Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jack Price
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

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Axminster Town Council:

Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Full Council, held at the Minster Room, The Old Courthouse, Church Street, Axminster.

DRAFT MINUTES - NOT YET APPROVED.

Held on Thursday 27th August 2026. Meeting started at 6.35pm.

Present: Cllrs. Price (JP) (Chair), Dowdeswell (MD) (Vice Chair), Dunsbury (RD), Farrow (JF), Hayward (AH), Hurren (WH), Leat (SL), Margetts (BM), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP) and Walden (JW).
(***Meeting was declared as quorate with eleven members present***).

Also present:
Town Clerk, Paul Hayward
Deputy Clerk, Sarah Jackson
No 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.
Subsequently, the Presiding Chair closed the Public Forum session at 6.36pm.

FC26/298EM
To note members of Council present:
Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

FC26/299EM
To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies for absence and reasons therefore:
Apologies received from:
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 MD. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf

FC26/300EM
To note members of committee not otherwise present and to receive any other apologies for absence:
None recorded, other than to note the apology received from EDDC Councillor, Simon Smith.

FC26/301EM
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.

FC26/302EM
To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the extraordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 10th August 2026.
These minutes were not yet available for review so this agenda business was deferred until the next FULL meeting of the Town Council.

FC26/303EM
To consider any matters arising from those minutes:
Not applicable (see FC26/302EM)

FC26/304EM
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 FC26/308EM-309EM inclusive].
None raised at this time other than those already listed on the agenda for Part Two (confidential session) discussion.

FC26/305EM
To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair for notation only.
Chair advised that there was a matter of urgency for discussion but due to the confidential nature of the matter, it should be discussed in closed session later. Noted.
Clerk advised that resignations had been received from former councillors Ashkettle and Norman. Noted. Clerk: Please action accordingly and add a suitable agenda item to the next FULL agenda covering the casual vacancy process and timeline.

FC26/306EM
i) To confirm the date of the next scheduled Ordinary FULL meeting of the Town Council - 14th September 2026

Continued overleaf

FC26/307EM

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 closed 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.

CLOSED SESSION COUNCIL BUSINESS TO BE CONDUCTED:

FC26/305EM (continued from above).
Confidential matters of urgency for discussion in closed Council session.
Chair advised members of a confidential and urgent IT matter. Noted and members made aware of new IT protocols and procedures.

FC26/308EM (IC)
To consider any 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 meetings.
This matter is considered commercially sensitive due to the subject to be discussed.

Chair provided an update to Councillors, supported by contributions from Cllr. Dowdeswell. Consequently, the Clerk was directed to add this matter to the agenda for the FULL meeting of Council scheduled for the 14th September to provide a further update to members at that time. Members were unanimous in the agreement that the exchange of sale contracts and/or completion should be processed as expeditiously as possible, mindful of related party transactions.
Clerk: Please note and add to agenda accordingly.

FC26/309 EM (IC)
i) To consider matters pertaining to forthcoming urgent Guildhall Maintenance works
This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed. (contractor quotations)
Chair provided an initial report to Councillors on the scope and scale of the proposed works (both improvements and repairs). After reaching agreement that the building was a valued and essential public amenity, funded and supported by the Town Council via general taxation, (proposed by Chair, seconded by SL, carried unanimously), the topic turned to the scale and timing and importance of the proposed works, and the preferred order in which key parts of the project should be undertaken and completed. RFO provided various options for the funding of any works (including use of general reserves, asset sale proceeds and public works loan board lending).
Continued overleaf

The Chair proposed to suspend Standing Orders at 8.30pm to permit the meeting to progress beyond the 2-hour limit. Seconded by the Vice-chair. Resolved unanimously.

After significant discussion, the following resolutions were proposed, voted on and resolved.

i) That Contractor G was to be commissioned to provide emergency roofing works at a cost of £11,680 to prevent further damage to the structure and fabric of the Guildhall due to water ingress and bad weather. Financial regulations to be suspended to allow one quotation to be used for the basis of the procurement due to the urgency of the works. Proposed by JW, seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

ii) That the Clerk and the admin team should begin to bring together a project specification (including the use of specialist project management contractors due to the resource issue facing the Council) for the remaining repair and improvements works. When quotes for the project are available, these are to be brought back to FULL Council for consideration and decision.

iii) That the RFO be given delegated authority to explore lending options for the financing of the works (and the possible repayment of the existing PWLB balance) with the agreement of the Councillors present that – in principle and subject to a business case on loan repayments based on existing budgets and anticipated credit interest receipts – the project should be funded primarily with external borrowing (over a term yet to be agreed, and subject to financial reports) with the balance taken from Council's earmarked and general reserves (excluding earmarked reserves set aside already for expenditure relating to the cemetery, the allotments and Jubilee Field).

iv) That the subject of the ongoing works project (and funding package) should be a standing item on Full Council agendas from hereonin and also on Strategy & Finance Committee, and Operations Committee, agendas also.

The substantive motion was proposed by SL, seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk/RFO: Please note and action all matters accordingly.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.40 pm.

Signed ……………………………………………… Date: 14th September 2026

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