

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 6 March 2019 at 7pm
Frome Town Hall, Christchurch Street West, Frome BA11 1EB

Present:

Councillors: Rich Ackroyd (Chair), Ali Barclay, Kate Bielby, Jean Boulton, Colin Cobb, Gary Collinson, Mark Dorrington, Toby Eliot, Pippa Goldfinger, Tricia Golinski, Sheila Gore, Peter Macfadyen, Al O’Kane, Mel Usher, Nick White

In attendance:

Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Chloe Bray (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Jane Llewelyn (Planning and Development Manager), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Kate Hellard (Community Projects Officer), Laura Hales (Marketing and Communications Assistant), Martin Dimery (Somerset County Councillor), Adam Boyden (Mendip District Councillor), PC Simon Humphrey (Frome Police Neighbourhood Team), Amy Proctor (Acorn Property Group), Edward Nash (Nash Partnership), Tom Metcalfe (Nash Partnership), Simon Gait (Acorn Property Group), Chujo Itoje, Andy Jones, Gill Fone, Sue Hughes

32 members of the public

| Minute Ref | Agenda Item | Action |
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| 2018/73/FC | <p>The meeting started at 7.02pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Apologies were received by Cath Puddick, Heather Wride (Frome Town Council), and Des Harris (Mendip District Council).</p> <p>Al O’Kane sent his apologies for lateness to the meeting.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members’ interests None was received</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 23 January 2019 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 23 January 2019 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Mel Usher, seconded by Pippa Goldfinger, approved unanimously.</p> | |
| 2018/74/FC | <p>2. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs Rich Ackroyd gave an update on the lights along Zion Path, which had been repaired, and the lights at the Old Showfield which were awaiting repair. Gill Fone confirmed the lights on Zion Path were now all working.</p> | |

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| | <p>Andy Jones noted that this was the last Council meeting before the Parish elections and praised the hard work of the councillors during their term.</p> <p>A member of the public asked about Agenda Item 6, which was to be confidential. He asked why the item was confidential and whether a future meeting agenda would include a discussion on the outcome of negotiations, the principles involved in selling the land, and the plans for investing the generated income from the sale. He felt FTC had missed an opportunity to develop the land into something special.</p> <p>Mel Usher responded that many FTC councillors would have preferred the proposed sale to be open to public scrutiny. He explained that these were complex negotiations between 4 parties, and that at least 1 other party wanted to retain confidentiality. He said FTC would explain the proposed future use of the income generated after the sale.</p> <p>Colin Cobb added that this had never been a fully commercial decision for FTC, and that councillors will continue to listen to the opinions of others. He explained that FTC had weighed up the influence FTC has secured so far versus the future work that could be done at the site. The decision had been made based on the principle of maximising the benefit to Frome.</p> <p>Chujo Itoje, a local taxi driver, gave a brief talk on his proposal to change the one-way traffic system currently in place at the junction of Bridge Street, North Parade and Welshmill Road. He had collected 340 signatures supporting this change and asked for FTC to provide their support.</p> <p>Rich Ackroyd said FTC would present the proposal to Somerset County Council who would have to make the decision, explaining the process may take a few months. He thanked Mr Itoje for his time, highlighting the importance of the public sharing their ideas for improvement at council meetings.</p> | |
| 2018/75/FC | <p>3. For decision – FTC’s response to the draft masterplan for Saxonvale</p> <p>Tom Metcalfe of Nash Partnership delivered a presentation on the proposed masterplan. He was joined by Edward Nash of Nash Partnership, and Amy Proctor and Simon Gait of Acorn Property Group.</p> <p>Tom noted that there had been many attempts over the years to build on the Saxonvale site. He explained the mutli-stage</p> | |

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consultation process that had been carried out in recent months that resulted in the current draft of the Masterplan.

He explained that the masterplan is designed to allocate commercial and retail space near existing businesses and to allocate housing near existing homes to work with the surroundings of the site. This is done by a gradual filtering from active social space at one end of the site to purely residential property at the other.

He explained the site would be more vehicle-focused in the centre, with as little traffic to non-central areas of the site as possible. In non-central areas the site would be much more cycle and pedestrian friendly. This design would allow anticipation from the outset of traffic density on the site.

He also highlighted the addition of a proposed footbridge on the site allowing access from Willow Vale and the additions of more landscape features that had been heavily requested.

He ended the presentation by noting that the next steps were to look at the finer detail, particularly the use of a large public square and that many decisions would be made based on public feedback. He explained it could be difficult to visualise what the space will look like and that they would work on improving that for future consultation.

A member of the public asked about how the land currently belonging to FTC fits into the masterplan. Tom said it had recently been added to the overall development plan and several sketches had been done so far.

A member of the public asked if there had been any change made to proposed building height near existing residential properties. Tom explained the current height proposed was based on the height of nearby houses but that the right balance had not yet been found, and potential changes were being considered. He stressed that the privacy of existing houses was important.

