

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 8 July 2026, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

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

On Zoom: Carla Collenette

In attendance:

Abi Green (The Conscious Project), Helen Kingston (Frome Medical Practice), Peter Wheelhouse (Town Clerk), Jane Llewellyn (Acting Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager & RFO), Matt Mellen (Climate Action Lead), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Caroline Wajsblum (Home Energy Upgrade Co Ordinator), Emma Parker (Community Project Officer), Jo Morris (Resilience Project Officer), Becca Evans (Business Administrator), Laura Flaherty (HR Lead & Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk)

6 members of the public were in attendance at the Town Hall
0 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2026/69/FC	The meeting started at 7pm. 1. To waive Standing Orders to enable a Cllr other than the Chair to chair the meeting This item was not required as the Chair, Fiona Barrows, was present and took the Chair as per Standing Orders	
2026/70/FC	2. Elect a chair for this meeting The Chair, Fiona Barrows, took the chair.	
2026/71/FC	3a. Apologies for absence Anne Hills proposed to accept apologies from Sara Butler and from Carla Collenette who attended online, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously. 3b. Declaration of members' interests None was received. 3c. Approval of minutes from the last meeting on 10 June 2026 Peter Wheelhouse advised Cllr that an administrative error had been identified within the draft minutes, with Andy Jones having been recorded as both present and absent. Peter confirmed that	

	Andy had been absent from the meeting and that the record would be amended accordingly. The minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 June 2026 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair. Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.	
2026/72/FC	4. Questions from public and Cllrs Fiona Barrows announced that Victoria Park and Mary Baily had been awarded Green Flag status, the internationally recognised benchmark for well managed parks and green spaces. She congratulated Environment Manager Rob Holden, the Ranger Team and the Council's Communities and Communications teams for their contribution to the achievement. Fiona noted that assessors had particularly praised the range of activities available within the parks together with the strong levels of community engagement. Philip Campagna also shared good news. After the Frome Summit meeting, Somerset Council Leader Bill Revans had responded positively to concerns about the lack of a regular bus service serving Frome Hospital and the medical practice. Following discussions with Somerset's bus infrastructure team, a revised timetable for the Route 30 service was being proposed. Philip explained that hospital and medical practice representatives were supportive of the proposal and hopeful that the amended service could commence when timetable changes are introduced in September. Also discussions were underway concerning the location of a new bus stop, with aspirations for it to incorporate a green roof design. Philip also gave an updates on developments relating to Frome's twinning arrangements. He noted the Frukes, a local ukulele band, would shortly be travelling to the partner town of Murrhardt. Whilst neither the Mayor nor himself would be attending, former Cllr and Mayor Richard Ackroyd would represent Frome. Discussions during the event would focus on evolving the partnership model to encourage year-round collaboration between communities rather than concentrating activity around periodic gatherings. Also a digital platform originally suggested by Frome would be discussed, enabling organisations and groups across partner towns to share opportunities and build stronger international links. Mrs Victoria Hicks, a tenant farmer from land commonly known as Sunset Fields in Vallis, addressed Council regarding ongoing	

	crop damage. Mrs Hicks explained that her husband's family had farmed the land for thirty-five years and that damage had significantly worsened since the Covid-19 pandemic. She described repeated incidents involving people leaving designated footpaths, crop trampling, abuse towards farmers who challenged inappropriate behaviour and damage caused by motorbikes. Mrs Hicks informed Cllrs that the financial impact amounted to approximately £3,000 to £4,000 each year, a significant sum given the modest margins currently achieved from farming. Nick Dove expressed sympathy for the situation and advised that he had recently raised the issue with Avon and Somerset Police. Nick noted that local policing teams had agreed to undertake targeted patrols and would provide feedback on their findings. Fiona Barrows, ward Cllr for the area, said she was committed to arranging further discussions with Mrs Hicks to better understand the issue and identify possible actions. Lisa Merryweather agreed that the matter required further consideration and suggested that officers and councillors explore whether communications activity could assist. Rachel Griffin noted that the forthcoming launch of the Nature Recovery Plan consultation provided a timely opportunity to promote messages about responsible countryside access, nature recovery and respect for farmland. Andy Jones suggested that local schools should be approached before the end of term to raise awareness amongst pupils. Tracey Ashford, speaking in her capacity as a representative of Purple Elephant, offered support through the charity's communications channels and family networks. Council agreed that a coordinated awareness raising campaign involving schools, community organisations and council communications should be explored, with officers maintaining contact with Mrs Hicks.	RG/FB/ND
2026/73/FC	5. For information & discussion – Green & Healthy Frome Evaluation Andy Wrintmore arrived at 7.32pm Steve Tanner arrived at approximately 7.35pm Fiona Barrows introduced a presentation on the achievements and legacy of the Green and Healthy Frome Programme. She described the programme as one of the most important projects in which she had been involved as a Cllr and highlighted the value of partnership working throughout its delivery. Abi Green of The Conscious Project presented the findings of the programme evaluation. Abi explained that the project represented an ambitious systems change initiative designed to encourage greener, healthier lifestyles while delivering climate, health and cost-of-living benefits. She outlined the extensive evaluation process undertaken over six months, including the review of more	

