

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 17 July 2019 at 7pm

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

Present:

Councillors: Mark Dorrington (Chair), Rich Ackroyd, Lizzie Boyle, Maxine Crawley, Nick Dove, Sheila Gore, Anne Hills, Paul Horton, John Nelson, Andy Palmer, Steve Tanner, Scott Ward

In attendance: Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk and Economic Development & Regeneration Manager), Chloe Bray (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing & Communications Manager), Kate Hellard (Community Development Manager), Anna Francis (Resilience Manager), Nykki Mehta (Customer Adviser), John Clarke (Somerset County Council and Mendip District Council), Adam Boyden (Mendip District Council), Shane Collins (Mendip District Council), Michael Dunk (Mendip District Council)

60 members of the public

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2019/16/FC	The meeting started at 7.00pm 1a. Apologies for absence Received from Anita Collier, Andy Wrintmore, Rob Collett, Sara Butler and Ali Barclay. 1b. Declaration of members' interests None was received 1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 15 May 2019 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 15 May 2019 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair. Proposed by Rich Ackroyd, seconded by Andy Palmer and agreed unanimously.	
2019/17/FC	2. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs Jason Collier and two other employees of Frome Fire Service explained their concerns on the changes being proposed by Devon & Somerset Fire Service (D&S). Their views were their own and did not represent the views of Devon & Somerset Fire Service. There are seven options being presented for consideration. These options include station closures, reduction in crew, and changes to operation and hours of service across various stations in Somerset. Option five includes potential changes to Frome's fire service,	

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	suggesting that one of the two engines currently operating 24/7 would cease operating from 8am-6pm daily. The Frome fire service comprises one station commander, 11 firefighters and other staff and trainees and has just had a recruitment campaign to boost cover. The firefighters are retained and when on-call they are able to respond from both work or home within 5 minutes. The firefighters handed out factsheets and asked for support from FTC and those present. Scott Ward asked about some of the figures given by D&S and asked if these changes would have a big impact on cost saving. Firefighters replied that D&S were estimating a saving of £984k per year from all cuts and would potentially look to sale land too. However, there is a general fund of £5m and further earmarked reserves for specific projects which, in their opinion showed that cuts may not be needed. John Clarke asked if the proposed change to the Frome service would increase risk in terms of emergency response. Firefighters felt the risk would be greatly increased as the 2nd pump is used to stop the spread of fire. Firefighters also highlighted that the population of Frome was forecast to grow by up to 9000 in the next 10 years, meaning that there is likely to be increased demand. Anita Collier thanked the firefighters for their presentation and asked why it was not an official agenda item. Mark Dorrington explained that as the firefighters could not act as official representatives of D&S, the decision had been taken to arrange their presentation during this item. Mark thanked the firefighters for an informative and engaging presentation and encouraged Cllrs and the public to respond to the D&S consultation and attend the presentation on 21 August. Paul Wynne was asked to respond to the consultation on behalf of the Council and in so doing reflect the views of the Cllrs present. There were no further topics raised.	PWy
2019/18/FC	3. For information - Extending the cycle path from Frome to Westbury and Warminster Adam Oakley from Connecting Chapmanslade gave a presentation on their vision for extending the cycle path and asked for FTC's support. Connecting Chapmanslade have presented to a number of councils and organisations and have gained the support of Frome's Missing Links, Westbury Town Council (although this was not voted on as the meeting was not quorate), Natural Land and Chapmanslade Parish	

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	Council among others. Wiltshire Council's Warminster Area Board have said they look forward to progress reports. The groups is working on securing funding and has identified multiple possible sources. Mark Dorrington asked what kind of support Adam was asking for from FTC. Adam said he was not currently looking for financial support but instead would welcome FTC formally saying they support the proposed cycle paths. Rich Ackroyd said Frome's Missing Links will help however it can and encouraged Connecting Chapmanslade to start the Just Giving fundraising page they were considering. Maxine Crawley said the ideas were exciting and suggested that Adam could seek further support from Somerset County Council and Somerset Highways Authority. Nick Dove asked if the cycle path route had been planned. Adam said they had a route in mind but the route was not yet set in stone. Although there were no recommendations, there was general support for the Connecting Chapmanslade proposals. Adam agreed to report back to FTC when more progress had been made.	
2019/19/FC	4. For decision – FTC's Position on the Rollout of 5G Paul Wynne presented the report which highlighted residents' concerns over the rollout of 5G technology across the UK and possible effects on public health and on the environment. He noted that the only permission needed to install the supporting infrastructure for 5G was that of the landowner. The following statement was shared from Neil Howlett on behalf of Frome Chamber of Commerce: “We are aware of concerns expressed about 5G. New technology is often met with concern and opposition. Good communications are essential for businesses in Frome. Neither the town nor the surrounding areas are well served with good broadband availability although we have been promised that for many years. It isn't likely that 5G is going to be arriving in Frome any time soon, but it would be wrong for it to be prevented unless and until there is good and reliable evidence of harm, outweighing the benefits. We therefore opposed the proposed resolution to be put to Frome Town Council on 17th July 2018 [sic], on the grounds that it is premature and that there should be wider consultation with the	

