

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 22 January 2020 at 7pm
Frome Town Hall, Christchurch Street West, Frome BA11 1EB

Present:

Councillors: Richard Ackroyd, Ali Barclay, Lizzie Boyle, Sara Butler, Rob Collett, Anita Collier, Maxine Crawley, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Sheila Gore, Anne Hills, Paul Horton, John Nelson, Andy Palmer, Steve Tanner, Scott Ward, Andy Wrintmore

In attendance:

Pauline Davey and Neil Howlett (Frome Chamber of Commerce), Susie Watkins (Hub News), John Clarke (MDC & SCC Cllr), Martin Dimery (SCC Cllr), Adam Boyden (MDC Cllr), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk and Economic Development and Regeneration Manager), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Jane Llewellyn (Planning and Development Manager), Anna Francis (Resilience Manager), Kate Hellard (Community Development Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Chris Stringer (Environment Manager), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

14 Members of the public

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2020/1/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence None was received.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests Sara Butler and Mark Dorrington declared personal interests in Item 6, as trustees of Fair Frome.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 20 November 2019 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 20 November 2019 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Anita Collier, seconded by Sara Butler, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2020/2/FC	<p>2. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs Gill Fone expressed concern about the condition of the paving stones in Shepherds Barton. Gill also commented at Chateau Gontier Walk the posts along the river bank were rotten and some had been thrown in river. She noted metal chains had been put in and asked if they were temporary? Chris Stringer confirmed it was a temporary fix that had been put in for the Christmas period. Replacements were</p>	

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	<p>subject to budgets and he was looking into a more attractive solution for the river bank.</p> <p>John Clarke noted that SCC were consulting on their climate emergency framework, there would be a meeting on 15 February in Shepton Mallet. He encouraged everyone to complete their survey on the climate emergency. He also explained that SCC had initiated discussions around their proposals to become a unitary authority. There would be a dedicated website at some point. John was unaware what level of public engagement there would be and asked FTC to consider what role they could take.</p> <p>Pat Tayler made a very generous offer to purchase a seat/bench for bus users in Cork Street. Chris thanked Pat for her offer and would contact her to discuss the options after the meeting.</p> <p>Alison Douthwaite informed Cllrs of Frome Power Chair Football Club’s fundraising efforts to provide a pool pod to allow those with physical disabilities to easily get in and out of the pool. As well as installing a Changing Places facility for inclusive use of the leisure centre. Alison explained they needed to raise £50k and were looking at all sources of funding, including applying to FTC’s Substantial Project Grant Fund, she would also be grateful for any Cllr involvement.</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>PWy</p> <p>CS</p>
<p>2020/3/FC</p>	<p>3. Presentation from Pauline Davey and Neil Howlett, Frome Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Pauline Davey, President of the Frome Chamber of Commerce explained their mission was to be the business voice in community discussions. She noted Frome was a thriving town made up of lots of different elements. The Chamber believed that, if all stakeholders worked together, they could make Frome an even more attractive place to live, work and socialise. One of their aims was to increase their membership in order to have a stronger voice. Pauline said their plan was to host a business festival in October 2020. The aim was to get businesses together to create networking opportunities and for them to discover they could meet their business needs in Frome. In turn it would help businesses grow and create jobs and support the local economy.</p> <p>Neil Howlett, member of the Chamber, noted their Manifesto set out their priorities: namely for businesses to have enough space in the right place and making the town centre a good place to visit for residents and visitors. He said the Chamber hoped to continue to work with FTC on many issues and opportunities such as Selwood Garden Village and SCC’s unitary proposal.</p>	

