

Minutes of a meeting of the Oversight Committee

Wednesday 26 July 2023, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Mark Dorrington (Chair), Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Steve Tanner, Mel Usher, Max Wide

In attendance:

Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Hannah Paniccia (Assistant Finance Officer), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

- o members of the public attended Frome Town Hall
- o members of the public were in attendance on Zoom

To watch the discussion in full visit: <https://bit.ly/45DqbRK>

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2023/01/OS	<p>The meeting started at 7.03pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Steve Tanner proposed to accept apologies from Fiona Barrows and note that Anne Hills was running late, seconded by Nick Dove, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests None was received</p>	
2023/02/OS	<p>2. Questions and comments from the public and Cllrs Steve Tanner, on behalf of FTC, offered condolences to anyone who had been involved in the road accident on the A361 that caused two fatalities. This was echoed by Cllrs.</p>	
2023/03/OS	<p>4. For information - Update on the Frome Town Hall</p> <p>This item was brought forward on the agenda to item 3. Anne Hills arrived at 7.22pm</p> <p>Rachel Griffin gave a summary of the report.</p> <p>Mark Dorrington was glad that the Citizens Advice (CA) was back in Frome. He asked Rachel how they were able to offer a confidential service at the Town Hall. Rachel explained that</p>	

	<p>they would hold a triage service in café space and any confidential discussions would take place in room 3.</p> <p>Polly Lamb asked how people were referred to the CA in the Town Hall. Rachel explained it was through Mendip Health Connections by appointment. From September people would be able to drop in. The CA phone line was the easiest and quickest way of contacting them. The Front desk team would have a system of referring someone who needed help on days when the CA were not there.</p> <p>Nick Dove enquired about the status of the Elliot Building? Rachel noted that it was still being rented by Fair Frome for their pantry. The lease was due to expire in December and the expectation was that Fair Frome would want to continue.</p> <p>Andy Jones asked about when the community fridge would be operating out of the Market Yard again. Paul Wynne said that the fridge at the Town Hall had still been very popular. He noted the intention was for FTC to take over the lease of the Loop de Loop building and either move the fridge back there or have a second fridge there.</p> <p>Mel Usher asked that next time could there be a discussion on future use of the Elliot Building before any decision is made to continue with the current tenant. He also asked for a discussion about what is more lucrative and/or provides better service for the town from the town hall offer: short term lets or long term tenants? Paul agreed to bring these two questions back to the committee for discussion.</p> <p>Mel Usher suggested inviting Somerset Officers to a meeting if the transfer of the lease of the Loop de Loop was taking too long. Sarah Williams suggested asking Nikki Brain for an update on progress so far next time as the completion of the lease is very close.</p> <p>Max Wide asked if the budget was still expected to come in? Rachel noted the figure was for firm bookings, and she was still expecting more bookings throughout the year. Frome Learning Partnership had since increased their lease from September so that would increase the budget.</p>	<p>LF</p> <p>NB</p>
<p>2023/04/0S</p>	<p>5. For information – Update on staff starters and leavers</p> <p>This item was moved to agenda item 4.</p>	

	Cllrs noted the report. Mel Usher requested in future new staff were asked to attend a council or committee meeting to introduce themselves.	LF
2023/05/OS	<p>3. For decision - Finance report to Oversight Committee</p> <p>This item was moved to agenda item 5.</p> <p>A summary of the report was given by Hannah Paniccia and Sarah Williams.</p> <p>Andy Jones asked if there was a threshold for requesting 3 quotes for purchase orders. Hannah explained it was £200. She always encouraged staff to list reasons for choosing one supplier over another.</p> <p>Anne Hills gave an overview of her report (Appendix 3.3.) which looked at cash reserve investments.</p> <p>Polly Lamb asked if any other councils used the CCLA? Paul Wynne explained lots of other parish councils used them because they were a pretty safe bet and therefore popular in the sector.</p> <p>Steve Tanner asked if there was a reason FTC could not use Triodos? Sarah Williams explained it was because Triodos was unable to process bulk BACS payments.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delegate to the RFO in consultation with the Town Clerk, the review and appointment of Internal Auditors 2. Approve the transfer of the majority of our cash reserves to the CCLA PDSF 3. Approve Appendix 3.4 Income and expenditure report to 30 June 2023 4. Approve Appendix 3.5 Payments made over £500 for February to June 2023 5. Approve Appendix 3.1 Balance sheet report including the breakdown of reserves at 30 June 2023 <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>After the finance item Cllrs discussed the function of the Oversight Committee and the desire for the content of reports. Around future discussions on finance, suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we making the right financial choices about reserves, for example. 	SW/PWy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on where next regardless of the subject • Strategic progression of the financial function – a medium term financial statement • A clear picture of what the future might bring • Where will the financial gaps be in the future and how will that impact on the precept demand, for example. • How can we increase income and decrease expenditure • How do we compare with other similar councils. • Consider a SWOT analysis, especially focusing on more opportunities and foresee the threats • To increase income, should FTC invest more in securing more grants and sponsorship <p>Mel noted that while the ideas above focused on finance, many could apply to other subject areas too.</p> <p>Lead Cllrs to talk to lead staff about what should be included in future reports. Reports should include the chance to discuss these types of future scenarios.</p> <p>Polly Lamb commented that the structure of the report on finance had clarified the subject. She felt the Oversight Committee would be good for her as a new Cllr and to be involved in helping to shape the next year. She felt everything discussed was always about future thinking and was always subject to debate and how FTC could do it better.</p> <p>Andy Jones noted it was about finding the right balance. Debate could happen in this arena but in an informed way. He said Cllr should get questions answered in advance of the meeting and share those with Cllrs so everyone knows what questions would be asked and discussed. Paul Wynne agreed that questions of detail in advance and the sooner the better would be helpful to allow staff to answer. Pop up questions were perfectly reasonable, but Cllrs may not be able to expect the answer on the night.</p> <p>Mel suggested that this committee could invite people to come to talk about various subjects that are likely to be important in future.</p>	
2023/06/OS	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 25 October 2023, Frome Town Hall and Zoom	

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.12pm