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	business community and better evidence before the Town Council adopts such a strong position on this subject.” Cllr Andy Palmer said he was opposed to the proposed recommendation. He felt that only those opposing the rollout had been listened to and that the petition that had been circulating only had 453 signatures equivalent to 4% of the Frome electorate. He said he could see nothing in the scientific literature to justify opposing the rollout. He said that should the rollout of 5G require felling trees and changing natural environments, he would be more open to opposing it. However, he felt that opposing the rollout at this stage would be little more than posturing, which he said was “a highly questionable moral stance to take”. He proposed the following recommendation: “Frome Town Council has a moral responsibility to protect public health and the local environment. It also has a responsibility to represent every person and every community within the town. Frome Town Council has noted the concern regarding the roll-out 5G in Frome, and surrounding areas, but also understand the needs for better telecommunications links for those who require them. At present, there appears to be inconclusive scientific evidence in relation to 5G, so Frome Town Council proposes to investigate and monitor this situation much more closely and to listen to members of all parts of the wider community. After this process, we will be in a better position to take view on whether 5G will be either beneficial or detrimental to the public of Frome.” A member of the public supported the original recommendation. He said he believed Electromagnetic Frequencies (EMFs) posed huge health risks. Another member of the public who had been part of organising the petition mentioned by Andy said there were a further 200 signatures in hard copy. Cllr Scott Ward who works in the technology sector and has been involved with data analysis on products that emit the frequencies people are concerned about. He has seen no reports from users and no concrete evidence of adverse effects, with the WHO classifying the technology as safe. He also said that as the strength of 5G is much lower than 4G, more relay towers are needed. He had seen reports of trees being felled to accommodate relay towers and his vote would focus on that concern. A member of the public, Chris Baker, shared his experience. He said he was involved in radiation and had a background in health and wellbeing and encouraged a healthy concern about 5G tech. He said	
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	there was growing evidence of adverse health effects and that the guidance on safe levels of skin radiation exposure had risen to fit new technology. He said the frequency involved in 5G was used as a weapon in some parts of the world, and that many countries and towns have adopted the precautionary principle. A representative of the Frome Stop 5G Group said there was plenty of evidence these frequencies are dangerous. A member of the public, Andy Jones, suggested that since FTC have no power to stop the rollout, they could instead seek information on where masts will be installed and look towards areas which they could influence. Cllr Sara Butler said the proposal wasn't against the rollout of 5G, but was advocating waiting for more information before accepting. Andy Palmer said his proposed recommendation suggested finding out more so that we could make an informed decision. District Cllr Shane Collins said that the potential for removal of trees was enough for him to oppose and he was also concerned that there were only a handful of suppliers, with Huawei approved to install the technology in the UK. He also shared that the Green Party voted in favour of a moratorium. Another resident was concerned about the UK guidelines on radio wave technology, as the UK has higher "safe" thresholds than other countries and the guidelines may be outdated. She said the research on this technology had only looked at the effects on men while there could be a risk to pregnant women and babies. She said there was also evidence bees were affected. A member of the public, Michael Dunk, was in favour of taking a moral stance to oppose anything that could be harmful to Frome. He felt that central government didn't listen to the evidence. Rich Ackroyd thanked everyone for sharing their views and said it had been interesting to learn more on the topic. Cllr Mark Dorrington proposed the following amendment to the tabled recommendation. This was seconded by Cllr Steve Tanner. The amended sections of the recommendation are in bold with the original wording struck through. Frome Town Council has a moral responsibility to protect public health and the local environment. Until there is a more independent scientific consensus that 5G wireless radiation is harmless to humans and the environment, FTC adopts the	
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	precautionary principle and opposes will not endorse the roll out 5G in the town. The amendment was carried by majority. The amended recommendation in full was: Frome Town council has a moral responsibility to protect public health and the local environment. Until there is more independent scientific consensus that 5G wireless radiation is harmless to humans and the environment, FTC adopts the precautionary principle and will not endorse the roll out of 5G. This was proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Sara Butler and agreed by majority.	
2019/20/FC	5. For decision – Frome Town Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plan Anna Francis presented the report on the process of creating an Action Plan. This included a proposal to establish a Citizens Assembly on Climate Change to inform FTC’s work on the Climate Emergency. Anna said that the process had been simplified to work at parish council level and she was in contact with highly qualified facilitators who will help at a low cost. She said that people would be paid to engage so that the process was open to residents who wouldn’t usually be able to engage due to their financial situation. In terms of experts and sampling, she said there were many experts who would help and the Sortition Foundation, who have a great track record, would help to ensure a representative sample. John Nelson said he would prefer for the decision to be deferred but understood this was a time sensitive decision. He was concerned over the politics surrounding the issue and the choice to fund projects that address climate change. He said that 1 in 10 households were in fuel poverty and 1 in 20 were defined as deprived. John was also concerned about the sources of external funding and the proposed engagement of the Sortition Foundation. He was concerned about the potential involvement of Extinction Rebellion, quoting the former head of counter-terrorism for Scotland Yard who had recently said Extinction Rebellion should be treated as an “extremist anarchist group”. He asked how experts would be decided and how we would find a representative sample. However, he was generally in support of making Citizens Assemblies work. He proposed an amendment to the recommendation which is detailed below.	

