

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 18 June 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Fiona Barrows (Chair), Philip Campagna, Carla Collenette, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Polly Lamb, Lisa Merryweather, Steve Tanner, Mel Usher

In attendance:

Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Becca Evans (Business Administrator), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager)

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

o members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

To watch to the discussion in full visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUOe6fxk3Vo

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2025/50/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Nick Dove proposed to accept apologies from Tracey Ashford, Sara Butler, Anita Collier and Andy Jones seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests None was declared.</p>	
2025/51/FC	<p>2. Questions from public and Cllrs It was clarified by the Chair that the meeting was an extraordinary meeting due to the changes in the calendar of meetings to accommodate two new committees for 2025/26.</p>	
2025/52/FC	<p>3a. For decision – Year end financial reports to March 2025, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25 and proposed Earmarked Reserves at 1/4/25</p> <p>Sarah Williams presented the year-end financial reports, highlighting the transition to new software for accounting, purchase orders, Town Hall hires, and HR.</p> <p>Sarah highlighted her appreciation to her team for their support in completing the annual return within the timeframe.</p>	

	<p>The underspend for the year was noted at £113k. The lowest year end figure in six years. Main areas of underspend were around staff costs and events while higher than budgets interest income also contributed. Unbudgeted expenditure, including the Christmas lights and town centre street sweeper contributed to the net underspend. There was discussion on why the underspend was relatively low and Sarah suggested that part of the answer was that while expenditure, from devolution project for example, was higher than in previous years and the underspent budgets just about compensated for this with the resultant smaller than normal net underspend.</p> <p>Sarah noted that the year end General Reserve at 1 April 2025 was £610k and combined with Earmarked Reserves (as detailed in the report) total reserves at 1 April 2025 were £1.6m</p> <p>The size of the general reserve was discussed and Sarah noted the importance of maintaining a healthy figure given the level of FTC expenditure. The discussion included the percentage of the general reserves in relation to the overall budget. Sarah noted that the sector advice was that the GR should be three months' expenditure which would be close to £610k.</p> <p>Sarah confirmed that the large EMRs resulting from carried over projects in 20224/25 will be spent very soon.</p> <p>Carla Collenette asked about the use of the School Streets EMR if the trial was not made permanent. Peter Wheelhouse explained that the construction was completed, with a snagging process and road safety audit still pending. The £125,000 in the earmarked reserves was primarily a contingency fund for things such as a road safety audit and reinstating street configurations if trial ends. Carla asked about potentially using any remaining funds for the Broadway crossing, but Peter clarified this was not part of the original design. Peter was asked to research the specific restrictions on the funding and provide more details via email to Cllrs.</p> <p>The internal auditor's recommendations were presented, including the approval of internal controls and the council's risk register.</p> <p>There was a brief discussion about using Barclays for FTC's current account rather than a more ethical bank. Sarah noted that the more ethical banks still do not offer all the current account services required by FTC.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p>	<p>PWh</p>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full Council to ratify Oversight Committees' approval of the Internal Controls of the Council and the risk register. 2. To approve the bank signatories (no changes made to existing bank mandates) and to note the table of bank accounts in Appendix 3.4 <p>Proposed by Anne Hills, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/53/FC	<p>3b. For decision – Year end financial reports to March 2025, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25 and proposed Earmarked Reserves at 1/4/25</p> <p>Sarah explained the AGAR process, including the compilation of financial statements and the role of the internal auditor.</p> <p>The exercise of public rights dates was confirmed between 23 June and 1 August, with the public able to view the council's accounting records.</p> <p>The recommendation was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Instruct the Chair and the Clerk to sign on Cllrs' behalf that they agree all the governance statements in Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 and for it to be recorded as a minute reference. <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>The Chair and the Clerk signed the governance statement.</p>	
2025/54/FC	<p>3c. For decision – Year end financial reports to March 2025, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024/25 and proposed Earmarked Reserves at 1/4/25</p> <p>The final set of recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Note that the Responsible Finance Officer has certified that the accounting statements fairly represent the financial position of Frome Town Council. 5. Instruct the Chair and the RFO to sign on Cllrs' behalf that they have approved the accounting statements. (2. and 3. to be recorded as separate minute references) 6. Approve the exercise of public rights dates for 2025 7. Approve the revised Earmarked Reserves 31/03/25 for the start of the financial year 	

	<p>8. Note the amount in the General Reserve at the start of the financial year</p> <p>9. Approve the payments over £100 published on the website and over £500 circulated</p> <p>Proposed by Carla Collenette, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>The Chair and the RFO signed to approve the accounts.</p>	
2025/55/FC	<p>4. For decision – To approve the financial regulations for 25/26</p> <p>Sarah Williams clarified the proposed changes were to enable staff to use debit cards for small purchases due to less use of cash. And the requirement for staff to adhere to procurement processes was enhanced.</p> <p>The recommendation was to approve the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations for 2025/26.</p> <p>Proposed by Mark Dorrington, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/56/FC	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 2 July 2025, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 7.25pm