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	<p>Rich Ackroyd asked Neil and Pauline if they felt FTC did too much or not enough as a council? Neil said he felt sometimes FTC took on too many things. He said FTC had excellent officers who worked hard, and the Chamber had an excellent relationship with them. He felt Cllrs needed to remember the pressure officers were put under. Neil asked them not to overload officers; do fewer things better in his opinion.</p> <p>Lizzie Boyle commended the work of the Chamber and their participation in the good business framework. She was concerned about in-work poverty and wanted to work with members of the Chamber to make sure they were paying the living wage to all their staff. Neil explained they had held a fair wage event in the past and the time would be right to hold another.</p>	
2020/4/FC	<p>4. For decision - Selwood Garden Village</p> <p>Mark Dorrington reminded Cllrs the item was only to decide FTC’s involvement, not whether FTC supported the proposal for Selwood Garden Village (SGV).</p> <p>Steve Tanner gave an overview of the proposals. He explained that FTC had been asked to help engage the local community and stakeholders in the consultation.</p> <p>Ric Swann presented the position of the Frome Civic Society. He explained they took issue with some of the assumptions in the proposal and felt those planning SGV were saying one thing to FTC and another to the landowners. They believed there was no need for this type of development. Ric also said the Civic Society supported FTC’s aspirations but felt the recommendations were conflicted. He suggested that as a council FTC could not take the lead in underpinning plans whilst being neutral. By doing this FTC would give credibility to a money-making exercise and asked FTC to defer their decision until the Civic Society could present their alternative proposal.</p> <p>Steve Tanner explained FTC’s aim was to be proactive and not reactive and that FTC was not conflicted. It did want to ensure that the community could engage with the proposals that were on the table and not those that were not.</p> <p>John Nelson suggested amending the recommendation to say FTC would enable the community in any development that came up.</p> <p>Andy Jones felt there was a real opportunity for FTC to engage with the public to show they (the public) could make a difference. Often people who do provide feedback never get any response to their feedback.</p>	

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	<p>Paul Horton had concerns over the perception of FTC support and suggested FTC should engage the community in discovering what the town needs but not in relation to SGV.</p> <p>Andy Palmer asked what FTC's our legal position was and the effect on its reputation. Paul Wynne explained that legally there was no problem and it was a common practice amongst District Councils for potential developers to financially support District Council in order to provide sufficient planner capacity for their development. Steve said if the consultation was handled correctly, he didn't foresee see any reputational damage.</p> <p>Neil Howlett said Frome Chamber of Commerce did not yet have a view on the SGV proposals. He noted that an application to the Planning Board could not be made until the Local Plan had been adopted which wouldn't be for months yet, meaning there was not yet an imperative to act. He said the people of Frome needed to be given the opportunity to say what they wanted and didn't want from the proposal.</p> <p>Ali Barclay noted FTC needed to find out what the town needed and that this would cost money. FTC did not have the staff time or expertise to do this alone. Funding was needed to engage effectively.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the need for SGV and if a need had been identified and the perceived conflict of interest if FTC took money from the Land Valuation Agency - the promoter of the scheme.</p> <p>Adam Boyden suggested FTC could draft a development brief for the area and support public interest as an alternative. Jane Llewellyn noted this could be possible but was unsure there would be enough time. Mark Brierly, NVB Architects, and one of the proposers of SGV, said the plan had been developed because Frome was in need of a strategic development including infrastructure to avoid more piecemeal developments.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the wording of the recommendations and whether to delay the decision. Ultimately it was decided that Cllrs did not have the luxury of delaying the decision due to the likely rapid submission of the application.</p> <p>Paul Horton proposed to accept recommendation 2 and defer decisions on recommendations 1 & 3 although no one seconded this.</p> <p>Recommendation 1 was amended to:</p>	
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	<p>1. Frome Town Council and partners enable the community and stakeholders to set the vision, concept and principles for a possible development that will underpin any future plans for Selwood Garden Village or alternative schemes</p> <p>Proposed by Rich Ackroyd, seconded by Andy Palmer, agreed by majority.</p> <p>2. Draft a detailed plan of community engagement, identify all the relevant stakeholder groups within the community and identify the principles of development for what the town needs</p> <p>Proposed by Rich Ackroyd, seconded by John Nelson, agreed by majority.</p> <p>Recommendation 3 was amended to:</p> <p>3. Consider financial support from LVA or other suitable sources to enable FTC to employ someone to facilitate public engagement, subject to an agreement that FTC will remain neutral</p> <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Andy Wrintmore, agreed by majority.</p>	
2020/5/FC	<p>5. For information - Frome Town Council’s Climate Emergency Plan</p> <p>Anna Francis summarised her report. She highlighted the work she had already completed such as holding climate workshops, improving building energy efficiency, the project to establish a microgrid at Saxonvale, increasing bike use, increasing electric charging points, reduction of waste, community fridges, local food growing, to name just a few.</p> <p>Anna said her aim was to make her work on the climate emergency plan participative, to find different ways of engagement and to allow people to comment and make suggestions.</p> <p>Anita Collier asked if there was a way of collecting spare produce from allotments. Anna said that some had linked with the community fridge. There was also a possibility of working with Edventure to set up an electric rickshaw scheme to be able to collect more surplus food.</p> <p>Lizzie Boyle commended Anna’s work and the amount she had achieved. She thanked Anna for all the work she had and continued to do.</p>	
2020/6/FC	<p>6. For decision - Work programme, budget and precept demand for 2020/21</p>	

