

Agenda item 5

For decision - Frome Town Council's Plan for 2022 - 2024

Authors: Frome Town Cllrs

Summary

This strategy has been developed by Cllrs in consultation with staff and partners over the first six months of the new administration, and we thank all of those who have taken the time to contribute. This strategy provides a high level workplan to drive the work of the Council, and the actions will be kept under constant review, to ensure we not only do what we have committed to doing, but that it is helping to deliver the outcomes identified for the people of Frome.

Recommendation

Approve the Council Plan 2022 - 2024 in this report and instruct the Town Clerk to the amend the current work programme for the remainder of this year to deliver it and to draft a work programme and associated budget and precept for 2023-24 for approval at the January 2023 Council meeting.



FROME TOWN COUNCIL PLAN 2022-24

“More than anything though, it’s the people of Frome that make it special. We are proud of our town, we love living here, and we think that our sense of community – helping each other, looking after each other, learning from each other and getting together to enjoy ourselves, is fundamental to who we are.”

Cllr Max Wide, Deputy Leader

Council Plan 2022 to 2024

Introduction - October 2022

Our Town

We have worked together to make sure that Frome is a great place to live and work; it is welcoming, charming and vibrant. It has a wealth of history, a booming art, cultural and creative scene, (arts in Frome is one of the top reasons people visit and choose to live here). It has beautiful parks and biodiversity rich open spaces, a very wide range of independent shops, markets, and places to eat and drink. More than anything though, it's the people of Frome that make it special. We are proud of our town, we love living here, and we think that our sense of community – helping each other, looking after each other, learning from each other and getting together to enjoy ourselves, is fundamental to who we are.

Amidst this positive story however is the reality that this prosperity is not all encompassing or evenly spread. In the past few years, for many people the world has been turned upside down. Pre-existing fault lines have become fissures into which many people have fallen, and others may fall, if we do not take collective action. No one could have known the huge events that would touch the lives of all our citizens, communities, and businesses; a global pandemic, war in Europe, a cost-of-living crisis. Frome is one of the most successful towns in the UK, but rising costs threaten businesses and their employees. Those made vulnerable by poverty, poor quality and unaffordable housing and ill-health, face horrendous choices and the ability of many people to give to others, is now very constrained.

This plan

This plan is designed to make lives better for people living and working in Frome and the surrounding areas. It is based on all the evidence we have about the problems we face and the opportunities that are in front of us. It is the product of new, independent councillors working with staff and asking, "what can we do to make a real difference".

This plan is divided into two distinct parts.

- Firstly, the things we believe we must do now to avert the crises that face our community.*
- Secondly, the longer term work we must do to build a town that is environmentally sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous with a community that is more resilient, happier, and better able to shape its own future.*

This current plan is proposed therefore for the next two years, with a formal review towards the end of that period, at which point we will re-assess the situation that faces us. This review will also give us the opportunity as a town to build a vision for Frome. We'll do this

through widespread engagement with the people, something that we have not been able to do at this time, as the urgency of the situation and the need for action weighs upon us.

The Superpower of our Town

As we face the future, we should however not forget that during recent adversity we learnt about the fundamental strengths of our town. During the pandemic we witnessed people coming together to look out for and support one another. We saw community groups, step up and step in to offer lifesaving help long before the remote machinery of the larger organisations arrived. We saw our many of our businesses change the way they work overnight, keeping people in employment, providing essential goods and services. We saw public services going more than the extra mile. We will need to mobilise all these strengths again deal with the challenges ahead.

What can we do as a Council?

We should be clear also about the role of the Town Council. Unlike the District, County, and the upcoming Somerset (unitary) Councils we do not possess large budgets, service and mandatory responsibilities. We do provide some direct services to the public, but we are a relatively small organisation. We are lucky to have a passionate, dedicated, and skilled staff group, organised into our marketing and communications, environment, planning, resilience, and community development teams, supported by business management and led by our Town and Deputy Town Clerk. It is they that will provide us with the capacity and capability to drive this plan. Much of what we aim to do, we will do in partnership with other organisations. The opportunity that emerges from the formation of the new Somerset Council, gives us scope for a more significant role.

