

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

making Frome a better place

FROME TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 24 February 2016, 7pm

Selwood Academy, Berkley Road, Frome BA11 2EF

Members of Frome Town Council are:

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

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence, declaration of members’ interests and minutes from the last meeting on 20 January 2016
2. Questions and comments from the public
3. Questions and comments from Cllrs
4. A short talk from Andy Mallender, Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
5. Project updates
6. For information: Response to Housing and Planning Bill 2015 - 16
7. For decision: To approve the Financial Regulations 2016/17
8. For decision: To approve the Risk Register for 2015/16
9. Health and safety update
10. For information: A review of the Ethical Decision Making Matrix
11. For decision : Internal One Planet Action Plan
12. For information: Response to proposed government bill to ban Councils from divesting
13. For information: Financial update as at 31 January 2016
14. For decision: To approve the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy
15. For decision: Promotion of walking and cycling in Frome
16. For decision: A review of how panels have gone and possible changes to structure from April onwards
17. For decision: To approve recommendations from the Grants Advisory Group
18. For decision: Fundraising and support contract
19. For information: Literacy – a plan for development
20. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 23 March at Rook Lane Chapel

Yours sincerely



Paul Wynne, Town Clerk.
Frome Town Council, 5 Palmer Street, Frome BA11 1DS
17 February 2016

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AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence, declaration of members' interests and minutes from the last meeting on 20 January 2016

<p>Draft Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council</p> <p>Wednesday 20 January 2016 at 7pm</p> <p>Frome Medical Practice, Enos Way, Frome. BA11 2FH</p> <p>Present:</p> <p>Councillors: Richard Ackroyd, Kate Bielby, Jean Boulton, Colin Cobb, Gary Collinson, Toby Elliot, Tricia Golinski, Pippa Goldfinger, Sheila Gore, Peter Macfadyen, Al O'Kane, Mel Usher, Heather Wride</p> <p>In attendance:</p> <p>Oliver Woodhams (Strategic Manager, Community & Traded Services SCC), Claire Wilson (Frome Standard), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Peter Wheelhouse (Economic Development and Regeneration Manager), Anna Francis (Resilience Officer), Jackie Wheeler (Responsible Finance Officer), Chris Stringer (Environment Manager), Mark Brookes (Town Centre Community Coordinator), Laura Poulton (Administration Officer)</p> <p>30 members of the public</p>		
Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2016/01/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7.03pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Received from Nick White, Ali Barclay, Tim O'Connor and Cath Puddick.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests Mel Usher declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 as a trustee of Fair Frome.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 16 December 2015 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 16 December 2015 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed Colin Cobb, seconded Richard Ackroyd, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2016/02/FC	<p>2. Questions and comments from the public Gill Fone enquired as to whether the cottages at the top of Bath Street were rented or privately owned as she was concerned about</p>	

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	<p>the tatty appearance of the front gardens. Pippa Goldfinger explained they were most likely privately owned.</p> <p>A member of the public informed Cllrs of a petition to reduce the speed limit to 30mph along Jeffries Lane. She explained that the campaign had been going on a number of years and asked if FTC could contact Somerset Highways on their behalf. Paul Wynne confirmed that officers would make contact with Selwood Parish Council, Jeffries Lane being in their Parish, in the first instance and together speak with Highways.</p> <p>The member of the public also expressed a concern about some of the art work on the graffiti wall in Welshmill Park as it was very visible to young children. She suggested that it be relocated into a more appropriate location such as the skate park. Chris Stringer confirmed he would discuss this with F.R.O.G.S who have a large influence on the management of Welshmill Park.</p>	<p>Jane Llewellyn</p> <p>CS</p>
2016/03/FC	<p>3. Questions and comments from Cllrs</p> <p>Chris Stringer provided an update on actions from the last meeting. The fly-posting on the bus shelters had all been removed by The Landscape Group. In conjunction with MDC & TLG a replacement tree for the Market Yard – a Himalayan Birch – was ordered and was to be planted by the Rangers. With regard to Button Bridge, TLG was continuing routine maintenance to encourage as much water as possible to drain from the bridge. Finally Network Rail had sent a more detailed breakdown of the costs and rates involved in the proposed works at Rodden Bridge and staff were reviewing the details.</p> <p>District Cllr, Shane Collins noted that a petition was circulating to request SCC pension board makes no new investments into fossil fuels and cease completely in five years.</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse gave an update on the improvement project at Station approach. He noted that it didn't appear in the budget and work programme because it would be funded by s106 money and the project was a part of a wider programme of work. He noted he would produce a more detailed report for the February or March Council meeting.</p>	<p>PWh</p>
2016/04/FC	<p>4. Short talk from Oliver Woodhams Listening, Learning, Changing – County Libraries & Hubs engagement</p> <p>Oliver updated Council on the current SCC library consultation in terms of austerity. He explained that they were not closing libraries but were investing in new ways of providing information. Frome</p>	

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	library was considered to be a location for this style of hub.	
2016/05/FC	<p>5. Recommendations from the Keep Frome Clean Panel</p> <p>Richard Ackroyd outlined the work of the panel and the main objectives that arose from their discussions. He highlighted the usefulness of ‘fixmystreet’ for reporting areas in the town that required maintenance. Richard thanked all those that took part in the panel.</p> <p>A member of the public congratulated the Rangers on their hard work keeping the riverside walk clear and making it a pleasant place to walk.</p> <p>Mel Usher suggested organising regular meetings with MDC and The Landscape Group in order to keep on track with the fulfillment of the contract.</p> <p>Tricia Golinski suggested discussing the issue of recycling, in terms of limited plastic recycling and litter left behind after collections, at the March meeting of the three tiers of local government.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FTC to regularly update the information on its website, providing clear and current information about who does what in the town – and the best and most effective ways to report queries and problems 2. FTC to regularly send out information in community newsletters, emails and via social media, promoting the Keep Frome Clean campaign and highlighting simple ways of keeping Frome clean 3. FTC & MDC to promote effective reporting of problems through ‘fixmystreet’ 4. FTC to employ an additional full-time or part-time Ranger focused on the town centre to deliver work including seasonal work & emergency support 5. MDC to ensure effective monitoring of its contract so that standards are met consistently and that faults or problems are addressed 6. FTC & MDC to work together on joint contract monitoring at least once a month 7. FTC & MDC to work together on a fixed period of intensive contract monitoring to bring the entire town back to standard 8. FTC to identify locations for new litter bins on an annual basis leading in to the Council’s budget setting processes 9. TLG to complete a town-wide bin condition & location survey, reporting back to MDC & FTC 	<p>CS/RK</p> <p>CS/RK</p> <p>CS/RK</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p>

