

**Minutes of the Frome Annual Town meeting  
at the Merlin Theatre  
Held on 2 April 2014 commencing at 7.00pm**

**In the chair:** Cllr Dickon Moore, Mayor of Frome

**In attendance:**

Approx. 100 members of the public

Frome Town Councillors – D Anderson; E Berry; C Bullen; G Burgess; T Eliot; P Goldfinger; T Golinski; P Macfadyen; H Starkie; N White; M Usher

Frome Town Council Officers – Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Laura Poulton (Administration Officer), Jane Llewellyn (Planning and Development Officer), Jackie Wheeler (Responsible Finance Officer), Simon Woollen (Grounds and Properties Manager)

**Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2013 were signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.

**Welcome**

The Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

The Mayor highlighted some of the many events he had been invited to over the past year such as the well blessing at St Johns and the opening of Loop de Loop gallery. He noted that he had chosen to support three local charities; Friends of River Frome, Openstorytellers, FROGS. As part of his fundraising the Mayor had created a Frome tie, organised a Film night and was about to embark on a bike ride from Frome to the twin town of Chateau Gontier. He noted some inspiring events he had attended included meeting patients at Frome Hospital on Christmas Day as well as the Big Christmas Get Together at the Cheese & Grain.

The Cheese & Grain had been a real success with its recent refurbishment project of the interior and the installation of solar panels which create energy that can be sold back to the grid.

**Report from Cllr Mel Usher on the Town Council's future aims**

Cllr Mel Usher identified five priorities for FTC over the next year.

1. Boosting the identity and reputation of the town

Cllr Usher noted that the reputation of the town had changed. Nationally and internationally, Frome is seen as busy, creative and exciting, mainly due to the people who live in the town but also from the numerous amounts of press coverage. He noted that exposure is important for Frome as we are competing with other small towns. In addition it is important internally so the people of the town are proud of where they live.

## 2. Creating a thriving town centre

Cllr Usher noted that the refurbishment of the Cheese & Grain had brought new faces and investors into the town. The Markets are better with the Independent Market going from strength to strength.

Cllr Usher noted there was a renewed commitment to the town centre with the employment of a Town Centre Regeneration Manager and revamping the area around Boyle Cross. He explained that the future of towns like Frome will be more pedestrian friendly, there will be a continuation of independent shops with unique selling points, good internet connections and temporary buildings and pop up shops should be encouraged by minimising red tape.

## 3. Self-reliance – Frome looking after itself

Cllr Usher noted that there had been erosion of Frome's employment base. However, on a positive note there had been growth in small enterprises in the creative sectors. He felt that more could be accommodated if we had the space.

He noted that FTC would be working to help reduce energy waste and explore renewable options.

Within the next year a youth worker would be employed to implement the recommendations from the recent research project. In addition, the Youth Council would be recommending how some of the budget should be allocated effectively. An apprenticeship hub would be launched next year in collaboration with the College to help local students learn new skills.

Cllr Usher encouraged community groups to apply for some of the £50k that was available in grants for the voluntary sector.

## 4. Making the best uses of open spaces

Cllr Usher explained that FTC would soon take over the Dippy; plans for improvements at Rodden Meadow and Victoria Park were underway. He noted FTC would still love to take over the management of the Showfield.

## 5. Democracy and engagement

Cllr Usher explained that the most meaningful engagement usually takes place at a local level which Participate Frome demonstrated. FTC continues to be transparent and persuadable in what we do. He noted that the three tiers of government was no longer working; if there is a problem facing the town the elected members should be working them out together.

Cllr Usher highlighted the increase of new voluntary groups in the town as well as the consolidation of older ones. He noted the launch of Fair Frome which would run a community food bank, help extend the credit union and to be a campaigning voice. He also highlighted the very recent opportunity to buy the old Public office along Christchurch Street West. He noted that it would offer the ability to set up a community hub.

Cllr Usher encouraged the members of the public to speak to himself, other Cllrs or Officers about what they thought about the priorities. He also thanked the dedicated staff for their hard work which was much appreciated.

### **Presentation from the Mayor and deputy Mayor for young people on the successes of their first year and their plans for the future**

Cara Honey (Mayor) and Alex Shingler (Deputy) were joined by their fellow members of the Youth Council Dominic McKeown and Eve Anderson.

Cara and Alex thanked the community for the support they had received so far in their first year as Mayor and Deputy for Young People. In addition, they thanked the FTC staff and Cllrs as well as Azeema Cafoor.

Dominic noted the highlights of the year from the Youth Council's past year including The Big Jam music event. He explained that they had learnt a lot and had identified ways of improving their use of social media especially for publicity of events and improving their agendas including setting dates for the future.

