

**Minutes of the Frome Annual Town meeting
at the Assembly Rooms
Held on 1 April 2015 commencing at 7.00pm**

In the chair: Cllr Peter Macfadyen, Mayor of Frome

In attendance:

73 members of the public

Frome Town Councillors – Dave Anderson; Eve Berry; Carol Bullen; Gareth Burgess; Toby Eliot; Pippa Goldfinger; Tricia Golinski; Peter Macfadyen; Helen Starkie; Nick White; Mel Usher; Dickon Moore; Damon Hooton; Claire Hudson.

Frome Town Council Officers – Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Rebecca Krzyzosiak (Administration Officer), Jane Llewellyn (Planning and Development Officer), Jackie Wheeler (Responsible Finance Officer), Chris Stringer Environmental Manager, Sarah Russell (Community Projects Officer for Open Spaces), Hannah Paniccia (Finance and Administration Apprentice), Peter wheelhouse (Economic Development & Regeneration Manager).

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2014 were signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting. No political bias proposed: Alex Shingler and Sandy Usher (a member of the audience) agreed majority.

Welcome

The Mayor opened the meeting at 7.16pm.

The Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed everyone making clear he was speaking with no political references or bias. He described the year of meetings: There have been 6 Full Council meetings; a further 12 Internal and External Affairs Committee meetings and 16 Planning Meetings. He went on to note the commitment shown by Councillors and wanted to thank them.

He described how the Mayor Chair's many meetings, and also how the Mayor represents the town on various occasions. These he would touch upon in the meeting and also highlight realisations by the Council over the last year of being Mayor. Cllr Macfadyen continued, he said he was unsure about initially signing up to be Mayor - however said how much he had enjoyed meeting people he had never met before and finding out more about Frome and the community groups within the town. He did not anticipate being Mayor meant so many speeches and ironing! He highlighted some of the many events he had been invited to over the past year including a Remembrance Service, and Commemoration of Lance Corporal Wilfred Fuller VC.

He noted many things he had been able to do, and was surprised by how many mayoral invites a Mayor gets. He said he tended to stay within Frome, and support music, art and sport, but had also been supportive of other issues. For example the Council had provided money and also the connections (especially that of a former Mayor Cllr White) – in getting Charlie Robins back where he belongs. Supporting the Memorial Theatre to do this was one of the most visible things achieved this year.

Another former Mayor Cllr Moore, did a bicycle ride to Chateau Gontier – Cllr Macfadyen said he and his wife and Annabelle drove there as part of the Town's commitment to Twinning. He also touched upon achievements such as the Frome Town Hall purchase and how a great deal of Council work and time had gone into the project and soon it would become a centre for the community. He stated it would not be a 'Council' building, but a community hub - full of community information. He also discussed how the Council had embraced social media and online platforms this year.

Cllr Macfadyen said his initial idea of the role of his Mayor-ship was in reality too ambitious. He wanted to bring people together with different skills through 'Mayor's conversations', but got carried away with ideas, however, this did turn into steering well-being, and joining the dots in the community to achieve this, through for example organisations and groups such as Edventure Frome, The Medical Practice - in helping to hire a Volunteer Coordinator, and working with other groups such as the Bowls Club.

Cllr Boyden arrived 7.22pm.

The Mayor said that health and well-being was also a Council lead theme, with continued grants to the community organisations during this year (another set of meetings Cllrs have undertaken with very significant staff support). He highlighted that around 20% of the flexible part of the Council's budget goes back to the community in this way. As well as the grants, the Council has continued to make available consultancy support for fundraising – which has brought in £140K over the last 2 years. Trying to establish a Council whose role is to support initiative in the community creating 'Our council' rather than 'The Council', observing how many community groups were starting to come together and help with the socialising of people together in different ways.

The Mayor highlighted that this year had a particular focus on youth, with work on apprenticeships, Youth Services work and the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) being opened on Mary Bailey; as well as the continued work of the Youth Mayor and Deputy.

The Mayor touched on efforts in attempting to reduce the dog mess problem with renewed Dog Control orders and that FTC would continue to work hard to better street cleanliness – though this is the responsibility of Mendip District Council.

