

Minutes of the Frome Annual Town Meeting
Wednesday 5 April 2023, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

In the Chair: Sara Butler, Mayor of Frome 2022/23

In attendance: Approx. 50 members of the public at the Town Hall
8 members of the public on Zoom

1. Welcome from the Mayor of Frome

The meeting began at 7pm and Sara Butler welcomed all attendees.

2. Agree the minutes of the last meeting on 6 April 2022

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2022 were signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting. They were proposed by Anita Collier, seconded by Mark Dorrington, and agreed by majority.

3. Presentation from Cllr Anita Collier, Leader of the Council

Anita began her presentation acknowledging that Cllrs were in their first year of their administration. They decided their starting priorities were the Football Club, cost of living crisis, town centre, parks and open spaces, planning and climate and ecological emergency.

Some of the year's activities

Highlights for Anita included speed indicator devices, engaging schools in active travel, fundraising and support for refugees, promotion of the D2 bus services, School Streets, Frome Buses, Queen's Jubilee, Light the Night and the Weylands Wassail.

How we make ourselves accountable

All Council meetings are open to the public, holding public engagement meetings for example the community benefit society at the football club and Selwood Garden Community. Cllrs have wards that they look after and are ready to take on issues of residents.

What does the future hold

- Supporting public engagement (football club, town centre business, planning, local parishes etc.)
- Regular review of the strategy & the work programme
- Always listening and looking out for new ideas
- Looking forward with unitary (creating a new and supportive relationship with Somerset Council)
- Developing a 'smarter' town

Anita thanked the FTC staff team for all their skills and expertise. Also, to her fellow Cllrs for their efforts, dedication and commitment. Anita saw Frome as truly unique place and was blessed with good shops, restaurants, pubs and venues. Frome was also a caring town with many community groups demonstrating this. Anita said she was proud to be a part of this.

Anita finished her presentation by thanking the people of Frome for all they did and all they offered.

4. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs

Paul Wynne read out a question from Elmer and Lucia from Frome Wholefoods, “Can we have assurance that there will be a specific public meeting to discuss the councils plans for their net zero policies including concerns about any possible Low traffic neighbourhoods, and 15 minute cities. As a business owner we need to keep as much access as possible for both customers and deliveries to continue trading in this town”

Sara Butler addressed their questions and noted FTC had agreed to host a town meeting about 15 minute cities as soon as possible. All interested parties will be invited and during that meeting we will open the discussion around what those issues might mean for Frome.

Mel Usher asked for FTC to make a bigger, better and bolder effort to make sure the road in the town centre could be crossed safely for all.

Alison Murdoch noted the Keyford Area Neighbourhood Group concerns about traffic and pollution in Keyford. They had commissioned a report and were keen for FTC to lead on a town wide approach regarding traffic. Steve Tanner noted that a working group had been established to look at traffic and movement in the town. He said he would speak to Alison after the meeting to feed into the conversation.

Julian Quail asked the following questions:

1. Please advise if Frome Town Council will arrange to supply street lighting to both central Cheap St, and Vicarage Street, which are both dangerously dark, as well as arrange to continuously remove the fallen leaves from such streets, which are dangerously slippery
2. Please advise if Frome Town Council will arrange an education campaign to persuade people to clear up their dog's mess, so no one slips on it.
3. Please advise if Frome Town Council will arrange for very frequent emptying of overflowing rubbish bins in central Frome, to reduce post covid risk of rats and disease.

Nick Dove answered, he noted there was a problem in Cheap Street with power and it had been reported. He noted the issue around litter was frustrating, currently there was no contact with the street cleaners due to the changes with MDC. FTC were exploring whether it was possible to take on the contract and have more control.

A resident asked about the closure of the banks and their future as well as the empty shops. Anita Collier noted she was exploring with other people in the community the possibility of a banking hub for small businesses. Mel Usher explained all the shops were privately owned and the banks were not going to come back. He said we needed to think about the implications and what we could do to help people.

5. Presentations from FTC PB Events recipients in 2022/23

Purple Elephant

Sue Willis gave a short presentation. They held the Frome Children's Festival in the summer. They designed the event with children and young people and made it fully accessible. Young people chose activities and designed the publicity and programme. They used widgets to give a clear visual indication of activities. The poster and programme were designed in line with Royal National Institute for the Blind guidance and included British sign language in promotion video. An interpreter was also available on the day to help people. There was 30 different activities, 2 zip wires, arts, craft, sports, magic and a ride on dragon. It was free to attend. Two support workers supported families with additional needs so they could be fully involved. They worked with pupils with additional needs to make sure the festival would work for them. They carried out an evaluation after the event to improve for future events. 3000 people attended. For them it was rare opportunity for people from all backgrounds to come together without stigma and everyone was welcome to take part. 2023 will be their 10th anniversary.