We will not forget however that our strength and unique contribution is in our local knowledge, networks, and relationships. We do not want to run and control everything, we want to actively give power away, to create self-sustaining activity in an increasingly resilient community. Frome is home to so many talented and dedicated people and we want to ensure that their energy and resources are harnessed for the greater good of the Town.

As a Town Council we are:

Advocates and champions of the town we know so well, engaging, listening, and using local feedback and knowledge to sense test available data, to make sure the story it tells is true. We are an organisation that speaks up for those whose views are ignored and whose views are not being considered.

Convenors and co-ordinators of people and groups in the Town, helping to join together the different agencies, County and District Councils, the NHS, Police, Fire and rescue and third sector providers so that their efforts are more than the sum of their parts, and they are focussed on the real needs and doing things that work.

Sign posters and guides that pull together diverse sources of information and help people to find the services and facilities that exist in the Town.

Catalysts and supporters of new initiatives in the Town, identifying gaps in provision, providing practical help and grant funding for people with new ideas.

Challengers and innovators helping the Town to think about the challenges of today and tomorrow, posing difficult questions and trying innovative ideas.

Providers and managers of services and assets where help is urgently needed in the short term and where in the long term we can show that we have the capacity and capability to provide more community benefit.

These roles will be evident in the work, set out in the remainder of this document, that we will do over the next two years and beyond.

Part 1 Deal with the crisis

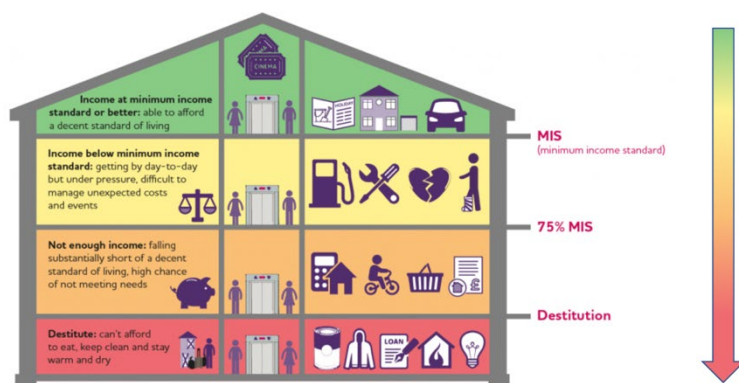
Reduce poverty
Protect community assets
Respond to the climate emergency

Reduce Poverty

What is the situation?

Since late 2021 there has been a growing crisis in the cost of living fuelled by inflation, soaring energy bills, higher taxation, and disproportionate increases in the cost of lower priced goods. The impact of these increases in Frome has been to drive more and more people into poverty and create greater mental ill health. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation says that poverty is:

“Not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation – and even discrimination – because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society”.



The illustration (left) shows the relative levels of poverty below the minimum income standard. The effect of the cost of living crisis could be to push more and more people down through the levels toward absolute poverty or destitution.

What are we trying to achieve?

We don't want to see anyone in absolute poverty, we don't want to see anyone in problem debt, we don't want to see anyone cold, or hungry or homeless. Whilst we recognise our powers are limited, we will do all we can, and work with our partners to ensure they are doing all they can, to tackle the crisis that an increasing number of people are facing, and eradicate these problems in Frome.

We will work with our partners to

- Reduce the impact of the burgeoning cost of living crisis on the people of Frome, as well as tackling long term deprivation.
- Reduce reliance on the current forms of emergency support, as people are enabled to live well without these things and enjoy independence and dignity in their lives.
- Improve access to training and secure investment in new job opportunities that deliver greater economic resilience.

