

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

The next meeting of Frome Town Council's

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 11 June 2013

Rossetti House, Welshmill, Frome, BA11 2AA

Members of the Internal Affairs Committee:

Toby Eliot; James Godman; Pippa Goldfinger; Claire Hudson; Dickon Moore; Helen Sprawson - White; Helen Starkie; Mel Usher; Vacancy.

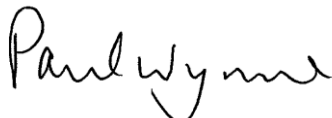
and

Cara Honey (Mayor for Young People); Alex Shingler (Deputy Mayor for Young People)

AGENDA

- 1 Questions, comments and information from the public
- 2 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair
- 3 Apologies for absence, declaration of members' interests and minutes from the last meeting on 1 May 2013
- 4 A quick review of previous actions and what is coming up next time
- 5 Deciding what to do with a grant from MDC related to Council tax support
- 6 What the Ethical Decision Making Working Party concluded
- 7 Frome Town Council website - the next steps
- 8 Arrangements for the 2013 Christmas Extravaganza
- 9 The progress of the Keep Frome Clean campaign
- 10 Some details on Frome Participation Week in November
- 11 Discussion over the banks that FTC uses to invest its reserves in
- 12 A brief update on payments over £500 made since the last meeting and other finance matters
- 13 Adoption of the Showfield Consultation report
- 14 The next meeting will be at 7pm on Tuesday 6 August at the Saxonvale Centre

Yours sincerely



Paul Wynne, Town Clerk,
Frome Town Council, 5 Palmer Street, Frome, BA11 1DS
5 June 2013

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- 1 Questions, comments and information from the public
- 2 Election of the Internal Affairs Committee Chair and Deputy Chair
- 3
 - a. Any apologies for absence?
 - b. Cllrs to declare any interests on the agenda
 - c. To consider and approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 1 May 2013

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the Internal Affairs Committee

Wednesday 1 May 2013 at 7pm

Frome Town Council Offices, 5 Palmer Street, Frome.

Present:

Councillors: Eve Berry; Toby Eliot (Chair); Pippa Goldfinger; Mel Usher; Nick White

In attendance:

Cllr Carole Bullen, Cllr Peter Macfadyen, Caroline Wood (Somerset Standard), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Peter Wheelhouse (Economic Development and Regeneration Manager), Karen Clements (Town Centre Manager), Simon Woollen (Grounds and Properties Manager), Jackie Wheeler (Responsible Finance Officer), Laura Poulton (Administration Officer)

9 members of the public

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2013/22/IAC	<p>1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</p> <p>John Warman, a member of the public, and John Price from the Frome Selwood Tennis Club expressed concern over the recent Victoria Park and Mary Baily Playing Field Consultation exploring the popularity of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). Both requested that the tennis courts are retained and not be replaced with a MUGA.</p> <p>The Town Clerk clarified that a location for a MUGA had not been decided upon. An application for funding from Sports Lottery Fund had only been submitted a week prior to the meeting. If FTC was successful there would need to be a detailed consultation over future uses of the park including the provision of tennis courts and possible locations for a MUGA in order to decide how to make best use of the funding.</p>	
2013/23/IAC	<p>2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>The Chair formally opened the Council meeting at 7.20pm and apologies of absence were received from</p>	

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	Cllrs Godman, Hooton and Hudson.	
2013/24/IAC	3 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS Cllr Berry expressed a non prejudicial interest in item 7 b.	
2013/25/IAC	<p>7B VICTORIA PARK AND MARY BAILY FIELD CONSULTATION RESULTS</p> <p>At this point the Chair decided to bring item 7b forward.</p> <p>Cllr Berry noted that the survey felt rushed and that 180 participants would not provide a mandate to move forward.</p> <p>The Town Clerk explained that it was an informal consultation designed to provide an indication and not a mandate and that a detailed consultation exercise was proposed in order to make sure the MUGA was located in an appropriate place.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to note the report and support the application to the Sports Lottery Fund for a MUGA 2. to complete the detailed consultation over future uses of Victoria Park and Mary Baily Playing Field, if the grant bid was successful 3. to include Selwood Tennis Club in future consultation about tennis facilities in Mary Baily Playing Field as part of the consultation discussions <p>Proposed Cllr Usher, seconded Cllr Eliot, agreed unanimously.</p>	PWy
2013/26/IAC	<p>4 MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the Internal Affairs Committee meeting held on 5 March 2013 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Cllr White asked about the future of hanging baskets in Cheap Street. The Town Centre Manager confirmed that it had been agreed that FTC would provide the flowers and hang them and that the traders would water them.</p>	
2013/27/IAC	<p>5 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS AND FORTHCOMING ITEMS</p> <p>The Town Clerk explained that he had received an answer to his request for running costs and income for the Market Yard car park. Both he and the Responsible Finance Officer were unclear of the figures provided and had asked for further clarification. Once this had been</p>	PWy

