

Agenda item 8

For information – 2018-19 Work Programme – end of year review

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Council on the delivery of the 2018-19 Work Programme.

The report summarises work that was undertaken in 2018-19 against the three pillars of the Work Programme (Environment, Prosperity, Health and Wellbeing), as well as against Finance and Marketing and Communications priorities. It highlights where there were challenges in terms of delivery (for example, because of dependence on others to deliver, budget constraint or staff capacity), as well as a brief summary of the many areas where there was positive progress.

Introduction

The Work Programme is reviewed at monthly Management Group meetings.

Managers have devised a system of RAG rating (Red / Amber / Green) the priorities within the work programme. Green indicates an action is on track for delivery or completed, Amber means an action is on track for delivery but there are potential issues that could affect this and Red means an action is not on track for delivery.

The Management Group now discuss areas of work where progress is challenging and collectively consider potential solutions to this.

The report highlights progress against each of the following areas:

1. Environment
2. Prosperity
3. Community Development
4. Resilience
5. Marketing and Communications
6. Finance

1. Environment - A Ranger's life for me...

Looking after the town's parks and green spaces is rewarding, exciting and inspiring.

There's very little to match the good feeling of planting a tree on a beautiful morning - and seeing (and hearing) that it's made people happier #nicetreerangers

Parks and green spaces are also challenging though; not least because looking after them is such an important and unique responsibility.

There's work to do every day - and that can be hard, physical work.

There are seasons; weather; the climate; and the environment to consider and plan for.

And you're simultaneously planning days ahead; weeks ahead; a year ahead; five years ahead - and sometimes - a generation or more ahead.

Across a busy twelve months, you get to reflect on the challenge of balancing the day to day upkeep with making things better.

Like towns and their people, parks change and evolve. In part because they don't stop.

There's always a bare minimum of work required just to keep things looking as they do. On top of this, there's a desire to bring about changes; to make improvements.

(And once you've made something better, the bare minimum of work required to keep it better shifts, too)

Over the last twelve months - whatever the weather - the Rangers and the Project Officers have worked with enthusiasm, initiative and good humour.

Completing all the essential work: the upkeep. And finding time and enthusiasm to do more; to make things better.

Sometimes grafting; always doing; and invariably smiling.

Highlights: What we've done

Some big things; some little things; and some things you might have missed that we're really quite proud of:

- Recruited and established two new Rangers: Jay Hanton & Josh Quiney
- Updated the Management & Improvement Plans for lots of our parks and green spaces, including the plans for Victoria Park, Mary Baily and Welshmill
- Run volunteer 'Ranger' sessions throughout the year: one with Critchill school and the other with Discovery - a Somerset-based social enterprise that supports people with learning disabilities, autism, challenging behaviour and complex needs
- Tree planting. Lots of tree planting. Over 60 new trees in spaces including New Road play area; the Showfield; Weylands and Victoria Park

- Planted an orchard over on the Showfield (that's more trees and shrubs right there)
- Tree works and tree surveys - looking after our existing trees
- Footpath improvements at the Old Showfield; around Victoria Park; and along the riverside path leading to the Roundhouse. Over 3,300 sqm of footpath improved; over £100,000 invested
- Started looking after Tower View play area & green; and the play area off Packsaddle Way
- Improved the corner near the bowls club in Victoria Park: new benches; a new path; and a colourful, seasonal planting scheme
- For the second year in a row, an award from Frome in Bloom for the Rangers' seasonal floral displays in the town centre. Including the flowers around the fountain
- Battled the snow in February and March 2018; and then a hot, dry and sunny summer. Only to see more snow in March 2019
- Invested in an improved riding surface for the skatepark in Mary Baily
- Improved a previously unloved and redundant space near Foundry Barton
- Put in bat-friendly solar lights along the main path at the Dippy

And pretty soon, we're going to see £30,000 of new play at Tower View and Packsaddle.

We've started work improving the steps to and from Millennium Green.

We're progressing discussions with Mendip District Council about looking after Egford Lane play area.

And we'll keep on top of the essential work, as well.

