

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 15 March 2023, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Fiona Barrows, Sara Butler, Anita Collier, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Lisa Merryweather, Steve Tanner, Mel Usher, Max Wide, Andy Wrintmore

On Zoom: Tracey Ashford

In attendance:

Martin Dimery (Somerset Cllr), Adam Boyden (Somerset Cllr), Bharati Pardhy, Helen Deeming, Julian Hight, Janine Nash, Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Nikki Brain (Resilience Manager), Jo Morris (Resilience Officer), Emma Parker (Project Officer), Owen King (Climate Action Researcher/Evaluator), Hannah Paniccia (Assistant Finance Officer), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

Approx. 30 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall
7 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

To watch to the discussion in full visit: <https://bit.ly/3FYNr2K>

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2023/21/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Fiona Barrows proposed to accept apologies from Philip Campagna, Carla Collenette and Ben Still and from Tracey Ashford who attended on Zoom.</p> <p>Seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests Anne Hills and Andy Jones declared other registrable interests in item 7.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 22 February 2023 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 22 February 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p>	

	<p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Anita Collier, agreed by majority.</p>	
<p>2023/22/FC</p>	<p>2. A short presentation from Friends of Easthill Field Andy Wrintmore arrived 7.14pm</p> <p>Janine Nash began the presentation. She explained that in Mendip District Council’s 2008 Biodiversity action plan the land at Easthill had not been included. In 2011 Natural England did a redesignation including more sites. Friends of Easthill asked FTC for help in protecting the land going forwards. Janine explained that the current cemetery overflow plan would be contrary to Natural England and Woodland Trust advice regarding its designation. The social housing argument was a divisive one. Janine said it should not be one or the other. She noted there were other models that could offer social housing on other sites.</p> <p>Julian Height spoke about the trees on the site. He explained some of trees were designated as notable and veteran trees that could never be replaced. Veteran trees were biodiversity hotspots and hosted wildlife, up to 2300 species, that younger trees could not. The site was recognised by DEFRA. He noted how important it was to get the designation of the site changed.</p> <p>A video was shown of Simon Jones explaining the importance of the site for students of all ages. He argued that Easthill should be a wildlife space for these students.</p> <p>Bharati Pardhy spoke about the wildlife and habitats at the site. Bharati argued that Easthill should be designated as a site of special scientific importance. She noted full ecological surveys, and a management plan was needed. Permission of the land owner was required but so far denied.</p> <p>Nick Dove noted how there was a desperate need for land for affordable homes. He felt Easthill was a good site for this. He said we should find the courage to build homes as we needed to look after human beings. Julian explained that Easthill was not just another field, it was a woodland habitat and parkland and was designated by DEFRA as important site. He said we should have the courage to keep hold of site for future generations and preserve a rare habitat. Janine Nash also explained there was a legislative duty to protect the site and it had been mis-designated in the Local Plan.</p>	<p>PWy</p>

	<p>Mel Usher proposed an informal vote on supporting Friends of Easthill to protect the site. The majority of Cllrs raised a hand in favour of protecting the site.</p>	
<p>2023/23/FC</p>	<p>3. Question from public and Cllrs and Cllrs, including Mendip District Cllrs and Somerset County Cllrs</p> <p>Andy Jones asked for an update on the finger post project. Steve Tanner explained the posts had been ready to go but they had been found to be produced in the wrong colour. They were currently being remade.</p> <p>Rich Ackroyd drew attention to the fact the street lights in Cheap Street were not working. Mark Dorrington explained there had been an electrical malfunction and had been told it would be repaired by the end of March.</p> <p>Rich also raised the amount of proposed funding for the 18 Local Community Networks in Frome and how £300k would not be adequate. There was a brief discussion and Max Wide noted he had mixed views about funding, and there were all sorts of things that could be done even with a small amount of funding. Max encouraged Rich to come to the next Frome Area LCN meeting on 28 March.</p> <p>Martin Dimery noted that Frome would be represented by the following councillors on the East Mendip Planning Board from April: Adam Boyden, Dawn Denton, Helen Kay and Martin Dimery.</p> <p>Adam Boyden took the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work over the years by those who worked for MDC. He said as the only Frome Lib Dem Cllr he felt a responsibility to take things forward in the new Somerset Council. Adam hoped more would improve and all Cllrs could continue to work together.</p> <p>Nick Dove thought the town centre was looking filthy and said it always seemed like everyone else's responsibility to clean it up. He said in the future he hoped there would be one place to call for town centre cleaning.</p> <p>Steve Tanner explained that FTC had only been informed the day before of a consultation on the new planning board and therefore we are requesting an extension.</p> <p>Nikki Brain asked Adam about the countywide energy plan. In relation to this FRECO had identified land suitable for wind turbines. However the project had already been stalled because they had been told the connection required would not be</p>	

