

Agenda item 11

For decision - Frome weekly markets – proposed creation of a Market Coordinator post
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Summary (incl. recommendations)

This paper outlines proposed next steps for the management and development of Frome's weekly markets following the end of the interim arrangement with the Frome Independent CIC. It sets out options for future delivery, alongside recommendations aimed at improving stability, increasing footfall, strengthening trader relationships and supporting the long-term sustainability of the markets. This paper sets out the 3 options and makes recommendations.

Recommendations

1. Move away from the third-party operator model
2. Recruit a dedicated Market Coordinator on a 1 year fixed term contract at 4 days per week (Option 1)
3. Establish a Market Forum to support collaboration and transparency
4. Review performance after 12 months against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Background

Frome Town Council took on the operation of Frome Weekly Markets last April from Somerset council. Following the challenges experienced with the third-party operator model for the markets, this paper sets out alternative delivery approaches to ensure the weekly markets are well-managed, financially sustainable and growing in line with agreed KPIs. This will ensure the development of the markets as both an economic driver and increased footfall measure for the town centre.

The intention is to not only retain the benefits of professional coordination, but also strengthen local accountability, relationships with traders and alignment with Frome Town Council priorities.

Strategic objectives

Any future model must support the economic regeneration of the town centre and deliver:

- Increased footfall across both Wednesday and Saturday markets (+15-25%)
- Strong trader retention (80%+) and targeted recruitment
- Improved quality, consistency and presentation
- Increased engagement and visibility
- Move towards financial sustainability
- A market that reflects Frome's inclusive and community-led identity

Option 1: In-house market co-ordinator

To recruit a dedicated Market Coordinator to lead delivery of the weekly markets, managed by the Marketing and Communications Manager and supported by existing FTC staff and stewards.

This option brings control and accountability back in-house, while still providing the professional capacity required to improve and grow the markets.

Proposed role: Market Coordinator

Contract: Fixed term contract for 1 year - 4 days per week (including market days)

Indicative salary: c. £30,000–£36,000 pro rata (depending on Job Evaluation and Experience)

Purpose of the role

To manage, develop and promote Frome's weekly markets, increasing footfall, improving trader mix and ensuring a welcoming experience for residents and visitors.

Key responsibilities

1. Market delivery and operations

- Oversee weekly delivery of Wednesday and Saturday markets
- Manage layout, stall allocation, health & safety and compliance
- Ensure high standards of presentation, cleanliness and safety
- Act as the main point of contact for traders on market days

2. Trader management and development

- Build strong relationships with existing traders
- Recruit new traders in priority categories
- Support trader retention through clear communication and fair processes
- Address issues of conduct in line with Terms & Conditions

3. Growth and performance

- Monitor footfall, trader attendance and performance
- Identify opportunities to increase visitor numbers and dwell time
- Deliver small-scale activations (e.g. themed markets, Lunch Bunch-style activity)
- Work with FTC comms team to improve promotion and visibility

4. Communications and marketing

- Develop a consistent voice and presence for the weekly markets in conjunction with the team and the traders
- Coordinate social media, trader features and local promotion
- Improve wayfinding and establish signage

5. Partnership working

- Work closely with FTC officers, councillors and town centre partners
- Support a Market Forum (FTC, traders, Chamber, stakeholders)
- Engage constructively with feedback and build trust with traders

Success measures (aligned to the existing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs))

- Footfall increases year-on-year
- Trader retention above 80%
- Improved trader mix and reduced vacant pitches
- Positive trader and visitor feedback
- Consistent operational standards met

Benefits

- Support a thriving town
- Provide stronger accountability and relationships
- Give greater control over standards and conduct
- Have flexibility to respond quickly to issues
- Clear alignment with FTC priorities and town centre strategy

Risks

- Recruitment and onboarding time but we do have a three month interim solution
- Reliance on a single role - mitigated through team support and use of the support stewards
- Ongoing salary cost (although supported with current budget line and income unaccounted for)

Option 2: Hybrid model (in-house lead + specialist support which is nearly where we are at the moment with the interim contracting of Rachel Haughey)

Overview

Appoint an in-house Market Coordinator (as above), with targeted external support for:

- Marketing campaigns
- Event programming
- Specialist consultancy (short-term)

Benefits

- Retains control while accessing specialist skills
- Lower risk than full outsourcing
- Scalable depending on need and budget

Although we have looked into this model and it relieves the team of the risks of ongoing support across the rest of the team it is a more costly option, requiring both a member of staff and a package of external support. We have therefore discounted this option.

