

# Vision for Frome and Frome Town Council

## Frome Showfield Consultation

October 2012



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## **Vision for Frome and Frome Town Council**

### **What is the best use of the Section 106 money for improvements and enhancements to Frome Showfield?**

**Objective:** to gather community views on how to spend the cash available for improving the Showfield and to develop a broad understanding of what the community would want in the longer term.

#### **1. The Showfield**

- 1.1 The showfield is one of the four major open spaces in the town. The others being Victoria Park, The Dippy and Egford Lane. It provides a 'green lung' for the whole of Stonebridge, Berkley Road the St John's areas. The consultation revealed it is valued highly as an open space while being in severe need of enhancement.
- 1.2 The Showfield is owned by Frome and District Agricultural Society and managed by Mendip District Council through a 99 year lease agreement established in 2006. The precise details of this lease were unavailable to the consultants.
- 1.3 The Showfield covers 22 acres / 9 hectares which includes the Cricket Club and Frome Collegians football pitch.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The new Frome Hospital was opened to the public in June 2008 and the new Medical Centre is expected to open in January 2013. The developers have a commitment to support the local community by contributing a fixed sum of money for enhancements and improvements to the locality.
- 2.2 The Section 106 agreement (Appendix 1) states that £38,607 is available for improvements and enhancements to the facilities at the Showfield. An additional £5,791.00 is available for public consultation. The Town Council has an additional sum for Outdoor Gym Equipment that will be installed on the Showfield.
- 2.3 Vision for Frome (V4F) and Frome Town Council (FTC) wish to encourage Mendip District Council to hasten the use of the Section 106 allocation in a way that supports the local community.
- 2.4 To that end, V4F and FTC commissioned Neil Oliver and latterly Clare Hein to carry out a short but intensive piece of community consultation between 17<sup>th</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

- 2.5 This work was funded by a £500 donation from V4F, the rest from the S106 moneys identified for consultation.
- 2.6 The consultants took notice of the excellent work that predated this work, most notably:
- Frome Community Plan - A vision for Frome 2008 - 2028 (V4F)
  - A strategy for success 2011 - 15 (FTC)
  - Strategy for Open Spaces (FTC)
  - Back out to Play In Mendip (Play Strategy Mendip District Council)

