

Agenda item 6

For decision - Community development

Author: Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer

Summary

This report recommends that FTC adopt a model of community development which would better enable communities to support themselves as well as embed existing FTC projects. The proposal is to pilot this approach in the Trinity (Selwood) area of Frome in order to build on the work we have already done with groups of residents in that area.

Councillors are asked to agree this approach and to delegate development of the project to a steering group made up of staff and councillors from all three tiers of local government. This group would also draw in expertise from other organisations as required. The project would be managed by Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer.

What are the aims of this project?

The main aim is to better enable individual communities within the town to support themselves. FTC's role would be to build on earlier work with groups within those communities and broaden the engagement to involve other local people.

Working with local residents and businesses, the task will be to clearly identify not only the issues faced by local people but also the opportunities to make a difference including the skills and resources of the people living there as well as FTC and partner organisations. This will not be a talking shop – rather the expectation is that there will be real action on the ground with FTC acting as an enabler.

A new approach to community development

We are proposing to trial an approach to community development in Frome based on Nurture Development's ABCD model which has been successfully implemented in other parts of the country. It involves mobilising people to act on things they care about and want to change in their own community. Skills, knowledge and other resources are identified and valued, connections are made between residents, local organisations and informal community groups to build strong relationships and social networks. The role of the community development worker is to enable people to recognise and mobilise the skills and resources they already have.

What we propose to do

The proposal is to pilot this approach to community development over two years starting in April 2018. Initially we will focus on intensive action in one part of Frome.

We will work with residents, businesses, developers, community and housing associations, community organisations and statutory services to build new projects that will make a difference to local people. If the community desires, they will be able to take full advantage of existing town-wide projects such as litter campaigns, Community Cars, Share, Frome Reads, car clubs, the support for which is already part of FTC's work programme.

The role of the community development worker

We have learnt, in recent years, that communities are wary of FTC taking too much ownership of their work and it is important that the role of FTC in community development is to facilitate, support and, where appropriate, coordinate community members to come together. A key element of this work is to build trust and grow projects from the bottom up, whilst sharing examples of opportunities that may be relevant and achievable from both FTC's portfolio of existing projects and further afield.

To do these things in a meaningful and influential way requires regular contact, staff time and ideally a named contact within the Council. It is proposed that this is Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer, in the first instance, who will deliver a series of outputs:

- Facilitate gatherings of local people (focused on practical projects and getting to know each other)
- Identify and work alongside community 'activists' in each community identified to work in.
- Work with businesses, developers, housing associations and other organisations to identify opportunities.
- Act as a single point of contact at the Council but if the community desires, draw on the resources and time of FTC's other staff and councillors so that the benefits of town-wide projects e.g. litter campaigns, Share, Community Fridge, Car Club, charging points, renewable energy, street parties, play, sport participation, micro providers and Health Connections can be enjoyed by the community
- Be regularly accessible at a local level and where appropriate take an enabling role in creating new projects and forming residents' associations, friends' groups and similar.

Where we will work in the first instance

For this approach to be manageable, it is proposed that we start with a single community, introducing a second one when the first is up and running successfully. This rolling approach will ensure capacity and the ability to learn, develop and refine according to the individual needs of communities.

It is proposed that we trial this approach in Trinity (Selwood) in the first instance building on the work that we have been doing with the residents of that area, an area where a vibrant community group has already emerged.

How the project will be managed

A steering group of staff and Cllrs will take a strategic overview of the work, ensuring that outcomes are identified and measured, and individual communities are supported

appropriately. We will invite councillors from FTC, the District and County Councils so that we can secure the benefit of advice from all three tiers of local government and quickly address any issues that emerge once the project has started. Other organisations will be invited to make a contribution where necessary.

Measuring success

In broad terms the measurement of success of this work will be that: community members report that they are better connected and have a greater sense of community, health, wellbeing; communities are working together to overcome issues and challenges as they arise and; successful projects are up and running.

We are looking to gather qualitative feedback and anecdotal information, using impact assessment tools, which can be collated to inform future work in these and other areas. We also anticipate that these will provide facts and figures attributing to the development which takes place.

We will measure the implementation of the outputs detailed above through a delivery time line. The steering group will lead a review process at regular, quarterly, intervals.

Recommendations

1. Pilot this model of community development over a two-year period, starting in Trinity (Selwood).
2. Delegate day-to-day management of the project to Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer
3. Set up a steering group comprising staff and councillors from all three tiers of local government