CREDITON
TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Oversight Committee meeting held on Tuesday, July 28, 2026 at 19:30 at Crediton Library, Belle Parade, Crediton, EX17 2AA

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

In Attendance: 3 members of the public
Cath Kelly, Lead Youth Worker

Minute Taker: Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

MINUTES

25 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Cllr Backhouse opened the meeting and members introduced themselves.

26 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

An initial question about Manor Office and flood-prevention spending was ruled outside scope unless tied to a budget line on the agenda, and no immediate answer would be given.

A member of the public asked several questions:

- what evidence supported creation of the apprenticeship role, whether the underlying figures could be made public, and what the total annual cost of youth-service provision would be once the apprenticeship was included. Cllr Backhouse explained that the costing had been worked through across several sessions, with complexity arising from university term dates not aligning with the council's financial year, a four-year budgeting profile for a three-year degree pathway, support secured, and the prospect of reduced reliance on peer educators
- clearer public presentation of the overall annual cost of youth provision and the scale of benefit being delivered was requested. Cllr Backhouse indicated an interest in presenting the figures more visually and accepted the value of showing not just session attendance but also the number of unique households, repeat attendance, and the broader reach of the service. The Town Clerk advised that any published breakdown would need to remain within GDPR constraints, particularly where staffing costs were concerned
- whether members of the public were entitled to criticise or challenge decisions and statements made by councillors in their public role. Cllr Backhouse responded that she felt that wording on the council website needed revision, that criticism of actions, policies, procedures, and services should be possible, and that she was uncomfortable with the current phrasing. She also reflected on repeated concerns raised to her privately about the tone used toward councillors in meetings and suggested the issue remained live and needed to be observed over time.

27 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS

28.1 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPI'S) IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA
Cllr Brookes-Hocking declared a personal interest in connection with item 38 (Church Faculty Application).

28.2 TO CONSIDER ANY DISPENSATION REQUESTS (REQUESTS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE TOWN CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING)
There had been no dispensation requests received.

29 CLIMATE EMERGENCY
The committee **noted** that decisions would continue to be taken with the climate emergency at the forefront of policy and decision-making.

30 ORDER OF BUSINESS
Cllr Backhouse altered the running order so that item 44 (Youth Recruitment) would be brought forward from item 44 to item 41 and into Part I, rather than being left in Part II.

31 CHAIR'S AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
There were no announcements.

32 OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES
<u>**Decision:**</u> It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23 June 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

33 FINANCE

33.1 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 01 JUNE 2026 AND 30 JUNE 2026
<u>**Decision**</u>**:** It was **resolved** to **approve** transactions between 01 June 2026 and 30 June 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

33.2 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION TO 30 JUNE 2026
<u>**Decision**</u>**:** It was **resolved** to **approve** the bank reconciliation to 30 June 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

33.3 TO NOTE BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES TO 30 JUNE 2026
Bank account balances to 30 June 2026 were **noted**.

33.4 TO NOTE YOUTH FINANCES TO 30 JUNE 2026
Although the agenda item itself was for noting youth finances to 30 June 2026, this section became the point at which the Chair revisited a public question about youth-service attendance and value for money.

<u>**Decision:**</u> It was **resolved** to suspend Standing Orders. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

A member of the public requested clearer indication of whether youth provision represented good value, linking cost to participation. The Lead Youth Worker responded that the most recent session had 20 young people attending and included 3 sibling groups but emphasised that the session was a special Milky Way trip and not representative of routine provision. She reiterated that future reporting needed to distinguish between one-off attendance, repeat attendance, and the number of households reached if the committee and public were to assess value more meaningfully.

Decision: It was **resolved** to reinstate Standing Orders. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

Youth finances to 30 June 2026 were **noted**.

33.5 TO NOTE YEAR TO DATE BUDGET TO 30 JUNE 2026

The year-to-date budget to 30 June 2026 was **noted**.

33.6 TO NOTE EARMARKED RESERVES BALANCES TO 30 JUNE 2026

Earmarked reserve balances to 30 June 2026 were **noted**.

34 EARMARKED RESERVES

This item was taken as item 35

After briefly moving ahead to the next item in error, members considered the report. A point raised from earlier public correspondence queried whether the report had understated financial implications relating to use of reserves for meeting space accommodation costs. The response given was that the report identified the funding source clearly, so there were no implications beyond those already set out, although it was accepted that the wording could have been more explicit.

Cllr Huxtable stated that additional financial observation was made about Manor Office utilities. Around £3,500.00 had been budgeted for electricity and water, while spending to date was substantially less.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** a transfer of £211.23 from EMR 375: Cluster Grant into the main budget. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)
Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the increase to the meeting room charges budget by £1,500.00, funded from general reserves, to cover library and Bookery meeting room charges. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)
Decision: It was **noted** that £854.00 had been transferred from EMR 346: Grants to finance the grants for 2026-27.

35 INTERNAL CONTROL PANEL

This item was taken as item 34

35.1 TO APPOINT THREE MEMBERS TO THE INTERNAL CONTROL PANEL

Members agreed the establishment of the Internal Control Panel, clarifying that the role would involve one meeting after each quarter, with any findings reported back to the committee.

Decision: It was **resolved** to appoint Cllrs Huxtable, Brookes-Hocking and Backhouse to the Internal Control Panel. (Proposed by Cllr Frisby)

35.2 TO APPROVE DOCUMENTATION FOR THE PANEL TO COMPLETE ON A QUARTERLY BASIS

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the Internal Control Panel documentation. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

36 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF POLICIES

The Town Clerk advised on typographical errors that would be amended, but did not materially change the policy.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the Volunteers Policy. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

37 EXTERNAL AUDIT COMPLAINT

The complaint to external auditor PKF Littlejohn was received and **noted**. No substantive questions were raised, and Cllr Backhouse highlighted that further instruction was awaited.