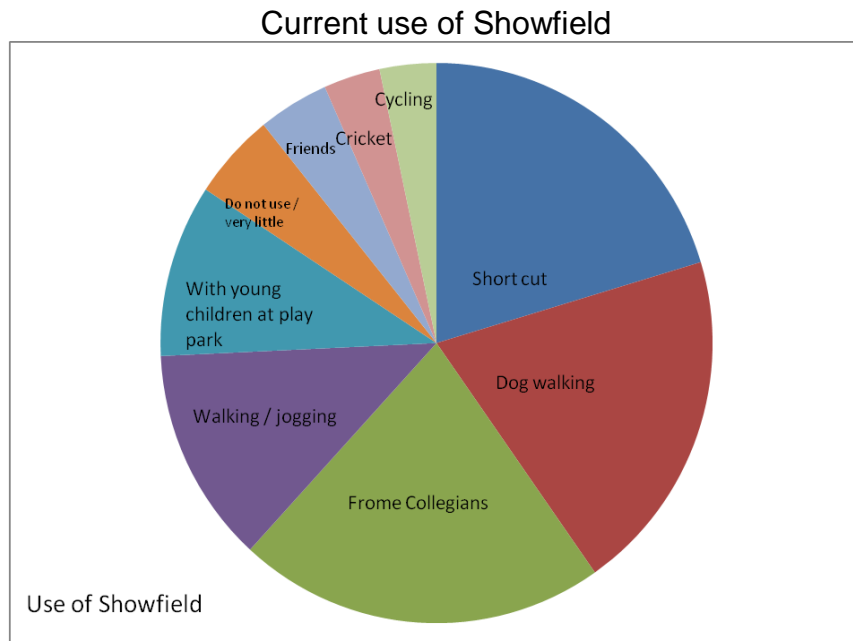
### **3. Methodology**

- 3.1 A group of potential stakeholders were identified and contacted (Appendix 2). All stakeholders were invited to complete a short questionnaire either through e-mail correspondence, face to face or via an online 'Survey Monkey' facility hosted by FTC. The consultants were available to meet members of the public on six occasions, at a variety of times/days of the week/weather on the Showfield.
- 3.2 Two public meetings were advertised widely through newspaper articles in the Frome Times and The Somerset Standard, posters displayed around the site, flyers delivered to local residents and via e-mails to over 100 key stakeholders. Attendance at the public meetings (30) represented all stakeholders except young people and children plus Frogs who sent in a response via e-mail.
- 3.3 The Questionnaire was designed with open ended questions (Appendix 3) to encourage respondents to be creative and expansive in their thinking thus encouraging a longer term vision.
- 3.4 The consultation closed on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October. At that point 236 responses had been gathered; Councillor Boyden 11, e-mail 8, Survey Monkey 78, and face to face 139, which included those gathered with the help of Frome Collegians.
- 3.5 The consultation events gave attendees the opportunity to draw their ideas direct onto an aerial map of the Showfield. Appendix 4 offers the public thoughts.
- 3.6 Frome Collegians presented very helpful proposals, which included the establishment of a mini pitch, Appendix 5.

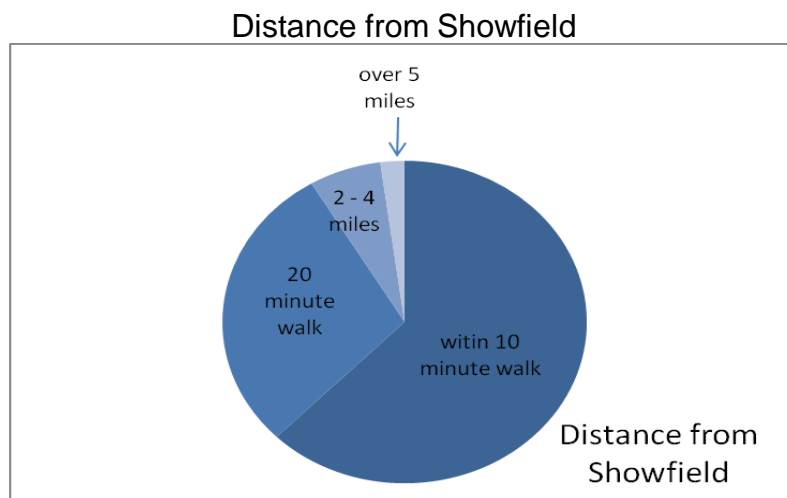
### **4. The findings**

- 4.1 The findings of the questionnaire plus the views expressed at the public meetings offer clear messages. This data and comments have been compiled and appear in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively.

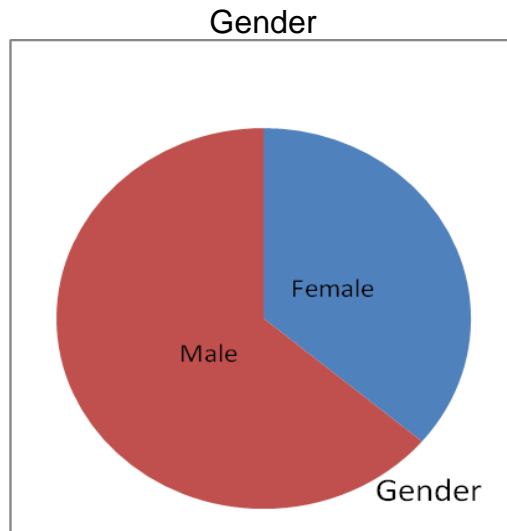
- 4.2 A common theme that emerged indicated that people would like to keep the Showfield as a desirable open space that encourages family and community use for leisure, recreation and sporting activities.
- 4.3 The consultants wanted to know about the current usage, how far from the Showfield people live, their age and gender and finally how they think the Showfield could be improved and enhanced over the next 5 years.



