

Frome
TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

..... 2018-19

Message from the Mayor

The most obvious task for the Mayor is to act as figurehead for the town and I realised quite quickly that it's impossible to know everything about a town so active and so varied. An important aim of mine and this council is to support local groups and individuals by highlighting their efforts. We have so many different community groups, each dependent on enterprising people many of whom have been supporting the community for decades. There are simply hundreds of opportunities to join in. Far more than most places I suspect.



Rich Ackroyd, Mayor of Frome - 2018-19

So, some of this year's highlights? I have to praise the different congregations and gatherings that I went to in our Churches – all inviting, vibrant and gave me an insight into the wide variety of work that goes on in these valuable meeting places. From jumble sales to concerts, art displays to choral events, discussion groups to more formal prayers, if you're looking, there is at least one church out there for everyone.

Our schools and young people have also done a great job at including the community. My highlights have to be the groundbreaking anti bullying rally in Victoria Park as well as the extraordinary Children's Festival – both showing community spirit at it's best.

Remembrance was also important this year. The centenary of WW1 saw thousands of people turn out to attend the memorial service outside the Memorial Theatre.

This was a very moving event, which paid deserving tribute to the fallen from all wars. There were many other services but the one I will remember most took place in Murrhardt our twin town in Germany – a lovely and respectful event and I was pleased to be invited. We all have so much to gain from our friendships in different countries.

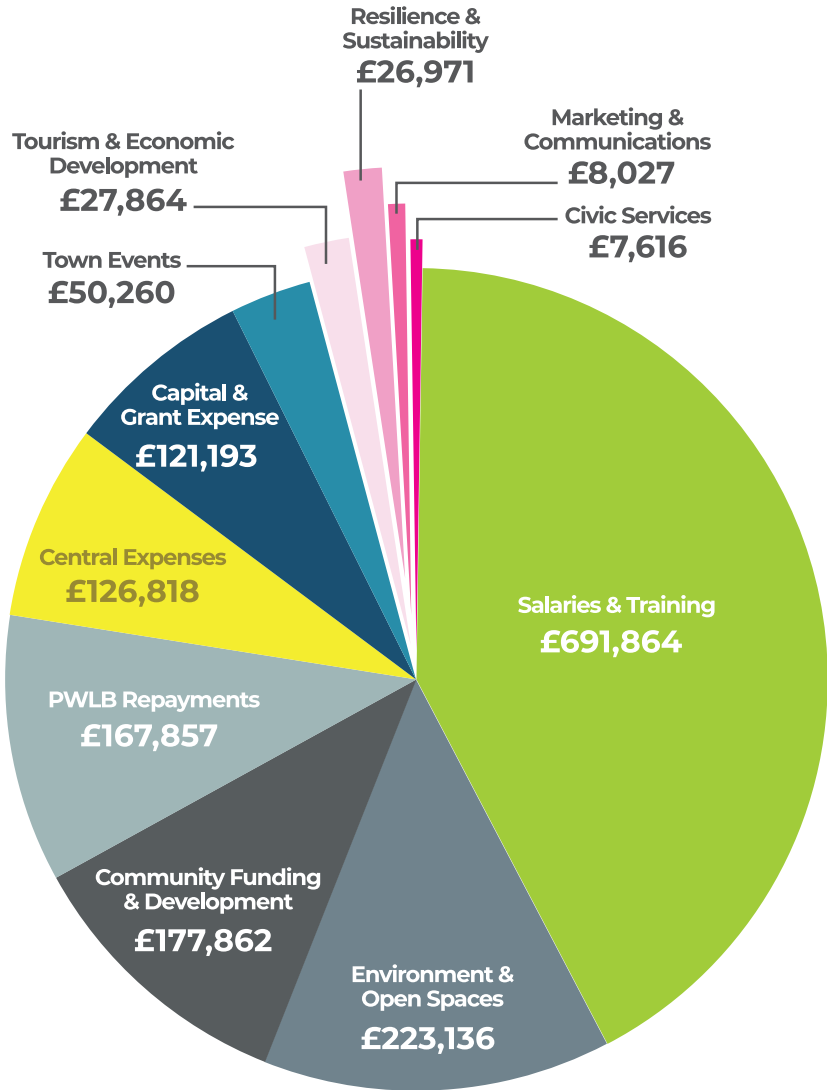
Resilience was also an important factor. From the Trinity Community Group street party to the multi cultural day at the Cheese and Grain, I saw first hand just how strong our community spirit can be. I met with leaders of refugee communities from across the country as part of a learning project organised by Erasmus and hosted by Edventure. I spoke to volunteers behind the Community Fridge and Community Larder and saw how the Share Shop and Good Heart Café are helping to build community well being.

