

Minutes of a meeting of CREWKERNE TOWN COUNCIL held in the Beech Suite, George Reynolds Centre, South Street, Crewkerne on Monday 28 July 2025.

PRESENT

Cllrs. S. Ashton, N. Draycott, K. Head, P. Maxwell, J. Morris, J. Nathan, C. Rawe, A. Samuel, A. Stuart, and S. Woodland.

In attendance: Acting Town Clerk G. Hughes.

16 members of the public were present.

034 TO NOTE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

25/26

Cllrs. Best and Livesley (personal).

035 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

25/26

Cllrs Head, Morris and Samuel declared an interest in agenda item 042/2526 as they are members of the League of Friends.

036 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2025

25/26

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2025 were AGREED.

037 PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

25/26

A member of the public raised several concerns, noting that the hospital provides essential nursing care, rehabilitation, and end-of-life services for residents across the county. They expressed concern that replacing this care with community-based alternatives would result in a reduced level of care. They also highlighted the risk of increased pressure on acute hospitals due to bed blocking. It was further noted that there are unused rooms at the hospital and suggested that new services could be added alongside retaining the existing beds.

A second speaker referred to the previous formation of the Action for Retention of Crewkerne Hospital (ARCH), which had successfully opposed past closure plans. They expressed strong support for retaining the beds and emphasised the importance of preserving these services locally.

038 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

25/26

a. Somerset Councillors

Cllr Ashton reported that an emergency had been declared within Somerset Council's Planning Department, resulting in a restriction on referrals to the Planning Committee. It was noted that the department is currently unable to meet statutory timescales, with widespread delays in processing applications. This raises the risk of applicants appealing on the grounds of non-determination. Cllr Ashton highlighted that if 90% of such appeals are successful, the Government may consider removing Somerset Council's planning authority.

b. Local Community Network (LCN) representative

Cllr. Head reported that there had been no recent meetings.

c. Crewkerne Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT)

A written report had been circulated in advance. A police representative attended the meeting and explained the bidding system in place for requesting additional policing resources. Towns are able to submit bids, which are then presented by the Chief Inspector at a force-level meeting. Allocation of resources is based on an assessment of threat, harm, and risk. It was noted that, in practice, these additional resources are usually directed towards larger urban areas such as Bristol, Yeovil, or Shepton Mallet.

039 **CLERK'S PROGRESS REPORT**

25/26

The Acting Town Clerk reported that:

- Trains will no longer stop at Crewkerne Station until further notice. The prolonged dry weather has caused the ground beneath the tracks to shrink, affecting track levels and making it unsafe for trains to stop. A replacement bus service will be in operation.
- The A356 through Misterton will be closed from 31st July until 29th August between 8am and 6pm, weekdays only
- Surface dressing works are scheduled on the A30 between Crewkerne and East Chinnock, requiring a road closure on 8th and 10th September from 9.30am to 3.00pm. The road will remain open outside these times and throughout 9th September.
- The yellow box junctions at the top of South Street have been refreshed

040 **FINANCE**

25/26

a. To approve the accounts for payment for July 2025 as listed

Cllr. Stuart made a declaration of interest regarding an expense claim. Cllr. Head verified the accounts for payment in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. Accounts for payment for 28 July 2025 in the sum of £52,126.09 were APPROVED.

b. To report the bank reconciliation for June 2025 has been completed

Cllr. Head verified the bank reconciliation for June 2025. It was noted that cash in hand as of 30 June 2025 was £940,147.10.

c. To note that the monthly accounts for the War Memorial Commemoration Trust have been checked

Cllr. Head verified the Trust accounts and it was noted that cash in hand as of 30 June 2025 was £4,989.04.

d. To receive Q1 income and expenditure summary

Councillors noted that the cemetery income was lower than expected. The clerk explained that this was due to a reduced number of burials and interments.

