

Agenda item 9

For decision – Future Frome Project

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Summary

With the emergence of major housing development proposals such as those for Selwood Garden Village, it seems appropriate to consider not only what type of housing is needed in the future but also what the wider needs of the community are. Consideration should be given to jobs, education, healthcare, retail, leisure and the other community infrastructure that would be needed by a growing population. This report recommends that FTC leads a process to engage the people of Frome to explore what they think.

The aim will be to develop a vision that can inform future planning decisions and the review of the Local Plan. The recommendations are that a 'Future Frome Panel' is established to steer this work involving representatives from FTC, MDC and Selwood and Berkley Parish Councils. It is also recommended that a budget of £25k is established to enable a planning consultant to be recruited to support FTC staff. MDC are to be approached to help secure a financial contribution towards these costs.

Background

Earlier this year, Mendip District Council (MDC) completed a consultation exercise on Part 2 of its Local Plan to consider where new housing and workspace will be developed, and open space safeguarded in the period up to 2028. Cllrs commented on these proposals at the Town Matters Committee meeting on 7 February and representations were made to MDC.

Amongst the representations received by MDC was a submission by Grassroots Planning Limited on behalf of a consortium of landowners who propose to develop land to the south of the town between the existing built-up area and the A361 Frome by-pass. They propose a new 'garden village' comprising circa 1800 – 2200 new homes, employment land and other infrastructure known as Selwood Garden Village. Cllrs will be aware that other major housing development is either already approved or is proposed in the following locations:

- Saxonvale
- Packsaddle
- Caxton Works (former Butler Tanner & Dennis site)
- T H White site
- Vallis Road
- Edmund Park (development by Persimmon Homes under construction)

The expectation is that MDC will shortly start work on a review of the Local Plan that will guide development up to 2036. In this process, the Government will decide what volume of

housebuilding occurs across the District leaving MDC to decide where it should happen. Their decision will be driven by deliverability and where there is a market for housing rather than an objective analysis of need.

Future Frome

To ensure that Frome develops in a way that meets the needs of the existing as well as future residents and that new development includes the necessary infrastructure throughout the town, it is appropriate that there is an investigation into what those wider needs are. It is also important that the local community should have an opportunity to have their say.

It is proposed that FTC leads a process to consider those wider community needs including the need for additional jobs, healthcare and educational facilities, leisure facilities, open space and other community infrastructure. We should also ensure that, if there is to be additional housing development, the mix of housing types reflect the needs in the town. The name 'Future Frome' has been suggested for this project.

The proposal is to hold a series of events that would enable stakeholder organisations and the wider community to explore those needs and develop a vision that can inform the review of the Local Plan and future planning decisions. Four events are proposed in July that cover the following topics:

- Education
- Employment and retail
- Healthcare, arts & leisure, open space & other green infrastructure
- Housing, utilities and transport infrastructure

It is proposed to engage a planning consultant that can support FTC staff in this work and help to develop a vision document drawing on:

- The outcomes from the public events
- The Frome Neighbourhood Plan and other existing strategy documents
- Additional professional research

The work would be steered by a 'Future Frome Panel' comprising representatives from FTC, MDC and Selwood Parish Council (in view of the Selwood Garden Village proposal) and Berkley Parish Council (in view of the probable expansion of Commerce Park).

A budget of £25k is required for this project. The proposal is that the cost is shared between FTC and MDC with FTC's share being drawn from the existing Saxonvale EMR as the impact of this development would need to be considered as part of this project.

Recommendations

1. A 'Future Frome Panel' is established to steer work to assess the future needs of the town including appropriate house types, employment, education, retail, healthcare, leisure, open space and other essential community infrastructure and develop a vision that will inform the review of the Local Plan and future planning decisions.
2. Pippa Goldfinger, Gary Collinson, Colin Cobb, Peter Macfadyen and Al O'Kane to represent FTC on this panel and representation to be sought from MDC and Selwood and Berkley Parish Councils
3. Public events are held in July to engage stakeholder organisations and the wider community in exploring these needs
4. Cllrs agree a budget of £25k for this project with authority being granted to the Deputy Town Clerk to negotiate a contribution from MDC, the remainder to be drawn from the existing Saxonvale EMR
5. Authority is delegated to the Planning & Development Manager to finalise a consultancy brief, recruit a suitable planning consultant in consultation with the Future Frome Panel and manage the process