

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 22 April 2026, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: , Sara Butler (Chair), Philip Campagna, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Lyndsey Mayhew, Richard Pinnock, Steve Tanner

On Zoom: Tracey Ashford, Fiona Barrows and Anita Collier

In attendance:

Cllr Martin Dimery (SC Cllr), Cllr Adam Boyden (SC Cllr), Peter Wheelhouse (Town Clerk), Jane Llewellyn (Acting Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager & RFO), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Katie Fraser (Town Centre Co Ordinator), Alastair Findlay (Facilities Manager), Lucy McMahon (Lead Marketing and Communications Officer, online), Laura Flaherty (HR Lead and Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk), Becca Evans (Business Administrator), Sian James (Business and HR Administrator)

10 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall
3 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2026/29/FC	The meeting started at 7pm. 1. To waive standing orders to enable a Cllr other than the Chair or Deputy Chair to chair this meeting To allow a Cllr other than the Chair or Deputy Chair to preside, Andy Jones proposed the waiver of standing orders, seconded by Nick Dove, agreed unanimously.	
2026/30/FC	2. Election of chair Nick Dove proposed Sara Butler as Chair of the meeting, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed by majority. Sara then assumed the chair.	
2026/31/FC	3a. Apologies for absence Polly Lamb proposed to accept apologies from Carla Collenette, Ben Still and Lisa Merryweather, and from Anita Collier, Fiona Barrows and Tracey Ashford who attended online, seconded by Lyndsey Mayhew, agreed unanimously. 2b. Declaration of members' interests None was received. 3c. Approval of minutes from the last meetings on 25 March 2026	

	<p>The minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 March 2026 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Richard Pinnock, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2026/32/FC</p>	<p>4. Questions from public and Cllrs A member of the public, Chris Wildridge, asked about the financial implications of the situation at Badgers Hill on the FTC’s budget, expressing concern that anticipated income might not be realised. It was clarified by officers that the figure quoted by the questioner was not accurate and that the income line associated with Badgers Hill was considerably lower. Fiona Barrows explained that Badgers Hill had been clearly identified as a risk in the Council’s risk register and that action was actively being taken in response to rising debts. The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed she would double-check the figures and that they were publicly available.</p> <p>Chris’ second question concerned whether the proposed management structure review had been informed by the Local Government Association Peer Review. Fiona Barrows responded that the management review formed part of a wider improvement programme that included, but was not limited to, the peer review findings. She noted that the work was intended to support long term organisational development and future proofing, rather than constitute a direct or narrow response to a single report.</p> <p>Lenka Grimes, raised concerns around increasing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping, highlighting growing demand for Fair Frome’s services and the additional pressures created during the Easter holidays following changes to free school meal voucher systems. Cllrs acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and thanked her for raising awareness.</p> <p>Further updates were provided on Somerset Council matters, including street cleansing arrangements, leisure centre operations, education consultations regarding a potential move from a three tier to a two tier school system, and historic planning designations relating to Packsaddle Fields. Cllrs discussed the implications of leisure centre management on Frome College and noted that dialogue with Somerset Council and relevant partners was ongoing.</p>	
<p>2026/33/FC</p>	<p>5. For decision– Frome Riverside Market Yard Toilets engagement update and next steps Peter Wheelhouse introduced the item, outlining the background to the Council’s decision to close the Market Yard toilet block due</p>	