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	<p>10. FTC to continue discussions with SCC about additional gulley & drain cleansing in Frome</p> <p>11. FTC to work with SCC in an annual review of the gully & drain cleansing schedule</p> <p>12. FTC & MDC to launch a number of joint promotions & publicity campaigns, including an ‘Any bin will do’ reminder for dog owners and a ‘No butts!’ campaign aimed at smokers</p> <p>13. FTC to promote household recycling via regular tips on social media</p> <p>14. FTC to work with local schools in promoting the Keep Frome Clean campaign and providing advice about recycling</p> <p>15. FTC to establish and promote community clean-ups, including Ranger Days and an annual town clean-up tied to the Keep Britain Tidy campaign</p> <p>16. FTC to link the Keep Frome Clean campaign to the Government’s new & developing national litter strategy</p> <p>17. FTC to encourage businesses and shopkeepers across the town to sweep and tidy their frontages with an awards scheme: the Frome Broom! The awards scheme could be expanded to include categories for schools, residents and communities too</p> <p>18. FTC to work with MDC after events, including markets, to make sure the town is clean and tidy</p> <p>19. FTC to ensure other organisations, residents and business communities are kept up to date and aware of events – to ensure provision for clean-ups</p> <p>20. FTC to work with local venues and promoters to encourage responsible advertising, including the removal of out of date and tatty flyers/posters</p> <p>21. FTC to work with MDC & SCC to look at the upkeep of the town’s roundabouts – and explore opportunities for advertising & sponsorship</p> <p>22. FTC to consider a dedicated Panel to look at recycling in Frome, including opportunities for recycling bins in public places and spaces</p> <p>23. Although 22 recommendations makes for a long list, it’s worth noting that a number of these recommendations are closely linked – and that the majority of the recommendations should be achievable by simply working together in better ways.</p> <p>Proposed Pippa Goldfinger, seconded Peter Macfadyen, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS/RK</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>CS</p>
2016/06/FC	<p>6. To approve the work programme, work programme, staff changes, the budget and precept demand for 2016/17</p> <p>Toby Eliot provided a comprehensive breakdown of how the budget had been allocated to achieve the work programme and</p>	

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	<p>therefore the level the precept demand was to be set at. The proposal was to increase the precept by 9%; the first increase in three years.</p> <p>a. Al O’Kane proposed a zero percent precept increase. He said that FTC should think "outside the box" and explore alternative / fairer ways of raising income from the community. This could involve FTC engaging with the community over the breadth of projects planned for the year ahead and then devising a way of enabling the community to choose how much they were willing to pay. Al thought that perhaps this would be fairer on lower income households and more positively received by all members of the public (rather than "another tax increase") and thus result in a higher community contribution than the precept demand.</p> <p>The proposal was to approve a zero percent increase for Band D households for 2016/17.</p> <p>Proposed Al O’Kane, seconded Heather Wride, motion not carried.</p> <p>b. Pippa Goldfinger proposed that the funding for Fair Frome was increased by £3,000 TO £18K to make it the same amount as the previous year. Peter Macfadyen noted that it had been discussed already to reduce the funding to Fair Frome gradually in order for them to become self-sufficient. Jean Boulton noted that the draft total budget (exceeding £2m) had been reduced in many areas in order to come to the current proposal and that the proposed grant for Fair Frome should remain unchanged. However, she did hope that later in the year there may be unspent budgets that could be used to supplement the grant for Fair Frome.</p> <p>Increase funding to Fair Frome from £15k to £18k for 2016/17</p> <p>Proposed Pippa Goldfinger, seconded Kate Bielby, motion not carried.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the budget and a precept demand of £1,139,706 for 2016/17, equating to an increase of 23p a week for Band D households. <p>Proposed Jean Boulton, seconded Gary Collinson, agreed by majority.</p>	
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	<p>2. Approve the work programme to March 2017</p> <p>Proposed Tricia Golinski, seconded Sheila Gore, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>3. Approve the staff changes in the organisation chart; note that there is an appropriate budget to recruit them and delegate responsibility for recruitment at the correct time to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Leader.</p> <p>Proposed Richard Ackroyd, seconded Colin Cobb, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>4. Note the forecast Earmarked Reserves and the General Reserve, transfer £110k from the General Reserve to a new Saxonvale EMR and transfer £40k from the General Reserve to the Town Centre Improvement EMR.</p> <p>Proposed Toby Eliot, seconded Richard Ackroyd, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>PWY/PM</p> <p>JW</p>
<p>2016/07/FC</p>	<p>7. Economic Development Update from Anna Francis and Peter Wheelhouse</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse, Economic Development and Regeneration Manager and Anna Francis, Resilience Officer gave an overview of their current work. They particularly focused on the areas where their work overlaps in terms of economic, environmental and social sustainability. Peter noted that a detailed area of the website was currently being worked on to make all the information easily accessible.</p> <p>Mel Usher suggested that the car club be made accessible to those who were disadvantaged and the costs of running a car are too high perhaps by FTC paying for their membership.</p> <p>Shane Collins enquired whether businesses could apply for a membership to the car club. Anna confirmed that it was possible and once the employer was a member employees were able to make use of the cars for free.</p> <p>Kate Bielby thanked Peter and Anna for their presentation.</p>	
<p>2016/08/FC</p>	<p>8. Project updates</p> <p>Richard Ackroyd highlighted the ‘Love Your River’ day which was happening on 13 February.</p>	

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	Heather Wride requested that the project updates were circulated around the town as well as posted on the website and social media.	Rebecca Krzyzosiak
2016/09/FC	<p>9. To note the internal auditors report</p> <p>Toby Eliot thanked Jackie Wheeler and the team for their hard work to ensure the financial controls were approved by the auditors.</p> <p>Cllrs noted the report</p>	
2016/10/FC	<p>10. Approve the calendar of meetings 2016/17</p> <p>A member of the public queried if the meetings of the Planning Advisory Group were to revert back to 6pm instead of 6.30pm. Pippa Goldfinger confirmed they would.</p> <p>The recommendation was to approve the calendar of meetings for 2016/17.</p> <p>Proposed Heather Wride, seconded Richard Ackroyd, agreed unanimously.</p>	LP
2016/11/FC	<p>11. Health and safety update</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised there was nothing to report.</p>	
2016/12/FC	<p>12. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 24 February 2016 at Selwood Academy</p>	
The Chair closed the meeting at 9.07pm		

2. Questions and comments from the public

3. Questions and comments from Cllrs

4. Short talk from Andy Mallender, Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

5. For information: Project updates

The project update is at Appendix 1

6. For information: Response to Housing and Planning Bill 2015 – 16

Author: Pippa Goldfinger, Chair of Planning Advisory Group

The Housing and Planning Bill makes provisions about housing, estate agents, rent charges, planning and compulsory purchase. It will be examined by committee in the Lords on 1 March. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has been consulting on parts of the Bill and has requested comments by 22 February. DCLG's

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consultation paper can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488276/151207_Consultation_document.pdf

Following discussion at the Planning Advisory Group, the following comments have been submitted by Pippa Goldfinger on behalf of the Group:

After careful analysis of the Housing and Planning Bill 2015-16, Frome Town Council's Planning & Advisory Group raise the following objections and concerns:

Britain faces a housing crisis through the combination of many factors including changing demographics e.g. more people living alone, an ageing population and population growth and the failure of successive governments to build new housing.

