



Minutes of the Oversight Committee, held on Tuesday 23 June 2026, at 19:30 at Credition Library, Belle Parade, Credition, EX17 2AA

Present: Cllrs Rachel Backhouse, Joyce Harris, Vix Frisby, Liz Brookes-Hocking and Steve Huxtable

Apologies: Cllrs Guy Cochran and John Downes

In Attendance: Two members of the public

Minute Taker: Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

MINUTES

13 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Cllr Backhouse welcomed everyone to the meeting and members introduced themselves.

14 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public asked questions about climate change and whether the council accepted established scientific evidence (e.g. rising temperatures, extreme weather, risks to food and water, ecosystem damage, and health impacts).

Cllr Backhouse confirmed that this committee recognises climate change in scientific terms, highlighted an invitation to Mel Stride MP to meet residents at a National Emergency Briefing film event, and noted the committee's support for strong leadership and the growing relevance of local politics.

Concerns were raised about the cancellation of a previous meeting and other non-agenda issues; however, Cllr Backhouse ruled these out of scope of the committee, emphasising that questions must relate to the published agenda as per Standing Orders.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking proposed the speaker not be heard further due to concerns about the tone in which they were asking questions.

A question on asset transfer transparency was addressed by Cllr Backhouse, who confirmed it was included in Part I of the agenda and would be discussed openly during the meeting.

Additional questions on unrelated matters (including the Manor Office and a weed and sweep project) were also ruled out of scope of the committee. Cllr Backhouse advised that broader issues should be directed to Full Council and submitted in advance by email for more comprehensive responses.

15 APOLOGIES

Decision: It was resolved to accept apologies from Cllrs Cochran (holiday) and Downes (personal). (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS

16.1 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPI'S) IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

16.2 TO CONSIDER ANY DISPENSATION REQUESTS (REQUESTS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE TOWN CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING)

There were no dispensation requests.

17 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

It was **noted** that decisions would be made with the climate emergency at the forefront of decision and policy making. Cllr Backhouse linked this to the earlier public questions and briefly remarked on the day's heat as a practical reminder of the issue's relevance.

18 ORDER OF BUSINESS

There were no changes to the order of business.

19 CHAIR'S AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

20 OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12 May 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

21 FINANCE

21.1 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 01 MAY 2026 AND 31 MAY 2026

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** transactions between 01 May 2026 and 31 May 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

21.2 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION TO 31 MAY 2026

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the bank reconciliation to 31 May 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

21.3 TO NOTE BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES TO 31 MAY 2026

Bank account balances as of 31 May 2026 were **noted**.

21.4 TO NOTE YOUTH FINANCES TO 31 MAY 2026

Youth finances to 31 May 2026 were **noted**.

21.5 TO NOTE YEAR TO DATE BUDGET TO 31 MAY 2026

Members reviewed and **noted** the year-to-date budget to 31 May 2026 and drew attention to headings where expenditure had already reached or exceeded expected levels:

- Annual grants to community groups line were highlighted at 102% percent. The Town Clerk confirmed that a virement had been approved by Full Council (2026/409, 03 February 2026)
- Newcombes Meadow toilets water, which appeared over budget. The Town Clerk confirmed that this reflected an estimated bill and that a meter reading had now been submitted, so the charge should reduce once adjusted
- Landscare Business Rates were higher than expected. The Town Clerk confirmed that a virement had been approved by Full Council (minute reference 2026/520, 21 April 2026)

21.6 TO NOTE EARMARKED RESERVES BALANCES TO 31 MAY 2026

Earmarked reserve balances to 31 May 2026 were **noted**.

22 MILEAGE EXPENSES CLAIM INCREASE

Decision: Members **noted** the report regarding the mileage expenses claim, which had risen from 45p to 55p per mile. Members observed that the proposed increase was consistent with government announcements and commented more broadly on rising costs.

Members also remarked that public transport and car sharing remained preferable where practical.

23 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF POLICIES

Members reviewed and considered the following policies:

Performance Management Policy

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

Procurement Policy

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

Cllr Huxtable requested that the delivery of sustainability aims should be discussed at a future relevant committee meeting. The Town Clerk advised that the SLCC had published a new sustainability information hub, and would speak to Cllr Fawssett.

Member/Officer Relations Protocol

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

Value for Money Statement

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

Time Off In Lieu and Overtime Policy

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

Whistleblowing Policy

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

Code of Conduct for Working with Young People

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the policy, with no amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

It was **noted** that this policy was required as part of the new three-year term insurance policy.

24 **BRANDED GAZEBO PURCHASE**

Members reviewed a report on purchasing a branded gazebo. The Town Clerk advised that although three quotes had been requested in line with procurement requirements, only one had been received so far, as two suppliers had yet to respond following submission of specifications and logo details.

Members discussed whether to proceed, citing concerns about transport and frequency of use, including recent difficulties moving equipment. However, it was acknowledged that CTC often attends events without clear branding and that the current banner setup is impractical and visually ineffective. Members also noted, with thanks, the recent support from the Royal British Legion in transporting equipment.

Cllr Huxtable proposed delegating authority to complete the purchase once further quotes had been pursued, with a spending cap of £1215.00 including VAT.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to complete the branded gazebo purchase, after pursuing the remaining quotes, up to a maximum of £1215.00 including VAT, the full cost being taken from general reserves. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

25 **BIG BONIFACE BASH**

Members reviewed the report on the cancellation of the Big Boniface Bash. Members were reminded that the event could not proceed because wind speeds had risen above a safe level, creating risks for gazebo use. The report focused on the unavoidable costs that had already been incurred. Members recalled that event cancellation insurance had been discussed previously but had been judged too expensive relative to the eventual loss figure.

