

**Aim:**

To deliver a project which increases participation in Frome.

Objectives:

To engage all people in Frome in all things Frome. To coordinate a week of events and workshops which generate conversation and increase involvement in local projects and issues resulting in positive change in Frome.

Executive Summary:

Participate Frome provided a well attended successful week of events and workshops which started the process of embedding participation in Frome. It highlighted a need to distinguish between participation and consultation and to work across statutory and non statutory sectors to increase participation in the Town.

There are a number of residents / volunteers who regularly take part and attend meetings and events who reported fatigue. We also talked to a number of other residents who said that they would like to be more involved in the town but that they did not know how to.

The recommendations suggest that Frome Town Council find a balance between delivering practical action in the town and increasing capacity in staff and infrastructure to support strategic social development in Frome.

There are a series of practical recommendations which include the facilitation of a "Participate Frome Advisory Board", a "Participate Frome Award", the establishment of a database of organisations, continued use of the Participate Frome brand and Facebook site, support to increase volunteers, identification and development of a mechanism for working with local 'community changers',

The themes which arose in the week as key issues that the community would like to see addressed:

- Traffic Flow through the town
- Car Parks
- Services for Young People
- Access to The River
- improved community cohesion between young and old, old and new
- increased information about community services.

One of the prominent themes that occurred before, during and after the week was that there is a strong sense of "Us and Them" in Frome and that there is an emphasis on those who were born here and those that have moved here. There are a number of events and venues which bring these two groups together and the Christmas Extravaganza is one of these, which was particularly successful this year. Facilitation and opportunity for dialogue between the two groups is needed.

A large amount of data was gathered through the week. It was not the intention to carry out a formal research project through this work however the data could now be collated into a comprehensive format with approx 2 days work to complete this. In addition there are a number of remaining postcards which could now be sent out to gather more information.

What is Participation

'the action of taking part in something.'

Purpose + Context + People + Process = Outcome

Outputs – what we did

Engagement

worked with over 50 organisations
16 organisations ran projects over the week
19 businesses donated prizes
280 people filled in postcards
talked to over 1000 people
137 people filled in chalk board speech bubbles
over 650 people came into the pop up shop

on Facebook we have had

total reach: over 4393 in one week
page likes: 266 in 10 days (still growing now 315)
averaged people actively engaged: 542
average post clicks: 6991

What Worked

Facebook 266 people liked the Participate Frome Facebook page in one week now 315 (with no 'boost page' promotions)



The screenshot shows the Facebook page for 'Participate Frome'. The page header includes the Facebook logo, the name 'Participate Frome', and navigation links for Home, Find Friends, and a user profile for Kate. Below the header, there are buttons for 'Admin Panel' and 'Promote Page'. The main content area features the 'Participate Frome' logo, which consists of a large orange question mark followed by the text 'Participate Frome'. Below the logo, it says '315 likes · 50 talking about this'. There are buttons for 'Update Page Info', 'Liked', and a dropdown menu. On the right side, there is a 'See Your Ad Here' section with a post from 'Participate Frome' that says 'A massive thank you to everyone involved in Friday's Extravaganza. What a fantastic evenin...'. Below the ad, there are buttons for 'Advertise your page' and 'Recent' posts. At the bottom, there is a 'Community' section with a post asking 'What is your favourite thing about Frome and Why? What one thing would you change in Frome and how? We are encouraging as many people as we can to think about these questions and pop their answers'. There are also buttons for 'About', 'Photos', 'Likes', 'Events', and 'Chat (Off)'.

Out and About – apprentices from Edventure Frome took to the streets and asked people what they liked about Frome and how they would change it. They spent four days covering an area from ASDA to The Mount, Trinity and the Town Centre.

What is your favourite thing about Frome?



What one thing would you change about Frome?