Problems of exorbitant house prices in the southeast are forcing many low and middle-income families to relocate elsewhere. This is unsustainable and will lead to pressures on towns like Frome further separating any connection between what people earn and what they are required to pay in rent or for mortgages.

Rather than resolve the issue the Housing & Planning Bill will exacerbate it through propping up unaffordable house prices and rents assuring nominal 'affordability' only in the very short term.

The Planning proposals that make up the latter part of the Bill also offer some cause for concern. Bypassing planning departments with consequent loss of planning fees and democratically accountable decision-making will further damage a planning system already showing signs of strain.

Having previously promoted local decision-making through the Localism Act the government is now proposing to override local planning authorities with powers given over to the Secretary of State. As well as centralising power in Westminster this element of the Bill will be a real blow to communities and neighbourhoods who have participated in producing Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders.

The following list is not exhaustive but it does highlight some of the key issues of concern:

- 1. Defining £250k (£450k in London) houses as affordable does not make them affordable.*
- 2. Selling off council houses to pay subsidies for selling off Housing Association houses means you're losing truly affordable housing stock from 2 sources.*
- 3. Selling off high value council houses will 'socially cleanse' London & other expensive cities of the very people who keep those places working.*
- 4. Making households on combined incomes of £30K (£40K in London) pay full market rent for council houses will drive them out of expensive areas (see above).*

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5. *Ending secure tenancies will deprive people of housing stability. Makes for a stressed and unhappy population.*
6. *Giving Ministers powers to override Local Plans runs contrary to the principles of Localism and democratic accountability.*
7. *Allowing developers to pay private planning consultants to write reports or decide applications doesn't guarantee neutrality & accordance with Local Plans.*
8. *If Planning application fees are paid to private planning consultants how will local authorities pay for processing the applications?*
9. *Demolishing the planning system won't result in more housing, just more permissions. Developers won't flood the market as they need to keep supply low and demand high.*
10. *Sounds like the perfect way to create a housing bubble. Everyone will suffer when it pops.*

7. For decision: To approve amendments to the Financial Regulations

Author: Jackie Wheeler, Responsible Finance Officer

Purpose of report

To consider adoption of draft Financial Regulations.

Background

The Financial Regulations were last reviewed by Council in their entirety and formally adopted in March 2015.

It is my responsibility to review and table the Financial Regulations for re-adoption by Council annually. I have consulted the NALC's model regulations and worked with our Internal Auditors and taken their advice on this draft. (see Appendix 2)

Councillors should note there are no fundamental changes proposed. However, I would like to bring attention to the proposed modifications.

- 'Committee' replaced by either 'Council', 'Planning Advisory Group' or 'Senior Staff Advisory Group'
- Merging comparable regulations
- Inserting additional regulations recommended by NALC
- Reference being consistent when referring to 'staff' and 'Councillors'

These changes are visible through the track changes.

Recommendation

Approve the draft Financial Regulations tabled for adoption to become the formal Financial Regulations at the end of the meeting.

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8. For decision: To approve the Risk Register for 2015/16

Author: Jackie Wheeler, Responsible Finance Officer

Background

There is a responsibility on a Council to demonstrate best practice in all aspects of their governance and the assessment of risk can be seen as a key test.

Risk assessment is an examination of working conditions, workplace activities and environmental factors that will enable the Council to identify potential risks and take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate them, insofar as is practically possible.

Management of risk is not restricted to the control of Council finance. It has a much wider definition which involves the assessment of all aspects of service delivery and the failure to implement effective risk management can have a significant and adverse impact on the ability of the Council to meet its service objectives.

The evaluation process involves simple effective scoring to eliminate low risk areas and direct the Council's attention to those risks that may require attention by means of an Action Plan.

Each risk is scored by selecting a value of the likelihood (the likelihood of this happening with the controls the Council has in place)

- N/A not taken into account/ignore
- Low (no/not likely) = value of 1
- Medium (chance it may happen) = value of 2
- High (this may happen) = value of 3

And impact (estimated impact of this risk on this area to the Council with the controls the Council has in place).

- N/A not applicable/ignore
- Low (little or no impact)
- Medium (low to medium impact on the Council)
- High (great impact on the Council)

The system multiplies the likelihood score against the impact score to arrive at a risk value for each item.

Each of the Council's 116 risks ranging from financial, reputation, to play equipment safety has been updated, assessed and scored taking into consideration the controls the Council has in place.

Where relevant, risks are cross referenced with the current Financial Regulations. Risks with a value of 4 or more appear in the 2015/16 Action Plan. For 2015/16 five areas have scored 4 or above and the relevant staff will continue to monitor these risks. The Action Plan can be seen at Appendix 3 (A full copy of the Risk Register can be made available on request).

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Recommendations

1. Approve the 2015/16 Risk Register.
2. Request the Chair sign the 2015/16 Action Plan on behalf of the Council

9. For information: Health and safety update

A member of Frome Town Council's Staff was injured as a result of a road traffic accident on Thursday 10 February.

In accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 – RIDDOR – this accident has been reported to the Health & Safety Executive.

We are studying the accident and Staff are reviewing all of the relevant risk assessments and safe working practices.

As appropriate Staff will bring a detailed report of the accident to a future Council meeting.

10. For information: A review of the Ethical Decision Making Matrix

Author: Jackie Wheeler, Responsible Finance Officer

Summary

To review the Ethical Decision Making Matrix to ensure the Council is continuing to make ethically based decisions over the choice of suppliers of goods and services.

Background

In 2013 the Council adopted an Ethical Decision Making Matrix with the aim of identifying a standard way in which ethical issues are taken into consideration when appointing suppliers.

A series of questions are asked in the matrix:

- Will the decision have a negative impact on vulnerable people, locally as well as globally?
- Does the decision impact on human rights?
- Will the decision have a negative impact on future generations – economically, socially or environmentally?
- Will the decision have a negative economic impact on local people?
- Is the contractor a living wage employer?
- Will the decision have a negative impact on human rights?
- Is the decision more likely to support local people above multinational companies?
- Is FTC happy for this decision to be open to public scrutiny?

Discussion

In 2015 the Council acquired the accreditation of a Living Wage Employer, currently one of four organisations registered in Frome and agreed to undertake a phased implementation.

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In 2014 representation was made to the Local Government Pension Scheme Committee who oversee the investment of the LGPS fund regarding their lack of ethical consideration.

Staff considering prospective suppliers are aware of their responsibility and adhere to the ethical matrix when making their decision especially for orders over £5k.