Other highlights were Apple Day, the Christmas Lights Switch On, Fireworks, Window Wanderland, Rachel Clark's fundraising adventures, Active and in Touch Tea Dance, Power Chair Football, Frome Town FC winning a game, meeting Mayors and Chairs from around the region, being 'captured' by students for the twin towns event, declaring a Climate Emergency, the Ukulele Festival and so much more but sadly there really isn't space to include it all here.

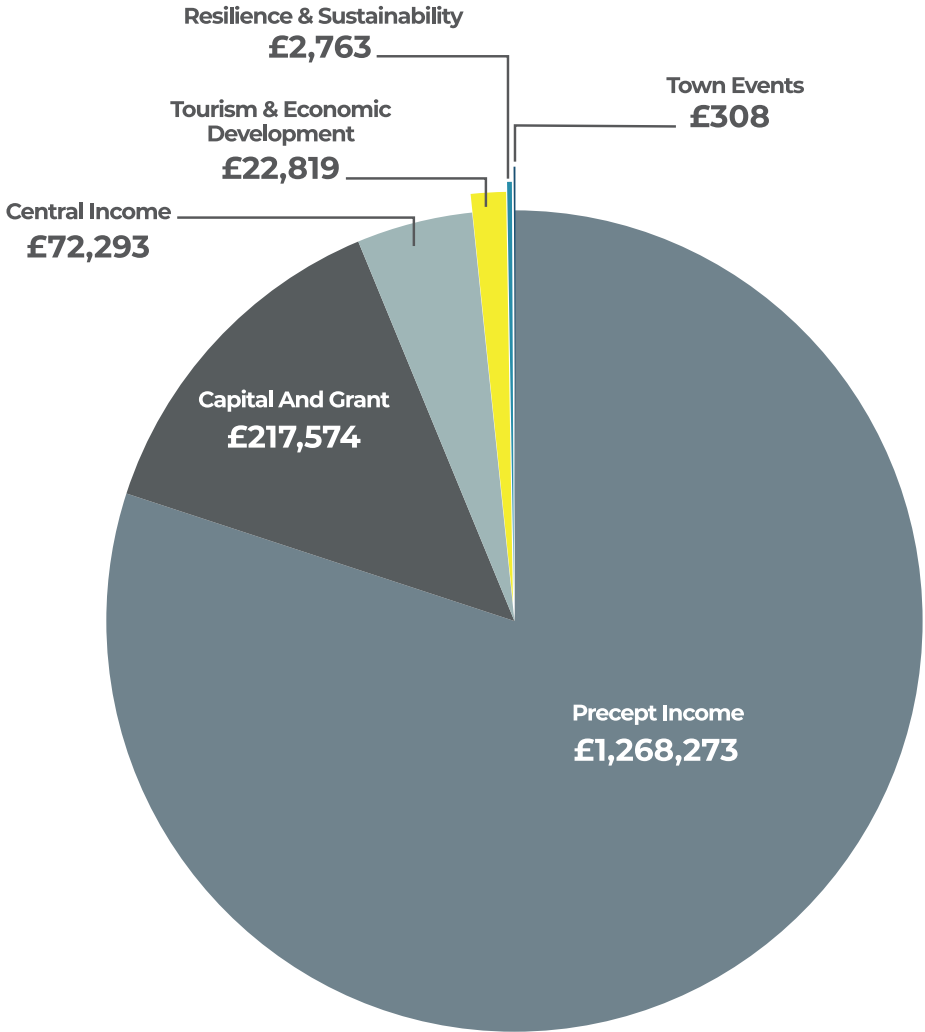
In summary then, an outstanding year with the Frome community at its finest.