The Pop Up Shop saw an impressive 650 + people come through the doors during the week hosting displays and information about the Neighbourhood Plan, Frome

Carnival, IT Support at Home, the Volunteer Bureau, Somerset Skills and Learning, Frome Active, Town Budgeting and Mendip Community Forum.



The Participate Frome Seminar
36 professionals attended a full day to look at how to increase participation in Frome's statutory and non statutory services



Participatory Planning – 15 people attended this training and planning event at Edventure

Trinity Pizza – Aster and Knightstone got onto the streets to meet their residents.

Young Peoples Consultation
Launch at Routes Cafe



Great Frome Clean Up 8 litter picks across the town and as a result three of the national high street businesses pledged to clear up outside their premises on a regular basis.



Fair Frome launch

39 professionals attended the launch event of a new project to build a resilient community to address the issues of poverty in the town.

Young Peoples Question Time



200 young people attended a question time event in the Merlin Theatre with a panel including the Town Clerk and the Mayor of Frome organised by Young People Frome.

Participate Frome Town Meeting

Was held in the Cheese and Grain with over 200 local residents who heard about the outcomes of Participate Frome and participated in plans to address the key themes of the week.



The **Participate Frome Mural** captured the thoughts and ideas of everyone who contributed.



Open Storytellers and The Job club held open events.

280 postcards were filled in and returned to drop boxes across town



Branding gave PF a real identity which people started to recognise.



