



What we're working on, at the moment...

Christmas trade and our work with town centre businesses



The Town Centre Benchmark Survey work for 2015 which compares the performance of Frome Town Centre with other similar centres across the country was completed in December as planned - the results will be available in March. In the meantime, it is

good to hear initial feedback from retailers suggesting that sales were strong in the run up to Christmas with some independent retailers reporting significant increases in turnover when compared with Christmas 2014. The demand for Town Centre commercial property remains strong with many recently vacated properties already well on the way to being occupied again. We are also starting to explore the opportunity to bring vacant space above shops back into productive use to help meet the growing demand for small office spaces within the town centre. The monthly Retail Group which is facilitated by the Council is well attended and this year we will be starting to work with the Group and other stakeholders on the development of a BID (Business Improvement District) which could yield new sources of funding for projects. For more information contact Mark Brookes, Town Centre Community Coordinator at brookesm@frometowncouncil.gov.uk

Apprenticeship Project Update

Apprenticeship employers sectors experience placements explore learning opportunities Careers contacts Support providers encourage Over the last quarter, work has continued apace to encourage local employers to take on apprentices. Terry Bishop, Apprenticeship Project Coordinator has worked with over 20 employers from a range of sectors. Two employers that have students on work experience placements with them under Frome College's Employability course have already indicated that they will be offering them apprenticeships when they leave school in the summer 2016 term. It is predicted that further offers will follow.

Being based in Frome College, Terry has also met with students and parents to explore apprenticeship and other work based learning opportunities and although this isn't the main thrust of the project, these meetings will continue as they are one route to helping to fill apprenticeship vacancies as they arise. The termly Careers Café sessions at the College provide another opportunity to promote apprenticeships. Terry attended a Mendip Employers' Breakfast Meeting before Christmas at which he gave a joint presentation with a representative from Strode College. This was well received and several useful contacts were made. He also attended the Frome Small Business Support Group organised by Frome

Chamber of Commerce at which he was able to network and make contacts with training providers and businesses.

A weekly list of current apprenticeship vacancies within the Frome area is now available and is being distributed to all places where young people are likely to see it. For further details contact Terry Bishop at TBishop@fromecollege.org or on 01373 465353

Rural funding opportunities



The Heart of Wessex Local Action Group (LAG) has secured £1.74m of European Union funding through the Rural Development Programme, and they want involvement from

the public in deciding how the funding should be spent. The LAG invests in projects that directly support the rural economy - supporting innovative projects aimed at developing micro and small enterprises and farming diversification, rural tourism, rural services, cultural and heritage activity and increasing forestry productivity. The first LAG Forum meeting will take place on Wednesday 20 January 2016, starting 6.30pm.

At this meeting you can and hear how the programme works, as well as how projects can apply for funding. You will also hear from the 1st tranche of project applications seeking support. The event is taking place at the South Somerset District Council Offices - Churchfield Wincanton, Somerset BA9 9AG GB. You can book a place on Eventbrite here – for [free](#).

www.heartofwessex.co.uk *Economic Development & Regeneration Manager*

Minute number 2013/54 26/06/2013

Business Breakfasts proving a tasty treat for local enterprise

Since October's meeting, attendance has risen from 17 to almost 40. The variety of businesses becoming involved is noteworthy, with attendees including small business owners from a wide range of sectors (including financial service, construction, retail and education). Further to this, larger national organisations such as Barclays have attended as well as prospective business owners looking to join Frome's business community. Each meeting sees a healthy mixture of new and long-standing participants.

The topics covered thus far are:

Workspace Survey Feedback

Wireless internet in Frome and the surrounding area

How Frome businesses can contribute to the town and support each other

The use of social media for marketing.

Upcoming topics are:

An overview of Frome's business districts

Business waste and a tour of a local factory

The function of the Chamber of Commerce.

One of the most exciting developments in the growth of the scheme is the ever-rising number of businesses who are interested in hosting the breakfast, and sharing their resources and expertise with the wider community. As the series continues, we are looking at how other initiatives can spin off - for example, looking at collective transport needs, and needs for space, as well as potentially providing more seminar-style sessions for businesses on specific topics such as pension regulations.

Economic Development & Regeneration Manager

Update on Play spaces

As reported at the December Council meeting, the requests for the transfers of the play and recreation spaces at Packsaddle, Chapmans Close & Tower View were discussed by Mendip District Council's Corporate Assets Management Group – CAMG – on 14 December. CAMG agreed that both Packsaddle & Chapmans Close could be transferred to FTC on 99 year leases at a peppercorn rent of £1.00 per year. Staff have started this process, including the legal aspects. There's no timeframe for the process just yet.