Option 3: Revised partnership model

Overview

Revisit a partnership approach with a third party, which we put out to tender but with:

- Much tighter contract management
- Clear quarterly reporting
- Taking into account trader feedback
- With stronger FTC oversight
- And FTC maintaining a presence in the Market traders group

Risks

- Hard to think who this might attract having had two false starts in a year
- Reputational damage and loss of trader trust already evident (although traders were resistant which soured the relationship with the Independent Market very quickly)
- Ongoing conflict management required
- Reduced responsiveness and local control

Budget

Last year, the income from the markets combined income was approximately £32,000. £14,000 was retained by Frome Town Council and £18,000 collected and retained by the operator.

For the current financial year, we have budgeted £20,000 to support the delivery of the markets, with no income budgeted for.

Proposed Budget	
Income	
Markets budget line in existing 26/27 budget	£20 000
Expected yearly income	£32,000
	£52,000
Expenditure	
Salary including on costs & holiday cover	47,000
Misc.	5 000
Total costs	52 000

We will not need to increase the 2026/27 budget in order to recruit a Market Coordinator.

Other options considered	Three delivery models were considered: a continued third-party operator model, a hybrid model combining in-house coordination with external support, and a fully in-house Market Coordinator role. The hybrid and revised partnership models were discounted due to increased cost, reduced local control, reputational concerns following recent experience, and the need for greater consistency, accountability and responsiveness.
Key considerations for the Council	The weekly markets are an important part of Frome's identity, economy and town centre vitality. The Council must balance financial sustainability with the need to improve footfall, trader confidence, operational standards and the overall visitor experience. The proposed model seeks to provide stability, strategic improvement and stronger alignment with FTC priorities.
Consultation and feedback	Consultation has included trader meetings, ongoing engagement through the Market Working Group, direct conversations with traders, councillor discussions, and operational discussions with the Frome Independent CIC. Trader feedback has informed the recommendation to bring coordination back in-house while retaining collaborative working arrangements through a proposed Market Forum.
Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan	The proposal supports FTC's priorities to support a thriving town, increase economic resilience, encourage footfall into the town centre, and strengthen community participation. The recommendations align with the Council's ambition to deliver visible local impact while ensuring services are financially sustainable and appropriately managed.
Financial and Risk Implications	The proposal includes recruitment of a fixed-term Market Coordinator role at an estimated cost of £40,000 including on-costs, plus £5,000 miscellaneous operational costs. Current market income projections and the existing £20,000 market budget line indicate that the role should broadly be cost-neutral if anticipated income levels are maintained. There remains a financial risk of up to £25,000 should projected income not be achieved. Additional risks include recruitment challenges, reliance on a single coordinator role and fluctuating market performance, mitigated through team support and ongoing performance monitoring against KPIs.
Legal / HR Implications	Recruitment of a fixed-term Market Coordinator post will require compliance with FTC recruitment and employment procedures, including job evaluation and appropriate HR processes. Ongoing management of traders must continue in line with FTC Terms and

	Conditions, licensing requirements, food hygiene obligations and relevant health and safety legislation.
Equalities Implications	Weekly markets provide accessible, low-barrier opportunities for local traders, start-up businesses and community enterprise. A well-managed market supports inclusion, accessibility and social connection within the town centre. The proposed Market Forum aims to ensure a broad range of voices are represented in future development.
Community Safety Implications	Improved coordination and oversight will support safer market operations through clearer compliance, trader management, stewarding, and adherence to health and safety requirements. Ongoing management of trader conduct and market layout will contribute positively to public safety and the wider town centre environment.
Climate Change and Sustainability Implications	The markets support local and independent trade, reducing travel distances for goods and encouraging local purchasing. The proposal also creates opportunities to further encourage sustainable trading practices, reduce waste and support local food producers and circular economy initiatives.
Health and Safety Implications	The proposed role includes responsibility for ensuring compliance with all relevant health and safety requirements, including market layouts, stall safety, food hygiene compliance, public liability documentation and safe build/breakdown procedures.
Constitutional Requirements	The recommendations require Frome Town Council approval due to the creation of a new fixed-term post and associated budget implications.
Background Papers	FTC Markets Business Case (April 2025); Service Level Agreement documentation; Trader consultation notes; Market Working Group notes; FTC Market Terms and Conditions.
Report Sign-Off	Councillor Nick Dove Peter Wheelhouse 15/05/26

Recommendations

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