

Minutes of a meeting of the Operations and Assets Committee

Wednesday 26 November 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Fiona Barrows, Mark Dorrington, Anne Hills (Chair), Polly Lamb, Lyndsey Mayhew, Steve Tanner

In attendance:

Cllr Tracey Ashford, Cllr Nick Dove, Peter Wheelhouse (Acting Town Clerk), Rob Holden (Environment Manager), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Becca Evans (Business Administrator), Lucy McMahon (Lead Marketing and Communications Officer)

1 member of the public was in attendance at Frome Town Hall
0 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

To watch to the discussion in full visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoatLN_XoOw

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2025/16/OA	<p>The meeting started at 7pm.</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence None was received.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests None was received.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 17 September 2025 Andy Jones requested that the Chair be identified in the list of attendees.</p> <p>The minutes of the Operations and Assets Committee meeting held on 17 September 2025 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/17/OA	<p>2. Questions from public and Cllrs Addressing a recent Facebook post regarding overflowing bins, Fiona Barrows asked Rob Holden about the current situation with emptying of waste bins and FTCs contract. Rob explained that Somerset Council (SC) were contracted to empty the bins on FTC land and they had been experiencing issues of bins not being emptied frequently. Rob explained that every time this happened</p>	

	<p>it was logged and Becca Evans would report the incidents to SC. This would then result in a discount off the contract. There was a lengthy discussion about overflowing bins, dog waste bins and a possible social media campaign to encourage people to take home waste if bins were full. Rob offered to escalate concerns and explore whether the Town Council might eventually take over bin emptying services, though this would have financial implications. Rob would also share an internal map of bin locations on FTC land with Cllrs. He would also explore having a map that could be shared publicly.</p> <p>Lenka Grimes congratulated staff and Cllrs on the success of the recent Christmas event. Fiona praised Rachel for her leadership and Jane for managing the evening.</p>	
<p>2025/18/OA</p>	<p>3. A verbal update on the Market Yard toilets Peter Wheelhouse provided an update on the Market Yard toilet project. He reported that stakeholder engagement had taken place with local venues and Somerset Council representatives. Upcoming plans included wider community engagement in the new year via the Go Vocal platform as well as in person sessions. Data was being collected on toilet usage, including the Changing Places facility managed by the Cheese and Grain. Security improvements, such as keypad access, were under consideration to prevent misuse. Fiona confirmed that a decision was pencilled in for March, aligning with consultation requirements for potential PWLB funding. Lenka emphasised the importance of securing Changing Places provision, given its national significance.</p>	
<p>2025/19/OA</p>	<p>4. For information - Review of Nurture Open Spaces Work Programme A summary of the report was given by Rob Holden. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of a bench near the taxi rank following community requests, involving hedge removal and resurfacing. • Winter planting of planters for community adoption. • Graffiti removal in the town centre. Rob described repeated vandalism and the challenge of deterring offenders. Cllrs discussed options including police involvement, CCTV monitoring, and engagement with graffiti artists. Fiona and Lenka suggested exploring designated graffiti spaces and educational outreach. • Christmas tree and lights installation. • Bulb planting across nine sites, involving 360 schoolchildren and 40 adults, with recognition from Somerset Council. • Community Woodland project progressing with meadow seeding and plans to plant 4,000 trees in March. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skate park development moving forward, with contractor appointment expected before year end and construction planned for early 2026. • Acquisition of new equipment, including a hedge cutter and fuel store, reducing costs and improving efficiency. <p>Andy Jones thanked the Rangers for their help with the installation of a composting toilet base at Broadway Community Garden, now operational and being adapted for accessibility.</p>	
<p>2025/20/OA</p>	<p>5. For decision - adoption of Adderwell Water Meadow and Showfield management plans</p> <p>Rob explained Adderwell Water Meadow was acquired through community crowdfunding. Plans for the area would see habitat enhancements including a scrape to improve wetland biodiversity. Already completed was removal of Himalayan balsam and improved access.</p> <p>The Old Showfield plan reflected the extensive public engagement carried out in recent months. Actions included improving calm spaces and maintaining inclusivity. Cllrs discussed QR codes and wildlife information boards to make plans more accessible.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows suggested monitoring gender balance in site usage now that the play area improvements had been completed.</p> <p>Adam Boyden raised community suggestions including installing talking benches and seating near the cricket pitch, more diagonal paths across the site, and opening up toilets at the Cricket Club for runners to use. Adam also asked if the Showfield was a protected site. Rob confirmed ongoing actions and protections for the site including that the site was under the protection of the Theodora Ann Le Gros for an Open Space Trust.</p> <p>Adam Boyden raised several detailed questions regarding the Old Showfield management plan. He noted that the plan included an ongoing item to “work with housing and planning to agree which open spaces should be maintained and which could be made available for housing.” Adam queried whether this represented a reboot of the Fair Housing Plan previously considered four years ago and whether it related to the recently devolved open spaces from Somerset Council. He expressed concern that previous attempts to identify land for housing had caused significant community opposition.</p> <p>Rob clarified that the item was a standing reference to the council’s declared housing emergency and does not specifically relate to devolved land. He emphasised that the 57 new open</p>	