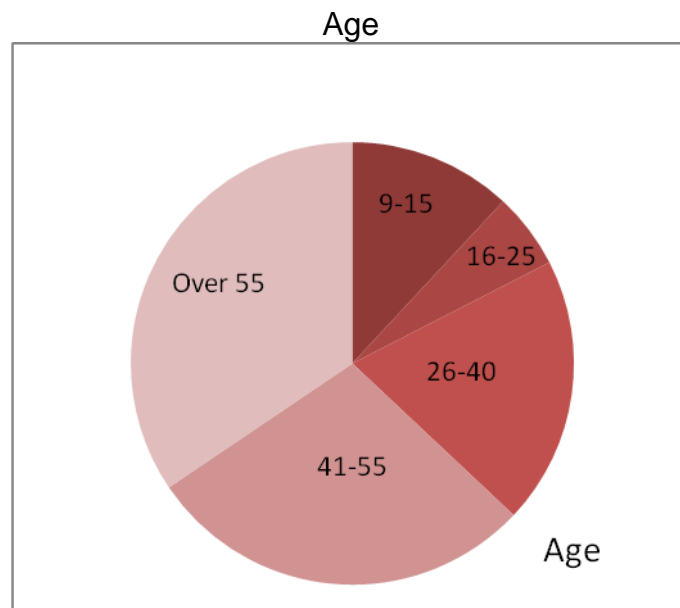
93% of people responded to this question.  
 20% said they use it as a shortcut to shops / college / hospital appointments.  
 20% use the Showfield for walking their dogs, often twice a day.  
 22% watch or are involved with Frome Collegians or the Cricket Club.  
 12% use the Showfield for walking/cycling or jogging.  
 10% supervise young children in the play park.  
 5% do not use the Showfield very often.  
 4% meet their friends: this was the response received from young people.



99% of people responded to this questions. 61% who responded indicated that they live within a 10 minute walk of the Showfield, a further 28% live within a 20 minute walk, 6% live between 2 and 4 miles and a final 2% live 5 miles or over.



99.5% responded to this questions 36% said they were female and 64% were males.



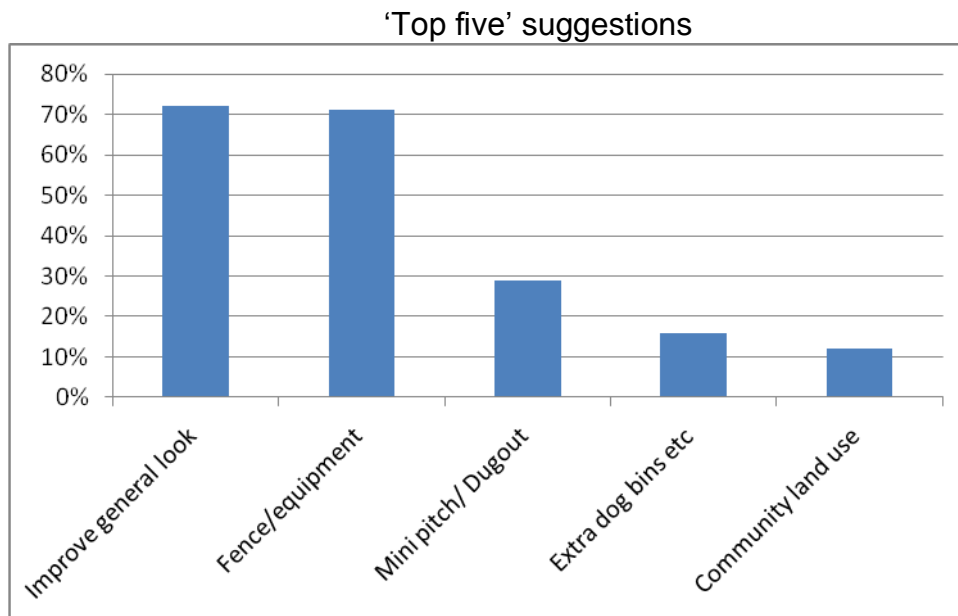
99% of people responded to age: 12% were 9 - 15 years, 6% 16 - 25 years, 19% 26 - 40 years, 28% 41 - 55 years, and 34% 55 years plus.

4.4 The public were asked how the Showfield could be enhanced or improved over a 5 year period. Many people offered more than one suggestion.

