

Agenda item 7

For decision - The process for producing the next FTC strategy for 2024-2027

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FTC is starting the research and collaboration needed to create its next strategic plan. The current Council Plan, www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Frome-Town-Council-Plan-2022-24.pdf was designed to last two years and comes to an end this year. The new Council Plan will focus on 2025-27 and beyond, and will be designed to remain flexible, agile and responsive to changing needs and events.

It's important that the new plan is evidence based and to do this we expect to utilise existing knowledge within FTC, available quantitative data from multiple sources and partners and to develop a set of qualitative data based on engagement with the community, understanding the priorities of the Town. Combined, these quantitative and qualitative data will form the foundation on which the strategy will be drafted and in so doing FTC can be confident that its work in the coming years meets the needs of the community we serve.

Hannah Stopford, our Engagement Lead, has led a series of Cllr and staff workshops to gather existing knowledge within FTC and has defined some draft emerging themes that Cllrs and staff believe to be important. There will be another Cllr workshop to discuss these emerging themes in the next few weeks.

Below are some principles that it is proposed underpin our work on this project from now until formal adoption of the Council Plan later this year.

- A strategy document is necessary, but it should be brief
- The need for clarity, simplicity and accessibility – writing style should be comprehensible to all, and it should include a “why” (why we are doing what we’re doing), “what” (the themes) and a “how” (how we work as an organisation).
- We need a set of themes, and we would consider the outputs of Hannah’s work as the initial basis of this, after further refinement at the future meeting noted above.
- We will collate existing data with partners and develop that data picture over the coming years. We may need to commission new data.
- Once we have defined the themes, we need quickly to engage the Town in ensuring these themes are robust and relevant. The extent and style of that engagement will vary depending on each theme and on our relationship to it.
- We are aiming to develop strategy jointly with other players and to commission additional engagement, as necessary.
- We should use IT solutions as appropriate to expand our ability to engage, store data, invite contributions etc.

The result will be a series of evidence based draft programmes which combined will comprise the new strategy, within which there will be projects: some of which FTC will deliver; some of which we will support other organisations to deliver; and there may be some projects delivered independently of FTC.

Due to the urgency and importance of this work, a defined Steering Group of Cllrs and staff should be delegated responsibility to progress the work and authority to take key decisions. This group will provide monthly updates by email to the wider team to ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the process, prior to ultimate sign off at the Council meeting in November 2024. All such meetings should make appropriate use of IT solutions to ensure the widest possible participation.

We will publish the quantitative and qualitative data on FTC's website (or provide links to external sources for same) for the community at large to use for their own projects such as third party grant applications, reports, and/or developing new policy.

Each year in December, we will review the strategy and then agree an annual costed work programme that will deliver the priority projects for the year ahead.

Recommendations

1. Approve the principles, process and timetable described above to produce the next Council Plan with a view to tabling it for adoption at the November Council meeting at the latest.
2. Delegate to the Community Engagement Lead to commission a short-term research project to build a robust data picture. The project will run alongside of and be informed by the qualitative engagement process (and vice versa). This project to be funded by the Vision 4 Frome EMR and the data will be published on the FTC website.
3. Create a "task and finish" Steering Group comprising of the Leader, the Mayor and the Town Clerk to be responsible for drafting the Council Plan.