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Rich Ackroyd introduced the three elements. He noted the focus was on bringing people together, creating a strong and resilient community, ensuring there were more free and open spaces, maintain play areas and invest in buildings for job opportunities and the growth of business. He explained the work programme required staff time and was ambitious to complete but was all worth it to make Frome a better place.

Paul Wynne explained the process that staff had been through to get to the current proposal. Staff started from the FTC Strategy, which was ambitious and founded on enabling the community. Paul noted he and the staff were confident the work programme could be delivered.

Peter Wheelhouse highlighted the priorities of the work programme. He noted staff had consulted with interested Cllrs on what they thought were priorities and what projects could be stopped or continued. Peter listed the key themes being ambition, increasing participation and building communities, addressing the climate emergency, supporting young people, assisting the growth of the local economy, enhancing the local environment, supporting the vulnerable in the community and, finally, finish what had been started.

Paul noted that FTC had an ambition to support young people and therefore there was a proposal to recruit a business administration apprentice. In addition, Chris Stringer would need to expand the Town Ranger team and recruit Wild about Trees Project Officer.

Sarah Williams gave an overview of the budget proposal. She started with a zero budget, added fixed costs and then discussed with Managers what additional budget was required to deliver the work programme. She had been given a steer from Cllrs over an acceptable increase in the precept. This resulted a budget increase of £206,008. The increase was mostly due to increased costs of staff, community support, managing open spaces and supporting town events. Sarah noted that there were also fewer unspent reserves than last year to offset the increase.

Sarah explained FTC had three sources of income. The first being the precept. Based on a Band D property in Frome FTC were proposing a £184.66 increase over the year working out at 58p per week. The second was income from Frome Town Hall mainly from rental of the rooms and spaces. Third, Sarah proposed to contribute £43k from the General Reserves which would retain the level of the General Reserve at £180k, in line with Financial Regulations. She also noted that new Ear Marked Reserves had been identified. All in all, this equalled a balanced budget.

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	<p>John Nelson congratulated everyone for their work. He noted the Strategy was a living document and would be revised continually. He asked how much flexibility there would be to take on something not planned for? Paul explained the work programme was full. However, there was a desire to embrace flexibility. He noted that if something was added to the programme later something else would have to be taken out. Like the Strategy, the work programme was also a living document.</p> <p>Andy Jones suggested that the objectives were relatively soft and encouraged staff and Cllrs to identify metrics of success.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the work programme for 2020/21. 2. Note there is sufficient budget allocation to cover forecast staff costs 3. Approve the proposed staff structure for 2020/21 4. Delegate to the Town Clerk to recruit the half time tree project officer, the half time ranger and the business administration apprentice 5. Approve the additional forecast Earmarked Reserves at 1 April 2020 6. Approve the forecast General Reserve at 1 April 2020 and that £5k be used to offset expenditure in 2020/21 7. Approve the precept demand of £1,633,108 <p>Proposed by Andy Palmer, seconded by Anita Collier, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Rich Ackroyd thanked all FTC staff who contributed to the work programme and budget.</p> <p>Bob Ashford thanked FTC for all their support, which had helped Fair Frome to grow their services and reach.</p>	PWy
2020/7/FC	<p>7. For decision - Calendar of meetings 2020/21 The recommendation was to approve the calendar of meetings for 2020/21</p> <p>Proposed by Sara Butler, seconded by Ali Barclay, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2020/8/FC	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 18 March 2020 at Frome Town Hall</p>	

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.34pm