Minutes of a meeting of CREWKERNE TOWN COUNCIL held in the Beech Suite, George Reynolds Centre, South Street, Crewkerne on Monday 26 October 2026.

PRESENT

Cllrs. R. Cosgrove, N. Draycott, C. Emmerson, K. Head, D. Livesley, P. Maxwell, J. Morris, J. Nathan, C. Rawe and A. Samuel (Mayor) and A. Stuart

In attendance: G. Hughes (Town Clerk), S. Syeda Bowen (Deputy Town Clerk), Cllr. S. Ashton (Unitary Councillor) and one member of the public.

The Mayor confirmed that Councillor Emmerson had signed and delivered their Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the meeting.

100 26/27 **TO NOTE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Best (personal reasons)

The reasons for absence were APPROVED.

101 26/27 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Emmerson declared an interest in item 118/2627 as an acquaintance of a hirer, and Councillor Head declared an interest in item 116/2627 as a member of CUDOS.

102 **MINUTES**

26/27 To confirm the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 21 September 2026

The minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on 21 September 2026 were AGREED as a true and accurate record.

103 26/27 **PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

A member of the public raised concerns about access to medical appointments for non-drivers, the lack of flu and COVID-19 vaccinations at Henhayes Centre, bus routes not serving North Street, Ashlands Road and East Street, unsuitable Taunton College bus times, and the number of vacant shops in the town.

Councillor Head, as Chair of the League of Friends, will continue raising health centre concerns with the Trust. She explained that the diagnostic hub was commissioned and funded at a higher level, with Martock central to Symphony's practices. Discussions are progressing, and changes may come in time. Empty shops are privately owned, and London House is currently for sale.

104 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:**

26/27 a. Somerset Councillors

Councillor Ashton advised that Somerset Rivers Authority grants are beginning to be paid, starting with larger projects. He also explained that a severe drought order had been imposed on Wimbleball Reservoir to allow South West Water to pump water from the river 24/7, rather than because the reservoir was at risk of running dry.

b. Local Community Network (LCN) representative

The Clerk reported that a Highways LCN meeting had taken place, attended by six Highways officers and, for the first time, a representative from the Car Parks Team. A further LCN meeting featured Clare Moody, Police and Crime Commissioner. Updates were also provided on the Westlands Leisure Complex and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West.

At an Active Travel meeting, Space4Crewkerne requested that vegetation overhanging the pavements on Blacknell Lane be cleared.

c. Crewkerne Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT)

Councillors received an updated quarterly crime statistics report, which included a comparison with data from the same period in the previous year. Queries were raised regarding some of the categories, and the Clerk was asked to seek further clarification.

105 26/27 **CLERK'S PROGRESS REPORT**

The Town Clerk reported that repairs to the Bincombe wall were underway. The contractors expect to be on site for approximately two months before pausing over the winter and returning for a further two months next year.

The grant application window has now closed.

An 80s Night will take place at the George Reynolds Centre at the end of November. Tickets can be purchased by scanning the QR code on the posters or via the link on the Council's Facebook page.

106 **FINANCE AND PROCEDURE**

26/27 a. To approve the accounts for payment for September 2026 as listed.

Cllr. Nathan verified the accounts for payment in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. Accounts for payment for 30 September 2026 in the sum of £53,135.79 were APPROVED.

b. To report that the bank reconciliation for September 2026 has been completed

Cllr. Nathan verified the bank reconciliations for September 2026. It was noted that cash in hand as of 30 September 2026 was £1,034,600.12.

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

Cllr. Nathan verified the Trust accounts, and it was noted that cash in hand as of 30 September 2026 was £8,082.95.

d. To receive the quarterly income and expenditure summary

The quarterly report was noted. Councillors asked if all the variances could have explanations.

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e. To note the quarterly investment performance report

The quarterly investment report was noted.

107 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

26/27 To review and approve an updated Terms of Reference for the Planning and Highways Committee

Councillors RESOLVED to approve the amended Terms of Reference.

108 **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

26/27 To receive the recommendation from the Joint Burial Committee for arrangements for the 2027 season

The recommendation from the Joint Burial Committee regarding arrangements for the 2027 season was considered and approved. Councillors commented that they would like to see more maintenance at Bincombe, and requested that the leaves are cleared from the churchyard.

109 **ROOM HIRE**

26/27 To consider a request for free room hire

Councillors considered a request from Freefest Community Events CIC for free room hire at the George Reynolds Centre for a Ladies Night fundraising event on 12 December 2026.

Councillors expressed their support for the Freefest event but felt that the nature of the event was not appropriate for the Council to be formally associated with. It was noted that requests for free room hire should be made through the Council's grant application process. Councillors also felt that waiving the hire charge would not align with the Council's aim of generating income through the George Reynolds Centre, and that any support provided should be dealt with through a grant rather than by recording the room hire as free.

It was RESOLVED to decline the request for free room hire.

110 **OPENING HOURS**

26/27 To consider Christmas opening hours for the council office

It was RESOLVED to approve the closure of the Council offices and Local Information Centre from Thursday 24 December 2026 until Monday 4 January 2027 inclusive, reopening on Tuesday 5 January 2027. It was further agreed that office staff could choose to work during this period, rather than take annual leave, by prior agreement with the Clerk.

The Clerk clarified that the Grounds Team would continue to empty the bins over the Christmas period and that she would remain available by telephone and would continue to monitor emails.