2. Prosperity

Planning & Development

Since April 2018, the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) has been consulted on and responded to 295 planning applications ranging from works to trees and householder extensions to shipping containers in the Market Yard. We have also seen plans for the residential redevelopment of the Former Butler and Tanner site and proposals for a new Cider factory on Cuckoo Lane.

There has been good attendance at the planning meetings and lots of lively debate. The number of Pre-application discussions with developers and householders at the planning meetings continues to increase. Members of PAG have also attended the Mendip Council Planning Board meetings.

As well as responding to planning applications, PAG has responded to the various consultations on the Mendip District Local Plan Part II, which allocates additional sites for housing, employment, community facilities and local green spaces. As a result, some amendments have been made to the draft plan which will be considered by the Planning Inspector for adoption in July.

General enquiries for help and advice on planning matters also continue to increase from residents and businesses.

In preparation for the expected planning applications for Selwood Garden Village and Saxonvale, a brief was prepared looking at how we can take account of the future needs of the town and engage the local community. The brief focused on developing a set of principles that can guide future developments in the town, looking at best practice not only in Frome but elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

The University of the West of England (UWE) offered the support of their Master of Architect students supported by their tutors. The work included background research, a public workshop and a place/life study focusing on the Mount area, finishing with a report and public exhibition. The report has been completed and whilst the Selwood Garden Village proposals are on hold for the time being, the principles in the report will be used to guide other developments that come forward.

Issues continue around car parking charges and on street parking. Unfortunately, parking charges have now increased but there was some success with a concession for the Independent Market following lobbying and the presentation of a petition against the introduction of Sunday charging.

Requests for double yellow lines, speed restrictions and ways to resolve residents parking issues are an ongoing discussion with Somerset County Council (SCC). As a result of lobbying, Frome has now been included as one of the first 5 towns in the County that will carry out a parking review. There will be a series of public meetings later in the year together with some survey work; the outcomes of this will be fed into the review. The 20mph speed limit from the top of Bath Street to the North Parade/Welshmill Road junction has now been implemented as part of plans to make the town centre more pedestrian friendly.

Saxonvale regeneration

Following Mendip District Council's (MDC) acquisition of former industrial land at Saxonvale last year, Acorn Property Group have been working up their plans. FTC has worked to influence those plans in line with its position statement and has enabled public debate through hosting a briefing by Acorn and architects Nash Partnership in March 2019.

The amount of non-residential space has been pushed up from the 35-40,000 sq. ft. level identified at second consultation to 45,000 sq. ft. The lobbying continues in partnership with the Frome Chamber, Civic Society and other interests in order to secure the maximum possible amount of non-residential space within the scheme to benefit the local economy. FTC's initiative to try to bring forward new cultural/community facilities within the scheme has been welcomed by Mendip/Acorn and time has been allowed to complete feasibility work. Discussion has been brokered between Acorn and CEPRO around a scheme for a community microgrid (solar powered electric and heating). If implemented, this measure will make a considerable contribution towards the development being carbon neutral. Positive discussions have been held around the possibility of FTC taking on the open spaces within the scheme and further meetings are planned with Mendip/Acorn to explore this further.

In order to secure a comprehensive regeneration of the site which has been a long-standing ambition of the Council, we have now agreed to sell our land to MDC at a price of £985,000.

Contracts have been exchanged and completion is due on 30 September. In the region of £500,000 will be available to invest in local capital projects as a result of the deal. We are working closely with SS & L and MDC to enable the training work that currently takes place on site at the Saxonvale Training Centre to continue in the town.

Market Place improvements

The first phase of Market Place improvements around Boyle Cross was completed in 2018. Following public consultation including an exhibition and drop-in sessions last autumn, an outline planning application for a second phase of improvements has been submitted. The proposals include, new paving and courtesy crossings to make the Market Place more pedestrian friendly, realigning the bus laybys to reduce congestion, new bus shelters to improve the experience for bus users, new on-street parking facilities in Cork Street for disabled drivers and a new loading bay in the Market Place. A £50k grant has been secured from SCC to enable FTC's proposed bus stop improvements to be implemented. We are currently out to tender on the build contract.

