

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 27 August 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Tracey Ashford, Fiona Barrows (Chair), Philip Campagna, Carla Collenette, Anita Collier, Mark Dorrington, Anne Hills, Andy Jones, Polly Lamb, Lisa Merryweather, Ben Still, Steve Tanner, Andy Wrintmore

In attendance:

Angela Kerr (CEO, Citizens Advice Somerset), Kim Martin (Representative of Skate Park community), Cllr Dawn Denton (SC Cllr), Helen Kay (SC Cllr, online), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Rob Holden (Environment Manager), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Hannah Stopford (Engagement Lead), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Miles Macey (Marketing and Communications Assistant)

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

To watch to the discussion in full visit:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kr26MvW5CuO&t=348s

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2025/62/FC	The meeting started at 7.05pm 1. A short presentation from Citizens Advice Somerset Tracey Ashford and Andy Wrintmore arrived at 7.06pm. Angela Kerr provided an overview of the work of Citizens Advice Somerset, following its merger with four other regional branches in 2023. The service had been relaunched in partnership with Fair Frome to improve accessibility through multiple channels: phone, email, and in-person support. Angela noted 633 clients had been supported in Frome, including, 134 in-person appointments and 29 clients seen at the food bank Services were available to people of all ages. Citizens Advice is legally accountable, impartial, and confidential. This means that they did not utilise AI in advice provision. Funders cannot influence advice outcomes.	

	Angela noted the common issues presented in Frome were help with benefits entitlement, money advice and affordability and affordable housing. Regarding the issue of housing, Angela explained the CA had seen an increasing prevalence of intergenerational households due to affordability pressures. Also there was a rising risk of overcrowding and homelessness. There had been a notable increase in retired individuals privately renting, facing affordability challenges and limited housing stock. Citizens Advice Somerset secured £172,908 in benefits, successful appeals, and related financial support for Frome residents. They had successfully persuaded housing associations to stop removing carpets between tenancies, promoting a “clean and retain” policy to reduce unnecessary costs and waste. Angela explained increasingly they were experiencing high demand and more complex cases, often involving clients with four to five concurrent issues. They planned to focus on training staff and volunteers to meet higher qualification standards. Continue their inclusion agenda and future-proof services and invest in technology (excluding AI-based advice). Steve Tanner asked about the rise in housing-related needs. Angela explained there were 2 issues, the national trend of older people renting privately, facing affordability issues and young people being impacted by lack of stock, high deposits, and reference checks.	
2025/63/FC	2a. Apologies for absence Andy Jones proposed to accept apologies from Sara Butler, Nick Dove and Max Wide, seconded by Anita Collier, agreed unanimously. 2b. Declaration of members’ interests None was received 2c. Approval of minutes from the last meeting on 2 July 2025 The minutes of the Council meeting held on 2 July 2025 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair. Proposed by Philip Campagna, seconded by Andy Wrintmore, agreed unanimously.	
2025/64/FC	3. Questions from public and Cllrs Anne Hills spoke about the white ribbon campaign which aims to end violence against women and girls. She noted current ideas to	

	raise the profile of campaign such as men taking action when seeing violence, posters on back of men toilets in C&G, potential for white ribbon decorations on Frome Christmas tree and funding for bystander training Philip Campagna noted there would be a stall outside Nationwide at the weekend for the new bus timetable.	
2025/65/FC	4. For decision – Proposal for new Skatepark in Mary Baily Rob Holden, Polly Lamb and Kim Martin presented an overview of the report. The current skate park, last refreshed in 2012, was 13 years old and in a state of disrepair, with visible cracking and structural fatigue. It no longer met the needs of modern wheeled sports users and was considered uninspiring and unsafe. Rob explained simply “doing nothing was not an option”. It was proposed to situate a new skatepark close to the existing play park. It was over 70 metres from the nearest residence, maintained a 40-metre clearance for air ambulance landings and complied with Fields in Trust guidance. Evidence from other towns (e.g. Portishead) showed that proximity to younger play areas can reduce barriers to participation, especially for younger children and girls. The vision was a state-of-the-art, inclusive facility for all wheeled sports: skateboarding, scootering, BMX, etc. It would be designed to be a destination skate park that attracted visitors from other towns. There would be a co-design approach which would be community-led, with engagement with diverse groups to ensure inclusivity and voices of underrepresented groups (e.g. girls, disabled users) would be actively included. Inclusivity had been embedded from the outset; the steering group included six women and two men to avoid unconscious male bias. The design would include social seating and planting to soften the space, art and naming to foster a sense of belonging and programming targeted at girls and women to encourage participation. There would be CCTV coverage and open sightlines to enhance safety. Rob explained there could be a potential application for a Green Flag Award to recognise community value. For community engagement two skate jams and multiple engagement events had been held. The majority of respondents were positive or interested and only 1 in 20 were opposed to the proposal.	