The Mayor noted green initiatives in his presentation to the meeting such as:

- The Car Club
- The award recently received as Most Proactive Public Sector Body by South West Green Energy Awards
- Employing an Energy and Recycling Officer
- One Planet vision
- Becoming a Living Wage Employer

- The fundraising to save the Whatcombe fields
- The Neighbourhood Plan
- An Ethical investment policy and decision making matrix
- Taking back open spaces in town – helping to define what Frome feels and looks like for years to come

He highlighted the huge process and masses of work delivered by the Council staff to get to this point.

The Mayor said that he had enjoyed the Christmas Extravaganza, especially dressing up – but mostly the fact that so many people had participated. He also highlighted the Mayor's Charity Bash all in aid of his three charities Edventure Frome, Fair Frome and POD Youth club. This would also be the first moment photos of all 22 of his Mayoral chains would be on show – again, photographed and framed freely by people in this magnificent town who have taken an idea and run with it for love, not money. The audience gave a round of applause.

He handed over to Ruth Knagg Community Projects Officer, Sarah Russell Outside spaces Community Projects Officer (who had recently returned from maternity leave) and Chris Stringer the new Environment Manager who provided an overview of their work so far and future plans.

Ruth Knagg presented her work at the Council, with various partnerships and projects such as grants, and how this had helped the local community:

- 76 community groups applied for grants
- 39 project grants
- 10 partnership grants
- 9 Youth Bank grants

Ruth highlighted some specific projects from grants and partnerships like:

- A weekly Roller Disco
- Frome Museum – a grant to buy portable display boards
- Frome Allotments Association – a partnership grant
- Frome Canoe Club – for youth participation
- Frome FM – partnership grant
- FRECo - A project grant to help schools cut their carbon and cut their costs
- Wessex Multiple Sclerosis therapy centre – a grant towards new equipment
- Merlin Theatre – with grants helping toward their youth programme
- Frome Collegians – project grant for youth training equipment
- Meet the funders – a workshop event with guest speakers from the Big Lottery & Somerset Community Foundation and workshops on crowd funding, recruiting volunteers and what sort of community organisation could be set up

Ruth underlined what was coming next:

- A Forced walks project; a two-day walk from Frome to Bath, the line of a Nazi Death March to Belsen transposed to Somerset

- A 'Step in Stone' art project which features disused quarries as a base for sculpture design – a competition for under 20 year olds
- Incredible Edible and a well-being garden in the park where the existing putting green is

Ruth also advised that the Whatcombe land purchase had completed Monday – she had been heavily involved in this as a volunteer. The audience gave a round of applause.

Chris introduced himself and said he was relatively new in post. He highlighted 2 main aims:

- Making green spaces in Frome as good as possible
- Making Frome a consistently green town with an underpinning of sustainability

Chris noted that Frome was not as clean as it could be at the moment and he was going to work hard to change this. Chris highlighted key issues that no-one person or organisation could do this alone – but everyone could play a part including FTC doing their bit and being proud of the town.

Chris presented what he was working on currently:

- Joining green spaces together
- Talking to residents about what they want
- Recycling opportunities
- Working with the community/wanting opinions and those opinions of local residents counted

Sarah Russell introduced herself as Open spaces Community Officer. She described how she would be working with Chris and would be putting on events for the community to enjoy in the open spaces around town. Another priority was conservation and traditional crafts for maintenance and engaging with community groups for these spaces and seeing spaces owned and valued by the people of Frome.

Sarah also talked on behalf of Anna Francis the Energy and Recycling Officer as Anna could not attend the meeting but wanted to share projects she had been working on.

Sarah highlighted the year just gone and future aims of Anna's work:

- FTC had been running monthly energy-sessions at the Medical Practice in partnership with the WISH programme.
- FTC secured £30k from Mendip's Local Legacy Fund to set up a solar powered community football stand at Frome Football Club
- FTC was awarded 'Most Proactive Public Sector Body' in the South West Green Energy Awards
- FTC has been working with local schools (Selwood, Frome College and St Johns) to reduce their energy bills and engage the students in energy efficiency
- Setting up an electric / hybrid car club

- Co-ordinating the Frome and Villages Bus User Group helping to reverse Somerset County Council's decision to scrap bus subsidies to Saturday services
- Supporting local projects including: Frome's Happy Nappy Library and the Toy Library
- Running perhaps the first ever VHS recycling campaign in the country in partnership with locally based business Protomax

FTC's future aims around this work were:

- Frome Renewable Energy Co-op will be launching their community share issue in May which will fund solar panels on Frome Medical Practice and the Football Club, and also lending out a range of energy saving items, including LED kits
- A Sharing Shop is planned where people can borrow items instead of buying them – the shop will also be promoting lift shares
- Supporting new projects such as Frome's Scrap Store and Re-play musical instrument recycling project is planned

The audience gave a round of applause.

