

Minutes of the Frome Annual Town Meeting at Frome Town Hall Wednesday 4 April 2018

In the chair: Sheila Gore, Mayor of Frome

In attendance:

Approx. 50 members of the public

Frome Town Councillors: Ali Barclay, Kate Bielby, Colin Cobb, Pippa Goldfinger, Peter Macfadyen and Mel Usher

Frome Town Council officers: Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

Minutes

Gill Fone asked for an update on the about saving the images of St Aldhelm from the railings if they were removed. Sheila noted that Peter Wheelhouse would respond after the meeting.

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2017 were signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.

The meeting started: 7.05pm and Sheila welcomed everyone to the Frome Annual Town meeting.

A brief summary of the Mayor's year

Sheila started off by highlighting some of the achievements of the town council over the year. She noted it had been a year centred around completion and consolidation. The pedestrianisation of the Boyle Cross had recently been completed and Frome Town Hall was officially opened in April 2017. She said that the improved space of the town hall had meant communication and collaboration between staff had been more efficient.

Sheila noted that much of the work of FTC happened behind the scenes, with the recruitment of a Marketing and Communications Manager FTC's websites and social media and greatly increased their reach to residents. This has also been achieved through reception at the Town Hall and the opening of the Discover Frome information point. Residents have a much clearer and easier way of reaching the town council.

FTC had taken on more open spaces within the town increasing the work of the Ranger team. In addition, they had been able to install more noticeboards which they regularly keep up to date as well as so much more.

Sheila noted that FTC respond positively to requests from the town which was evident with the Volunteer driver scheme and the Changing Places toilet in the Market Yard car park.

Sheila focused on some of the highlights from her year as Mayor. She explained attending events was a big part of her role. Sheila opened the newly refurbished Westway cinema, she noted how lucky Frome was to have a cinema and encouraged everyone to buy their snacks there as this was how the ticket prices were kept so low. Sheila was also greatly impressed by the creative students of Frome College when they displayed their work at their end of year art show. Sheila was also asked to open the 2017 Frome Festival.

Sheila explained how she found attending the Remembrance service a challenge and a powerful experience by being actively involved.

The lead up to Christmas was really special for Sheila. She was proud to have used her influence to improve the visual appearance of the shop front of Boots. Local school boy Ted Lewis Clark had his design chosen as the first class stamp for the Christmas season which was celebrated with a specially painted post box and Sheila invited Ted to help turn on the Christmas lights. The Christmas lights switch on was made even better by the lantern parade and samba band.

Sheila was pleased to have been able to meet with students from Vallis and Selwood after they wrote to her concerned about the amount of litter, graffiti and dog poo in the town. The outcome was their creation of posters encouraging people to pick up after their dogs. FTC were also helping community groups in the town with litter picks.

Sheila announced that she had chosen to support the Toy Library continuing beyond her time as Mayor, she hoped to raise money and awareness.

Sheila said she had a fantastic year and being the Mayor is a privilege to anyone.

Civic awards

Before presenting the civic awards Sheila thanked her fellow Cllrs for convincing her to take on the role of Mayor. She also thanked her friends for their support throughout her year as Mayor. Sheila said one of the best jobs as Mayor was to witness and thank the people of Frome, this part of the meeting was her chance to award some of those people.

Sheila's first award went to Neil Howlett. Sheila had known Neil for many years and appreciated the way he chaired the Chamber of Commerce meetings and keeping them informed of any issues that might affect them. Sheila personally thanked Neil for sweeping up the massive amount of corn around town left by someone keen to feed the local wildlife. Sheila noted that Neil maintained interests in different areas and worked on many different issues. Everyone benefitted from his perseverance for free parking at Christmas. Sheila thanked Neil for all the work he does for the community.

Sheila's next award was a joint one for the organisers of last year's multicultural event, Lenka Grimes and Azeema Cafoor. Sheila said the event showed what diverse cultures there were in Frome. Sheila hoped the event would be repeated.

The next award was to a community group, Songs for the Memory. Sheila explained that Frome had been in the press for their creative response to an overstretched NHS. Songs for

the Memory were one of the groups that contributed to this, they run singing sessions for those with dementia and their carers.

When accepting their award, the group led the room in a song of 'We shall overcome'.

Although not with an award Sheila thanked the staff of FTC for their support which allowed her to perform her duties as Mayor. In particular Sheila thanked Laura Flaherty for keeping her diary organised and ensuring she didn't feel overwhelmed. Sheila presented Laura with a bouquet of flowers.

People's Budget

Toby Eliot introduced himself as the project lead for Participatory Budgeting which purpose was to change the relationship between FTC and the town. The aim was to make this relationship an adult to adult one. PB gives real people real power over real money. Toby introduced the recipients of last year's events funding which were decided by the people of Frome.