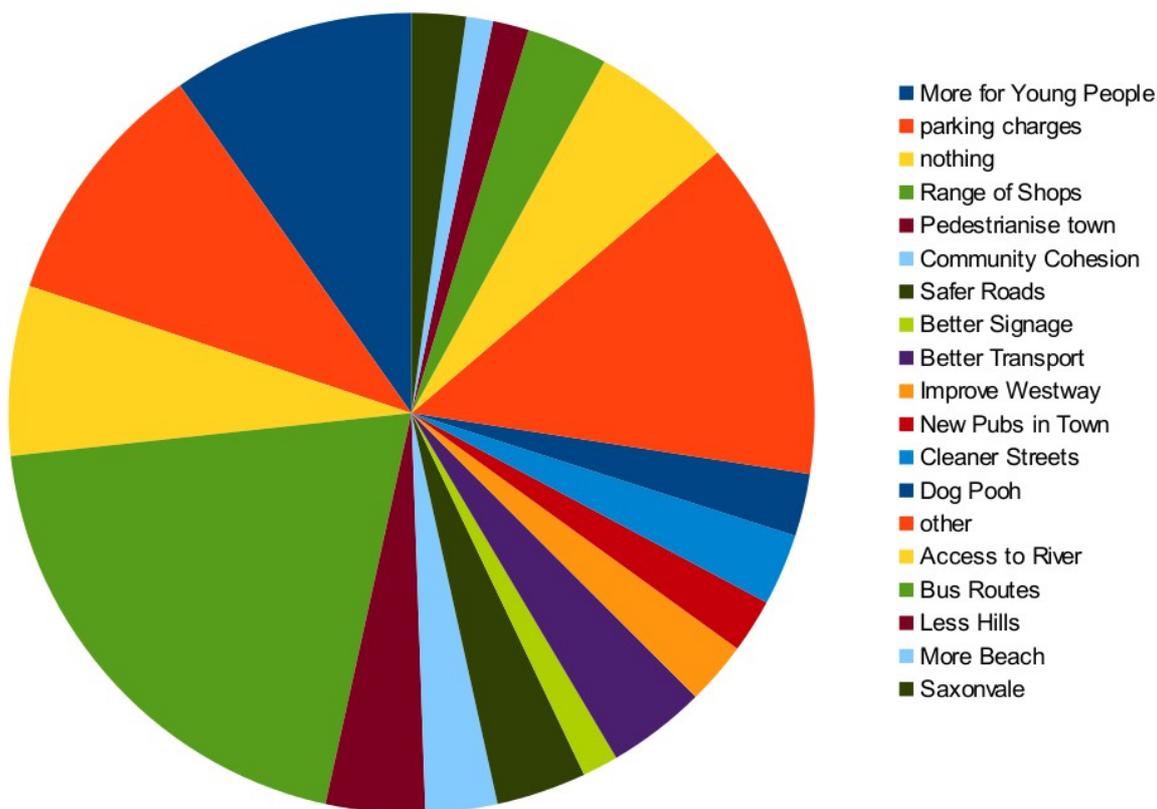
What could have worked better

- More capacity to attend events and talk to more people
- Reach to more people – schools, Children's Centres
- Engaging the Health Centre and Hospital in the week.
- Promotion – posters – using bus stops
- FTC meeting – venue – parking – stage – audience participation – improving promotion
- In the pop up shop we could have displayed the material in a story which lead them through the information in a more engaging way.
- More of the Town Councillors could have got involved – got on their soap boxes and got out into their ward.
- Town Budgeting
- Frugal Fine Dinner did not run because they lost their venue.

The Findings

One thing people would change in Frome...

The Themes which emerged from the postcards and bubbles
(follow the chart around to the left)



What people liked about Frome

The People The Architecture The Park The Community
Independent Shops The Markets The Cheese and Grain

The notes from the practitioners seminar are attached in Appendix 2

Who I met and what I did

Individual meetings with
Active and in Touch
Vision 4 Frome
Edventure
Somerset Skills and Learning
Frome Town Council
Aster
Knightstone
Mendip Community Forum
Fair Frome

Frome FM
Open Storytellers
Frome Active
The Cheese and Grain
Frome Carnival
Frome College
Black Swan Arts
Green Strands
Frome Job Club

Attended FTC, Community Forum and other relevant meetings. Coordination of

events and workshops. Liaison with workshop leaders

Time spent before PF week: 232 hours

Time spent during PF week: 66 hours

Time spent after PF week: 35 hours

Total time to coordinate Participate Frome: 333 hours

Breakdown of costs in appendix 1

Organisations that actively attended and participated in events over the week

Friends of the River Frome	Black Swan Arts
FROGS	Green Strands
Conservative Party	Somerset County Council – Children's Centres
Sustainable Frome	Somerset Business Agency
Keep Frome Local	Frome Town Football Club
Frome Town FC	Mendip YMCA
Somerset Skills and Learning	FRECO
Frome Community Education	The Bridge Children's Centre
The Key Centre	Mendip Community Credit Union
Frome Health Centre	Community Resilience and Emergency Welfare
Active and in Touch	Food Bank
Vision 4 Frome	The Bridge Café
Edventure Frome	Home In Frome
Somerset Skills and Learning	IT Support @ Home
Frome Town Council	Jackdaws
Aster	The Key Centre
Knightstone	Cranmore Tower
Mendip Community Forum	Long Term Conditions Support Group
Fair Frome	Routes Café
Frome FM	Frome Job Club
Open Storytellers	Observations
Frome Active	
The Cheese and Grain	
Frome Carnival	
Frome College	

Observations

Communication could be more clear, open and honest.

There are many cases of misunderstanding in Frome due to lack of freely available information . One example of this is the Saxonvale development were it is widely understood that FTC is opposed to any development which includes high street shops.

There could be a better flow of communication out from the FTC and other organisations as part of a process which involves a flow and return using a diverse range of communication methods and building on the local community's

activists / changers that already exist.

There are circa 200 people who regularly attend events and meetings many of whom are reporting fatigue. Volunteer capacity and engagement could be increased through a number of channels including supporting capacity of third sector organisations, both practically and through training to support residents to engage in issues that effect them.

There is value in facilitating conversation between people representing different groups. There were many examples during the week where, through conversation with two parties, people were able to communicate their frustration around particular issues, reach a common understanding of the issues and constructively consider the potential ways forward.