The Investment Strategy states that investment decisions must be prudent and when possible made ethically. Currently investments are short term or instant access.

A balance of ethical investments with Triodos, CCLA and Mendip Credit Union and prudent with Lloyds Bank benefiting from free banking and increased investment rates.

The Council's grant fund application has a set criteria encouraging local organisations to take an ethical approach, sharing ideas and working together.

Conclusion

In the past two years, the recommendations agreed in 2013, have been implemented where possible. The Council having joined the 'Living Wage movement' are promoting fairness and hopefully will encourage other employers in the town to register. The Council is represented on Somerset County Council's Pension Board to increase pressure on the Pensions Committee into making ethical considerations when investing the LGPS fund. The Council's own investments are made mindful of the need to maintain the balance of ethical and financial investments. The grant making criteria has been amended to include impact on future generations and vulnerable people.

The 'sunlight test' asks whether the Council would be happy for its decisions to be open to public scrutiny and whether they are confident the decision making is as ethical as possible. The answer to this has to be yes.

11. For information: Response to government bill to ban Councils from divesting

Author: Peter Macfadyen, Leader of the Council

Below is a copy of the letter written in response to the Local Government Pension Scheme: Revoking and replacing the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009 consultation.

I write, as the Leader of the Independents for Frome who run Frome Town Council in respect of the Local Government Pension Scheme: Revoking and replacing the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009 consultation.

I and my fellow Councillors and as a Town Council as a whole are extremely concerned by areas of the consultation. In short the plans mean that;

- *Localism is completely removed by this plan*
- *It centralises decision making and is completely at odds with devolution plans*
- *It is draconian legislation which ignores the views of the community*
- *The Local Government Pension Scheme will be placed in areas of constant conflict*
- *It will also place LGPS pension funds with precarious and risky financial investments*

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- *The Government and Pension Funds could find themselves in breach of UN security Council*
- *It conflicts with the Foreign Offices own guidance in investments*
- *It is undemocratic*

Local councils take decisions that reflect the views and opinions of local communities. These proposed changes to the LGPS are unprecedented and go against that basic premise and will lead to confusion, legal challenges and conflict as local communities begin to understand the full implications contained.

The UK has a long and proud tradition of councils acting democratically to take investment decisions that represent the views of the local community. These are not boycotts or sanctions as the extreme and poorly argued press release maintains but sensible decisions by Councils throughout the UK, who are more in tune with their communities than central government.

In recent years, dozens of local Councils have passed motions to adopt fair trade principles and disinvest from fossil fuel companies, tobacco companies and the arms trade.

With assets of £178bn at its last valuation on 31 March 2013, the Local Government Pension Scheme is one of the largest funded pension schemes in Europe. Several thousand employers participate in the Scheme, which has a total of 4.68 million active, deferred and pensioner members. It is one of the few remaining funded public sector pension schemes with its history dating back to 1921. These continual changes, limitations and attacks on it, will have serious repercussions for all the community if it is pushed into a state of conflict with its own members and the local community, something which in particular paragraphs 3.7-3.8 would provoke.

The principle of a fiduciary duty incumbent on pension scheme trustees to act in the best interests of the local community. This duty is enshrined in Article 18(1) of the Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provisions (IORP) Directive which states that "...assets shall be invested in the best interests of members and beneficiaries".

It is noted that no other government in the EU places this kind of restriction on local councils.

You are placing LGPS investments in a position where they will be constantly open to challenges from the local community.

The Governments assertion that such actions by councils harms the economic security of families by pushing up council tax is plainly incorrect and misleading when the higher return of ethical investments over more contentious investment portfolios, often due to the particular vulnerability of more contentious investments to a weakening of their value as social justice campaigns, and political, legal, and reputational developments evolves are taken into consideration.

For example, recent analysis has revealed that a total of £14 billion of £231 billion in assets held by 4.68 million LGPS workers has been invested in fossil fuel. Everyone from the bank of England and the World Bank are concerned about the risk of huge financial losses if nations act to slash carbon emissions. Are these institutions the 'hard left' troublemakers that the press release is referring to?

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The value of funds disinvesting in fossil fuels has soared to \$2.6trillion in a year, and yet if these proposals were adopted, LGPS funds would legally have to keep staff member's contributions in such it for the investments due to the Government's aim. This would be disastrous on the valuation of pension funds, which are already under great strain and are about to undergo the latest triennial valuation. There is already a strong ethical and financial case to local Councils to disinvest from fossil fuels and to reinvest into infrastructure fit for the 21st century.

Matthew Hancock's (Minister for the cabinet office) assertion to take steps to stop such outdated policies, would ironically take local decision making back to feudal times.

We don't want fossil fuels to destroy our pensions, and we don't want our pensions to destroy everyone's futures.' (Jane Ivimey, Fossil Free Oxfordshire Divestment campaign.)

By restricting the ability of local councils to divest from companies operating in violation of international law, we are also gravely concerned the government may find itself in breach of these international standards. We believe that as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK has a particular responsibility to support and uphold international law and human rights, including through supporting the actions of government bodies, agencies, and councils to promote its adherence. Parts of this consultation go against both international law and human rights and will land the LGPS in continually legal battles.

The Secretary of State further states in the consultation that, "Divisive policies undermine good community relations... whilst the press release use of phrases such as "militant", "divisive" and "hard left" are unheard of since the 1980's and seem very outdated for a party in power to use in the modern world.

Legitimate campaigns to uphold international law are supported by people from all backgrounds from across the country. The tone of the press release is both offensive and divisive itself and will unite a large part of the population, along the lines of the previous national forests campaigns which the government previously had to concede on the grounds of the large scale opposition.

We are also somewhat confused by the Governments own message concerning Overseas business risk in Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-israel/overseas-business-risk-israel>

The Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009 already require administering authorities to publish and follow a statement of investment principles. The move to also attempt to force LGPS investments into passive strategy is in tandem with this wholly undemocratic proposal which will also limit local democracy.

"Guidance on how these policies should reflect foreign policy and related issues will be published ahead of the new Regulations coming into force" is also of concern. You cannot introduce such changes without fully thought out and issued guidance, which you are prepared to be transparent about and you cannot expect fully formed responses without full details and based on a wholly inadequate amount of information.

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How can you possibly square the circle of encouraging localism whilst centralising such local decisions.

If these regulations were in place during the 1980's, the pressure that local Councils lead with in the UK for the release of Nelson Mandela and the end of apartheid would simply not have been there and history may now look very different.

These proposals place the UK and the LGPS on the wrong side of history. They are undemocratic and are the politics' of central government total control and are completely at odds with any plans for devolution. We request that they are dropped forthwith.

We also note that in the Coalition, once the LGPS reforms were made, we were informed that there would be no more changes for 25 years, we haven't have 25 months yet and already we are seeing large scale changes to the LGPS. This has to cease.