The 'top five' suggestions are to:

- improve the general appearance and feel of the Showfield by providing more seating, frequent grass cutting, a picnic area with more trees and areas that encourage wildlife

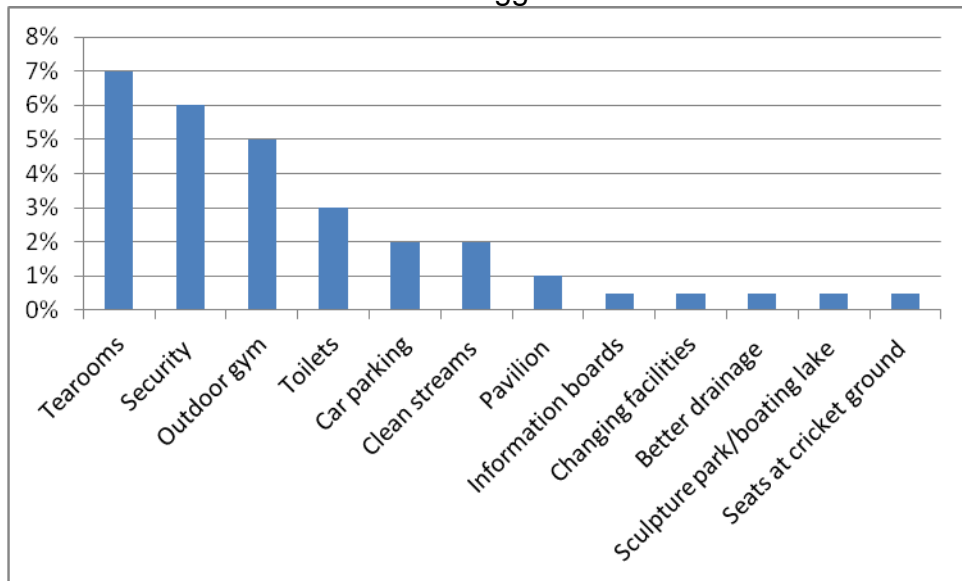
- improve the children's play area with a fence and more equipment for both younger and older children
- create a 'mini pitch' for community use and improve the 'dug out' on the pitch that is used by Frome Collegians
- increase number of bins for dog owners to use and consider creating a designated 'dog area' or employing a dog warden
- create a community flower market garden with allotments



Other suggestions include:

- improvements and increase to paths which could be lit with solar lights
- outdoor gym equipment to supplement the ring fenced money for the new facilities due to be installed over the coming months
- information boards
- enforcement of 'no dumping' of household refuse in streams that run along the south side of the Showfield
- improvements and increased car parking facilities
- improved security at entrances
- a tearoom that could be seasonal
- public toilets
- a major pavilion with facilities for functions
- changing facilities for footballers
- better drainage on northern side
- a sculpture park and boating lake
- seats around the cricket pitch

Further suggestions



- 4.5 A tearoom gathered 7% of suggestions. This facility will be offered in the new Medical Practice. The proposed cafe will be close to the entrance of the practice and will be open from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm during the winter months and possibly longer during the summer. There will also be toilets available within the Medical Practice for public use.
- 4.6 It is important to note that although some ideas can be funded in principle from S106 money, it may be more appropriate for the facility to be provided from other budgets. The Planning Team Manager at MDC has the final decision in regard to whether a proposal falls within the remit of the S106 agreement.

## 5. Village Green Application

- 5.1 Frome Recreation and Open Grounds Supporters (Frogs) submitted a Village Green Application to Somerset County Council in 2011 under Section 15 of the Commons Act 2006. This application is still in process and may take a further two to three years before a decision is reached. As a result, this report assumes no impact from the application.

## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1 In order to provide a high quality open space on the northeast side of town, much work needs to be done. The consultants make the following recommendations.
- 1) An active exploration takes place regarding the current maintenance and mowing contract. If the mowing contract fell under local control, residents would feel more connected with the service provider. This may also enable a different cutting regime that would encourage family use for picnics and



relaxation but would also enable some areas left for longer periods to help develop wildflower meadows.

