

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 19 April 2023, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Fiona Barrows, Sara Butler (chair), Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Polly Lamb, Lisa Merryweather, Ben Still, Steve Tanner, Max Wide

On Zoom: Andy Jones

In attendance:

Dawn Denton (Somerset Cllr), Martin Dimery (Somerset Cllr), Adam Boyden (Somerset Cllr), Helen Kay (Somerset Cllr), Johannes Moeller (FTC consultant), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Nikki Brain (Resilience Manager), Rob Holden (Environment Manager), Sean Powell (Town Hall Steward), Becca Evans (Business Administrator), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

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

6 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

To watch to the discussion in full visit:

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2023/30/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Nick Dove proposed to accept apologies from Anita Collier, Philip Campagna, Andy Wrintmore and Mel Usher, and from Andy Jones who attended on Zoom.</p> <p>Seconded by Fiona Barrows, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests Lisa Merryweather declared a personal interest in item 4.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 15 March 2023 Fiona Barrows asked that future minutes list the names of the Cllrs who abstained from voting.</p> <p>The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 15 March 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>LF</p>

	<p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2023/31/FC</p>	<p>2. Question from public and Cllrs and Cllrs, including Somerset Cllrs</p> <p>Gill Fone raised the issue of the silent pedestrian crossing outside Iceland in the town centre and that it only gave pedestrians 6 seconds to cross the road. Gill was also concerned about the lack of sound which guide dogs rely on and the lack of visual display at eye level . Peter Wheelhouse agreed to look into these issues and report back.</p> <p>Gill asked if FTC could confirm if the car park at the leisure centre/Merlin was now going to be pay and display. Max Wide noted that Frome College were responsible for the upkeep of the car park but received no money from the Merlin or Leisure centre. He understood they were in conversation with the leisure centre. Dawn Denton agreed to look into this and report back.</p> <p>Gill also raised concerns that there was no longer a National Express stop in Frome. She also enquired whether FTC intended to take over the riverbank that is covered in brambles and which until recently had been the responsibility of Mendip District Council. This was confirmed. Gill raised a general concern about the number of potholes in the town and it was acknowledged that FTC were already aware of this issue. Fiona Barrows noted Somerset Council’s deficit figure in Dawn Denton’s report and asked where would the missing money coming from? Max Wide suggested that Somerset would probably have to make savings by cutting services.</p> <p>Nick Dove noted that ID Verde didn’t turn up to paint bins as they said they would for the great big spring clean event held in the town centre recently and still hadn’t. He asked if there was a way to find out the value of the contract to clean our streets and collect rubbish? Rob Holden agreed to look into this and feedback. Max Wide noted that Somerset were unlikely to be able to break down the contract for Frome alone but should be able to provide the service level agreement. There was brief conversation about how to contact heads of department at Somerset Council. Dawn said she would look into finding out.</p> <p>Dawn noted that parts of Frome were going to be part of trial for flexi plastic recycling and 3600 houses had been selected. She explained if it worked well it would be rolled out to the rest of the county. She was also planning to hold another parish</p>	<p>PWh</p> <p>DD</p> <p>RH</p> <p>DD</p> <p>DD</p>

	<p>roadshow bringing organisations to the surrounding parishes, the first had been held in Rode.</p> <p>On business support, Dawn confirmed that there would be as a meeting with Somerset Chamber of Commerce at Edventure in the next few days to start thinking about collaborations on training and the use of Edventure as a venue. The first Somerset Chamber of Commerce event in this area will be at Fussells Farm around Field To Fork.</p> <p>Dawn is meeting with Nick Dove soon to discuss the future of the market.</p> <p>Steve thanked Dawn and Adam for their updates and invited representatives of the Green Party to provide updates too.</p>	
<p>2023/32/FC</p>	<p>3. For decision – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan</p> <p>Nikki Brain provided an overview of the report.</p> <p>Carla Collenette asked Nikki where funding could come from for junctions like Bath Road/Christchurch Street West/East. Nikki explained that the Somerset Active Travel Team could put in bids for funding to government and that having the LCWIP would help with this. Steve Tanner also noted that the Saxonvale project would supply a lot of s106 money for the Gore hedge and Bath Street/Christchurch Street West/east junctions. Fiona Barrows said there would likely be a snowball effect; the more that is done the more fundable we would be. Nikki explained that having involvement by organisations like Sustrans was helpful as they had access to other DFT grant pots for upgrades which has already benefitted School Streets.</p> <p>Polly Lamb asked about how well placed we are to secure funding compared with other parts of Somerset given that we have to compete for funding. Nikki indicated that Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) have been produced for Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil, Wells, Street, Glastonbury, and Chard but there are many other areas that have not yet developed an LCWIP.</p> <p>Max commented that we are building a jigsaw bit by bit and this is a really good bit of it together with School Streets. Max said that at the last Local Community Network (LCN) meeting, there was a lot of interest shown in active travel. He acknowledged that there are strong connections between Frome and surrounding villages and the plan to develop a movement strategy would help to fit all of the pieces of the jigsaw together. Nikki had been told that it wasn't possible to</p>	

