CREDITON
TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Oversight Committee of the Democratic Services held on Tuesday, October 27, 2026 at 19:30, in The White Room Creative Space.

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

In Attendance: 2 members of the public
3 councillors

Minute Taker: Rachel Avery, Town Clerk

MINUTES

65 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Cllr Backhouse opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, and members introduced themselves.

66 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Public questions and comments were raised as follows:

- A member of the public challenged the quality of several policies scheduled for review, particularly the anti-fraud and safeguarding documents. The Chair confirmed that the policies would be deferred to the December meeting for fuller review, and officers clarified that the safeguarding policy had been issued as an external template and would be reviewed
- Identification by a member of the public regarding a serious weakness in the Council's redaction process was raised. A demonstration of documentation provided to members showing that information hidden in published documents could be recovered by copying and pasting text into a basic editor was provided, and the member of public stated that the issue appeared across historic documents dating back to at least 2015, including Freedom of Information responses. Members acknowledged the seriousness of the issue, accepted the warning, and agreed that the current redaction method must be reviewed urgently. The member of pubic stated that they would be reporting the matter to the ICO and would send further information by email. Members recognised the point, thanked the speaker for raising it, and noted that the flaw appeared to be caused by the method of redaction rather than any sophisticated attempt to bypass protection.

67 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

68 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS

68.1 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.

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

No dispensation requests had been received.

69 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Members **noted** that decisions would continue to be taken with the climate emergency at the forefront of policy and decision-making. Cllr Downes requested that MDDC be invited to a future meeting regarding Emergency Planning.

70 ORDER OF BUSINESS

There were no changes to the order of business.

71 CHAIR'S AND CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were informed that Cllr Frisby had resigned from the committee, creating two vacancies, to be referred to full council for appointments to be made. Appreciation was recorded for her service.

72 OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

73 FINANCE

73.1 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE BANK TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN 01 SEPTEMBER 2026 AND 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** transactions between 01 September 2026 to 30 September. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

73.2 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

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

73.3 TO NOTE BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Bank account balances to 30 September 2026 were **noted**.

73.4 TO NOTE YOUTH FINANCES TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

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

73.5 TO NOTE YEAR TO DATE BUDGET TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

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

73.6 TO NOTE EARMARKED RESERVES BALANCES TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

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

74 SCHEDULE OF REGULAR PAYMENTS 2026/27

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the schedule of Regular Payments for 2026/27. (Proposed by Cllr Cochran)

75 S106 FUNDS

Cllr Backhouse introduced the item with reference to progress at St Lawrence Green, where S106 funding was helping to deliver picnic benches with disabled access. This prompted wider consideration of how other allocations could be pursued more effectively. Members referred to a range of identified funding lines, including Jubilee Gardens, and an inset bus stop proposal at St Lawrence Green. The discussion highlighted that some opportunities were difficult to interpret because the published MDDC information was broad and lacked detailed explanation.
Cllrs Brookes-Hocking and Cochran emphasised that Section 106 funding is held and administered by MDDC and is often difficult to unlock, even where there is local support.

Cllr Cochran declared an interest due to sitting on the MDDC panel that decides on allocation, not voting on Crediton-specific allocations

Members **noted** that district councillors have greater access to the process but also agreed that CTC should maintain a clearer local record of available and used allocations.

Standing orders were suspended

A member of the public argued that funding had sat unused for too long and that local pressure had been needed to generate movement. Members accepted that more persistent follow-up was justified, while also stressing that some money had already been successfully allocated to projects such as the paddling pool, skate park, and other local improvements.

The meeting also touched on the relationship between Section 106 and CIL. Members noted that future agreements were being drafted more broadly and that there was growing appetite at district level to revisit the balance between the two systems.

Standing orders were reinstated

Decision: It was **resolved** to adopt a more proactive approach to monitoring available Section 106 funding streams and developing projects. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)
Decision: The creation of a register of known Section 106 funding opportunities was **approved**, to support ongoing review. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

76 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF POLICIES

76.1 TO REVIEW AND ADOPT THE FOLLOWING POLICIES

AI Usage Policy: Members considered amendments requiring data protection impact assessments for new AI systems, pre-procurement assessment of software containing AI functionality, clearer rules on evidence before alleging AI misuse, and a strengthened statement that human judgement remains central to decision-making. Members also reviewed environmental wording covering energy, carbon, and water use.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the AI Usage Policy, with proposed amendments, noting review every 3-6 months. (Proposed by Cllr Backhouse)

Code of Conduct: Members broadly preferred the newer draft to the previous version and recognised its alignment with civility and respect expectations. Discussion nevertheless highlighted discomfort with subjective wording around what a reasonable person would consider proper behaviour and concern that sanctions remain limited. Members noted the importance of councillor training on the Code of Conduct and acknowledged that not all members had completed the relevant session available through DALC.

Decision: It was **resolved** to approve the revised Code of Conduct. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

76.2 TO RECEIVE THE LEAD YOUTH WORKERS REPORT REGARDING THE SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION REPORT AND ASSOCIATED POLICY, AND TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION THEREIN

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

77 TOWN SQUARE

A brief verbal update was provided by the Town Clerk regarding the transfer of the Town Square, noting that no response had been received from Homes England. The Town Clerk had requested an update on 21 October, with a response awaited.

78 COMMUNITY BULLETIN

Members **noted** that an application had been submitted to the Devon County Council Locality Fund for £800.00 towards the development and launch of the Community Bulletin, with a decision pending.
Members considered promotional opportunities for the bulletin, including use of the St Lawrence Green phone box installation and other local publicity methods.
A community stakeholder event in January 2027 to support the bulletin initiative was **noted**, with promotion of the event commencing as part of the Christmas in Crediton programme.

Decision: The pending £800.00 Locality Fund application outcome was **noted**.
Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** expenditure of £200.00 plus VAT for advertising and £68.00 for design work. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)
Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve**, in principle, a community stakeholder event in January 2027 to support the Community Bulletin initiative. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

79 PENSIONS

Members had expected a meeting in early October about LPPI and related pension investment matters, but no update had been received.

80 LAPTOP PURCHASE

Members reviewed the report regarding replacement options for failing laptops.

Decision: The purchase of two refurbished laptops was **approved** as the preferred replacement route. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)
Decision: Authority was approved to spend up to £1000.00 per refurbished laptop, plus configuration costs, to be delegated to the Town Clerk. (Proposed by Cllr Huxtable)

81 CTC GRANTS

81.1 TO APPROVE THE DRAFT COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the amended Community Grants Policy, as recommended by the Grants Sub-Committee. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

81.2 TO APPROVE THE SMALL GRANTS APPLICATION FORM

Decision: It was resolved to approve the Small Grants Application Form. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

81.3 TO APPROVE THE LARGE GRANTS APPLICATION FORM

Decision: It was resolved to approve the Large Grants Application Form. (Proposed by Cllr Harris)

82 TOWN SURVEY

Members considered proposals for the Town Survey and agreed the survey questions, timetable and distribution arrangements.

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** the Town Survey questions, timetable and delivery arrangements. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)
Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** distribution of the survey via an A5 leaflet with QR code access and paper copies available on request, with members distributing the leaflet. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

Decision: It was **resolved** to **approve** expenditure from the existing Public Consultation budget, with authority delegated to the Town Clerk to utilise Neighbourhood Planning earmarked reserves if required. (Proposed by Cllr Brookes-Hocking)

83 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members **noted** that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 8 December 2026, at Crediton Library.

APPENDIX

84 REPORTS PACK

Signed ……

Dated……