- 2) There was a recurrent request for more trees: these could be small and fruit bearing. If planted along existing paths, interspersed with extra seating, then the area would take on a more attractive feel that echoes some of the features found in Victoria Park.
- 3) A fence around the children's play area, coupled with an increase in play equipment for younger children would have an immediate and positive impact on children and their families, many of whom are concerned about potential health hazards due to dog fouling. More equipment has also been requested for the older children to supplement what is already in existence.
- 4) Work is carried out with Frome Collegians to help realise their ambition of creating a 'mini pitch' on the Showfield. This would be of benefit to the local community as the pitch would not be fenced thus enabling youngsters to use it at any time. The area suggested in Frome Collegian's proposal (Appendix 5) is located just beyond the large yellow barrier near the Frome and District Agricultural Society offices.
- 5) Although 'dog bins' fall outside improvements and enhancements under the S106 agreement, it is recommended that the number and location of bins is increased. The Council may wish to explore ways of providing this facility from its own budgets with the associated costs for emptying and refreshing them. Placing of the bins is important; local residents gave detailed information as indicated on the consultant's location ground plan. (Appendix 8).
- 6) In order to maximise the positive impact of the new outdoor gym equipment, it is suggested that the existing paths need to be improved. These could be augmented with lighting. This will have the beneficial impact that Frome Running Club would feel able to use the area on dark evening. The addition of lights could encourage more people to take up an active, healthy lifestyle.
- 7) The creation of a new path to run parallel with Linnet Way would link up the north and south side of the Showfield at its northeast end. This desirable addition would enable wheelchair users, adults with buggies, cyclists, walkers and joggers to complete an entire circuit of the Showfield with much greater ease of access.
- 8) A small but important minority (6%) of respondents recognised that security on the Showfield is important and needs to be improved. This issue is the responsibility of the leaseholder. In the long term improved security would benefit the 6% who would like to see improvements to Frome Collegians 'dug outs'. A creative approach is to consider that extra use of the Showfield does, in itself help improve an overall sense of security and well-being for all.

9) Longer term suggestions include a community flower garden, extra allotments and perhaps a pond to encourage wildlife. Active groups that include The Allotment Association, Incredible Edible, Sustrans Supporters and Frogs members are ready and willing to support this work with knowledge and expertise.

10) It is important that the voice of young people is not lost. Theirs was the smallest percentage of respondents. However it was identified by 8% of all those who completed a questionnaire that improved facilities for young people is important. It is therefore recommended that further work with young people is carried out to establish exactly what is needed to support them in such a way that intergenerational barriers are broken down and a rich and balanced community is reflected in the facilities at the Showfield.

6.2 The location ground plan for suggestions has been created for reference. Appendix 8.

## **7 Conclusion**

7.1 In order to spend the S106 money in the short term, the consultants recommend that a costing exercise is carried out to supplement this report. These recommended improvements and enhancements will benefit Frome and its community and show that the voice of local people is heard and acted upon.

## **Appendices**

1. Section 106 agreement (hard copy only)
2. Stakeholders
3. The Questionnaire
4. Public suggestions detailed on maps (hard copy only)
5. Frome Collegians Proposals
6. Data analysis
7. Comments from the questionnaire
8. Location ground plan (hard copy only)

## **Appendix 1**

**S106 Agreement** (hard copy only)

## Appendix 2

### Stakeholders

- Frome and District Agricultural Society
- Residents
- Selwood and Frome Community College pupils, governors and staff
- County, District and Town Councillors
- Medical Practice including the hospital
- Cricket Club
- Frome Collegians
- Strategy for Open Spaces working group
- Young children using the play equipment
- Dog walkers
- Frome Recreation and Open Grounds Supporters (Frogs)

## Appendix 3

### The questionnaire

1. How do you use the showfield at the moment?
2. What improvements could be made to the showfield over the next 5 years?
3. How would these enhancements encourage more people to use the showfield?
4. Any other comments?
5. How far from the showfield do you live?
  - Within a 10 minute walk
  - 20 minutes walk
  - 2-4 miles
  - Over 5 miles
6. Please tell us about yourself
  - Age 9 - 15 / 16 - 25 / 26 - 40 / 41 - 55 / over 55
  - Female / male
  - Student / Adult responsible for young children / Dog walker / Sports person (including walker / jogger / runner / cyclist) / Linked to health centre / Local resident living near the showfield
  - Other: please specify

## **Appendix 4**

### **Ground plan of ideas from public consultation (hard copy only)**

## Appendix 5

### Frome Collegians Proposal for Frome Showfield Improvements.

Frome Collegians Football Club was formed in 1975 and is a prominent part of the Frome Sporting Community, running 19 children's and youth football teams from under 7's to Under 17's, plus two Adult Teams.

