

Agenda item 7

For decision: To enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Vision for Frome to take on the custodianship of Frome's Community Plan 2020 - 2028

Author: Paul Wynne, Town Clerk

Summary

This report proposes that FTC enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Vision for Frome to take over the custodianship of the Frome Community Plan 2008 – 2028. The MoU states that FTC would carry out a review of the Plan every two years. The remaining budget (circa £6,000) of V4F would be transferred to FTC to cover the cost of the reviews. The MoU last until 2025.

Background

Vision for Frome (V4F) was established in 2006 to undertake a community initiative to identify the aspirations of the Frome Community on how they wished to see their town develop over the future years.

A wide range of consultation events and methods were used to enable as many members of the community as possible to input into the process. The final plan, spanning 2008 to 2028, was completed and called [The Vision for Frome Community Plan 2008-2028](#).

In 2015, FTC and V4F jointly funded a review of the Community Plan. The review concluded that the Community Plan was “still very current”, that three new objectives were required and an additional 15 projects needed to be added. Some projects were marked as completed.

Many of the proposals in the Community Plan were incorporated into the Town Council's corporate strategy in 2011 and in subsequent annual work programmes. It has also been used as evidence in support of funding applications, for example, and used to inform the Mendip Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.

In short, many of the proposals in the Community Plan have been or are being taken forward by FTC, MDC and others. The question of whether there was still a need for V4F, as the custodian of the Community Plan, was raised with Cllr Macfadyen and myself by Charles Wood, chair of V4F, earlier this year. V4F have concluded that its job is done and it is not necessary to continue as an organisation, so long as the custodianship is taken on by the Town Council. The result of these discussions is the proposal to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (draft document is at the end of this report) with V4F to safeguard the future of the Community Plan and allow V4F to disband.

The proposals

While V4F has agreed it no longer needs to exist as an entity, there is a strong desire to keep the Frome Community Plan and that it should remain in the ownership of the community. It is

proposed that the Town Council will become the custodian of the Community Plan on behalf of the community and carry out a public review to monitor progress and update the Plan if necessary.

This review would seek to involve all interested groups in the community. The task of carrying out the review would probably be contracted out to retain the independence of Community Plan. The next review would take place this coming winter. The MoU states that the Town Council will carry out a review every other year until 2025.

Following a review, the Town Council would consider whether to re-adopt a revised Community Plan.

Residual V4F funds (currently around £6,000) would be passed to FTC and be lodged in an EMR to cover the costs of the reviews until 2025 when FTC will consider the validity of the Plan.

The V4F [website](#) contains relevant documents and is still accessed periodically by people wishing to see what the Community Plan contains. Retaining and maintaining it will fall to the Town Council and be incorporated into FTC current IT management systems. There will be a link from the FTC website to the V4F one.

V4F will transfer the file archive and any other assets to the Town Council and usable things like the projector and the screen will be made available to the community. The document archive will be sent to the Somerset Records Office when FTC sends the next tranche of its own files.

Recommendation

Instruct the Town Clerk to sign the V4F Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of FTC.

DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

Vision for Frome and Frome Town Council

BACKGROUND

1. Vision for Frome (V4F) was established in late 2006 early 2007 to undertake a community initiative to identify the aspirations of the Frome Community on how they wished to see their town develop over the future years. This was then brought within the established Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI), sponsored and funded by the then South West Regional Development Agency, to enable towns in the South West to each draw up a Community Plan for their town spanning 20 years. V4F then contracted with the Market and Coastal Towns Agency (MCTA), the MCTI implementation authority, to deliver a Frome Community Plan by June 2008.