	<p>link with the LCN when the work started on the LCWIP, but the hope is that we can work with others through the LCN in the future.</p> <p>Fiona highlighted the benefits of the telematics data that shows the movement of people in Frome was collected as part of the project.</p> <p>Helen Kay asked whether new developments are taken into account in the LCWIP. Helen indicated that there is s.106 money coming from David Wilson Homes to improve pedestrian access on the B3092 and there is a desire to put a crossing in too. In discussion around the Movement Strategy in the Working Group there had been discussion about whether the whole LCN or Frome and immediate surrounds should be the focus. To make the project manageable it had been decided to focus on Frome and immediate surrounds. Nikki explained that whilst future demand was taken into account, the routes audited were existing routes. Adding future developments would delay the process but could be added later.</p> <p>The recommendation was to adopt the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Frome.</p> <p>Proposed by Carla Collenette, seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2023/33/FC</p>	<p>4. For decision – Update on football club project and proposal to exercise the Council’s option to acquire the Badger’s Hill stadium</p> <p>Peter provided a summary of the report.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows asked about the relationship between the Community Ownership Fund and Football Foundation funding. Peter explained that the Football Foundation together with the Council’s discounted rent are regarded as match for the Community Ownership Fund funding. Fiona noted that in the business plan other things had been considered such as containers for business and an artificial pitch. She asked if these were still going ahead. Johannes explained these were medium/long term goals. He noted there was still a lot of work to be done on feasibility. The site had more potential than was currently described and a lot could be made of the facilities that are already there.</p> <p>Fiona asked for clarification on the meaning of a full insuring lease. Peter explained the onus was on FTC as owners to insure the ground which would continue throughout FTC’s tenure. In the first year FTC would pay the costs then from the second</p>	