38 CHURCH FACULTY APPLICATION

38.1 TO RECEIVE THE EMAIL FROM THE GOVERNORS AND PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL (PCC) OF HOLY CROSS CHURCH REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR A FACULTY APPLICATION

Members considered a request from the Governors and Parochial Church Council of Holy Cross Church for support with a faculty application. Cllr Backhouse explained that the church was preparing its statement of need following the latest quinquennial survey and was seeking a letter of support rather than financial contribution.

Members discussed the church's unusual status, including the fact that Holy Cross is owned by the parishioners rather than the diocese and does not benefit from Church of England funding in the same way as many other churches.

38.2 TO APPROVE THE DRAFT LETTER, SHOULD MEMBERS SUPPORT THE FACULTY APPLICATION

Having considered the request and the background given on the church's funding position, members approved submission of the draft support letter.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the draft letter for submission. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

39 MDDC ASSETS

39.1 TO NOTE THAT EXPRESSION OF INTERESTS FORMS HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO MDDC

Members **noted** that expression of interest forms had been submitted to Mid Devon District Council. Clarification was given that some assets, including the car parks, St Lawrence Green, and the land under the Union Road toilet block, had been requested separately because they were not all included on MDDC's transfer documentation.

Members were reminded that submission of an expression of interest was exploratory and did not amount to a final commitment to proceed.

39.2 TO RECEIVE CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING THE TRANSFER OF THE TOWN SQUARE AND AGREE ANY FURTHER ACTIONS

Members considered correspondence on the Town Square transfer and the three options set out in the report. Members reflected that a lease would provide more certainty than the current position but would still stop short of ownership and leave some uncertainty until a later transfer became possible. Greater support emerged for a combined approach that would retain practical progress while also testing whether a transfer could be accelerated.

Consideration was given to the report's recommendations, noting that in the paperwork the relevant reference at 3.3 referred to Homes England rather than MDDC.

Decision: It was **resolved** to continue lease arrangements with MDDC, whilst also making direct representations to Homes England regarding an earlier Town Square transfer or other acceptable arrangements before 2029. (Proposed by Cllr Downes)

40 PENSION INVESTMENTS

Cllr Backhouse introduced the report on pension investments and explained why she regarded the issue as significant for CTC as an employer contributing around £3,000.00 per month into the LGPS pension scheme.

The discussion acknowledged that the issue was technically complicated because the fund is passively invested, the exact boundary of unethical investment is not always straightforward to determine, and related legal processes are still under way. Cllr Backhouse's central argument was that the figure of about £84 million, while superficially large, represented only a very small proportion of the wider pooled fund, which also includes other councils and the Environment Agency. She estimated that it was about 0.2% percent of the total pool and argued that even full withdrawal of that amount would barely affect individual pensions, particularly if the money were reinvested in more ethical alternatives.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the draft letter for submission. (Proposed by Cllr Cochran)

41 LOCOMOTIVE NAMEPLATE

Cllr Backhouse explained that CTC already held an insurance valuation but not a valuation for sale, and that the report therefore asked whether members wished to obtain a market valuation and, separately, whether they wished to establish the cost of a like-for-like replacement copy.

Cllr Brookes-Hocking strongly opposed the notion of replacing the original with a replica, arguing that the historic significance lay in the authentic object and its local railway heritage, not in a reproduction. Cllr Downes highlighted the historic significance of the item. Other members were more open to at least knowing the object's potential sale value, on the basis that CTC ought to understand the worth of an asset in its possession.

Decision: It was **resolved** to obtain a quote for the sale valuation of the locomotive nameplate. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable, Cllr Brookes-Hocking voted against)
Decision: The proposal to obtain a quote for a like-for-like copy of the locomotive nameplate was not approved. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable, which failed due to lack of votes for)

42 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This item was taken as item 43

Members **noted** that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 15 September 2026.

43 PART II

This item was taken as item 44

Decision: It was **resolved** to exclude the public and press for Part II under section 1 subsection 2 of the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

44 RECRUITMENT

This item was taken as item 42, and discussed in Part I

44.1 TO APPROVE THE RECRUITMENT PACK FOR THE YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORKER APPRENTICE POST

Members reviewed the recruitment pack in detail. The following points were made:

- clarification of the required GCSE threshold for the course being grade 5 prior to publishing the pack
- addition of a sentence explicitly telling applicants that their application should provide evidence showing how they meet the person specification, rather than assuming younger applicants would infer that from the form alone
- the need to accommodate applicants still awaiting A-level results due in Summer 2026.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the recruitment pack for the Youth and Community Support Worker Apprentice post, subject to amendments. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

44.2 TO AGREE TIMESCALES FOR THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Members reviewed the recruitment timetable as detailed in the pack.
It was clarified that interviews would take place on 24 August, not in that week. The wording in the pack would be amended,

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the recruitment timetable, subject to the amendment of the interview date. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

44.3 TO APPOINT ONE MEMBER TO THE INTERVIEW PANEL

Decision: It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Huxtable to the interview panel for the Youth and Community Support Worker Apprentice post. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

45 STAFFING

This item was taken as item 46

The Town Clerk left the room

<u>Decision:</u> It was **resolved** to **approve** the contents of the report, with an additional action for the HR Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

The Town Clerk rejoined the meeting

46 STAFFING

This item was taken as item 47

<u>Decision:</u> It was **resolved** to approve the contents of the report, with Contractor A being approved. (Proposed by Cllr Downes)
It was **noted** that Contractor A was LCC.

Signed ……………………………………………………………………………….……

Dated………………………………….