2. V4F constituted itself as an Unincorporated Association with members and a Management Team, with MCTA, Mendip District Council and Mendip Community Support staff attending as necessary to provide advice and practical support. Using £30,000 of funds provided by the MCTA, a wide ranging community consultation period was then undertaken, to determine what the Frome Community wanted to see happen in six areas of application: Economy, Getting Around, Housing and Heritage, Land/Energy/Food/Waste, Health and Wellbeing, and Young People. Additional £25,000 of funds were provided by Mendip District Council so that the consultations could contribute to, and in some cases be run jointly, in their requirement to concurrently develop a Local Plan for Mendip. A wide range of consultation events and methods were used, with a paid coordinator, to give maximum opportunity for the general Frome population to contribute and for specific sectors to give of their expertise. Effort was made to reach all sectors of the Frome Community, including the more difficult (e.g. the elderly, the disabled, the young and the traveller community), together with views from the surrounding villages who have a stake in what Frome has to offer.
3. The first version of the Community Plan was completed and delivered to the MCTA in June 2008, and was accepted as a suitable product to meet the MCTA contracted requirement. However, it was viewed that the Plan could do with further development, in particular for panels and workshops of people and town organisations with particular interests and expertise to review, help develop and refine the six areas of application and their respective chapters. The final plan, spanning 2008 to 2028, was completed and delivered to the Town Council in May 2009.
4. The V4F role then changed to one of custodians of the Plan, with the mission to facilitate the achievement of its objectives and underlying project list. Frome was at the very top end of the size of towns taken on by the MCTA, and the further mission with the plan was of a different character to those much smaller towns, like Lyme Regis, who established development groups or agencies from the Plan generators to initiate much of what was required for them. In Frome there were so many groups active in almost all the areas of application that this kind of initiative by V4F was unnecessary. The V4F mission became one of networking, support for fund raising (using the very solid provenance the Plan provided), and in any other way the community at large could be supported in their activities relevant to the **Plan's** objectives. What was not achieved was any significant interest from the Town Council of the day.
5. A further major change to the need and role of V4F came about when the IfF took over the town council in 2011. The Plan was taken off the **Council's** shelf and its objectives taken as a template for the **Council's** work for their first four year tenure. It remains an informing document for the continuing Council work in this four year period, and has informed many other activities, not least the content of the Mendip Local Plan as it applies to Frome, and the **Town's** own Neighbourhood Plan. One strong focus for the Town Council has been community involvement, now further developed with panels and a very open community oriented way of running Council meetings. This makes the role of V4F of much lower significance, and the long serving Management Team have now done enough time without any significant prospect of replacements coming forward. It is time for V4F to take a back seat and let the current baton carriers continue with the very real progress being made in the town.
6. In doing so it is important that firstly the Frome Community Plan be maintained and kept within the ownership of the Frome Community at large. To maintain its provenance periodic reviews and updates will be necessary, as was funded by the Council and V4F in 2013 following the "Participate **Frome**" activity. The history and base information held by V4F on its website, and its use as a potential good source of current community information on how the Plan is progressing, should be considered, as should the

allocation of the remaining V4F funds, the use of its assets (including projection equipment) and its contact list. It is a common V4F and Council view that suitable arrangements with the Council could be made to keep the legacy of the Plan and its objectives alive, kicking and current, whilst maintaining the principle of Community ownership and involvement.

AGREED FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

FOR THE COMMUNITY PLAN

7. The Town Council will take over the custodianship of the Frome Community Plan 2008 - 2028, and its future updating. Ownership will remain with the Frome community at large. Measures will be implemented to enable the community to be fully involved as required in the periodic review and update of the Plan. As for the original Plan generation, the review would seek to involve all interested communities and groups, to help oversee the **Plan's** management and community provenance. A review period to examine the currency, validity and progress, and possible addition to, the **Plan's** objectives and underlying projects would be aimed to be around every two years, at a cost of around £1000 per review based on the joint Town Council and V4F expenditure on the last review. The next review will take place in the winter of 2017/18 and will be considered for re-adoption by FTC as soon as possible thereafter. Subsequent reviews will occur every two years thereafter.

FOR V4F RESIDUAL FUNDS

8. Residual V4F funds (currently around £6,000) will be passed to the Council, for ring fencing to be expended in their majority on required Community Plan updates. Continuing the V4F website and **V4F's** internet contact identity, including emails, will also be supported with these residual funds.

FOR V4F ASSETS

9. V4F assets include projection equipment, display boards and material, an ancient laptop, storage boxes, and archive documents. It is agreed that these will be reviewed and where of continuing value will be held by the Town Council and made available on loan to **Frome's** community groups as their needs arise. Where equipment and archive soft and hard copy material is considered to be obsolete or of no continuing value it will be disposed of, securely where required.

FOR V4F WEBSITE AND ITS INTERNET IDENTITY

10. The V4F website contains a good archive of relevant documents, and is still accessed periodically by people wishing to see what the Community Plan contains. It forms a good purpose built resource to support the continuing Community Plan activity. Maintenance is not too demanding, albeit an update is currently overdue, but would need someone to take the lead. Residual V4F effort might be available to do this for the initial period of this MOU, with an aim for other Council or community support to be arranged to follow for as long as the website is viewed to be of value. V4F has its own email identity and server service, paid at a low cost annually. This is primarily used to send out information to a wide contact list, as well as the means to contact V4F when needed. Whether this needs to continue or be assimilated into future alternative arrangements will be decided with the Council

VISION FOR FROME

11. With the implementation of this MOU, and with the V4F **members'** agreement, V4F would disband as a separate Unincorporated Association. It is suggested that consideration

be given to its name and mission being retained as a live but dormant community capability and identity, for resurrecting should this type of community initiative arise again in the future.

LENGTH OF AGREEMENT

12. This MOU will apply from (*signature date*) until 31 March 2025, at which point a decision will be made by Frome Town Council in consultation with community groups about whether to re-adopt the Community Plan for an agreed period, produce a new Plan or close it down.

MOU AGREED

FOR VISION FOR FROME

FOR FROME TOWN COUNCIL

NAME

NAME

POSITION

POSITION

DATE

DATE