Yours

Peter Macfadyen

Leader of Independents for Frome

Frome Town Council

12. For decision: FTC One Planet Action Plan

Author: Anna Francis, Resilience Officer

Introduction

This is the draft internal One Planet Action Plan for Frome Town Council. It outlines some of the key actions needed to ensure that the Council is demonstrating best practice environmentally, socially and economically and is playing its part in creating a One Planet town. The plan will be further developed and targets set. Progress will be reviewed annually and a record will be kept of progress towards targets. The plan and action points will be included in staff inductions and discussed regularly at staff meetings.

Zero carbon

making buildings more energy efficient and delivering all energy with renewable technologies

- Explore opportunities for renewable generation on Council buildings
- Ensure that lights and machinery are turned off when not in use
- Encompass energy saving in induction documents
- Favour suppliers that use renewable energy
- Buy green energy
- Default position in outside services is prioritise manual and non-carbon tools (unless clear case can be made not to do so)
- Use ethical banking and investment where possible, for example, actively support Somerset County Council pension divestment scheme and use ethical insurance company

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Zero waste

reducing waste, reusing where possible, and ultimately sending zero waste to landfill

- Print double-sided as default and set margins to 2cm where possible
- Print two to a page where feasible
- Explore opportunities to further reduce paper use e.g. at Council meetings
- Work with suppliers to minimise waste
- Maximise recycling rates
- Avoid non-recyclable packaging and products where possible

Sustainable transport

encouraging low carbon modes of transport to reduce emissions, reducing the need to travel

- Prioritise public transport for business trips
- Use low carbon vehicles where possible such as the Council's electric van
- Ensure staff use car club cars instead of private cars when travelling for business where feasible
- Encourage and promote lift-share internally and externally

Sustainable materials

using sustainable and healthy products, such as those with low embodied energy, sourced locally, made from renewable or waste resources

- Update ethical procurement policy to include sustainability
- Purchase recycled paper and stationery
- Favour environmental suppliers such as Green Stationery Company in Bath for office products

Local and sustainable food

choosing low impact, local, seasonal and organic diets and reducing food waste

- Use local caterers at all times unless clear reasons are given not to
- Minimise food waste
- Provide vegetarian food as default at events

Sustainable water

using water more efficiently in buildings and in the products we buy; tackling local flooding and water course pollution

- Add water saving hippos to toilets
- Recycle water for re-use where possible

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Land use and wildlife

protecting and restoring existing biodiversity and natural habitats through appropriate land use and integration into the built environment

- Work towards zero chemical use i.e. default position is not to use chemicals unless there is a clear reason to do so is given
- Manage land to maximise wildlife and biodiversity

Culture and heritage

reviving local identity and wisdom; supporting and participating in the arts

- Ensure local culture and heritage are integral to our work, for example, exploring use of hydro power linking in with the town's hydro-powered past

Equity and local economy

creating bioregional economies that support fair employment, inclusive communities and international fair trade

- Be a Living Wage Employer and work with suppliers and other local businesses to promote this further
- Ensure all goods such as tea, coffee and sugar are fair trade

Health and happiness

encouraging active, sociable, meaningful lives to promote good health and well being

- Ensure good communication with staff and regular appraisals to monitor progress and wellbeing
- Explore conducting an internal wellbeing survey each year
- Ensure regular opportunities for professional development are offered to all staff

Recommendation

Adopt the Action Plan and update it annually following review of progress.

13. For information: Financial update as at 31 January 2016

Author: Jackie Wheeler, Responsible Finance Officer

The Income and Expenditure Statement presented at Appendix 4 represents ten months of this financial year, comparing expenditure and income to the agreed budget set at the start of the year.

This format of the budget codes and cost centres will remain until the end of this financial year. In 2016/2017 a new layout will be sectioned as Environmental, Well Being, Prosperity and Core Services reflecting the adopted Action Plan.

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The Internal Auditors completed their audit of the accounts up to and including 31 January and their report can be found at Appendix 5.

The end of year forecast remains similar to that reported in January. DCLG approval was received for the additional £200k Public Works Loan for the completion of the renovation of Frome Town Hall; this will be drawn from PWLB in the new financial year.

The Valuation Office is still considering an appeal for the reduction in the Elliott building business rates lodged in September. The Elliott building has secured a regular weekly booking since the last report.

Significant income to note during October to January

- £125k Public Works Loan drawn in October to purchase the Old Showfield
- £44.3k S.106 Old Showfield agreement
- £39.5k VAT repayment received from HMRC, reclaimed for the second and third quarters
- £1.2k solar panel surplus electricity sold back to the grid for quarter 3, October to December

Significant expenditure to note during October to January aside from normal expenditure

- £70.6k Public Works Loan repayments, interest and principal
- £29k Partnership and Community Grants
- £26.8k Oakley Machinery, Grillo Flail Mower and attachments
- £15.3k Mendip District Council, Town and District Council Elections
- £12.6k NVB Architects, Frome Town Hall RIBA Stage 3
- £12k Role Modellers Ltd, Town Digital Hub
- £10.9k IMA Transport Planning, Market Place phase 2 re submission
- £10.8k Jeremy Smalley, Saxonvale project work

Details of payments over £500 reported since the last meeting can be seen at Appendix 6. Councillors are invited to come to the office to 'spot check' and sign BACS payments retrospectively.

Reserves/Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shown at Appendix 7 details deposits in the bank and investments as at 31 January 2016 compared to 31 March 2015. Total reserves stand at £1.6m, a combination of General and Earmarked Reserves. The General Reserves stand at £756k following the transfers agreed in January; this figure includes the balance of the PWLB loan for Frome Town Hall renovations and it is proposed to transfer that balance to the EMR Office Relocation at the end of the financial year. The Earmarked Reserves £850k are identified for specific spending.

Section 106 agreements

Work is progressing on suitable projects in order to claim the S.106 monies held by MDC, these projects will be brought to Council for approval:

- Old Showfield (£44k) public open spaces enhancement

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- Former Cuprinol Works (£19k) and Bennetts Gardens (£26k) for public open space enhancement.

Investments

Two short term investments of £200k matured 31 December and reinvested for two months in line with the Investment Strategy.

If you require any further financial information please do contact me in advance of the meeting.

14. For decision: To approve the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy

Author: Jackie Wheeler, Responsible Finance Officer

Local Authorities must consider, discuss and adopt their own Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy which they are required to publish and keep under review. FTC's policy was adopted in September 2014 and is reviewed annually.

Background

Following national changes to the pension scheme from 1 April 2014 and under the revisions to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), Frome Town Council as an employer is required to publish a statement as to its adopted policy regarding certain discretions it may exercise in relation to members of the scheme.

