

FROME TOWN COUNCIL
making Frome a better place

To Members of the External Affairs Committee:

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

The next meeting of Frome Town Council's

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Wednesday 29 April 2015, 7pm

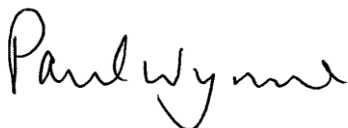
Assembly Rooms, Christchurch Street West
Frome BA11 1EB

Please contact Rebecca Krzyzosiak (admin@frometowncouncil.gov.uk) in advance of the meeting if you are unable to attend

AGENDA

1. Questions, comments and information from the public
2. Apologies for absence, declaration of members' interests and minutes from the last meeting on 25 February 2015
3. Outstanding actions and forthcoming items
4. For decision: Work programme of Community Projects Officer for the year ahead
5. For decision: Improvements to the performance of the Town Centre
6. For information: Phase 1 of the Market Place re-modelling
7. For information: Update on Green Strand's work on grants advice to local groups
8. For Information: Station Approach improvements
9. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 24 June 2015 at Forward Space, Butts Hill, Frome BA11 1BH

Yours sincerely



Paul Wynne, Town Clerk
Frome Town Council, 5 Palmer Street, Frome, BA11 1DS
22 April 2015

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AGENDA

- 1. Questions, comments and information from the public**
- 2. Apologies for absence, declaration of members' interests and minutes from the last meeting on 25 February 2015 at Appendix 1**
- 3. Outstanding actions and forthcoming items at Appendix 2**
- 4. For decision: Work programme of Community Projects Officer for the year ahead**
Author: Community Projects Officer

Summary

My work will follow three themes over the coming year as agreed on January 7 by Council. These themes are Community Involvement and Participation, Information and Capacity Building and Support for organisations.

Discussion

The proposed work plan at Appendix 3 contains a list of projects and activities that will support delivery of these themes and can be broadly broken down into these categories:

- Grants.
- Fundraising support and advice.
- Access to information.
- Volunteers.
- Communication.
- Intergenerational projects.

The first project proposed is a Volunteer Frome Week, 1 – 7 June to tie in with National Volunteer Week. We will have a series of events which aim to:

- Promote volunteering in Frome.
- Celebrate volunteers already active in the town.
- Support organisations to increase their capacity to engage and support volunteers.
- Encourage more local people (of all ages) to be active and volunteer in their town's community.

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Other projects will include:

- The development of a community groups database.
- The setting up of volunteer bureau / one stop shop.
- A conference for young people in September, to highlight creative ways of engaging and increasing the flow of information from the bottom up and the top down.

On-going work will include:

- The management and delivery of the grants programme including the Youth Bank.
- Responsive support for community groups.
- Involvement in the design and community engagement in Frome Town Hall.

Recommendation

Approve the work programme for the year ahead at Appendix 3.

5. For decision: Improvements to the performance of the Town Centre

Author: Town Centre Community Coordinator

Summary

This report summarises the results of the 2014 Town Benchmarking Report (see Appendix 4 for executive summary) that compares the performance of Frome town centre with other similar town centres in England and Wales. It also highlights the early work I am pursuing as the new Town Centre Community Coordinator.

Background/discussion

1. The agreed role of the Town Centre Community Coordinator is to:
2. Establish a Town Centre Working Group that has the task of planning and delivering improvements to the town centre as a place to visit, shop, work in, enjoy sports and events and generally socialise in.
3. Engage all stakeholders in the town centre including: businesses, residents, the voluntary and community sector, and public partners to plan and deliver projects that will secure a marked improvement in:
 - The cleanliness of the centre and waste reduction.
 - Promotion of the town.
 - The welcome for visitors.
 - Sustainable transport links.
 - Town centre events.
 - Performance of the independent retail sector including markets.

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4. Investigate the potential for establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) as a way of financing improvements.

In this context, the completion of the 2014 Town Benchmarking Report by 'People & Places' is very timely. The report compares Frome town centre's performance with 48 other small towns, mostly in England and Wales. The People and Places Town Benchmarking System is designed to capture data on 12 Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Quantitative and qualitative data is collected at a local level and sent to People & Places for analysis and report production.

There was a low sample on the Town Centre Users Survey compared with 2013, which should be taken into account when considering the qualitative responses below. However, the positives to emerge from the report include:

- A high number of traders and footfall at weekly markets compared with other towns.
- A relatively high footfall and spend compared with other towns.
- The perceived level of safety of the town centre.
- The perceived quality of customer service.
- The perceived quality of the cafes and retail offer.

Key areas for improvement were perceived to be:

- The town's cleanliness.
- The need for cheaper car parking.
- The need for improved leisure facilities and more clothes shops.

Contact with businesses and other stakeholders has already started. It is clear from this contact that whilst we have several issues that need attention, we do have a vibrant retail community and a firm base on which to build. Nonetheless, problem areas are being mapped and there is a focus on understanding what resources are available for education campaigns, communal clean ups, new bins etc. to help make the streets cleaner.

Based on conversations with a limited number of retailers and influenced by the Benchmarking Report, I am currently pursuing a number of ideas:

- Working with the Environmental Manager, re-invigorate the "Keep Frome Clean" campaign. Corporately, this is a high priority and one that needs tackling in order to improve this KPI.
- Re-establishing a town centre working group / re-energising retailer groups or potentially combining these into a single inclusive and effective body and creating

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a list of priority projects for the group to be involved with (likely to be some short term projects and some longer term objectives).