What will we do?

| Council Role | What will we do | By when? |
|---------------------------|--|----------|
| Advocate/ champion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information we need and understand what the situation is in our neighbourhoods in four areas of need - food, energy, housing & income | Oct 22 |
| Convenor/ co-ordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring together all the organisations that are working on poverty and identify the people most at risk and monitor gaps in the current provision. | Oct 22 |
| Sign poster/ guide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to existing support (financial, practical, emotional) for those in need everyone eligible & wanting to claim welfare benefits are claiming. | Dec 22 |
| Convenor/ co-ordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify best practice food initiatives (Community Kitchen, Supermarket and Dining) and work with partners to enable local projects | Dec 22 |
| Convenor/ co-ordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work to join together the various initiatives stemming from the County Council, the NHS and community groups so that they create a help hub (digital & physical) | Mar 23 |
| Catalyst/ supporter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide practical resources, support, advice and training at a street level to neighbourhoods identified as most in need to reduce poverty and mitigate cost of living increases | Ongoing |
| Provide/ manage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support during this period for existing initiatives that can be used by all residents: welfare rights advice, food bank, community fridge and coat rack. | Ongoing |
| Catalyst/ supporter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of new and existing initiatives for those in fuel poverty: to include support for warm banks and warm homes. | Nov 22 |
| Provide/ manage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and distribute information and signposting material for Frome residents detailing local information about sources of help | Dec 22 |

| | | |
|----------------------|---|--------------------|
| Provide/Manage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support during this period the management of the refugee hub for the Frome area on behalf of Somerset Council | Until Oct 23 |
| Advocate/champion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressure public service organisations to target reductions on those in need, especially a 100% council tax reduction scheme | Dec 22 |
| Catalyst / supporter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how partners can improve the training and business incubation offer in the Town to keep people out of poverty | May 23 |
| Provide / manage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deploy the Substantial Grant Fund to specific targeted cost of living mitigation projects. | Nov 22 April 23 |

Protect Community Assets – Frome Town Football Club

What is the situation?

Earlier this year Frome Town Football Club found itself in a very difficult situation and approached the Town Council for help. A combination of factors, including the pandemic reducing access to loans, put the club in a precarious financial situation. Had we not stepped in, Frome would have lost one of its important community assets.

The club is important to the Town (under eighteens and youth teams at every age group, supporting around 600 players in total.) It is also a valuable community facility, an important employer, and a source of community pride with unrealised potential to develop new and improved facilities and expand the range of activities and people involved.

What are we trying to achieve?

The Council does not have any desire to be a long-term owner of the football club, the aim is to work with the club, experts in the field and the supporters and the wider community to achieve the following.

1. Continuation of football at Club beyond 2022
2. By 2023, a change to the structure of the club leading to
 - a. a community-based organisation
 - b. greater long term financial security, and wider community ownership through the purchase of shares
2. Wider social engagement especially harder to reach groups such as travellers, unemployed, large families. LGBTQ groups and ethnic minorities.
3. To improve the ground and pitch facilities and services by investigating the potential of a new stand, retention of the solar panels, a new artificial pitch and a new club house

4. *Make best use of the land surrounding and adjacent to the ground and to prepare a brief to inform decision makers about the feasibility of building a new ground.*

What will we do?

| <i>Council Role</i> | <i>What will we do</i> | <i>By when?</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <i>Provider / manager</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Secure debt redemption and charge with possible ownership of land and ground as first step.</i> | <i>Done</i> |
| <i>Sign poster / guide</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensure town is aware of possible problems and advantages of approach through press statements and continuing engagement</i> | <i>Started and ongoing</i> |
| <i>Catalyst / supporter</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Set up Football Club Panel internal to council and then wider involvement to start campaign for community owned club</i> | <i>Done</i> |
| <i>Challenger / innovator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Visit examples of community run clubs and identify lessons</i> | <i>Now</i> |
| <i>Catalyst / supporter</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with the club to develop a new strategy</i> | <i>Sept 2022</i> |
| <i>Catalyst / supporter</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agree the approach to community club and if necessary, start a share issue campaign. Ensure maximum public engagement and generate excitement across town and in the immediate area.</i> | <i>Xmas 2022</i> |
| <i>Provide / manage</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop a plan for delivering new facilities that can be enjoyed by both the club and the wider community</i> | <i>May 23</i> |
| <i>Convenor / co-ordinator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensure that we see a return on our investment to enable us to invest and/or support other valuable community assets</i> | <i>Sep 23</i> |

Respond to the climate emergency

What is the situation?