In 2009 Mendip District Council granted the Club planning permission to build a full sized football pitch on the Frome Showfield, and that same year a new ground was constructed. The Club has a 99 year lease on the land, and its volunteers take responsibility for maintaining the pitch and surrounding area in good order.



In the School holidays the Club have used their pitch to run a number of Football Fun Days for children of all ages, and in the summer evenings many children have used the pitch for training sessions. It has become a very valuable asset for the Town and enjoyed by many people.



Mendip District Council gave the Club approval to construct two dug outs at the ground, and these were built by Club members in 2009.

To prevent the dug outs becoming a meeting place for undesirables we lock security panels across the front after each match. Despite our efforts the security panels have been regularly targeted by vandals, who have broken into the dug outs a number of times and used them for drinking, smoking and drug taking.



The worst incident happened in June 2012 when the Showfield site was invaded by Travellers, who broke into the dug outs and used them as a toilet for the duration of their stay. When the travellers were finally evicted from the site Mendip District Council had to employ a team of specialist cleaners to decontaminate them.

We wish to replace the current security panels with a set of robust steel gates which will make the dug outs impregnable in future. A specialist contractor has given us a quote of £1490 plus VAT to build the gates, which will have a 30 year life. They will incorporate a Frome Collegians badge and will be very attractive.

There is a shortage of Football pitches for children in Frome. Frome Collegians have identified a piece of land (see below) on the Showfield which would be ideal for a mini soccer pitch, where children aged 6 – 10 could play competitive matches against other clubs.

The land is in poor condition, unused, and ideally situated for parents to watch their children play football.



The pitch would be 50m x 30m and include a perimeter for spectators to watch matches. The pitch would not be fenced off, so maintains the open space principle of the Showfield. An organised football match may take place on a Sunday afternoon, but at any other time the pitch would be available for local children to play informal ball games. Other children's football clubs in Frome would also be welcome to use the pitch.

Frome Collegians have the equipment to maintain the pitch in good order and would regularly mow the grass, mark lines and keep it litter free.

A discussion has already taken place with Frome & District Agricultural Society, who have given broad approval for the pitch to be built.

To ensure the pitch is built to a good standard we are obtaining a quote from the same contractors who built our existing pitch. We estimate the cost to be no more than £5000, although competitive quotes will be sought to ensure we get best value for money.

The land will remain under the control of Mendip District Council who have a 99 year lease on the site, and their permission will be sought in due course.

## **SUMMARY**

Frome Collegians Football Club are responsible custodians of the Showfield, and since 2009 have maintained their pitch in excellent condition, which has enhanced the area and provided enjoyment for many.

We did not receive any allocation of funds towards the construction costs of our pitch from the original Section 106 Monies relating to the Frome Hospital construction, and hope our projects this time are recognised by the local community as worthy of funding.

We are seeking £1788 from the Section 106 Showfield Improvement monies to purchase the security gates for our existing dugouts.

We wish to build a mini soccer pitch, and a maximum grant of £5000 is being sought for this project.