Rich Ackroyd, Mayor of Frome 2018-2019

Expenditure 2018-19



Income 2018-19



Some of our highlights

Environment

- 2 new green areas at Tower View & Packsaddle Way
- 3 improved outside spaces: Foundry Barton, skatepark in Mary Baily and new beds in Victoria Park
- Bat-friendly solar lights along the main path at the Dippy



Frome in Bloom
award for the
Rangers



Health & Wellbeing

- 3 School Gate Running sessions
- 12 Outdoor Gym sessions
- 2 free Couch to 5k

Support for Community Groups

- 12 Community group training sessions
- 35 Community groups supported
- 1 shed full of community resources
- 37 grants given



Community development pilot project with Trinity Community Group

- 5 community litter picks
- 2 new bins
- 1 Street Party
- 1 Community Lunch

Prosperity

Following Mendip District Council's acquisition of former industrial land at Saxonvale last year, Acorn Property Group have been developing their plans. FTC has worked to influence those plans in line with its position statement and has enabled public debate.



Saxonvale land sale agreed £985,000.

Support for Business & Enterprise

- 12 Business Breakfasts
- 1 Apprenticeship Conference
- 1 Visitor Conference
- 2 international work placement students
- 6 Good Business reviews

Transport

School Active Travel Challenge: 2000 students took part and burnt half a million calories. Active travel increased by 20%.

- 932 Electric bike hours
- 3 bike pumps and repair kits across the town
- 90 members of Frome Community Cars



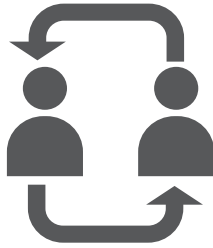
**CO-WHEELS
CAR SHARE**



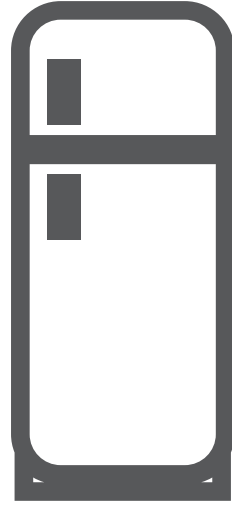
Energy

- 1 Climate Emergency declared
- 60 households benefitted from discounted insulation offer
- 15 energy café's helped people reduce their bills
- SHARE now open four days a week
- 90,000 items a year saved from land fill by community fridge
- 140 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions saved

SHARE is now
open 4 days
a week



COMMUNITY FRIDGE



90,000
ITEMS SAVED
FROM LANDFILL

Communications

- 82 events and meetings supported
- 1 Singer's Trail + 4 information boards
- 6 guided walkers trained, walks every Sunday and Wednesday
- 5 new walks developed with Walkers Are Welcome



2299
TWITTER
FOLLOWERS

125,000
VISITORS



FACEBOOK
FOLLOWERS
UP 20%



1359 Followers
UP 42%

Participation & Engagement

- 800 responses + 350 year 8 votes for The People's Budget Events
- 767 voted, 81% for the orchard in The People's Budget Town vote

Town Hall

- 3 new tenants
- 1 premises licence
- 10 support stewards recruited
- 512 successful meetings, forums and conferences
- 3 days a week Co working
- 9 zero nights sessions



CO-WORKING



Discover
FrOme
Information Point

FTC Volunteers

- 6 Discovery Rangers
- 12 Critchill Rangers
- 16 Discover Information Point Ambassadors
- 5 Noticeboard ambassadors
- 15 Litter warriors
- 10 volunteer drivers

FTC Staff

- 5 + 1 maternity cover leavers
- 7 + 2 maternity cover starters

Frome Town Council – A Year

I think it's safe to say that for most parish councils, a review of the year would be quite a brisk affair. Not so for Frome. It's not been an easy year. Global and national issues can feel overwhelming. Locally we're seeing the swingeing cuts to local government funding hitting the most vulnerable in our community. How on earth, as a town council do we respond to that?