	than 200 project documents, interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups, attendance at project events and engagement with comparable initiatives. Abi advised that the evaluation had assessed the programme against internationally recognised OECD criteria covering relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. She reported that the programme had performed strongly across all categories. Although some of the original targets proved difficult to measure due to the complexity of systems change work, the evaluation demonstrated substantial impacts across climate action, community participation, partnership working and influence beyond Frome. Abi explained that the Healthy Homes and Renewable Energy workstreams had built knowledgeable community networks able to provide advice and support on retrofit and energy efficiency. The Cycle Together project had generated carbon savings and reduced transport costs through bike reuse and active travel. Plastic Free Period had successfully influenced behaviour change and empowered participants to become advocates within their communities. Within Frome Medical Practice, the Choosing Wisely programme had accelerated a culture of non-medical interventions and deprescribing. Green Community Connectors had successfully communicated the links between health, community and environmental wellbeing through a range of creative engagement activities. Turning to lessons learned, Abi presented ten recommendations covering partnership working, funding, systems change methodologies, evaluation practices and future climate action. She emphasised the importance of planning for partnership arrangements from the outset and ensuring robust systems are in place for monitoring, evaluation and storytelling. Lisa Merryweather welcomed the findings and acknowledged the difficulty involved in evaluating complex projects of this nature. She noted that whilst the programme's achievements were evident, stronger baseline data and clearer measures of systems change could have strengthened future funding applications and academic learning. Lisa suggested that consideration be given to providing evaluation training for local organisations and community groups. In response, Abi explained that systems change often occurs over decades, making it challenging to demonstrate full impacts within a three-year funding programme. She emphasised the importance of planning evaluation frameworks at the beginning of such projects and reiterated that significant lessons had been learned. Fiona agreed, noting that	
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	Green and Healthy Frome had contributed valuable learning nationally regarding the evaluation of complex systems change initiatives. Nick Dove reflected on his own experiences with programme evaluation and acknowledged the challenge of developing measurement systems for large collaborative projects. During discussion he identified an apparent error within the report relating to budget figures quoted for Frome Medical Practice. Representatives from the medical practice clarified that whilst turnover exceeded £5 million, the quoted figure did not represent the practice's operating budget and the report would be amended accordingly. Fiona concluded by thanking all staff, partners, volunteers and participants who had contributed to Green and Healthy Frome and praised the courage involved in delivering such an innovative programme.	
2026/74/FC	6. For decision – Review of Complaints Procedure Peter Wheelhouse explained that the review had been informed by research into best practice across other councils, guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils and advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. He explained that the proposed changes included the introduction of a formal complaints register to track complaints and actions taken, together with an annual summary report to support organisational learning. He also recommended the inclusion of guidance relating to unreasonable complainant behaviour and clearer provisions to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 through the provision of reasonable adjustments where required. Peter further advised that the current three-stage complaints process appeared unnecessarily resource intensive and atypical compared with arrangements elsewhere. He therefore proposed a revised two-stage process comprising investigation by the Town Clerk followed, where necessary, by consideration by a newly established Complaints Committee. Cllrs noted the report. The recommendations were: 1. To adopt a revised Complaints Procedure as shown in Appendix 6.1 that involves: a. the creation of a new Complaints Committee delegated by Council to hear complaints as a second and final stage of the formal complaints process	

	b. the introduction of a Complaints Register and production of an annual summary report to Council to support organisational learning c. adoption of guidance around how unreasonable complaint behaviour will be managed d. setting out how we will meet the requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments where necessary in the way we investigate complaints 2. To agree the Terms of Reference of the Complaints Committee as set out in this report and amend Standing Orders accordingly 3. To approve the following as initial members of the Complaints Committee: Fiona Barrows (Chair), Steve Tanner, Mark Dorrington, Richard Pinnock, Anita Collier, Polly Lamb Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.	
2026/75/FC	7. For decision – Planning Committee update Steve Tanner, Chair of the Planning Committee, explained that the committee met every three weeks in order to respond within statutory consultation deadlines and had considered more than 200 planning applications during the previous year. He described the wide variety of applications reviewed, including householder developments, listed building works, tree applications and major strategic developments. Steve outlined the committee's approach of engaging constructively with applicants wherever possible. He explained that the Council sought to influence developments through proactive dialogue rather than relying solely on objection. This approach allowed officers and Cllrs to highlight priorities such as sustainable transport, green infrastructure and community benefits from the earliest stages of project design. Jane Llewellyn, Planning & Development Manager, explained that of 231 planning applications considered, 205 formal responses had been submitted. Twenty-one applications had attracted objections, with six subsequently refused and three approved at the time of reporting. She noted that householder extensions and tree-related applications accounted for the majority of objections, often due to concerns regarding overlooking, overdevelopment or unnecessary tree removal. Jane also reported progress on the Frome Area Movement and Place Plan. Work had commenced with neighbouring parishes, Somerset Council and specialist transport consultants. Public engagement activities were planned during summer 2026 and councillors were encouraged to participate and promote the accompanying survey. Council then considered updates regarding major development sites, including Selwood Garden Community and Oldford, both of	

