

Agenda item 6

For information - 2017-18 Work Programme – end of year review

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Council Matters Committee on the delivery of the 2017-18 Work Programme.

The report summarises work that was undertaken in 2017/18 against the three pillars of the Work Programme (Environment, Prosperity, Health and Wellbeing), as well as against Finance and Marketing and Communications priorities. It highlights where there were challenges in terms of delivery (for example, because of dependence on others to deliver, budget constraint or staff capacity), as well as a brief summary of the many areas where there was positive progress.

Introduction

The Work Programme is reviewed at monthly Management Group meetings.

Managers have devised a system of RAG rating (Red / Amber / Green) the priorities within the work programme. Green indicates an action is on track for delivery or completed, Amber means an action is on track for delivery but there are potential issues that could affect this and Red means an action is not on track for delivery.

The Management Group now discuss areas of work where progress is challenging and collectively consider potential solutions to this.

The report highlights progress against each of the following areas:

1. Environment
2. Prosperity
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Marketing and Communications
5. Finance

1. Environment

Introduction: Consolidation - and managing a planned set of projects

Naturally, the focus for the Environment team over the last six months has been similar to that of the previous six months: consolidating the Rangers' work; and balancing the upkeep of the parks with supporting and delivering projects.

This approach has reflected the amount and variety of work that the team has been tasked with such as the seasonal nature of the work and the change to the team (with Mike leaving; and Ranger Toni replacing him).

And again, for the most part, we've been able to balance these things pretty well (something shown by the highlights listed below).

The last six months haven't been entirely seamless though.

The unseasonal weather in February and March – snow (twice) plus lots of rain – was a reminder that working outdoors is very much dependent on the weather and ground conditions. And this has inevitably impacted on projects and on our day to day work. For example, grass cutting has started a little later than usual and some sites are still wet underfoot. And the new Birch trees being planted in Foundry Barton are going in that little bit later.

It's also true to say that the team is now stretched in terms of time and resource and this has and is diminishing the team's ability to react to problems and opportunities and deliver on some of the planned work too. The 'to do' list is longer than we'd like.

To borrow a line from November's update, it's essential that what we're doing is sustainable, well-planned and well-managed. Maintaining the high standards that we're proud to keep is proving to be hard/er work.

Highlights over the last six months:

- A great start for Ranger Toni, who has settled brilliantly into life as Ranger (and life at FTC) over her first six months
- A new look and some TLC for the café in the park, including: replacing all the external guttering and downpipes; decoration inside and out; and restoring and improving the doors to make the building more secure
- Lots more spring bulbs have been planted, including daffodils in Mary Baily and tulips in Victoria Park
- Reacting successfully to the unseasonal snow
- Updated Management & Improvement Plans for the Old Showfield and Victoria Park
- Public consultation work in Weylands, which will inform and shape a Management & Improvement Plan for the area
- Skatepark improvements in Mary Baily
- Replacement swings in Mary Baily
- Sessions with the Discovery group (adding to the Critchill Ranger sessions)
- Spring and summer floral displays in the town centre

- Ongoing support for the residents in the Trinity area – with new bins and a community noticeboard going in soon
- New signs in and around Frome’s less formal spaces
- Planting sessions and herbal workshops at the Roundhouse being led by FROGS
- Completion of the Foundry Barton project
- Scoping out the project for new toilets in Victoria Park

Upcoming projects and work (expected between now and autumn 2019):

- Flowers for the Market Place
- A new look for the bandstand in Victoria Park
- Participatory Budgeting votes at Tower View & Packsaddle (subject to transfer from Mendip)
- Footpath improvements at the Showfield and in Victoria Park

Things that haven’t progressed:

- The improvements to the play area at the Showfield have taken far longer than expected because of the ground being so wet
- Foundry Barton has taken much longer than planned, partly due to over-ambitious expectations and the stretched capacity of the team
- Improvements to Chateau Gontier Walk have not started due to lack of staff capacity
- Tree planting on Stonebridge hasn’t started due to lack of capacity