Support for Business & Enterprise

The monthly Business Breakfasts and Discuss & Do events have continued to offer businesses the opportunity to come together to discuss a wide range of topics including financial planning, business strategy, social media, giving back to the community, energy efficiency and IT Security. FTC also hosts Soul Traders, a monthly business event at the Town Hall to support and connect people who work on their own.

An Apprenticeship Conference was held at the Town Hall bringing organisations and businesses together to discuss how we can promote apprenticeships and traineeships to local businesses. A leaflet was also produced highlighting the benefits of taking on an apprentice, the steps involved and how FTC can help through the process.

Students from Frome College were given valuable work experience through delivering a benchmarking project across the town centre, visiting businesses and retailers with a business survey and interviewing shoppers and visitors about the town. The results from the survey were written up into the Town Benchmarking Report.

A two-week international work placement was arranged with Bosch in Murrhardt Germany for a young student from Frome College. The placement provided the student with engineering work experience, prior to taking up an engineering degree.

In February, FTC hosted a Visitor Conference which highlighted activities to drive tourism planned across the town for the year ahead and encouraged businesses to work together to promote Frome as a top visitor destination.

Frome Busks returned to the town centre in March. Young musicians had the opportunity to perform at key retail areas around the town. Retailers were very supportive of the event and felt that it brought people into the town, made the place feel busy and lively, and created a

great atmosphere. The event also gave the performers a chance to gain confidence and experience in performing, some of whom had never performed in public before.

FTC continued to offer free good business consultancy reviews to local businesses focusing on businesses planning, environmental impact and social contribution. Over the year 6 new businesses were visited, each receiving a confidential report afterwards with highlights and recommendations.

3. Health and Wellbeing

During the first half of the year the emphasis of our work was on delivering the following priorities:

Young Peoples Mental Health

The young people's mental health forum met four times during the year. Several guest speakers joined local practitioners to share expertise and information regarding specialist and universal counselling and wellbeing services and delivered awareness raising presentations.

Healthy Lifestyles

Over the year we have supported a number of initiatives aimed at enabling residents to participate in a range of physical activity opportunities that they might otherwise not have, these include: a School Gate Running project, Outdoor Gym sessions at the outdoor gym on the Old Showfield, Tennis for Free with Frome Selwood Tennis Club in the Mary Baily playing field, Couch to 5k, Mayhem in the Meadow, the Sports Festival and Mojo Moves a PB events recipient.

Literacy

Frome Community Education were supported through a Multi-Year agreement to deliver ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes and an IT hub, where IT support and literacy support have been successfully delivered together.

Purple Elephant have continued to run and promote the Frome Reads initiative through their projects and events such as the Toy Library, Children's Festival and at Mayhem in the Meadow.

General Health and wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing forum; two meetings of this group were held in the year covering a range of topics and informing next steps.

Sports Forum; the action plan was updated and a forum meeting held.

A four weekly radio show was trialled for the first half of the year, in addition to Health and Wellbeing messages being widely promoted through our communications team.

In the period from mid-November, when the Health and Wellbeing Manager role came to an end, we looked at how best to move forwards with our objectives of health and wellbeing particularly those related to young people's mental health. During the discussions with

various partners including Health Connections Mendip, the Young Peoples Mental Health Forum and the Frome Learning Partnership, we identified a range of issues which young people face relating to their health and wellbeing that are interlinked.

The County cuts to youth services, the Get Set service and support for young carers, amongst others, raised questions for Frome about how best to continue to support all our residents, particularly children and young people, going forward.

We have worked with Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council and our local partners to develop a model of working which will be led by the Community Development Manager and a new Children and Young Peoples Project officer. The work aims to build on our facilitative approach, working with partners to identify and fill gaps in provision and to further our work in communities to enable residents to better support each other.