	It had been estimated that the cost would be between £350,000–£400,000. Rob explained FTC would recruit a fundraising specialist (contractor or fixed-term post) with a budget of up to £45,000. This post would be managed by the Communities Team. Other funding options could possibly come from the National Lottery, landfill tax, crowdfunding amongst others. FTC’s role would be as owner and manager of the contractor and to ensure inclusivity standards were met. And to oversee the co-design process. Anne Hills asked about the mechanics of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan, and whether FTC could limit its exposure by only drawing down what was needed for match funding. Sarah Williams clarified that FTC could apply for a larger loan but only draw down the amount required. Cllrs discussed the PWLB loan and it was resolved to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government to apply for a Public Works Loan Board Loan of £400,000 over the borrowing term of 15 years for a new Skatepark. The annual loan repayments would come to approximately £38,400. It was not intended to increase the council tax precept for the purpose of the loan repayments. Susanna Walker (Expert on Inclusive Public Spaces) gave a short presentation and challenged FTC’s claims about inclusivity, citing national and international research showing skate parks were overwhelmingly used by boys and young men. She questioned the lack of data on how the new facility would serve girls and young women. She warned that placing the skate park near the only facility popular with teenage girls (the big swing) could further exclude them. She suggested FTC should conduct targeted engagement with girls and consider alternative locations. Lisa Merryweather asked Susanna for her practical suggestions on how to make skate parks more inclusive. Lisa expressed concern about voting for the project without a clear commitment to also provide facilities specifically for girls and young women. She stated she could not support the proposal in good faith unless inclusivity for girls was addressed. Carla Collenette also echoed concerns about the lack of research on what teenage girls want. She suggested pausing the decision to allow for more targeted engagement with girls. Lenka Grimes raised the issue of a lack of play or adventure equipment for disabled users in Frome parks. She asked whether the skate park project could also address accessibility for disabled young people. Rob Holden responded that inclusivity for all	
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	protected characteristics, including disability, would be embedded in the co-design process. He also noted that previous projects (e.g., the Showfield play area) included wheelchair-friendly equipment and that more could be done in Victoria Park. Ruth Knagg, a local fundraiser, pointed out that most funding would likely come from grants and crowdfunding, not the loan. She suggested that if less than £45,000 was needed for a fundraiser, the remainder could be used as “angel investment” to kickstart fundraising. Members of the skate park community voiced their thoughts about the project. JoJo spoke about the current skate park’s poor condition and the need for a new, inspiring facility. They emphasised that a better skate park would help reduce antisocial behaviour and give young people a sense of ownership. Casper’s Mother shared her son’s achievements in scootering and the challenges of accessing suitable facilities locally. She also highlighted the benefit a new skate park would bring to young people in Frome. Connie voiced support for the skate park, arguing that supporting boys also benefits girls and that the community aspect is valuable for all. Sue Bucklow, Chair, Frome Skate Park Project, argued that the skate park was the most popular facility in the park and was used by people of all genders and backgrounds. She stressed the importance of not removing the facility due to current gender imbalances, as participation by girls was increasing. Polly Lamb expressed concern that the debate was becoming divisive and that young men should not feel apologetic for using the skate park. She emphasised the need to support all young people. Tracey Ashford suggested FTC consider allocating funds for facilities specifically for girls, women, and disabled users, in addition to the skate park. The recommendations were: 1. Approve the plan to relocate the Skatepark to near the younger children’s play area Proposed by Andy Wrintmore, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed by majority. Carla Collenette abstained and Lisa Merryweather was against.	
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	2. Agree to take out a PWLB, in principle, of up to £400k with the precise amount that is to be drawn down to be decided by Council once the total cost of the project is determined and net of any grant funds raised. Noting that the indication is that there are grants available so long as match funding is made available, in this case via a PWLB loan. (Referred to as Option 1 in the report) Proposed by Andy Jones, seconded by Tracey Ashford, agreed by majority. Carla Collenette abstained and Lisa Merryweather was against. 3. Allocate from the New Projects budget and EMR (a max total of £45k) to pay for professional fundraising, noting that the exact nature of engaging the specialism (officer post or contractor) to be decided later in consultation with the HR team. Project management and staff/contractor management to be provided from within the existing staff body and the relevant managers be delegated to ensure that there is capacity by reducing other areas of work. (Referred to as Option 4 in the report). Proposed by Polly Lamb, seconded by Andy Wrintmore, agreed by majority. Carla Collenette abstained and Lisa Merryweather was against. After Cllrs voted a young member of the public Luca spoke and said, “We’re really happy to have this skatepark! Thank you.” The Chair called for a break at 8.49pm. Tracey Ashford left the meeting at 8.50pm.	SW
2025/66/FC	5. A discussion on building community resilience Due to time constraints the discussion was deferred to the Council meeting on 29 October 2025.	
2025/67/FC	6. For information – Key Centre Update For decision – Key Centre Objectives and next step for Nursery tenancy A summary of the report was given by Hannah Stopford. She explained FTC was actively working with local residents and stakeholders to co-design the future offer of the Key Centre. Engagement activities include pop-up events, coffee mornings, and door-knocking to reach people living in and around the Key Centre. They were gathering stories about the centre’s past to help shape its future and reignite community passion for the space.	

