

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 29 October 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Tracey Ashford, Fiona Barrows (Chair), Carla Collenette, Anita Collier, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Lyndsey Mayhew, Ben Still, Steve Tanner, Andy Wrintmore

In attendance:

Dawn Denton (SC Cllr), Adam Boyden (SC Cllr), Helen Kay (SC Cllr), Anna Sabine (MP, online), Peter Wheelhouse (Acting Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager & RFO), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Nikki Cox (Partnership Lead), Hannah Stopford (Engagement Lead), Jane Llewellyn (Planning and Development Manager), Rob Holden (Environment Manager) 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
2025/75/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows began by acknowledging the retirement of Paul Wynne, who had served as Town Clerk for 14 years. She praised his dedication to the community and his leadership, which had helped shape Frome Town Council into a forward-thinking and community-driven organisation. Fiona also announced that Peter, formerly Deputy Town Clerk, had agreed to step into the role of Acting Town Clerk. She expressed confidence in Peter’s ability to guide the council effectively.</p> <p>She also paid tribute to Cllr Mel Usher, highlighting his foundational role in establishing the Independents for Frome and his contributions to numerous local initiatives. Fiona thanked him for his boldness and commitment to making Frome a better place.</p> <p>Following these farewells, Fiona welcomed Cllr Lyndsey Mayhew to her first meeting. Lyndsey had recently been elected to represent Market Ward, replacing Mel Usher. Fiona noted that Lindsay’s election marked a historic moment for Frome Town Council, which now had a majority of female councillors for the first time.</p>	

	<p>1a. Apologies for absence Anne Hills proposed to accept apologies from Sara Butler, Philip Campagna and Lisa Merryweather, seconded by Ben Still agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests Fiona Barrows declared a personal interest in item 7.</p> <p>1c. Approval of minutes from the last meetings on 27 August 2025 and 8 October 2025 Andy Jones requested an addition of a comment from member of the public, Luca for minute ref: 2025/65/FC in the minutes for 27 August, which read 'After Cllrs voted a young member of the public Luca spoke and said, "We're really happy to have this skatepark! Thank you."'</p> <p>The minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 August 2025 and the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting on 8 October 202 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Anita Collier, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2025/76/FC</p>	<p>2. Questions from public and Cllrs Mark Dorrington raised concerns about SC's proposal to introduce parking charges for 120 currently free spaces in Frome. He asked for an update and urged SC Cllrs representing Frome to oppose the plan. Adam Boyden explained the proposal aimed to standardise Sunday parking charges across Somerset and shift from a flat rate to hourly charges. He noted that a consultation on charging for waiting bays was expected before Christmas and assured the council that responses would be made once details were available. Mark expressed frustration over the lack of a promised town-wide parking survey and reiterated his opposition to further charges.</p> <p>Lenka Grimes, representing Fair Frome, raised urgent concerns about the housing crisis. She described families living in temporary accommodation without cooking facilities and in poor conditions that were affecting their health. She criticised SC's housing department for its lack of local staff and ineffective support. Lenka also called for action to limit Airbnb properties and second homes in Frome. Fiona and Peter offered to collaborate with Lenka on a letter to SC, drawing on her experiences. Jane Llewellyn explained that such limits would need to be implemented through the Neighbourhood Plan. Adam Boyden shared updates on Somerset Council's efforts to address housing, including the purchase of properties for social housing and a</p>	<p>PWh</p>

	<p>planned development at North Parade car park. Lenka emphasised the impact on Fair Frome’s services and the urgent need for action.</p> <p>Lenka also reported a rise in racism and hate crime in Frome. She urged the community to be vigilant, report incidents, and support victims. Fiona welcomed the initiative and encouraged continued dialogue.</p> <p>Andy Jones asked for updates on Fusion Leisure Centre and the planning department’s backlog. Adam Boyden confirmed that Fusion planned to complete repairs before January. Dawn Denton reported that 200 planning applications had been processed, but a backlog of 1,200 remained. She noted that a consultant might be hired to improve planning and enforcement.</p> <p>Nick Dove raised concerns about defaced parking signs in Badcox and the lack of response from SC. He criticised their poor customer service and communication. Adam Boyden and Dawn Denton offered to escalate the issue, and Peter agreed to write to SC’s CEO about the broader concerns.</p> <p>Anita Collier proposed a formal thank you to Ashley Reay, who had received a regional Volunteer of the Year award for his work on road safety. The council agreed to send a formal message of appreciation.</p> <p>Adam Boyden asked for updates on the toilet block, Share Shop, and ramp at Henley Way. Fiona explained that the toilet block was part of the Riverside Vision project and that public consultation would begin in January. Anne Hills explained trustees of the Share Shop were exploring a distributed service model, and current storage arrangements had been extended. Rob Holden confirmed the ramp at Henley Way had been replaced with a staircase due to cost constraints, but space had been preserved for a future ramp.</p>	<p>PWh</p> <p>PWh</p>
<p>2025/77/FC</p>	<p>3. For decision – update of Council Plan 2025-27 Fiona Barrows presented a summary of the report.</p> <p>She reflected on the challenges faced since the last election, including the COVID pandemic, cost of living crisis, and the transition to a unitary authority. She described the council as being in a period of transition and emphasised the importance of maintaining its innovative and community focused approach. The plan included SMART objectives for the first time and aimed to guide the council’s work programme and budget setting.</p>	

