



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 25

Message from the Mayor

I asked my colleagues on Council to elect me as Mayor because I wanted the opportunity to find out more about what makes our wonderful town tick and meet some of the amazing people who make it all work. I've certainly done that!

The role of Mayor seems to fall into three main elements. First is the only legal requirement: that I chair the meetings of Frome Town Council.

Second is the ceremonial role. Traditionally the first Mayoral engagement is the Blessing of St John's Well, because it falls on the Saturday nearest the Feast of St Aldhelm in late May. The kids at St John's always do a lovely job of dressing the well, but it's quite an experience for a new Mayor to be walking through town with the incense burning, stopping to bless the leat in Cheap Street and then joining the Town Band for hymns and prayers at the Well.

That's just the beginning of a packed calendar of mayoral events at annual favourites like Frome Carnival and its fun day, The Big Spring Clean, wassailing at Weylands, Frome Pride, Frome Busks, Frome Kindness Festival and Remembrance events, to name but a few.

It was my fortune to be Mayor for the 50th Anniversary of Frome Town Council, and hundreds of you joined us for a celebration in the park. The High Sheriff of Somerset joined that one, and Rob Beckley cut quite the dashing



Andy Jones, Mayor of Frome 2024-25

figure in his formal uniform and bicorn hat – I felt quite upstaged, but then I've got used to that as I work so closely with Martin, our flamboyant Town Crier!

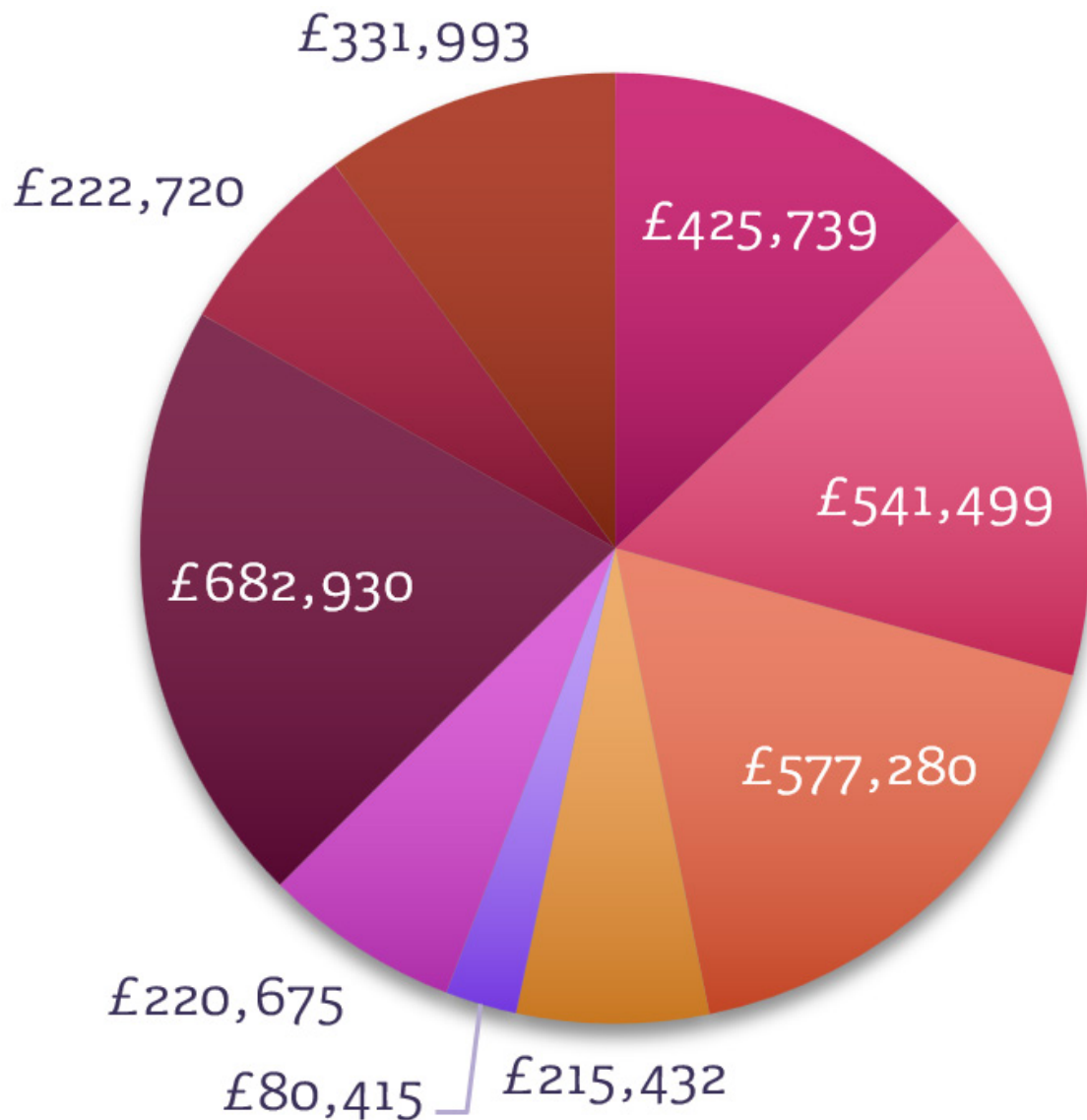
Christmas was another highlight – it's worth being Mayor just for that one night on the balcony for Light the Night! Judging the Mayor's Christmas card competition and choosing a winner from among hundreds of wonderful entries was no mean feat, but I loved the winning design from Frida so much that I sent it to friends and family around the world – so her artwork is now in Germany, Denmark, France, the US and Australia!