One example of this was when a resident expressed her concerns about the Super Market not being demographically representative of the community. One of the members of the management team explained why it was important to bring people into the town. Both parties were able to listen to each other and then discuss possible solutions and the 'Them and Us' beginnings of the dialogue dissipated.

Other examples were with conversations about how 'they' should do more for young people and 'parents should be responsible' culminating in older people considering what skills they could share with young people and a local care home considering how they could facilitate the two groups coming together.

Summary of Recommendations:

FTC to increase capacity to:

- Strategic overview of organisations working in Frome
- Support, advice and guidance for organisations to work collaboratively, try new ways of engagement, meet.
- Continued use of the Participate Frome Brand Administration and Moderation of PF; including Facebook,
- Promote and campaign for a positive 'can do' attitude to local people improving the places that they live in.
- Provide and coordinate training – methods of participation, skills which enable local people to get involved
- Delivery and coordination of events
- Enable review and update of Vision 4 Frome
- Develop a model of 'community changers' for Frome.
- Celebrate success
- Participate Frome Award for organisations demonstrating participative approach.
- Promote, increase, support and celebrate volunteers

To consider the following:

- Embed participation across FTC and in all posts
- Recognise and promote Participation as opposed to consultation
- Review FTC Communications Strategy
- Community Database
- Feasibility study for One Stop Shop for service users and organisations.
- Increase attendance and engagement:
- Practical support for attendance: crèche, transport.

To address the following key themes:

Increase in a range of shops in the town

- to work with the new Town Centre development worker in the Town.

Enable better access to the river

- seating
- low level board walk
- cafés / pub next to the river
- access for swimming in the river

Car Parks

- FTC to buy the car parks
- pay on exit
- use large supermarkets for park and ride

Young and old, old and new

- find common interests
- create opportunities for people to mix and meet
- Food festival back in the Town Centre
- have a 'men in sheds' project

Traffic Flow

- re route the buses
- create shared spaces
- 20 mph speed limits throughout Frome
- park and ride from the supermarket car parks

Community Services

- directory of organisations
- skill share opportunities
- community services fair
- Better info in the library
- bring back the notice boards

Detail of Recommendations

To embed a culture of “participation” and not “consultation” in Frome

For FTC to avoid consultation which is re-active to issues and engage the community in pro-active planning for the future.

There is a place for consultation however this should be undertaken with integrity: be real, encourage engagement and influence, and be fully participative in planning and delivery. In addition it is important to feed back the results of such consultation to the consultees within an agreed time frame with headline actions to be acted upon as a result of the consultation.

Lots of people we talked to asked “What’s the point? no one ever listens to us anyway”. They had provided their views in the past but felt that they were not acted upon and or the did not hear any more about it, this was particularly the case around the issues of having a variety of shops in the town.

Strategic Overview of Organisations working in Frome

The need for a strategic overview of organisations working in Frome has been highlighted throughout the week and in the preparation for the week. A great deal of time is spent by practitioners and professionals working in Frome ascertaining who is working with who and who knows what. In addition organisations are competing for the same pots of money, in some cases doubling work and or overlapping without knowledge of doing so.

Attendees at the PF Seminar identified the need for a central record of organisations and a need to 'map' priorities and gaps in service across all areas of third sector and statutory services.

In addition the success of the pop up shop demonstrated a need for a central resource point for members of the public and professionals which would provide information, support and advice as well as facilitating a space for conversation and discussion.

Recommendations :

Increased capacity in FTC to facilitate strategic overview of organisations and / or to out source this to a third party. There is a significant overlap with the aims and objectives of Fair Frome, who would be well placed to support and or provide the following.

