

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 14 January 2026, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Tracey Ashford, Sara Butler, Philip Campagna, Anita Collier (Chair), Mark Dorrington, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Lyndsey Mayhew, Lisa Merryweather, Steve Tanner

On Zoom: Carla Collenette

In attendance:

Cllr Dawn Denton (SC Cllr), Cllr Adam Boyden (SC Cllr, online), Peter Wheelhouse (Acting Town Clerk), Jane Llewellyn (Acting Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager & RFO), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Rob Holden (Environment Manager), Hannah Stopford (Community and Partnerships Development Manager), Owen King (Planning and Development Project Officer), Lucy McMahon (Lead Marketing and Communications Officer, online), Laura Flaherty (HR Lead and Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk), Becca Evans (Business Administrator)

5 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall

4 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2026/01/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm.</p> <p>In the absence of the Chair, Sara Butler nominated Anita Collier to Chair the meeting, seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed by majority. Anita took the Chair.</p> <p>Tracey Ashford arrived at 7.05pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Lisa Merryweather proposed to accept apologies from Fiona Barrows, Ben Still and Andy Wrintmore and from Carla Collenette who attended online, seconded by Sara Butler, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests None was received.</p> <p>1c. Approval of minutes from the last meetings on 29 October 2025 and 10 December 2025 The minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 October 2025 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p>	

	<p>Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Nick Dove, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>The minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting on 10 December 2025 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2026/02/FC</p>	<p>2. Questions from public and Cllrs</p> <p>A member of the public, Julia Gray expressed concern that FTC had grown from a £1m to a £4m operation and now required more formal systems, clearer structures, and strategic oversight. She questioned the decision to use an internal Improvement Advisory Group (IAG) made up of Cllrs and officers to oversee the improvement plan, arguing that an independent scrutiny committee, as she said operates at every other tier of government, would inspire greater public confidence. She asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the public could have confidence in an advisory group comprised of those who presided over decision-making in recent years • why the advisory group had not brought a draft work programme and 2026/27 budget to this meeting • when the 2026/27 precept intention would be made public • who was currently overseeing the Council’s performance and financial management. <p>Peter Wheelhouse, stated that the IAG had met twice with a further meeting scheduled for the following day and that a report with recommendations would come to the Council meeting on 18 February 2026. He noted it was for the public to judge confidence, but emphasised recommendations would be debated in public, providing scrutiny before adoption. He confirmed that the budget and work programme for 2026/27 would also come to the 18 February meeting and that oversight arrangements would be set out there.</p> <p>Lisa Merryweather thanked Julia for raising concerns and acknowledged feeling similarly at times. She supported developing more formalised external involvement and stronger inclusion of community voices. Nick Dove stressed FTC itself invited the peer review, demonstrating openness to improvement rather than remedial intervention, and welcomed scrutiny via open meetings. Philip Campagna preferred the term ‘areas for development’ over ‘weaknesses,’ noting all organisations benefit from constructive review.</p>	

	<p>Julia queried why a previous minute suggested the work programme and budget would be brought to this meeting. Anita Collier explained FTC was in a pre-election period due to a by-election on 10 February and therefore could not progress certain items; the first opportunity to bring them would be 18 February.</p>	
<p>2026/03/FC</p>	<p>3. For decision – recruitment of the Town Clerk On behalf of Cllr Fiona Barrows, Laura Flaherty presented the proposed selection process following the retirement of the previous Town Clerk. She explained extensive engagement had been carried out: Fiona had met with Cllrs and all staff to review the job description (JD) and person specification. FTC was working with external adviser James Corrigan to design a comprehensive candidate process. James’ team were developing interview materials and the optional leadership assessment is under consideration.</p> <p>Lisa Merryweather praised the thoroughness but asked for transparency on weighting between application, exercises and interview, and for explicit inclusion and disability adjustments, including alternative submission formats and clear contact routes for support. Laura confirmed weighting and assessment detail would be finalised and shared. Also equal opportunities statements and reasonable adjustments were standard and would be clearly signposted in the application pack as well as the form.</p> <p>Philip Campagna cautioned the panel’s significant influence and sought assurance that the outcome would be to select the best person for the job, not merely the best performer on the day. He also said that no appointment should be made if standards are not met.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the job description, candidate pack and selection process for the role of Town Clerk. 2. Approve the selection panel members of Cllrs Fiona Barrows, Andy Jones, Lyndsey Mayhew and Mark Dorrington. 3. Delegate to the Leader and Chair of Frome Town Council, Cllr Fiona Barrows, in consultation with the interview panel, to negotiate and make an offer of employment to the successful candidate. <p>Proposed by Steve Tanner, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>FB</p>
<p>2026/04/FC</p>	<p>4. For decision – Proposal to Develop a Shop Front Design Guide for Frome</p>	