Overlaid on all these regular events is the third part of the Mayor's role, celebrating specific milestones and events for some of the nearly 200 voluntary and not-for-profit organisations that make Frome tick. Among them were cutting the ribbon on a new play area in Welshmill Woods, the stunning mural in the Westway and the wonderfully refurbished Roundhouse at the Otherside, handing out awards, marking important birthdays and anniversaries such as the centenary of Frome Memorial Theatre and welcoming Rev. Seamus Hargrave as the new vicar of St John's.

I have ridden the Saxonvale rollercoaster with the town, marked the long-awaited opening of a banking hub and presented Civic Awards to some of the fantastic people who contribute so much to life in Frome. It's been a great year as Frome's Mayor – but I am looking forward to a quieter diary for a while!

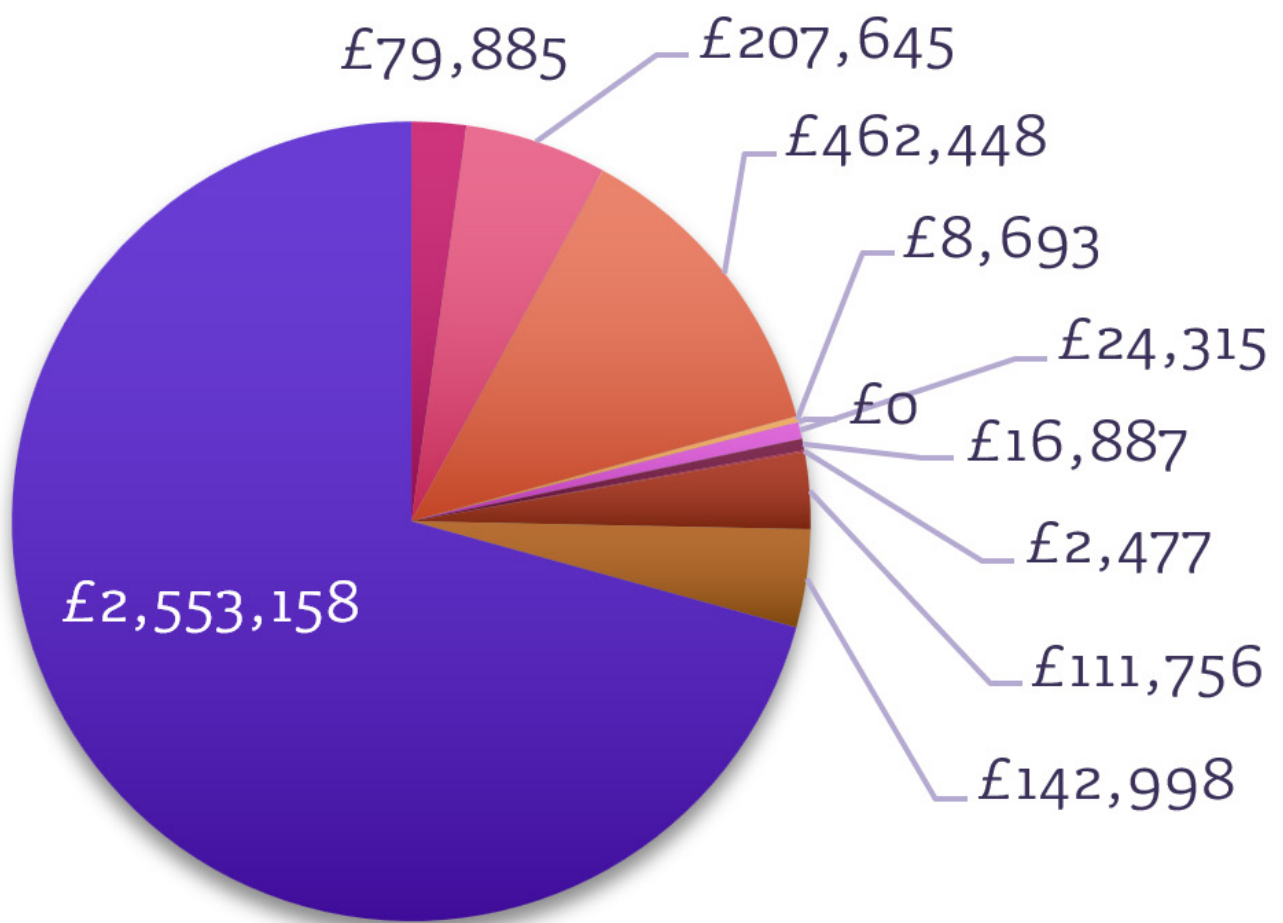
Andy Jones, Mayor of Frome 2024-25

Expenditure 2024-25



- Communities & grants £425,739
- Assets £541,499
- Climate action £577,280
- Devolution work £215,432
- Planning £80,415
- Town centre £220,675
- Open spaces £682,930
- Marketing & communications £222,720
- Business services £331,993

Income 2024-25



- Communities & grants £79,885
- Assets £207,645
- Climate action £462,448
- Devolution work £8,693
- Planning £0
- Town centre £24,315
- Open spaces £16,887
- Marketing & communications £2,477
- Business services £111,756
- Use of reserves £142,998
- Precept £2,553,158

Some of our highlights

Devolution

"Having a town council that supports residents is a big plus...congratulations for getting it so right and thank you FTC"
- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

2024 brought a watershed moment. With Somerset Council in financial emergency, we faced the risk of losing many valued assets and services. In response, we produced the Frome Devolution Deal Prospectus, setting out a clear vision for the town's future. Through this work, we demonstrated how greater local control over assets, budgets and responsibilities could better serve our community and improve quality of life for everyone. At the heart of this proposal was a shared commitment to partnership between Somerset Council, Frome Town Council and our residents, working together to unlock Frome's potential and ensure the town remains thriving, sustainable and inclusive

What was included in it?

Aspirations to transfer of over 50 open spaces to Frome Town Council as Somerset Council no longer had the resources to maintain these crucial assets. Now owned by FTC, we are maintaining these spaces and creating management plans to ensure they are managed in a way that reflects the values and needs of residents. Obtaining a long lease on part of the Highways Depot allows for plant and materials storage and an accessible operation base for the Rangers.

The transfer of key assets at Frome Riverside including market rights and operations, and the toilet block, allowed us to keep the markets running and the toilets open while we worked on longer-term plans. The deal also included the **freehold of riverbanks** and a lot of aspects that allow us to take responsibility for economic development in the town centre.