Support for Community Groups

We have continued to support community organisations through a range of mechanisms:

- The Mayor's and Community Grants: both were reviewed and revised in 2018 to ensure that funding is administered effectively with an emphasis on creating financially sustainable projects, with support for new and emerging organisations that might not qualify for other funding streams.
- A training programme for community groups: this rolling programme of training includes practical courses such as first aid and risk assessment alongside the role of a trustee, marketing and communication, business planning and creating a fundraising case for support.
- Fundraising support and advice: the triage system continues to provide an effective way to ensure that organisations referred for fundraising support are 'grant ready'. Many organisations have been referred to our contracted fundraising advisor and she has supported others through bespoke training as part of the training programme.
- A shed full of resources: we have continued to build the bank of resources available to community groups and organisations and now take regular bookings for items such as gazebos, litter pickers, hot water flasks, tables and chairs, which are available free for community organisations to use
- Responsive support for Community organisations: this is an ever-growing area of our work and we have worked with circa 35 individuals and organisations since April 2018.
- Facilitation for boards of trustees: this area of work has been developed to support organisations, providing a clear format for them to create a shared vision, clear and achievable outcomes and sustainable development plans.

In addition to requests for support from existing organisations, we are receiving an increasing number of enquiries from groups and individuals looking to initiate new community projects in Frome. The support they then receive is often by way of match making, encouraging partnership working, linking with existing projects and organisations and where possible encouraging peer to peer support and advice.

We have found that we are well placed to provide a strategic overview and to take on a coordination role bringing groups together around a common theme.

Throughout the period we have also seen a shift in requests from ‘nice to do’ projects to those which address significant issues, with an increase in statutory organisations looking for support to sustain existing interventions and / or to create new ones which will support them to deliver the services they are primarily funded to deliver.

Community development

In April 2018 we embarked on a new area of work and began to pilot a community development project in the Trinity area of Frome. The project is based on an asset-based approach, building on the skills within and needs of individual communities, through a supportive and facilitative approach. Underpinning this model is the ethos that we enable the community to build projects for themselves.

Whilst developing trusting relationships in the Trinity area, we have supported the community to develop and deliver several projects and initiatives with local partners:

- Litter Campaign: 5 community litter picks and the installation of two new bins.
- Street Party in Milk Street with food, music and a range of activities for residents: supported by the Toy Library, Vallis School, Frome FM, Child’s Play, local councillors and sponsored by several local businesses.
- A weekend Community Lunch cooked by the community group and held in Trinity Church Hall
- Junk Gardening: improving the physical space in the area, recycling a range of receptacles including wellie boots, old flower pots and used car tyres as coloured planters. Demonstrating longevity and a lack of vandalism we are working with the school and Live West (formerly Knightstone Housing Association) are looking to develop new gardening projects throughout the area.

Through an ongoing dialogue, residents raised concerns about a sharp rise in arson attacks, anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and rubbish. There was a sense that there was little point in starting new projects as they would not last and that the statutory services should do more. The community group was supported by FTC to convene a series of public meetings with the police and other services to raise these issues and consider positive ways forward.

The meetings were well attended and resulted in a very positive dialogue between residents and the various services with a significant decrease in the related issues in the area. Community members have also reported a positive change in the general feel of the community with an increased dialogue between residents and XXX

Throughout the year we have provided support for other emerging neighbourhood groups who have come together to deliver street parties, apple days, litter picks and other events. Many have received advice and support on insurance, forming a group, installing a notice board, road closures and have borrowed our community resources.

Project work

Both the support for organisations and community development work have highlighted common areas of concern in Frome which have developed into wider projects, many of these have been addressed in other areas of this report for example, 'Rubbish' initiatives with Litter Warriors, a bursary fund and Saturday music project.

Other project work has included support for:

- An Emergency Cold Weather Shelter
- Anti-Bullying March and friendly neighbourhoods' campaign
- Positive interventions for young people

4. Resilience

4.1 Transport

- School Active Travel Challenge was a great success; over 2000 students took part and burnt half a million calories. Active travel increased by 20%. The film of the project has inspired Greater Manchester City Council to explore setting up a similar programme.
- Electric bikes are now covering all their costs and are being hired regularly.
- There are now bike pumps and repair kits to have at the Town Hall, Cheese and Grain and La Strada as part of our 'Cyclists are Welcome' programme.
- There are more bus frequent services to Bath and more stops including Sainsburys in Frome; FavBUG have done a great job lobbying for these services supported by FTC.
- We are continuing to lobby for better rail services and to explore ways to improve facilities at the station.
- Frome Community Cars is now being managed by Sustainable Frome and secured funding to support its first year.
- There are now 90 members of the car club. Membership is only £1 with £25 free driving credit and no monthly charge (promo code FROME109).