## Appendix 6

### Data collection

<b>Q2 - What improvements could be made to the Showfield over the next 5 years?</b>	Total number: possible to respond with several suggestions	Percentage %	Falls within the S106 remit for improvements and enhancements?
<i>More seating/benches</i>	55	23.31	Yes
<i>Maintain grass and hedges / variety of hedges for wildlife</i>	54	22.88	No - maintenance
<i>High quality landscape planting and more trees</i>	46	19.49	No - maintenance
<i>Fencing around the children's play area</i>	46	19.49	Yes
<i>Mini pitch for community use (maintained by Collegians)</i>	44	18.64	Yes
<i>Improve and increase paths</i>	40	16.95	Yes
<i>Dog fouling bins</i>	30	12.71	No
<i>Increased play equipment for younger children</i>	29	12.29	Yes
<i>(Solar) lighting along footpaths</i>	25	10.59	Yes
<i>Increased equipment for young people</i>	20	8.47	Yes
<i>Improvements to Collegian's 'dugout' by installing gates</i>	20	8.47	Yes if a public facility
<i>Create picnic areas that could include tables</i>	19	8.05	Yes
<i>A tearoom (could be seasonal)</i>	17	7.20	Yes: subject to planning approval
<i>Community flower garden / market garden with seating</i>	14	5.93	Yes
<i>Improved security at entrances</i>	15	6.36	Yes
<i>Create allotment plots</i>	12	5.08	Yes: subject to planning approval
<i>Outdoor gym</i>	11	4.66	Yes
<i>Toilets</i>	7	2.97	Yes
<i>Paddling/splash pool and fence</i>	6	2.54	Yes
<i>Higher fence at end of football pitch to stop balls going into</i>	6	2.54	Yes

<i>children's play area</i>			
<i>Designated 'dog area'</i>	4	1.69	Yes
<i>Litter bins</i>	4	1.69	No
<i>Create a pond</i>	3	1.27	Yes
<i>Information boards including 'pick it up' signs</i>	2	0.85	No
<i>Extra facilities for footballers / a place to change</i>	2	0.85	Yes if a public facility
<i>Major pavilion with other facilities for functions etc.</i>	2	0.85	Yes if a public facility
<i>More car parking</i>	2	0.85	Yes
<i>Clean up stream which smells</i>	2	0.85	No - maintenance
<i>Stop people dumping stuff in streams</i>	2	0.85	A matter for Enforcement
<i>Improve the appearance, (i.e. car park resurfacing etc)</i>	2	0.85	No - maintenance
<i>Better drainage on northern side</i>	1	0.42	Yes*
<i>Install bird nesting boxes</i>	1	0.42	Yes
<i>Sculpture park</i>	1	0.42	Yes
<i>Create a boating lake</i>	1	0.42	Yes
<i>Put in a heli pad (..... Perhaps a tongue in cheek response!)</i>	1	0.42	
<i>Ski slope in winter (..... Response by 10 year old girl)</i>	1	0.42	Yes if a public facility
<i>A dog warden (could be a volunteer in local area)</i>	1	0.42	No: cannot be used for wages: MDC
<i>More events</i>	1	0.42	No
<i>Seating around the cricket ground</i>	1	0.42	Yes if a public facility

\* in theory but a tough one to implement

## Appendix 7

### Comments received to Q2: What improvements could be made to the showfield over the next 5 years?

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Lighting - running club (who meet at the rugby ground on gypsy lane) would use it in the evening if it was better lit

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Clean up dog fouling and litter, maintain the grass and hedges, have more seating and areas for picnics

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I hope there will be some well positioned paths to take people from the show field to the (hospital and health centre) entrances to allow and encourage walking and cycling to the buildings.

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Gates for football dug outs and better security for the showfield.

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Fence off play area so dogs cannot run around and disrupt our picnic/physical play (we had a couple of dogs run among our group of children and started fighting!!)

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Support to Collegians and to Frome Cricket Club in improving their facilities. Holding more events on the open land akin to the Frome Hospital fete or other open air events. Enhancements and fencing to the children's play park.

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Fence for the playground. Drainage: The paths flood after heavy rain. The ditches need re-digging. Soak-aways on the top side of the lower path would help, but a wildlife pond carefully sited could alleviate the problem and be of benefit to all. Paths: A hard based link needs to be made at the north east end & a cycle route maintained from Forest Rd to Fromefield to join up with Spring Rd. Security: Further steps should be taken to prevent access by both "travellers" & young local joy-riders. Additions: A wildflower meadow would be pleasant & low maintenance - mow once yearly after seed has set. Trees could be planted as personal memorials to loved ones, to be maintained by those concerned. Seating and picnic areas at strategic points.

