

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 17 November 2021, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

Rich Ackroyd, Rob Collett, Anita Collier, Maxine Crawley, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Sheila Gore, Anne Hills, Paul Horton, Andy Palmer, Scott Ward and Andy Wrintmore

In attendance:

John Price, Arthur Close (Frome Tennis Club), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Jane Llewellyn (Planning and Development Manager), Kate Hellard (Community Development Manager), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

9 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall

3 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2021/42/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7.01pm</p> <p>1. The Mayor, Andy Wrintmore, proposed that all meetings of FTC and its committees will in future meet in person and return to being formal meetings.</p> <p>Proposed by Andy Palmer, seconded by Maxine Crawley, agreed by majority.</p>	
2021/43/FC	<p>2. A short presentation from John Price, Frome Tennis Club Maxine Crawley left at 7.06pm</p> <p>John Price gave a summary of the recent improvement to tennis facilities located in Mary Baily Playing Field. The current issue is the need for floodlighting to allow for continued growth in membership by enabling playing on darker evenings. They had so far raised 70% of the funding but there was a shortfall that could not be covered by a loan. Rich Ackroyd suggested using volunteer labour to keep costs down. John didn't think this would be feasible but was willing to consider all options.</p> <p>Cllrs asked that John had a conversation with Chris Stringer, Environment Manager, and come back to council with a proposal for Cllrs to consider if appropriate.</p> <p>Arthur Close, Treasurer, gave Cllrs an overview of their latest plans to install two new gates. This was being done to ensure</p>	

	<p>the safety of children using the courts and made sure the courts were inclusive.</p>	
2021/44/FC	<p>3a. Apologies for absence Andy Wrintmore proposed that Cllrs accepted apologies from Ali Barclay, Lizzie Boyle, Sara Butler and John Nelson.</p> <p>Proposed by Rich Ackroyd, seconded by Scott Ward, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>3b. Declaration of members' interests Andy Palmer declared a non pecuniary interest in item 5.</p> <p>3c. Minutes from the last meeting on 22 September 2021 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 22 September 2021 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Mark Dorrington, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2021/45/FC	<p>4. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs Andy Wrintmore read out a summary of the Frome Town Neighbourhood Policing Report. This included a well-received visit of the police's Drugs Bus in Victoria Park in October. Cllrs also were pleased to hear of a reduction of anti-social behaviour in the town centre.</p> <p>On behalf of Ashley Reay from Frome Community Speedwatch, Anita Collier asked if FTC could re-apply pressure on SCC to finally get the speed indicator device for Frome in situ. Peter Wheelhouse said he would be happy to approach officers at SCC. Andy Palmer as Leader of FTC agreed to speak with the county Cllrs.</p> <p>Rich Ackroyd wanted to urge MDC to put more resources into protecting mature trees in the town, particularly by placing more Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on existing valuable trees before any planning approval was given. He proposed a letter to Mendip's Chief Executive to that effect. MDC Cllr Helen Kay said she would welcome this effort from FTC as she had been working to have an additional person at MDC to help the one Tree Officer. She was also trying to push for a change in a planning policy to ensure more trees were planted. Peter Wheelhouse said he would work with Planning & Development Manager, Jane Llewellyn on a draft a letter. Andy Palmer also suggested raising the issue at their next meeting with MDC Leader Cllr Ros Wyke.</p>	<p>PWh/AP</p> <p>PWh/JL</p>

<p>2021/46/FC</p>	<p>5. For decision - FTC's Position on the Rollout of 5G Jane Llewellyn presented a summary of the report and the recommendation.</p> <p>Concerned members of the public Karen Churchill, Amy O'Brien and Joanna Price urged Cllrs not to remove the precautionary principle over installation of 5G that was adopted in 2019. They also urged FTC to work with them to address an apparent contradiction between a general requirement on councils to weigh up all the evidence in determining planning applications whilst complying with a strong directive from Government that councils will minimise the barriers to 5G deployment. They confirmed that they were challenging what they considered to be a failure of the Government to properly assess the risks of 5G and presented evidence to suggest that there were serious health, environmental and moral implications of the Government's 5G rollout across the country.</p> <p>Andy Palmer read out a statement on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. The statement set out the Chamber's support for 5G provision that improves access to decent broadband speeds and improves connectivity in an area where coverage is patchy.</p> <p>Scott Ward highlighted that FTC is only a statutory consultee on planning applications and must work within the system. Since 2019, he has done a lot of research on 5G. He is interested in the potential impact on ecology, but he felt that there is so much conflicting evidence available for and against 5G that he doesn't feel that he has seen definitive proof one way or the other.</p> <p>Mark Dorrington appreciated the work Karen, Amy and Joanna had done but suggested they should be talking to MDC who, as the planning authority, decide whether to approve 5G masts.</p> <p>Anita Collier said she had sympathy with Karen, Amy and Joanna but felt there was an argument for the businesses to have access to faster broadband speeds to help them survive and thrive. She felt it was hard to pick and choose between all the arguments and evidence out there. FTC had followed government guidance during the pandemic; the same should now be done for the rollout of 5G.</p> <p>A member of the public with a background in health and safety commented that 3 statutory acts require a risk assessment to be undertaken but he has never seen a risk assessment on this</p>	