The **Key Centre** was once a vibrant community hub, but available services and usage have diminished in recent years and there was a risk of permanent closure. Thanks to the devolution deal, we took over the Key Centre and **Mount Community Garden** in early 2025 and have begun the work of recreating a welcoming and inclusive space for the community to gather and for vital early help services.

The final section centred on sustainability. This included working to create a Movement Strategy and working to create a Reuse Centre



Some of our highlights

Grow community wellbeing

Kindness, connection and community are at the heart of everything we do. This collaborative approach doesn't just help us get more done; it builds something deeper: the strong connections that are vital for community wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

"I am part of community groups in Frome and they give me a great sense of belonging."

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

An example of this approach is the networking, sharing of information and resources, (and sometimes a delicious curry) at FTC's regular Community Organisations meetings. These gatherings bring together local groups to share resources and ideas in our welcoming, well-used town hall.

Like many civic buildings, the town hall sees lower footfall from younger residents. A quarter of Frome's residents were aged 18 and under at the last UK census, so making them feel welcome in their town hall is a priority.

Adventures at... the town hall

In November 2024, in partnership with community arts adventurers Terrestrial, 'Adventures at the Town Hall' invited young people to take charge. That very day, in Frome Town Hall, a forest grew...there was music, art, outdoor crafts, an ingenious escape room designed by young participants and a set of new rules for Frome.

Terrestrial's Director Tom Spencer says: "At the heart of this wild set of arts experiences was an invitation for young people to feel their creativity has real power."



Photos by
Paul Blakemore



School Council Voice project

We captured the voices of young people aged 4 to 19 who shared their priorities for their school or educational setting and for Frome as a whole. The most-mentioned topics were access to parks and open spaces, friends and friendship, helping and respecting others, keeping Frome clean – and lunch! The findings are already embedded into FTC's work programme for 2025/26.



"The community events, how diverse we are, people's passions and creativity, and that in Frome, you can make a difference whether you're big or small "

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

Frome Welcome Hub

The Welcome Hub marked another year of supporting displaced persons and those seeking asylum, offering a safe, welcoming space, signposting, practical support and a range of social and cultural opportunities.



"I really appreciate all the different work the Town Council does across the town. It's so connected to the community and enables good change."

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

Lunch Bunch

The Lunch Bunch pilot in the town centre invited people to take a break from their desk or their shopping and join in with board games, snacks and drinks and an opportunity to connect.

Let's Talk

The Let's Talk group hosted regular free 'open practice' sessions in 2024/25. These sessions shared skills in restorative communication, helping people turn heated debates into healthy discussions—even when emotions run high.

Some of our highlights

Support a thriving town

Frome Town Council supports and champions local businesses and invests in our town centre to make it a vibrant hub for residents, business owners and visitors. We're proud of Frome's high level of retail unit occupancy and its cafes, restaurants, pubs and bars, making it a great place to live and visit.

"Frome is great! It's not perfect ...
but you cannot be bored in Frome!
There's brilliant free events and a
very active town council. "
- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

"I love our town centre, I shop
around, go to the markets and
meet friends at the cafés"
- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

Events

We've hosted and facilitated a busy calendar of events that raise the profile of our town and bring people together, including the Light the Night lantern Parade, the Weylands Wassail, Frome Busks, Great Big Green Week, and a forum for International Women's Day. We've amplified and supported other town events like Frome Festival, Frome Walking Festival and events to mark Remembrance Day.



"Working in the town centre
I am always surrounded by a
good bunch of regular
members of frome which
are lovely and friendly"

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024



Discover Frome

Our Discover Frome site provides a one-stop-shop for tourist and 'what's on' information, with more than 500,000 website visits in 2024/25. Throughout the year, we've been working on a major refresh of this valued resource. In Frome Library, our dedicated volunteers at the Discover Frome Information Point have welcomed three new people to their team and helped with thousands of face-to-face enquires.

