

## Agenda item 4

### For Discussion: Update on Participatory Budgeting

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#### Summary

This report collects some early views on the Council's move towards Participatory Budgeting (PB) this year which provided an opportunity for local residents to make decisions about Council expenditure. The report summarises the three projects pursued to date and some of the lessons already learnt.

### Background

The move towards PB was led by a desire to give Frome's residents greater say and greater responsibility over how FTC spends its budgets. For 2017/2018, three distinct budgets were identified for PB projects with different approaches for each.

### Events

People living in the town registered to vote on which events FTC funds in 2017 and 2018, directly deciding how £30k of FTC's budget will be spent in this financial year.

The voting event was held on Saturday 11 March at Frome Football Club.

66 residents voted, deciding between 17 different events.

Of those 17 events, 7 were successful in securing funding:

Project Name	Summary	Amount
<b>School Travel Challenge</b>	The School Travel Challenge will celebrate those already walking, scooting or cycling to school; and inspire others to make positive changes towards active and sustainable journeys to and from school	£500
<b>Fair Housing for Frome</b>	Fair Housing for Frome is a community group which is running a campaign during 2017 to raise awareness of and find solutions to housing problems in Frome, particularly for young people and families	£1,300
<b>Cycle Powered Cinema</b>	A free outdoor cinema screening, raising awareness of the Frome Missing Link project through a fun and inclusive event	£2,200
<b>Big Disability Diversity Day</b>	An inclusive event to celebrate Learning Disability arts in Frome; bringing groups together to share success; raising awareness and celebrating the diversity that Frome has to offer	£6,000

<b>Word Up!</b>	A series of events across the town focused on words, writing, reading and literacy; taking place in a range of venues across the town.	£9,550
<b>Frome FM's Party in the Park</b>	A unique party in the park with a programme of radio shows and interactive events, giving you the chance to get to know your local radio and even try broadcasting	£4,813
<b>Lantern Procession</b>	A series of lantern making workshops in the run up to either the Frome Festival or Frome's Christmas event	£4,986
<b>Total</b>		<b>£29,349.00</b>

### **Next steps**

We are now in the process of drawing up contracts with each of the successful organisations; these will detail the events in full and require a report back to the town about how the money was spent at the end of the financial year.

These agreements will dovetail with the other funding arrangements FTC has with community organisations and include a requirement that they promote the support of FTC through the use of the logo on promotional material.

### **Feedback so far**

Everyone who attended the event was asked for feedback. This is being collated and will be reviewed in detail to help inform the development of the scheme next year.

Generally though, the public have asked that we shortlist the applications more rigorously, provide more detailed information about budgets and look at how we ensure young people are better able to participate in the day.

The voting panel felt that they did make a difference and that their votes counted positively to the decision making. They liked the venue, lunch and the way the day was managed and chaired.

### **The public toilets in Victoria Park**

Anyone living in Frome over the age of 10 has been able to vote on the future of the public toilets in Victoria Park, answering two questions to decide on an annual budget of £20k:

1. Do you want public toilets in the park?
2. If you do, how do you think we should spend FTC's budgets to provide toilets?

At the time of writing this report, over 500 residents have voted. By the time of the meeting, the vote on the toilets in Victoria Park will have closed.

### **Feedback so far**

There has been an incredibly broad spectrum of comments on this vote – and the subject matter has proved engaging, although to the point of controversy and antagonism for some people.

Notably, some people have stated very plainly that questions about the toilets should be answered by elected Councillors, not by a voting public.

The issues that have emerged so far include:

- The inclusion of the park café in the voting options - this has clouded and complicated the vote for some people.
- The perceived clarity and level of detail provided on each of the options
- Some people believe that FTC has had a preferred option all along but this is not the case
- The complexity of the vote – some people would have preferred a single question

### **Play at Packsaddle & Tower View**

The final PB vote will be taking place later this summer, with residents able to decide how £15k of FTC's budget is spent on local play. The vote will decide between investing in play equipment or providing led, free to attend play sessions.

Ahead of the vote, we've received and are still receiving lots of completed questionnaires from residents that will help us to draw up plans to improve both play areas. These plans will also shape the voting options which will be confirmed before the vote.

### **Comments on PB (including lessons learnt)**

- Across all three projects, providing people with clear, relevant and (as appropriate) impartial, unbiased information is essential
- Delivering successful votes requires considerable planning, publicity and administration
- Lead-in times to all three projects could have been longer, although this necessarily adds to the resources required throughout
- There is still a question about what PB 'is'; and for some people this is because of the term. A different name and a different brand could be more engaging and more Frome

### **Recommendations**

1. Note the comments on the various projects; and on Participatory Budgeting generally.
2. Through discussion at the meeting, consider how and where FTC might use PB in 2018/2019 (and beyond)