	<p>Owen King introduced a proposal to develop a Shop Front Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to support good design, protect heritage, and improve economic vitality and town identity. Current policy such as the Neighbourhood Plan and Town Design Statement lacked detailed design guidance on materials, proportions and heritage sensitivity, resulting in variable quality and some loss of architectural detail.</p> <p>Nick Dove supported the principle and asked that business names be displayed on premises to avoid the appearance of pop-ups, he also queried enforcement. Jane Llewellyn advised that as an adopted planning document the guide could inform decisions and be enforced via planning enforcement, noting resourcing constraints in the enforcement team.</p> <p>Lisa Merryweather felt the guidance should avoid a museum like uniformity and ensure shops speak to all residents, including those experiencing disadvantage. Owen reiterated the guide’s focus on retaining original fabric and materials, not prescribing uniform colours/lettering, and confirmed broad engagement.</p> <p>Andy Jones asked for clarity on the town centre boundary and whether A-boards were included. Owen noted the boundary would be defined during drafting and that A-boards were out of scope. Jane added A-boards sat under different legislation; however, officers were in dialogue with traders about alternatives (e.g., hanging signs).</p> <p>There was a discussion about corporate brands adapting to local context. Owen cited examples where national chains vary frontage treatments in heritage areas. Anne and Lenka Grimes emphasised accessibility such as step free access, door widths and lighting as a core consideration. Officers agreed to embed accessibility within the brief.</p> <p>A member of the public asked why £8,000 on a guide represented good value. Nick Dove responded that residents and traders frequently raised town appearance and footfall, and a well applied guide supported economic health and visitor appeal.</p> <p>The recommendation was to agree a figure of £8, 000 to be funded from the Discover Frome EMR and delegate authority to Planning & Development Project Officer in consultation with the Town Centre Working Group, to appoint consultants.</p> <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed by majority. Lisa Merryweather objected. Sara Butler had left the room at the time of the vote.</p>	<p>OK</p>
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<p>2026/05/FC</p>	<p>5. For decision – For Frome Town Council to underwrite town-wide membership of WalkSafe app for one year</p> <p>Lucy outlined the WalkSafe app proposal, which aligned with FTC’s White Ribbon accreditation and the Council’s work on safety for women and girls following the 2025 forum. The free public app enabled users to share their live route with trusted contacts, set timed arrivals, and find “safe spaces” (venues trained and equipped to help).</p> <p>Anita Collier confirmed there had been engagement with the police and clarified the distinction between police “walk and talk” (route assessments and confidence-building) and real-time support via the app.</p> <p>Lisa Merryweather welcomed the initiative but highlighted youth vulnerability (under-25s over-represented in violence/sexual offences) and digital exclusion. Lucy stressed WalkSafe was one strand of the wider White Ribbon programme, with parallel work on leaflets, posters, school engagement and inclusion.</p> <p>Nick Dove raised the issue of balance between perception and the reality of crime. He suggested reviewing lighting in certain routes. Lyndsey Mayhew noted police interest and the value for late night economy staff. Some larger venues could opt into a staff tracking add on.</p> <p>Philip Campagna urged building a safeguarding culture across the town. Through White Ribbon by stander training would be pursued.</p> <p>A member of the public asked why not use WhatsApp location instead. Lucy explained WalkSafe’s SOS, timers/auto-alerts, and a safe space directory provided additional, purpose-built safeguards.</p> <p>Sara Butler returned to the room at 7.53pm</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FTC to underwrite the remaining cost of the first year of membership of WalkSafe app, to a maximum value of £2,170 plus VAT. 2. Delegate admin to the White Ribbon steering group for signing up businesses to cover the cost <p>Proposed by Sara Butler, seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed by majority. Lisa Merryweather abstained.</p>	
<p>2026/06/FC</p>	<p>6. For decision - Calendar of meetings 2026/27 starting May 2026 and amendments to the calendar for 2025-26</p>	

	<p>Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the calendar of meetings for 2026/27 2. Approve the changes to the calendar of meetings from January – May 2026 <p>Proposed by Philip Campagna, seconded by Lyndsey Mayhew, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2026/07/FC	<p>Vote to go into confidential session</p> <p>Andy Jones proposed Cllrs entered into confidential session, seconded by Lisa Merryweather, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2026/08/FC	<p>7. For decision – complaint from a member of the public</p> <p>The complainant addressed Cllrs and outlined the nature of their complaint. They then left the room to enable Cllrs to discuss the complaint and agree a response.</p> <p>Cllrs debated all areas of the complaint and agreed by majority not to uphold the complaint.</p> <p>The complainant was provided with a written summary of the Cllrs debate and the reasons they did not uphold the complaint.</p> <p>The chair closed the confidential meeting at: 9.32pm</p>	
2026/09/FC	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 18 February 2026, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 8.14pm