Badgers Hill stadium

We secured external funding for much-needed improvements to the facilities at Badgers Hill stadium, including installing solar panels to bring down running costs and improve the carbon footprint of the ground and building new changing areas, showers and toilets.

Town Centre improvements

Our town centre ranger Mike was equipped with a new street sweeper this year to keep Frome's cobbled streets looking their best. We also improved the look of Frome's shopping streets with projects including a vibrant new mural at Chateau Gontier, a temporary installation in the Market Place telling the story of the River Frome, and new wildflower planters on Catherine Hill in partnership with local businesses. We've worked with colleagues at Somerset Council to tackle waste management and improve access to recycling.



Some of our highlights

Cultivate environmental sustainability

Cultivate environmental sustainability

New Climate Action Lead

Our Climate Action Lead Matt Mellen joined the FTC team in autumn 2024 to head up our renewable energy project Solar and Beyond, develop a Climate Action Plan for Frome and work on our Green and Healthy Frome project strands, Healthy Homes, Cycle Together and Plastic Free. Period.



"The energy advice clinics/sessions are a really good idea."

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

Healthy Homes

Our team of Energy Advice Champions grew in 2024/25 and a series of one-off and regular pop-up sessions at venues across Frome, including Frome Medical Centre, Frome Jobcentre and the Westway precinct offered face-to-face support and advice to help make homes warmer, drier and more energy efficient: benefitting health, planet and pocket.



"I absolutely love the Dippy, I run and walk through it almost every day. I walk through Whatcombe Fields frequently. I love the way Victoria Park is maintained with wild borders and careful planting. I love the trees in the park. I love the little bit of park on Bath Street and the hidden footpath. I think the rangers are amazing."

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

Spaces for people and wildlife to thrive

Our focus on creating spaces for people and wildlife to thrive takes many forms. We're contributing to global data collection initiatives through our bat, toad and frog counts and the Community Wildlife Mapping project. In February 2025, members of Frome Wild Bunch represented this commitment to supporting wildlife in a stunning window display at the town hall for the annual Frome Window Wonderland.

The way we manage our open spaces prioritises biodiversity, play and community, including new play equipment for Egford Park and Welshmill Park, picnic benches, seating, and a refurbished wooden Roundhouse on the Otherside. We improved access and laid a new path to the community hub at Broadway Community Gardens and worked with Friends of the River Frome to buy a water meadow at Adderwell. The land has huge environmental significance and also secures continuous pedestrian access to the River Frome from Wallbridge to Spring Gardens.



"It's good for me to have pedestrian routes along the river to get to town from Welshmill and out to the west. Having connected green spaces throughout Frome helps my physical and mental health allowing me to be able to walk in nature..."

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024



Some of our highlights

Improve assets and infrastructure

We know that helping our community thrive means making sure Frome has the physical and organisational infrastructure to support its growth. This includes advocating for affordable and sustainable housing, access to services and green spaces, safe active travel routes and reliable transport links.

Safer School Streets

The Safer School Streets trial began in April 2024 with monitoring, engagement and further improvements taking place this year. The scheme addresses longstanding concerns about road safety around schools by creating a 20mph zone on key roads, reducing traffic at drop-off and pick-up times and introducing a number of traffic calming measures.

One of the most impactful improvements came in April 2025 – a new zebra crossing and improved cyclist access at The Butts.

"This has made such a positive change for children that walk or cycle to school or the park this way (and for adults doing this also)."

- Social media feedback on new crossing

Planning

Our Planning team responded to 220 applications including major proposed developments such as Saxonvale, Selwood Garden Community and Packsaddle. Some of these proposals sparked passionate debate at planning meetings and among the community. The team create strong responses that push for sustainable and affordable housing, infrastructure to support increased demand on roads and services, and the protection of natural habitats.

"I am proud of the unique nature of Frome, many diverse people have come together to improve the town for the residents. However, we need the infrastructure to support the increasing number of people who wish to move into the town." - Building a Picture of Frome, 2024



Improved green spaces

We worked with neighbourhoods to improve their local green spaces. The largest of these projects was at Milk Street Green, where Trinity Community Group, local residents, schoolchildren and FTC staff and rangers transformed the green into a hub for the community, with flowerbeds, benches and imaginative play structures.