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	Anna said that addressing issues on climate change would help address fuel poverty as renewable energy could be much cheaper. She noted that locally £12m pa was on energy with the majority going to the six largest energy suppliers rather than benefitting the local economy. Lizzie Boyle said that Citizens Assemblies are at the forefront of engaging people for collaborative decision making which is part of the core aims of FTC. She said that even if there were issues it would provide a valuable learning experience for future engagement and would be entirely externally funded. She said this was a complex issue, and specific, practical steps needed to come out of the process. Rich Ackroyd agreed that what was practical for Frome was important to the process and said there was a responsibility to act especially considering population growth in Frome. Karen Eberhardt-Shelton said population was a big issue and suggested Frome did not need more homes. Nick Dove said that there should be plenty of younger people involved in the Citizens Assembly as part of a representative sample. A member of the public asked about the Climate Ecological Emergency – the impact on natural habitats and biodiversity. They also asked if the proposed amendment would slow down the process. Anna said that ecological issues were inextricably linked with climate change issues and so would be part of conversations. She said she felt the amendment wouldn't significantly slow the process. Maxine Crawley said that while she would agree to the amendment, FTC should be trailblazers and she would be proud if FTC was linked to Extinction Rebellion. She agreed that young people should be involved in the process. The amendment suggested by John Nelson is as follows with added sections in bold and original wording struck through. It is recommended that Frome holds Subject to Cllrs approving a grant application to fund it, and as part of the Council's efforts to widen consultation and participation of Frome residents in developing the council programme, it is recommended that Frome tests the methodology of a Citizen's Assembly to inform our climate emergency work and increase engagement and profile – this is contingent on securing external funding. Assuming this happens, and subject to Cllrs approving the detailed process and subject to establishing it, the Assembly will feed into four climate emergency panel meetings focussing on specific, practical actions needed to achieve the	
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	town's zero carbon targets. The resultant draft report will be presented at Council on 22nd January for comments, revision and or potential approval. This was seconded by Maxine Crawley and agreed unanimously. The amended recommendation in full was: Subject to Cllrs approving a grant application to fund it, and as part of the Council's efforts to widen consultation and participation of Frome residents in developing the council programme, it is recommended that Frome tests the methodology of a Citizen's Assembly to help inform our climate emergency work – this is contingent on securing external funding. Assuming this happens and subject to Cllrs approving the detailed process and subject to establishing it, the Assembly will feed into four subject orientated panel meetings focussing on specific, practical actions needed to achieve the town's zero carbon targets. The resultant draft report will be presented at Council on 22nd January for comments, revision or potential approval. This was proposed by Rich Ackroyd, seconded by Sheila Gore and agreed unanimously.	AF
2019/21/FC	6. For information – discussion on Have Your Say and input into the next FTC strategy document Sara Butler and Scott Ward left the meeting at 9:15pm. Rachel Griffin explained the Have Your Say cards and online survey open to the public for several months. This will generate ideas for the People's Budget Town Vote but will also allow the public to share their views on the priorities for Frome. She handed out the cards to Cllrs and others present to fill in. Paul Wynne explained the role of the strategy document and said that work was planned to create the new strategy which would come to a later council meeting.	
2019/22/FC	7. Appointing a Chair to the Grants Advisory Panel John Nelson proposed Scott Ward as chair of the Grants Advisory Panel. No other nominations were received. The recommendations were 1. Resolve to appoint a Chair to the Grants Advisory Panel 2. Receive nominations for and appoint a Chair to the Grants Advisory Panel This was proposed by John Nelson, seconded by Rich Ackroyd and agreed unanimously.	

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2019/23/FC	8. Appointing a Deputy Chair to the Planning Advisory Group Steve Tanner proposed John Nelson as deputy chair of the Planning Advisory Group. No other nominations were received. The recommendations were 1. Resolve to appoint a Deputy Chair to the Planning Advisory Group 2. Receive nominations for and appoint a Deputy Chair to the Planning Advisory Group This was proposed by Steve Tanner, seconded by Maxine Crawley and agreed unanimously.	
2019/24/FC	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 25 September 2019 at Frome Town Hall	

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.34pm.