4.2. Energy

- Climate Emergency: Frome Town Council unanimously declared a Climate Emergency in December. We held Zero Carbon Towns events in June and February to link with other areas to explore how to slash carbon emissions. We launched a free zero carbon spreadsheet and '[Climate emergency toolkit](#)' that has been used by many other areas to declare emergencies too. We printed 'Clean and Healthy Future' pledge cards and webpage to encourage people to switch to green energy and ethical banking.
- Solar Streets: we worked with local contractor Iddea to launch a discounted solar offer for local homes. 70 people have enquired so far and 16 have paid deposits.
- Warm and Well: We held a popular 'Improve Don't Move' event at the Town Hall in May to showcase ways to refurb homes and reduce carbon, including a green directory. We promoted free / discounted insulation; 60 households took up the offer. We held training sessions for Medical Practice staff to highlight the impacts of cold homes and to signpost support. We held regular energy cafes over the winter to help people reduce their bills.

4.3. Waste

- Plastic-free: we are working to meet the Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Town criteria. We held several well attended community meetings, screened Plastic Ocean twice and launched <https://www.plasticfreefrome.com/> with a map and directory of local businesses and a plastic free film. A leaflet has also been printed and distributed at our plastic-free carnival float (which won first prize in the 'miscellaneous' class!).
- SHARE is now open four days a week and has a new manager. The team have held monthly repair cafes at the Welshmill Hub.
- Community Fridge: we added a 'Frome Larder' for items that don't need refrigeration in October. The fridge and larder are now diverting 90,000 items a year and saving 140 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

5. Marketing and communications

The Marketing & Communication area of work has a prolific output delivering our own projects within the strategic objectives of FTC and supporting the rest of the team to deliver high quality communications and events. Our work is broadly structured into three aspects: Communicating FTC's work through media channels, events and engagement and through supportive materials such as press, posters, digital content and brand awareness; Highlighting Frome as a visitor destination through the Discover Frome Brand and the Information Point: And marketing the town Hall Team and ensuring that it is fit for purpose, that best use is made of it, and that everyone has a positive experience. We work to provide high quality communications to support the strategic aims of the council to include:

Improving the image of the town through the visitor experience

- Discover Frome Information Point at Black Swan Arts is now firmly embedded - visitor numbers are up, and we are ready for the new season with a new season of cards and refreshed merchandise. We have two volunteer coordinators who we employ 5 hours a week to support the volunteers and we have instigated quarterly training meetings to upskill the volunteers and ensure that the volunteers feel like valued ambassadors of the town.
- A partnership with The List has resulted in an improved The Annual, focusing on co wheels car club, ebikes and walks this time as well as listings of independent businesses.
- Discover Frome website has gone from strength to strength with over 125,000 visits this year, and up to date event listings
- Particular attention has been paid to developing the walkers are welcome section of the website to include a number of local walks, cycling routes (and buses) through a series of maps and guides.
- We have developed a programme of professional training and delivered the new Guide Walks programme. This will mean that Frome will have guided walks every Wednesday and Sunday throughout the summer.

- Having recruited an apprentice, the course Digital marketing degree apprenticeship was not forthcoming, so we are currently using a mixture of in house and external support to service this area of work.
- A series of maps which we planned to be launched is now being delivered in partnership with the Walkers are Welcome group.
- The Singer's Trail was devised and launched to celebrate JW Singer's 200 birthday and a series of info boards were commissioned and soon to be sited as part of these celebrations.

Participation and engagement

- Participatory budgeting events – last year's successful organisations provided films of their events as feedback at the annual town meeting which also included a 'surprise' visit from Cheryl from Mojo Moves.
- People's Budget events vote is complete for 2019/20 and we are looking forward to supporting the events. The Fair Housing for Frome Big Red Bus project has already taken place, and work has begun around the Fireworks event. This year the People's event was extended to include an online vote which had nearly 800 responses and also the participation of over 350 year.
- The town vote took place last year, the public voted overwhelmingly for an orchard which was subsequently delivered by the Ranger Team in October. This year we are working Public Square to generate the ideas that we take to the town vote from within the community.
- The Make it Happen Conference was delivered in Partnership with Purple Elephant – engaging 350 year 8's in the democratic process enabling them to learn new skills, empower them to get involved in community action through random acts of kindness and enabling them to vote for PB Events. Interestingly the General Public and the Year 8's results were aligned.