Alex noted that in the near future an apprenticeship academy was to be set up; the Youth Council had been forming stronger links with Twinning Association. He and Cara were attending a trip to Chateau Gontier in the summer with hopes of improving relationships abroad. A youth bank was in development, which would allow young people to apply for grants, and they planned to do further work with Frome College and the Carnival as a way of getting involved in the community. The Youth Council had organised public question times, and were continually engaging with primary and middle schools.

Eve spoke of the Youth Council's current project with Friends of Palestine. They were working with the art department to create collages of pictures of their everyday lives which would then be sent to a refugee camp in Palestine who would return pictures of their everyday lives. They were planning to show examples of this project at the 2014 Frome Festival.

### **Public question time**

A member of the public, Denise, raised the issue of First Bus making changes to their 267 service. She was concerned of the effect on residents of Critchill and the knock on effect in the town centre. Tracy Harding also raised concern that buses were travelling to the Medical Centre at times when it was closed. Cllr Usher noted FTC was aware of the issues with the changes and officers were meeting with First Bus. After this meeting, he noted that the outcome would be reported.

Damon Moore congratulated Cllr Peter Macfadyen on his recently published book 'Flatpack Democracy'. He asked how the model for independence is reaching out. Cllr Macfadyen noted that the book was an attempt to open it up for debate and to show there was a need to look at other ways of doing local democracy.

A member of the public asked that more street lighting be installed at the junction of Clink Road and Berkley road. The Planning and Development Officer noted that she would investigate this in consultation with SCC. Dominic McKeown also raised the issue of poor lighting along the Welshmill footpath and at Willow Vale making them unsafe to walk at night.

John Peveryly noted he was encouraged to see FTC being proactive in taking over the Public Office's building as it was a terrific opportunity. He asked how likely the move was and how far it had progressed. The Town Clerk explained that FTC had commissioned a structural survey and if it were to go well then a price will be agreed with SCC. He noted FTC hoped to be moved in by January all being well.

Mike Rideout asked how FTC would finance the move. The Town Clerk said it was something they were still exploring and were looking at external sources of funding, grants, reserves, a public works loan and the profit from the sale of the property in Palmer Street.

A member of the public felt there was a strong moral case for the Public Offices building to be transferred for £1 and noted he had written a letter to the Frome Times to propose that.

Sacha Guppy asked if it was possible to plant trees in the town centre. Cllr Burgess explained that in the draft Neighbourhood Plan it was proposed to plant more trees in residential areas and the town centre. He noted that FTC would support owners of land to plant trees but wouldn't be able to do that without permission as the Westway and outside of Costa Coffee are both privately owned. Cllr Goldfinger also recommended joining the Facebook group 'more trees please'.

A member of the public, Gerlinda, congratulated FTC on how proactive they had been in engaging the town and implementing so many projects.

A resident of South Parade asked if FTC could help implement resident parking permits. The Town Clerk asked if they could speak after the meeting about what could be done to help.

Charles Wood noted he was in agreement with Cllr Usher with regard to the three tier system no longer being effective. He stated there was a need to try and build bridges and make the system work as much as possible.

Mike Rideout asked with regard to the transfer of the Showfield if it was just MDC holding it up. Cllr Usher explained that FTC were willing to take it on, would do it tomorrow, however there has to be discussions with MDC, the Agricultural Society and FROGS. Unfortunately, a solution could not be found because no sensible discussions had taken place yet.

Nick Ray noted that Friends of the River Frome were trying to improve the river banks by the Westway and acknowledged the work the Outside Services team had done to help. However, he wanted to encourage the Westway and other businesses in the town centre to fund some planting on the river bank.

## **Civic award winners**

The Mayor of Frome noted that within his year of office he had had the opportunity to attend some great events and therefore meet some wonderful people who do a lot for Frome. For the 2014 Annual Town Meeting the Mayor had chosen five recipients.

John Birkett Smith for his work in the town most notably with the Cheese & Grain.

Richard Brindle who set up a trust to fund work in the town including Frome CIC and part funding Fair Frome.

Ruth Diligent and Samantha Bull, two nurses at Frome Community Hospital. Ruth noted that the Civic Award gave recognition to the hard work and dedication of nurses.

John Fuller for his dedication to sport and organising clubs in the town over the last fifty years. Graham Clark of the Frome Collegians accepted the award on behalf of John and noted that the Collegians will officially present the award to John with an evening at the club.

Each recipient received a certificate and a posy of flowers in recognition of their contributions to Frome.

## **Conclusion**

The Mayor thanked everyone for coming. In order for the public to keep up to date with FTC he suggested liking the Facebook page and noted there was a flip chart in the foyer if anyone wanted to leave further comments.

The meeting was closed at 8.45pm.