

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council Matters Committee

Wednesday 9 May 2018 at 7pm

Frome Town Hall, Christchurch Street West, Frome BA11 1EB

Present:

Councillors: Kate Bielby, Jean Boulton, Colin Cobb, Toby Eliot, Pippa Goldfinger, Sheila Gore, Mel Usher

In attendance:

Richard Ackroyd (FTC Cllr), Mark Dorrington (FTC Cllr), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Jackie Wheeler (Responsible Finance Officer), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Chris Stringer (Environment Manager), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Laura Hales (Marketing and Communications Assistant)

1 member of the public

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2018/12/CM	<p>The meeting started at 7.01pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Received from Gary Collinson, Peter Macfadyen and Heather Wride.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests None was received</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 21 February 2018 Mel Usher asked Chris Stringer the current status of the transfer of the Millennium Green. Chris explained that he had struggled to get the right people together and was hoping to progress the project over the summer.</p> <p>The minutes of the Council Matters Committee meeting held on 21 February 2018 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Kate Bielby, seconded by Sheila Gore, agreed by majority.</p>	
2018/13/CM	<p>2. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs Mark Dorrington provided an update about a recent meeting about the proposed car parking changes with MDC Cllrs Nigel Taylor and Phil Ham, and MDC officers. The meeting focused on the proposed rise in daily and season tickets prices as well as introducing Sunday charging. Mark said he asked Nigel to rethink Sunday parking charges. Nigel said it was not morally right for Frome to be treated differently to other towns in Mendip. He said they were already generous with two weeks of free parking over the Christmas period.</p>	

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	<p>Sheila Gore suggested speaking with Councils in Wells and Glastonbury to find out the impact of on street parking as they already have Sunday parking charges. Peter Wheelhouse explained that those towns had specific attractions which Frome didn't have. Peter said he would try to get a view from colleagues in Wells and Glastonbury. He said he had already spoken to colleagues at Shepton Mallet and they had a similar view to FTC and they already had an issue with workers parking on street rather than in car parks.</p> <p>Toby Eliot said it was fascinating that a MDC cabinet member would use words like 'morally wrong' when the MDC cabinet included no Frome Cllr and thereby no cabinet representation for Frome, which is the district's biggest town and home to 25% of the district's population.</p> <p>Mel Usher said it was past the point of rational negotiation with MDC.</p>	PWh
2018/14/CM	<p>3. For decision - Management & Improvement Plans for Victoria Park and Mary Baily</p> <p>Chris Stringer introduced the management plans. He explained that Victoria Park was the oldest park in Frome and Mary Baily was the most important play park.</p> <p>The management plans proposed new trees and new hedging around the tennis courts as well as flower and shrub planting around the bandstand. Chris noted Victoria Park was very evergreen and adding colour would be good. The new toilets and café would be brought forward in 2019, the current location under discussion was in the middle of the two parks.</p> <p>For Mary Baily there would be a new skatepark. It was currently one of the best used facilities and was in need of repair and eventual replacement.</p> <p>Sheila Gore asked if some information about the recently discovered Victorian fountain could be put up. Chris said he would look into this.</p> <p>Jean Boulton said the plans looked great and both were nice parks to go to. She noted the notices about Dog Control Orders were very small. Chris said that he was working on improved and updated signage that would be much clearer.</p> <p>Mel Usher asked Chris what his response had been to the recent social media posts about anti social behavior in the park. Chris explained that he and the Rangers report any instances that they become aware of to the police but they had not received more reports than usual.</p>	CS

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	<p>Mark Dorrington asked Chris if the Rangers felt comfortable challenging bad behavior in the park. Chris replied that they did, to a point they did. Rangers were clear that they should challenge bad behavior only if they felt it safe to do so. Otherwise, they were clear that they should call the police.</p> <p>Colin Cobb asked about the repair plans for the skatepark. Chris explained that the older ramps were about 17 years old and were getting worn out. The ambition was to build a concrete skate park that would last 25 – 30 years. However, it could take three to five years to put together a funding package. The recent repairs would allow to time to explore this option.</p> <p>Lottie, who ran the Café in Victoria Park, thanked Chris and FTC for the recent upgrades to the café building which had already made such a difference. She noted there had been a lot of comments about the closing of the park toilets due to vandalism. However, most had been understanding. Chris explained that the Rangers were awaiting the delivery of heavy duty steel doors with automated locks as a temporary fix until the new toilets had been built.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the proposed management plans for Victoria Park and Mary Baily 2. Delegate responsibility to the Environment Manager to implement the plans 3. Note the plan will be reviewed in May 2019 <p>Proposed by Colin Cobb, seconded by Toby Eliot, agreed unanimously.</p>	CS
2018/15/CM	<p>4. For information - Frome Town Hall Rachel Griffin, Marketing and Communications Manager, gave an overview of the report.</p> <p>Fair Housing for Frome had moved into the building and were sharing an office with Active and In Touch. WHY were temporarily renting Room 2 in addition to their current rooms.</p> <p>Rachel explained that the café was now being used as rentable desk space as well as a meeting room for local parent and toddler groups, for example. Uptake was limited at present but when the necessary alcohol and wedding licences were received, the café would be used more. Rachel said she was looking at other pop events and use by community groups for the space.</p>	

