

Agenda item 10

For decision – Agree that Cycle Together ebikes can be loaned to Frome Community Bike Project to offer as hire ebikes

Author: Matt Mellen, Climate Action Lead

Summary (incl. recommendations)

FTC owns seventeen ebikes and accessories that are currently being stored and maintained by Frome Community Bike Project (FCBP):

- Fourteen of these ebikes were purchased between 2021 and 2023 using Lottery money from Green and Healthy Frome and were offered as a free 4 week loan to the public through the Cycle Together Lottery funded scheme. The funding for Cycle Together and the associated free ebike loans ended on 31st March 2026.
- Three of these ebikes were purchased between 2017 and 2019 and were offered as paid for hire bikes through a partnership between FTC and Cycology Bikes. When Cycology Bikes closed the ebikes were relocated to Pronto Bikes in 2021. The hire of these ebikes became unviable for Pronto Bikes and they were relocated to FCBP in 2022.

The recommendation is the following:

- FTC agrees to loan 10 ebikes, 10 bike locks, 10 helmets and 10 panniers to FCBP at no charge to FCBP for this loan.
- FTC will take back 3 ebikes for staff use.
- The remaining 4 ebikes will be disposed of by FTC and FCBP will be permitted to use them as they wish (spares/repairs/resale).

Background

Between 2017 and 2019 FTC purchased three ebikes that were offered as paid for hire bikes through a partnership between FTC and Cycology Bikes (a bike shop previously on Waterloo BA11 3JB). When Cycology Bikes closed in 2021 the ebikes were relocated to Pronto Bikes. The hire of these ebikes became unviable for Pronto Bikes and they were relocated to FCBP in 2022. At that time FCBP was the only place with enough storage space for the ebikes but they did not have capacity to run a hire scheme so the paid for hires paused.

Cycle Together started in May 2021 funded by the Lottery's Climate Action Fund for the Green and Healthy Frome partnership made up of Frome Town Council, Frome Medical Practice and Edventure. From 2021-23 Cycle Together was administered by Frome Town Council and 6 ebikes and accessories were purchase using Lottery money.

In January 2023 the Green and Healthy Frome partnership was awarded further funding from the Lottery's Climate Action Fund to support expansion of Green and Healthy Frome for another three years. Cycle Together, as one of the strands within Green and Healthy Frome, was granted a much larger fund than previously allocated and a further 8 ebikes and accessories were purchased with Lottery money. In August 2023 an agreement was reached

between Frome Town Council and Frome Community Bike Project (FCBP) to transfer development, delivery and budget responsibility of Cycle Together to FCBP.

Operational activities

The hire ebikes were popular while they were live between 2017 and 2022. People had the flexibility to hire an ebike on a specific date and for a chosen time.

The Cycle Together free four week ebike loan was popular while it was operational between 2021 and 2026. Over the summer months often all 14 ebikes were on loan.

Unfortunately it was not possible to offer the paid for daily ebike hire alongside the Cycle Together 4 week loans due to staff capacity. Cycology was an established bike shop able to manage the time taken to hand over and check ebike between loans. They were also open longer regular hours conducive to a hire scheme. Pronto ran the hire scheme for 12 months after Cycology closed but as a new shop who were still establishing their business, refining their revenue streams and building a customer base they found that the ebikes were not feasible at that time and therefore could no longer sustain the hire scheme. A search for a new host for the hire scheme commenced but nowhere was able to offer the hire service. Options included the Share Shop but they could not store and maintain the ebikes and the Town Hall was explored but again there was nowhere to store the ebikes and no FTC staff members who could run the hire operation. The only option was FCBP who at that point were in the process of setting up their workshop. They were able to store the ebikes but they were not yet open so could not continue the hire scheme.

The Lottery funding covered coordination, storage and maintenance costs of the Cycle Together scheme which allowed the 4 week regular loan to continue on a set monthly rota.

Since the hire scheme ceased people have regularly enquired about hiring an ebike just for one day. The fleet of ebikes purchased for Cycle Together are now available to be offered for daily hire since the Lottery commitment to 4 week loans has ended. FCBP are now in a position to be able to offer daily ebike hires.

In March 2026 on-street regular hire bikes and a cargo bike have been installed in Frome using GWR funding. Offering ebike loans from the FCBP workshop will expand and expand the hire offer in Frome to include regular bikes, ebikes and a cargo bike.

An MOU has been created by FTC and FCBP staff to set out the details of how FTC and FCBP have agreed to work collaboratively and gain maximum benefit from the hire ebikes.

Other options considered	None
Key considerations for the Council	<p>There is currently no other local organisation that can store, maintain and run a hire scheme with the FTC ebikes.</p> <p>Owning a fleet of ebikes paid for with Lottery money is a great opportunity to reinstate the hire ebike offer.</p>

	Continuing a hire bike offer forms part of the legacy of Green and Healthy Frome.
Consultation and feedback	There is public demand for daily flexible ebike hire. Cycle Together evaluation shows high interest in ebikes and positive feedback from users.
Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan	None
Financial and Risk Implications	The ebikes are already a number of years old and there is no budget to replace them when they become too expensive to repair. Within the next 5 years we anticipate the fleet to be half its current number. Resale value of older ebikes is very low due to motor and battery risk of failure.
Legal / HR Implications	None
Equalities Implications	None
Community Safety Implications	None
Climate Change and Sustainability Implications	This scheme will enable people to try out an ebike before purchasing one or to have occasional use of a bike when they need it without storage issues or upfront costs of owning an ebike. Cycle Together evaluation shows that people who tried an ebike were more likely to cycle more often and consider purchasing an ebike. The electric assistance enables people to carry more luggage and cycle up Frome's hills more easily, therefore making ebikes a viable alternative to motorised vehicles.
Health and Safety Implications	FCBP holds insurance to cover the hire of the ebikes. FCBP will safety check and maintain the ebikes. FCBP will securely store the ebikes.
Constitutional Requirements	None
Background Papers	MOU FTC FCBP loan ebikes DRAFT April 2026 GHF_Learning Insight #4 CycleTogether
Report Sign-Off	Peter Wheelhouse, Town Clerk 20/05/26

Recommendations

1. FTC agrees to loan 10 ebikes, 10 bike locks, 10 helmets and 10 panniers to FCBP at no charge to FCBP for this loan.
2. FTC will take back 3 ebikes for staff use.
3. The remaining 4 ebikes will be disposed of by FTC and FCBP will be permitted to use them as they wish (spares/repairs/resale).