

Minutes of the Frome Annual Town meeting at the Assembly Rooms Wednesday 6 April 2016 at 7.00pm

In the chair: Mayor of Frome Kate Bielby

In attendance:

Approx. members of the public 50

Frome Town Councillors – Al O’Kane, Alison Barclay, Gary Collinson, Kate Bielby, Mel Usher, Nick White, Peter Macfadyen, Pippa Goldfinger, Sheila Gore, Toby Eliot, Tricia Golinski

Frome Town Council Officers - Paul Wynne (Frome Town Clerk), Rebecca Krzyzosiak (Administration Officer), Chris Stringer (Environment Manager), Kate Hellard (Community Projects Officer), Mark Brookes (Town Centre Community Coordinator), Peter Wheelhouse (Economic Development & Regeneration Manager)

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 1st April 2015 were signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.

The Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed everyone at 7.12pm. She gave a very heart-warming and heart felt talk about her past 10 months of being in office as Mayor. She described how she had been able to get to know more of town with this role, and had attended at least 100 events in the past 10 months. She highlighted that through the role as Mayor she could formally recognise people’s efforts and had learnt a lot about the town’s community groups. In particular, she said she had been impressed by the Children’s Festival, Fair Frome, the Toy library, Active and Touch (part of Somerset You Can Do) and the Gateway Club – these were organisations working hard for the community and serving and meeting a real need; they also had volunteers who diligently ‘get on with things’ and had a lot of ‘good will’ along the way. Kate also mentioned Frome’s Missing Links project, and how she had learnt more about the organisation steering for a virtually traffic free cycle route that takes cyclists and pedestrians to Radstock and then on to Bath, running alongside the route of the old train line. The Mayor said to her it made sense to have a safe and healthy transport route which would benefit residents and enable businesses to connect with Frome.

Kate said she had been fortunate to have been invited to and attend a great deal of performances in the town. She said there were notably high standards of music and drama in the town, especially by young people and children; one organisation which had captivated her was the Frome Town Youth Band – if she could choose a Mayoral sound track, it would be played by them. She touched on how in the present day there are pressures we face with creativity being squeezed out of budgets, for example in many schools. She said FTC could continue to support teachers and creativity for young people as well as groups who engage with others and inspire.

Kate said she had had many firsts in her Mayoral role: she DJ'd, been interviewed by many people and by May would have written 40 columns for the Frome Standard. This she confessed had been a challenge but very rewarding. She wanted to give thanks to Journalists Caroline, Lynne and Claire for the opportunity to write for the paper.

Kate said that as Mayor she had chaired many meetings and wanted to give thanks to and was grateful to Cllrs, those who attend meetings and staff for their patience and support and especially to Town Clerk Paul Wynne who had helped her through the meetings.

Rather than having official mayoral charities Kate had decided to choose subjects near to her heart; like respite for those who care or who are parents of someone with a disability. She had however, underestimated the sensitivity and complexity of this cause. Kate also touched upon how she had wanted to highlight the low levels of literacy in many communities and that this was also prevalent in Frome – she gave thanks to Kate Hellard (Community Projects Officer) and the supportive groups in the town which work in this area. Kate also highlighted how the community projects officer's role was to provide community back up, facilitate partnerships and helped to recruit volunteers for a number of organisations in Frome.

Kate highlighted specific events that had stayed with her. Namely, the Big Christmas Get-together and the Christmas card project with Critchill School, Frome Museum's Sue Bucklow and Artist Steve Jenkins. She mused about the brilliant idea to have Car Club cars feature as part of the Carnival – with Mandy Morgan and Cllr Collin Cobb coming to her rescue for the procession, when it became apparent she couldn't drive an automatic car!

Kate thanked her husband for his valiant support, and for holding the fort whilst she was on Mayoral duties – she also gave special thanks to her daughter Daisy. Kate thanked Rebecca Krzyzosiak for her calm, efficient and good humoured admin support as well as Cllrs Ali Barclay, Pippa Goldfinger and Nick White for stepping in when she was unable to attend an event or engagement due to family commitments. She also said how she had been grateful to be have been able to be Mayor.

The meeting gave a big round of applause.

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2015 were signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting. No political bias proposed: Cllr Pippa Goldfinger proposed, Gill Fone (a member of the audience) seconded - agreed majority.

Talk by Cllr Peter Macfadyen Leader of the Council

Cllr Macfadyen introduced himself and highlighted the elections that took place in May, noting that there was an extraordinary number of candidates who stood for election and who wanted to stand as a Town Councillor. He acknowledged democracy was alive and well in Frome. He said this civic year started with 17 out of 17 Independent Councillors being elected in Frome.

He went on to say how participatory democracy is very important to the Council, bringing people into decision making through community engagement and touched on the panels

that the Council introduced recently. Both these processes help to acquire ideas, skills of others and more depth of expertise. He said this was a council intent on 'participative democracy' in which we maximise ongoing listening and learning what the community wants.

Peter talked about the face of the Council – the staff, the Library point and the Rangers who epitomise what the Town Council is trying to do; out there engaging with the public, getting the everyday things right for the community. He noted how FTC had taken on more land, and needed to maintain it and the Council is indebted to volunteers who help and inspire others to do this.