Frome Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2018 and followed this with declaration of Ecological Emergency in 2021. The issue remains every bit as urgent as it was

then, and the commitment to net zero carbon by 2030 is a key target for this town. The reality is that as a Council we cannot deliver net zero carbon on our own, but we can support communities to take action, and create the infrastructure needed to support behaviour change.

What are we trying to achieve?

Working with our partners, community groups, businesses and individuals we want to:

- Increase Frome’s **biodiversity**, using data already gathered through our Wildlife Mapping project as a baseline to measure our progress.
- Develop **energy resilience** by increasing the amount of energy we generate as a town through renewable sources, increasing the EPC ratings of **homes**, and ensuring all new developments are as energy efficient as possible.
- Increase the number of **businesses** aiming for and achieving net zero in Frome.
- Develop **food resilience** through a thriving local food network and an increase in the amount of food consumed in Frome that is grown in Frome.
- Increase the number of people using **active travel** and **public transport** over private cars.
- Develop a **circular economy** in Frome, reducing the amount of waste leaving Frome and encouraging reuse and recycling.

What will we do?

| Council Role | What will we do? | By when? |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| General | | |
| Challengers/ Innovators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the impacts of climate and ecological breakdown on Frome, review the strategy to mitigate these at a town level, and consider adaptations we can make. | Strategy: End 2024 Adaptations: on-going |
| Provide/ manage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide (subject to funding) through the Green and Healthy Frome partnership, Healthy Homes, Evaluation, Cycle Together and Fair Frome projects | Ongoing |
| Convenors/ Co-ordinators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the independent development of climate and biodiversity community groups and initiatives. • Communicate the work we are doing to respond to the climate and ecological emergency and build resilience as a town, and encourage residents to participate in and contribute to climate action. | Ongoing |
| Biodiversity | | |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Catalyst / supporter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Wildlife Mapping Project in partnership with SERC and look at ways of further encouraging engagement, through schools in particular. | On going |
| Energy and Housing | | |
| Catalysts and supporters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the ability for residents and communities to save on energy bills and retrofit their homes through the Healthy Homes programme, and creating a street level retrofit project (subject to CAF funding), | April 2023 |
| Advocate / champion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign for sustainable future developments, and support and encourage Housing Associations to access funding for retrofitting projects. | Ongoing |
| Catalysts and supporters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support FRECO (Frome's energy company) to acquire land and build community-owned wind turbines in and for Frome alongside exploring new opportunities for solar, microgrids and other renewable generation. | Ongoing |
| Business | | |
| Challenger / innovator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to develop the Good Business framework to increase impact, including energy savings and carbon reduction Retain Plastic Free Champions awards. | Summer 2023 Ongoing |
| Food Resilience | | |
| Convenor / co-Ordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and support food resilience initiatives developed through the Frome Food Network and other organisations. Review provision for food growing in Frome, including allotments, and encourage community growing projects. | On going Summer 2023 |
| Active Travel | | |
| Advocate / champion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of our conversation with the new Somerset Council, make the case for a town-wide transport strategy for Frome that prioritises active and sustainable travel and includes metrics that measure success. Promote and campaign for better public transport infrastructure and greater use of it in Frome | Ongoing |
| Provide / manage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for funding and promote agreements with developers that support Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) infrastructure improvements Develop signposted network of walking and cycling routes | Once LCWIP agreed – in early 2023 |
| Provide / manage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with residents, local schools, and stakeholders to influence behaviour change to more sustainable and playful modes of transport. Monitor and evaluate the 18 months trial of School Streets and continue engagement with residents and schools. | Spring 2023-end 2024 |