The policy can be found at Appendix 8 and the discretions are:

- Whether the Council elects to pay all or part of an additional sum to a member's pension.
This could be used as an incentive to recruit or retain an employee.
- Whether the Council allows an employee over the age of 55 to claim all or part of their pension whilst continuing to work, either at reduced hours or a lower grade (Flexible retirement).
In such cases, pension benefits will be reduced in accordance with actuarial tables unless the employer waives reduction on compassionate grounds or a member has protected rights.
- Whether the Council chooses to waive or reduce the actuarial reduction applied to those members on flexible retirement or employees leaving before retirement age due to ill health or an active member who chooses to draw their pension between the ages of 55 and 60.
- Whether to allow the 85 year rule to be 'switched on'. Previously if the combined total of an employee's age and length of service was 85 they could retire without any reduction to their pension. This option has been removed.
- Whether to grant additional pension to members leaving through redundancy or business efficiency up to £6,500 pa.
- Whether to allow all or part of benefits paid to an employee aged 55 or over. (Repetition of point 2).
- Whether to allow ex-employees between the ages of 55 and 59 to claim early repayment of their pension.

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- Whether the Council allows reinstatement of tier 3 ill health and waives or reduces the actuarial reduction.

The discretion as to whether the Council agrees to 'top up' an employee's pension who is leaving following redundancy has been removed as it has now expired.

The policy has been reviewed and it is important to note that the Council has the ability to allow a case by case flexibility as it is impossible to know what circumstances can arise. The need for ill health insurance cover has been clarified by the pension administrator. When setting employer contribution rates at each valuation, the actuary assumes that a certain number of ill-health retirements will occur and builds this into the employer's contribution rate. Therefore, as long as the actual number of ill-health retirements does not exceed the actuary's assumptions there is no additional risk to the employer. If the number of actual ill-health retirements does exceed the actuary's assumption, this will be factored into the employer's rate at the next valuation.

Recommendation

Note the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions policy.

15. For decision: Promotion of walking and cycling in Frome

Author: Ruth Knagg, Community Projects Officer

Summary

Promotion of walking and cycling in Frome has renewed impetus with two proposals for consideration at this meeting. Firstly, there is a proposal that we apply for the status of 'Walkers are Welcome' which brings economic and tourism benefits as well as benefiting local residents. Secondly, to complement the funding being sought from The Heart of Wessex Local Action Group (LAG) and elsewhere primarily for the Missing Link, there is a recommendation that Section 106 funds from the Mendip Lodge site be ring-fenced for marketing and promotion of the town as a destination for both walkers and cyclists.

Background

'Walkers are Welcome', as you will hear from the speaker at this meeting, 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 keen to apply to join this scheme.

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.

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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 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are also very enthusiastic because this would establish another destination town beyond the eastern end of their territory.

Steps that are required for Walkers are Welcome status

1. Demonstration of support by 5% of the population (forms are already circulating. Please sign up yourself tonight if you are personally in favour)
2. Formal endorsement by the Council, including a financial contribution if possible – NB provisional membership is only £55
3. Commitment to maintenance of public footpaths (in progress by FTC & Mendip Ramblers)
4. Adequate marketing of 'Walkers are Welcome' status
5. Show how use of public transport will be encouraged
6. Demonstrate future maintenance of 'Walkers are Welcome' status by having a steering committee

Combining with cycle path provision and promotion

Discussion with the walking and cycling working group whose members cover a number of local interest groups, resulted in the decision that it would be most effective to use the Walkers are Welcome platform alongside the promotion of cycling routes to promote and market Frome as a destination for both walkers and cyclists.

Frome's Missing Link have already prepared a draft bid to the Heart of Wessex LAG funding scheme and have been advised that the application was not yet ready to be put forward. Peter Wheelhouse and Ruth Knagg have had further discussions with the LAG Programme Manager and are advised that a revised bid from FTC submitted to the 'rural tourism' strand that promotes both walking and cycling would fare better.

The LAG fund is focused mainly on funding items of capital expenditure and the Missing Link cycle path will, of course, require mainly that. Promotion of walking and cycling will be partly done via websites and social media that LAG funding will not cover and, for this reason, it is recommended that Section 106 funds given from the development of the Mendip Lodge site be ring-fenced towards this aspect of the work.

Promotional opportunities

- Linkage with the national network of other Walkers are Welcome towns
- Promotion of The Mendip Way, a 50 mile long distance footpath that begins at the Boyle Cross in Frome and passes through Wells and Cheddar, ending at Weston super Mare. Mendip AONB are pro-active on this
- The carfreewalks website does not yet show any walks with Frome as a base. The fact we have a railway station is an asset.
- Wessex Wanderer Railway walks – organised routes from railway stations.
- Promotion of car free routes can help with the campaign to save bus routes
- Links via Sustrans into the national cycle network

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- Links via the Cycle Touring Club (whose research demonstrates that the average economic benefit-to-cost ratio of investing in cycling and walking schemes is 13:1)
- Visit Somerset 360 would help promote this
- Opportunity to promote circular routes to families as well as dedicated cyclists and walkers

Recommendations

1. Formally endorse the application for Frome to apply for 'Walkers are Welcome' status
2. Request that section 106 funds of £38,000 from the Mendip Lodge Hotel site be ring-fenced for marketing of Frome as a destination for walkers and cyclists

16. For decision: A review of how panels have gone and possible changes to structure from April onwards

Authors: Cllrs Peter Macfadyen and Mel Usher and Paul Wynne, Town Clerk

Introduction

It was agreed that once the Panels had completed their initial recommendations that a review be undertaken of democratic engagement within the Council. This report discusses the options and makes recommendations for a way forward.

Background

Historically, Town Councils have been democratically managed through a series of committees. Typically the committees would look at areas of interest such as parks and recreation, amenities, the town centre, assets, finance and management and so on. Often they would have sub committees and be supplemented by working groups. Councillors were allocated seats on the various committees.

On the face of it there is nothing wrong with this approach and most Town Councils still operate using this kind of model; in the last administration there was an 'Internal Affairs Committee' for subjects such as finance and personnel, 'External Affairs Committee' for most other matters and a 'Planning Sub Committee'. The main decision making body remained the Council Meeting, where all Councillors met.

There are at least 3 problems associated with the committee approach:

1. Committees have to be treated as legal entities and as such they are constrained in both their remit and conduct of business. This is particularly true around areas of public engagement.
2. Cllrs often only glimpse part of the overall work of the Council in any detail. In some cases they defend "their committee" budget and interests.
3. By necessity, committees are inward focussed and often neglect wider issues occurring in the town. They have a tendency to encourage micro management of the staff which can hinder progress.

