

Agenda item 7

For information - Support to community groups

Author: Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer

Summary

Frome Town Council provides support to community organisations such as charities, CICs and PTAs through a range of mechanisms managed by the Community Projects Officer. This report outlines these and provides an overview of the work to date within each area.

Discussion

FTC have designed a series of support mechanisms for community organisations over the last 5. We recognise their vital role in supporting residents and helping to create a sustainable, vibrant and resilient town. In recent years many community organisations have seen an increase in demand for their services as central and regional funding has been cut.

Reactive support for community organisations

New and existing organisations are encouraged to contact Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer, with queries regarding support and advice for their community organisation. At this point they are 'triaged' and the individual needs of the organisation are identified.

Over the course of the year to date (April to January) Kate has been approached by 35 organisations and 4 individuals / businesses for support and advice. Their issues and enquiries ranged from advice on setting up a new group, formalising existing governance and fundraising. Fundraising is usually their initial reason for making contact, but we often find governance issues are also underlying.

The following is an example of the kind of reactive support offered to a community organisation:

Rosie and Willow came to us in August last year, through an enquiry to our website, for support and advice on fundraising and to see if we would be able to support them through our Crowdfund Frome programme. They came in for an initial meeting where they explained their work, facilitating regular singing sessions for toddlers and their parents in a Frome nursing home. Though they were paid nominally for their time in the sessions through the nursing home, they were finding that there was an increasing demand for the sessions and that the time to manage the social media and organisational aspects of the sessions was increasing. They were looking to extend the groups but were not formed as an organisation.

Together we explored possible parent organisations and the pros and cons of setting up a new organisation. They emailed shortly after to say that, "We were filled with confidence after our meeting with you and have made some headway". The email also highlighted a few queries over the practicalities of filling the paper work with Companies House.

Rosie and Willow then attended a free training session facilitated by Rebecca Morland, our contracted fundraising advisor, titled 'Setting up an organisation', along with many other individuals in the early stages of looking at community interest companies and charitable incorporated organisations.

After some further advice about the merits of other structures they have now come back with an established CIC 'Play It Forward' ready for 'advice and inspiration' on fundraising and are due to meet Rebecca on the 1st February.

Many of the groups we have supported now receive ongoing advice and support largely focused on organisational structures and fundraising. They move between the various areas of our support through a triage system, with the Community Projects Officer as their main point of contact, enabling encouraging and supporting through training, telephone contact, the FTC forum meetings and individual face to face meetings. In some cases, this work has also involved facilitating meetings of trustees and bringing together groups of organisations around a specific topic.

Community Groups Newsletter

This regular newsletter offers local groups a means to keep up to date with training, funding and networking opportunities, as well as providing a space for FTC and other organisations to share news and highlights about events and initiatives that we are involved in. It has proved popular with sports clubs and arts-based organisations, those working with older people and young people alike, with an average 'open' rate of 45%, with a following of 215 subscribers.

Community group training

FTC offers a comprehensive training programme for community groups and organisations. Already this year around 50 organisations have attended the training programme, Discuss and Do events and volunteer forums.

There are further training sessions planned for 2018. The full programme can be seen on our website www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/organisation-support/training/ Previous courses are also listed to give potential attendees an idea of other training we can offer. Future training plans includes a session for organisations on recruiting young volunteers. This will support the work of Volunteer Frome and the newly appointed development worker, whose role will include working with Frome College towards creating a wider offer for young volunteers. We are also seeing an increase in the number of schools looking for advice and support, particularly for fundraising for extra circular activities and services which are not core to their statutory responsibility. Therefore, we are planning to run a fundraising training session specifically for schools this year.

Fundraising support and advice

This contracted role is currently delivered by Rebecca Morland. She came into post in July 2017, with a two-year contract to continue to support organisations to develop their fundraising skills in an advisory role.

Referrals to Rebecca are made through the triage system described above. Rebecca runs a surgery on the first Thursday of the month in the Town Hall. To date she has worked with 9 organisations on a one to one basis; recommending appropriate funds and funders, supporting, editing and encouraging a case for support and applications. There are 4 new organisations due to meet with Rebecca on the 1 Feb and she has met many more through fundraising specific training sessions.

We will present more detail about the breadth of advice and support given to a range of organisations at the meeting.