Circular Economy

*Convenor /
co-Ordinator*

- *Promote and support circular economy initiatives developed through Loop, Edventure, and other organisations.*

Ongoing

Part 2 Creating the future we want

*Agree a Unitary Deal
Improve Planning and Deliver Affordable Housing
Revitalise our Town Centre
Nurture our open spaces*

Agree a Unitary deal

What is the situation?

In April 2023 Mendip District Council will cease to exist and its resources and responsibilities will pass to the new Somerset Council. At the time of relationship with the upcoming new Council is developing well. The business case accepted by central government states two important mechanisms through which a new arrangement, in terms of the distribution of powers and responsibilities, budgets and assets, could be developed. Firstly, the business case lists a significant number of items that could be devolved to town and parish councils “where appropriate”. Secondly, we know that the new Council will establish Local Community Networks whose boundaries, roles and responsibilities are yet to be determined.

How we work with Somerset Council will be central to the fortunes of our town and surrounding villages. The future of planning, housing, education, libraries, promotion of tourism, economic development, highways, transport, public and environmental health, waste and recycling and social care will be determined by the new Council. We are aware that it will face a significant deficit and a heavy reliance on business rates. The Council also faces an urgent agenda for children’s services improvement and a demographic time bomb with regards to an ageing population.

What are we trying to achieve?

Devolution

Frome Town Council is already contributing positively to the thinking that is going on to design the new Council, we want to reset the relationship that has previously existed between Frome and the District and County councils, to one based on co-operation, common goals, and mutual advantage. Over the coming months we will need to develop a ‘win-win’ proposal that will bring benefits to town, area, and county alike.

Our initial thinking involves the devolution of assets that are crucial to the future prosperity of the Town centre and its day and night-time economy. The Arts are central to the Town’s identity and prosperity, attracting visitors (Frome Festival attracts 8000 people), creating jobs, developing skills, attracting, and retaining businesses, revitalising places and developing talent. Markets have also become an important part of Frome’s identity. We want therefore in particular to have greater control over the property assets within the Frome’s ‘cultural quarter’ centred on the market yard; the Cheese and Grain, the river front, the car park, and library, to achieve greater integration with already present assets, Black

Swan Arts, and Frome Museum. Through more control and better coordination of these, we believe we can bring greater business development, footfall, and prosperity to the Town, thus benefitting both us and Somerset Council.

Added to this, we want to build on work already underway to help ensure that people, especially the young and very old, do not become marginalised and excluded from the wider community. Working through community groups, businesses, and individuals to stop people falling through the net and remain part of a healthy community.

Control of our open spaces, the promotion of active travel and the development of business incubation facilities all make for healthier and more engaged lifestyles. In return for the development of this offer we believe Somerset Council will see demand for high-cost crisis services diminish as people lead better lives.

If we are successful, then the public will see:

- 1. Transferred ownership of key assets in the cultural quarter to improve the town centre and increase prosperity by 2025*
- 2. Ownership of open spaces whose use can be determined locally by 2023*
- 3. An increase in early help for key groups to tackle poverty, exclusion, and ill health by 2024*
- 4. That as a council we stay true to our role as convenor, advocate, and catalyst rather than a major service provider*

Local Community Networks

As we write, consideration is being given to the geography, governance, and responsibilities of the LCN's which are constituted as sub committees of the new Council. Frome area is a pilot, and all our experience so far shows that to sustain the involvement of parishes the geography should be one that all participants can relate to. We will continue to explore the 5 'functions' of an LCN:

- a) What can we do together as parishes and communities that address common issues and opportunities, regardless of the involvement of Somerset Council?*
- b) What services and policies of agencies can we influence, so that they are doing better things to serve our area?*
- c) What assets and budgets currently run by County and Districts we can own or influence, where more local delivery might be better to meet local needs?*
- d) What new services or innovations can we develop to change the pattern of service delivery?*
- e) What new resources we can attract to help common agendas in our local area?*

We will continue to work under these headings alongside parishes in the local area, to create a network that is a vital forum for the those involved and to make a positive impact for our people and communities

What will we do?

