



ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 26

Message from the Mayor

Becoming Mayor for the second time in 2025 was enormously exciting!

My first Mayoral appointment was in 2020 right at the beginning of lockdown. I was unable to perform many of the usual duties, so when I was given a second chance to take on the role, I was absolutely thrilled!

It was hectic from the start. Usually, the first mayoral assignment is the blessing of the well to give thanks for our clean water, which emanates from the Mendip Hills and feeds the famous leat in Cheap Street.

For me it was my fifth! I wanted it to be a busy year, to see and do as much as humanly possible, and I'm delighted to say that's exactly what happened!

I was averaging two or three meetings a day as well as attending regular Council meetings, but it gave me so many wonderful opportunities to meet our amazing community groups who work tirelessly to help those less fortunate. We are lucky to have so many friendly and willing volunteers and so I was delighted to attend a ceremony to thank them personally for their time and dedication.

There were many highlights for me including our many festivals, the lighting of the Valentine Lamp, Cobble Wobble, Centenary celebrations for both Rotary and the Memorial Theatre, Remembrance Day, the Frome Festival Food Feast, meeting the High Sheriff of Somerset, visiting so many incredible school children, and of course our wonderful Christmas celebrations.



Anita Collier, Mayor of Frome 2025-26

I loved opening new shops and attending events, and giving talks was my favourite pastime!

Frome is an edgy, quirky, and creative town, with an extraordinary history, lots of independent shops, wonderful listed buildings, a delightful river, and some beautiful green spaces. I was lucky enough to explore so much of what's on offer, expanding my knowledge into the bargain.

It's a demanding, and sometimes exhausting job, but I loved every minute of it and throughout the whole of my year felt supremely proud to be the Mayor of such an amazing town.