To partially overcome these problems FTC implemented a Panel system in June 2015. Panels were meant to be outward focussed, informal, engaging and short lived. We set up four Panels covering Wellbeing, the Town Centre, Sports and Leisure and Keep Frome Clean. All

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four have now reported to Council and many of their recommendations have been incorporated into the Four Year Plan and work programme for 2016-17. At the same time the 'Planning Sub Committee' morphed into the more campaigning focussed 'Planning Advisory Group'. The Panels all completed their tasks in different ways but they seem to have worked well. They:

1. Significantly engaged the 11 new Cllrs to four important areas of work.
2. They allowed in depth discussions of existing issues and introduced a whole raft of new ideas.
3. They encouraged local "experts", members of the public and staff to have significantly more engagement.

However, they were heavy users of staff time, as the planned work programme still had to be delivered, and in some cases opened up a Pandora's Box of wish lists, some of which are unrealistic and/or unaffordable.

They did however show the benefit of greater co-ordination, bringing players together in productive and novel ways. Some of the Panels may yet have a life beyond the current time period with different briefs. For example, exploring more sports opportunities through the involvement of most of the local clubs; co-ordinating well-being and health matters; or establishing an advisory group of multifaceted interests for the town centre.

The role of the Council meeting has also changed during this first 6 months; in the absence of committees, the Council meeting has become the main decision making body. This has resulted in longer agendas, although interestingly the average length has remained unchanged. Some Cllrs are not totally convinced by the monthly Council meetings citing concerns about limited time, a jumble of unrelated topics and a lack of scrutiny of some of the day to day activities of the Council.

Outside of the Council meeting cycle Cllrs continue with ward work, direct involvement like litter picking and adopting areas of specialist interests. These have been semi-formalised by recognising 'Project Sponsors' as Cllrs with particular focus on a given area of work.

So far we can identify:

Cllr Ackroyd for FTC environmental issues

Cllr Boulton for business engagement and public transport

Cllr Bielby for PR and communications

Cllr Cobb for Town Hall improvements

Cllr Collinson for sport

Cllr Elliot and Gore for finance

Cllr Goldfinger for planning and design

Cllr Golinski for cycling and transport

Cllr Macfadyen for resilience concerns

Cllr O'Kane for music and arts

Cllr Barclay for wellbeing

Cllr Usher for town centre

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Next Steps

First, an admission that there is no right way to run a Town Council; much depends on the issues faced, the skills and expertise of the paid staff, the willingness of Cllrs to engage and recent electoral history. For example, the election of IfF Cllrs to all 17 seats on the Council presents us with a unique and challenging opportunity. We think there's an opportunity to develop and refine the structures to enable us to take advantage of a range of strengths.

We recommend the following as an approach.

Project/work area Sponsors

That the role of Cllr Sponsors be defined as “advisor, guide, critical friend and communicator” to and from the staff, to and from other Cllrs, other agencies and the public. They are not decision makers but will generate ideas and options and monitor performance. How sponsors fulfil their brief will depend on the issue in hand and its significance in the work programme, staff availability, their wish for other Cllrs (or indeed non Cllrs) to be involved and their confidence and experience. Sponsorships will come and go depending upon the needs of the Council. Sponsorship briefs and appointments (and removal!) should be approved by Council and they will be expected to report and have schemes or projects approved at that meeting.

All existing sponsorships should be formally agreed by the Council at this meeting in February followed up by a short briefing paper in March to identify possible gaps and potential areas of work that may need breaking into smaller bite size chunks.

Council

That the Council undertakes the same duties as now and continues to meet monthly. To ensure that the agenda is not completely dominated by ad hoc decision making the Town Clerk should manage the agenda to review the progress of one pillar of the work programme at each meeting with the fourth meeting specialising in finance, internal matters and sponsorship progress. Of course this does not mean that urgent matters have to await the appropriate cycle; the Council is the only decision making vehicle outside of the Town Clerk role and it needs to be flexible.

The table below proposes the theme for each Council meeting.

Theme/pillar	Review date	Review date	Review date
Wellbeing	March	July	Nov
Environment	April	Aug	Dec (incl. initial discussion on work prog and budget)
Financial/internal affairs	May (incl. Annual Return sign off and appoint Mayor)	Sept	Jan (incl. sign off work prog and agree precept)
Prosperity	June	Oct	Feb

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Panels

That the Council continues to form Panels with the same broad intent as before. It is unlikely more than one Panel will run at any time. It has already been suggested that an Arts and Music Panel be established, and if the Council agrees that, a fuller brief with its remit will be brought to the March meeting.

Existing Panels may wish to continue to meet. In some cases their work may sensibly morph into arrangements set up by the appropriate staff member and Sponsors and become forums. In others they may require a new remit with an agreed timescale and aims. It will be important to clarify this and ensure that any staff support is agreed. These arrangements should be carefully communicated. The Sponsor and lead staff member may also decide to bring together working groups to crack particular problems. It important that Council is aware of forums and working groups in order to monitor corporate priorities. It will be the responsibility of the Town Clerk to monitor these and report to Council accordingly.

Senior Staff Advisory Group

The need for a high level group to advise the staff and to do some preparatory work for Council still remains. The Town Clerk has a preference for 4 councillors (two of which should be the Mayor and Leader) and 4 staff. This group should have scheduled quarterly meetings through the year that can be cancelled if there is nothing to discuss. Council is asked to identify the 4 councillors.

Conclusion

We recommend this as a pragmatic approach to democratic engagement in the Council. There is a fine line to be drawn between excessive Cllr involvement which can clog up the system, and proper management and scrutiny making the most of Cllr skills and enthusiasm.

Recommendations

1. Council formally recognises the role of Councillor Sponsors and a definition be included in the appropriate standing orders.
2. Existing sponsors and sponsor topics as identified in this report be approved and that a further report be brought to the March Council meeting identifying a short brief for each topic area, any gaps in topics covered and any topic areas that might be too extensive in the issues to be covered.
3. Future formal Council sponsors and topics be approved by the Council and that sponsors to report back to Council in an agreed way.
4. Council to continue to meet monthly and its agendas should run wherever possible on the 4 monthly thematic cycle identified in this report.
5. Any future Panel and its remit to be approved by the Council.
6. The Senior Staff Advisory Group continues with 4 Cllrs and 4 senior staff and that the Mayor, Leader and 2 other Cllrs are elected
7. The proposals be reviewed by the Leader and Town Clerk and a report be brought to Council in March 2017

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17. For decision: To approve recommendations from the Grants Advisory Group

Author: Ruth Knagg, Community Projects Officer

Summary

The Grants Advisory Group has met to consider grants applications for the third and final round of this financial year. The Group's recommendations are in the report below and it is recommended that Cllrs agree these.