Projects and work with concerns at present:

- The time we’ll need to spend looking after the Market Place and the fountain could be impacted by things out of our control
- Looking after the play areas at Tower View and Packsaddle is literally stretching us across the town

2. Prosperity

The Prosperity area of work delivered successfully against priorities in 2017/18. The following highlights key achievements over 2017/18 and identifies projects where the start date will be carried forward to 2018/19:

Planning & development

- The response to the Mendip District Council Local Plan Part 2, for the allocation of sites was agreed and submitted in February.
- A working group has been set up to look at the Selwood Garden Village proposals, a series of stakeholder meetings will take place to look at what Frome needs in the future, not just looking at the Selwood Garden Village but including other development sites in the town. This work will form the basis of a response to any revision of Part 1 of the Mendip Local Plan. A consultant will be engaged to assist with this project.

- Various meetings have been held to discuss parking issues in the town, in response to this we will be holding a town parking event where attendees will have the opportunity to discuss different parking issues including business and retail issues, public car parks and residential parking. The parking event is planned for later this month the aim of the event is to get an overview of parking issues throughout the town, including the outlying housing estates and the trading estates.
- Frome Town Council, working in conjunction with various stakeholders, responded to the Mendip Car Parking Strategy which was agreed and submitted in April.
- The feasibility study for the self-build housing scheme at Little Keyford Lane has established that it is not viable to take the site forward because of the highway issues. However, the site had been put forward by Mendip to be allocated as a self-build site in the draft Local Plan Part 2 and the self-build register continues to grow.
- Work continues to support initiatives around empty homes and the lack of affordable housing in Frome, through working with and supporting Fair Housing for Frome.
- Developers and land owners are responding to the policies and objectives within the Neighbourhood Plan; more pre-application discussions and enquires are being received and the Planning Advisory Group has been consulted on 130 planning applications in the last six months.

Saxonvale regeneration

- Working closely with our local authority partners on the Saxonvale Steering Group, we were successful in getting landowners to clear up the site
- With the help of agents, JLL, we have been exploring the development potential of land owned by FTC. When we first started work on this project, it seemed unlikely that surrounding land would come forward for development. However, we now know that bids have been invited for the Notts Industries Pension Fund and Terramond land. So, the next step will be to consider how our land can contribute to a wider and more comprehensive regeneration.

Remodelling of the Market Place and town centre improvements

- Phase 1 of our Market Place Remodelling project has been completed. With our partners at Mendip, we are now working on joint management arrangements and a plan for getting more markets and other events going on this site.
- We have been working to get everything in place to enable Phase 2 to be completed this calendar year. This includes the necessary approvals by the County Council. An application for Small Improvement Scheme funding has been lodged with them to help fund some of the improvements with a decision due imminently.
- We have enabled the construction of the Bert Jansch Media Centre at the Cheese & Grain which is due to be completed later this month

Support for business & enterprise

- The 2017 results from the annual Benchmarking Project have now been received. Preparations for collecting the data for 2018 are underway with the involvement of Frome College.

- Monthly Business Breakfast and Discuss & Do events held; with approx. 30 attending the Breakfast and 40 attending Discuss & Do each month.
- Micro-Enterprise support:
 - ‘Soul Traders’ meetings offering peer-to-peer support
 - Retail Group offering a platform for businesses to discuss issues and raise concerns
 - Catherine Hill Summer Pop-Up Event
- Frome Busks event held; a busking competition for under 25s held in the town centre to encourage footfall for businesses
- Support with Frome College World of Work Programme, work experience and apprenticeships
- International Work Experience project between Frome & Murrhardt
- Project to introduce a bus service to Commerce Park
- Work towards encouraging businesses to bulk-buy sustainable products and share waste providers