Anita Collier, Mayor of Frome 2025-26 and 2020-21

Expenditure 2025-26



Communities £349,897



Grants £95,000



Assets £537,649



Resilience £165,382



Green & Healthy Frome £244,967



Devolution £351,063



Planning £93,494



Town Centre £163,593



Open Spaces £829,554

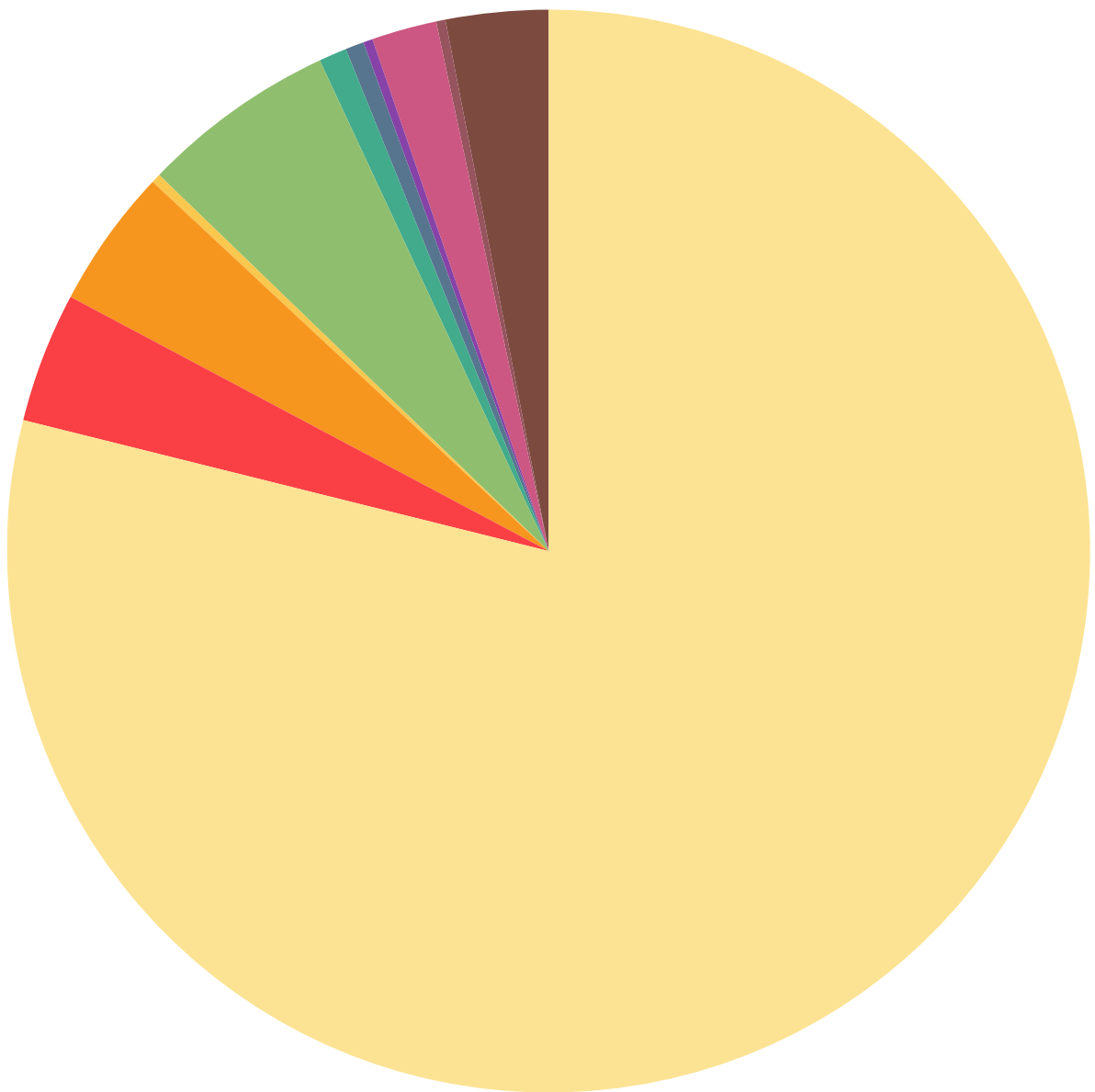


Marketing & Comms £239,449



Business Services £474,484

Income 2025-26



Precept £2,777,932



Communities £133,237



Assets £147,249



Resilience £15,140



Green & Healthy Frome £197,776



Devolution £29,180



Planning £27,473



Town Centre £4,430



Open Spaces £68,875



Marketing & Comms £14,198



Business Services £98,029

Some of our highlights

Grow community wellbeing

The Key Centre

A major part of the Frome Devolution Deal was taking over management of the Key Centre, a community centre at risk of closure following years of underinvestment. This was our first year at the helm, and we recruited our Key Centre Co-ordinator Sarah Walton and regular cleaner, Tina. In the first few months of opening, there was much to be done to improve the building for community use. Bookings and income from rentals have been steadily rising and the types of users are increasingly varied. The Key Centre also hosted a Warm Space over Winter which gave people of all ages a welcoming space to play, relax and connect.

Families also came to play at Summer pop-ups around Frome, a day with Caravan Arts at Tower View, and Play Day at Edmund Park.

Photos by
Alice Whitby

Young people

We continued to empower young people to get involved, with a co-design project for a play space at Mary Baily and a youth-led grants panel. The YOU (Young Opinions Unite) grants project involved young people at every stage – a brilliant group of local teens came up with the name, designed the process, considered applications and decided how to allocate funding. They also evaluated the project, letting us know how to improve it for the future.



Supporting charities and community organisations

This year saw a huge increase in applications for grant funding as local charities and community organisations face difficult funding and delivery challenges. We undertook research into the local and national funding landscape to better understand the challenges and how we can effectively respond to them. We invited local residents with different backgrounds and life experiences to be part of a new Grants Advisory Panel, and continued to host networking sessions for community organisations, including the Open Space event with Terrestrial, which brought people together to ask: "How do we help creativity and community thrive in Frome?"



