

FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Town Matters Committee

Wednesday 5 August 2020 at 7.15pm
Zoom

Present:

Councillors: Richard Ackroyd, Ali Barclay, Sara Butler, Rob Collett, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Paul Horton, John Nelson, Andy Palmer, Steve Tanner, Andy Wrintmore

In attendance:

Jess Read (Transport Engineer), Tina Gaisford Waller (Hunting Raven), John Clarke (MDC/SCC Cllr), Shane Collins (MDC Cllr), Drew Gardner (MDC Cllr), Adam Boyden (MDC Cllr), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Kate Hellard (Community Development Manager), Anna Francis (Environment Manager), Viv Whitaker (Project Officer), Beccy Byrne (Marketing and Communications Officer), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

9 Members of the public

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2020/11/TM	The meeting started at 7.15pm 1a. Apologies for absence Received from Anita Collier, Maxine Crawley and Scott Ward 1b. Declaration of members' interests Rich Ackroyd, Ali Barclay, Mark Dorrington and Nick Dove declared disclosable pecuniary interests in item 6 as they were shareholders of FRECO. 1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 12 February 2020 The minutes of the Town Matters Committee meeting held on 12 February 2020 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair. Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by John Nelson, agreed by majority.	
2020/12/TM	2. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs John Nelson asked what had been happening recently at Willow Vale and the removal of trees? Sara Butler explained that she and a group of residents were taking action to prevent Network Rail removing more trees. She was involving Cllrs at all levels. Cllr John Clarke requested Cllrs wrote to the Frome Times to support the transfer of the Broadway allotment site to FTC.	

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2020/13/TM	3. For information – Update on retail and hospitality sectors & support provided during Coronavirus outbreak Viv Whitaker gave an overview of the report. She highlighted the following: • MDC had provided grants up to £25k – FTC had assisted in getting messaging out and helped individuals get access to the funding • FTC’s key role was communications and thereby providing guidance and opportunities • FTC organised online training and support – arranged a webinar from a consultant with good take up from businesses • Online events – Discuss and Do particularly had continued online. The attendance had been higher than in person events and moving the event online in the future was being considered • FTC promoted alternative services – most notably through the Discover Frome website • Took out a double page spread in the Frome Times twice, advertising businesses that were reopening • Enabled social distancing by closing side streets • Created banners to encourage shoppers into the town centre • Jane Llewellyn worked with businesses to help them make pavement licence applications so they could trade outside their shop • Promoted ‘Eat out to help out’ scheme – so far sixteen businesses had signed up • Continued to work with the retail group – they were focusing on challenges and opportunities the recent crisis had brought Tina Gaisford Waller – from Hunting Raven bookshop - spoke of her experience as a retailer during lockdown and how reopening recently had been for them. Her experience of reopening was like doing the play without a dress rehearsal. She was pleased that what had happened at every stage had been better than she initially thought, trade has come back strong and footfall had been manageable. A big help had been the retailers ‘What’s app’ group, they had been able to share ideas and learn from what other retailers were doing in the town. A big thing on her mind was Christmas which she would normally be preparing for now as Sept – Dec was their busiest for book sales. She proposed ‘Christmas wrapped up early’ to encourage people to shop locally but slightly earlier than usual to combat the issues of the winter months and the possibility of a second wave. Tina said it would be useful to buddy up with other retailers for communications with the backing of FTC. Rich Ackroyd asked Tina what the general feeling amongst the retailers was about the town centre development? Tina said it was hard to tell as there was so many factors such as road works, return from lockdown, lack of the Frome Festival, the weather and it was	
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	impossible to separate them from each other. Hunting Raven's sales were on a par with last year and the feeling was that the works were not negatively impacting them. She did note that visitors had found it difficult to access the town centre and more signage directly visitors to car parks would be useful. Anne Hills said Frome was fortunate to have so many independent shops. Tina agreed and said when you have a personal investment, you were connected to the community and what you did.	
2020/14/TM	4. For information – Ideas to support Frome's Recovery Peter Wheelhouse provided an overview of the report. He highlighted: • A working group had been formed to start looking into Frome's recovery • The 'What Next' survey was sent to every household in Frome – it was crucial to ask the community what was important to them • The survey highlighted the biggest challenges for residents during lockdown was not seeing family, shopping, finances and employment • However, there were benefits such as, community spirit, green spaces, reduced traffic and walking & cycling • Clear actions from the survey were to help businesses, support walking & cycling and improve public transport • Recovery panels took place in July. There had been a number of recommendations from each of the seven panels which FTC would be taking forward over the next few months: Transport Group • Safer cycling routes -Implementation routes £20k per new route (one being pursued) • Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. • Cycle confidence classes and Dr Bike (Being pursued) • Edventure are recruiting a new team to develop a mobile 'Dr bike' project in autumn. • More e-bikes - hire of e-bikes to local businesses was highlighted as a need. • Maps showing cycle routes, cycling, and walking speeds would be useful. • Active travel programme to encourage walking and cycling to school and work etc. • Clean air network – to enable to see live impacts of air pollution. (Being pursued) • Creative ideas to support people to slow down Community Organisations Group • Free school meals through holidays (being pursued)	