	<p>spaces transferred from Somerset Council had been taken on to protect them as open spaces, and there was no intention to repurpose these sites for housing. Rob confirmed that all land adopted by FTC was selected for its community value and would remain protected.</p> <p>Adam then shared feedback gathered from residents, including wishes for “talking benches,” diagonal paths, more seating near the cricket pitch, improved drainage, increased grass cutting and use of public toilets at the Cricket Club.</p> <p>Regarding diagonal paths, Rob acknowledged existing ‘desire lines’ but cautioned that installing hard paths would represent a significant change. He confirmed that some diagonal hardstanding has already been introduced in section 10 as part of the blossom circle project. On grass cutting, Rob clarified that area two and four (rather than three, which is the Collegians pitch) were now cut fortnightly for amenity use following consultation feedback. Rob noted that the Cricket Club toilet provision had been explored in discussions with the club, but as the land was not FTC owned, responsibility rested with the club. Drainage remained a priority action within the plan, particularly in the play area and other waterlogged zones. Rob agreed to review seating requests and explore opportunities for additional benches near the cricket pitch.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To adopt the management plan for the Adderwell Water Meadow 2. To adopt the management plan for the Showfield <p>Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2025/21/OA</p>	<p>6. For decision – updates to the Staff Handbook at November 2025</p> <p>Laura presented proposed additions to the staff handbook, including new policies such as Neonatal Leave, Criminal Record Checks, Rehabilitation of Offenders and Reasonable Adjustments. She explained the importance of employment law compliance for FTC and equitable access to information for staff. She confirmed the handbook would be circulated digitally and integrated into internal systems for ease of use.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the changes to the policies as shown in the appendices 2. Note the policies that will be brought back to a future committee meeting for approval 	

	<p>3. Delegate to the Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor to update the Staff Handbook with the new policies and ensure all employees have an up-to-date copy</p> <p>Proposed by Steve Tanner, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2025/22/OA</p>	<p>7. For decision – Business & Finance report to 18 November 2025 for Operations & Assets Committee On behalf of Sarah Williams, Becca Evans summarised the key points from the finance report. An estimated £64,000 underspend is projected for year end. Notable underspends included the Citizens’ Assembly, waste management, and markets, while overspends related to Cllr allowances, by-election costs, and security costs. The committee noted the auditors’ requirement for full council approval of the risk management report. Cllrs raised questions on earmarked reserves, including School Streets funding and CRM allocations. Peter noted Sarah would come back to Cllrs with clarifications on their queries surrounding the CRM project.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve Appendix 7.1 the Income & Expenditure report at 18 November 2025 2. Approve Appendix 7.2 the Balance Sheet including Earmarked Reserves at 18 November 3. Approve Appendix 7.3 General Ledger - payments over £500 (Payments over £100 are published on the Finance page of Frome Town Council’s website here: https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/council/frome-town-council/finance) 4. Note the External Auditor PKF Littlejohn’s Report dated 29 September 2025 at Appendix 7.4 <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p>	<p>SW</p>
<p>2025/23/OA</p>	<p>8. For decision – Town Hall safety and zero tolerance statement Laura introduced a draft policy addressing unacceptable behaviour towards staff, prompted by increasing incidents involving individuals in crisis. She outlined existing safety measures, upcoming de-escalation training, and plans for a simple flowchart to guide staff responses. Cllrs discussed extending training to other public facing organisations and ensuring visibility of the policy. Andy suggested a concise version for display in reception. Fiona raised concerns about lone working and hybrid arrangements, which will be reviewed in future meetings.</p>	

	<p>The recommendation was to adopt the zero tolerance statement for public display in the reception areas of the Town Hall and Key Centre.</p> <p>Proposed by Polly Lamb, seconded by Lisa Merryweather, agreed by majority. Andy Jones abstained.</p>	
2025/24/OA	<p>9. For information – Review of Facilities Management September – November 2025</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse summarised the report on behalf of Alastair Findlay. He highlighted significant progress in asset management, compliance, and health and safety. Cllrs praised Alastair’s thorough approach and requested his attendance at the next meeting.</p> <p>Lenka requested that the drop kerb be installed in the car park to allow disabled visitors to access the pathway to get to the accessible side entrance to the Town Hall. Peter confirmed he would ensure this was followed up.</p>	<p>PWh/AF</p> <p>PWh/AF</p>
2025/25/OA	<p>The proposal was for the next item to be held in confidential session; therefore members of the press and public were asked to leave.</p> <p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/26/OA	<p>10. For decision – Staff matters</p> <p>Cllrs discussed the report and unanimously agreed to the recommendations.</p>	
2025/27/OA	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 28 January 2026, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 8.31pm