"Trinity is an exciting and historic part of Frome, with a vibrant and diverse community. But one thing that Trinity has always lacked is a central community space. That's all changed now thanks to the work by FTC and so many local volunteers. Everyone says it looks amazing!"

- Adam Baylis, Trinity Community Group



Some of our highlights

Be a bold and effective town council

In 2024, we celebrated 50 years of Frome Town Council by bringing the community together for a big party. We looked back on a rich legacy – five decades of councillors and staff working together for the common good. And we looked forward, creating our 2025-27 plan that lays out the next steps towards our vision of a Frome that is thriving, sustainable and inclusive.



Building a Picture of our Town

We launched a large-scale engagement and data collection project to create a snapshot of the people of Frome, what they value and their current concerns. We heard from 973 people and presented our findings in a report and several data dashboards that have been a valuable tool for both FTC and other organisations in the town, to understand the priorities and needs of the people we serve.

Clear and engaging comms

Our Communications & Marketing team continued to create press releases, social media campaigns, posters, leaflets and website pages that explain the council's work and projects in a way that prioritises transparency and invites people to get involved and share their thoughts.



"The town council does a good job, publicising what's available well, and people know the Town Hall, Library and the Cheese and Grain are important points of contact."

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024

At the town hall

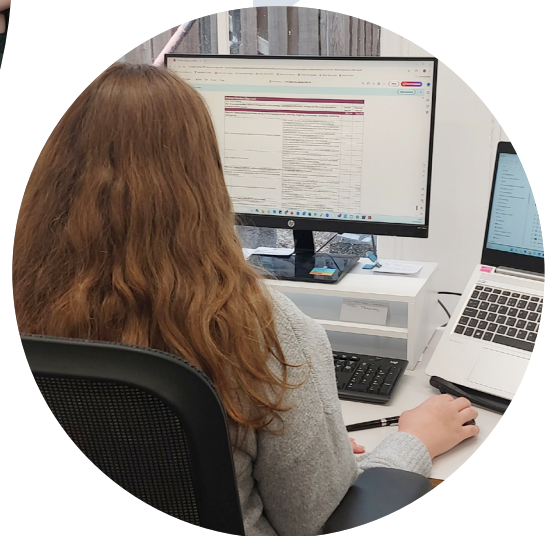
Our Customer Service Advisors Tracy and Sian, Town Hall Steward Sean and Events Administrator Nykki work hard facilitating bookings and events in the Town Hall, and supporting community events by lending free equipment. The town hall is a hub for the community and host to important drop-in services such as Citizens' Advice and our own Welcome Hub, as well as meetings of all hapes and sizes, and weddings.

Our HR and Finance teams have supported several new starters this year and arranged an array of valuable training opportunities for staff. They managed a smooth transition to Lemon booking, and Xero accounting software, training all staff to use ApprovalMax for creating purchase orders and approving bills. They also kept us going, paying the bills, and leaving us in a strong financial position to face the challenges of the coming year.



"We LOVE Frome. Thank you for all that FTC does to make it such a brilliant place to live."

- Building a Picture of Frome, 2024



Frome Town Council – A Year

It was a year when important decisions had to be made that will shape the town for many years to come. Firstly, we had to react to the dire financial situation Somerset Council are in. We produced a devolution prospectus outlining our approach to protecting key services, assets and the fabric of the town. The first phase included taking on 57 new open spaces across the town including play areas, taking on the Key Centre and the Frome Weekly Markets and preventing the Market Place toilets from closing permanently. We were of course conscious that we had to keep our spending under control and have worked hard to give value for money to residents.



Steve Tanner, Leader - 2024-25

Planning applications for Selwood Garden Community and Packsaddle needed a final decision by Somerset Council, both very complex sites and, as ever with planning applications, there were some passionate discussions. Both ended up going to appeal, decided by national government. At year end we are awaiting the final decision on these sites. Badgers Hill took up a lot of bandwidth across the organisation too, as we worked to find a sustainable way forward, that would allow football to be played at the site for decades to come, plus benefits for the community as a whole.

