CREDITON
TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Full Council of the Democratic Services held on Tuesday, October 20, 2026 at 19:00 in Crediton Library, Belle Parade, Crediton, EX17 2BT

Present: Cllrs Steve Huxtable, Guy Cochran, Giles Fawssett, Vix Frisby, Rachel Backhouse, Tim Stanford, Joyce Harris, John Downes, Jim Cairney (part meeting) and Natalia Letch

Apologies: Cllr Liz Brookes-Hocking

Absent: Cllr Paul Perriman

In Attendance: 3 members of the public

Minute Taker: Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

MINUTES

2026/074 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair opened the meeting and members introduced themselves.
The Chair opened public question time with three members of the public present and confirmed that questions had to be taken at that point in the meeting. No questions were raised.
One written submission containing five questions was read into the record, with a request that the questions be recorded publicly and answered in writing in due course. The questions raised were:

- Less than two weeks ago at the HR Committee meeting of 8th October, when asked directly whether the Council had considered or awarded any public funding towards the Town Clerk's Master's degree, the Chair of that meeting gave an unequivocal response that no funding had been awarded, and that none would be in the future. What material facts or governance decisions have changed in the intervening fortnight to bring this expenditure back onto the agenda?
- Excluding the Town Clerk, the Council employs four other members of staff.Will the same proportional level of public funding and postgraduate support be formally made available to all other Council employees?
- Given that Crediton Town Council has previously funded the Town Clerk through to a Level 6 BA (Hons) degree, a standard already substantially above the statutory Level 3 (CiLCA) benchmark required for the role, what specific operational requirements, business case, or measurable benefits to Crediton taxpayers have been identified to justify committing further public funds to a voluntary Level 7 academic degree?

- The 2026/27 budget was formally approved by Full Council on 13th January 2026, setting a total annual training budget of £4,000 for all staff and councillors combined. Just over a fortnight later, on 29th January, a request for financial support towards this single qualification costing £7,300 was submitted to the HR Committee, recommending that funds be drawn from General Reserves. Why was an expenditure of this scale not brought forward during the formal autumn/winter budget-setting process so it could be scrutinised alongside other precept priorities, rather than relying on an unbudgeted drawdown from public reserves?
- Given that the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26 remains subject to formal questions and ongoing review by the external auditor regarding governance assertions, does the Council consider it prudent financial stewardship to commit non-statutory, reserve-funded expenditure to advanced academic study before those audit findings are formally concluded?

The Chair confirmed that written responses would be provided and placed on the website.

2026/075 APOLOGIES

Decision: Apologies from Councillor Brookes-Hocking (holiday) were received and accepted. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

2026/076 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

2026/076.1 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.

2026/076.2 TO CONSIDER ANY DISPENSATION REQUESTS (REQUESTS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE TOWN CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING)

No dispensation requests had been received.

2026/077 ORDER OF BUSINESS

There were no changes to the order of business.

2026/078 CHAIR'S AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

2026/079 TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

The Town Clerk advised on a requested amendment from Cllr Backhouse to item 2026/069.1, adding that Cllr Backhouse had asked for the scheme of delegation to be discussed first but that it had been agreed to take matters in agenda order. This amendment had been made to the draft minutes.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 15 September 2026, with the amendment. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

2026/080 TOWN CLERK TRAINING

The Town Clerk left the meeting

Members revisited the recommendation that had come forward from the HR Committee, noting at the outset that the committee had not reached a settled recommendation and that the matter had therefore been referred to Full Council.

A number of councillors opposed funding the master's degree. Concerns centred on whether council tax funds should support a postgraduate qualification, whether this would create a precedent for other staff, and whether the course represented the best match to the role.

Cllr Backhouse explained that she had previously assembled alternative training options, largely because she understood the original case to be linked to a perceived need for line-management development. She said she had found a range of other courses and remained unconvinced that the master's directly met that need. She also argued that wider council capacity and engagement mattered as much as formal training if organisational change was to be effective.

Cllr Letch proposed to fund the master's degree, subject to a clawback clause if the Town Clerk left within an agreed period, was put to the vote and was not carried.

Members considered an alternative course of action and agreed to defer the matter so that Cllr Backhouse could refresh her report on training options and bring it back to the meeting on 17 November, allowing members to compare the available options in full before taking any further decision.

Cllr Cairney joined the meeting at 19.29

Decision: Consideration of Town Clerk training was deferred to the 17 November 2026 meeting so that alternative training options could be brought back for review.

Task: Update the alternative training options paper and bring it back for consideration at the 17 November 2026 meeting.

2026/081 MANOR OFFICE

2026/081.1 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE TOWN CLERK'S REPORT REGARDING THE TENDER PROCESS FOR INTERNAL WORKS AT MANOR OFFICE

Members received a brief update on the tender process for internal works at Manor Office.

The Town Clerk's report on the tender process was received and **noted**. Members were advised that the options were either to collate the remaining scores immediately or to refer the matter to a task and finish group so the process could be checked properly before a contractor was appointed.

Decision: It was **resolved** to establish a task and finish group to complete the tender review process and appoint a contractor under delegated authority, with the appointment to return to Full Council on 17 November 2026 for ratification. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

Decision: It was **resolved** to appoint Cllrs Letch, Downes, Huxtable, Cochran and Cairney to the Task and Finish Group. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

2026/081.2 TO UNDERTAKE SCORING OF TENDERS FOR INTERNAL WORKS AT MANOR OFFICE

Scoring of tenders did not proceed.

2026/081.3 TO APPOINT A CONTRACTOR FOR INTERNAL WORKS AT MANOR OFFICE

Appointment of a contractor did not proceed. The resulting appointment would be brought back to Full Council for ratification.

2026/082 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting date was **noted** as Tuesday 17 November 2026.

2026/083 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)

2026/084 OLD LANDSCORE SCHOOL

Members considered the confidential report on Old Landscore School.

Decision: It was **resolved** to authorise that the Town Clerk obtain legal review and lease related works for Old Landscore School up to a cost of £4,200.00 from EMR 344 (OLS project).

Decision: A task and finish group would be established to review Old Landscore School submissions and any documentation and to make recommendations back to Full Council.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** expenditure of up to £500.00 from EMR 344 (OLS project) for external tidy-up work if required.

2026/085 REPORTS PACK

Signed ……

Dated……