

Agenda item 6

For decision - To seek Council approval of the proposed process and timetable for developing the 2027/28 Budget and Work Programme

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Summary (incl. recommendations)

Frome Town Council's budget setting process is one of its most important statutory and strategic responsibilities. It provides the framework for allocating resources, delivering Council Plan priorities and ensuring the Council remains financially sustainable while responding to the needs and aspirations of the community. The proposed timetable for the 2027/28 Budget and Work Programme has been designed to provide sufficient opportunity for councillor involvement, community engagement, committee consideration and final Council approval ahead of the commencement of the 2027/28 financial year.

Recommendations:

1. Approve the proposed budget setting process and timetable for the preparation of the 2027/28 Budget and Work Programme.
2. Note the opportunities for councillor, committee and community input throughout the process.
3. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the relevant Committee Chairs and Lead Councillors, to make any minor amendments to the timetable required to facilitate the budget setting process.

Background

The Council is required to set a balanced budget on an annual basis and ensure that resources are aligned with its strategic objectives and work programme commitments. The budget setting process provides the mechanism through which priorities and the work programme are reviewed, proposals developed and financial implications considered before final decisions are made by Council in January 2027.

The proposed process for the 2027/28 Budget and Work Programme seeks to ensure:

- Early engagement between officers and elected councillors.
- Meaningful community engagement.
- Transparency in decision making.
- Consideration of proposals by the Council's committees.
- Sufficient time for refinement and review before final adoption.

Proposed Budget Setting Process

The process will commence with Council approval of the timetable and approach in August 2026.

During September 2026, managers will work with Lead Councillors to review existing work programmes, identify priorities and develop budget proposals for consideration. This stage will include an assessment of operational requirements, strategic priorities alongside the existing Council Plan and emerging financial pressures.

Alongside this work, community engagement will be undertaken during September and early October 2026. The detailed approach to engagement will be developed separately by Rachel Griffin, Marketing & Communications Manager in consultation with the & Communities Team, the Town Clerk and Council Chair. Engagement will seek to provide residents, businesses and stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to the development of priorities and spending proposals.

The outcomes of the engagement exercise will be reviewed in early October 2026 and used to inform the ongoing development of the budget and work programme. Managers, staff and Lead Councillors will continue refining proposals throughout October and November 2026, taking account of community feedback, financial implications and service/work programme requirements.

Formal committee consideration will then take place as follows:

- Community & Place Committee – 21 October 2026
- Planning Committee – 19 November 2026
- Operations & Assets Committee – 25 November 2026

The committees will have the opportunity to review proposals relevant to their areas of responsibility and provide recommendations for inclusion within the draft Budget and Work Programme.

Following committee consideration, staff and councillors will review all feedback and recommendations during December 2026. A final draft Budget and Work Programme will then be prepared for Council consideration and presented to Council for decision on 13 January 2027.

Proposed Timetable

Activity	Provisional Timetable
Report to Council to agree process	5 August 2026
Managers work with Lead Councillors to develop budget/work programme	September 2026
Community engagement (details to be confirmed)	September to early October 2026
Review outcomes from engagement	Early October 2026
Work on budget/work programme continues	October to November 2026
Report to Community & Place Committee	21 October 2026
Report to Planning Committee	19 November 2026
Report to Operations & Assets Committee	25 November 2026
Review outcomes and finalise recommendations for Council	December 2026
Report to Council for decision	13 January 2027

Benefits of the Proposed Approach

The proposed process:

- Provides a clear and transparent framework for budget development.
- Enables early involvement of councillors in shaping priorities.
- Incorporates community engagement before proposals are finalised.
- Allows for detailed committee scrutiny and input in a public meeting setting.
- Provides sufficient time for refinement of proposals before Council makes its final decision.
- Supports alignment between the budget, work programme and the Council's strategic objectives.

Conclusion

The proposed timetable provides a structured and inclusive approach to developing the Council's 2027/28 Budget and Work Programme. It balances the need for staff and councillor input, community engagement and committee scrutiny while ensuring that a final budget can be adopted by Council on 13 January 2027. Approval of the proposed process will enable work to commence on the preparation of the 2027/28 Budget and Work Programme.

Other options considered	N/A
Key considerations for the Council	The Council is responsible for setting an annual budget and ensuring that appropriate financial planning arrangements are in place. The proposed process supports informed and transparent decision making in relation to the Council's statutory responsibilities.
Consultation and feedback	The proposal outlines timetable for broader engagement across the community, stakeholders and committees than has been held previously.
Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Budget and work programme will build on approved Council Plan
Financial and Risk Implications	The purpose of this report is to agree the budget setting process and timetable. No direct financial implications arise from approval of the process itself. Financial implications will be considered through the development and approval of the 2027/28 Budget.
Legal / HR Implications	See Constitutional Requirements below
Equalities Implications	The proposed process includes community engagement to ensure that residents and stakeholders have an opportunity to inform the development of Council work priorities and budget proposals. Equality and sustainability considerations will be assessed as

	part of the development of individual budget proposals where relevant.
Community Safety Implications	None
Climate Change and Sustainability Implications	Equality and sustainability considerations will be assessed as part of the development of individual budget proposals where relevant.
Health and Safety Implications	None
Constitutional Requirements	The Council is responsible for setting an annual budget and ensuring that appropriate financial planning arrangements are in place. The proposed process supports informed and transparent decision making in relation to the Council's statutory responsibilities.
Background Papers	None
Report Sign-Off	Peter Wheelhouse, Town Clerk 28/07/26

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