What we've done is continue to be ambitious for Frome. To invest in our town and its people, to do all we realistically can to help create a resilient, thriving town regardless of what's thrown at us.



Kate Bielby

This year we've continued to acquire, improve and manage green open spaces for our town. We've taken on Packsaddle and Tower View play areas, so we now look after just under 70 acres in which people can play, exercise and enjoy being outside. We've resurfaced paths on the Old Showfield and Victoria Park, so these are both more accessible for the whole community. We planted a town orchard. We've continued to improve the Dippy with lights in the footpath as we did at Welshmill. We recruited two new rangers. As well as the routine upkeep of our land, our rangers are constantly making improvements and work in partnership with school and community groups like the Critchill rangers, Discovery, FROGS and the Women's Shed who helped create bird and bat boxes for yr 8s students to build as part of our annual youth conference.

We've continued to invest in the Cheese and Grain, which was refurbished five years ago with support from us. In 2017, funding from Frome Town Council enabled the Cheese and Grain to leverage hundreds of thousands of pounds in external grants to complete the new rehearsal and recording space in the building. The loan repayments are financed by income from the solar panels the town council installed in 2012. We are, in other words, continuing to see ambition and investment pay off.

The Town Hall, bought back from the County for the town has been restored to a lively and incredibly well used community space. Home to the town council, Fair Frome, the Frome Learning Partnership, WHY, Frome FM, Active and In Touch, but also used throughout the year for meetings, film screenings, conferences, a breastfeeding café, a coworking space, exhibitions and loads more.

After decades of consultation with thousands of Frome people we have submitted our planning application to finish the remodelling of our town centre, so we can finally sort the bus stops, improve traffic flow, reduce pollution and make the town centre a better, safer place for people.

In 2013 we borrowed £265,000 to buy a patch of land on Saxonvale, protecting Somerset Skills and Learning but also giving the town a seat at the table of any potential comprehensive development of the site. Last month we sold our land for £1 million, after costs making a profit of around half a million to invest in Frome. Our staff and councillors have worked really closely with Mendip District Council to solve the frustrating and seemingly intractable deadlock of the Saxonvale site and what a hopeful and positive point we're at now, with a comprehensive, mixed use development actually moving forward. We will continue to put pressure on the developers and MDC to incorporate the things we know the people of Frome want from this huge and transformative development in the centre of our town.

Declaring a climate emergency as we did in December might seem a bit futile rather than ambitious for a parish council. But in the face of the evidence – that we have less than 12 years to take action to avoid the worst impacts of climate change – why would we not take action? Nobody thinks we can solve a global problem alone, but we can do what we can to reduce carbon emissions and we've set a target for Frome to become carbon neutral by 2030.

In the past year we've inspired Manchester City Council with our School Active Travel Challenge that saw over 2000 local pupils out of cars and cycling, scooting or walking to school. Our infrastructure of electric bikes, electric cars and the community car scheme continues to thrive and we have lobbied for and recently seen improvements to bus and rail connectivity.

We've held successful events such as Zero Carbon Towns, linking with other areas to explore reducing carbon emissions and also Improve Don't Move, showcasing ways to refurbish homes and also tackle carbon. We promoted free and discounted insulation for homes in Frome and we launched 'Solar Streets' offering group discounts for people to reduce costs and support our carbon neutral target.

