

Minutes of a meeting of the Operations and Assets Committee

Wednesday 23 July 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Mark Dorrington, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Steve Tanner, Mel Usher

In attendance:

Cllr Anita Collier, Cllr Tracey Ashford (online), Justin Worringham (Frome Welcomes Refugees), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Laura Hales (Marketing and Communications Officer), Sarah Williams (Business Manager, online), Becca Evans (Business Administrator)

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

1 member of the public was in attendance on Zoom.

To watch to the discussion in full visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouR94jLsyEU&t=2521s

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2025/01/OA	The meeting started at 7pm 1. Election of the Chair Andy Jones proposed Anne Hills as Chair of the Operations and Assets Committee, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed by majority. Anne Hills abstained. Anne took the Chair.	
2025/02/OA	2a. Apologies for absence Polly Lamb proposed to accept apologies from Philip Campagna, seconded by Mel Usher, agreed unanimously. 2b. Declaration of members' interests None was received.	
2025/03/OA	3. Questions from public and Cllrs None was received	
2025/04/OA	4. For decision - Management options regarding the Market Yard toilets A summary of report was given by Rachel Griffin.	

	Rachel explained the facilities were at the end of their operational life and had high maintenance costs, with frequent blockages and attracted antisocial behaviour. Changing Places toilet was currently out of order due to a missing part which was an order but had to come from Denmark. The Marketing and Comms team conducted a snapshot survey which showed there were 284 users in 24 hours, 87% were local, and the urinals were the most used with 75% being male users. Rachel presented the five management options which were: • Employ staff for cleaning/maintenance – not cost-effective. • Continue current model – unsustainable. • Full closure – against inclusivity values. • Partnership with Cheese & Grain – cleaning and maintenance for £25k. • Gradual closure of cubicles as they become unusable, retaining Changing Places toilet. Anne Hills suggested retaining both the Changing Places and disabled-access toilets due to limited alternatives in the town centre. Rachel noted this was possible but would be a short term choice. Polly Lamb opposed the closure, citing the importance of public toilets for inclusivity, dignity and accessibility. She felt the Cheese & Grain was not a suitable alternative due to location and social barriers. Mel Usher and Steve Tanner supported immediate closure of all but the Changing Places toilet due to cost and the need to avoid a deteriorating toilet block in the town centre. Mel suggested that FTC explored different usage options for the redundant toilets. Andy Jones questioned whether the urinals should be retained given their high usage, but concerns were raised about their role in antisocial behaviour. There was a discussion about maintaining disabled toilet access via the Changing Place toilet, maintaining access via radar key to ensure the use of the toilet is not abused and connecting rough sleepers with support from SC housing team during the winter so they did not use the toilet as place to sleep. There was also a discussion about providing event toilets for things such as the Independent market and sharing the costs with those organisations.	
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	Mel Usher proposed to amend recommendation 2 and remove recommendation 6. seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed by majority. Polly Lamb was against. The recommendations as amended were: 1. Temporarily transfer cleaning and maintenance of the Market Yard toilets to the Cheese and Grain, retaining the Changing Places facility open as current. 2. Close the other toilets as they become non operational with immediate effect 3. Redirect people to the Cheese and Grain toilets 4. Allocate £15k pa to pay the Cheese and Grain for cleaning to come from the Market Yard toilet budget 5. Continue to monitor public response to inform next steps 6. Explore quotes for refurbishment of existing toilet block 7. Include the refurbishment/repurposing engagement conversation of the public toilet facilities into the wider Riverside / Cultural Quarter vision The amended recommendations were proposed by Mel Usher, seconded by Mark Dorrington and agreed by majority. Polly Lamb was against.	
2025/05/OA	5. For approval – Financial update April to June 2025 A summary of the report was given by Sarah Williams. Mel Usher requested future reports highlight both overspends and underspends over £3,000. Andy Jones raised queries on School Streets EMR, Badgers Hill carpentry and payments to Barters payments. Sarah explained the remaining School Streets EMR was a contingency in case of improvements, adjustments, or reinstatement if the SSS scheme was stopped. FTC paid the net amount due to a contractor for work at Badgers Hill but only after the net amount came in via the football club as part of the PLSF grant, so there was no cost to FTC. Six of seven payments to Barters were refunded due to a credit card issue. Regarding recommendation 4 Anita Collier clarified the Rotary Club of Frome acted as the financial custodian. The decisions of how to distribute the funds were made by the Frome Welcomes Refugees group. Funds were used for grants to new arrivals for emergency support. The recommendations were:	

	1. Approve the Income & Expenditure v Budget report April – June 2025 2. Approve the Balance Sheet report April – June 2025 3. Approve the list of payments over £500 April – June 2025 4. Approve the transfer of the funds in EMR 328 for safekeeping and distribution guided by the Frome Welcomes Refugees committee Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Mark Dorrington, agreed unanimously.	
2025/06/OA	6. For information – Review of the Open Spaces and Business Services work programmes Cllrs noted the report. It was agreed to keep the review of the work programme as a standing item. Anne suggested that authors highlighted some of things that had gone well or were particularly successful.	
2025/07/OA	7. Discussion around how to manage the business of this committee Anne Hills proposed that each meeting should include: • A review of essential operational items. • A thematic deep dive into one area of council operations to support learning and strategic oversight. • A collaborative approach to shaping the committee’s role and impact. She suggested that the committee should not only monitor progress but also support staff, challenge assumptions, and help steer work in the right direction. The committee discussed several key operational themes that could be explored in future meetings including: • Finance and Investments: Budget management, reserves, income generation, and medium-term financial planning. • Risk Management: Understanding how risks are identified, assessed, and mitigated across council operations. • IT Systems: Infrastructure, software, digital transformation, and cyber security. • HR and Staffing: Recruitment, wellbeing, performance management, and organisational development. • Health & Safety: Compliance, incident reporting, and staff training. • Civic and Twinning Matters: Community representation, international partnerships, and civic events.	

	Mel Usher suggested an annual walkabout of council owned assets to physically inspect and engage with the estate, which would provide councillors with firsthand insight. Polly Lamb emphasised the importance of using the committee to bring transparency to work allowing broader participation and scrutiny. Anne Hills reiterated the need for the committee to be a space for learning, strategic thinking, and collaborative problem-solving. It was agreed the theme for the September meeting would be finance and investments. To include a review of income, expenditure, reserves, and preliminary ideas for a medium-term financial plan. It was tentatively agreed that the theme of the January 2026 meeting would be risk management, to include a tutorial-style session on risk identification, assessment, and mitigation, ahead of the annual review of the risk register.	
2025/08/OA	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 17 September 2025, Frome Town Hall and Zoom	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 8.29pm