	<p>technology. He said that someone is legally responsible to produce a risk assessment.</p> <p>Rich Ackroyd thanked Karen, Amy and Joanna for their presentation. He said that he has undertaken some research on 5G, and he has observed that neither the World Health Organisation nor Public Health England have said that 5G is dangerous. Rich said that we don't know for sure, but we are in no position to question other's technical expertise. The recommendation regarding the siting of 5G masts encourages FTC to consider proposals on a case-by-case basis which in his view is a precautionary approach.</p> <p>Sheila Gore backed Rich's comments but suggested that we should try to encourage the use of fibreoptic technology as an alternative to masts where possible.</p> <p>Steve Tanner asked Jane Llewellyn whether the Planning Committee will see all applications for 5G masts and Jane confirmed that this is the case.</p> <p>The recommendation was FTC will support planning applications for digital communications infrastructure, including 5G masts, notwithstanding legitimate planning concerns around siting and design.</p> <p>Proposed by Andy Palmer, seconded by Nick Dove, agreed by majority. Rob Collett and Paul Horton abstained.</p>	
<p>2021/47/FC</p>	<p>6. For discussion – Events</p> <p>Rachel Griffin provided a summary of the report. The report highlighted staff capacity with next year's event list totaling 600 hours of staff time.</p> <p>Rob Collett said the events list was incredibly impressive and he was full of admiration for what Rachel's team achieves. He asked how they decided between events? Rachel explained the direction came from Cllrs and the list in the report was the suggested draft list from staff. She noted there was always flexibility.</p> <p>Anita Collier said she had huge admiration for Rachel's team and said they did an extraordinary job. She noticed Window Wanderland was not on the suggested list. Rachel explained Window Wanderland was an excellent example of working in partnership. It will happen next year and will be run independently and supported by FTC.</p>	

	<p>Adam Boyden asked how could FTC support low risk community events on other council land? Kate Hellard explained that FTC were doing some work through the neighbourhood networks, such as making street closures easier. FTC were encouraging neighbours to get together in lots of different spaces including FTC land. Rachel also noted that Hannah Stopford was working on streamlining the process in terms of risk assessments and insurance for small events.</p>	
<p>2021/48/FC</p>	<p>7. For information – 2021/22 Work Programme – mid-year review Peter Wheelhouse gave a presentation summarising the mid-year review of the work programme. Highlights included the parks and open spaces, play encouragement, People’s Budget, weddings, the Neighbourhood Network, Play Streets, FIND, business support, vocational training, providing a voice for the community on planning, exploring opportunities for regeneration, the green and healthy futures programme, making streets safe for cycling, walking and play, supporting the local food network, a satisfactory report from the external auditors and transitioning to hybrid meetings.</p> <p>Scott Ward said it was highly commendable that during the pandemic FTC officers carried on doing things and adapted other things so they could still be delivered. He said he was always in awe of what FTC achieves. Peter thanked Scott and said he would share his comments with the staff team.</p>	
<p>2021/49/FC</p>	<p>8. For information – NALC Local Council Award Scheme Laura Flaherty gave a summary of the report.</p> <p>Laura confirmed that FTC had been awarded the top level of award by NALC and read out the following quote which explained the gold award, “The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. Quality Gold councils provide leadership for their communities, bring people together, have excellent business planning processes, ensuring value for money as well as constantly seeking new innovations and opportunities to improve. They highlight the very best we, as a sector, can achieve for our communities.”</p> <p>Congratulations were given to all staff and Cllrs.</p>	

<p>2021/50/FC</p>	<p>9. For information – Unitary Somerset update and to decide whether to work with the other Mendip towns over devolutions of some assets and liabilities</p> <p>Kate Hellard provided a summary of the report.</p> <p>Rob Collett said he was under the impression Local Community Network’s (LCN’s) were toothless. Kate explained that FTC were interested in being involved in a pilot to try to ensure that they weren’t. She noted priorities and/or actions made at the LCN level might not need a decision or funding by the unitary authority. She said they had learnt a lot by listening and talking to colleagues in Cornwall who had been through the process.</p> <p>Scott Ward asked if taking on assets from SCC had been considered? Kate explained that the unitary consultants had compiled a list of assets owned by MDC and SCC to help FTC work out what would be the most appealing to Frome. However, at that moment any devolution deals would require all five district councils to agree until vesting day.</p> <p>Rich Ackroyd said he felt we should be keen to grab as much as FTC could. He said as Cllrs they would do everything they could to properly resource any new services or assets acquired through the process. Kate said that the unitary process had lots of opportunities, but it was likely that the unitary council would insist that the devolution “deal” would need to budgetary neutral.</p>	
<p>2021/52/FC</p>	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 19 January 2022, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

Table 1 - Agenda items

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.12pm