

Agenda item 3

For Decision – Next steps on community development

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This report provides an update of the Community Development pilot in Trinity and recommends a new area of work, starting in February, in the Stonebridge area of Frome, utilising support staff to help deliver aspects of the work.

In June 2019, Town Matters were presented with an update on the Community Development work in the Trinity area of Frome. This pilot has provided an opportunity to consider the role of the Town Council in supporting neighbourhoods to come together to affect positive change.

We have learnt that taking the work down to streets, within a wider neighbourhood, has a greater impact in terms of connecting residents with each other in order to consider issues that are important to them and developing positive action through projects.

The work in Trinity has brought several other services together with the Community Group who have worked hard to explore a range of issues and deliver a series of projects to improve the place in which they live.

While working with the residents in Trinity and exploring ways to evaluate this pilot we have started to consider the importance of paying attention to the ‘power’ held by FTC, the role of the ‘expert’, how to empower residents through a facilitative and inclusive approach, how participation is underpinned by the sharing of knowledge and the delicate balance of stepping in and stepping out in order to support the development of sustainable projects.

Following a recent street party in Selwood Road, residents in that street are now planning next year’s street party and looking forward to making a splash in next year’s ‘Window Wanderland’ event. Residents in Trinity Walk, have similarly, talked about their next steps for events in their street and key members of the wider Trinity Community Group are taking a lead on developing a range of projects including litter picks, public meetings and a community garden. They continue to work together to address ongoing issues such as overgrown trees in Trinity Street, anti-social behaviour, arson and concerns as they arise.

At the same time, we have been developing larger projects for Trinity and other areas of Frome:

Trinity Community Garden: Vallis First School and Somerset County Council (SCC) have agreed to hand over a small piece of land beside the Griffin Pub, on a long-term lease, to FTC in order that the community can create a community garden, built and looked after by residents. As this is the first lease arrangement on land we have completed with SCC our solicitors will review the lease. We have agreed to make a small contribution to the costs of the associated fees for SCC. It is hoped that this is a model we might follow in other neighbourhoods in the town.

Detached Youth Work pilot: We commissioned The YMCA and Steven Utterly to deliver a series of ten youth work sessions in the Trinity area, working with young people on the streets. After the success of the first series, Live West housing association agreed to fund a

second series. We are now working with the Youth Workers to agree a mechanism to measure the impact and evaluate the work, with a view to supporting similar projects in other areas of the town.

Playing Out: we are working with the Police and SCC to trial a 'play streets' initiative where residents close their streets on a regular basis to enable children and families to play out. The aim is to work together to provide appropriate training and access to a simple, straightforward, affordable, regular road closure application process. More information about the playing out model can be found [here](#)

Resources for engaging with residents on their streets: We are continuing to build a set of resources which can be booked and borrowed, for free, by residents and community groups, for street parties and other neighbourhood events. The 'shed full of resources' is home to tables and chairs, gazebos, the smoothie bike, water containers, litter pickers, bean bags, bubble wands, chalk and other useful equipment to support events across the town. We are currently talking to the Women's Shed about commissioning a set of street games (i.e. giant draughts, noughts and crosses, giant Jenga and twister). Bookings for these resources are made through reception at Frome Town Hall.

Web resources: our web page on Frome Community has recently been updated with useful information for neighbourhood groups on where to find insurance, how to set up a street party and other useful information [here](#).

Next steps

We will continue to provide ongoing support for Trinity Community Group in the same way that we support other neighbourhood groups in the town. We will also prioritise the development of peer to peer support opportunities for members of neighbourhood groups through coffee mornings, forums and training opportunities in the coming six months.

It is proposed to now move on to another area of the town, apply the lessons learnt and help build more community resilience. It is proposed that we start initial work in the Stonebridge area of Frome in the February half term next year. We will look to deliver a series of engagement activities alongside the Children and Young People's Project Officers.

The advantage of Stonebridge is the myriad of small public open spaces that are owned and managed by Mendip. Our experience at Packsaddle and Towner View was that communities come together for many reasons and taking more control over open spaces is often one of them. There are potential links here with the Wild about Trees project and part of our work in February will be to test the level of enthusiasm for more tree planting. Stonebridge is also interesting to us because there is anecdotally a greater proportion of people living there who work outside of Frome who are perhaps less engaged with the rest of the town. Again, we can test this in February.

At this stage, Cllr support for the principle of this project on Stonebridge is requested. If agreed, we will build a costed project plan to be submitted to Town Matters in December to inform the 2020 work programme and budget. In order to grow the capacity of FTC to deliver community projects in Stonebridge and other areas of the town we will need more staff time and to take into account the additional resources needed for our core services such as

Marketing and Comms, on-costs from employing staff such as laptops, phones, desk space, etc.

Recommendations

1. Start exploratory work in Stonebridge in February 2020
2. Use the Community Development budget to fund support stewards to support project delivery.
3. Delegate to the Community Development Manager to work up a detailed and costed project plan to be tabled for discussion at the Town Matters meeting on 11 December.