The Good Heart – The Kindness Festival

Alison Murdoch gave a brief presentation. They had over 3000 participants and the second Kindness Festival, 75 volunteers and over 100 presenter's performers and leaders. They had the Frome Kindness challenge where the challenged people to do their own acts of kindness. Preparations for the festival started in the Autumn. The first theme was celebrating kindness such as events, a flash mob, screenings and decorations. The second theme was practicing kindness such as gifts for people in food parcels, clothes swap, joint works of art. The third theme was exploring kindness such as lectures, painting, talking to children, interfaith event and more. Alison explained some of the positive outcomes included positive mental health, multiple acts of kindness and generosity, improved visibility & appreciation for kindness, community-building arts and creativity projects and more. Future plans included follow up discussions, events and activities, schools programme, Caravan of Kindness and other outreach and a third Frome Kindness Festival in 2024 (subject to funding)

Somerset Food Trail

Stewart Crocker provided a brief presentation. He noted the food system was broken with far reaching consequences for health and the planet. The Food Trail identified many enterprises who helped to produce local and sustainable food that reduced carbon output and improve health. The trail encouraged people to become more interested in how their food was produced and the benefits of sustainable food. They created twelve clusters across Somerset including Frome with enormous engagement from enterprises and residents. Stewart showed a video about the food trail which can be viewed here at around the 49 minute mark <https://bit.ly/3oE1kgV> There would be another trail in 2023.

Caravan Arts

Sarah Philips was unable to attend the meeting so sent a video which can be viewed here at around the 52 minute mark: <https://bit.ly/3oE1kgV> On 24 August they held Gatherings film screening. The afternoon brought together refugees and local families to help with community building. It was promoted locally, and the amount attended made it a relaxed and welcoming event. There was a programme of activities at the Silk Mill including circus games, silent disco, face painting, crafts and more. They worked with local freelance creative practitioners. There was a screening of a Pixar short and free catering. The day ended with lighting a fire as a

closing ritual to bring people together to reflect and share emotions. There were over 70 attendees. It was an intergenerational and cultural afternoon.

6. A video compilation of FTC Grant recipients in 2022/23

The Marketing and Communications team created a lovely video to highlight all the wonderful groups and events that happened in Frome with the help of some grant money from FTC. The video can be seen here on our YouTube channel <https://bit.ly/3oE1l5D>

7. Presentation from Cllr Sara Butler on her year as Mayor

Sara started off by saying what a privilege it was to have had insight into the town that only the role of Mayor could give. Her year as Mayor had engendered an enormous amount of pride to see all the work going on in the town. She has also noted how surreal it had been at times particularly when asked to arrest someone despite not having those powers as Mayor.

In her presentation Sara showed photos highlighting the variety of events she had attended. There had been big key town events that were significant to a large majority of the residents like the Queen's Jubilee at the Showfield, the death of Queen Elizabeth II, Paul McCartney playing at the Cheese & Grain and the Frome Carnival and fun day.

Underpinning all these things were the events that brought her to the heart and soul of the town. That was the essence of her year. Seeing the work, the effort often for love, connections, support, good will and the eagerness to look after their communities had been special. Some of the quirky Frome events were the Well Blessing at St John's Church and the lighting of the Valentine's Lamp. Frome Busks and Black Swan Young Artists exhibition demonstrated what creative, innovative and talented young people there were coming through the town, for Sara it had been a privilege to witness.

Sara gave a special thanks to Laura Flaherty who helped support her throughout her year especially with diary management.

8. Presentation of the Mayor's Civic Awards

The Mayor's Civic Awards celebrate those in the community who have gone above and beyond.

Reg Ling

Reg was a bit of a legend in Frome. Not only did he single handily rescue and restore the only remaining gas lamp in Somerset, but he also created the only Valentine's lamp in the world! Each year Reg delights the gathered crowd on Valentine's Day and sets off a rocket to signal the start of the lighting ceremony. Annually taking place on 14th February, the lamp has been lit on only two other occasions, one to mark the death of Princess Diana and last year to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. The award recognises all of Reg's hard work in the upkeep of the Valentine's Lamp and for the joy it brings to residents every year.

Frome Shed

Sara wanted to recognise the team's commitment and incredible dedication to the Frome Shed and all the wonderful opportunities this organisation provides to the people of Frome. Both Frome's Men's Shed and the Women's Shed make and mend things together, they complete a host of their own projects plus many for the community and use their skills for the benefit of the town, for example making bird boxes, community games and assisting with the Coronation flag project. The award was picked up by Pam Curtis, Anne Jones and Ros Whitehouse, who were all members of the Women's Shed.

Tabitha Clayson

Tabitha recently stepped down from being a Director of The Frome Independent Market, having spent almost the past 10 years creating and making the market into the institute it is. The award was to recognise Tabitha's hard work in developing and running the market which had become central to Frome's visitor offer.

Bob Ashford

Following nine years, Bob retired from his role as Chair and trustee for Fair Frome. Bob had been with the charity since its inception in a tiny office in Palmer Street and seen the organisation grow and it now runs the Food Bank, Furniture Bank, Food at Five, Holiday Hunger, Baby Bank and other projects such as supporting the Christmas Get-together. The award was to recognise Bob's commitment and incredible dedication to Fair Frome and the community it serves.

All award recipients received a certificate and flowers.

Sara thanked everyone for attending and invited everyone to stay for food and music.

Meeting closed: 8pm

Cllrs and staff From Frome Town Council in attendance:

Frome Town Councillors: Sara Butler, Anita Collier, Mark Dorrington, Anne Hills, Steve Tanner, Andy Wrintmore

Frome Town Council Officers: Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Beccy Byrne (Marketing and Communications Officer)