Edward Nash added that they were willing to talk to local residents and would set up the opportunity for those conversations once the space in question had been given the attention it needs by developers.

Mark Leigh raised concerns about FTC selling their land before the details of the site were finalised. He asked how the council would continue to protect existing residents without having the land as leverage.

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Colin Cobb explained that FTC would retain their ongoing influence as part of development project group and reassured the meeting that FTC would continue to influence the process and would not be “washing our hands” of the development.

Rick Swann raised the issue of affordable housing on the site and asked if this would be settled in the outline. Amy Proctor from Acorn Property Group said the outline for the site currently included 300 homes and 45,000ft of commercial space. She said that policy was currently set at 30% of affordable housing but reaching 30% would a challenge for this site.

John Clark asked for confirmation that MDC had agreed they will not accept allocation above 20% of affordable and social housing. Simon Gait from Acorn explained that this was still in development and needed further consideration.

Another member of the public asked how much of the amount of affordable and social housing would be specifically social housing, and whether this meant social rents. Simon Gait replied that he thought the allocation was for social rents but couldn't confirm that completely at present.

Tricia Golinski brought up the southern route to the train station on the site and asked if the route could be improved for cyclists and pedestrians. She explained that because Church Street is one-way, it would be suitable for travel to towards the station but not back towards the town centre. She asked whether there would be another route from the station to the town centre. Tom said they were looking into the issue and noted that the proposed footbridge would also help cycle routes.

Nick White expressed disappointment over the amount of space allocated for retail. He stressed that this was the last opportunity for meaningful retail development in the town centre and that homes could be built anywhere. Tom replied that even half of the 45,000ft allocation for commercial space would be enough to employ several hundred people. He stressed that the key idea of the development is to supplement the town centre rather than replace it. Tom explained that the buildings will be designed so that they can change uses as demands for space change in the future.

Sheila Gore asked about public transport – would the existing bus routes be extended to the Saxonvale site? Edward Nash replied that it was felt that the site was close enough to the Market Place bus stops. He added that they would like to consider the matter further and it would be part of highways discussions.

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Mel Usher brought up that there had been a proposal to use the Western Warehouses land as residential space. He said the impact to the Silk Mill must be considered as it has made a strong contribution to music and art in the town. Tom replied that residential use of the Western Warehouse was no longer being considered.

Jean Boulton raised the issue of car parking. She asked if any more spaces had been added to the plans and whether there was car parking for commercial and retail space. Tom explained that they were researching car ownership trends and pointed out an area on the masterplan designated for commercial and retail parking and said they were considering other areas too.

Edward said they would be replacing 71 car parking spaces at Merchants Barton Car Park and providing 70 additional spaces. He said the conversation with the community about the number of car parking spaces would continue as the issue of whether car ownership is necessary is important for Frome at the moment.

Colin Cobb introduced Peter Wheelhouse, who would present Frome Town Council's response to the proposed masterplan. Colin highlighted the council's involvement in the process and the way Frome Town Council had worked together with Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council.

Colin also gave further insight on the sale of FTC land which would be discussed in confidential session later. He explained that the redevelopment of the Saxonvale site was a real opportunity to provide a comprehensive development and also that FTC did not have the expertise to develop the site itself.

He added that FTC would continue to prioritise maximising employment, cultural activities and learning and skills development on the site.

Peter Wheelhouse gave a brief presentation on Frome Town Council's official response to the Saxonvale masterplan.

He welcomed the inclusion of social rented and shared equity homes and said FTC would continue to push for 30% affordable housing.

Peter said there was scope for circa 80,000ft of non-residential space; much more than the current proposal of 45,000ft. He shared information from an ongoing consultation with Frome businesses, stating that of 121 responses received, 69% said they