We have significant data and have already listed assets in open spaces in the cultural quarter.

We need to influence key players; the new Somerset councillors and key Cabinet portfolio holders and senior staff at the new Council, to agree our business case.

We need to deliver the agreement, increasing our capacity as a council to do so.

| <i>Council Role</i> | <i>What will we do</i> | <i>By when?</i> |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| <i>Convenor / co-Ordinator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Convene the relevant people to create a vision for the cultural quarter and town centre</i> | <i>Feb 23</i> |
| <i>Convenor / co-Ordinator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Convene the relevant people to build on the work of mapping social and community assets to ensure that and the 'FIND' scheme covers the whole area</i> | <i>Dec 22</i> |
| <i>Catalyst / supporter</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Support, in partnership with other parish councils, and public service organisations and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector the development of a comprehensive early help offer</i> | <i>March 23</i> |
| <i>Provider / manager</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Develop a fully costed and modelled business case that describes the benefits to all parties</i> | <i>May 23</i> |
| <i>Provider / manager</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Build the local community network and submit the outcome to the County wide evaluation exercise</i> | <i>March 23</i> |
| <i>Challenge / innovate</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Promote our business case by obtaining cross-party support and engaging with the new Somerset council</i> | <i>Now onwards</i> |
| <i>Provide / manage</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Create a plan for the managed transfer of assets to the Council</i> | <i>July 23</i> |
| <i>Convenor / co-Ordinator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Support and develop the work of the Local Community Network as a major route to influencing provision in Frome and surrounding areas.</i> | <i>May 23</i> |

Improve planning and deliver affordable housing

What is the situation?

874 households are in need of a home in Frome (a total of 1954 people). In July 2022, there were 4 (four) properties available on Homefinder Somerset site. There are many factors that have contributed to this situation, but the simple fact is that the shortage of affordable housing in Frome is desperate.

Realistically, market housing schemes with the required 30% of affordable housing are the only way in which enough social and affordable housing is likely to become available.

As a council we have been committed to protecting our surrounding landscapes, but also conscious of the need for more housing. In the past town council strategies have been reactive, we generally only know proposed schemes when they are submitted, and we have always 'sat on the fence' during these discussions until such time as we felt that we had to make our wishes clear publicly. Frome is a popular target for speculative developers, and it is probable that we will be fighting off inappropriate schemes for all of this administration.

What are we trying to achieve?

1. Ensure that developments in and around Frome provide the right type and number of units which suits the needs of the local population as well as embracing FTC's climate declaration, the need to promote active travel and add to the economic growth of the town.
2. Ensure that the overall percentage of social and affordable units, which is currently 21% is, at minimum 30% as per policy and a aspirational 40% level with Wells.
3. Success will be developments the town can be proud of, supported by the necessary infrastructure, which are future proofed and reduce the number of residents on the housing waiting lists. The percentage of affordable units will be increased to a minimum of 30% in the current administration.

What will we do?

| Council Role | What will we do | By when? |
|-------------------------|---|----------|
| Advocate / champion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a more proactive approach to developers and developments to push forward what we want | Ongoing |
| Provider / manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Supplementary Planning Document detailing affordable housing. | March 23 |
| Convenor / co-Ordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring together a broad cross section of the community, including those that work in the support and housing sectors to give a balanced view of the problem and identify solutions | March 23 |

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|--------------------------------|--|---------------|
| <i>Advocate / champion</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop and promote a bigger vision of Frome including a comprehensive transport and parking strategy so the public can see the bigger picture.</i> | <i>May 24</i> |
| <i>Provider / manager</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with the new unitary council to improve enforcement of planning within the town.</i> | <i>May 24</i> |

Invigorate our Town Centre

What is the situation?