Background

The total sum of grants available this year is £65,000 of which:

- £10,000 is for fundraising advice contract (currently delivered by Greenstrand and agreed at the September Council meeting to extend to March 2016)
- A further £3,878 Youth Bank fund (EMR)
- £55,306.96 has already been distributed, leaving £3,571.41 remaining

Grants Advisory Group propose the following applications be approved in Round 3 of the 2015/16:

Recommended for approval			
Organisation	Project	Amount Requested	Amount agreed
Frome SODA	Ceramics tuition	£200	£200
Frome Community Productions CIC	Skills training programme	£300	£300
Frome & District Day Centre/Active living	Intergenerational project with Frome College	£2,000	£600
Frome Carers Group	Respite days at Ammerdown	£400	£300
Foreground	Small Town Art Club	£2,000	£200
Edventure	Drop in/support network - Frome Feeling Good?	£3,000	£1,000
Frome College as sponsor (Youth Bank application)	School Shop	£1,000	£1,000
Total			£3,600

Not recommended			
Organisation	Project	Amount Requested	Reason
Purple Elephant Productions CIC	Frome Children's Festival 2016	£3,000	Not from this year's grants pot although commitment to support
Frome Street Bandits	Music For All	£1,000	Not for this project
Open Story Tellers	OST Centre Development	£3,000	Not now
Youth With A Future (YWAF)	Moving-in grants to homeless young people	£2,960	Insufficient funds to support this

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Frome College as sponsor (Youth Bank application)	College Savers Club	£900	If College shop is successful, they can fund from proceeds
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The group also held a full review of the grants system including the funds that are distributed to external organisations through budget lines other than the grants allocation. A revised process based on this discussion and linking refreshed criteria to the new adopted Strategy will be brought to the March Council meeting.

Recommendation

Agree the recommendations of the Grants Advisory Group as above.

18. For decision: Fundraising and support contract

Author: Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer

Summary

The Grants Advisory Group propose that Council agree to go out to tender for a Fundraising and Support Contract for a two year period to start in April to the value of £10k per year. The contract will include a support package detailed below for local groups and organisations. It will be overseen and coordinated by the Community Projects Officer as part of a wider programme of training and support.

They recommend that authority to recruit and appoint a contractor to deliver the Fundraising Support contract be delegated to the Town Clerk and Chair of the Grants Advisory Group.

Introduction

For the last three years Frome Town Council (FTC) has contracted the services of a consultant to provide advice and support to any Frome community group, whether emerging or established to assist them in whatever is necessary to help them raise funds for their work and to improve the lives of Frome citizens.

This has been very successful, raising over £280,000 for Frome groups in that time. On the 23 September 2015 Council agreed that ‘Before April 2016 the Greenstrand contract be re-tendered although before that process, and during the budget preparation, thought be given to increasing the provision of advice to the voluntary sector where gaps needed to be filled.’

Discussion

The Grants Advisory Group have met and agreed an outline for the Fundraising and Support contract. They propose that it includes a package of support and practical advice to be offered to local groups and organisations, referred by the FTC Community Projects Officer with responsibility for grants and fundraising. The CPO will also develop and coordinate a wider programme of training and support for organisations, which includes a programme of training for trustees, First Aid, practical support with DBS checks and volunteer support.

The package provided through the fundraising support contract will include:

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- Advice on governance, organisational objectives and the type of organisation the group may need to consider constituting as.
- Support with writing business plans for specific projects
- Direct assistance with bid writing for projects – generally as a training or hand-holding exercise rather than actually undertaking the bid-writing itself, although there may be occasional situations where the latter is preferable
- Help to run and deliver, in conjunction with the Community Project Officer, workshops on specific topics e.g. tips on fundraising from trusts.

It is proposed that the contract is advertised widely with the opportunity to tender open to any qualified professional or agency who wishes to bid for the work. Interested parties will be asked to submit a proposal of what they would offer and how they will deliver this service and then interviews will take place.

We anticipate that the new contract will start at the beginning of April with a continuity of support for local groups and organisations.

Recommendations:

1. Agree the length of this contract to be 2 years starting in April 2016 with an annual cost of £10k to be paid from budget line 600/4725
2. Delegate authority to recruit and appoint a contractor to deliver the fundraising support package to the Town Clerk and Chair of the Grants Advisory Group

19. For information: Literacy – a plan for development

Author: Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer

Introduction

Issues around literacy are not unique to Frome but, anecdotally, Frome does not appear to be bucking the national literacy trend. Around 1 person in every 6 in the UK lives with poor literacy; impacting on, among other things, their ability to engage in education, training and/or work.

Literacy was identified by the members of the Wellbeing Panel as an area of concern and as one of the targeted projects requiring further investigation.

While many of the underlying causes of low levels of literacy may be beyond our control, members of the panel hoped that bringing together education providers and key agencies might identify some potential actions to help support people locally.

Literacy Meetings

Kate Bielby hosted and chaired the initial meeting of a group of interested parties in November 2015, supported by the Community Projects Officer. The group included representatives from Fair Frome, Somerset Library Service, Frome College, Get Set Services (Frome's Children's Centres), Frome Community Education and other schools and services were invited to attend.

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The group discussed the level of literacy expected of school leavers, identified specific issues, discussed the impact of low literacy skills, areas of need and future focus, who else should be invited to join the group, the next steps and the possible actions to take forward. It was agreed that whilst there was some representation of first schools in the room we need to ensure that they and the middle schools are well represented in order to understand better the issues that they face.

A need to engage businesses, to better understand the impact on them, the levels of literacy that they desire, how they support adult learning and the actions that would support their growth in Frome was also identified.

There are some projects and services in place, both within the statutory sector and otherwise which are aimed at addressing these. However in many cases they are increasingly overstretched due to increased demand and reduced funding and have funding in place for no more than a year. They are vulnerable to County Council cuts.

The group identified a number of practical actions that can be pursued over the next few months which fall into the following headings:

Create a holistic approach to support all residents in achieving increased literacy skills, access to opportunities and participation in learning (with attention to particular groups and communities)

Provide Information about services and opportunities making it widely available to practitioners and Frome residents – a clear referral network

Create a long term funding plan for local services

Identify possible opportunities for collaboration and the provision of new services

Engage more volunteers in supporting literacy projects and services in schools, the library and other organisations

Campaign for the maintenance of existing services and to raise awareness of the related issues

The 2016/17 action plan for FTC includes literacy as an action under the heading 'Building a Resilient Community' and states the intention to 'Increase literacy levels in the community'. It is intended that FTC take a facilitative lead in this work, bringing together partners to create and deliver actions which lead to improved literacy levels in the town. At this stage there is no budget attached to the work other than to cover the costs of room hire where necessary and to support the work of the Community Projects Officer in servicing the group. It was agreed that the group would meet again to further develop the overview and agree an action plan. This meeting will take place on 24 February 2016.

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Conclusion

The Community Projects Officer will continue to work with Kate Bielby to coordinate and support the development of an action plan with a range of appropriate partners, which will improve the literacy levels of residents in Frome. It is intended that this is a discrete period of facilitation over the coming 12 months.

Where necessary the group will identify external funding streams to support the development of specific projects.

The group will update Council of their progress at regular intervals.

- 20. The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 23 March at Rook Lane Chapel**