041 **PLANNING**

25/26

To consider applications requiring comment before the next Planning and Highways Committee meeting:

a) 25/01821/TCA 2 Bincombe House Popleswell Crewkerne Somerset TA18 7ES

Notification of intent to fell No. 2 Horse chestnuts – 13ft tall and 10ft tall likely planted by squirrels. Needs to be removed as likely to grow too big eventually and dangerously close to a land drop. Carry out Tree Surgery works to No. 1 Cypress Tree – Some tidying where dead and loose branches are overhanging thus dangerous within a Conservation Area.

Councillors noted that the application was not accompanied by an arborist report, and therefore the proposed works appear to be based on opinion rather than professional assessment.

Councillors wished for these matters to be raised in the submitted feedback.

b) 25/01659/REM Land At Gold Well Farm Yeovil Road Crewkerne Somerset

Application for the approval of reserved matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for the development of 67 No. dwellings and associated works pursuant to Condition 1 ('the reserved matters') of outline planning permission 20/03708/OUT. The outline planning application was not an Environmental Impact (EIA) Application.

Councillors noted the following points:

- There appear to be few significant changes from the original outline permission.
- Although the development lies within the boundary of Merriott Parish Council (MPC), Cllr Ashton advised that MPC were likely to take Crewkerne's lead due to the site's proximity to the town. MPC had agreed that any community payments should be allocated to Crewkerne.
- Concerns were raised regarding the safety of the junction and its impact on parental parking for the nearby school.
- The Taylor Wimpey development will result in increased traffic, with a larger junction and traffic lights proposed at Ashlands Road. While this may improve pedestrian safety, it could affect parking and lead to congestion, potentially blocking access to the development.
- Cllr Ashton confirmed that access was approved as part of the outline application. Although concerns had been raised during school collection times, these were overruled by Highways.

A representative of the applicant was permitted to speak by the Chair. He advised that three parking spaces were allocated on-site for school use and that the developers had acquired additional land adjacent to the pillbox. While this would require a separate planning application, they were open to engaging in discussions about its use for parking. He also confirmed that all proposed dwellings would include air source heat pumps and insulation levels above the minimum standard.

Councillors requested that comments reflecting these points be submitted in response to the application.

c) 25/01693/FUL Land At 346017 109612 Higher Easthams Lane Crewkerne Somerset

Creation of a wetland with associated development including construction of an in-take/out-take to the Viney Brook, earthworks and landscaping and excavation of land.

Councillors noted that this phosphate mitigation measure relates to the Taylor Wimpey development, which lies outside the Crewkerne parish boundary. Concerns were raised regarding the future ownership and ongoing maintenance of the wetland. Additionally,

questions were raised about whether the stream's water volume would remain sufficient, particularly during periods of very dry weather.

Councillors APPROVED the application and requested that the clerk submit comments reflecting the discussion.

042 CREWKERNE HOSPITAL

25/26 To discuss and consider the Council's response to the proposed closure.

Councillor Head wished to comment that the League of Friends (LoF) previously met with the Chief Operating Officer of Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and initially supported the closure of beds in favour of introducing additional services at the hospital. However, with new information emerging, the LoF now feel they have been misled. They have reviewed their position and subsequently met with the Integrated Care Board to explore alternative options. These include maintaining the current number of beds while adding other services or reducing the beds by half alongside new services. It is anticipated that a public consultation will take place through drop-in sessions.

The Chair (Cllr. Samuel) and Vice-Chair (Cllr. Head) declared an interest, alongside Cllr. Morris, and left the meeting. Councillors then elected Cllr. Stuart to act as Chair for the duration of the agenda item.

Councillors discussed the following points:

- The hospital is currently underutilised and should have a stronger focus on community services.
- Adding additional services appears to come at the expense of reducing bed numbers.
- The priority should be to maintain the current level of provision.

It was AGREED to delegate the Clerk to write to the Chief Operating Officer and Adam Dance MP to oppose the closure, emphasising that the Council supports adding services alongside retaining the existing number of beds.

Councillors Head, Morris and Samuel returned to the meeting.

