

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

To Members of Frome Town Council:

Al O’Kane, Alison Barclay, Cath Puddick, Colin Cobb, Gary Collinson, Heather Wride, Jean Boulton, Kate Bielby, Mel Usher, Nick White, Peter Macfadyen, Pippa Goldfinger, Richard Ackroyd, Sheila Gore, Tim O’Connor, Toby Eliot, Tricia Golinski

FROME TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

7pm Wednesday 25 November 2015

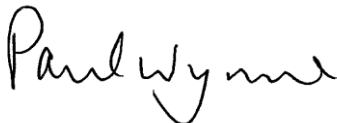
Selwood Academy Hall Berkley Rd, Frome, Somerset BA11 2EF

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

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence, declaration of members’ interests and minutes from the last meeting on 28 October 2015
2. Questions and comments from the public
3. Questions and comments from Cllrs
4. Short talk by Chris Reeves Mendip CCTV Manager
5. For decision: Frome Town Council’s support of CCTV in Frome
6. For decision: To agree the outline design and costings for refurbishment of Frome Town Hall
7. For information: Market Place improvements – update following MDC’s refusal of the planning application
8. Short talk by Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer, providing an update on her work this year.
9. For information: Outstanding actions and update on current projects
10. For information: Initial thoughts on the main messages heard from the community about the cleanliness of the town during October Watch Campaign
11. For information: Budget forecast at 31 October
12. The next meeting will be at 7pm on 16 December – Venue to be arranged.

Yours sincerely



Paul Wynne, Town Clerk
Frome Town Council, 5 Palmer
Street, Frome BA11 1DS
18 November 2015

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AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence, declaration of members' interests and minutes from the last meeting on 28 October 2015 (Appendix 1)**
2. **Questions and comments from the public**
3. **Questions and comments from Cllrs**
4. **Short talk by: Chris Reeves Mendip CCTV**
5. **For decision: Frome Town Council's support of CCTV in Frome**
Author: Paul Wynne, Town Clerk

Summary

This report explains how CCTV operates in Frome. FTC has a four year Service Level Agreement with MDC to provide CCTV in the town that expires on 31 March 2016. This report recommends that FTC continues this arrangement for a further four years. Chris Reeves (MDC's CCTV manager) will give a short talk on how CCTV operates in the district and will answer questions.

Background

All four Mendip towns currently have the same SLA with MDC. It costs FTC approx. £8k pa, is index linked, and covers the cost of a member of MDC staff who alerts the police of "live" incidents, provides the police with footage of where an incident has occurred and generally maintains the equipment. The staff member is joined by a group of volunteers at busy periods, usually on Friday evenings and Saturdays and Sundays. The CCTV base is in Wells and the majority of the volunteers are from Frome.

The agreement does not cover the capital cost of replacement of the cameras and other kit. There is a £7.5k Earmarked Reserve to pay for this if/when it is required.

MDC needs to know in early December whether FTC plans to continue with the SLA for another four years.

Chris Reeves' presentation will include a summary of how the system works in the district, the location and coverage of cameras in the town, how long the existing kit is likely to last and some statistics that will illustrate the use of CCTV.

To give Cllrs a better understanding of how CCTV is operated in the district there is an open invitation from Chris to visit the CCTV control room in Wells. If any Cllrs are interested in CCTV, it is worth a visit. My advice is to visit the control room prior to the meeting on 25 November. Please let me know asap if you do want to and I'll arrange it with Chris.

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Discussion

I met with the local Police Sgt on 10 November. Her view is that CCTV is an essential tool that is often used by the police in investigating crimes and is extremely keen that it continues.

There are many views of CCTV in the community. These range from it being no more than a snoopers' charter, through a waste of money to an essential tool in the fight against crime. My personal view is that CCTV provides a useful tool in catching offenders and is a deterrent.

Recommendations

Sign another four year SLA agreement with MDC at a cost of £8.3k per year (2016/17).

6. For decision: To agree the outline design and costings for refurbishment of Frome Town Hall

Author: Paul Wynne, Town Clerk

Summary

This report brings Council up to date on the Frome Town Hall project. It recommends for approval the outline design and costings and the means to finance the work.

Background/Discussion

As noted by Colin Cobb at the last Council meeting, the Design Brief was knowingly aspirational. It reflected what ideally the community would want from Frome Town Hall. We have been aware for a while that the building was never going to be big enough to meet those aspirational requirements. Indeed, in order to deliver them in full would require the floor area to increase by 20 per cent and a budget well in excess of £1m.

The recommended plans are at Appendix 2a and 2b, and they meet most of the Brief. They illustrate which rooms are likely to be meeting rooms, which are likely to be offices, the location of toilets, the kitchen, the lift, the emergency fire escape and access ramp. James McGillivray, our architect will present these. Both James and Colin Cobb, our project sponsor, will be able to answer questions. Unfortunately, Alan Holley, our quantity surveyor is unable to attend.