Increasing the information output of the Council for the purposes of well-being and civic pride

- Noticeboards have not been neglected including an extensive network of 25 noticeboards and volunteer Noticeboard ambassador network has grown
- All channels continue to be used to support all the projects that the Town Council are undertaking from print to online digital content
- This has included the significant increase in Social Media output, through a clear and developed digital strategy including both websites, a series of online newsletters and ticket sales.
- Campaigns such as the Bin it campaign continue to be supported with the addition of the new litter warriors. These campaigns work across channels and throughout the town as well as in small locales. The same is true of other areas of work such as events
- Accessibility and participation in meetings remain a priority - using posters, trailing meetings, actively inviting members of the public. Live streaming remains an outstanding issue, but we are committed to finding a solution.

The Frome Arts Forum

- We continue to be committed to the performing arts in Frome to acknowledge the important part that is played by Arts in the town and last year our focus was on young people. Last year we explored the feasibility of a bursary fund to support access to the arts for young people based on the model of give it a go and looked at the creation of a Saturday morning music club, to allow. Frome Busks was an event grown out of the forum too. The forum is expected to change shape in the next administration.

Town Hall

- Frome Learning partnership, Fair Housing for Frome and WILD Co-working were added to the tenants last year and the meeting rooms continue to be popular. The Drug and Alcohol Service and the Probation Service are now regular hirers.
- We have secured Change of Use permission for the town hall and the conditions were discharged to include air conditioning and evac chairs to allow us to run events with entertainment.
- Following our successful conference last year, we have developed a series of tours, Made Differently, which serve to support external enquiries regarding the Council's work.
- We have employed 10 support stewards to support town hall and also events and have bought the cleaning Staff in house to better support the facility.
- Now licensed we are able to offer a bar as an auxiliary facility.
- We are waiting on the registrar service to see if we can hold weddings here as a registry office to give Frome Residents another service in Frome – this would also extend to naming ceremonies and other civic ceremonies. A professional brochure is planned to show case the town hall as a and multi-use facility

Events

- Events were identified as an important of our Communication and Marketing strategy allowing us to engage both with the community in a different way but also as an outreach tool for increased participation
- For the first time in recent years we took the Christmas event in house. The lantern parade was funded by PB and a great success which we hope to repeat this year.
- Successful PB events were marketed, attended by FTC staff and supported
- Lots of events across the town and in our Parks and Open Spaces were able facilitated by the FTC Team including Apple Day and Children's Festival
- The Town Hall has seen a number of special events and conferences from across the workplan including events such as Discover Frome Visitor Conference as well as external events like the recent visit from Helen Pankhurst and is well used – in the last 6 months we have seen 156 meetings and events from FTC staff alone.

6. Finance

1.1. Budgets

The financial year ending March 2019 is reported separately at this meeting (15 May 2019) under the Annual Return. Overall, the year ended underspent to budget with new Ear Marked Reserves proposed for Council approval at this meeting.

The budget April 2019 to March 2020 was approved by Council on 23 January 2019 and will be reported regularly throughout the year at Council Matters.

1.2. Precept

The second half of the 2018/19 Precept was received in September 2018 bringing the total received for the year to £1,268,273 as requested. This figure translates to a Band D rate for 2018/19 of £150.69 on a tax base of 8,416.

Explanation of the Council Tax Base – “The Council Tax Base for the District as a whole, or for individual parishes, for the forthcoming financial year is the estimated number of chargeable dwellings in that particular area, expressed as the equivalent number of Band D dwellings, net of an allowance for projected losses on collection.” Mendip District Council, December 2018.

