

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 25 March 2026, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

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

On Zoom: Fiona Barrows and Philip Campagna

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), Rob Holden (Environment Manager), Hannah Stopford (Community and Partnerships Development Manager), Matt Mellen (Climate Action Lead), Emily Osler (Community Engagement Officer), Melody Hunter Evans (Children and Young People’s Project Officer), Lucy McMahan (Lead Marketing and Communications Officer), Laura Hales (Marketing and Communications Officer), Laura Flaherty (HR Lead and Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk), Becca Evans (Business Administrator)

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

5 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

| Minute Ref | Agenda Item | Action |
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| 2026/18/FC | <p>The meeting started at 7pm.</p> <p>1. To waive standing orders to enable a Cllr other than the Chair or Deputy Chair to chair this meeting</p> <p>To allow a Cllr other than the Chair or Deputy Chair to preside, Polly Lamb proposed the waiver of standing orders, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| 2026/19/FC | <p>2. Election of chair</p> <p>Nick Dove proposed Sara Butler as Chair of the meeting, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed by majority. Sara then assumed the chair.</p> | |
| 2026/20/FC | <p>3a. Apologies for absence</p> <p>Sara Butler proposed to accept apologies from Carla Collenette and Anita Collier, and Fiona Barrows and Philip Campagna who attended online, seconded by Nick Dove, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>3b. Declaration of members’ interests</p> <p>None was received.</p> | |

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| | <p>3c. Approval of minutes from the last meetings on 18 February 2026</p> <p>The minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 February 2026 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Polly Lamb, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| <p>2026/21/FC</p> | <p>4. Questions from public and Cllrs</p> <p>Lenka Grimes, Fair Frome, highlighted the recent replacement of the Household Support Fund with the Government’s new Crisis Resilience Fund. She explained the new scheme would no longer automatically provide vouchers to families with children in receipt of free school meals. Instead, families would be required to apply, including evidence submission, which she felt introduced significant barriers for some households. Citizens Advice would be administering the fund locally and thanked Council officers, particularly Melody Hunter Evans for helping share the information. Lenka also highlighted a recent increase in demand for advice services, arising from rising council tax bills, housing insecurity and anticipated increases in evictions following recent legislative changes. She urged Cllrs to recognise the increasing pressure on vulnerable residents and to continue supporting frontline support organisations.</p> <p>Julian Quail, a local volunteer and member of Frome Litter Warriors, raised concerns about the accumulation of litter along the River Frome banks in the town centre. He stated that in his view the current practice of clearing the riverbanks twice a year was insufficient, and that litter was often visible for many weeks at a time. He asked whether FTC would consider requiring contractors emptying litter bins to also litter pick along the riverbanks more regularly, or alternatively to licence or support volunteer groups to undertake the work. Rob Holden, Environment Manager, explained that the riverbanks were steep and presented significant health and safety risks. He stated that staff could only safely trim and litter pick the riverbanks twice a year using appropriate equipment and training, and that more frequent clearance was not currently possible on safety grounds. Nick Dove added that responsibility for street cleansing in the town centre formally sat with SC, although FTC had taken on additional responsibilities and employed a Town Centre Ranger at its own expense. Further discussion followed and Fiona Barrows acknowledged the frustration felt by residents and suggested that the matter warranted further review.</p> | <p>RH</p> |

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| | <p>Chris Wildridge asked when the forensic financial review of the CBS, in relation to the Badgers Hill project, would be formally discussed by the Council. Fiona Barrows explained that the CBS was a separate legal entity from FTC, but that the Council had commissioned the review proactively following community concerns. She stated that recommendations relevant to the Council were already being implemented, that funders had been informed, and that the future of Badgers Hill would be considered at an upcoming Council meeting. Mr Wildridge expressed concern about the financial implications for the Council as the landlord of the site, which Cllrs acknowledged.</p> <p>Nick Dove raised a concern around antisocial behaviour involving young people accessing the roof of a building in Palmer Street via insecure fencing on land owned by SC. Dawn Denton confirmed that she had already raised the issue with SC officers and that work was underway to identify responsibility and secure the site.</p> | |
| <p>2026/22/FC</p> | <p>5. John Kulasek, interim Head of Property at SC to answer questions regarding Packsaddle Joining John online was Chris Hall, Executive Director for Community, Place and Economy. John and Chris attended to explain the decision to fence the site.</p> <p>John explained that SC owned the land and had entered into an option agreement with Live West for potential residential development. Under the terms of that agreement, SC was required to prevent trespass on the site. He stated that although the land had been used by the community for many years, such use had been permissive rather than a statutory right, and that the fencing had been installed to comply with the Council’s contractual obligations. Chris added that SC was also seeking to respond to housing need, noting the declaration of a housing emergency, and that the land was held for development purposes. He acknowledged the strength of feeling locally and confirmed that the decision had been taken on the basis of legal advice.</p> <p>Tim Taylor, representing People for Packsaddle, challenged the explanation offered. He argued that long standing community use, undertaken with the knowledge of the landowner, could not reasonably be characterised as trespass, and questioned why permissive access could not continue pending any future planning application. Mr Taylor also queried reports that failure to fence the site could expose SC to a potential £500,000 claim, asking how that figure had been calculated.</p> <p>A wide-ranging discussion followed. Jane Lewellyn clarified that the site was not allocated for development in the local plan and</p> | |