	<p>year the CBS would be charged as part of an overall rental package.</p> <p>Carla Collenette asked about FTC’s liability for the ground and buildings to address health and safety. Peter explained FTC was liable as the freeholder as much as the leaseholder when it comes to health and safety. He noted that if FTC could be sure the necessary improvements are made, and the CBS took on its responsibilities as part of the lease, this would be a reassurance to FTC. Ultimately, it is FTC’s responsibility as freeholder to address the condition of the site.</p> <p>Carla noted that the success of the CBS is pivotal and asked who decides who is on the Board and will FTC and the Club be represented? Johannes Moeller explained that Mel Usher and founding members of the CBS were on the selection panel. The new Interim Board members will serve until the AGM at which point the public members will decide who continues. He explained that the Chair has led the Memorial Theatre and Merlin Theatre. The Vice Chair is the Chief Executive of Voluntary Service Overseas. The Football Club is the anchor tenant for the CBS and following due diligence the CBS may become the shareholder of the Football Club. There was a brief discussion about the membership of the CBS board and the merits of having an FTC representative. Johannes explained that the Head of Community Offers has been taken on by Lisa, but this is not a representative position. Lisa commented that she felt that there should be an FTC representative and she would be recommending to the CBS Board that FTC is offered a position on the Board.</p> <p>Carla asked when the £400K investment would come back. Peter explained the expectation was that the £400k would not come back immediately but it would come back over the term of the lease. He noted the rent had to be affordable to secure external funding and for the CBS to be financially sustainable. Sarah Williams said that we will get the interest that we would have received had the money sat in the bank but there are no immediate plans to receive the capital. Peter said however, that FTC will own the football ground – it becomes a community asset in the way it hasn’t been in the past.</p> <p>Max Wide noted that FTC was perhaps asset rich but cash poor. He said he understood why FTC was buying the ground, in order to protect the asset. Most of our reserves are tied up. He felt it was a hard asset to realise without doing something completely different. He congratulated the team on their funding bid, which he regarded as an exemplary piece of work.</p>	
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	<p>Max asked if there was a sustainable and viable club? If the football team got promoted would the ground need to be repaired to an even higher standard? Peter explained the work to sustain the club was still a work in progress, and they would be asking the CBS to address this. It wasn't just about the football club; it was also the wider benefits to the community. Max asked if income is going up. Johannes explained that income is increasing, and the CBS is a vehicle for further development of the site, but it still needed to be realised.</p> <p>Lisa Merryweather, who now had been appointed as Director of Community Engagement independent to FTC, said she felt strongly that the club should be more than a men's football team. Lisa feels that the Club has a thriving fan base, and it provides some community elements for part of the population that we don't always engage with. The key was developing the site beyond football. The idea of a 'Boxworks' type of development on the grounds had been pitched as other organisations were desperate for space. In addition, youth sports would benefit from access to the ground. There were also opportunities for day services, groups for parents and more. Lisa said it was a really underused asset that could be used to fill gaps in the FTC strategy. Lisa accepted that we won't get all of our money back immediately, but we could make the asset work to benefit the town.</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse suggested the following highlighted amendments to recommendations 3, 4 and 5:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Agree to delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk in consultation with the Business Manager to conclude lease, rent and loan negotiations with Frome Town Community Benefit Society 4. Agree to the option of a loan to Frome Town Community Benefit Society of up to £5k for start-up costs including legal services to be funded from the Saxonvale EMR - to be repaid in years 2 - 4 at 5% interest (terms similar to those offered by the Somerset Community Foundation) 5. Agree to FTC paying year 1's insurance premium of £2414 funded from the Saxonvale EMR, then year 2 onwards from revenue expenditure year with the cost reclaimed from the CBS along with the rent invoices. <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to exercise the Council's option to acquire the freehold of the Badger's Hill football stadium for £1 before 1 July 2023 and instruct a lawyer to complete the necessary documentation 	
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Agree to a 25-year lease to be granted to Frome Town Community Benefit Society with a minimum rent payable in Years 1 and 2 that would be similar to interest earned on £400k in the bank and a step up in subsequent years 3. Agree to delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk in consultation with the Business Manager to conclude lease, rent and loan negotiations with Frome Town Community Benefit Society 4. Agree to the option of a loan to Frome Town Community Benefit Society of up to £5k for start-up costs including legal services to be funded from the Saxonvale EMR – to be repaid in years 2 – 4 at 5% interest (terms similar to those offered by the Somerset Community Foundation) 5. Agree to FTC paying year 1’s insurance premium of £2414 funded from the Saxonvale EMR, then year 2 onwards from revenue expenditure year with the cost reclaimed from the CBS along with the rent invoices. <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Carla Collenette, agreed by majority. Lisa Merryweather abstained from voting.</p>	
<p>2023/34/FC</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. For decision - Establish an Oversight Committee and formalise some informal groups to ensure Council accountability and transparency <p>Lisa Merryweather presented the report on behalf of Paul Wynne.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows was not convinced the advisory groups were the answer to the need for accountability. Max Wide felt the opposite. He said it was about formalising what already exists and is in line with the strategy. It was a step forward and gave Cllrs some scope to deal with items in council that had been ignored. He explained it was about being a catalyst, enabling some groups and co ordinating others. It was a leaping off point.</p> <p>Carla Collenette said she preferred this structure. There was reassurance that there would be accountability. Also, the Advisory groups would be more impactful with involvement of the community.</p> <p>Nick Dove proposed an additional recommendation (see 6 below) specifying a trial period, and reviewing in 1 year. Seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From the May Council meeting establish an Oversight Committee with the remit as described in the report above 2. Note that FTC will continue to take opportunities to enable Town Meetings 3. Between the April and May Council meeting review the current tranche of informal Cllr working groups 4. Propose to the May Council meeting the remit, timescale and membership (including the chairs) of a series of advisory groups 5. Propose to the May Council meeting Lead Cllrs to work closely with each manager 6. In one year review whether to continue with the Oversight Committee <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2023/35/FC</p>	<p>6. For decision – Plans for Nurture Open Spaces Programme A summary of the report was given by Rob Holden.</p> <p>Lisa Merryweather said she understood the reasoning for the recommended vehicle and asked what could be done in terms of carbon/eco off setting to mitigate its impact. Rob explained the Rangers would be using the transit van a lot less and emissions would go down. The recommended vehicle would last a lot longer than an electric vehicle. He explained just by managing green open spaces, enabled massive carbon off setting. Lisa asked a small explanation along these lines was added to the website. Nikki Brain said she was able to re-run a model that detailed FTC’s emissions, which include the new vehicle.</p> <p>Mark Dorrington thanked Rob for all his work. He noted Rob had only been with FTC for six months, but had crammed a lot in and he was really impressed with the new and revitalised Ranger group.</p> <p>Rob Holden suggested a change of wording to recommendation 1 from "Purchase a police sourced CCTV camera and donate to the Police" to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the purchase of a police sourced CCTV camera, install in Victoria Park (total cost £2.6k) and donate to Police <p>The recommendations were:</p>	<p>RG/RH</p> <p>NB</p>

	<p>1. Approve the purchase of a police sourced CCTV camera, install in Victoria Park (total cost £2.6k) and donate to Police</p> <p>2. Approve the purchase of a Toyota Hilux Extra Cab Tipper</p> <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Lisa Merryweather, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2023/36/FC	<p>7. For decision – Approve Chapter 7 Staff and Cllrs Protocol Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendation was to approve Chapter 7 Staff and Cllrs Protocol.</p> <p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Lisa Merryweather thanked Sara Butler for her work in chairing the Council meetings during her year as Mayor.</p>	
2022/37/FC	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 17 May 2023, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.07pm