengthy debate, and consensus amongst members that ATM coverage and availability at peak times in the town was insufficient, members agreed to direct the Clerk, in conjunction with the Chair / Mayor, to write to LINK to formally request an additional ATM installation at the premises of the Banking Hub in Trinity Square. Proposed by JW, seconded by RO. Resolved unanimously.
(Consequently, the Clerk and the Chair had an online meeting with LINK on this subject and new information has come to light that negates the need for a letter to be sent to LINK who have claimed to not have jurisdiction in that regard. The matter is being tabled for discussion [with an update from the Mayor] at the Full Council meeting on the 13th July 2026 and, as such, no letter has yet been sent on the Town Council's behalf)

FC26/231
To note the recent increase in anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the town centre and to consider the best approach to reduce and mitigate the impact of this issue upon the town and the community.
After another lengthy debate on this subject, the Clerk was asked to collate relevant CCTV data in the town to create a "coverage heatmap" to assist with CCTV enquiries when received and to assist the public in knowing where cameras were and what area they covered. This matter is to be brought back to the Operations Committee for their review and consideration. Noted.

FC26/232
To note the launch of the National Allotment Society (NAS) UK audit of allotment sites/plots (the first in 30 years) and to consider whether Axminster Town Council should participate and submit a formal response.
Members overwhelmingly supported the completion of this survey / audit and gave direction to the Clerk (in liaison with the other administration officers) to complete the survey and submit the relevant data to the NAS. Clerk: Please note and arrange completion accordingly. Please diarise to obtain a copy of the national data report once survey completed and all data compiled.

FC26/233
To consider whether all Town Councillors wish to support (and sign) the Civility and Respect Statement of Assurance (as per the Council-wide pledge signed in September 2022) to highlight the Town Council's drive to encourage better and improved standards in public life.
It was proposed by JW, seconded by EP, that all members of Council should be asked to sign the statement of assurance, noting that the Town Council was already a signatory to the Civility and Respect Pledge. Resolved unanimously.
Clerk: Please note and arrange for all members to be provided with a copy of the statement for their signature. Please publicise when all members have signed.

FC26/234
To consider a matter pertaining to the recording of Council meetings (as a policy decision) and the archiving of said recordings in respect of GDPR / Data Protection compliance.
After a debate on the subject, and following contributions from the Clerk as to the data protection and GDPR elements of meeting recordings, the Chair asked for an indicative show of hands for two possible options:
1) That only the open public sessions of the Council's meetings are recorded: 3 votes.
2) That the confidential sessions of meetings ARE recorded but that the recording is deleted once the minutes of that meeting have been approved as a true and accurate record by the Council (or the committee). 5 votes (with 1 abstention).
Subsequently, it was proposed from the Chair that option 2 above be agreed as Council policy. Resolved by a majority vote.
Clerk: please note and action accordingly, ensuring that all previous Part Two recordings (where minutes have already been approved) are deleted, and that all open council session recordings over 12 months old are also deleted, as per extant Town Council policy.
Members were aware that there has been some critical social media commentary (from outside of the town but naming ATC) on this subject recently and so a relevant agenda item will be brought before Councillors on the 13th July for discussion and decision.

FC26/235

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair for notation only.
The Clerk advised that correspondence had been received from Plants Out of Place (a weed management survey report) [which was duly noted] and also from the local Royal British Legion group regarding street parades. A relevant agenda item will be included within the business for the Operations Committee for consideration on the 15th June. Clerk: Please note and add to OpsComm. agenda accordingly when published.

FC26/236

i) To confirm the date of the next scheduled Ordinary FULL meeting of the Town Council - 13th July 2026.

ii) To confirm the date of an Extraordinary FULL meeting of the Town Council - 10th August 2026; *to consider the repercussions and consequences to Axminster parish [and the wider Devon area] of the Secretary of State's decision on Local Government Reorganisation on 16th July 2026 or earlier.*

FC26/237

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.

<u>PART TWO COUNCIL BUSINESS TO BE CONDUCTED:</u>

FC26/215 d) (IC)
To consider matters pertaining to Light Up Axminster [LUA]:
This matter is considered commercially sensitive due to the subject to be discussed.
This matter was brought forward from an earlier discussion – see minutes above.
Chair provided an update to Councillors, supported by contributions from Cllr. Dowdeswell. Consequently, the Clerk was directed to contact the Acting Chair of LUA, Kara Burrough, to arrange a meeting to ascertain what the group was planning to arrange for Christmas 2026. At this point in time, no financial support / funding or budgetary allocations have been decided or resolved upon.
Clerk: Please note and contact KB accordingly and arrange a meeting as soon as practicable. Please bring this matter back to Operations Committee or the FULL Council for further discussion.

The Vice-Chair proposed to suspend Standing Orders at 9.00pm to permit the meeting to progress beyond the 2-hour limit. Seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC26/238 (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.

The Clerk provided a commercial update on progress with the sale. Noted.

The Clerk also advised members that a further Freedom of Information Request (FOI) has been received from another 3rd party. This has been replied to, albeit only to advise that the request cannot be responded to within the statutory resource limit laid down in legislation due to the complexity of the request. The author had subsequently sent another email seeking the Clerk's advice on how to hone the request to allow it to be responded to. The Clerk is dealing with this matter. Noted.

FC26/239 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Field recreation area and adjoining curtilage.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of a 3rd party landowner.

The Clerk advised that further correspondence has been received from a 3rd party despite that same individual having been previously served a Stage One "Vexatious Correspondent" notice. It was subsequently proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, that – mindful of the tone & content of the most recent correspondence - the Town Council should proceed to Stage Three of the Vexatious Correspondence Policy and send that Stage Three letter to the 3rd party without delay. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please note and action accordingly under the Mayor's digital signature.

FC26/240 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Council's website and online media.

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

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk provided a verbal report (supported by a paper report) outlining current concerns over the website operation and technical support. It was subsequently proposed (after debate and deliberation) by JW, seconded by SL, to agree in principle that a sum of up to £3000 be expended to create two new WCAG2.2 compliant websites (for both ATC and the Guildhall) with a further sum of £1000 earmarked for staff costs and administration charges for the migration and population of the content data. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please endeavour to obtain a further two comparable quotes for the proposed websites and bring back to either Strategy & Finance Committee, or the Full Council, for further review and decision on nominated supplier.

Continued overleaf

FC26/241 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Council's community engagement with other local organisations and how stakeholder relationships and financial support can be managed.

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

After a lengthy debate, it was agreed that the Town Council should write to the specific organisation that had communicated with the Council and offer them our support and thanks for the role they perform in the town. At this stage, however, no financial support can be offered due to budgetary constraints. Proposed by the Chair, seconded by LN. Resolved unanimously.
Clerk: Please action accordingly.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.

The Chair thanked all council members for their time, their active participation and their ongoing dedication and zeal.

Signed …………………………………………… Date: 13th July 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council.
Held on Monday 8th June 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED