

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 23 October, 7pm

Saxonvale Centre, Garsdale, Frome. BA11 1RZ

Members of the External Affairs Committee are:

Dave Anderson; Eve Berry; Graham Burgess; Adrian Dobinson; Tricia Golinski; Damon Hooton; Peter Macfadyen (Chair); Mel Usher; Nick White
and
Cara Honey (Mayor for Young People); Alex Shingler (Deputy Mayor for Young People)

AGENDA

1. Questions, comments and information from the public
2. Short talks from:
 - Mindset will give a summary of how installing the new road access at Welshmill was successful and their hopes for future training initiatives
 - Tessa Hibbert on her current findings from her research into what services young people need in the town
3. Apologies for absence, declaration of members' interests and minutes from the last meeting on 4 September 2013
4. A series of short presentations from officers on projects the Council is working on at the moment
5. Information about the upcoming Neighbourhood Plan public consultation
6. A look into the possible cut in funding to the Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership
7. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 18 December at the Cheese & Grain

Yours sincerely



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

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

AGENDA

- 1 **Questions, comments and information from the public**
- 2 **A short talk from:**
 - a. **Mindset**
 - b. **Tessa Hibbert**
- 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 4 September 2013
- 4 **An update on what the Council is working on at the moment**

Appendix 1 shows a comprehensive list of current projects FTC is currently working on and short progress reports. Officers will accompany this with verbal updates.
- 5 **For Information – Neighbourhood Plan public consultation**

The Planning and Development Officer will give a verbal update on the process that the plan has gone through and will go through before it is adopted. There will be a focus on the upcoming public consultation.
- 6 **For Decision – Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership**

Author: Economic Development & Regeneration Manager

Summary

The purpose of this report is to highlight the implications of the proposed withdrawal of funding by Somerset County Council from the Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership from April 2014 and to seek approval for representations to be made ahead of a decision by the County Council.

Background

The Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership is a joint venture between the train operating company (currently First Great Western) and local authorities along the Bristol to Weymouth railway line including Bristol City Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Somerset County Council and Dorset County Council. The overall objective of the Partnership is to raise awareness and increase use of the line to be achieved through:

- Building community involvement
- Improving information provision & promotion of the line's destinations/local economies

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

- Improving station environments and facilities, including access to them by other modes of travel.

A summary (Appendix 2) has been prepared by the Partnership Officer to show what the Partnership has achieved so far. Notable achievements referred to in this summary include:

- A growth rate in passenger numbers 3 times the national average (2002-13)
- Strong volunteer involvement in station improvements including Frome
- Production of a line guide 3 times a year which amongst other things helps to promote Frome as a visitor destination
- Car park for customers at Frome station
- Repainting and renovation of station buildings at Frome
- A programme of maintenance of parts of Frome station by a group of 18 volunteers that currently is not the responsibility of the train operator or Network Rail

Proposals

County Officers are recommending that the County Council withdraws funding from the Partnership from April 2014. This is projected to save Somerset County Council £5,528 per annum. The matter has been referred to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee and they are expected to take a decision on 11 November.

Potential impact

1. *Withdrawal of other partners* – all the partners are under severe financial pressure and because Somerset is geographically located in the middle of the route and a quarter of the stations are in Somerset, there is a high risk that the County Council's withdrawal would lead to the Partnership being wound up in its present form
2. *Loss of capacity to coordinate volunteer activity, promotional work and lobby the train operating company* for service improvements – the employment of the Partnership Officer would end and so will her work to organise activities along the line and her contacts with the railway and local authorities on behalf of the Partnership
3. *Loss of funding for community projects through the Community Grants Fund*
4. *A weakened voice for the region in influencing future investment by the train operating company, Network Rail and the Department for Transport* – whilst the Partnership is currently focussed on the Bristol to Weymouth line, it has the potential to provide a strong voice for the partners in representing the interests of the region in relation to rail investment across the region. The focus of attention at the national level is the proposed HS2 high speed service and the improvement of north-south rail links. Now is the time to be raising the profile of the need for improved east-west links and in particular improving the services connecting the south west region with London. If the Heart of Wessex Partnership was wound up, it may have to be quickly re-invented to ensure that

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

the current partners had a strong voice. The Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) may have a role to play in influencing Government but their functions and focus are broad and there are currently four LEPs operating in the area covered by the Partnership.

Conclusions

Whilst it is understood that the County Council is facing severe pressure to make savings, in the long term, cutting funding for the Partnership could prove to be a false economy given the need for a strong voice for Somerset in influencing investment by the train operator, Network Rail and the Government. This can only be achieved through continued partnership.

Frome is dependent on investment in the Bristol to Weymouth line as this provides the rail connections with the rest of the country. The loss of the Partnership would result in the loss of coordinating capacity and funds for local volunteer activity/projects and has the potential to weaken Frome's voice in terms of influencing investment in rail services in the future.

Recommendation

Write to Somerset County Council urging them to continue to support the Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership citing the conclusions in this report

- 7. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 18 December at the Cheese & Grain**

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the External Affairs Committee

Wednesday 4 September at 7pm
Frome Medical Practice, Enos Way, BA11 2FH

Present:

Councillors: Dave Anderson; Eve Berry; Tricia Golinski; Peter Macfadyen; Nick White.
Cara Honey (Mayor for Young People) and Alex Shingler (Deputy Mayor for Young People)

In attendance:

Angela Kerr (Vista Project), Steve Macarthur, Cllr Pippa Goldfinger, Paul Wynne (Town Clerk),
Sarah Hobbs (Community Projects Officer), Laura Poulton (Administration Officer)

10 members of the public

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2013/61/EAC	<p>1 QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION FROM THE PUBLIC</p> <p>A member of the public Elaine Ewens informed Cllrs that 29 acres of land known locally as Rodden Lake Stream was up for auction on 24 September. She was concerned that if there was no intervention from the public or Council the land that is a very popular site for informal recreation and rich in wildlife would be lost to development.</p> <p>Cllr Pippa Goldfinger suggested the possibility of protecting the area as a community asset. The Town Clerk confirmed he would look into this. The Community Projects Officer suggested contacting Somerset Wildlife Trust as they have a project to protect meadows.</p>	
2013/62/EAC	<p>2 A SHORT TALK FROM ANGELA KERR FROM VISTA PROJECT</p> <p>Angela explained that Vista Project is involved in Frome through the community group Active & In Touch. The group focuses on those who are isolated and assists them with reconnecting to the community. Those with mental health issues are at a higher risk of becoming isolated but Active & In Touch does not have the specialists to assist those with more complex issues.</p> <p>There were representatives from other voluntary organisations such as the Bridge Café, Frome Medical Practice and the Elim Connect Centre who all agreed sharing experiences and current issues was highly useful.</p>	
2013/63/EAC	<p>3 a. APOLOGIES</p> <p>The Chairman formally opened the Council meeting at 7.45pm and</p>	

FROME TOWN COUNCIL
making Frome a better place

	apologies of absence were received from Cllrs Burgess and Usher.	
2013/64/EAC	3 b. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS None was received.	
2013/65/EAC	3 c. MINUTES The minutes of the External Affairs Committee meeting held on 26 June 2013 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.	
2013/66/EAC	4 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS ACTIONS AND WHAT IS COMING UP NEXT TIME The Town Clerk informed Cllrs that Kate Hellard had been appointed on a contract to organise the Participate Frome! week. The Neighbourhood Plan public consultation had been scheduled for October. An application to the Heritage Lottery fund will be submitted by November for improvements to the town centre with a focus on St Johns Church. Cllr Anderson enquired about the plans for commemorating the start of WW1. Cllr White noted that he had been working with Steve Macarthur to look into funding opportunities to hold an event in the town centre. He also noted he had approached Singers about loaning to the town a bronze statue of the WW1 soldier for the commemoration. Charles Wood, a member of the public was invited to speak and advised contacting Tony Coutts- Britton as he has done extensive research into WW1. The Town Clerk suggested setting up a group of interested persons to begin planning a way for Frome to commemorate the start of WW1.	LP
2013/67/EAC	5 FOR DECISION – COMMUNITY GRANTS ROUND 2 It was recommended that Cllrs endorse the recommendations of the Grants Advisory Group. Proposed Cllr White, seconded Cllr Golinski, agreed unanimously.	
2013/68/EAC	6 FOR DECISION – FUNDRAISER SERVICE REVIEW AND NEW CONTRACT Green Strand provided a summary report. Cllrs noted that the current contract with Green Strand was due to expire in October.	

FROME TOWN COUNCIL
making Frome a better place

	<p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the current contract is amended in the light of the lessons learnt in its first year 2. That discussions with Green Strand are then opened to see if it is possible to continue and if not to advertise for a new contractor 3. That the service is funded from the Community Grants budget in 2014/15 <p>Proposed Cllr Golinski, seconded Cllr Berry, agreed unanimously.</p>	PWy
2013/69/EAC	<p>11 FOR DECISION – STREET FURNITURE – EXISTING AND FUTURE The Chair brought this item forward on the agenda.</p> <p>Cllr Goldfinger gave a summary of the current work that has been done with the Planning and Development Officer and Cllr Burgess on the restoration of the Cockey Lamps. She noted that there is a need for putting together a plan for more coherent street furniture in the town. She proposed a working party to evaluate what street furniture there is currently, what needs replacing and what can be restored.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to establish a working party to collate existing audits and studies and produce a thorough audit of all street furniture in the town centre and all Cockey Lamps in the town. This working group will be led by Cllr Goldfinger and include interested individuals and experts in the town 2. Return to this committee on 26 February at the latest with findings of the audit and recommendations 3. Give in principle support for a new street furniture design guide that will inform the town centre remodelling project 4. Encourage the Civic Society to apply for a community grant to provide a specification for maintaining and restoring existing historic street furniture in the town, primarily this is Cockey lamps <p>Proposed Cllr White, seconded Cllr Anderson, agreed unanimously.</p>	Cllr Goldfinger
2013/70/EAC	<p>7 FOR DECISION – FROME YOUTH SERVICES RESEARCH Cllrs noted the paper.</p> <p>The recommendation was to endorse the work to date on the project and note that the results of the project will be tabled at the</p>	SH

FROME TOWN COUNCIL
making Frome a better place

	<p>EAC meeting on 18 December.</p> <p>Proposed Cllr Golinski, seconded Cllr White, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2013/71/EAC</p>	<p>8 FOR DECISION – RODDEN MEADOW AND MILLENNIUM GREEN</p> <p>The Community Projects Officer informed Cllrs that FTC were expecting to acquire the piece of land at Rodden Meadow within a week and that it will be purchased with s106 money. She also noted that FTC was working closely with the Millennium Green Trustees and this land and Rodden Meadow would be managed as one. The Community Projects Officer emphasised that there will be a lot of community involvement in the management and maintenance of both areas.</p> <p>Cara Honey, Mayor for Young People suggested there be some advertisement about what has been happening in the two areas to inform residents of Frome. The Community Projects Officer confirmed this will be a part of the next steps.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note that the acquisition of the final parcel of Rodden Meadow is nearly complete 2. Endorse the approach taken in working with the Millennium Green Trustees 3. Agree to take on the lease of the Millennium Green if necessary in future 4. Agree the next steps and timetable <p>Proposed Cllr White, seconded Cllr Anderson, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>SH</p>
<p>2013/72/EAC</p>	<p>9 FOR DECISION – UPCOMING PROPOSALS FOR THE DIPPY</p> <p>The Community Projects Officer informed the committee that the transfer of The Dippy from MDC to FTC was expected soon and that MDC had agreed to have no restrictive covenants. The Mount Community Association was proposing to set up Friends of the Dippy group and was holding a meeting on 9 September. The Community Projects Officer explained that The Dippy could be managed by the Community with support from FTC.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endorse the approach taken in managing the site in the short term and in working with Edventure Frome and the local community 2. Agree the next steps and timetable 	<p>SH</p>

FROME TOWN COUNCIL
making Frome a better place

	Proposed Cllr Anderson, seconded Cllr White, agreed unanimously.	
2013/73/EAC	<p>10 FOR DECISION – UPDATE ON GARSTON ROAD PLAY AREA</p> <p>The Community Projects Officer informed the committee that it was hoped the transfer of the land to FTC would be finalised very soon.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note that the acquisition of this site is imminent 2. Endorse the proposed next steps 3. Agree to delegate to the Town Clerk the decision over whether to contract a local organisation to carry out the engagement with the local community in order to draw up a plan for the play area 4. Agree the timescale that concludes with the new equipment installed by late Spring/early Summer <p>Proposed Cllr White, seconded Cllr Golinski, agreed unanimously.</p>	SH
2013/74/EAC	<p>12 FOR DECISION – PALMER STREET RESURFACING</p> <p>A member of the public was invited to speak. David Taylor voiced his concerns about the resurfacing to Palmer Street.</p> <p>Cllrs felt that the paper from the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager did not provide them with enough information to vote on a decision.</p> <p>Cllr White recommended the decision be deferred to the next Full Council meeting or an emergency meeting of the External Affairs Committee.</p> <p>Proposed Cllr White, seconded Cllr Berry, agreed by majority.</p>	PWh
2013/75/EAC	<p>13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 23 October, Saxonvale Centre, Frome.</p>	
The Chair closed the meeting at 9.10pm		