	<p>to ageing infrastructure, antisocial behaviour and high maintenance costs. He explained that community engagement had been undertaken to inform future provision.</p> <p>Rachel Griffin presented the findings from the engagement exercise, which included online consultation, social media feedback and in person engagement. She reported that public toilets were regarded as essential town centre infrastructure, with high and routine use by shoppers, families, older people and disabled residents. The former Market Yard toilets had been the most used facility, while current provision at the Cheese and Grain was widely seen as a compromise. Respondents emphasised the importance of cleanliness, accessibility, safety and central location.</p> <p>Although preferences between refurbishing the existing block and creating a reimagined site were closely balanced, the data indicated strong support for a redesigned solution that addressed long standing safety and usability concerns.</p> <p>Further explanation was provided regarding lease negotiations with Somerset Council and the importance of achieving long term security to enable future investment and potential borrowing. It was proposed to establish a Frome Riverside Advisory Group to guide the development of a deliverable scheme and consider the wider vision for the riverside area.</p> <p>Cllrs welcomed the thoroughness of the engagement but raised questions regarding costs, structural condition, future maintenance liabilities and the relationship between toilet provision and the broader riverside vision. Officers confirmed that detailed design, costs and any borrowing would only be pursued once lease terms were secured.</p> <p>Members of the public spoke about antisocial behaviour, accessibility of Changing Places facilities, the effectiveness of the Victoria Park toilets and potential design measures to deter misuse. Suggestions included extended access for disabled users and the use of modern monitoring solutions.</p> <p>An amendment was proposed to ensure that an update on lease negotiations with Somerset Council would be brought back to the next Council meeting. The amendment was proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Steve Tanner and agreed unanimously.</p> <p>To delegate authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair/Leader to:</p>	
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Frome Riverside Advisory Group to take forward a project to provide new toilet accommodation within the existing Market Yard toilet block including the reimagination of the other parts of that block and adjoining apron. The Advisory Group to also oversee the development of a vision for the wider Frome Riverside area. The following to be members of the Advisory Group: Cllrs Fiona Barrows, Steve Tanner, Nick Dove, Lyndsey Mayhew, Sara Butler and staff including Peter Wheelhouse, Jane Llewellyn, Sarah Williams, Rachel Griffin, Alastair Findlay 2. Press Somerset Council to provide a 25-year lease for the block and apron on terms that are acceptable to FTC particularly with regard to the requirement for Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) funding 3. Develop a costed design for the development to be agreed by the Advisory Group 4. Invite tenders for the development 5. Submit an application for PWLB funding for this project 6. Bring a paper back to Council to report on progress to include an Equalities Impact Assessment and at an appropriate point seek authority to draw down funding and proceed to contract stage 7. To report back to the next Council meeting about the lease negotiations with Somerset Council <p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2026/34/FC</p>	<p>6. For information– Badgers Hill bid update Fiona Barrows provided an update on Badgers Hill, congratulating Frome Town AFC on their recent sporting achievements. She addressed misinformation circulating publicly and reflected on the Council’s decision to intervene to safeguard the site. Fiona outlined the scale of Council and grant investment and explained that recent bids to operate the site had not provided sufficient financial assurance. She confirmed that a further proposal had been sent to the football club and a response was awaited.</p> <p>Lenka Grimes, speaking in her capacity as a volunteer involved with the club, described significant positive change at Badgers Hill, including increased community use, inclusive activity and strong volunteer engagement. She emphasised the social value of the site, particularly in an area of deprivation, and urged all parties to work toward a fair and stable resolution.</p> <p>David Parry, representative of the football club, echoed these sentiments, thanking the Council for its support and expressing</p>	

	<p>confidence that continued dialogue would lead to a workable outcome.</p>	
2026/35/FC	<p>7. For decision – Proposed review of management structure Peter Wheelhouse introduced the proposal to commission an external review of the Council’s management structure, explaining that it aligned with the approved work programme and was timely following his appointment as Town Clerk. The review was intended to assess whether current arrangements matched the Council’s strategic priorities and growth.</p> <p>Nick Dove questioned the need for an external review, expressing concern about costs, disruption and a lack of evidence that current reporting arrangements were problematic. He argued that the appointment of a permanent Town Clerk addressed interim concerns.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows responded by explaining the rationale for seeking external expertise, noting the Council’s organic growth, evolving roles and the value of independent scrutiny. Other Cllrs spoke in support, highlighting transparency, learning from the peer review and potential long term efficiency gains.</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse confirmed that staff would be kept informed and involved throughout the process and that the review was focused on management arrangements rather than individual performance.</p> <p>To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appoint Council HR & Governance Support to undertake an independent external evaluation of the Council’s management structure at a cost of up to £4,300 to be funded by projected underspends on the 26/27 staff budget 2. Work with the Improvement Advisory Group to develop costed recommendations to be presented to a future meeting of Council <p>Proposed by Mark Dorrington, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed by majority. Nick Dove and Richard Pinnock were against. Sara Butler abstained.</p>	
2026/36/FC	<p>8. To align Standing Orders on remote voting with current equality legislation An amendment to standing orders was presented to allow Cllrs to vote remotely in specific circumstances, subject to safeguards.</p>	

	<p>The proposal was discussed in relation to equality legislation and potential legal risks. It was confirmed that remote participation would not include a casting vote by the Chair.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve an amendment to Standing Orders to permit remote voting where a councillor is unable to attend in person due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disability or illness or some other protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 for a period of 3 months or more • caring duties for a period of 3 months or more 2. This provision would be subject to advance notification of the Town Clerk and approval by a majority of councillors at the first meeting at which the councillor intends to vote remotely. 3. This provision would also be subject to the councillor in question participating fully in debate and being visible on screen 4. There would be no eligibility for a casting vote on the basis that all meetings will be chaired in person 5. Enactment of these proposed changes to be subject to the outcome of a request for legal advice from NALC <p>Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2026/37/FC</p>	<p>9. For decision – Approval of Chapter 7 Staff and Cllrs’ Protocol Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendation was to approve the annual review of Chapter 7 Staff and Cllrs’ Protocol.</p> <p>Proposed by Steve Tanner, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2026/38/FC</p>	<p>10. For decision - Calendar of meetings 2026/27 starting May 2026 Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendation was to confirm the calendar of meetings for 2026/27.</p> <p>Proposed by Lyndsey Mayhew, seconded by Richard Pinnock, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2026/39/FC</p>	<p>11. For ratification – Appointment of the Town Clerk 2026 The Council formally ratified the appointment of Peter Wheelhouse as Town Clerk. The Chair congratulated Peter on his</p>	

	<p>appointment and thanked those involved in the recruitment process.</p> <p>The recommendation was to ratify the appointment of Peter Wheelhouse as Town Clerk with effect from 1 April 2026.</p> <p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2026/40/FC	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 27 May 2026, Frome Town Hall and Zoom	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 8.26pm