



Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday, September 1, 2026 at 19:30 at Credition Library, Belle Parade, Credition, EX17 2AA

Present: Cllrs Steve Huxtable, Guy Cochran, Giles Fawssett, John Downes, Jim Cairney, Liz Brookes-Hocking, Joyce Harris, Vix Frisby, Rachel Backhouse and Tim Stanford

Apologies: Cllrs Paul Perriman and Natalia Letch

In Attendance: 8 members of the public

Minute Taker: Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

MINUTES

2026/038 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Cllr Huxtable opened the meeting and members introduced themselves.

Before taking formal questions, the Chair re-read a revised statement on the conduct of town council meetings.

*Town council meetings are meetings **IN** public, not meetings **OF** the public. The law allows members of the public and the press admission to town council meetings so that they can observe democracy in action.*

It is important that councils make decisions transparently and openly, allowing members of the public to give their views and raise issues that the council may wish to consider, but it is also important to remember that members of the public do not have a formal role in the governance of the council, proposing or making decisions at local council meetings, including with regards to the minutes of meetings.

Clearly members of the public may want to share their views on council priorities and actions, and indeed have the right, and are indeed welcomed to scrutinise council activities, decisions made, processes and offer constructive comments not only at Council meetings but by other means too.

All questions and comments should be factual, polite and, at Full Council meetings restricted to matters over which the council has direct authority – for committee and sub-committee meetings the comments and questions must be in respect of items on their agenda.

Public Questions at council meetings is one of the options available, but more commonly letters/emails and telephone calls to the council, are the avenues used by the majority of members of the public. In addition there is also 30 minutes available before each Full Council Meeting to discuss such topics.

Staff, councillors and members of the public should not criticise any members of the public or the performance or ability of staff or individual councillors at Council

meetings – it is not acceptable. This is especially true in the light of our signing of the pledge on Civility and Respect.

Should a complaint against staff and/or councillors be necessary details of the process is available on the CTC and MDDC websites.

A member of the public stated that they would continue to criticise staff, councillors and the council, because there was so much to criticise.

Cllr Backhouse said the environment at recent meetings had become toxic and described feeling personally threatened, arguing that the revised wording was an attempt to reduce intimidation and protect both councillors and staff. Cllr Downes drew a distinction between criticism of decisions and offensive or personalised comments, while a further contribution suggested the wording still created a poor public impression and would benefit from a further redraft. Cllr Huxtable accepted that versioning might need to continue and indicated willingness to revisit the wording.

Public questions were raised as follows:

- Standing Orders now limit each person to 3 questions, but argued that the council should be equally diligent in answering, pointing out that written answers published on the website appeared to stop at 3 March and describing the council as around 140 days late against its own 10 working day response expectation
- It had taken seven months to replace a noticeboard and then five months to repair the Town Clock, asking what changes had been made so that the Town Clerk could act more quickly and efficiently in future
- Since early June, High Street pavements, kerbs, traffic islands and street furniture areas had been kept clear of weeds and dirt to a 3-month cycle and asked whether the council would support and potentially remunerate that work on terms similar to those used for Turning Tides in the Town Square
- Criticism of the handling of the Crediton Visitor Guide, stating that several hundred pounds had been invested, around 4,000 copies were received in autumn 2024, and about 30 unopened boxes were still believed to be in storage, with advertisers left without the expected physical distribution
- Concerns raised regarding anti-social behaviour, police training and resilience, including concerns that reporting through 101 and online channels remained slow or inaccessible for some residents.

In response, Cllr Huxtable did not give substantive answers in the meeting but repeatedly confirmed that responses would be provided after the meeting, including an assurance that replies would be issued within 10 working days.

Task: Cllr Huxtable to provide written responses to the public questions raised.

2026/039

APOLOGIES

Decision: It was **resolved** to receive and accept apologies from Cllrs Perriman (personal) and Letch (personal). (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

2026/040 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

2026/040.1 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS (DPI'S) IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

No personal interests or disclosable pecuniary interests were declared in respect of items on the agenda.

2026/040.2 TO CONSIDER ANY DISPENSATION REQUESTS (REQUESTS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE TOWN CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING)

No dispensation requests had been received.

2026/041 ORDER OF BUSINESS

There were no changes to the order of business.

2026/042 CHAIR'S AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made by either the Chair or the Town Clerk.

Earlier in the opening introductions, councillors briefly referred to a second showing of a national emergency briefing, noting that around 100 MPs had signed up, and linked recent severe weather to wider climate concerns.

