

# Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 7 September 2022, 7pm  
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

**Present:**

In the Town Hall: Fiona Barrows, Sara Butler, Philip Campagna, Anita Collier, Carla Collenette, Mark Dorrington, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Lisa Merryweather, Ben Still, Steve Tanner, Mel Usher, Andy Wrintmore

**In attendance:**

Sarah Merritt (Deputy Chief Nurse RUH), Dawn Denton (Somerset Cllr), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Kate Hellard (Community Development Manager)

Approx. 15 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall  
8 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2022/59/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Philip Campagna proposed to accept apologies from Nick Dove.  Seconded by Fiona Barrows, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests None was received.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 10 August 2022 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 10 August 2022 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.  Proposed by Andy Wrintmore, seconded by Anita Collier, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2022/60/FC	<p>2. <u>Q</u>uestions and comments from the public and Cllrs</p> <p>None was received.</p>	
2022/61/FC	<p>3. For discussion and decision - Possible next steps as a result of current closure of Frome Birthing Centre</p> <p>A summary of report was given by Carla Collenette. Sarah Merritt, Deputy Chief Nurse RUH, joined the discussion via Zoom. A number of community groups and organisations were</p>	

	<p>represented at the meeting such as Frome NCT, Baby Connections Jane Norris who is a midwife.</p> <p>Sarah explained a number of midwives left employment after covid meaning there was a national shortage. There were a number of a student midwives coming on line. However, there was a period of time that they needed to remain in the main hospital in Bath to gain the necessary experience. Since May, Sarah had recruited 30 newly qualified midwives and 11 experienced midwives. Unfortunately, there were still some gaps meaning some services could not be covered. And this meant that services in Frome were lower than she would want. She recognized people's disappointment about the local service but her priority was to keep mothers and babies safe. In her view this was best achieved by concentrating resources in Bath.</p> <p>Nick White, Friends of Frome Hospital trustee, asked Sarah if it was four midwives that were needed to run a full service in Frome? Sarah said this was the case, new members were joining in the next month, and they were keen to return to the continuity of care model. They were also hoping to reintroduce home births in the next month to six weeks. Once community births were reinstated they would be able to provide full services 24 hours a day.</p> <p>Ellie Clarke asked if the strain on the ambulance service was part of the reduction of services? Sarah explained this was not the case.</p> <p>Carla asked Sarah what was being done to retain new midwives? Sarah noted it was complex. A number chose to take retirement after covid. Some began their training before covid and had a less than ideal experience. The midwifery service bursary had also been removed meaning midwives had to pay for their university fees. Sarah was hoping to be able to offer this again asap. More mature students were reluctant to train as midwives due to lack of funding. Sarah was pushing for the 18 month conversion course from nursing to midwifery. Finally a pathway for maternity care assistants to go through an apprenticeship for midwifery was being explored.</p> <p>Amber Strong, pregnancy, birth and post-natal doula and Vice Chair of the Somerset Maternity Voices Partnership, gave a short presentation. She noted the impact of the current closure of the Frome Birthing Unit. This included for those without a car, those with young children at home and those that laboured quickly. She noted that it was a legal right to have a home birth.</p>	
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	<p>There was a discussion about an equitable service and engagement in the community consultations.</p> <p>Jane Norris, midwife, stated how hard working she and her colleagues were and how dedicated they were. She felt some midwives did not complete the training because it was such a high pressured role.</p> <p>Those in the room split into groups to have a discussion about what could be done to help.</p> <p>Feedback was:</p> <p>Table 1 Rebalance the narrative to say that the service was doing everything they could to reopen</p> <p>Table 2 Conversations with the community were important as some would not be aware the birth centre was closed.</p> <p>Table 3 Everyone recognized it was the system that was broken</p> <p>Table 4 Look at other services nationally and how they were operating. See how FTC could support volunteers to support women around birth trauma more</p> <p>Table 5 Providing more forums for those working in the service and supporting the volunteers.</p> <p>The points discussed would be collated, shared with Sara Merritt via Carla who would keep the dialogue between Sarah and FTC open.</p> <p>Sara Butler thanked everyone for their contributions.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support the Frome NCT campaign.</li> <li>2. Write to the NHS decision makers inviting them to discuss possible solutions and how FTC and the Frome community might be able to help.</li> </ol> <p>Proposed by Andy Wrintmore, seconded by Ben Still, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>Carla Collenette / PWy</p>
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<p>2022/62/FC</p>	<p>4. For information - Update on the Frome Town Hall</p> <p>A summary of the report was given by Rachel Griffin.</p> <p>Highlights of the report included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bookings had already exceeded the income budget for 2022/23</li> <li>• Café space has struggled to be a bookable space but otherwise used often by staff and visitors for informal meetings and lunch.</li> <li>• Additional wedding dates added for 2023 and 2024</li> <li>• Ground floor windows had been draught proofed</li> </ul> <p>Fiona Barrows asked if there was a way to keep a space at the Town Hall that was relaxed and informal. Paul Wynne noted the café was hoping to be that space and there were sofas around the building on both floors for informal meetings.</p> <p>Carla Collenette asked if the café could be used by community groups who did not have funding to pay. Rachel explained there was a structure in place for this already if a community group gave under two weeks' notice and there was space it would be given for free. Other community groups also get discounted spaces.</p>	
<p>2022/63/FC</p>	<p>5. For decision - Review of FTC's Communications Strategy and an update on marketing and communications</p> <p>Rachel Griffin gave a summary of the report.</p> <p>The recommendation was to establish a panel comprising a few councillors, members of the marketing and comms team and external experts - with a review and a return to council in November.</p> <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Lisa Merryweather, agreed unanimously. Mel Usher abstained from voting</p>	
<p>2022/64/FC</p>	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 5 October 2022, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

Table 1 - Agenda items

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.25pm