Transport

- Frome Community Cars was successful in breaking even last year, supporting 300 members to access the things they need. The project has now been handed over to Mendip Community Transport.
- Transport strategy and action plan was agreed at the Town Matters Committee and actions are being implemented
- E-bikes are being promoted widely for hire via Cycology
- Five electric charge points now available for electric vehicles in Frome
- Schools Active Travel Challenge is being led by Frome Town Council in partnership with Missing Links 21st – 25th May and aims to significantly cut car use.
- New bus routes with more frequent buses are being introduced by First Bus in May in part due to lobbying by FavBUG and FTC. We have also worked together to develop an integrated bus timetable which will be delivered to all households.

Energy

- Energy awareness training was provided for front-line workers to help reduce fuel poverty
- Energy challenge has been trialled successfully at Trinity First school and will be launched for local schools in November
- Solar opportunities are being explored at Commerce Park
- Climate Works have developed a zero carbon town tool based on Frome’s model which can be shared with other areas. We are also signing up to the Covenant of Mayors – a global network of zero carbon towns and cities.
- The Improve Don’t Move event on 19th May will highlight ways for households to reduce their carbon emissions and costs.
- Anna secured £3000 from E-On’s Community Fund to install a new heating system for Fair Frome and hold fuel poverty sessions in winter 2018.

Waste

- Community Fridge now diverts over 6000 items per month and has external funding until Sept 2018. Model has been replicated by 15 groups around the country.
- SHARE has 900 members and has been replicated in the UK and abroad.
- Plastic Free Frome has proven to be very popular with 70 attending a community meeting. From this a screening of 'Plastic Ocean' has been organised for 1st May and the #Take back the plastic events were organised. FTC is organising a bulk buy of non plastic products for businesses and is encouraging them to sign up to reduce plastic waste and join 'refill' campaign. We aim to achieve 'Plastic Free Town' status by autumn 2018.

Other

- Good business visits conducted monthly – impacts include more companies adopting Living Wage and taking on an apprentice.

3. Health and wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing area of work successfully delivered its priorities in 2017/18, as well as developing a new strategy and work plan for 2018/19. The following highlights key achievements over that time, as well as areas of work for focus early in 2018:

Strategy

- A health and wellbeing manager joined the FTC team in May 2018.
- A health and wellbeing stakeholder engagement event took place in November 2017, where priorities for the health and wellbeing strategy were discussed.
- A health and wellbeing strategy agreed by Council in December 2017 and work programme / budget for 2018/19 agreed. The strategy will be regularly reviewed, and regular updates will be tabled at the Town Matters Committee, via updates to Cllrs and forum members and via the health and wellbeing forum.
- The Health and Wellbeing Forum will take place twice a year. The latest one was held in April 2018 and reviewed work on the strategy, as well as starting work on mapping what is happening in Frome relating to 'food'.
- The data contained within the [Frome Town Profile](#) is a useful resource, both for staff at FTC when planning projects / priorities and for organisations around the town. A State of Frome review will take place during 2018/19 – resulting in a refreshed document that provides data about our local population on a range of issues relating to our priorities.

Partnership working

- Relationships have been established by the health and wellbeing manager with a wide range of people within and beyond Frome, including Frome Medical Practice, Somerset Public Health, Somerset Sports and Activity Partnership, Mendip District Council and Frome Learning Partnership, for example, as well as with many service providers.
- Mendip Health Connections (MHC) Multi-Year Agreement in place.

- The national press coverage of the work undertaken by MHC has led to several enquiries being directed to us, from colleagues in other Councils and public sector organisations. We continue to share information on what we do, but this works both ways as it means we hear about what is happening elsewhere as well.
- We continue to host a health and wellbeing show on Frome FM every 4 weeks, usually focusing on a particular theme with guests joining us to share information on their varying projects. [Previous shows are available to listen to online here.](#)
- Attendance at Mendip Health and Wellbeing Board, Somerset VCSE Forum, Somerset Physical Activity and Sports meetings (for adults and children) and other appropriate meetings.