2026/043 TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

Decision: It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 07 July 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

2026/044 TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

The minutes of the following meetings were reviewed: -

- Oversight Committee held on 23 June 2026
Decision: It was **resolved** to **ratify** the minutes of the Oversight Committee held on 23 June 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)
- Community Committee held on 07 July 2026
Decision: It was **resolved** to **ratify** the minutes of the Community Committee held on 07 July 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)
- Grants Sub-Committee held on 21 July 2026
Decision: It was **resolved** to **ratify** the minutes of the Grants Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 July 2026. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

2026/045 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

No written County or District Councillor reports had been received by the time this item was reached. One councillor indicated there was a brief point to raise, but Cllr Huxtable asked for that to be taken later if time allowed.

2026/046 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Hayward's Educational Foundation: Cllr Cairney informed members that the tree which had prompted concern had been cut by a professional tree surgeon in a way intended to protect the roof of a nearby house, and that regrowth was now evident
DALC: Cllr Brookes-Hocking noted that the conference on 7 October was approaching.

Twinning Association: Cllr Huxtable confirmed that the Twinning Association was due to meet later in the month, with a further update to follow if needed.

Boniface Trail Association: Cllr Fawssett reported to members that a topographical scan was planned on the 2-mile stretch linked to the proposed cycle route.

Age Concern: Cllr Frisby reported meeting with the manager, describing early work on a programme of additional activities and further developments planned.

2026/047 BUDGET VIREMENT

Decision: It was **resolved to approve** the budget virement of £1,250.00 from the Old Landscore School insurance budget to the main insurance budget was approved to cover Manor Office insurance costs. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

2026/048 CYBER INSURANCE

Members discussed whether to proceed with cyber insurance and how it should relate to existing technical support.

Standing Orders were suspended

A member of the public asked what provision the IT company offer.

Standing Orders were reinstated

Cllr Fawssett argued strongly against further digital dependency and questioned whether the council should be spending more on cyber products at all. Others took the opposite view, pointing to the frequency of attacks, the increasing sophistication of fraud and AI-enabled intrusion, and the reputational and financial risk of data breach, ransomware, account compromise, website outages and loss of records. Members also noted that staff receive some training, but councillors do not currently have equivalent guidance on suspicious emails and related cyber risks.

Discussion focused on possible overlap with the council's IT provider. Members asked whether backup, cloud storage and related protections already formed part of the existing support arrangement and whether insurance could duplicate cover that should already sit with the contractor. The Town Clerk confirmed that Nexus had previously advised the council to obtain cyber insurance, but members asked for a more detailed mapping of what is already covered against the risks listed in the proposed policy. Rather than choose a provider immediately, the council agreed to seek that clarification and return the matter to a future meeting in November.

Decision: Further consideration of cyber insurance was deferred pending clarification from Nexus on existing coverage and any overlap with the proposed policy, with the matter to return in November.

Task: Ask Nexus to map its existing coverage against the risks listed in the proposed cyber insurance policy and report the findings back to council in November. @Rachel Avery

2026/049 TRANSFER OF FUNDS TO CCLA

Decision: It was **resolved to approve** the transfer of £100,000.00 into CCLA was approved. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

2026/050 EARMARKED RESERVES TRANSFER

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the transfer £1,500.00 from earmarked reserves into the grants budget if required to support a grant recommendation for Welcoming Refugees in Crediton following the committee process. (Proposed by Cllr Fawcett)

2026/051 MANOR OFFICE INTERNAL BUILDING WORKS PROCUREMENT

The report on the procurement process for internal building works at Manor Office was received and **noted**.

2026/052 CIVILITY AND RESPECT**2026/052.1 TO CONSIDER AND RESOLVE THAT INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS WILL SIGN THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE**

Rather than take the civility and respect items in isolation, Cllr Huxtable advised that a revised code of conduct was being prepared in line with the latest Local Government Association approach. Consideration of the Civility and Respect items was deferred to the November meeting to allow a revised code of conduct package to be brought forward.

2026/052.2 TO RECEIVE THE REPORT REGARDING A CIVILITY AND RESPECT WEBPAGE AND TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS THEREIN

This sub-item was not taken separately because the wider Civility and Respect item was deferred for consolidated consideration in November.

2026/053 TOWN CLOCK

Members received and considered the report on the Town Clock.