CAMG's Members deferred a decision on Tower View, but were agreeable to the principle of transferring this space area to FTC if it was felt this was "the correct long term option" for the area.

In order to decide this, CAMG proposed a joint meeting to discuss Tower View. With thanks to the Mount Community Association this meeting has now been arranged for Wednesday 27 January 2016. After this CAMG will meet again to consider FTC's request. It would now seem unlikely that the request will be considered at CAMG's meeting on 1 February 2016; if this is the case then Staff will look to have this added to the agenda for either CAMG's March or April meeting. Minute number 2014/71 17/12/2014

Tree surveys on FTC land

If you've been out and about you might have noticed numbered tags appearing on the trees in Town Council owned parks and green spaces. These tags are being used to uniquely identify our trees - we've found out we have over 330 trees in Victoria Park alone! These tags are part of detailed condition surveys being undertaken by an independent arborists. These surveys report back important maintenance and management needed for our trees over the coming years. You can find out much more detail about subsequent work that

is likely to take place over on our website www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk
Environment Manager

Love your River



You might not guess from the stretch of the river Frome that you see most often in town, but it is actually is one of the best in the country for diversity and

stocks of fish. FTC is partnering with the Environment Agency this Spring to improve the river habitat for fish and wildlife in Rodden Meadow and Weylands. Find out how you can get involved with this project by dropping into our "Love Your River" day, based at the Canoe Club on Saturday 13th Feb.

We'll be hoping to recruit volunteers to help with aspects of the project. This might range from pulling on a pair of waders on to remove litter from the river, to ongoing monitoring of the water quality and the insect life that the river supports. On 'Love Your River' day itself, there will be lots of information about our plans, and how these tie in with Somerset Wildlife Trust and the ideas of re-wilding that many of you will have heard about.

In the morning there will be angling demonstrations. Young aspiring anglers are encouraged to bring their own tackle with them and Frome Anglers will be on hand to give invaluable tips on how to perfect your techniques. From 2pm to 4pm, you will see members of the Frome Canoe Club paddling the river. There will be a chance to sign up for free taster sessions yourself at a later date. *Community Projects Officer*

Walking and cycling routes

Walkers are Welcome

Walkers are Welcome is a national scheme, led by communities, that both helps to maintain footpaths and facilities for walkers and contributes to tourism.

Frome walking groups are already keen on applying to join this scheme and an initial very brief presentation was made to the Retail Group where the idea was also warmly received. Other towns that have taken up this scheme report a measurable increase in bookings for accommodation and at restaurants. Winchcombe for instance, reports a 40% increase in footfall.

Cheddar launched itself as a Walkers are Welcome destination last September and report that it is key to involve local businesses. They have 40 businesses who have a free listing and link on a website (<http://cheddarwalking.org.uk/>) in exchange for specifically providing something – just a welcome, or free water bottle filling, or dogs welcome, or walking guides available etc.

Once they are more established, Cheddar aims to work jointly with Visit Somerset and other towns in the county to promote the area as a walking destination. The Mendip Hills AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) are also very enthusiastic about supporting Frome, should we decide to pursue this status. We have invited Andrew Mallender, their Project Officer to present

Community Health Champion Project



Update

During 2016 we have training sessions planned for

patients, staff from a large supermarket, care agencies, housing associations, local community

to the February Council meeting to detail more about the process and its benefits.

The first thing that we would need to demonstrate is a set level of support from the local community and Walkers are Welcome have a standard template for this. A copy **will be circulating at the meeting** for you to sign if you are in favour.

Promotion and links to cycle paths

The walking and cycling working party met in the autumn and recommended that Walkers are Welcome status be pursued. The group also felt that promotion of this scheme could neatly dovetail with increased promotion of footpaths and cycling routes in and around Frome and new mapping and signage that is needed. It was agreed that a bid would be prepared to the LAG funding scheme that links up a request towards the funding needed for the next phase in the Missing Link with this increased promotion of Frome as a walking and cycling destination.

The Missing Link committee have already drafted the wording concerning the next phase for the LAG application form. Community Projects Officer is to add in wider walking and cycling promotion aims and costs and will seek cooperation from Frome businesses, especially food and accommodation providers. *Community Projects Officer*

cafés, community police, town council staff and students and teachers from a local secondary school.

We have had requests from community members to roll the project out across Mendip.

For more information contact [Julie Carey-Downes](#)