	<p>Cllrs expressed support for the plan, with Andy Jones welcoming its two year scope and Dawn Denton proposing regular meetings between Somerset and Frome councillors.</p> <p>The recommendation was agree the updated Council Plan 2025-27 to guide our work programme and budget setting processes.</p> <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Carla Collenette, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2025/78/FC</p>	<p>4. For decision – response to Peer Challenge</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse presented a summary of the report on FTC’s response to the Local Government Association’s Peer Challenge. He summarised the strengths identified, including civic leadership, innovation, and community engagement, and outlined areas for improvement such as financial planning, governance, and performance management.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows thanked the peer challenge team who came to visit Frome in July: Helen Ball, Cllr Paul Hilliard, Sally Jones, Justin Griggs, Chris Bowron and David Harding. She acknowledged the hard work and long days they spent so FTC could benefit from their skills, experience and insight.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To set up an Improvement Advisory Group to be chaired by Fiona Barrows as Chair & Leader and involving Nick Dove, Carla Collenette, Anne Hills, Mark Dorrington, the Acting Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer, Interim Deputy Town Clerk and Executive Assistant that will inform our response to the Peer Challenge and a broader Improvement Plan to be approved by Council in January 2026 2. Approve the brief for the Improvement Advisory Group in Appendix 4.3 <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Carla Collenette, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>PWh</p>
<p>2025/79/FC</p>	<p>5. For decision - To adopt the Annual Report 2024-2025</p> <p>Rachel Griffin presented the Annual Report. She noted it would form part of the submission to reapply for the NALC Local Council Award Scheme Gold Award.</p> <p>The recommendation was to adopt the Annual Report 2024-25.</p> <p>Proposed by Tracey Ashford, seconded by Anita Collier, agreed unanimously.</p>	

<p>2025/80/FC</p>	<p>6. For update and decision – support for Cheese & Grain</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse gave a summary of the report. He explained that the investment would reduce the venue’s energy bills, cut its carbon footprint, and also benefit FTC because the existing solar panels on the building would be replaced with more efficient ones, maintaining the current feed-in tariff. He confirmed that the loan would be repaid within the current financial year, although the exact timing depended on Somerset Council’s payment schedule.</p> <p>Steve Macarthur, representing the Cheese and Grain, added that the installation work was scheduled to start in January and emphasised that the panels would remain the property of FTC as the building’s landlord. He also noted that the solar upgrade was part of a broader carbon reduction plan for the venue.</p> <p>Andy Jones asked about timescales and repayment, and Peter reassured Cllrs that due diligence would be carried out before the loan was issued.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To confirm landlord’s approval of the installation of the new roof top solar PV panels and battery array at the Cheese & Grain 2. To delegate authority to the Acting Town Clerk in consultation with the Responsible Finance Officer to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. obtain all necessary approvals b. complete due diligence leading to the provision of a bridging loan of £38k once those approvals are in place and subject to the loan being repaid within the current financial year <p>Proposed Nick Dove, seconded by Andy Wrintmore, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>PWh</p>
<p>2025/81/FC</p>	<p>7. For decision – increasing the Chair’s allowance for the remainder of 25/26</p> <p>Fiona Barrows left the room at 8.23pm. Anita Collier took the Chair.</p> <p>Anita summarised the report and explained that Fiona’s workload had increased significantly due to the retirement of the Town Clerk, the peer challenge, strategic planning, and other responsibilities.</p> <p>Laura Green from the Frome Times asked several questions about the distinction between the Chair and Town Clerk roles, whether the allowance made Fiona a staff member, and whether the allowance would end upon the appointment of a new Town Clerk. Peter and Cllrs clarified that Fiona remained an elected</p>	

	<p>representative and that the allowance was a recognition of her time commitment. Cllrs expressed strong support for Fiona’s leadership and the need to enable diverse participation.</p> <p>The recommendation was to increase the Chair’s allowance by £3,750 at a cost of £625 per month for six months up to April 2026.</p> <p>Proposed by Andy Wrintmore, seconded by Anita Collier, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows returned to the room at 8.53pm</p>	SW
2025/82/FC	<p>8. For decision – Appointment of Acting Deputy Town Clerk Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delegate authority to the Acting Town Clerk to recruit and appoint an Acting Deputy Town Clerk from the Management Group that will deputise for the Acting Town Clerk in his absence to serve for the period until the appointment of a permanent Town Clerk 2. Delegate authority to agree appropriate remuneration for that period in consultation with the Responsible Finance Officer and HR Team <p>Proposed Anita Collier, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed unanimously.</p>	PWh PWh/SW
2025/83/FC	<p>9. For decision – election of Cllr Lyndsey Mayhew to committees Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendation was to elect Cllr Lyndsey Mayhew to serve on the Community & Place Committee, Planning Committee and Operations & Assets Committee.</p> <p>Proposed by Mark Dorrington, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/84/FC	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 14 January 2026, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The chair closed the meeting at: 8.56pm