	which remained subject to ongoing design and reserved matters discussions. Jane also outlined the emerging Somerset Local Plan consultation and explained the importance of establishing local policies relevant to Frome, including a potential policy on allotments. Tracey Ashford asked whether planning objections tended to focus on particular categories of application. Jane explained that objections were most frequently associated with householder developments and tree applications rather than major housing schemes. Anita Collier raised concerns regarding delays within Somerset Council's planning enforcement service. Jane acknowledged significant enforcement backlogs and ongoing recruitment difficulties affecting councils nationally. She explained that although enforcement processes could ultimately require unauthorised development to be altered or removed, investigations and appeals often resulted in lengthy timescales. Richard Pinnock highlighted forthcoming legislative changes limiting matters which could be debated by planning committees and suggested greater collaboration between councils to maintain community input into planning decisions. Steve and Jane agreed that the implications of the new legislation should be explored further through existing parish and councillor forums. Philip Campagna enquired whether any local authorities had successfully delegated enforcement-related responsibilities to town and parish councils. Jane explained that legal enforcement powers remained with local planning authorities but noted that local councils already performed an important role in identifying potential breaches and supporting residents. Nick Dove asked about the potential value of introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) within the former Mendip area. Jane explained that CIL could generate significant funding for local projects and that Frome's Neighbourhood Plan status would entitle the town to receive a larger proportion of levy receipts. Cllrs were reminded that representations had already been made to Somerset Council encouraging consideration of a future transition from Section 106 arrangements to CIL. The recommendations were: 1. The formal response to the Somerset Local Plan consultation is agreed by the Planning Committee on 16 July. 2. Standing orders are amended to enable the planning committee to respond to licencing applications.	
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	Proposed by Anita Collier, seconded by Lyndsey Mayhew, agreed unanimously.	
2026/76/FC	8. For decision – renewal of NALC gold award Cllrs considered a report regarding the renewal of the Council's NALC Gold Award accreditation. Andy Jones advised that his role representing the Council within SALC would conclude following the next elections and invited expressions of interest from councillors wishing to succeed him. The recommendation was that Frome Town Council confirms by resolution that all the required documents, information and conditions are in place for the NALC Gold Award, and that these are published on the Council's website, where applicable. Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously. Lyndsey Mayhew left the room at 8.27pm	
2026/77/FC	9. For information – Staff Expenses & Cllr Allowances 2026 Sarah Williams presented a report outlining revisions to the Staff Expenses Policy and proposed updates to councillor allowances. She explained that the policy had been rewritten in plain English and now reflected the increased HMRC mileage rate of 55 pence per mile. Sarah advised that Cllr allowances would increase in line with Somerset Council's remuneration panel recommendations. She further noted that a separate report concerning the Leader's Allowance would be brought forward once external audit arrangements had been completed. Nick Dove asked how many Cllrs currently claimed the allowance. Sarah advised that approximately nine councillors were claimants and confirmed that details of allowances claimed were published annually on the Council website. The recommendations were: 1. To approve the revised Staff Expenses policy and associated appendices 2. To approve the 3.2% increase in Cllrs Annual Allowance to £1,332 pa Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Tracey Ashford, agreed unanimously.	

	Lyndsey Mayhew returned to the room at 8.30pm	
2026/78/FC	10. For decision – Re-approval of chapters in the constitution: 13. Access to information policy 14. Information policy 15. Publication Scheme 16. Information retention and disposal policy 17. Data Protection Policy 18. General Data Protection Regulation Privacy Information Council considered the final group of constitution-related policy reviews presented by Laura Flaherty. The report covered the Access to Information Policy, Information Policy, Publication Scheme, Information Retention and Disposal Policy, Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice. No questions were raised. The recommendations were: 1. Approve renaming chapter 18 to Privacy Notice (UK GDPR) 2. Approve the suggested amendments to the following policies: 13. Access to information policy 14. Information policy 15. Publication Scheme 16. Information retention and disposal policy 17. Data Protection Policy 18. Privacy Notice (UK GDPR) 3. Readopt the updated policies Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Lisa Merryweather, agreed unanimously.	
2026/79/FC	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 5 August 2026, at the Frome Town Hall and on Zoom	

The chair closed the meeting at: 8.32pm