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	• Homelessness – accessible information point in the town • Service gaps (being pursued) • Digital inclusion - To consider a wider digital scoping project to identify what needs there are (access to Wi-Fi / practical resources e.g. laptops, tablets and training) • Volunteers – promoting opportunities and re directing our new volunteers • Explore Drug & Alcohol existing services, their capacity and signposting mechanisms • Ring organisations to update records Neighbourhood networks • Wild About Frome – to identify green spaces that neighbourhoods can claim. • Conflict resolution training – addressing difficult issues noise too many cars etc • Sharing resources - noticeboards in gardens? • Gatherings and opportunities to meet each other. Possibility of umbrella insurance for streets / networks – mayors grants • Peer to peer platform where network activators can talk to each other, share ideas and ask each other questions. Business Recovery Panel • Enable hospitality businesses to trade on the street and in some open spaces in the town centre to address the constraints of small premises (being pursued) • Consider how pop-up shops could be supported in major venues such as the Cheese & Grain • Develop a ‘Deliver Frome’ service for hospitality businesses similar to Deliveroo • Make the town centre more attractive (being pursued) • Work with training providers (on the Vocational Training Group) to support businesses that are struggling to recruit including the development of new apprenticeship schemes staff (being pursued) • Work with training providers (on the Vocational Training Group) to address the growing demand for digital skills • Could Western Warehouse be part of this solution? • Growing and training centre: Field to Fork Vocational Training • Create a page on FTC website with information and links to training opportunities relevant to residents in Frome (including distance learning)	
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	• Survey of local businesses to find out what they feel their current training needs are, and training needs/ skill gaps over the next 1 – 3 years. • Information about training and upskilling included in an FTC comms for people who are not online • Webinar around wellbeing and meaningful employment (incorporating upskilling) Frome Arts Forum Recovery Panel • Support collaborative efforts and re-engage the group to share learning • Connect with What Next - looking at culture, policy, and advocacy regionally and nationally • Identify the economic value of local cultural organisations with a Frome Cultural Impact Survey & make infographic to engage support from wider community, lobby MP etc (Being pursued) • Supporting the local organisations to deliver outside events when rules allow • Promote Frome Performers without other opportunities through busking and Online performance platform similar to Bristol arts channel (Being pursued) • Revival of Frome Busks Resources Group • Lockdown will reduce incomes and increase fuel poverty next winter. Bulk insulation programmes and projects such as Healthy Homes by Prescription need to be key focus of our work in this area. • Promote and support resource sharing in light of reduced income and need to reduce waste, e.g. SHARE, community fridge • Repair programme including directory of local repairers, advice and repair cafes • Landscape Sensitivity Analysis to enable us to identify areas for food growing, renewables and tree planning and to feed into the Local Plan (a separate item on this agenda) Cllr John Clarke noted that this had been a positive exercise. It was crucial for MDC and FTC to work together. Peter explained he was having regular meetings with his counterpart at MDC and regularly meeting with other towns in Mendip to share ideas and collaborate. Anne Hills asked for John's help in encouraging MDC to release the funds to FTC that had been promised to the parish sector by central government. John noted that this would be a real challenge.	
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2020/15/TM	5. For decision – School Streets Feasibility and Consultation Anna Francis introduced the report and explained recent work by FTC had demonstrated an increase in demand for safer ways to walk and cycle. The ‘School Streets’ project would help to embed active travel. Anna was working with Jess Read, an experienced transport consultant. Jess introduced the concept of ‘School Streets’ and how it would work in Frome. She noted: • Walking and cycling were now recognised as forms of transport by the government • Jess and Anna were working together on scoping exercises • COVID had revealed a lot about child health in Frome • The School Street would provide an active corridor • It would be access only – residents could still park in front of their houses, school staff could still park at the school, emergency vehicles and delivery drivers could maintain access also • The proposed street was about a mile and covered four schools, representing about 20% of pupils in Frome • There would be clear signage to indicate entering a School Street • If it went ahead in September it would initially be a pop up with temporary signage and cones • It was a four stage process with likely full implementation by June 2022 if successful. Ali Barclay asked what support was in place to support children who weren’t strong cyclists? Jess explained the priority would be safety and there would initiatives in place, such as active (walking) buses made up of five children with one parent, volunteer stewards, one adult every 100m, ideally adults cycle with children, and improved crossings at Broadway and The Butts were key. Anna noted that the plans included family training to increase cycling confidence. She explained most people don’t walk and cycle because they don’t feel safe. John Nelson was concerned about shutting down streets. He felt it needed to be made clear what roads would be shut and that there needed to be a much longer consultation. Jess clarified that the roads would not be shut. She had been informed of the residents parking scheme and appreciated the amounts of work that goes into consultations. She explained the School Street project was an emergency measure because of the scale of the health emergency. Andy Palmer felt the proposals lacked detail of how residents wanting to use the park, for example, from further afield, would do so. He suggested that shortening the extent of the road closure to exclude roads around the park would be helpful. Jess said it was	
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	important in the weeks ahead to understand what was needed. It was possible to make parking spaces available and could be accommodated in the design. Fiona Puleston asked how a crossing would work at The Butts? Jess explained that they were missing a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which would allow strategic management of HGV's. The crossing hadn't been designed just allocated. Paul Horton asked what the benefit of a LCWIP was? Jess explained those towns with LCWIP's had been more successful in securing external funding. It would be beneficial to do one as soon as possible, but important to have a consultation of at least six months. Lenka Grimes asked how could affordable bikes be made available to people? Anna explained there were plans for bike jumble and noted it would be good to link with Fair Frome. Anna was also looking into a bulk buying cycles to offer a resident discount as well as talking to the Bike Academy. There was a discussion about the consultation and the length of time that should be given to this. Some Cllrs had concerns that if the scheme started in September it would not give residents enough time. Others felt that delaying the scheme until January would mean it would be much less successful in encouraging a behaviour change. Jess also noted that now was an unprecedented moment with central Government enthusiasm and funding available. She explained there would always be a level of push back. Paul Horton proposed an amendment to the first recommendation which is in bold below. 1. Approve the commissioning of a School Streets feasibility and consultation programme with a view to starting a scheme in September Seconded by Anne Hills, agreed by majority. Opposed by John Nelson. The revised recommendation was: Approve the commissioning of a School Streets feasibility and consultation programme with a view to starting a scheme in September Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Paul Horton, agreed by majority.	AF
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	2. Subject to the outcome of the feasibility and consultation programme bring a report back to councillors as soon as possible Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Paul Horton, agreed by majority.	AF
2020/16/TM	6. For decision - Environmental Landscape Sensitivity Analysis Anna Francis gave an overview of the report. She explained the intention was to commission a study which would indicate areas that were less sensitive and enable the establishment of new solar farms, wind turbines and woodlands. The results from the study would feed into the Local Plan. John Nelson asked how Frome was to achieve zero carbon locating renewable energy production outside the parish? Anna explained that no town was autonomous. It would require only eight turbines to meet Frome's energy needs. The study would be about looking at a few opportunities within a mile or two of Frome and anything built would be community owned. The profits would go straight back into that community. Anne Hills asked if the findings of the analysis could be made available to neighbouring parishes for free? Anna said this would be the case and it would be a shared resource. She expected MDC would include the study in the Local Plan. Cllr Drew Gardner asked if water mills had been considered? Anna explained that the possibility of hydro power had been explored in the past. The findings indicated that there was a danger of increased flooding in some areas. However, other options were being explored. The recommendation was to approve expenditure of the £5,000 already allocated for this work in the Resilience budget, to support the landscape sensitivity analysis for wind, solar and tree planting around the town and the surrounding areas. Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Rob Collett, agreed by majority.	AF
2020/17/TM	7. For decision – Field to Fork Proposal Anna Francis gave an overview of the report which proposed that an existing EMR established following a donation from a private individual be utilised to support the Field to Fork project. In particular, the fund the sinking of a bore hole for irrigation.	