The Community Fridge in the town centre is old news now, but continues to reduce food waste by around 24 tonnes a year. This year we've added the Community Larder next to it and we are working with local community groups to explore setting up new fridges on the Mount and in Trinity. Our fridge has helped to inspire almost 50 fridges to set up around the country. We've also promoted the reduction of plastic waste through a series of events and the award winning plastic free carnival float.

We've given a lot of money away this year, just under £154,000, to local organisations through our community grant scheme, the Mayor's small grants and through the people's budget. That's quite extraordinary for a town council.

We support several organisations with multi-year agreements, so they have the stability of ongoing funding and can use that to leverage funding from elsewhere. We set up Fair Frome five years ago and continue to fund their work year on year. We continue to fund Active and In Touch and Health Connections Mendip who have done extraordinary work in reducing loneliness and promoting the wellbeing of people in our town.

This year we've given over £24,000 in community grants to a diverse range of groups for an equally diverse range of things – from the cricket club to the baby café.

Not only do we provide funding we also provide support to community organisations – training, one-to-one and fundraising so Frome has robust, nimble organisations equipped to survive and thrive. We have worked hard this year to support the growth of new, localised groups where residents have ambitions for their immediate neighbourhood. Our Community Development work in Trinity has focused on supporting and enabling residents to unite in tackling the issues that matter to them.

Drug dealing, arson and litter have been high on their agenda and with our support new projects and initiatives are beginning to take shape and a new relationship is developing between us, other services like the police and local people.

We recognise a healthy future for Frome requires a healthy economy. This year we've organised more than 40 events for local businesses including Business Breakfasts, Discuss and Do and Soul Trader groups – not just as successful networking events but to promote ways in which businesses might contribute to their community –for example we held an Apprenticeships conference where we brought local schools and businesses together to increase training and employment opportunities for young people in Frome.

As well as public meetings on key issues like car parking and litter, we also try and create informal opportunities for people to have a say - Events like Mayhem in the Meadow or Apple Day at the Orchard. We've organised huge consultations around large planned developments and got out on the ground in all weathers to find out what people want to see on the Showfield, Tower View and Packsaddle.

Our council meetings open with comments and questions from the public and we make them as informal and accessible as we can. We successfully trialled a council meeting on the hoof this year – walking with local residents and reviewing our land at Welshmill and the Other Side with Paul, the Town Clerk, as our tour guide.

We've refined and improved our People's Budget over the last couple of years and putting the choice of town events to a townwide vote has been a spectacular success. The amazing light the night lantern parade at Christmas and Frome Fireworks in November were two fantastic opportunities for people to come together for free whole town events – opportunities to have a great time and feel proud of Frome, Frome people, and what we can achieve together.

Kate Bielby,
Leader of the council 2018-2019

Grant Recipients 2018 - 2019

Fair Frome

Citezens Advice bureau

Frome Festival

Frome Carnival

Mendip Health Connections

Purple Elephant

Active & In Touch

Mendip YMCA

Frome Community Education

Harry's Hydro

Get Wet Set

Nova Sports and Coaching

Local Entrepreneurs Forum – Edventure

Frome Baby Café

Pod Plus – The Pod

Frome Fire Cadets – SAFE South West

The Year of the Flute – Jackdaws

Active and In Touch

Frome Cricket Club

Fair Housing for Frome

Casting the World – Rook Lane Arts Trust

Frome FM

Multicultural Frome

Young People Frome

Trinity Community Group

Singing social – Play it Forward CIC

Casting workshops – Black Swan Arts

Frome Independent

Frome Town Crier Festival

Friends of the River Frome

Frome SODA

Frome Powerchair Football Club

Frome College

The Somerset Wood

Packsaddle

Young People Frome

Frome Twinning Association

Frome In Bloom

The Write Place

Frome Gateway Club

NOVA Sports and Coaching

Frome Syrian Resettlement Project

Frome Town AFC

Frome Macular Support Group

Black Swan Arts

Active and in Touch

Trinity Community Group

Frome Town Ladies FC

Frome Rotary

Rare Species

Home in Frome

Window wanderland

Rotary

Community Orchard