We also launched the Volunteering for Health partnership with Spark Somerset, connecting groups in need of volunteers with people who could enjoy the mental and physical wellbeing benefits that volunteering provides.

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.



Support a thriving town

Supporting the town centre

We recruited a new Town Centre Co-ordinator, Katie Fraser, who worked closely this year with town centre property and landowners, businesses and services and other stakeholders to build positive working relationships.

We supported Cheap Street traders with various efforts to increase footfall including their late-night Christmas shopping event. And made improvements to the look and feel of the town centre, including new planters on Scott Road and Cork Street, a new bench at the taxi rank, and commercial bin relocation on Scott Road. We appointed a new waste contractor to deliver a more efficient, reliable, and sustainable waste service for businesses, and minimise the impact of waste storage and collections on the town centre.

We made the difficult decision to close the Market Yard toilets after rising running and maintenance costs made the existing facilities unsustainable, while committing to work with the community to explore a better, more accessible and sustainable long-term solution for public toilets in the town centre. Plans are underway to provide a new facility.

A successful pilot of the Young Secret Shopper Programme helped businesses and services to improve their offer and operations, with a focus on provision for and inclusion of young people in our town centre.



Events

Events and markets continued to bring people together and animate Frome's public spaces throughout the year.

Highlights included the Children's Festival, Frome Pride, Frome Busks and the much-loved Pancake Race, alongside support for a wide range of community-led events. Our team worked behind the scenes with organisers, providing practical expertise, safety planning, road closures, stewarding and equipment to help Frome's busy programme of events happen safely and successfully.



Markets

This year also saw Frome Town Council take on responsibility for the Wednesday and Saturday weekly markets from Somerset Council, securing an important part of Frome's heritage as a market town. We have begun the work of strengthening and developing the markets, supporting existing traders, attracting new ones and looking at how they can bring more people into the town centre and support the wider local economy.

Together, our markets and events help create a lively town centre, support local businesses and provide opportunities for people of all ages to come together



Discover Frome

The Discover Frome Information Point in Frome Library continued to be a valued resource for residents and visitors alike. The excellent team of volunteers, supported by Discover Frome Volunteer Co Ordinator Tricia Mugridge, are a font of local knowledge. Whether they're providing bus timetables, handing out maps or helping people find interesting things to do, their warmth and expertise support local businesses and services and make the town centre a more inclusive place. The new Discover Frome website has gone from strength to strength, utilising new technology to cut down time and display events from across all Frome venues.



Badgers Hill Stadium

We continued to work consistently and proactively to secure a sustainable long-term future for football at Badgers Hill. We remained committed to finding a workable solution. This included commissioning an independent audit of improvement works at the stadium to provide a clear and robust basis for future discussions.

The work laid the foundations to secure the future of football at Badgers Hill and support the stadium's wider role as an important community asset.



Cultivate environmental sustainability

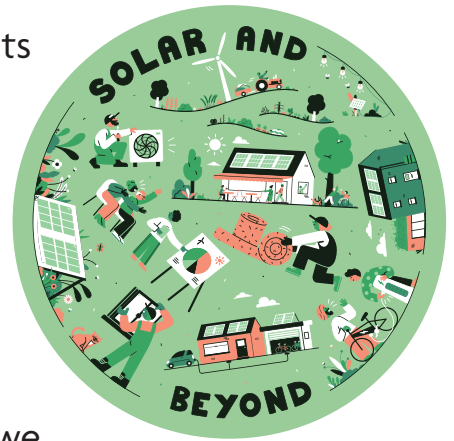
Empowering and engaging

Frome Town Council has continued to provide useful information on the climate emergency and support residents to link up to become part of the solution. A series of large events such as a climate adaptation workshop and vision the future workshop with Rob Hopkins activated us on the topic and offered routes to action. Young people were offered opportunity to think, talk and act on climate via a new afterschool club. Smaller events, talks, pop ups, face-to-face meetings and online engagement are all ongoing.