Fair Housing for Frome

Alison Murdoch explained that Fair Housing for Frome were concerned about affordable and accessible accommodation in Frome. They were given £1300 to run 6 public meetings each with a different theme. In addition, they organised a lunch, a meeting with the fair landlords' club and screened a film. Moving forward their actions were to work to help prevent homelessness, enhance the private rented sector and support tiny homes. FHfF had successfully secured £56k in funding to help them achieve this.

School Travel Challenge

Majory Hatvany ran the project on behalf of Frome Missing Links who were working to create a cycle path from Great Elm to Frome. The travel challenge was in partnership with Sustrans and the aim was for schools to increase the amount children travelled school by foot or on bike or scooter. The First schools were able to increase their sustainable travel by around 30%. In addition, they arranged an art competition of photos the children had taken on their walks to school. Missing Links were able to raise £1400.

Word Up

Lisa Millard explained that a third of 16 – 19 year olds struggle with literacy which consequently has a big impact on a town the size of Frome. Low literacy is linked to low rates of employment. Word Up worked with local employers and schools as well as the Bath Festival and Bath University. The funding from PB was used for over 5000 literacy based experiences, 5 large author visits and for 700 students to attend the Bath Literature Festival. Since these events schools had taken on their own writing projects and they had set up writing courses for teachers. In June they would be running a Word Up festival in June, with free events across the town.

Party in the park

Helen Ottoway said that Frome FM were awarded £4,800 to organise a party in the park. The aim was to raise awareness of the local radio station, bring the station out of the studio into a

public space. The event was a great success, with other community groups making new connections.

Openstorytellers

Ben Waller explained Openstorytellers were awarded money to run an all inclusive event showcasing disability arts called 'The Big Mix'. Lots of community organisations were involved as well as Critchill school. The Hub Nub was taken over for events, performances and an art gallery. Participants took part in workshops in the run up to the event where they wrote a song and created a soundtrack to a film trailer. They received fantastic feedback and Ben thanked FTC and those that voted, he said it was a privilege to showcase the work of Openstorytellers.

Pedal powered cinema

Ruth Knagg, Frome Missing Links, explained they held a screening of Labyrinth at the Cheese and Grain. The event was to fundraise however was also to help promote the electric bikes and cars available in the town. It was attended by 100 people and raised £289. Audience members went on to set up other fundraisers and raised a further £1200. Missing Links were now aiming to crowdfund to raise £30k to buy a strip of land to bypass restrictions from Network Rail to link the paths.

Light the night

Aliss Vass and Mel Day, Home in Frome, organised the Christmas light switch on lanterns. They organised seven community workshops which were attended by 450 people and worked with most of the Frome schools. They noticed a great social benefit to the workshops. Ultimately 1000 people attended the lantern procession. Aliss and Mel noted they had recently received funding from the 2018 PB events to do the same for Christmas 2018.

Town vote

Rachel Griffin, Marketing and Communications Manager, introduced the 2018 town vote as part of the People's Budget. She explained that every resident over the age of 10 was invited to vote for three projects. The projects were chosen according to the FTC strategy, Rachel explained that the two projects that were not voted for would not be brought forward. The three projects Frome residents were asked to vote for were a town orchard, a dog poo powered street light and a giant waterslide.

Public questions

Jane Wood noted she had seen surveyors at the Market Yard car park around the proposed box works location, she asked for an update on the project. Mel Usher explained that proposal for 20 containers to be used as offices was an MDC proposal on their land. Mel noted there was potential for an increase in employment opportunities but there would be a loss in parking. He knew that a revised application would be submitted soon, and FTC would publicise an informed opinion once this had happened.

Matt Sims asked when Council meetings would be live streamed again. Colin Cobb explained that there had been technical difficulties getting things to work reliably and the hope was to start solving the problems within the next month.

A member of public who had begun volunteering at the Discover Frome information point noted a common comment from visitors was the signs in the town pointed the wrong way? Rachel Griffin explained FTC were in contact with SCC and were currently making plans for new finger post signage. Neil Howlett, who with the Chamber of Commerce, had been working for a number of years to improve signage in the town, gave a very comprehensive overview of the problems and the steps taken to resolve it. The latest was that Cllr Martin Dimery was working to get SCC to give permission to FTC Rangers to take down incorrect and redundant signage.

Lenka Grimes asked for an update on the toilets in Victoria Park that had recently been closed. Paul Wynne explained that the toilets had to be closed due to vandalism which had left live wires exposed. The Environment Manager was currently looking at installing more robust doors until the new toilets would be in place in the Spring of 2019.

Gill Fone asked if there were plans to improve Chateau Gontier walk. Paul Wynne explained there were plans to do some work to get the retaining fences in better condition.

Nick Ray congratulated FTC on the recent 2018/19 budget documents. He noted they were easy to read and therefore easy to understand, he was very impressed.

Sheila thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and invited them to stay for tea and cake.

Meeting finished: 8.35pm