In recent years, Frome has fared better than most other towns of comparable size in terms of town centre footfall and trade largely down to its vibrant cultural offering and events economy and the strength of its independent retail and hospitality sectors. However, there are threats to this vibrancy due to the slow recovery from the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, changes in shopping habits and competition from other centres.

By building on the town's strengths and opportunities including the potential to develop our town centre cultural assets, make the riverside area a more vibrant destination, build the infrastructure of our growing music industry, the proposals for Saxonvale and encourage more active and sustainable travel, it should be possible to address these threats.

FTC has a role to bring together all stakeholders including property owners, developers, investors, local businesses, users of the town centre and partner organisations to develop a plan that will enable Frome to maintain its competitive edge as a destination whilst meeting the day-to-day needs of local residents.

What are we trying to achieve?

- 1. To ensure more people, both residents and visitors, use the towns shops and attractions that they enjoy the experience, and return to contribute to the local economy.*
- 2. The town centre continues to be a place with unique independent shops and hospitality businesses that can provide an experience that will attract visitors and locals alike to spend time and money.*
- 3. We need to make sure that we facilitate the holding of events in the town that will further enhance its attraction-including markets, music and events and get local support from businesses and organisations to help with the costs.*
- 4. As part of the Unitary discussions, we need to show the mutual benefit to be gained from greater control of our markets.*
- 5. We want to grow the number of active businesses in the town and eliminate vacancies*
- 6. To ensure in partnership with the new Somerset Council that the streets are clean, and the street furniture and public domain is maintained and improved.*

What will we do?

- *Convene stakeholders to develop a plan that will maintain and develop the town centre's vibrancy, (the measures outlined below may form part of our plan but there maybe many more exciting things that we should and can do in partnership with others that will make a difference to the town centre's appeal impacting positively on footfall and trade)*

| <i>Council Role</i> | <i>What will we do</i> | <i>By when?</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| <i>Manage / provide</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Define the actual town centre</i> | <i>Tbc</i> |
| <i>Challenge / innovate</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Engage with Somerset Highways and find a way to make the two crossing points to the BC pedestrian safe</i> | <i>Ongoing</i> |
| <i>Catalyst / supporter</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop a plan to ensure more trees and plants, more places to sit.</i> | <i>May 23</i> |
| <i>Convenor / co-Ordinator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify key stakeholders in the town centre-property owners both residential and non-residential, tenants and business owners.</i> | <i>May 23</i> |
| <i>Catalyst / supporter</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bring together local independent businesses in the retail and hospitality sector with town centre premises at the Town Hall for a facilitated meeting to identify how we can work with them to enhance the town centre for locals and visitors alike</i> | <i>Feb 23</i> |
| <i>Advocate / champion</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We will monitor the situation regarding the collection of rubbish in the town centre and the cleanliness of the streets and press for improvements where necessary</i> | <i>Ongoing</i> |
| <i>Challenge / innovate</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consider ways in which we can calm vehicle traffic by using planters and other street furniture to make the town centre feel safer and pedestrian friendly</i> | <i>Ongoing</i> |
| <i>Challenge / innovate</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage and support local business to organise events in the town centre for example a cycling festival</i> | <i>Oct 23</i> |
| <i>Challenge / innovate</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>As part of our Unitary conversations, explore how greater control of the town centre car parks could bring mutual benefits.</i> | <i>May 24</i> |

Nurture our Open Spaces

What is the situation?

The community is proud of our parks and open spaces, especially those managed by us There are also many small plots of land in and amongst existing housing many of which are currently owned by Mendip District Council. The future of these open spaces is often a point of contention in the competing needs of neighbourhoods to have open spaces at their heart versus the need for housing.