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| | <p>would look to relocate to the town centre if they wish to move premises.</p> <p>He acknowledged the difficulty of balancing the number of car parking spaces and that FTC would support creative solutions to this issue.</p> <p>Peter praised the addition of the footbridge to the masterplan, saying it was good to see this aspiration being realised. He also asked developers to consider a second crossing further east, connecting with Rodden Meadow.</p> <p>He also praised the inclusion of a natural park at the riverside. He proposed that this park could be taken on by Frome Town Council as one of our open spaces, and that this idea should be explored further and brought to decision in the future.</p> <p>He urged developers to prioritise environmental sustainability, highlighting that all 3 tiers of local government had declared a climate emergency. He specified that development at the site should contribute to Frome Town Council's goal of being carbon neutral by 2030.</p> <p>Sue Clepper asked about further education on the site which is currently the base of Somerset Skills & Learning and wondered if classrooms and apprenticeships would be incorporated in the plans. Colin Cobb explained that FTC were supporting SS&L to find permanent premises elsewhere in Frome</p> <p>Toby Eliot provided further reassurance that it was highly unlikely that SS&L would be abandoned by FTC.</p> <p>Mel pointed out future opportunities to improve Church St, King St and the town centre in general.</p> <p>Damon thanked Acorn and Nash for the changes to the Western Warehouse site proposal, which could be a great community space. He mentioned the old wall which runs through Merchant's Barton and continues through Saxonvale could become a feature of the site that brought different areas together.</p> <p>Rich thanked representatives from Acorn Property Group and Nash Partnership for their time. He said there would be more opportunities for consultation but the redevelopment plans have already come a long way and the progress is encouraging.</p> <p>The recommendation was to:</p> | |
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| | <p>Agree the proposed response to the Acorn Property Group’s Saxonvale masterplan proposals as set out in Item 3 of the agenda.</p> <p>Proposed by Colin Cobb, seconded by Peter Macfadyen, agreed by majority. Nick White abstained.</p> | |
| 2018/76/FC | <p>4. For Information – Mendip Local Plan Part II</p> <p>Jane Llewellyn presented, explaining that the plan was partly to demonstrate 5 years land supply. Without this plan, MDC would face difficulties refusing other applications for development.</p> <p>The identified sites are to be developed by 2029. Each has been deemed suitable and available for development and has its own set of policies and objectives. Jane noted an extension to the Commerce Park just outside parish bounds which would help balance other employment sites that have been lost.</p> <p>Areas of local significance identified in Part I of the Local Plan had been reallocated as green spaces providing protection similar to that of Green Belt status. FTC had unsuccessfully proposed three sites to be allocated as green spaces.</p> <p>Jean Boulton asked about the Butler and Tanner site on Adderwell Road which Jane replied had not met the criteria for protection as commercial land.</p> <p>Colin Cobb asked if there could be allocation for housing next to the Butler and Tanner site. Jane said developers would still need to apply as usual and FTC has made recommendations to that effect.</p> | |
| 2018/77/FC | <p>5. For Decision – Recruitment of a Children and Young People’s Project Officer</p> <p>Kate Hellard gave a presentation on the challenges children and young people face in the community, what this proposed role would encompass and how it could help ease demand on expensive, crisis-level services.</p> <p>She said that while other councils tend to recruit youth workers, FTC is looking to support other sectors and thereby broaden the scope.</p> <p>Toby Eliot thanked her for the presentation. He praised the evidence-based approach and the innovation involved in creating</p> | |

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| | <p>this role. He suggested that FTC would benefit from the support of other councils and should look into match funding.</p> <p>Ali Barclay said it was great to see the plan coming together after many conversations over several years. She called the plan “really inspiring” and praised how FTC are taking a lead by creating the post. She asked why the post was recommended as a 1-year contract.</p> <p>Mel Usher said Cllrs needed to be brave and approve at least a 2-year contract to give the project a fighting chance of success.</p> <p>Nick White said the job description needed to be specific and measurable outcomes should be agreed upon. Peter Macfadyen asked for training provision and co-ordination to be considered.</p> <p>Kate said they would be using a model similar to Mendip Health Connections which, while broad, has proven to be successful. She said this would be a fundamental enabling role.</p> <p>A member of the public said he applauded Kate’s work and said improving community resilience was crucial and this role would enable such progress.</p> <p>The following amendment was recommended: Recruit a Children and Young People’s Project Officer on a 2-year contract, instead of the initial recommendation of a 1-year contract.</p> <p>Proposed by Jean Boulton, seconded by Kate Bielby, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>The amended recommendations were...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk and Community Projects Manager to draft a job description, based on the generic FTC Project Officer JD, in consultation with Cllr Shelia Gore (chair of Council Matters). 2. Agree to recruit a Children and Young People’s Project Officer on an initial fixed-term contract of 2 year and utilise the £30k budget allocation accordingly. <p>Proposed by Kate Bielby, seconded by Jean Boulton, agreed unanimously.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">KH</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KH</p> |
| <p>2018/78/FC</p> | <p>6. For decision – confidential item on the proposed sale of FTC land at Saxonvale to MDC</p> | |

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| | <p>Due to the commercial sensitivity of the discussion, the press and public were asked to leave.</p> <p>21.10 Ali Barclay and Al O’Kane left the meeting.</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse presented the report and welcomed Cllrs’ questions.</p> <p>Cllrs were recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve exchange of contracts with Mendip District Council for the sale of FTC’s land at Saxonvale 2. Delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk to finalise legal documentation required for exchange of contracts and completion of the sale to Mendip District Council 3. Delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk to agree a payment to SS & L CIC to enable their relocation to permanent accommodation in Frome. <p>Proposed by Colin Cobb, seconded by Pippa Goldfinger, agreed unanimously.</p> | PWh |
| 2018/79/FC | The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 15 May 2019 at Frome Town Hall | |

The Chair closed the meeting at 9:49pm