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	<p>gained it would come back to the committee.</p> <p>The Economic Development and Regeneration Manager informed Cllrs that the demolition of the building at Garsdale will hopefully be scheduled for the end of May/beginning of June.</p>	
<p>2013/28/IAC</p>	<p>6 FROGS DESCRIBED WELSHMILL GREENWAY IMPROVEMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS</p> <p>Shelia Hedges from FROGS updated the committee on their work over the last eighteen months and their future aims and plans. Phase one of the project had been completed and the next plan is for a low activity trail. In addition there are hopes to install a cantilever swing. A recent application had been made to MDC under the NHB Local Legacy fund scheme to help start these improvements.</p> <p>Sheila explained that their future plans are for a new entrance to the park, community built tree walk, new lighting, boulders for seating and climbing, children’s art and sculpture trail, interpretation boards of flora and fauna, a water feature and a resolution for cyclists and pedestrians using the path underneath the railway bridge. In addition there are many varied activities planned throughout the year.</p> <p>Cllr Usher suggested putting together a proposal to work out how FTC and FROGS can work together to get phase two under way. The Town Clerk agreed and noted that the Community Projects Officer was working with FROGS to do this.</p>	<p>SH</p>
<p>2013/29/IAC</p>	<p>7A FOR DECISION – PLANS FOR IMPROVING FTC SITES</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree that the Community Projects Officer works with the local community to create a long term management plan of each site. 2. That Weylands will be managed in the following manner: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cut as when required to amenity grass land (once per month) b. Two pathways cut on a more regular basis to allow for the dog walkers c. No further scrub removal until clear plan identified d. Footpath cut in accordance with recommendations e. Hedge cut once per year 	

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	<p>3. That the grass and wooded area at Welshmill Greenway will be managed in the following manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Playground and glade area – amenity grass cut and reseeded as required b. River bank by wooden seat- amenity cut to continue to reduce original nettle and brash growth and enhance the river view c. Trees managed for conservation and safety <p>4. That the Chateau Gontier Walk will be managed in the following manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cut once per season in the late autumn with a strimmer b. Remove if possible the roots of brambles to discourage regrowth c. The top 3 foot from the railings will be cut on amenity schedule to ease litter picking <p>5. That Rodden Meadow will be managed in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to cut the meadow and bail once per year in September b. The paths are kept short as and when required c. The edge of the river, the scrub and the hedges will be cut annually d. Broken fencing removed and interpretation boards replaced e. Weekly litter picks to be carried out by Outside Services. f. Continue to negotiate to acquisition of the horse paddock. g. Continue to work closely with the Millennium Green Trust support management of this site. <p>Proposed Cllr Goldfinger, seconded Cllr White, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>SW</p>
<p>2013/30/IAC</p>	<p>8 FOR INFORMATION – HOW FTC IS WORKING TO SPEND MDC BUDGETS TO IMPROVE OPEN SPACES INLCUDING THE OLD SHOWFIELD</p> <p>The Town Clerk informed Cllrs that the Responsible Finance Officer had been working with the s106 officer at MDC to unlock funding to cover the cost of new fencing at Tickleberry Alley.</p> <p>In order to do the same for the Showfield MDC required a minute to show that Cllrs supported the proposed improvements that were recommended from the survey undertaken by Vision for Frome and Frome Town Council and recommended that Cllrs support these and the use</p>	

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	<p>of s106 budget held by MDC to implement them.</p> <p>Proposed Cllr Eliot, seconded Cllr Goldfinger, agreed unanimously.</p>	PWy
2013/31/IAC	<p>9 FOR DECISION – SHOULD FTC DONATE DOCUMENTATION AND TWO WORKS OF ART TO THE FROME MUSEUM TO ENABLE THE PUBLIC TO SEE THEM?</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree the principle to transfer 2. To discuss with the Museum what pieces they would be willing to acquire and on what basis. 3. To table at a future meeting a list of pieces that the Museum was willing to accept and confirmation on what basis the transfer was taking place. <p>Proposed Cllr White, seconded Cllr Goldfinger, agreed unanimously.</p>	PWy
2013/32/IAC	<p>10 FOR INFORMATON – PLANS FOR THE CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA 2013/14, THE KEEP FROME CLEAN PROJECT AND IMPROVING FTC WEBSITE</p> <p>The Town Centre Manager informed Cllrs of a positive meeting about the Christmas Extravaganza 2013/14 that was held on 29 April. Frome FM and Sunrise Festival were keen to take on the organisation and running of the extravaganza. It was explained that both organisations were aware of a set budget from FTC and alternative ideas for fundraising if needed would be looked into by Sunrise Festival. Some ideas for reintroducing a theme had also been discussed.</p> <p>The Town Centre Manager provided a summary of the progress and achievements of the Keep Frome Clean project. Community groups and businesses are keen to be involved and the Somerset Standard will be promoting the campaign. On 11 and 12 May a spring clean is being held in partnership with Friends of the River Frome and McDonalds.</p> <p>With regard to the improvement to the FTC website, the Town Centre Manager noted that two briefs would be available in the week beginning 6 May. A full report of the proposals will be coming back to the committee at the next meeting.</p>	
2013/33/IAC	<p>11 FOR DECISION – MINOR CHANGES TO HOW FTC</p>	