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Some seating for picnics and watching the children play would also be good. Putting in proper paths where people obviously walk would be useful as would an increase in litter bins and dog mess signage and dog poo bins would be great too. Increasing

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the play facilities for younger children - a lot of work seems to go into catering for school age children, however the under 5's who have the most daytime hours to fill are nearly always forgotten about.

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A community garden, possibly in the corner near the cricket ground and the Vine Tree, would be a fantastic resource for Frome. It could be used for therapeutic gardening, if the health centre was involved in it, and it could encourage a healthier attitude to food generally, as well as providing more growing space, and a place for people to come together and learn about growing food (through community plots, training sessions, etc). I would also like to see a mini orchard planted, perhaps, so that the fruit could be available to anyone, as the blackberries are at the moment. Space for picnicking would also be good, and I would support a paddling pool / lido on the showfield.

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New paths where users have created those diagonally across fields. Better drainage on Northern side. More seats. More trees perhaps linked to a Nature search for children. Major pavilion with other facilities for functions etc.

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Keep it at current size (ie don't lose any more space) , improve the appearance, (ie car park resurfacing etc), and provide more to attract the community to use it - ..... with more play equipment, or boating lake - we need to get more people to use and value showfield, with more leisure facilities.

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Develop the area between the cricket club and the football pitch with a dog free picnic area, more playing facilities for children, a cafe and introduce a parking fee for all dog walkers which would be used toward the upkeep of an area specifically for dog walkers. Make all areas secure.....

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1. Cleaned up, as it is currently disgusting with litter and dog mess.
2. The area could be managed properly as a wild flower meadow with extra trees and paths, or mown better so that it can be walked on more easily. Extra trees should focus on those that bees and other pollinator insects can forage on, (eg goat willow, lime trees amongst others), and easily managed fruit and nut trees for wildlife and people.
3. There are few places in this part of Frome where young children can play safely and without walking into dog mess, so to have somewhere beautifully designed and done to a high standard would be beneficial. Natural materials would enhance the feel of it. The current 'play area' is grotty and a not a nice place to be; it seems to have been done cheaply and without much thought. Any toddler area MUST be fenced off from dogs and done well. (Welshmill improvements may have been great for older kids but leave almost nothing to use safely by toddlers).
4. I wonder if a cafe of some sort would bring a friendly atmosphere, especially if the area around it was well landscaped and good for children.....

5. If the area was beautiful it could be a venue for community events like Apple Day, which currently rotates around schools. If there were plentiful orchard fruit trees planted this would make even more sense.

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Some benches on the top side so that people can watch the cricket - it's a lovely vista from up there. Some swings, both toddlers and ordinary, for the kids - there are only 2 at the lovely new facility that you've created at Welshmill and any parent/grandparent will tell you that swings are a great attraction to young children (and presumably wouldn't be too expensive or require a lot of upkeep); and why not make the current FCC nets into a community facility so that anyone can turn up and have a bat at any time.....

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It is sometime nice just to have a green area. But maybe more play equipment for a wider age range. Seating and plants. Children just need space - so perhaps some large stones. Tree trunks to scramble over.

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To work, community gardens need to be in highly visible public places with strong local support from a 'community' defined as people who live very close rather than a 'community of interest'. This is the case at both Orchard St and Mount Community Association gardens and both are remarkably vandal-free.

The other possible model is the Welshmill allotments one, and despite the high fences they still have problems of vandalism. And you certainly wouldn't want great big fences all over our lovely Cheeseshow field. I would advise whoever is running this show not to go down that path. Please!

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Maybe some sort of tearoom facility, with space for local arts and crafts to be displayed and able to be sold. Good toilets designated dog walking area

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Improve the pathways making them more suitable for use by all. Improve the drainage on the north side of the field. Since the hard paths have been laid these have been flooded many times. Drainage into the ditch, which needs redigging, should to be taken under the path. The paths should be completed making a circuit within the confines of the showfield. The present children's play area should be fenced off to keep dogs out. A wildflower meadow could be created, preferably in the north east field. Security of the whole field should improve to ensure that travellers should not be able to camp on the field.



## **Appendix 8**

**Location ground plan** (hard copy only).