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	John Nelson suggested that the request for funding should be part of the grants process in order to give other groups, such as the Allotment Association, a chance to apply for similar funding. Anne Hills suggested that this proposal was different in that the funding had been donated by a private donor and shouldn't be re-allocated without their permission. She noted that the Grants Advisory Panel would welcome applications from groups such as the Allotment Association. Sarah Williams explained that the donor had agreed to divert the donation to this particular project. The recommendation was to confirm support for the Field to Fork project and thereby contribute £1k towards the bore hole. The recommendation was to confirm support for the Field to Fork project Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed by majority.	AF
2020/18/TM	8. For decision – FTC to work with Public Square to review, co - design and co - produce the Grants process Kate Hellard gave an overview of the report and described the proposal to work with the consultancy called Public Square. Andy Jones enquired who would be part of the proposed panel? Kate explained initially there would be a small group who would design the process including who would be part of the panel. She noted it would not be Cllr or staff heavy. The recommendation was for the Town Matters Committee to agree to the Grants Advisory Group working with Public Square to initiate and deliver a co – design project with a focus on designing a grants process that meets local need. Proposed by John Nelson, seconded by Rich Ackroyd, agreed unanimously. Ali Barclay requested that it became practice to have a ten-minute break for any meeting that exceeded 1 hr 45 mins.	AP/PWY
2020/19/TM	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 7 October (venue to be confirmed)	

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.57pm