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	<p>Rachel said that she was currently speaking to an interested tenant for Room 3.</p> <p>FTC had already used 150 meeting room slots for the current year.</p> <p>Rachel explained there had been slow progress on the licenses. She noted these were important as the income budget had been based on having these in place. She was confident that the Council Chamber would be a popular space for events and weddings and 25 couples were on waiting list for wedding receptions. The Town Hall event travel plan had been accepted by MDC and the change of use had been granted, subject to some conditions. In particular, this meant needing a noise impact assessment. Once that was accepted, the alcohol and wedding licenses could be applied for.</p> <p>Rachel had recently commissioned images of the Council Chamber laid out as a wedding venue and these would be used in the wedding brochure.</p> <p>Jean Boulton noted that some people had been put off using the Town Hall because of parking. Rachel explained she was in discussions with the church on Park Road about using their spaces. The Memorial Theatre was happy for their car park to be used on a case by case basis. She also had discussions with the Steiner School.</p> <p>Pippa Goldfinger said she was optimistic as sometimes it can take a while for word to get out there, even with a good marketing strategy.</p>	
2018/16/CM	<p>5. For information - Financial update at 31 March 2018 Jackie Wheeler, Responsible Finance Officer, noted that the internal auditors report confirmed FTC we are adhering to the rules and regulations and they had signed off their section of the annual return.</p> <p>With regard to income and expenditure Jackie explained that they had previously been holding money for Frome's Community Car scheme, as they did not have a bank account. The scheme would soon come under the Mendip Community Transport umbrella. The final payment for Cheese & Grain (C&G) tower project had been paid to the C&G.</p> <p>Jackie noted the balance sheet showed there was slightly more interest on investment than expected.</p> <p>The recommended amount to be kept in the General Reserves is £180k. Jackie explained that at the end of the financial year there was £30k over this figure.</p>	

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	<p>Colin Cobb asked why there had been underspends on Crowdfunder and Participatory Budgeting (PB). Jackie explained due to the lack of take up and £17k went back into the general reserve. Kate Bielby said she suspected the low take up was due to the amount of work required by applicants. However, it was still available if there was interest from a group. Jackie noted that £6k was still budgeted for 2018/19. The underspends on PB were in ear marked reserves for Tower View and Packsaddle play areas. FTC were still awaiting the transfer of these open spaces from MDC.</p> <p>Mel Usher asked for a one page summary of money spent on community grants, Crowdfunder and PB for a future Town Matters meeting.</p> <p>Mel Usher thanked Jackie for all she had done for FTC and the fact they had never had a bad audit report. On the occasion of her retirement Mel presented her with a gift on behalf of all Cllrs.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note that the year end budget and reserves position. 2. Note the Internal Auditor's report as at 31 March 2018. 3. Note the General Reserves being £30k above the agreed minimum. <p>Proposed by Sheila Gore, seconded by Kate Bielby, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>Business Manager</p>
<p>2018/17/CM</p>	<p>6. For information - 2017-18 Work Programme – end of year review</p> <p>Mel Usher noted the report was a really useful source of information and asked for a wider distribution, possibly through the website. He said he hoped the end of year review would continue into the future.</p> <p>Rachel Griffin provided a summary of each section of the report on behalf of the management group.</p> <p>The highlight for 'Environment' was the positive impact the Rangers were making to the open spaces. The only issue was that with such a large workload they were stretched in terms of time and resources.</p> <p>For 'Prosperity' the Planning department had been busy with a response to the MDC Local Plan Part 2 as well as a response to the MDC parking consultation. For the future, the Selwood Garden Village proposal and subsequent application would take up a lot of time. The Planning Advisory Group had been consulted on more than 100 applications in the last six months. Finally, the remodelling of the Market Place at Boyle Cross had been largely popular and the plan was to progress phase 2.</p>	<p>RG</p>

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	<p>For 'Resilience' there had been improvements in transport links, an increase in solar power opportunities, a well received campaign around plastic free with changes already seen, the continuation of 'Clean Healthy Future' and £25k had been secured for Fair Frome's furniture bank project.</p> <p>'Health and wellbeing' was a new area with a manager being appointed last year. A strategy was now in place with new priorities particularly around community support. This was seen through the annual training programme, community grants, the youth conference and the development of the Trinity community group.</p> <p>'Marketing' now had a cohesive communications strategy. Engagement with residents had greatly improved particularly through the PB vote for events in the town. The implementation of the Discover Frome Information Point had been hugely successful.</p> <p>For 'Finance' the external audit had been approved without comment, the work programme had been delivered within budget and general reserves were £30k above where they needed to be.</p>	
2018/18/CM	<p>7. For information - Health & Safety Update Chris Stringer reported there had been one minor accident since the last meeting.</p>	
2018/19/CM	<p>8. For decision - Broadening the pay bands and performance related pay progression</p> <p>Toby Eliot provided a summary of the report. He explained that last year the management group had been created and they had an eight point salary band. The admin staff, the rangers' and the project officers had much narrower pay bands. Toby explained that by broadening pay bands staff retention and recruitment was increased as well as rewarding experience. Toby noted that all staff should be given similar opportunities. Staff would move up the pay band following satisfactory performance against their objectives.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set the pay band for rangers and administrator at scp 15 to 25 2. Set the pay band for project officers at scp 24 – 32 3. These changes to have effect from 1 April 2018 4. Confirm to all staff that progression through the pay band is dependent on meeting the objectives set at the annual appraisal. <p>Proposed by Pippa Goldfinger, seconded by Toby Eliot, agreed unanimously.</p>	JW

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2018/20/CM	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 18 July 2018 at Frome Town Hall	
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The Chair closed the meeting at 8.08pm

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