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	<p>ANSWERS FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS The recommendation was that the proposed amendments to FTC’s Information Policy and Publication Scheme be adopted as Council policy.</p> <p>Cllr Berry was unclear on which changes had been made and asked to discuss this with the Town Clerk.</p> <p>It was suggested to accept the recommendation in principal and, if after Cllr Berry had any revisions, to bring them back to the next meeting.</p> <p>Proposed Cllr Eliot, seconded Cllr Goldfinger, agreed unanimously.</p>	PWy
2013/34/IAC	<p>12 FOR INFORMATION – FINANCE UPDATE Members received for information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Payments made (over £500 in value) since last meeting. b. Summary of significant budget under and overspends for 12/13 in the Income and Expenditure c. Summary of draft balance sheet at year end 2012/13 	
2013/35/IAC	<p>13 FOR INFORMATION – RECENT STAFF STARTERS AND LEAVERS The Town Clerk informed the committee that James Chalk (lengthsman) and Hayley Barnsley (customer service advisor) have both recently started and Emrys Davis (park patrol) and Mary Hemmett (customer service advisor) have recently left.</p> <p>He agreed to circulate a copy of the staff organisational chart.</p>	PWy
2013/36/IAC	<p>14 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING Wednesday 11 June 2013, 7pm at Rossetti House</p>	
<p>The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.35pm</p>		

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4 A quick review on previous actions and what is coming up next time

SUMMARY OF RESOLUTION	MINUTE NO.	CMTEE	MEETING DATE	RESPONSIBILITY	PROGRESS REPORT	Target Date
Establish ethical decision making working party	2012/49/IAC	IAC	05/09/2012	Paul Wynne	On Agenda	11/06/2013
Medical Practice s.106 agreement for firm trail fitness equipment	2011/21	IAC moved from EAC	02/03/11	Paul Wynne / Simon Woolen	Quotes from work on Showfield received, next step to agree these with MDC.	11/6/13
S106 Agreements	2013/07	IAC	08/01/2013	Jackie Wheeler	In progress	06/08/2013
Market Yard costs and income	2013/09	IAC	08/01/2013	Paul Wynne	Paul Wynne to reply to Adam Savery asking for clarification of the costs provided - no response as yet	06/08/2013
Demolish building on Garsdale site	2012/119	FC/IAC	12/12/2012	Peter Wheelhouse	Waiting for appointment from Electricity Board to remove the cable to the pole	TBC
Dog Mess		IAC	05/03/2013	Karen Clements	On going as part of Keep Frome Clean campaign	06/08/2013
Frome Selwood Tennis Club, VP & MBPF action summary	2013/22	IAC	01/05/2013	Sarah Hobbs	On going as part of the VP/MBPF consultation exercise	06/08/2013
Proposal for working with FROGS	2013/28	IAC	01/05/2013	Sarah Hobbs	Sarah in discussion with FROGS over next steps	06/08/2013
Risk Register		IAC		Jackie Wheeler	Recurring item	06/08/2013
Cheese & Grain building project		IAC		Peter Wheelhouse	Progress of the project so far	06/08/2013
Palmer Street and Office move		IAC		Paul Wynne		06/08/2013
Annual Appointment of Internal Auditors		IAC		Jackie Wheeler		06/08/2013
Discuss Work Programme and Budget		IAC		Jackie Wheeler	Recurring item as of 6/8/13	06/08/2013
Expenditure Forecast		IAC		Jackie Wheeler		09/10/2013
Internal Auditors Report		IAC		Jackie Wheeler		03/12/2013
Finalise Work Programme and Budget		IAC		Jackie Wheeler		03/12/2013
Annual Review of Risk Register		IAC		Jackie Wheeler		04/02/2014

Key

	overdue
	on going (on schedule)
	behind schedule
	Action required
	Upcoming item
	Presentations planned

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5 For Decision - Possible uses of a grant from MDC for £117,027

Author: Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer

Summary

This paper informs Cllrs that FTC has received a grant of £117,027 from MDC in relation to the increase in Council Tax following Government changes to the benefits system.

It recommends that the grant is kept in general reserve until advice is taken over whether it is legal to offer a refund to each household in the town.