	Hannah explained FTC were partnering with current building users, the neighbouring school, and other organisations. A local Advisory Board was being established to ensure a varied and balanced offer that addresses local needs. A new booking system was now up and running. The Communities Team would be working with FTC's new Facilities Manager to get the building, nursery, garden, and cabin ready for a wider launch and potential rental. Hannah explained they were exploring viable financial models, aiming to balance community need with financial sustainability. She also noted there had been a high level of excitement and interest from both organisations and residents about the centre reopening for wider use. They were still in the early stages but committed to reporting back towards the end of the first year. Lisa Merryweather asked what FTC was aiming to achieve with the nursery. She raised concerns that government funding was insufficient for women to return to work and that nurseries were often not fit for purpose for low-income families. She asked if there was clear knowledge of where the gaps in provision are. Hannah explained that FTC were not expert in nursery provision and would work with Somerset Council. She stated they would not want to work with any provider charging higher fees. Previous research (by Melody Hunter Evans) was done and the nursery was leased to a year-round provider. Carla Collenette commented that sending children to nursery is a privilege and expressed concern about high fees. Fiona Barrows noted there may be an influx of children due to funding being available for younger children. She suggested the tender process could include an advisory group to look at different options and that rent discounts could be considered if certain funding was in place. Philip Campagna asked about the implications of leasing to a nursery provider, noting that Ofsted would then scrutinise the provider. He suggested it would be prudent to clarify Frome Town Council's responsibilities. Steve Tanner asked if any significant issues had been found in the building. He noted that the left-hand side of the building was purpose-built for nursery use and queried who would be responsible for any necessary works. Hannah responded that responsibility would be clarified, but no structural changes were anticipated.	
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	Sarah Walton introduced herself as the Key Centre Coordinator. Andy Jones raised concerns about security and safeguarding at the nursery. Fiona noted this would be the responsibility of the Facilities Manager. The recommendations were: 1. Agree the Key Centre aim and objectives. 2. Agree to put the tenancy of the Nursery out to tender for full time occupancy and delegate to the Engagement and Partnership Leads to manage this process in partnership with Somerset Council's Education Places Team An additional recommendation was added: 3. Agree to a report being brought back to council in summer 2026 setting out the learnings of the 'test and learn year' and costed options assessment relating to the future management of the Key Centre Proposed Fiona Barrows, seconded by Andy Jones, agreed unanimously. All three recommendations were proposed by Carla Collenette, seconded by Anita Collier, agreed unanimously.	HS/NC HS/NC
2025/68/FC	7. For decision – A digital engagement platform for Frome Carla Collenette introduced the report. Miles Macey gave a demonstration of the platform. Features included surveys, participatory budgeting, map-based feedback, and targeted engagement. It would be designed to complement in-person engagement and improve inclusivity. Andy Jones commented that seeing the demo helped clarify what a digital engagement platform actually meant. He noted how previous consultations had low engagement and hoped the platform would improve participation. Anita Collier asked where the platform would be hosted (on the council website or elsewhere). She sought clarification on how residents would find and access consultations. Lisa Merryweather raised concerns about data protection and GDPR, noting the platform provider was based in Denmark. She asked about data storage, who controlled the data, and what protections were in place in case of a breach.	

	Rachel Griffin clarified that the digital platform was an additional tool and would not replace existing engagement methods. She confirmed that further due diligence on data protection would be completed before full implementation. The recommendations were: 1. Subject to due diligence, agree expenditure of £25k for the first 2 years for a digital platform provided by Go Vocal. 2. In year one, allocate £5k from the Marketing & Communications budget 800-7961 with the remaining £5.5k underwritten by the General Reserve subject to underspend at year end. 3. In year two, the annual subscription costs of £15k to be included in the annual revenue budget. 4. Delegate to the Marketing & Communications Manager Rachel Griffin, Engagement Lead Hannah Stopford and Marketing & Communications Assistant Miles Macey to complete due diligence and the onboarding process with an aim to launch the platform in Q4 of 2025. Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Carla Collenette, agreed unanimously.	RG/HS/ MM
2025/69/FC	The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 29 October 2025, Frome Town Hall and Zoom	

The chair closed the meeting at: 9.33pm