(Alternatively, the tax base may be described as an approximation of the number of Band D chargeable homes in an area. Full detail on tax bases can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755950/Local_Authority_Council_Tax_base_England_2018_Statistical_Release.pdf)

For 2019/20 the Band D rate requested by Frome Town Council is £154.46, an increase of 2.5%, on a tax base of 8,697.21, an increase of 3% (252 households), resulting in a total Precept for the coming year of £1,343,371. Countrywide, council tax increases for 2019/20 were reported to be an average of 4.5% (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accounting - 5 Mar 2019). The first half of the 2019/20 Precept £671k, was received in April.

1.3. Audit

Internal auditors Fair Account visited the Town Hall offices in July and October 2018 and on Thursday 2 May 2019 to complete the audit for the year ending March 2019. Fair Account confirmed that Records and procedures in place were approved to provide a good standard of control but noted that the Risk Review for the year had yet to be minuted by Council. This is now tabled for approval at this meeting and will be scheduled annually for July Council in future.

1.4. Sound Financial Management

Our processes comply with the published FTC Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and our Internal Auditors Fair Account will continue to review this in their ongoing quarterly audits.

1.5. VAT

Quarters ending December 2018 and March 2019 have been submitted and refunds claimed.

1.6. Investments

Our cash balances/reserves of £686k at 31 March 2019 are held across seven accounts – detailed in the attached Balance Sheet reported with the Annual Return. New Cllrs will be added to the mandates of the bank accounts as appropriate in the coming weeks. At least Charity Bank and possibly also Barclays, require ALL Cllrs details to be registered even though just three signatories are needed, whilst the other banks usually just require only the signatories to be registered.

1.7. Invoicing

Invoices are paid on time, credit control on debtors being rarely necessary with a majority of prompt payers and a reasonably low level of debtors - £1,576 at 31 March 2019.

1.8. Banking

Bank mandates for all seven accounts will need updating with new Cllrs as reported above. We are limited in the number of deposit accounts we have to spread our reserves as it is difficult to find banks who will store deposits only (without an active current account from which they would earn transaction fees). Research for additional deposit/interest bearing accounts is ongoing.

1.9. Contracts

All procurement has followed appropriate protocol during the past financial year.

1.10. IT

At Council Matters in February 2019 it was approved for the RFO to source a suitable IT solution (reviewing both cash/lease purchasing an on-site server or subscribing to a cloud based option). After further exploration, we have chosen an on-site solution, to be purchased outright with EMR funds from 2018-19 if approved by Council at this meeting. The rationale is that the cash purchase will cost less than two years quoted cloud-based subscriptions and we

will not be tied to one provider for the five years of a lease purchase. We can therefore review the suitability and cost of cloud-based services again in two years' time.

We will be conducting a review of all individual laptops and PCs in May to see where we can upgrade machines to prolong their use as opposed to replacing them, or where we have to fully dispose of older laptops/PCs/monitors. Secure cleaning/reformatting of equipment will take place before disposal and passing on to reuse/recycling organisations will be investigated where possible.

Accounting software – we are intending to conduct a trial of QuickBooks online accounting software during April – June alongside our existing software Omega, if time allows. It is hoped that QuickBooks would save time on day to day bookkeeping activities and offer easier access to reports for the managers.

1.11. HR

Ellis Whittam (solicitors) and SW Councils have continued to be helpful for HR/HR legal advice over the past year. Annual appraisals were completed March 2019 and there are no areas of concern. A representative from Peninsula Pensions has offered to give a presentation to staff on the LGPS scheme provided by FTC in May/June.

1.12. Bookings

The current bookings software works acceptably and is accessible to five staff. As we look to develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool/central database most likely on Open Source software, we may also need to change the bookings system to integrate. The priority for now is the CRM.

1.13. Tenants

Fair Frome's lease on the Elliot Building requires re-drafting and this is being carried out by solicitors currently. WHY are vacating the downstairs room at the end of May and we are currently advertising the office publicly. The Town Hall is otherwise at capacity for longer term tenants and the Council Chamber will be coming online for event / wedding hire shortly when we are hopeful that SCC Registry will take on the Chamber for regular Saturdays over the year.

1.14. GDPR

We have 17 draft GDPR documents (100 + pages) under review and will publish to staff and Cllrs when complete. Training sessions will be organised as appropriate. The new CRM will enable us to have one source of data as opposed to numerous versions amongst staff and generally assist in adhering to GDPR requirements.