The Youth Mayor (Cara Honey) and Deputy Youth Mayor (Alex Shingler) gave a short presentation:

They both thanked people for being here today. They talked about projects that had involved young people:

- Frome friends of palatine
- Peter Wheelhouse (Economic Development & Regeneration Manager) had been working with the Apprenticeship Academy and was now starting to get underway - currently young people have to look outside of Frome for such opportunities
- They noted that over the last few years there had been a bigger drive to engage with young people in the community
- The Question time event at Frome College and other events at the college
- How youth representation in figure heads had gotten people involved in politics

They noted how the Youth Bank can have a difference in their town, they felt their voice does matter and giving people grants means they can achieve things. They were both immensely proud being Mayor for young people and thanked FTC for taking that on.

Cara talked about work she did around research in the summer of 2013; she highlighted she did struggle to give the Council information on what young people wanted from the community engagement exercises. She noted the importance of young people being involved with the Council and discussions - as they are the future. She said that Schools and the Council should be aiming to communicate more. Cara noted that anyone in post for young people has a big commitment to their role, and wanted the voice of young people at every meeting to be heard, if possible. They should be included in all parts of the town; not just when an issue arises. Alex noted his interest in the planning process.

Cara said her trips abroad had given her inspiration for Frome and moving things forward. Intergenerational work is important to them, as there feels a huge divide. They noted that the Youth Mayor role could often be seen as a separate entity from the Council but in fact

was not – they both wanted their roles to act as a spring board for other young people to realise that they have a voice. They thanked every single Cllr and FTC staff member for the hard work they had all taken in in recent years. They paid special thanks to Azeema Coffoor, of Young People Frome for the support they had received and thanked the young people of Frome also. The audience gave a round of applause.

Looking back: A reflection by Cllr Mel Usher on the Town Council's past four years

Cllr Usher advised due to the time of year it was with elections he could not be political and would not talk about the future of FTC. He said that FTC had changed in 4 years. He congratulated staff on a really significant event, and noted the quality of presentations from staff. Cllr Usher explained that through the recent localism act Parish and Town Councils had greater powers than they had previously. This had enabled FTC to buy land, facilitate more and get involved in the well-being of the town. FTC now had a vision for the town a 'Strategy for Success'. He acknowledged that localism plays a part in regards to cuts on a wider scale.

He recognised that the world had changed a lot in recent years with austerity measures; he noted it was difficult for the public sectors and had sympathy for Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council who had experienced a reduction in budget.

Cllr Usher said most people accept that climate change exists; that the USA has accepted that we need to work towards changing carbon emissions.

Cllr Usher highlighted the importance of a town centre for a community.

He noted that in the digital age we're in communication from the public sector should improve and this was something the Town Council was working on.

Cllr Usher went on to explain that in the beginning of the Council forming, they had many great ambitions, he realised that it takes longer than one thinks to implement things. He highlighted things that FTC had not done so well: namely that the town centre didn't seem to be any cleaner. However he said that the officers at the Council were noticeably more specialised in what they did and noted there were less administrative staff than previously, however there were no more staff than at 2011 working for the Council. People were working in the evenings and at weekends to see their work done.

He acknowledged that the Council had faced much criticism over the purchase of land and subsidy of the Cheese and Grain, but was pleased to report that since the work was done at the Cheese and Grain the footfall had doubled and other support from the Council had meant that the venue was more sustainable.

Cllr Usher noted that the image of the town had changed considerably over the years. That the town was attracting many new people to settle here, including families, business owners and entrepreneurs. The image of Frome changing didn't happen by chance; many aspects of the town's interesting and vibrant initiatives by many people had all played a part.

Public question time

Councillors had opportunity to speak about what had been covered.

A spokesperson from Frome Collegians said that Frome town lacked sports facilities. That for the team to train they had to go out of the town. If FTC had not helped with a grants opportunity then the club would have found keeping going more difficult.