043 CREWKERNE BOARDS

25/26 To approve the artwork for the three 'Welcome to Crewkerne' boards.

The artwork was approved with a few minor amendments.

044 TELEPHONE BOX

25/26 To consider potential future uses.

A discussion took place around different uses for the phone box, including a seed swap or using some of the artistic members of the community.

It was AGREED for the Clerk to consult with the community for their opinions.

045 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

25/26 To consider a request from the Steering Group for a financial contribution towards finalising the draft plan.

The Clerk confirmed that funding for the Neighbourhood Plan is no longer available. The Steering Group aims to have the draft plan finalised by September. Councillor Ashton advised that the Plan

would remain valid even if Crewkerne were to be split into two wards. Councillors agreed that the Plan is a good reflection of the views of local residents and should be supported.

It was AGREED to allocate up to £1,000 to support the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan.

046 **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES AND APPROVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS THEREIN**
25/26

- a. Planning and Highways Committee 14 July 2025
- b. Policy and Resources Committee 9 June 2025
- c. Joint Burial Committee 3 June 2025
- d. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 15 July 2025
- e. Reports from Town Council representatives to outside bodies

Councillors Ashton and Head commented that they had recently attended a Business Group meeting. Concerns were raised over the proposal to relocate the bus stop. The group plan to submit their objections to Highways.

All minutes above were duly noted and any recommendations contained therein AGREED.

047 **TO RECEIVE MATTERS OF REPORT (for information only)**
25/26

The Chair read the following statements:

'I wish to inform you that Katharine Sheehan, our Town Clerk, has left her position with effect from 23 July 2025. On behalf of the Council, we would like to thank Katharine for her service and contribution during her time with us and wish her the best for the future.

I wish to inform you that our Finance Officer will be leaving her role with her last day being Wednesday 10 September 2025. She has given ten years of dedicated service. On behalf of the Council, we extend our sincere thanks for her commitment and hard work over the past decade, and we wish her all the very best for the future.'

Councillors raised the following points:

- The Awe and Wonder weaving event was well attended and considered a great success. Councillors welcomed the collaboration with the museum.
- Cllr Samuel recently welcomed the Scouts to the Town Hall to discuss community issues. Concerns were raised about dog fouling and litter. The Scouts were encouraged to report incidents of dog fouling to Somerset Council via the website, and a community litter pick may be arranged in the future.
- The Royal British Legion will be hosting events for VJ Day, including a proclamation by the Town Crier alongside the Deputy Mayor, followed by a service at the Methodist Church.
- Waitrose is nearing completion of its refurbishment. Turnover has been higher than anticipated, and further improvements are expected, including the introduction of an ANPR system in the car park.
- It was noted that there are two dead trees near the Henhayes Centre, alongside the clothing bank. The Clerk is trying to establish ownership.

048 **NEXT MEETING**
25/26

Monday 22 September 2025, 18.45, Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square, Crewkerne.

049 **GRC MANAGER**
25/26 To agree the recruitment pack

The recruitment pack was approved; however, due to the current staffing shortage and ongoing recruitment, it was AGREED to postpone advertising the vacancy.

050 **FINANCE OFFICER**
25/26 To agree the recruitment pack

The recruitment pack was AGREED with the vacancy to be advertised as soon as possible.

051 **BANKING HUB**
25/26 To consider a request for an extension to the agreement.

Councillors remarked that the town is fortunate to have a banking hub, and the extension was AGREED.

052 **YOUTH SERVICE**
25/26 a. To receive an update on the Youth Service contract

An update was received regarding the Youth Service contract and associated matters. It was AGREED to fund core costs until the end of the financial year, on the condition that children from the Youth Zone will not be permitted to re-join once they have left the group, and that the Service Level Agreement will be renegotiated in March.

b. To consider Happy Valley outreach options

It was AGREED that additional outreach couldn't be justified due to the increase in core costs.

The meeting closed at 20.35.

Signed:

Dated:

TC28July2025