Introduction

In the budget discussion paper on 30 January Cllrs were informed that:

The Government is providing a grant for 2013/14 to billing authorities (MDC) to part-compensate for the lower council tax support. It is anticipated that FTC will receive a portion of this grant from MDC. At the time of writing we have not had this figure confirmed by MDC. In addition, it has not been decided if this grant will be available in future years.

It is, therefore, suggested that Cllrs do not take this grant into consideration when deciding the precept demand. If the grant is received from MDC it is suggested that Cllrs consider how best to use it at Council on 20 February. (FTC Summons 30.1.13)

We received the grant on 17 April.

Background

In the spirit of localism, Government gave no instructions on how billing authorities should use the grant. This meant that despite the changes to Council Tax benefit impacting on the parish council section of the Council Tax bill, billing authorities could decide whether or not to pass this on to the parish.

I understand that in some parts of the country some billing authorities transferred 100% of the grant to parishes. In other parts the reverse was true and billing authorities transferred nothing.

Some parish and town councils around the country had a better understanding, and in many cases certainty, on how much their billing authority intended to transfer. Some of them reduced their precept demand by the size of the grant they knew they were going to receive. Other councils reduced the precept by the total amount and reduced their budget in the knowledge that the grant was not going to totally compensate for the reduction. Some other councils received no grant and some simply cut their budgets to keep council tax bills at the same level. Finally, some councils, like FTC, decided to wait and see if and when the grant arrived before deciding what to do.

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In short, the system that has been imposed is a mess. All households are paying more Council Tax, many parish and town councils around the country have cut their budgets and lowered their aspirations and the principle, or Golden Thread, that the parish sector has long held dear – that the community pays directly to the parish council without any interference from other tiers of Government - has been broken. There is absolutely no certainty about what the Government will do next year.

In order to make national budget savings the Government grant to billing authorities only part compensated for the changes to the benefits system. In MDC's case they anticipated a government funding reduction of 10%, which is £750k. However, MDC made changes to charges which effectively provided them with additional Council Tax funding of £815k, which enabled MDC to benefit by a further £65k rather than lose out.

MDC decided to distribute 100% of the transitional grant received from Government and FTC has now received £117,027.

The situation in Mendip District

To the best of my knowledge, all the town councils in the Mendip District, aware of the uncertainty about the grant, set their budget and precept amount in the same way as FTC. I think all parishes in Mendip District have now received a grant although I understand that Wells City Council only received theirs in w/b 20 May.

Options

FTC has options about what to do with the grant. Before these are considered, however, I want to remind Council that subsequent decisions need to be made in the context of not knowing whether:

1. A grant from Government will be forthcoming next year or in future years
2. MDC will continue to transfer any or all of the grant to the parishes
3. Future precept demands will be capped by Government (it was widely expected that Government was going to impose a cap on the 2013/14 precept demand, but it didn't)

Given this uncertainty, I recommend FTC continues with a low risk approach, continues to assume from one year to the next that no grant will be forthcoming and decide how to proceed if and when it arrives.

What should FTC do with the grant it has now received? Four options are provided below.

1. Issue a substitute precept demand for the current year that would be £117,027 less than the original. This would mean that MDC would need to issue a subsequent Council Tax bill to all Frome residents. In postage and printing alone, I estimate this would cost in excess of £12,000 and on these grounds alone I do not recommend this approach.

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2. Offer every Council Tax payer a flat rate (band D equivalent) refund regardless of the band of their property. This would equate to approximately £10 each but would create an administrative cost on this Council and this would probably need to be taken in to account before a refund was distributed. The informal advice I have received from SLCC is that this might be open to a legal challenge because it could be argued that those households in band E and above would be receiving proportionately less than those in bands A, B and C.

If the refund was offered it is unlikely that every household in the town would claim it, leaving an amount which could be spent on appropriate projects. Such projects could be related to relieving hardship in the town brought on in part by the changes in Council Tax benefit. FTC could, for example, establish a Hardship fund to complement MDC's newly established Hardship fund. Other projects might be related to improving the quality of the public realm and/or open spaces in the town, reducing the town's energy consumption, or simply doubling the size of FTC's community grant budget.

This approach has the advantage of engaging with the members of the community over whether they want a refund or whether they would prefer to see it spent on something else. It also has a lot of advantages but I do not recommend it unless legal advice is taken beforehand. Further thought would then need to be taken as to how it could operate.

3. Offer every Council Tax payer a refund proportional to their property banding. Band D households would receive approximately £10; Band C slightly less and Band E slightly more and so on. Otherwise option 3 is the same as option 2 above.
4. Offset next year's precept demand by £117, 027 and keep the grant in general reserve until then. Of course, this approach leaves FTC at the mercy of a Government imposed cap on the precept demand. This would be the simplest way to achieve a fair redistribution of the grant but would not open the possibility of establishing an appropriate project nor would it be a way of engaging with the community. I recommend that Council considers this approach only if legal advice suggests option 2 or 3 are not possible.
5. Spend all or part of the grant now or through the year on appropriate projects. This approach could engage the community in how the grant should be spent but might leave the Council open to criticism for not offering a refund to households in the town. Even so, Cllrs might prefer this to option 4 if, following legal advice, offering refunds is not possible.