Cllr Downes advised that he and Jo Ward had inspected the clock and found it had been switched off, not suffered a mechanical failure. After power was restored, both motors operated correctly, clock faces moved normally, but the system was out of synchronisation with the two clock faces and displaying different times. He advised that resetting the clock is complicated because the difference between the internal control clock and the visible clock faces must be programmed manually. He had spoken to the makers of the clock (Smith of Derby), who advised they could reset the clock for £450.00 if no battery replacement was required or reset the clock and replace the battery for £650.00 if needed.

Concerns were raised regarding a separate quotation which included the need for a cherry picker, despite the battery being located inside the building and uncertainty over whether a replacement was necessary.

He highlighted that the service and maintenance records were found to be inconsistent. The Town Clerk advised that the council had also paid for a service in March 2026 and would seek the relevant records from council files or Time Assured. Members noted that, regardless of resolving the current timing issue, the question of ongoing maintenance remained outstanding.

Decision: It was **agreed** that Cllr Downes and Jo Ward would reset the Town Clock using the existing controls and report back on whether the clocks remain synchronised.

Task: Locate the March 2026 Time Assured service records for the Town Clock or request them from the contractor if they are not already held. @Rachel Avery

2026/054 GREATER RURAL EXETER AREA TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Members considered the report on the Greater Rural Exeter Area Town and Parish Council group in the context of wider local government reorganisation. One councillor expressed concern that the arrangement risked adding yet another governance layer rather than simplifying accountability between town councils and the new upper-tier authority. Others took a more positive view, arguing that cooperation with comparable councils would strengthen representation, particularly on assets, planning and wider negotiations.

Cllr Huxtable had attended the first meeting on 12 August, stating that Exeter City Council had more experience of operating as a city authority than of working closely with towns and parishes, and suggested there was value in developing a united position, so individual councils were not dealt with in isolation.

The Town Clerk clarified that the report wording should refer to the Chair or Mayor attending, rather than the DALC representative.

Decision: It was **resolved** that the Chair/Mayor be appointed to attend future meetings of the Greater Rural Exeter Area Town and Parish Council Group, that regular updates from the group be reported back to Full Council and a page be added to the CTC website to provide information to residents on the group and its purpose. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

2026/055 WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Members noted the correspondence on warding arrangements for the shadow authorities ahead of the May 2027 elections. Members' understanding was that the current Boniface and Lawrence representation would remain at 2 members each on an interim basis, with any wider change more likely to arise through a later boundary review.

Cllr Fawssett highlighted concerns that the emerging structure would still allow dual hatted councillors, with members potentially serving both on the new Exeter authority and on CTC and said that clearer separation between local and upper-tier roles would have been preferable.

2026/056 ACTIVE TRAVEL MOTION

Cllr Fawssett introduced the motion and argued that councillors should model active travel whenever possible, because of its contribution to climate mitigation, public health and lower personal cost.

Some members accepted the broad principle, while at least one councillor said there was no need for a formal council stance on what adults should choose to do in their own circumstances.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the motion as tabled, establishing the expectation that councillors will walk, cycle or wheel to meetings whenever possible. (Proposed by Cllr Fawsett)

2026/057 **COMMUNITY BULLETIN**

Members considered the report, requesting support for the development of a new Crediton Community Bulletin in partnership with local organisations. Members broadly welcomed the idea, with particular support for greater collaboration across the town and for presenting more positive shared community information. Cllr Backhouse asked about the likely impact on already stretched staff time, and the Town Clerk advised that, whilst there would be development work, the expectation was that the time commitment would be broadly comparable with the current newsletter and could reduce burden over time if the wider project matured.

Members were told that the immediate plan was for a first printed edition to launch at the Christmas lights switch-on, with later editions potentially carried through the Crediton Courier or another route if more suitable. The Town Clerk also noted that Kirton Quarterly had already approached the council about possible page space.

Standing Orders suspended

Jane Williams from The Turning Tides Project said the proposal should be seen as a first step toward more joined-up working amongst around 60 local organisations, several of which already work together regularly. She argued that closer coordination would help shared understanding, funding conversations and a stronger sense of community-led rather than organisation-led activity.

Standing Orders were reinstated

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the development and implementation of the Crediton Community Bulletin as a replacement for the existing newsletter was approved. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

2026/058 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members were advised that the next meeting might need to move from Tuesday 3 November 2026 to Tuesday 17 November 2026. The date would be confirmed and published once agreed.

2026/059 **PART II**

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

2026/060 **OLD LANDSCORE SCHOOL**

Members considered and discussed the confidential report.

Decision: It was **resolved** that further advice would be obtained from Tozers. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

APPENDIX

2026/061 REPORTS PACK

Signed

Dated.....