Timetable

The project time line to completion is at Appendix 3. This shows that, assuming planning permission is granted for the ramp at the front and the fire escape at the back, we should be able to move in January 2017.

Project costs

The cost of this project has been estimated by Alan Holley at £750k ex VAT (Appendix 4). This is more than we originally thought a year ago. This is because we have carried out more detailed surveys of fire safety, disability access, electrical and IT systems. This project cost is however achievable, as I explain in the following section on sources of funding.

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It is important to remember that following this initial investment the building will provide enormous community benefit. Estimated annual income and expenditure is described in more detail later on in this report.

Sources of funding

In August 2014, FTC secured a loan of £550,000 from Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) to cover the purchase of the building, associated professional and legal costs and renovation works. As shown in the table below it is recommended that an additional £200k loan is applied for to complete the project. The loan repayments for £200k will equate to an additional £11.9k per annum over 25 years. Informal discussions with Department for Communities and Local Government (which deals with applications) have been positive as they realise that projects involving old buildings can increase in cost as more detailed surveys are carried out.

Although we are proposing to use the community groups subsidy as part of the capital project, the estimated income and expenditure table later on in this report, is based on rental and hire costs that these groups should be able to afford.

The sources of funding to complete the project.

Frome Town Hall		Source of funding
	£265,000	Existing PWLB loan balance following building purchase
	£70,000	Current EMR Office Relocation, (Winter works described below have already been taken out)
	£100,000	EMR Community Groups subsidy (MDC CTS Grant 2014/15) previously earmarked to subsidise rent of local user groups
	£115,000	From the sale of Palmer Street offices with the remainder allocated to the Market Place improvements project
	£200,000	Top up PWLB loan
Total	£750,000	

Winter works

Over the winter there are various works that need to be done in advance of the main project. Inside, there is some asbestos that needs to be removed or at least sealed and a damp problem to the rear of the building that needs solving. Externally, the guttering and down pipes, windows, some urgent re-pointing and a leaky roof all require attention. Most of the external work requires scaffolding and should be done at the same time to minimise costs. Alan Holley estimates that these works will cost approximately £50,000 and it is proposed to fund them from the existing EMR for Office Relocation as described in the table above.

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Tenants

Discussions have been held with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Positive Action of Cancer, Active and In Touch and Fair Frome in relation to the spaces likely to be available to them and they are still keen to join FTC in Frome Town Hall. Discussions are ongoing with Frome FM and other local groups. Other areas of the building have been allocated for bookable meetings rooms and offices.

Forecast ongoing income and expenditure

The table below is based on a series of assumptions for a full financial year commencing April 2017, thus avoiding the partial year 2016/17, when we will be moving. Whilst expenditure exceeds income by £5k, we will be saving £13k on the running of Palmer Street.

Estimated income	Per annum	Assumptions
First floor		
Council Chamber	£18,720	Booked for 12 hrs a week at £30/hr over 52 wks in the year for community group hire (meetings, church groups)
Council Chamber	£13,000	Booked for 5 hrs a week at £50/hr over 52 wks in the year for private hire (weddings etc)
Consultation room adjacent to Council Chamber at front	£2,220	Based on sole use at £15 per sq.ft per year
Consultation room at rear	£2,205	Based on sole use at £15 per sq.ft per year
Office Suite (10 persons)	£6,675	Based on sole use at £15 per sq.ft per year
Office Suite (8 persons)	£5,910	Based on sole use at £15 per sq.ft per year
Office at rear	£2,325	Based on sole use at £15 per sq.ft per year
Two bookable consultation rooms at front	£4,680	Based on booked for 18 hrs per week at £5 per hour
Ground floor		
Meeting room (large)	£16,640	Based on £20 ph x 16hrs per week
Meeting room (medium)	£5,200	Based on £10 ph x 10 hrs per week
Shared office hub	£4,160	8 workstations @ £10 per week
Café/Community space	£2,460	Based on rent charged to Victoria Park café
Elliott Building	£4,368	Based on £7 per hour x 12 hrs per week

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Car Parking	£5,962	Based on £1.50 x 15 spaces x 265 working days
Total	£94,525	

Estimated expenditure		
PWLB repayments £550k	£32,870	Fixed over 25 years
PWLB repayments £200k	£11,875	Fixed over 25 years
MDC rates Town Hall	£11,260	
MDC rates Elliott building	£3,180	
Electricity & Gas	£8,400	Town Hall and Elliott building
Water	£1,200	
Broadband	£5,000	Existing server transferred to Town Hall
Building maintenance	£25,625	Includes cleaning costs
Total	£99,410	

Next steps

Assuming Council is happy with the proposals, the next steps are to:

1. Apply formally to DCLG for an additional £200k
2. Work up the detailed design and costings
3. Produce the tender documents
4. Let the contract to refurbish the building

It is proposed to delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk and Project Sponsor (Colin Cobb) to progress the project through these steps to completion. We will follow Financial Regulations including our ethical decisions making matrix throughout.

