

Minutes of a meeting of the Operations and Assets Committee

Wednesday 17 September 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Fiona Barrows, Philip Campagna, Mark Dorrington, Anne Hills (Chair), Polly Lamb, Steve Tanner

In attendance:

Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Rob Holden (Environment Manager), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Sarah Williams (Business Manager, online), Clare Riley Davis (Finance Administrator), Becca Evans (Business Administrator)

2 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=R-s8gVXopYI

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2025/09/OA	<p>The meeting started at 7pm.</p> <p>1a. Apologies for absence Anne Hills proposed to accept apologies from Andy Jones, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests None was received.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 23 July 2025 Fiona Barrows asked why it was agreed to not explore quotes for refurbishment of the toilets and also wanted clarification around the decision that was made. The Chair responded that there was a discussion on what would be done immediately and what would be done in due course. The Committee had decided that there was no point in exploring quotes for refurbishment yet because the priority was to engage with the community to understand what the preferred course of action is. All options would be considered.</p> <p>The minutes of the Operations and Assets Committee meeting held on 23 July 2025 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Mark Dorrington, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed by majority. Fiona Barrows and Philip Campagna abstained.</p>	

2025/10/OA	<p>2. Questions from public and Cllrs</p> <p>None were received</p>	
2025/11/OA	<p>3. For decision – Finance report to 31 July 2025 for Operations & Assets Committee</p> <p>Sarah Williams introduced Clare Riley-Davis who is providing maternity cover for Hannah Watts. A summary of the report was given by Sarah. She reported that the Council's finances remained stable and resilient, with a projected year-end surplus of approximately £100,000. This surplus was largely attributed to delayed recruitment and lower-than-expected costs in devolved services.</p> <p>Overspends were noted in yard maintenance following a break-in, professional fees for accountancy support, and the new leader allowance.</p> <p>A duplicate payment of £60,000 was identified and 75% has been recovered, with the remainder expected shortly. Enhanced financial controls had been implemented, increasing the number of checks from four to six. Cllrs commended the finance team for their transparency and swift action.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve Appendix 3.1 the Income & Expenditure report at 31 July 2025 2. Approve Appendix 3.2 the Balance Sheet including Earmarked Reserves at 31 July 2025 3. Approve Appendix 3.3 General Ledger - payments over £500 4. Approve Appendix 3.4 the list of disposals 5. Note the duplicate payment error of £60,600, the corrective actions taken to strengthen financial controls, and the ongoing recovery of the outstanding balance. <p>Proposed by Fiona Barrows, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/12/OA	<p>4. For decision - Proposal for compact tractor for managing Open Spaces following devolution</p> <p>A summary of the report was given by Rob Holden.</p> <p>He explained that the FTC's land management responsibilities had increased significantly following devolution, and the tractor would reduce manual hedge cutting hours from 930 to 259, improving both welfare and efficiency. The tractor would also support grass cutting, digging, transporting, and other tasks. The estimated cost would be covered by the existing devolution budget underspend.</p>	

	<p>Cllrs praised the thoroughness of the report and discussed the need for sinking funds to support future equipment replacement.</p> <p>The recommendation was to purchase a tractor (such as a Kubota L2-622) with flail and attachments together with a bunded tank for fuel storage as detailed in the report at a cost of £79k from budget code 400-7949.</p> <p>Proposed by Mark Dorrington, seconded by Polly Lamb, agreed unanimously.</p>	
2025/13/OA	<p>5. For information - Review of Nurture Open Spaces Work Programme</p> <p>Rob Holden continued with a comprehensive update on the work of the Ranger team and progress across Frome's open spaces.</p> <p>Improvements were highlighted at Victoria Park, Adderwell, Community Woodlands, Mary Baily, and Egford Park. The sweeper has made a noticeable difference in the town centre, and repairs to the fountain had been completed. The Henley Way steps had been replaced, and while concerns were raised about their steepness, it was confirmed that the design met standard specifications. A wildflower seeding event was planned for 27 October. Fiona Barrows and Mark Dorrington praised the Rangers' work and the positive impact on the community.</p> <p>A question was received online from Adam Boyden regarding disabled access at Henley Way. Rob confirmed that while a ramp remained a future possibility, the estimated cost of £120,000 made it currently unfeasible. Accessibility improvements had been made on the Welshmill side.</p> <p>The committee then discussed the management of open spaces on new housing developments. Cllrs expressed concern about poor maintenance by private management companies and agreed that early engagement with developers was essential to secure funding and ensure quality. Dragonfly Close was cited as a successful recent adoption. Cllrs were encouraged to notify the Planning Committee of problematic sites for future consideration.</p>	
2025/14/OA	<p>6. For information – Update on staff starters and leavers, health and safety matters and safeguarding</p> <p>Laura Flaherty noted an increase in complex issues presenting at the Town Hall due to reductions in Somerset services and confirmed that a review of lone working and safeguarding policies was underway. A detailed discussion followed regarding DBS checks for staff, volunteers, and councillors. Mixed views were</p>	

	<p>expressed, Laura noted that she would incorporate this into the report on safety at the Town Hall at the next meeting.</p> <p>The meeting concluded on a celebratory note with Fiona announcing the birth of Hannah Watts' baby boy, George. Congratulations were extended to Hannah and her family.</p>	
2025/15/OA	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 26 November 2025, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 8.48pm