A feasibility study for a “One Stop Shop for information re organisations / resources / advice

- central information point
- a place to stop for a chat
- accessible / inclusive

Community Database

To establish and maintain a database of organisations which could be accessible through a web based portal. It would also allow officers to produce reports of organisations/ groups/ individuals working in specific fields, create mail shot lists, details to include:

- name
- address
- contact details (preferred communication method)
- website address
- purpose
- type (charity, voluntary sector, company, statutory)
- beneficiaries – inc: age range
- what they do (how they achieve purpose)
- where they meet
- when they meet
- geographical reach
- funding
- membership / service users criteria (ie referral/open)
- resources – including : buildings, meeting rooms, equipment,
- partners

Community organisations directory

physical paper copy of the above

Continued use of Participate Frome Brand

The Participate Frome logo, icons and key questions became identified across the town during the week as an independent brand. For its continued use it now requires brand guidelines to determine what, were, when and who can use the brand PF.

The use of PF brand and Facebook page but another organisation is currently being trailed by Edventure in their “Dippy” Consultation. It is showing that there is a need for communication to be clear about purpose and outcomes and what will happen next.

There is a need to oversee posts, for there to be a named person to respond to comments.

Facebook site

This was very successful over the week and continues to attract new visitors and

provide a neutral space for discussion and comment which can be measured and collated.

Recommendation:

That there is continued use of PF Brand. Guidelines and systems need to be agreed and monitored centrally.

Responsibility for administering / moderation of the site should be held centrally in order to protect the brand as a 'participative' information sharing resource.

Guidelines for its use

- ensure appropriate content
- who is given administrator access
- how often posts are made

Participation Award

To create an award for organisations which work in a participative way

Training

The seminar identified gaps in understanding, practical tools and methods of engaging people in participative methods.

The Edventure training on Participative Planning facilitated by Martin Gilbraith was very successful (<http://martingilbraith.wordpress.com/tag/actionplanning/>) and a model which can now be facilitated by Neil Oliver, Sarah Hobbs, Kate Hellard and Nikki Cox.

Recommendation:

To develop and facilitate a range of training opportunities for practitioners, FTC employees and councillors which will promote a common understanding of Participation and methods.

Events as a means of connecting people

The week of events was a success, however many people commented that they had attended a number of events and were tired!

Recommendations:

- Run a yearly seminar / conference
- Facilitate regular opportunities for Volunteers to get together – Parties / celebrations

Celebrate success

Engage and encourage people to consider what is positive in Frome.

Street parties

Awards

Participate Frome Award for participative organisations.

Central Intergenerational public open spaces

To enable and facilitate different groups in Frome to meet, play and 'hang out' together.

Space for events and engagement which reach a wide demographic

Vision 4 Frome

Vision 4 Frome was widely represented throughout the week at many of the events. The report has been widely used as evidence for a range of projects across the town. There is a common understanding that it is now due to be updated.

A process for regular revision and updating could be implemented in a partnership between V4F and the FTC and or a third party.

Recommendation:

Enable, support and facilitate a review and update of Vision 4 Frome

Use a range of methods of engagement

To promote and increase use of:

- social media
- press / media
- posters
- school newsletters (usually printed on one side with space for other info)
- community notice boards
- Community activists
- Community notice board

To ensure that the public have access to information other than in a digital format or through the press.

FTC to manage notice boards throughout the town centre and wider community displaying public notices, posters and information.

Increase attendance at community meetings

- to publicise meetings well in advance through a range of forum – media, in local children's centres, schools, facebook,
- use a range of accessible venues throughout the town – mindful of transport, parking.
- To take specific issues of interest into the community to discuss / address. (go to the people!)
- Practical support for engagement
- childcare (Coop)
- travel / transport
- having a friend

Community 'changers' / activists

Many of the communities in Frome have a network of informal activists (people in the know). These people could be identified and supported to gather feedback and inform local issues and decision making. They could also be used more for information sharing.

To continue to evidence and collect data

This project has produced some valuable data which could be further explored and recorded. It could also be enhanced through the collection of further data through PF postcards and other means of research. This could then be used to inform many areas of work and the review of Vision4Frome.