Communities

- Delivery of Youth Conference, March 2018, attended by all Year 8 pupils at school in Frome. An update on the outcomes of the conference was presented to the Town Matters Committee in April 2018 and this will be considered when planning the event for 2019.
- Coordination and attendance at a range of events including the Sports Festival, Mayhem in the Meadow, Children's Festival, Children's Christmas party, local litter picks and others as a means of engagement.
- Community development delivery plan has been agreed by council. Each community will be supported to identify issues and means to improve local connections and mechanisms for engagement.

Support for Organisations

- Multi-year agreements are now in place with ten organisations. The key benefits of such agreements are that they provide help with medium-term financial planning for both FTC and the recipient of the grant and can assist with raising other fund raising.
- Training programme successfully delivered– 12 courses taking place during 2017/18. More are being delivering in 2018/19, with new courses being added as appropriate.
- Mayor's Grant – this budget was allocated to 26 projects in 2017/18.
- Crowdfund Frome has seen six successful campaigns supported by FTC.
- Two rounds of community grants were delivered in 2017/18, for grants of £300 - £2000.
- Rebecca Morland was appointed as external fundraiser to deliver the external fundraising contract, including an additional seven fundraising specific training courses.
- Participatory budgeting events – successful organisations fed back on the delivery of their events at the annual town meeting.
- People's Budget events vote complete for 2018/19.
- Approximately 32 organisations supported with responsive work during 2017/18.

Fairer life chances for all

- Young people's mental health forum established; regular meetings of local providers, schools, police and other interested agencies to discuss service provision, need and to

make connections between each other. Plans are already in place for guest speakers for meetings in the first part of 2018/19.

- We had a focus on World Mental Health Day in October 2017 – using social media, promotion of new web page we created regarding support for young people needing support on mental health and radio show focused on broad issue of mental health in Frome.
- A business breakfast in March 2018 focused on workplace mental health and stress management. This was complemented with a new page on our website sharing resources on these issues that organisations might find helpful.
- We are now exploring two projects relating to young people’s mental health. The first would involve the provision of [Mental Health First Aid training](#) to people working directly with children and young people, giving them the skills and confidence to spot the signs of mental health issues, offer ‘first aid’ and guide them towards support. The other is the creation of a part time Young Person’s Health Connector role, who would be able to work 1-1 with young people, setting goals and supporting them to make changes, directing them to a directory of local services / support that we would create as part of the project. One of these projects will be taken forward during 2018/19.
- We have started the process of mapping what’s happening in Frome on food related issues such as learning to cook, food provision, reducing food waste, food growing. This is part of our ‘healthy lifestyles’ work and will enable us to share this information as a resource but to also identify any gaps in what might be needed across the town in future.
- We have implemented aspects of the Frome Reads Action Plan, particularly through the presence of Frome Reads at various public events in Frome. This will continue in 2018/19.
- Additional funding for Frome Community Education is being used to provide English for speakers of other languages classes. Two classes a term (one evening, one daytime) are being provided.
- Play audit undertaken and new provision is being trialled in Frome, including an accessible play scheme for disabled and non-disabled children and young people run by Kids. Emerging gaps in holiday play provision are now being filled by new provision.
- Exploration of how support is provided to carers. as part of the play audit we worked with SCC short breaks team and childcare teams to create new provision for Frome which would provide support for carers of disabled children and young people.

Volunteering

- Volunteer Frome continues to grow with Spark now taking an active role in the coordination and delivery of the service. We worked in partnership to secure additional funding for a VF coordinator who has a focus on recruiting young volunteers.
- Annual VolunTea in the Park took place in June 2017. Volunteers were also invited to a Christmas thank you with mince pies in the council chamber in December to celebrate the contribution volunteers make to our town.