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Recommendations

1. Note that FTC has received a grant of £117,027 from MDC related to the changes in Council Tax Benefits.
2. Note that all other town councils in Mendip District adopted the same low risk approach as FTC when setting their budget and precept amount.
3. Hold the grant in general reserve until a decision about how to use it has been made.
4. Take advice over whether it is legal to offer a refund to each household in the town.
5. Depending on the legal advice, (a) devise a refund scheme to offer households in the town, (b) reduce the precept demand next year by £117,027 based on the certainty that it is in reserves, or (c) devise projects and plan to spend the grant this year.
6. Focussing on community engagement, investigate suitable projects that might be appropriate on which to spend all or part of the grant.
7. Return to IAC in August with further recommendations.

6 For Decision - Ethical Decision Making Working Party findings

Author: Town Clerk

Summary

Making ethically based decisions generally, and specifically over choice of suppliers of goods and services, has been investigated by a working group that met twice. This paper reports back to IAC on the questions it considered and promotes a matrix for these decisions within FTC. It then identifies a series of recommendations.

Background

The Internal Affairs Committee agreed to establish a working party with the aim of identifying a standard way in which ethical issues can be taken into consideration when making decisions generally, and specifically when appointing suppliers. It requested that the working party recommend a framework/matrix that can be applied to decision making and/or recommend further work.

This working party comprised Luke Wilde (professional sustainability consultant), Judy Annan (Fairtrade Frome), Cllr Peter Macfadyen (FTC), Cllr Toby Eliot (FTC) and Paul Wynne (FTC Town Clerk). It met twice; in March and April.

Existing FTC policy

1. FTC's strategy states that there will be an environmental thread running through corporate decision making.
2. FTC's Investment strategy states that investment decisions must be prudent and when possible they should be made ethically.

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Discussion and conclusions

The following points highlight the various discussions of the working party. These led to the recommendations at the end.

It was agreed early on that *the mark of a good society is how it treats its vulnerable people and considers future generations in decision making.*

Emerging questions

The working party considered the meaning of the term ethical. The following questions began to emerge.

- How will this decision impact on the most vulnerable people in society?
- How will a decision impact on future generations?
- Does the decision impact on human rights?
- Will the decision have a net negative environmental impact (e.g. in production, transport and disposal costs)?
- Is the decision more likely to support local people above multinational companies?
- Is FTC happy to submit decision making to public scrutiny?

The working party asked if one decision could be described as more ethical than another? It agreed that this was possible and that this was best answered by combining the questions above.

Financial scale of the decision

It was agreed that to get the most significant ethical impact we should probably focus more attention on decisions that cost the most. This is not a fool proof mechanism, of course, and there are small cost decisions that can make a big impact. For example, showing others that we use paper from sustainable forests in our publications and letters or that we invest our reserves in more rather than less ethical banks could change behaviour in the community.

The role of evidence

The working party considered the importance of evidence in making decisions. For example, what is a reasonable level of research in order to inform decisions over investments, contractors or suppliers?

The working group agreed it is important to work through each decision and consider the ethical impact based on the evidence available. But also, where evidence isn't available or where it is ambiguous FTC needs to decide on what it believes to be the correct decision. This led on to a discussion on what is termed the "sunlight test" (see below).

The sunlight test

This test asks whether FTC would be happy for its decisions to be open to public scrutiny. The answer to this has to be yes, even for minor decisions. This sunlight test helps FTC be confident that all decision making is as ethical as possible and not tokenism.

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Promotion of ethical organisations

The working party agreed that FTC has a role in promoting other ethical organisations. It did not discuss how best to do this and recommends further work in this area.

Matrix for ethical decision making

Combined, the questions below create a matrix that enables FTC to compare different suppliers. The working group believes it to be appropriate to the size of FTC and not burdensome. Initially, the decision makers will answer positive or negative to each question in the matrix and if there remains no clear leader then consideration to the question “to what extent” (see below) will be needed. This will probably involve qualitative analysis.

1. Is the decision likely to incur costs in excess of £5000? If so, more investigation should be carried out to inform the decision.
2. Will the decision have a positive or negative impact on vulnerable people, locally as well as globally? If so, to what extent?
3. Will the decision have a positive or negative impact on future generations – economically, socially or environmentally? If so, to what extent?
4. Will the decision have a positive or negative environmental impact in the short term? If so, to what extent?
5. Will the decision have a positive or negative economic impact on local people? If so, to what extent?
6. Will the decision have a positive or negative impact on human rights? If so, to what extent?
7. Is FTC happy to do the sunlight test?

