

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of Frome Town Council

Thursday 5 June 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Tracey Ashford, Fiona Barrows, Sara Butler, Carla Collenette, Mark Dorrington, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Lisa Merryweather, Ben Still, Steve Tanner, Max Wide

In attendance:

Danny Greaves (Frome Town AFC), Lester Silk (Frome Town Supporters Club), Max Hirst (Frome Town CBS), Tara Tomley (Frome Town Women FC), Lee Seviour (Frome Town United), Darren Bernstein (Football Supporters Association), Cllr Dawn Denton (SC Cllr, online), Cllr Adam Boyden (SC Cllr, online), 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), Jane Llewellyn (Planning and Development Manager) Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Lucy McMahon (Lead Marketing and Communications Officer, online)

Approx. 50 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall
30 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

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

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2025/44a/FC	<p>The meeting started at 7pm</p> <p>As Frome Town Council are the owners of the Badger's Hill site all Cllrs present declared an other registerable interest and submitted a request for a dispensation to allow the proposal about Badgers Hill to be discussed and voted on. All the dispensations are attached to these minutes.</p> <p>There was a vote to agree the dispensation forms, proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/44b/FC	<p>1a. Apologies for absence</p> <p>Mark Dorrington proposed to accept apologies from Philip Campagna, Anita Collier, Nick Dove, Anne Hills and Mel Usher, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Paul Wynne explained that Anita Collier and Anne Hills as directors of the Frome CBS would have had to declare an other registrable interest if they were present. This meant they would not have been able to remain in the room and vote on the proposal</p>	

	<p>if present at the meeting. As there was only one item on the agenda they had given their apologies.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests All Cllrs declared had an other registrable interest due to FTC owning the Badgers Hill.</p> <p>An other registerable interest was declared by Tracy Ashford as a member of Purple Elephant. Carla Collenette declared a pecuniary interest as a shareholder member of the Frome CBS.</p> <p>Tracey and Carla requested a dispensation and these were agreed as part of the dispensation decision at the start of the meeting.</p>	
<p>2025/45/FC</p>	<p>2. Questions from public and Cllrs None was received.</p>	
<p>2025/46/FC</p>	<p>3. For decision – To decide whether to lease (with an ‘option to buy’) Badgers Hill to a private operator</p> <p>Fiona Barrows emphasised the decision was about the management of the asset, not the clubs who used the site. She highlighted the historical significance of Badgers Hill and the community's investment in it.</p> <p>Danny Greaves from Frome Town AFC emphasised the club's financial stability, community engagement, and the success of the men's and women's teams.</p> <p>Lester Silk from the Frome Town Football Club Supporters Association supported the proposal from the private operator, he criticised the current CBS for failing to deliver its mandate.</p> <p>Max Hirst from the Frome Town Community Benefit Society argued against the lease-to-buy proposal, citing the lack of community benefit and the board of the Football Club's financial mismanagement.</p> <p>Tara Tomley from Frome Town Women Football Club highlighted the club's growth and the need for a sustainable future at Badgers Hill.</p> <p>Lee Seviour from Frome Town United noted the club's community impact and the importance of maintaining the under-18 team's use of Badgers Hill.</p> <p>Darren Bernstein from the Football Supporters Association argued against privatising Badgers Hill, emphasising that the stadium</p>	

	<p>should remain in community ownership highlighting the potential risks faced by FTC if they agreed to the proposal.</p> <p>Members of the public in attendance were given the opportunity to ask questions of the speakers.</p> <p>David Parry defended the current Frome Town AFC board's actions and criticised the CBS for misrepresenting the facts.</p> <p>Gary Collinson questioned the CBS's community engagement and the lack of community use at Badgers Hill.</p> <p>Stephanie Reese asked about the financial viability of the CBS and the potential impact on the community if the lease was not granted.</p> <p>Ryan, representing the Pod, expressed concerns about the treatment of vulnerable groups by the CBS.</p> <p>Cllr Lisa Merryweather clarified that the decision was about leasing the site, not the clubs using it.</p> <p>Cllr Tracy Ashford emphasised the legal and moral obligations of the Cllrs to serve the community.</p> <p>Simon Harding questioned the FSA's support for the CBS and the lack of consideration for other similar situations.</p> <p>Cllr Carla Collenette urged Cllrs to focus on the community benefit and the long-term sustainability of the asset.</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse provided an update on the representations notice in the advert in the Frome Times asking for views on whether FTC should dispose of the site. He noted the majority of these were in support of the proposal and that there were objections due to concerns about community benefit and accountability.</p> <p>Peter highlighted the key considerations Cllrs had to consider in order to decide whether to accept the proposal or not these were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Has best consideration reasonably obtained been achieved i.e. are there sufficient obligations or commitments from the private operator to preserve and maintain community benefit to justify the discounted rent?2. Are the interests of FTC as landlord adequately safeguarded and risks managed through the Heads of Terms?	
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2025/47a/FC	<p>The proposal was for the next item to be held in confidential session due to commercial confidentiality. Cllrs would consider the matter in private session to which members of the public and press were excluded.</p> <p>Cllrs would return to the Council Chamber to vote.</p> <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Cllrs and members of staff left the room at 8.10pm.</p>	
2025/47b/FC	<p>In the confidential session Cllrs discussed the proposal and the representations at length and whether they felt it met best consideration reasonably obtained. Cllrs were advised by the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to reject the proposal because that the community and social benefit in the proposal was insufficient to merit the below market rent.</p> <p>Cllrs felt that the proposal as it stood was insufficient but wanted to explore if the benefits could be enhanced.</p>	
2025/48/FC	<p>3. Cont. For decision – To decide whether to lease (with an ‘option to buy’) Badgers Hill to a private operator</p> <p>Cllrs returned to the Chamber at 9.40pm.</p> <p>The proposal from the Cllrs was:</p> <p>“as the private operator’s proposal stands, we consider that the legal criteria for best consideration has not yet been met. We would like to leave the door open for the private operator to improve their offer in relation to guaranteed long term community benefit.”</p> <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed by majority. Andy Jones abstained.</p>	
2025/49/FC	<p>The next meeting will be an extraordinary meeting at 7pm on Wednesday 18 June 2025, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 9.43pm