Physical activity and sport

- A Sports Forum took place in December 2017. The forum discussed the existing action plan and work to deliver this, as well as looking at emerging new actions. The plan will be updated in Spring 2018 to reflect the work that has been undertaken and completed and new emerging issues that the forum is starting to focus on.
- The focus on healthy lifestyles in the new health and wellbeing strategy means we are developing a number of projects which will support people to be more active. These include the provision of beginners and current runners running groups – [more information here](#). We will also be providing instructor led sessions at the Old Showfield outdoor gym through the summer months. Opportunities to try tennis for free will be available in the Summer of 2018 and we'll be working to set up a series of 'school gate running groups' too. We are also looking at how we can support schools to encourage children to be more active, through a project such as [The Daily Mile](#).
- The annual Sports Festival took place in April 2018 and saw us engaging with over 200 people. Mayhem in the Meadow takes place in May 2018. Both of these events are aimed at encouraging people to try new activities.

4. Marketing and communications

The marketing & communication area of work was a newly created last year and had a prolific output. We work increasingly to deliver projects and provide high quality communications to support the strategic aims of the council to include:

Improving the image of the town through the visitor experience

- Discover Frome information Point at Black Swan Arts heads towards its first year - visitor numbers are picking up and we are beginning to introduce a series of Frome branded products to help support the visitor offer.
- A partnership with The List resulted an improved The Annual, focusing on accommodation listings and a series of maps. Our input allowed for businesses who wouldn't otherwise have been listed this year to have a listing.
- Our Marketing & Tourism Intern Claire Worrall has gone from strength to strength to support the development of the Performing Arts sector through the further development of Discover Frome Website. In her final two months we are now looking to support walking, cycling (and buses) through a series of maps and guides. The focus this year will be on print versions and guided walks.
- The addition of the new Eviivo widget to the website will mean Frome Accommodation will be able to take bookings commission free
- We are currently recruiting for an apprentice.

Participation and engagement

- Participatory budgeting events – successful organisations fed back on the delivery of their events at the annual town meeting.

- People's Budget events vote complete for 2017/18 and looking forward to supporting the events. This included the participation of over 280 year 8s into the vote during the Make it Happen conference
- At the time of writing, the people's budget Town Vote is well underway, and the results will be known before this meeting

Increasing the information output of the Council for the purposes of well-being and civic pride

- This has been channeled through the significant increase in Social Media output, through a clear and developed digital strategy including our website - Work has begun on restructuring the Frome Community website to allow for better navigation and improved search function. We have also created a new business section and will be looking to develop that further in the coming months.
- Campaigns to increase the profile of the Town Council work programme in interesting creative and innovative ways are numerous but currently include Plastic Free campaign, supporting the work of the resilience manager through comms. We are also about to launch the Keep Frome Clean Bin it campaign with a litter character. These campaigns work across channels and throughout the town as well as in small locales: The Bin It campaign will start in Trinity alongside community development work.
- Participation in meetings remains a priority - using posters trailing meetings, actively inviting members of the public. Live streaming remains an outstanding issue but we are committed to finding a solution. Our commitment to reportage of meetings in an accessible way is a priority.

The Performing Arts panel

- The performing arts panel has had a new iteration in the Frome Arts Forum. We continue to be committed to the performing arts in Frome to acknowledge the important part that is played by Arts in the town and are developing a series of actions to come from it to include an audit of music provision with supporting documents, a review and exploration of bursary fund to support access to the arts for young people based on the model of give it a go, a continued look at event space as rehearsal rooms and the rolling out of our noticeboard programme. The next forum will be held in September.
- This year we successfully delivered Frome Buses - an event that aimed to support businesses through and event whilst providing a performance opportunity for young people- Positively received by businesses and shoppers alike, we will look to this that this event to go from strength to strength.