111 **GRC NEWSLETTER**

26/27 To approve the autumn newsletter

Councillors commented that the newsletter was bright and colourful. It was noted that the Freefest event was now being advertised in Chard and should therefore be removed from the newsletter.
It was RESOLVED to approve the newsletter, subject to this amendment.

012 **TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:**
26/27

a) Reports from Town Council representatives to outside bodies
b) Joint Burial Committee: 7 September 2026
c) Planning & Highways Committee: 7 September 2026
d) Policy & Resources Committee: 8 June 2026

No reports had been received from outside bodies. It was RESOLVED that the minutes under items b) to d) be received and agreed.

113 **TO RECEIVE MATTERS OF REPORT (for information only)**
26/27

Councillors discussed the following matters:

- Councillor Rawe had attended a Birds Almshouses meeting and reported that everything was in order, with one person currently on the waiting list.
- At the Somerset Playing Fields Awards, Happy Valley received a Bronze Award and Henhayes received a Commendation.
- The Twinning Association was making arrangements for its visit to France on 6 May.
- The Friends of Crewkerne Station had received the Somerset Chair's Award.
- A planning application had been submitted for the removal of 20 trees and the reduction of a further 31 at Brickyard Lane. The site borders Bincombe and the proposals would affect the view from the area. The Tree Officer was due to undertake a site visit.
- Somerset Council was beginning to challenge residents who leave their bins on pavements for prolonged periods.
- Storm damage to trees at Bincombe, Henhayes and Happy Valley had been reported.
- Councillor Livesley queried why the Grounds Team parked on the hardstanding outside the Town Hall. It was explained that they were generally collecting or dropping off items.
- Tree debris on Hinton Hill and loose stones on the path to the church were highlighted.
- Concerns were raised that part of the Waitrose car park was dark at night, with two lights reportedly not working.

114 **NEXT MEETING**
26/27

Monday 23 November 2026, 18.45, Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square, Crewkerne.

Councillor Maxwell left the meeting and did not return.

It was AGREED that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted it was advisable that the public and press be excluded and were instructed to withdraw. No members of the public or press were present.

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION: EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC – Staffing and commercially sensitive information

115 **TIME MANAGEMENT**
26/27 a. to consider quotations for staff time recording machines at three locations

It was RESOLVED to purchase three BioTime face recognition machines at a cost of £425 for the first machine and £295 for each additional machine.

b. to review and adopt a Time Recording and Attendance Policy

It was RESOLVED to adopt the Time Recording and Attendance Policy. Councillors also requested that the procedures be reviewed with all staff after three months.

116 **ANNUAL HIRE CHARGES**
26/27 To review the annual hire charges

It was RESOLVED to implement increases to the annual hire charges for 2026/27 in line with inflation. It was further RESOLVED to adopt the following definitions to ensure consistency in the application of hire charges at the George Reynolds Centre (GRC) and Victoria Hall:

- 'Peak Hire' - applies to bookings on Fridays and Saturdays between 19:00 and midnight at both venues.
- 'Out-of-Hours Hire' - applies to bookings between midnight and 05:00 at both venues.
- 'Off-Peak Hire' - applies to bookings outside the designated peak and out-of-hours periods.
- 'Kitchen Use (Light Use)' - applies where the kitchen is used for limited preparation or serving of refreshments, such as making tea and coffee using a kettle, serving pre-prepared food or using work surfaces and sinks. Light use does not include cooking, heating or reheating food or drinks, other than boiling water in a kettle for making tea and coffee. Use of the freezer, dishwasher, cooker or microwave is not permitted.
- 'Kitchen Use (Full Use)' - applies where the kitchen is used for any cooking, heating or reheating of food or drinks (other than boiling water in a kettle), or where the freezer, dishwasher, cooker or microwave is used. The use of an urn also constitutes full use, as does the use of crockery and/or utensils for more than 30 persons. Full use also includes any other substantial use of the kitchen facilities beyond the scope of light use.
- 'Sessions' - A session for the kitchen, bar or Council Chamber is a period of hire not exceeding five hours, falling within one of the following time periods:
    - Morning: 08:00–12:59
    - Afternoon: 13:00–17:59
    - Evening: 18:00–23:00

  Alternative session times may be agreed in writing by the Council. Kitchen and bar use must be booked in advance. Bar use is subject to the relevant licensing requirements and any conditions specified by the Council.

It was further RESOLVED that out-of-hours bookings would be charged at the peak hourly rate.

117 **GRC TENANCY ARRANGEMENTS**
26/27 To review the existing arrangements

Councillors reviewed the existing tenancy arrangements and agreed that further information, including an independent valuation from the District Valuer, was required before making a decision.

It was RESOLVED to defer the item to a future meeting pending receipt of this information.

118 **AGED DEBTORS**
26/27 To consider two outstanding debtors

Councillor Emmerson left the room

Councillors RESOLVED to write off an outstanding invoice no. 6126 for £228.28, dated 8 September 2026 in accordance with Financial Regulation 13.3 due to non-payment.

Councillor Emmerson returned to the room.

Councillors discussed outstanding invoice 6054 for £82.48, dated 29 April 2026. The hirer had paid a refundable bond of £100, with the balance of £17.52 due to be refunded upon receipt of payment of the invoice. As the invoice remained unpaid, Councillors considered whether the balance should be refunded.

It was RESOLVED not to refund any monies, pending advice from the Internal Auditor on the appropriate procedure.

The meeting closed at 19.55

Signed: ……

Dated: ……..

TC26October2026

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