Recommendations

1. Adopt the framework above with immediate effect
2. Apply the matrix to FTC bank accounts, investments, credit cards within three months and return to IAC in October with recommendations.
3. Review FTC’s grant application form using the matrix as a guide and refine it if need be in time for the final round this year. This will help us to encourage local organisations to take an ethical approach.
4. Include an ethical commentary in the Annual Report.
5. Investigate how to promote other ethically based organisations.
6. Provide a review of the matrix to IAC in October.

7 For Information - Website update – a full report on progress

Author: Town Centre Manager

Summary

This paper recommends the endorsement of the progress of the internal website group and agreement of the next stage in redeveloping the FTC website.

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Background

The website working group was established to review the current website style and content and make recommendations for change. It was agreed early on that due to the volume of content aimed at different audiences there was a need to develop two separate but linked websites providing:

- council and community information (of interest to the people of Frome and potential new residents)
- visitor and business information (of interest to day or staying visitors or a business that may be interested in moving to Frome). Business information is not currently available on the existing website.

The group agreed that there is a need for a cohesive brand for both websites that can also extend to other communication tools such as printed materials. At the most recent meeting on 13 May the group focused on a brief for this work which includes the messages to be promoted, potential domain names to be used and how the websites will be developed.

Messages

The group agreed that the messages to be promoted to visitors / incoming businesses should be:

- a. Creative, vibrant town
- b. Fascinating history and heritage
- c. Strong independent retailing and 'super' markets
- d. Always something happening
- e. Ideal base for the wider area
- f. Thriving creative sector
- g. Entrepreneurial town – sharp growth in self-employment
- h. Fourth largest town in Somerset with further growth planned
- i. Large catchment of businesses and people of working age
- j. Excellent quality of life – cultural, facilities, education, work / life balance
- k. Well connected by road, rail and superfast broadband connectivity
- l. Strong desire to help

The messages to be promoted within the community and council website should be:

- a. Encouragement of participation, getting involved
- b. Vibrant, dynamic community

The information should be:

- a. Clear, concise, accessible
- b. Lighthearted – more of the Facebook page tone, less municipal
- c. 'The boring bits' – council information that has to be included but is not the main focus should have its own section
- d. The community information should lead over council information

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Domain names

Use of gov.uk domain names are regulated by the Cabinet Office and must include either be www.frometowncouncil or www.frome-tc.gov.uk. There are examples like trowbridge.gov.uk which are historic but frome.gov.uk is not possible under current rules.

For the visitor / business site discoverfrome.co.uk and .com are owned by the Council.

Development

One area of the website that is valued by contributors and one of the most visited pages is the events calendar. It is seen as the best available online events listing by the Frome venues group but is time consuming for staff to update. This will be dealt with by a content management system that venues and event organisers can access to add their own details.

The existing website suppliers, Boson are able to rework the current site significantly to address identified issues. This will help to keep costs down. Budget for website development is available within the established Marketing budget of £40k, although this budget needs to cover communication through all channels.

Recommendations

1. Endorse the approach taken by the internal website group
2. Discuss with Boson improvements to the existing site
3. Approach website developers with finalised briefs for the new website development

8 For Decision - Christmas Extravaganza 2013

Author: Town Centre Manager

Summary

The purpose of this report is to agree new arrangements for the organisation of the Christmas Extravaganza. Organisation of the event in house takes significant staff resources, it is therefore proposed to enter an agreement with Sunrise Festivals to make use of their event planning experience.

Background

There is agreement that the existing format is already fairly successful in terms of attendance and community involvement but that there is a need to make it more appealing. Core elements of the event: stage, Santa, reindeer, community carol singing are popular. The Extravaganza working party met with representatives from Sunrise Festivals and Frome FM on 29 April to establish a new format for the event in 2013. The date will be Sat 30 Nov and as last year will tie in with the Super Market on Sun 1 Dec to provide a weekend of Christmas events.

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Improvements to the event

Suggestions on how to improve the event included:

1. ask the community what they want the event to be with a public consultation
2. re-instate a theme – Medieval, Harry Potter?
3. add things of interest to different age groups
4. encourage more focussed involvement of venues such as pubs
5. Possibilities: street food / food feast style area, banquet

Developing the event may require additional funding beyond the £6000 in the council budget. Sources for additional funding could include business sponsorship (there are existing demands on businesses at this time of year), grant funding or revenue generation within the event. It was confirmed that no extra funding would be available from FTC.

These are all areas that Sunrise will investigate further as part of the event planning.

The main issue for the Town Council is around staffing capacity to organise the event. Sunrise Festivals have the capacity and willingness to take on the organisation. Frome FM have the expertise to further the reach of the event via broadcast.