Town Hall marketing

- We have secured Change of Use permission for the town hall with conditions. Currently we are working towards getting those discharged.
- Our own conference Breaking the Mould has allowed us to learn about the capabilities of the Town Hall whilst also showcasing the work of the Council and allowing a sharing experience with other councils. A pop-up web site in support of the conference remains live with an increasing amount of interest. This may also act as a "how to" guide for other councils hoping to host a similar conference in the future.

- As we inch closer to permissions to be able to host private events we have started work on the collateral to provide a professional brochure to show case the town hall as a and multi-use facility

Looking forward

- We are looking at new ways of improving the image of the town through a walking tours and maps and history blogs. We are in the planning stage.
- We will be evaluating the impact of The Annual as a guide
- Delivery of the newly formulated Discover Frome Website. Any day now.
- Continuing to support Discover Frome Information Point with a focus on signage and improved service with a card reader and till system
- Establishing a framework of poster distribution to new and existing community noticeboards
- A music provision audit and support a new Saturday music group
- Work on the Christmas event has started – currently in its preliminary stages.
- And..... marketing the Town Hall remains the biggest priority

5. Finance

The majority of the Town Council expenditure for the final six months of the 2017/2018 financial year remained within budget. Highlights over the last six months include:

Budgets

- Budgets agreed in January 2017 delivered the work plan in 2017/18
- Unbudgeted expenditure from General Reserves agreed by Council namely Changing Places funding and Staff and Councillor mentoring
- Second tranche of the Precept from the District Council received
- Funding supplementing budgets received from:
 - Mendip Tourism funding the Discover Frome Information Point
 - Partnership funding from Mendip for the Boyle Cross improvements
 - Donation from Frome Rotarians for the Victoria Park Picnic and Play area
 - EU grant funding reimbursing the Quadripartite Thematic Twinning

Earmarked reserves

- Earmarked Reserves expenditure totalled £619k
- Cheese & Grain Tower renovation grant funded by the Council taking out a loan with the Public Works Loan Board for £120k to support the Cheese and Grain's project was paid in full to the Trust
- The year ended with £445k in Earmarked Reserves, 50% of those EMRs is being held for Market Place Phase 2 and Saxonvale redevelopment

General reserves

- The financial year ended with £30k in General Reserves above the minimum £180k

- £30k being the amount available for unexpected or unbudgeted expenditure

Audit

- Internal Auditors, Fair Account completed final quarter of 2017/2018 and their quarterly reports with no concerns raised and noted at Council Matters
- New External Auditor, PFK Littlejohn appointed for 2017/18. The Council has been selected for an Intermediate Level Review and Audit.
- Annual Return for 2017/18 signed off by the Internal Auditors in preparation for sending to the External Auditor

Financial regulations and financial risk assessment

- Financial Regulations and Risk Assessments were reviewed and adopted in April 2018

VAT

- All four quarters submitted to HMRC for repayment and received.

Investments

- Short term investments in seven accounts generating interest 60% over budgeted income

Town Hall

- Broadband, Wi-Fi, new telephone system and photocopier on three-year leases installed April 2017
- Meeting room booking software, linked to accounting software installed April 2017
- Long term tenants secured on five-year leases April 2017
- IT support changed from Excalibur Communications to Itec Connect Ltd
- Cleaning contract extended for six months to September 2018 to allow option to explore alternatives
- Bank of existing FTC staff recruited as Support Stewards for evening meetings

HR

- Staff Handbook updated and adopted
- Staff contracts updated and accepted
- Ellis Whittam contracted for three years for certain HR duties
- South West Councils to continue in an advisory HR capacity
- Recruitment procedure documents formalised October
- Six monthly staff reviews completed October
- Annual appraisals completed March

Areas to be closely monitored over the next six months include:

- Income and expenditure to remain within budget
- Town Hall income
- S106 agreement money outstanding and held by MDC to be raised above Officer level in an attempt to release the funds
- Develop and expand HR procedure documents
- Implantation of action to ensure we are adhering to the General Data Protection Regulations