- Increasing the awareness of the 'shop local' campaign.
- Exploring the potential for a town centre business / retail recycling scheme operated by a locally based contractor, in order to provide cost savings and collection consistency.
- Investigating opportunities for business waste plastics to be recycled locally into useful or marketable products in liaison with the Energy & Recycling Officer.
- Investigating the potential for new public events and markets designed to bring increased trade to the town.
- Understanding how a Business Improvement District (BID) scheme might benefit Frome.
- Studying the potential to market Frome to coach tour operators to increase visitor numbers and retail sales in the town.

Parking issues and developing the existing Markets will be picked up by the Town Centre Regeneration Manager.

Recommendations

1. Endorse the early work of the Town Centre Community Coordinator.
2. Publicise the results of the 2014 Town Benchmarking Report and obtain feedback from town centre businesses and other stakeholders.

6. For information: Phase 1 of the Market Place re-modelling

Author: Town Centre Regeneration Manager

Summary

This report updates Cllrs on progress in bringing forward improvements to the Market Place that will make it a more pedestrian friendly and attractive place. In summary, design work on Phase 1 around Boyle Cross is complete and we are ready to go out to tender once the necessary approvals from Mendip are in place. The expectation is that planning approval will be forthcoming when Mendip's Planning Board next meets in June. Consultation on the second phase in the Market Place is underway.

Background

The Market Place Phase 1 works involve the paving of the existing parking spaces around the Boyle Cross and the restoration of the fountain within the Boyle Cross monument. At the last EAC meeting on 25 February, Cllrs approved moving to tender stage selecting a contractor from a list of firms that have met pre-qualification criteria.

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A concept for the second phase of the Market Place remodelling scheme was also presented at this meeting and Cllrs agreed that there should be consultation on this. The second phase is important as it will deliver the necessary courtesy crossings and traffic calming that will make crossing the road easier for pedestrians.

Current status

Detailed design of the works is complete and tender packs have been prepared for issue to four shortlisted contractors. Before construction can commence the following are still needed from Mendip:

- Planning and Listed Building Consent.
- Agreement to transfer the land to the Town Council.
- Agreement for spaces at Bridge Street to be made free of charge for one hour (to replace those lost at Market Place).

The position on each of these is as follows:

Planning

We have submitted further and final details regarding the protection of the base of the Boyle Cross monument and the plaque where these will be covered by the new works; the Conservation Officer has verbally stated that he is now happy with the proposals. It is expected that the scheme will now gain approval at the next Planning Board in June.

Land Transfer

Agreement has been reached with officers on the transfer of the long leasehold interest in the site and this is expected to be ratified by Mendip's Corporate Asset Management Group when they next meet after the elections. FTC will pay for Mendip's legal work to be done by external solicitors to expedite the legal process.

Parking Spaces

A verbal update will be provided at the meeting on the proposal to replace the parking spaces in the Market Place with spaces in Bridge Street.

Consultation on Phase 2

Consultation on the second phase has started with the Town Centre Retail Group and town centre businesses already engaged. Other stakeholders including the Civic Society, MDC, Highway Authority and transport operators will be approached shortly. This will be followed by wider public consultation. A full report on the outcomes will follow at the June meeting of EAC.

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7. For information: Update on Green Strand's work on grants advice to local groups

Author: Community Projects Officer

A summary of work completed to date was requested at the EAC on 24 February. The mid-year report from Green Strand is attached at Appendix 5, it shows £3k for the YMCA from the FTC Community Grants programme and £15k for the Children's Festival from FTC, 'Awards for All' and FDCiC.

Also included is a detailed breakdown of the hours spent working on the contract. This shows a total of 107.5 hours over the 6 month period.

The current contract runs to the end of September 2015. Future fundraising advice and services commissioned by FTC will be considered in August/September in line with the new FTC corporate strategy, and in consultation with local community groups to establish the services that will be of benefit to them.

8. For Information – Station Approach improvements

Author: Town Centre Regeneration Manager

Summary

The Station Approach improvements scheme has now been accepted in principle by Somerset County Council and they have committed £33k of s.106 funding to the project. This report provides further information on the approvals required by the Highway Authority before the scheme can be implemented.

Background

The Town Council has been developing a scheme for improvements to the Station Approach including signage. Details of this scheme were presented to EAC on 17 December 2014 but in summary the scheme includes:

- Pedestrian and cycle signage between the station, the Town Centre and other destinations.
- A widened footway on the west (town centre) side of the Station Approach.
- A fully disabled accessible bus stop on the approach in readiness for a bus service.
- A safe and accessible route across the forecourt.
- Cycle racks.

The intention was to fund this project using a s.106 contribution dating back to 2005.

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Update

The scheme was submitted to Somerset County Council who were required to commit the funding (value around £33k) by 31 March this year to ensure that the money was not paid back to the developer. The County Council have confirmed that the scheme is acceptable in principle and the funding is safe.

The Town Centre Regeneration Manager is now progressing the various approvals required by Somerset in their role as Local Highway Authority. These are:

- Technical Audit of proposals.
- Legal consent for works on highway.
- Licence for obstructing the highway (for proposed signage).
- Section 278 agreement - a legally binding document to ensure that the work to be carried out on the highway is completed to the standards and satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority.
- Traffic Regulation Order for proposed double yellow lines.

With regard to the budget for works, the proposals as presented last December included cycle racks which would have been paid for out of the s.106 funding. First Great Western has since agreed to provide these at their own cost and the budget for this is now being reallocated within the overall project.

- 9. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 24 June 2015 at Forward Space, Butts Hill, Frome BA11 1BH**