He said this was a year of settling in for the Cllrs as a group. As Councillors, they bring a fantastic range of skills and experience and are incredibly lucky as a community with the quality of Council staff we have. He wanted to publically thank them all for the work they do – regularly above and beyond what's required, and under rewarded in many ways.

The Frome Town Hall (which will reopen to the community by early next year) has staff working on getting it right for the community.

Peter said that FTC staff had been central to the plethora of national awards Frome received in the last year. He recognised that as a Council FTC do more than what is constitutionally obligated to do – for example hold meetings and provide allotments. Despite all this, he recognised – some would say belatedly – that FTC has limits. This is very clear in two areas where the Council had hoped to have made real progress but hadn't quite managed it:

1. The Market Place – For many years the people of Frome have wanted to cross the main road in town without fighting heavy traffic congestion. FTC were very disappointed that despite this, planning was refused for the first phase of making this possible. The Town Council will continue to drive this project forward.
2. Saxonvale - FTC had also been frustrated – so far, in plans to get the Saxonvale development moving. He said that the Town Council continued to lead on this process and had not yet given up.

Peter explained that over the next 3 years FTC will continue to operate in three key areas:

- **Wellbeing:** To create and maintain a flourishing and active community of people and organisations working together.
- **Prosperity:** Helping to support the thriving business community in Frome, one connected with each other and with the town, providing employment and prosperity.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Covering the attractiveness, variety and accessibility of the town's green spaces and an increased focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and community transport not just for green issues they underpin and link into prosperity for the town.

The new Strategy also makes clear that the Town Council has to operate with two very significant factors hanging over it. For example: Frome is in a hierarchical order of other councils. There is less money from the county, less services they'll be able to provide. Thus, society will be more dependent on the voluntary sector.

Secondly, the population of Frome is set to increase by 7000 people in the next 7 years - a 24% increase. This represents a massive challenge on infrastructure.

Peter said that staff and Cllrs had worked together to produce ambitious and a realistic strategy and plans for the next 4 years – constantly mindful of the need and desire to continuously consult and widely involve the community. He finished by saying that more than ever the Town Council had its limits, with further austerity and a larger population would put greater pressure on these...But that there is much to look forward to.

Public question time

Paul Wynne, Town Clerk highlighted an email from a member of the public Jean Gill from Spring Road, who would like Frome Town Council to get Somerset County Council to tackle important safety issues in Frome:

- “1. **Light controlled crossing at bottom of Bath Street and the top of Bath Street.** To improve access between Cheap Street and St Catherine’s and improve safety for pedestrians.
2. **Pedestrian crossing needed from top of Catherine Street to bottom of Weymouth Road.**
3. **Pedestrian crossing needed from side of Welshmill play/skateboard park to bottom of Spring Road.** Young children and mobility scooter users have to step into road as the pavement ends and it is difficult to see traffic coming down Welshmill Road.
4. **The Belisha beacons by Fromefield PO need to be changed for modern ones with poles which light up.** The existing ones are very difficult to see after dark.
5. **Dropped kerbs needed each side of Rook Lane** as small wheeled mobility scooters can’t get from town to Rook Lane Chapel for exhibitions etc.
6. **Red notices stating that CHANGES TO ROAD LAYOUT AHEAD** or similar wording should be removed after being in place for 2 years. The ones at each end of Spring Road have been there for about 15yrs, since the barrier was put across to make it a ‘no through road’, but people who return to Frome having been away think the barrier has been removed as the notices are still there. Why do Somerset County Council go on paying for new red notices for other places, wasting our taxes, when there are at least 5 obsolete ones in Frome which could be reused?

As lots of Frome residents as well as visitors use Mobility Scooters, please **could a map be produced to show all the dropped kerbs.** I’m sure a group of volunteers would be pleased to take on that project.

I have contacted Councillors about several of these issues over recent years, but as usual old people don’t get things done.”

Paul advised the meeting that FTC now has a really good dialogue with the highways authority and other departments within the County Council, and FTC continues to work hard with building relationships with other Councils.

Peter Wheelhouse announced that the scheme to make the Boyle Cross more pedestrian friendly had this afternoon, been approved by Somerset County Council cabinet members and the two authorities would be working together in partnership to bring forward this work.

Charles Wood wanted the Town Council to know that the office provided to the charity Active and in Touch and the admin support that had been delivered by staff were appreciated and he thanked everyone for helping the charity.

Civic Award Winners: (in presentation order)

Tracey Harding was awarded for her relentless campaigning and dedication to the protection of vital bus services on behalf of everyone in the community.

Sue Everett was awarded for her role as a community leader. For her extraordinary dedication in support of the Keyford, Mount & Marsden Community Association and outstanding work in improving The Dippy.

Lucia Chadwick was awarded for her work and role at Active and in Touch. Lucia was commended for her extraordinary commitment to the support of those in greatest need and the contribution she brought to the lives of many in the community.

Jim Boulter was awarded for his longstanding and outstanding dedication and achievement to music in the local community, and for inspiring generations of young musicians and providing Frome with wonderful music.

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

Conclusion

The Mayor thanked everyone for coming. In order for the public to keep up-to-date with FTC she suggested liking the Facebook page and noted there was a flip chart in the foyer if anyone wanted to leave further comments.

The meeting was closed at 8.50pm.