We also made progress in protecting and improving the places that matter most to local people. The transfer of open spaces that could no longer be cared for by Somerset Council keeps them in public hands for the long term, enhancing biodiversity and ensuring they remain places for everyone to enjoy. Work at Victoria Park and Mary Baily has continued with the community's ideas at its heart, setting out a long-term vision for these much-loved green spaces.

The town centre has remained busy and full of life. We've continued to support our independent traders, markets and events, all of which keep Frome distinctive and welcoming. Our 'Discover Frome' campaign helped attract visitors and footfall, bringing benefits to local shops, cafés and creative businesses.

We have also kept our focus on the climate and ecological emergency. Bold partnership projects like Safer School Streets and Green and Healthy Frome, Retrofit, community energy schemes and the expansion of the Wild About Trees and wildflower programmes have all made tangible contributions to reducing emissions and improving local biodiversity.

The council has worked hard to support those facing cost-of-living pressures. We have created and shared community advice and information, promoted warm spaces, and provided grant funding and other support to local organisations such as Fair Frome and The Good Heart. These partnerships are what make Frome resilient – neighbours helping and supporting each other when times are tough.

We've continued to involve residents in shaping decisions about their town. Themed council meetings and engagement activities, as well as town-wide engagement project Building a Picture of Frome, really enable us to embed our residents' experiences of life in Frome in our work. Our links with local schools have helped young people make their voices heard too, reminding us that decisions today shape their futures most of all.

We have stood firm on the need for sustainable, well-designed housing that fits the town's character. Our input into the Selwood Garden Community process has undoubtedly kept community benefit and environmental standards at the centre of discussions, even as plans evolve.

Cultural life continues to flourish. Events like the Christmas Lantern Parade, Frome Festival and a host of community projects have brought people together. We also commissioned a new mural at the Westway centre, celebrating Frome's connection to our river and the wildlife it sustains.

Through it all, we've made sure that Frome's voice is heard loud and clear within the wider Somerset structure. We've shown that local decisions made by local people lead to better results – practical, fair and community-driven.

Frome Town Council is entirely independent, and has been since 2015. We are a group of 17 individuals, ranging in age from 26-77. We are not always in agreement – in fact, we rarely are. This leads to passionate discussions but always with the shared aim of achieving the best for the town. We have

a wealth of experience within our group, across many sectors of society. However, our strength is not in the individual but in the sum of our parts: how we listen to our residents, and share our experiences and perspectives to reach decisions and find solutions. We as councillors would not achieve a fraction of what we do without the dedication and expertise of council staff body we have the privilege of working with.

There continue to be big challenges ahead, but Frome has always been resilient. We have shown time and again that when faced with uncertainty, our community comes together. I have no doubt we will do so again.

Steve Tanner,
Leader of the council 2024-25

Grant Recipients 2024-2025

Mind Your Music

The Pod

We Hear You (WHY)

Purple Elephant

Frome Area Community Land Trust
(FACLT)

Wise Children

Frome Field 2 Fork

VOICES

TOP – Triumph Over Phobia

Make the Sunshine CIC

The Good Heart

Back to Nature CIC

Vallis First School Association

Frome Town Band

Merlin Theatre

Better Nature

Fair Frome

FromeFM

Frome Festival

Frome Selwood Bowls Club

Macular Society Frome Support Group

Frome Museum

RisingUp

Ecos Court Veg Patch

Frome International Climate Film Festival

Evolve Music

Forward Step Tutoring

Somerset Farmer's Market

Black Swan Arts

Frome Monthly Women's Circle

Somerset Bus Partnership/Frome & Villages
Bus User Group (FAVBUG)

Photo Frome

Edventure Frome CIC

Youth Production Network CIC

We are Connectors

Artists in Dialogue

Dogs for Health

Frome Parkinson's Group

Frome Falcons Powerchair Football Club

Grand total: £86,184