Recommendations

1. Agree a service agreement with Sunrise Festivals to organise the Christmas Extravaganza for 2013, including sourcing additional funding as necessary
2. Frome FM to be involved in the event via liaison with Sunrise Festivals
3. The Town Centre Manager acts as a contact point for Sunrise Festivals to provide information and receive planning and financial reports
4. This will be a one year trial to be reviewed in early 2014

9 For Decision - Update on Keep Frome Clean

Author: Town Centre Manager

Summary

This paper provides an update on the campaign to date, outlines next steps and recommends committee endorsement.

Background

The campaign was launched at the end of April with a photo call bringing together businesses and community groups. This gained front page coverage in the Somerset Standard who are actively promoting the campaign.

The 'Keep Frome Clean Spring Clean' on 11-12 May was a great success involving over 30 volunteers from community groups, businesses and Town Council Cllrs and staff. It covered the river corridor and the town centre and

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generated an impressive amount of rubbish and further coverage in the Somerset Standard.

Next steps

Future clean up events are planned for summer, autumn, winter. Rather than continuing to focus on the town centre, these will be aimed at particular hotspots in neighbourhoods around the town that have been identified in consultation with relevant groups and which will aim to encourage local residents to take ownership and engage.

The cleaning of the town centre will, by this point, be covered by The Landscape Group who take on the street cleaning contract for Mendip from July. The Landscape Group have assured us that they will be working to a high standard of cleanliness and have the ability to be more responsive to issues as they develop. This will be monitored closely in practice and further meetings with The Landscape Group are planned. It will allow the Town Council lengthsmen to focus on complementary works such as removing graffiti.

Businesses are still being approached to sign up to the campaign. The Town Centre Manager is working with the Chamber of Commerce to produce a statement of commitment for businesses who will be issued a Keep Frome Clean window sticker to show their support. There is a Keep Frome Clean page on the Council website listing all businesses and community groups who have signed up along with related events.

The Town Centre Manager along with the dog warden and businesses is also looking into the availability of dog mess bags. Making them more easily available will encourage owners to pick up after their dogs.

Next steps revolve around raising public responsibility, initially by approaching schools to involve children. One way to do this will be with an art competition for students to design anti-litter posters that can then be displayed in problem areas around the town. Engaging the children can be a good way to also raise awareness with parents.

In addition Police Inspector Mark Nicholson, following his presentation at Council on 22 May, will be discussing with the Town Centre Manager the possibility of PCSO's issuing fixed penalty notices for litter and dog poo offences.

Recommendation

To note progress to date and endorse the next steps in the campaign.

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10 For Decision - Frome Participation Week

Author: Community Projects Officer

Summary

This paper recommends a week of participatory events in November 2013 with the overall objective of increasing community engagement with Frome Town Council and each other.

Background

A key objective of FTC is to increase and enhance community engagement throughout the town. This is important in order to engage local people with the Town Council's activities as well as strengthening community networks themselves.

Following the successes of the 2013 Town Meeting and the Steiner School World Café meeting before Christmas, it was agreed at Council on 22 May that another Town Meeting should be organised for November. It is proposed to organise a series of lively and engaging participatory events across the town in the same week under the banner of 'Participation Week'.

Content of Participation Week

The Participation Week could include, for example:

Community Fair

As we would like this year's Community Fair to have a stronger emphasis on promoting community activities to the wider public, we are keen to hold it in a conspicuous location to encourage as many people as possible to get involved. Therefore, it would work best to hold the fair outdoors in the town centre, where people passing by can easily stop and find out more. To encourage people to spend this time outside, September may be more suitable than November due to weather constraints.

Community groups attending the fair can be given the opportunity to take ownership over further community events as part of Participation Week. The fair can also be used as a platform to, for example: promote Participation Week; gather votes for the People's Grant projects; strengthen community networks; provide information such as fundraising opportunities.

Town Meeting

This could be held in a World Café format, with the agenda having been set with the community in advance of the meeting. Agenda setting can be promoted through various means including social media discussion boards and through events such as the Community Fair.

Speakers' Corner

Regular open spots within the town to enable people to speak about issues that are important to them.

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Understanding the budget

An event or series of events to provide more transparency about the FTC budget, and to invite local people to be involved in how the budget is allocated. This could be used as an introduction to community budgeting, and would serve as a way of opening dialogue and raising awareness of how the town's money is spent. This event is an opportunity to use creative visual methods of capturing local communities' priorities, and to increase involvement in FTC decision making for the future.

Issues surrounding poverty in Frome

This would serve to increase engagement and work towards collective solutions to the issues surrounding people affected by poverty in the town.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to endorse this approach. There will be further updates on planning for Participation Week at upcoming meetings.

11 For Decision - Investment Banks

Author: Responsible Finance Officer

Summary

This paper recommends that members delegate authority to the RFO in consultation with the Chair of IAC to invest Frome Town Council's reserves in ethical banks/building societies offering competitive investment rates.