Our parks and open spaces are hugely valued by our communities as places for exercise, as homes for biodiversity and as places to relax and play in. However, because they are so popular, they are sometimes magnets for anti-social behaviour and this sometimes leads people to feel unsafe in them.

As Somerset Council develops there is an opportunity for Frome to purchase or adopt land currently owned by Mendip. How we would resource a greater number of open spaces is an issue and we will engage with residents as we have in the past to explore how they would like to use the spaces, what these spaces provide and how this can be achieved.

What are we trying to achieve

- 1. Biodiversity rich accessible and safe places for residents and visitors to enjoy exercise and relax in that present an attractive 'face' for the town*
- 2. Greater ownership of and control over our open spaces and their future use*
- 3. Sufficient allotments for the needs people in the town.*
- 4. Proper maintenance of all properties in the public realm owned or leased by FTC*
- 5. As part of our commitment to mitigating climate change and our declaration of an ecological emergency we will consider how we can contribute through our Open Spaces strategy, such as more tree planting*

What will we do?

The Ranger team is already delivering outcomes in this area that are obvious to residents and visitors. Alongside the community, we will continue to enhance the quality of our estate as it (hopefully) grows

| <i>Council Role</i> | <i>What will we do</i> | <i>By when?</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| <i>Convenor / co-Ordinator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Convene people who use our open spaces to ensure existing groups are represented but also to reach out to other users whom we have not yet engaged</i> | <i>Tbc</i> |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Challenge and innovate</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with the forum to consider resident involvement in the maintenance and development of open spaces</i> | |
| <i>Catalyst / supporter</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify open spaces that we want to take on during the creation of the new Unitary</i> | |
| <i>Manage / provide</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consider how FTC would service and maintain a growing number of open spaces</i> | |
| <i>Concevor / Co- ordinator</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Work with housing and planning to agree which open spaces should be maintained and which could be made available for housing</i> | |
| <i>Manage / Provide</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensure our parks and open spaces are places that people value highly to enjoy, are accessible and inclusive, and support a wide range of outdoor activities.</i> • <i>Ensure our parks and open spaces can be used to support greater biodiversity</i> | |

How we will work:

Conscious of the fact that there were very few town council seats contested in the May 22 election we are committed to making sure that as many people as possible participate in the development and delivery of our plans. In all our plans you will see the need to convene people to discuss a way forward. We will involve people affected by what we are proposing, as well those with expertise who can help shape our plans so that they achieve the maximum benefit. We will actively encourage the input of creative methods and in particular the Arts to engage people in the town, using as much as possible local creative groups and individuals to provide innovative approaches to raise awareness, provoke discussion, and collectively find ways forward.

Our values as a town council.

Fair, inclusive, and for all.

Frome Town Council is for all of Frome. We strive to make our work as inclusive and accessible as possible and ensure every person in Frome feels the Town Council is supportive of them, their needs and their aspirations. We recognise that we need to give greatest support to those most vulnerable and we are committed to building an equal, diverse, and inclusive town.

Open, honest and transparent.

We are motivated by what is best for Frome and seek to share information clearly and honestly. We are approachable, helpful, and part of this town - entering conversations first and foremost as fellow residents. We are open and transparent, particularly around decision-making, and how town money is spent, and welcome feedback as an opportunity to improve.

Engaging and encouraging participation

We actively encourage engagement and want to support and enable people to make their voices heard and empower people to take action. We believe a resilient town is a town of active citizens - participating and working together for the common good.

Facing the Future

The Town Council raises money through a local precept and spends that on resolving local issues. We are committed to ongoing reviews to make sure that money is well spent and that we are as effective and efficient as possible. We will continue to invest in partnerships with other agencies, to work with the private sector and to win grant funding that accords with our aims. The establishment of the new Somerset Council should provide new opportunities, but it will also bring challenges only if we are innovative and open to radical ideas and solutions.

Alongside all our aspirations, we will always prioritise our work as Ward Councillors, to help and support those residents within our constituencies.