We shall continue to update Council and the community as the project progresses.

Recommendations

1. Approve the outline design and costings
2. Apply for an additional £200k loan from the DCLG to complete the project.
3. Allocate £115k currently in the EMR Community Groups subsidy to the Town Hall project.

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4. Allocate £115k from the sale of 5 Palmer Street to the Town Hall project.
5. Note the works that are required over the winter period in advance of the main project.
6. Delegate responsibility to take the project through to completion to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Project Sponsor, Colin Cobb.

7. For information: Boyle Cross – MDC rejection of planning application

Author: Peter Wheelhouse, Economic Development & Regeneration Manager

Summary and introduction

This report provides an update on the outcome of the Mendip Planning Board on 16 November at which FTC's proposals relating to the area around the Boyle Cross in the Market Place were considered.

Three applications were considered at the Board:

- An application for a lawful development certificate for the proposed development. This was to establish whether the development could be regarded as permitted and not require planning permission; the agenda indicated that this would be considered first as if the Board determined that the development was permitted it would have rendered any debate on the planning application unnecessary.
- A planning application relating to the following development: removal of the existing street furniture and excavation of the existing parking area; resurfacing of the site to form a new pavement area using high quality natural stone; the introduction of demountable traffic bollards and replacement street furniture; renovation of the Boyle Cross to a working fountain; a new seating area; the removal of existing parking and formation of a loading bay for vehicles
- An application for listed building consent for the above in recognition that the Boyle Cross is a listed structure

Outcome of the Mendip Planning Board

All three applications were refused. The decisions fly in the face of the officers' recommendations which were for approval of all three. The decisions are also contrary to Mendip's own policy on town centre improvements in the adopted Mendip District Local Plan, the adopted Frome Town Design Statement and our own submitted Neighbourhood Plan.

In addition, the order of the agenda had been changed so that the planning and listed building applications were determined before the issue of whether planning consent was actually necessary was considered.

At the time of writing this report, the minute of the Board meeting had not been received. It is understood that the reasons for refusal were the loss of parking and a negative impact on the heritage asset. However, a Freedom of Information request has been sent to Mendip to obtain confirmation of the reasons for refusal and the reasons why the order of the agenda had been changed.

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Cllr Pippa Goldfinger has written to the Chair of the Mendip Planning Board, Cllr Nigel Hewitt-Cooper to express her disappointment at the decision and to request a meeting to discuss a way forward.

Next steps

Advice is being taken in terms of the courses of action open to FTC. One of those is to appeal to the Secretary of State. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

- 8. **Presentation on the work of Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer**
- 9. **For information: Outstanding actions (below) and update on current projects at Appendix 5**

Outstanding Action

Summary of Resolution	Minute number	Meeting date	Responsibility	Progress Report
Freehold transfer of Tower View, Chapmans Close & Packsaddle along with an appropriate dowry	2014/70 2014/71	17/12/2014 17/12/2014	Chris Stringer	The transfers of the play spaces at Tower View, Chapmans Close & Packsaddle are now set to be discussed at CAMG’s December meeting. MDC has requested additional information in support of the requests.

- 10. **For information: Initial thoughts on the main messages heard from the community about the cleanliness of the town during October Watch Campaign**

Author: Chris Stringer, Environment Manager

Background

There are a number of organisations involved in the cleaning, maintenance and general upkeep of the town, including Frome Town Council (FTC), Mendip District Council (MDC), Somerset County Council (SCC) and the Environment Agency.

This joint *but split* responsibility can sometimes be challenging; at the very least it can mean delays working out who is responsible for any given area of land. As such, this is one of the reasons that previous efforts to improve the overall cleanliness of the town have fallen short.

To address this, the **Keep Frome Clean Panel** was setup to lead and organise the Keep Frome Clean campaign, working with all of these organisations – as well as residents, businesses and other local groups.

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The overall aim of the campaign is make sure that Frome is *consistently* clean, tidy and welcoming throughout the year.

As an important first step, the Panel launched **October Watch** to get a full and detailed picture of what's going on across the town, encouraging everyone to report problems, concerns and observations throughout the month of October.

Coincidentally, MDC & The Landscape Group (TLG) also undertook a district-wide customer satisfaction survey focusing on the Core Services of the District Council's contract with TLG. They received 74 responses during the six week period - and FTC Staff are currently analysing the results of this survey in conjunction with MDC's team.

Initial Findings & Analysis

Via Frome Town Council, the Panel received 94 distinct reports during October Watch. These reports came in steadily throughout the course of the month, although there were days without any reports.