Background

Currently, FTC has £300,000 invested in Co Op in a three month investment due to mature on 18 July and £300,000 invested in Lloyds TSB in a 95 day investment due to mature on 12 June.

Lloyds TSB allows FTC free banking and we currently have two accounts, current and business for day to day banking plus salary transfers, business charge card and Information Centre credit card terminal. We are in the process of setting up a BACS payments system called Lloyds Link free of charge so it is not recommended that the day to day banking arrangements are altered at this stage.

Our Financial Regulations state that investments must be made prudently and, wherever possible, ethically, with full recognition of the Town Council's responsibility to the Council Tax payer, and with regard to the priority for security and liquidity of those investments. All investments will be specified investments not exceeding twelve months and will be monitored and approved by the Internal Affairs Committee.

Discussion

The recent downgrading of Co Op bank's credit rating highlighted the possible risk of having investments in only two savings accounts as the entitlement to

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compensation should a bank/building society fail could be a maximum of £85,000.

I consider it prudent to explore whether we should spread our investments. This could be between different banks/building societies to a limit of £85,000 per investment and ranging from three month investment to longer term to attract a higher investment rate.

Alternatively, we can decide to roll over the current investments with the Co Op and Lloyds TSB.

Recommendations

On maturity from the Co Op and Lloyds TSB authority be delegated to the RFO in consultation with the Chair of IAC to invest and spread the Town Council's reserves over three or more banks/building societies offering ethical and competitive investments in line with the Ethical Decision making matrix discussed at the meeting.

12 For Information - Financial update and forecast

Appendix 1. Payments made (over/= £500 in value) since last meeting.

Appendix 2. A breakdown of Income and Expenditure as at 30 April 2013

Income

The first half of the annual Precept (£495,809) and a Council Tax Support Grant (£117,028) for 2013/14 has been received from MDC this month. S106 money (£9,642) has been released by MDC to enable the completion of bow top fencing alongside Tickleberry Alley side of Mary Baily Playing Field. £10,000 was received from DCLG towards marketing of the town. Monthly rent was received of £250 and £345 from Victoria Park Café and Palmer Street flat respectively, plus a donation of £250 towards screening at the Welshmill dirt track.

Expenditure

The first month of the new financial year sees the payment of the annual Insurance £8,558 a reduction of almost 50% on 12/13. Following negotiations with WPS, AON and Zurich Insurance companies, Frome Town Council has entered into a fixed price three year deal for 2013 – 2016 with Zurich Municipal Town and Parish. Despite WPS offering a competitive proposal, cost and an established relationship were important factors in choosing Zurich.

April is when annual subscriptions are due, the largest being £2,000 to Somerset Association of Local Councils, part of that subscription (£870) is to the National Association of Larger Councils.

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Following the staff review in April 2012 and successful 2012/13 staff appraisals, staff salaries were increased by one increment apart from staff at the top of their salary band. National pay increase of 1% has been offered and a vote is being sought by the Unions.

Part of the Community Enablement grant towards the community warden has been spent on buying a ride on mower and highway working training for the Outside Services Team.

Aside from normal monthly running costs, significant expenditure in April included FTC Community support grants to Young People Frome and the Cheese & Grain and legal fees for the transfer of land and play equipment at New Road.

Budget Savings

S106 money agreed for Tickleberry fencing has meant a saving of £5,000 on the Tickleberry Alley fencing budget.

Community Enablement Grant has freed up £6600 of the equipment replacement budget, originally set for the purchase of a ride on mower.

Appendix 3. Balance sheet and reserves as at **30 April 2013**

Reserves/Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet at appendix 3 shows the deposits in the bank, plus VAT owed to FTC, less amounts owed by FTC. It stands at £1,398,529. This is as high as our deposits ever get as we have just received the £495,809 half year precept as well as the £117,028 grant from MDC.

The General Reserve at the first of April was £224,958. It should be noted that £10,000 of this is for the Town Team grant referred to above. This leaves a balance of £35,000.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the town council's financial position as at 30 April 2013.

13 For Decision - Adoption of Showfield Consultation Report

Author: Town Clerk

Summary

This paper requests FTC adopts the Showfield consultation report which can be viewed at <http://www.frome-tc.gov.uk/frome-showfield-consultation-report/>

Background

At the last meeting it was noted there has been no formal adoption of the report produced following the consultation over the Showfield.

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The objective of the report was to gather views on how the Community wanted to use the Showfield in the future. The main findings were that a mini football pitch, more trees, bins, benches and paths were needed. These can be funded from the s106 budget for Showfield improvements. In addition the report highlighted the need for MDC to fence the play area, create a short mown area for picnicking and improve management of hedges, ditches and the site as a whole. Lastly the report highlighted that adult fitness equipment would be popular.

- 14 The next meeting will be at 7pm on Tuesday 6 Aug 2013 at the Saxonvale Centre**