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| | <p>was covered by policy DP16, which protects open space. She referenced the findings of the planning inspector, who had previously concluded that development of the site would cause irreparable harm to the community’s passive enjoyment of open space, even in the absence of a formal green space designation.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the reputational impact of the fencing, the apparent conflict between planning and property positions within SC, and the lack of transparency regarding the legal advice relied upon. Chris confirmed that SC was not in a position to release its legal advice publicly. Adam Boyden asked about routes for challenge, and it was confirmed that scrutiny committees or full council consideration at SC would be appropriate mechanisms. Sara Butler thanked all contributors and noted the complexity and sensitivity of the matter.</p> | |
| <p>2026/23/FC</p> | <p>6. For decision - Approval of Risk Register 2025/26 A summary of the report was given by Sarah Williams.</p> <p>Polly Lamb asked about risks relating to trees and public parks following a recent incident involving a falling branch. Rob Holden explained that professional arborists assess all FTC owned trees on a rolling programme and that additional inspections were commissioned following incidents, while acknowledging that not all risk can be eliminated.</p> <p>Richard Pinnock questioned the number of high risk items associated with Badgers Hill within the register. Peter Wheelhouse explained that the Facilities Manager maintained a close oversight of the site and that significant action had been taken over the preceding year to address health and safety concerns and governance issues. Fiona Barrows agreed that the cluster of risks associated with Badgers Hill was notable and explained that this had prompted the Council’s decision in December to seek alternative options for the site, with a further report to be brought forward in April.</p> <p>The recommendation was to instruct the Chair to sign the 2025/26 Risk Register on behalf of the Council and approve the 2025/26 Risk Management Strategy.</p> <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Tracey Ashford left the room.</p> | |

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| <p>2026/24/FC</p> | <p>7. For decision – repurposing of Climate Action underspends Fiona Barrows gave a summary of the report. She outlined key achievements, including significant energy saving and financial benefits delivered through the Healthy Homes project, particularly for residents experiencing fuel poverty, and engagement initiatives such as Plastic Free Periods, which had involved over 1,300 young people.</p> <p>It was proposed that unspent sustainability funding be repurposed to support a transition to future climate action work, including continued retrofit support, school engagement activity and a wildlife parade linked to the Frome Festival. Cllrs expressed strong support for the proposals, noting the combined environmental, health and social benefits.</p> <p>The recommendation was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the use of Climate Action underspends in 2025/26 and the balance of funds within the Sustainability EMR totalling £11k (or the balance remaining following completion of reporting to Lotto) to enable the following work to progress: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fundraising support b. School engagement and wildlife parade to launch the next phase of sustainability work set out in the approved Work Programme for 2026/27 c. A Green Open Homes initiative to bolster the work programme around home energy efficiency & renewable energy d. Workshops in schools around Plastic Free Periods which will lever in £7k external funding from the community <p>Proposed by Steve Tanner, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| <p>2026/25/FC</p> | <p>8. For decision – Report on Frome Funding Landscape Research, Grant Making Pilots and Next Steps Hannah Stopford, Melody Hunter Evans and Emily Osler presented a summary of the report. Hannah summarised findings from research commissioned from Locality, highlighting pressures on voluntary and community organisations, a tightening funding environment and the growing importance of collaborative, community led approaches to unlocking larger scale funding.</p> <p>Melody presented on a youth led participatory grant process in which young people co-designed funding criteria, assessed applications and allocated funding to projects providing free and affordable activities. She reported strong engagement from schools and young people, many of whom had expressed a desire to participate again.</p> | |

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| | <p>Emily reported on the grants advisory panel which had been made up of residents with lived experience of protected characteristics. Panel members received training, scored grant applications and worked alongside Cllrs to reflect on equity, access and transparency within the grants process. While challenges had been identified, particularly around process and influence, the pilot was widely viewed as valuable.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ringfence £10k of 26/27 grants budget to use for potential match funding in a project proposal that results from strategic partnership working on known gaps or priorities. 2. Repeat Young People’s Participatory Grant Making programme in 26/27 including improvements to the process that emerge from evaluation. 3. Reconvene the Grant Advisory Panel for the next round of FTC Community Grants including improvements to the process that emerge from evaluation. <p>Proposed by Steve Tanner, seconded by Nick Dove, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| <p>2026/26/FC</p> | <p>9. For decision – Changing contractor for managing waste from bins on the FTC estate from Somerset Council to Busy Bees Rob Holden summarised the report. He explained that the interim service provided by SC had been inconsistent and that SC had proposed a significant price increase to continue the service. Alternative tenders were therefore reviewed. Rob recommended appointing Busy Bees, a local contractor, from April 2026. He explained that Busy Bees had provided assurances on staffing cover, responsiveness to missed collections and comprehensive litter picking, including in play areas. Cllrs discussed monitoring arrangements, possible sanctions if service standards were not met, and the suggestion by Mark Dorrington that FTC owned bins be clearly marked. It was confirmed that the cost was within the approved budget.</p> <p>The recommendation was to change supplier for managing the bins, and litter picking of the play areas, on FTC land from Somerset Council to Busy Bees as of 1 April 2026 at a cost of £55,829.</p> <p>Proposed by Mark Dorrington, seconded by Lyndsey Mayhew, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| <p>2026/27/FC</p> | <p>10. For decision – WhatsApp Policy Laura Hales presented a summary of the report and recommendation. Cllrs noted the report.</p> | |

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| | <p>The recommendation was to agree to adopt and implement the Policy.</p> <p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| 2026/28/FC | <p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 22 April 2026, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p> | |

The chair closed the public meeting at: 8.55pm