In one sense, the total number of reports is less than hoped for; a greater sample would have provided a more detailed picture.

Nevertheless, nearly 100 reports in a single month from a variety of residents, businesses and visitors would seem to confirm the *general feeling* that the town isn't as clean, tidy and well-kept as it should be. Very simply, the reports weren't limited to a handful of concerns from one or two people about one or two places.

By area

Reports came in in respect of the following streets and areas. (The text with brackets (M) identifies those streets and areas that were reported more than once during the month; and/or those streets and areas where different and multiple problems were reported)

A - I	J - R	S - Z
Alexandra Road (M)	King Street	Selwood Road
Badcox	Low Water	Spring Road (M)
Bath Street (M)	Lullington Lane	Stony Street
Blue House	Market Cross (M)	Town Bridge
Broadway	Market Yard (M)	Town centre
Catherine Hill (M)	Naish's Street	Trinity Row (M)
Catherine Street	North Parade (M)	Trinity Street (M)
Church steps	Palmer Street (M)	Trinty Road
Cork Street	Paul Street (M)	Trinity Walk (M)
Duke Street	Rodden Bridge	Vallis Road (M)
Eagle Lane	Rook Lane	Vallis Way (M)
Goulds Ground	Rossiters Hill (M)	Vicarage Street (M)
Hoopers Barton (M)		Victoria Park (M)
Iron Mill Lane		Welshmill Lane
		Welshmill Road (M)

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		Westway
		Weylands
		Willow Vale
		York Street (M)
		Zion Path

General problems

Over half of the reports have been categorised as either 'General litter' (30 reports) or 'Weeds' (19 reports).

Not only are these the main problems, they were also common across the town by area. Meaning that nearly all the areas listed above had general litter or weeds reported at least once during the month.

Specific problems

The following problems were specific by category and area:

- The pigeons at Rodden Bridge
- Graffiti along Vicarage Street

Seasonal problems

Not too surprisingly, leaves were reported 12 times. More specifically, leaves were a concern in places like Vicarage Street, where the pavement only runs on one side of the road – and the build-up of leaves becomes slippery and hazardous. Leaves were also reported on steps around the town – like the two sets of steps leading to and from St John's churchyard.

Other problems

Blocked drains were reported 7 times.

Surprises

Only two reports came in on dog's mess. It is speculative, but reasons for the overall lack of reports (and the lack of reports on something like dog's mess) could be as follows:

- Lack of public awareness about October Watch - and therefore a lack of promotion
- Lack of promotion in the right places and the right ways
- A combination of apathy, lethargy and acceptance amongst the public – the feeling that reporting problems won't change anything anyway; that it's been tried and failed before etc.
- That assumed problems – like dog's mess – are no longer perceived as keenly

Next steps

- Detailed analysis of the reports
- Cross-referencing with the findings of Mendip District Council & The Landscape Group's recent Core Services survey
- Cross-referencing with the relevant standards and contracts that describe how clean the town should be
- Identify locations for new litter bins based on the reports received

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- Continue discussions about additional gulley & drain cleansing with SCC
- Complete and publish the Panel's summary report, including actions
- Report back to Council with the Panel's full findings and recommendations in December.

Recommendations

Note the report.

11. For information: Budget forecast at 31 October

Author Responsible Finance Officer

Forecast budget as at 31 October 2015 is shown at Appendix 6

This information provides Council with a forecast budget position taken on 31 October. This is calculated to the end of the year and should be compared to the agreed budget at the start of the year.

We are more than half way into the financial year, a reforecast is useful in order to flag up likely changes. These forecasts will alter as we reach the end of the financial year, but at the moment it is expected that the year-end budget will be £25k under that agreed in January. This translates into a need to use £5k from the General Reserve to balance the books rather than the planned £30k.

The main changes relate to removing the budgeted income from the sale of the Town Office in Palmer Street (802/1016), as the sale is likely to happen in the next financial year. Similarly the Market Place Improvements are also unlikely to incur costs this financial year and therefore that budget has also been removed (506/4125). These budgets will be reinstated in 2016/17.

The Frome Town Hall budgets for 2015/16 were calculated on the assumption the Council would move in June and expenditure split between office accommodation in Palmer Street and Christchurch Street. Therefore there will be under and overspends on the various office accommodation budgets.

Following a revamp, the Elliott building is available for all Panel and small Council meetings and income is being generated from Community Group bookings. Business rates are still applicable, and an application has been made against the Elliott building valuation and once the renovations start in Frome Town Hall an appeal for a reduction in rates will be made.

Minor forecast savings and overspends are highlighted in red at Appendix 6.

If you would like further information or to discuss the budgets and reforecast please do contact me in advance of the meeting.

12. The next meeting will be at 7pm 16 December – Venue to be arranged.