Cllr Macfadyen said that the current Council plan comes to an end due to the elections; whoever is voted in needs to be approached about this. He concluded that sport had not gotten to the top of the Council's list – and is aware it's not being championed and needs to be.

District Cllr Adam Boyden said that it was worth having low-level conversations with MDC to talk about sport and clubs/organisations in the town. He advised that Fusion was now taking over from Avalon Leisure in the running of the Sports Centre at Frome.

A member of the public said that he was upset that parking was outsourced and asked the Council what they thought about MDC getting money from parking fines and pay and display machines. Cllr Macfadyen said it was difficult to get round parking issues in the town - he noted that Council Officers had already been engaging in negotiations with MDC for some time to establish some sort of strategy for the town's parking. He concluded that more on street parking is what Frome needed and a crackdown on parking attendants in certain areas to deliver something better *could* be a way forward.

Neil Howlett said he thought that consultation was needed for parking concerns. If people had access to information about parking (like on the website) then people would be more informed.

Civic award winners

The Mayor noted that within his year in office he had the opportunity to attend some great events and meet many interesting people; he had also met people who did a lot for Frome and wanted to recognise them having gone above and beyond. For the 2015 Annual Town Meeting the Mayor had chosen four candidates to receive a Civic Award.

Before he gave out the awards he said he had a different type of award for a special resident in particular - in recognition of 12 years' hard work he presented Gill Fone with a gold (painted) statue of a camel that he had fashioned himself at home. Mayor Macfadyen said Gill had attended nearly every council meeting for many years. He explained that Gill lives near to a patch of land that fell into disrepair while negotiations took place as to who should manage it. The land is on the site of the old Camel Shed of JW Singer and Sons and there is a column with a camel on top there. Gill was presented this award in recognition of her persistence in the face of bureaucracy.

He also said that he wanted to draw attention to June Barnes who was well-known in the town for her hard work. His choices for the civic awards were lesser known people for their achievements:

Cara Honey: The Mayor thanked her for her tireless efforts as the Young people's Mayor. However he noted her extra work relating to Twinning events, coordinating the college carnival entry, and visiting schools to talk about democracy. Cllr Macfadyen said that from learning more about Cara he found out she had already been awarded a Rotary Young Citizen of the Year, but then thought if Meryl Streep has had two Oscars for 'Best Actress' and they gave her another, then he could give Cara a civic award too!

Emma Warren: The Mayor noted that Emma was one of the names that popped up in Frome but was very bashful about her role within the community. One role being Vice-Chair of charity Fair Frome; the force behind the Big Christmas Get Together, on the board of the Frome Museum, recently involved with the Job Club, the local Beavers group, Black Swan Arts – and she has young children!

Kate Wright: The Mayor said that Kate's story was a nice one on how the community can work effectively together. He said her award was for the time and effort she put into getting Frome Area Leg Club off the ground and for the continued positive energy she put into supporting it. He explained how Kate started off her career as receptionist at the Frome Medical Practice in 1989, she then progressed to become a health care assistant, obtained a nursing degree, and then came back to the health centre to do many things including becoming the power behind the Leg Club.

Kevin Corcoran: The Mayor presented Kevin a civic award for his steadfast support of community and sporting events, and all his charitable activity in Frome over many years. He explained that Kevin played a key role in the Frome Carnival and also sponsored Arron Butterfield's horse riding; Frome bowls club; Orchardleigh golf events; the Millard brothers in their side-car cross team; Frome Town Youth and Berkley School's tag rugby, and so on. Kevin also has a role as chair of Frome Amateur Boxing Club – it was noted his contribution is above and beyond. The Mayor said that Kevin represents a solid heart of Frome on which much of the newer community activity builds. He said we sometimes neglect to notice this day-to-day support upon which so much depends. He explained that Kevin provides an example to others for how a community can work together.

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

Conclusion

The Mayor gave thanks to the Assembly Rooms and James Morrison Catering, Meadowside Café, Vickie Burke (for entertainment) Laura Poulton of Frome Town Council and Paul Wynne Town Clerk and Rebecca Krzyzosiak Administration Officer for organising the event. He thanked the audience for coming. In order for the public to keep up to date with FTC he suggested liking the Facebook page and following updates on Twitter and the website. The Mayor explained there was a flip chart in the foyer if anyone wanted to leave further comments.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.38pm.

DRAFT