	<p>available until 2036. Nikki noted how this was a huge barrier for any big renewable energy projects and asked Adam to bring this to the top of the agenda. Adam said he would ask the officers involved.</p> <p>At the time item 5 was discussed Paul Oster from Mayday Saxonvale requested FTC’s support in calling on Somerset Council to compare the two planning applications for Saxonvale fairly and transparently to ensure the right plan for the future of Frome. Paul Wynne said he would respond on behalf of FTC in support.</p>	<p>PWy</p>
<p>2023/24/FC</p>	<p>4. For information - The next stage of Green and Healthy Frome</p> <p>Fiona Barrows introduced the presentation and gave a brief summary of the report.</p> <p>To view the presentation in full visit https://bit.ly/3FYNr2K</p> <p>Sue Palmer, Project Manager, talked about the vision for a green and healthy town. It was a partnership between Frome Town Council, Frome Medical Practice (FMP) and Edventure. They had spent two years testing and working out what worked, what didn’t and created new job roles to assist in their projects.</p> <p>Each organisation was focusing on particular projects:</p> <p><i>Frome Medical Practice – presented by Sue Palmer</i> Sustainability focused, green community connectors, a focus on engaging FMP staff and plastic free period. Choosing Wisely - saving carbon, reducing medication, optimal testing. Sue explained the next stage was to build more capacity and recruit two new roles.</p> <p><i>FTC – presented by Nikki Brain</i> Cycling Together – initially 93 people were offered a free ebike to try for 1 month; the project had been successful so in the next three years the plan was to expand the fleet of bikes, offer bike maintenance classes and work closely with the Local Community Networks. Healthy homes - improving energy efficiency. Evaluation - to understand impact.</p> <p><i>Edventure – presented by Johannes Moeller</i> Future Shed - testing out ways of engaging people, 275 people actively involved.</p>	

	<p>Telling our story – media channels and website, Frome Times wraparound</p> <p><i>Beyond Frome</i></p> <p>It was not just about Frome it was also about engaging with other communities, councils, medical practices etc. to share and learn from each other. There were opportunities for Frome residents to get involved such as jobs, partnership board etc. Johannes explained the project governance. It was three independent organisations that held grant contracts, they were each responsible for delivering their work, but working in partnership.</p> <p>He noted the impact they were trying to achieve was massive and the targets were a tiny step towards the difference they wanted to make. Green and Healthy Futures was one of the best funded projects in the country. FTC could help facilitate the community to come together to see the win wins.</p>	
<p>2023/25/FC</p>	<p>5. For approval and decision - Financial update to 28 February 2023 and future investment options Sarah Williams and Hannah Paniccia presented the report.</p> <p>Max Wide asked about the CCTV camera that had been donated to the police. Sarah explained that it had been located at Welshmill and it had been taken down to update the software. She said she would ask Simon Humphreys about the plans for its next location. Anita Collier asked for clarification as to whether the police had paid for the purchase of the camera. Paul Wynne explained that due to anti-social behaviour problems on some of the FTC estate, FTC had purchased the camera and gifted it to the police. This was to enable them to monitor behaviour and deploy resources where they are needed. It was for the police to determine the location of the camera. Nick Dove also explained this was common practice for councils to buy and gift cameras to the police.</p> <p>The recommendations were: Approve the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Income and expenditure report to 28 February 2023 2. Variances report April 2022 to February 2023 3. Payments made over £500 for February 2023 4. Balance sheet report including the breakdown of reserves at 28 February 2023 5. Asset Register report for year to February 2023 	

	<p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Hannah gave a summary of the review of FTC’s £400k investment with Charities Churches & Local Authorities (CCLA) as part of research to move the reserves to more ethical banks. Hannah presented four options for Councillors to consider for the investment with CCLA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue investing with the CCLA 2. Continue to invest in CCLA for the time being, accepting the investment exposures shown (see report) along with the risk and seek independent financial advice on low risk/more ethical investments. Return to Council with recommendations. 3. Take the investment out of CCLA immediately and lodge our other existing savings accounts and seek independent financial advice on low risk/more ethical investment options. Return to Council with recommendations. 4. Stop investing altogether and place the funds into our other existing savings accounts. Max Wide asked about the timetable for doing research. Hannah said that we will get 3 quotes, but she was not sure about the timeframe. She has contacted SALC to see if they have any advice on companies to approach. <p>Andy Jones noted he was uncomfortable with the proposed recommendation and would prefer to take the money out whilst doing more research.</p> <p>Anne Hills explained that we are dependent on what is available; FTC may not find an investment option that entirely aligns with its ethics, and it may have to compromise. She guarded against pulling it all out when a better option wasn’t available at that time.</p> <p>The recommendation was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Continue to invest in CCLA for the time being, accepting the investment exposures shown above along with the risk and seek independent financial advice on low risk more ethical investments. Return to Council with recommendations. <p>Proposed by Anita Collier, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed by majority.</p> <p>Anne Hills offered to assist Sarah and Hannah with the research on investments.</p>	<p>SW/HP</p> <p>AH</p>
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<p>2023/26/FC</p>	<p>6. For ratification – Plans to celebrate the Coronation and 25th anniversary celebrations of the Cheese and Grain Anita Collier provided a summary of the report.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows asked if there were plans to hang bunting around the town for the Coronation. Rachel Griffin explained there was bunting available for the Town Hall and Boyle Cross fountain</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the Coronation celebrations as outlined in the report. <p>Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed by majority. Mel Usher and Max Wide abstained.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Support the celebrations of FTC taking on the Cheese and Grain as outlined in the report and, specifically, support the project to collect and collate a Cheese and Grain archive and work with the Cheese and Grain to stage a celebratory community event using £1k re-allocated within the events budget <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Lisa Merryweather, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>RG</p>
<p>2023/27/FC</p>	<p>7. For ratification – Community Grants Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ratify the awards for community grants in table 1. 2. Ratify the decision to award Purple Elephant with funding from the substantial grants fund instead 3. Ratify the decision not to award community grants in table 2. 4. Note the Mayor’s grants awards since the last meeting in August 2022 in table 3 5. Delegate authority to the Community Development Manager to ensure the recommended conditions are met and review the impacts of this funding as appropriate <p>Proposed by Max Wide, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed by majority.</p>	
<p>2023/28/FC</p>	<p>8. For information – Update on staff starters and Leavers Cllrs noted the report.</p>	
<p>2022/29/FC</p>	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 19 April</p>	

	2023, Frome Town Hall and Zoom	
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The Chair closed the meeting at 8.40pm