The Town Clerk explained that some expenditure had been partially mitigated. Several acts originally booked for the Big Boniface Bash were now able to perform at the Food Festival. An additional £260.00 paid to Turning Tides for the well dressing would also be used at a Folklore Library event in August. Members also discussed the residual costs of advertising, bins, printing and replacement date stickers for gateway signs, with the stickers having been used to cover the previous year's date rather than replacing the banners entirely.

There was a discussion regarding bin charges, which members considered frustrating given prior difficulties with bin provision.

A member of the public raised a question. Cllr Backhouse moved to suspend standing orders to allow the question, but the committee voted not to do so.

Decision: The contents of the report was **noted**.

26 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

26.1 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT BY CLLR BACKHOUSE REGARDING THE DCC/DALC LGR EVENT

Cllr Backhouse gave a verbal report on the Devon County Council and DALC Local Government Reorganisation event attended the previous day. The report forms part of the minutes at Appendix A.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking reflected on the challenge created when councillors held roles across multiple tiers of local government, suggesting that divided loyalties could complicate negotiation. That led into a wider point about the need to improve negotiation skills across the council. A recent training course was described positively, and members expressed interest in sharing the learning from it more widely. It was also observed that there was no legislation requiring asset transfer arrangements to be fair or cost neutral, making informed negotiation important.

26.2 ASSET TRANSFER WORKING GROUP

Members considered the report and discussed the distinction between the recently submitted expressions of interest and any later decision to accept responsibility for assets. A direct question was raised as to whether filing the initial forms created any moral or legal obligation, and the Town Clerk confirmed that it did not. The purpose at this stage was to secure information and heads of terms so that assets could be reviewed properly before any commitment was made.

Once responses from MDDC were received, the working group would assess each asset against the council's asset transfer policy before any further recommendation came forward.

Transfer of the Town Square was discussed, which the Town Clerk had confirmed to MDDC is to be treated as a separate and longstanding issue rather than part of the wider reorganisation process. It was noted that transfer of the Town Square had been pursued for many years, including earlier proposals for a lease that the council had asked to convert into a full transfer ahead of Local Government Reorganisation. The Town Clerk reported that MDDC had again said the matter was still with legal, despite repeated chasing. Concern was expressed that, if unresolved, the Town Square could become entangled in the wider reorganisation and later be offered back to the town on less favourable terms. Members therefore indicated that the issue should remain on future agendas.

A member of the public raised a question. Cllr Backhouse moved to suspend standing orders to allow the question, but the committee voted not to do so.

Decision: It was **resolved to approve** that expressions of interest would be submitted for each MDDC-owned asset in Crediton shown on the published map. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

Decision: It was **resolved to approve** that the Asset Transfer Working Group would assess each asset against policy once responses were received from MDDC. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

27 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The committee noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 28 July 2026.

28 PART II

Decision: The public and press were excluded from the meeting under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960 for the remaining confidential business.

29 YOUTH WORK STAFFING

Decision: It was **resolved** that this item would be considered by Full Council on 07 July 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

30 REPORTS PACK

Signed

Dated.....

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Information Session – DCC

Report by Cllr Backhouse

22/06/26

Attendees: Representatives, town clerks, and councillors from town and parish councils across the county.

1. Overview, Timeline and Vesting Day

We were given an initial overview of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), outlining timelines, and potential implications for town and parish councils. Many elements remain uncertain but the decision on which model is being selected should be made public before the end of July, leading up to **“Vesting Day” on 1 April 2028**. **Vesting Day** is the point at whichever new unitary authority formally takes over responsibility from existing councils. On this date, **powers, services, staff, assets, and liabilities legally transfer**, marking the official start of the new local government arrangements. It may also signal the beginning of further service devolution to town and parish councils.

2. Potential Service Transfers and Capacity

Many discretionary services could be devolved to town and parish councils. This raises questions about **capacity**. Council will need to carefully assess:

- What services it can realistically deliver
- The risks of taking on responsibilities beyond operational capability

3. Community Impact and the Need for a Town-Wide Audit

LGR is expected to have **far-reaching impacts**.

A key takeaway was the importance of undertaking a **comprehensive town-wide audit** of:

- Existing services
- Community assets
- Infrastructure

This will be essential for informed decision-making and effective negotiation during the transition.

4. Sentiment, Support and Voluntary Arrangements

There was clear **scepticism in the room**, with some clerks and councillors raising concerns about capacity, fairness of assets being offered, and expectations.

The County Council emphasised its intention to support councils through the transition, with the mantra **“End well, start well.”**

Although service uptake is encouraged to be **voluntary**, concerns were raised that councils will feel pressure to take on services under the implication that “if you don’t take it on, it may be lost”. Some felt this risk may be overstated in the short term.

5. Uncertainties, Assets and Risk

Significant uncertainties remain, including:

- The final decision on the **unitary structure** (expected by August)
- Whether **May 2027 elections** will proceed as normal or be postponed

There was discussion about the transfer of **assets and funding**, alongside concern that some assets may effectively represent **liabilities**. There is no legislative guarantee of a fair balance, so councils will need to:

- Be firm in negotiations
- Avoid over-commitment
- Aim for a **cost-neutral position** wherever possible.

6. Relationships, Next Steps and Key Takeaways

The session was valuable for **networking and relationship-building**, with agreement on the importance of positive, collaborative working across councils.

A further meeting is expected in **Autumn**, by which time the unitary structure and responsibilities should be clearer.

Key takeaways:

- Undertake a full audit of town services and assets
- Assess realistic capacity before accepting new responsibilities
- Strengthen cluster and cross-council relationships
- Approach negotiations confidently, cautiously, and pragmatically