Solar and Beyond

FTC is leading the charge by adding solar panels to all of its own suitable roofs, saving money and decarbonising our estate. We are also supporting the town's community buildings to reduce bills by reducing energy waste, and to invest in solar panels where appropriate. We're working with FRECo to support community orgs and businesses to install renewables whilst bringing tangible, financial community benefit to the town at the same time. Working with key partners and community groups we are helping to mobilize the journey to make our town more resilient to global challenges.



Healthy Homes

The Energy Advice programme supported 272 residents, delivering home visits, advice sessions, events and workshops. The results are £100k in one-off financial benefits, an estimated £29k in ongoing annual savings, and 25.84 tonnes CO₂e/year in ongoing carbon savings.

The Retrofit Support programme provided 52 home energy plans and follow-up support to 26 households, helping people lower their energy bills and reduce their carbon footprint. We strengthened Frome's retrofit community of , creating a stronger foundation for ongoing home energy and retrofit support for Frome.



Spaces for people and wildlife to thrive

Our open spaces are managed to be inclusive, biodiverse, and active, supporting community wellbeing and wildlife. This year, the size of the land that we care for increased by half. To handle the increased demands, we took on and refurbished a new Ranger base and purchased a tractor, which allowed the team to undertake 6km of hedging.



We purchased Adderwell Water Meadow thanks to a hugely successful crowdfunding campaign and completed works that improved access to this space which has huge environmental significance and also secures continuous pedestrian access to the River Frome from Wallbridge to Spring Gardens. The new community woodland at Spring Gardens came into being, with 600 people planting over 4000 trees.



To help us manage and maintain our 34 hectares of land more effectively, we recommissioned part of Somerset Council's depot, giving our Ranger Team a dedicated operational base with the space they need for equipment, vehicles and materials. This will help the team work more efficiently and support our growing responsibility for looking after Frome's green spaces and community assets.

Improve assets and infrastructure

Planning

Our Planning Committee met 13 times during the year, considering and responding to 232 planning applications across Frome including 30 objections. Alongside this important statutory role, we continued to work on the bigger issues shaping the town's future. We took part in planning inquiries and discussions around major developments including Selwood Garden Community, Packsaddle, Saxonvale and Oldford Hill, and worked with Frome Civic Society on proposals affecting the town's heritage.

We worked with Somerset Council and partners to implement Safer School Streets and explore a more joined-up approach to 20mph limits. And behind the scenes, the team continued to support residents with planning, highways and enforcement issues, pursued Section 106 funding for improvements in the town and began early work on a new Frome Shop Front Design Guide.

We also welcomed a new Planning and Development Projects Officer, increasing our capacity to take this important work forward.



A new skatepark

Following extensive engagement and working with young people, skaters, families and the wider community a new skatepark relocated at Mary Baily was approved by councillors. Working with Frome Skatepark Project, feedback from hundreds of people helped shape the emerging plans, with clear priorities including a smoother and quieter design, better accessibility and improved paths, seating and lighting. With a potential investment of up to £400,000, work also began on developing a funding strategy and exploring external grants and community fundraising. The project is about much more than replacing the existing skatepark - it is an opportunity to create a high-quality, welcoming and accessible space designed with young people that can serve Frome for many years to come.

Improved green spaces

We're always improving the parks and open spaces we look after. This year's improvements included: a tower upgrade at Welshmill, a hedge laying makeover for Weylands, a big makeover and celebration at Milk Street, and a refreshed play area and new feature trees for Egford play area.

In Victoria Park, a stunning carved bench was created using the much-loved Norway maple that sadly needed to be felled. Table tennis was introduced, the sandpit gained sails and a zip wire was installed. The mower shed also got a revamp, and a gorgeous graffiti mural and beautiful planting brought more colour to the space.



Be a bold and effective town council

Clear and engaging comms

Throughout 2025-26, we worked hard to make our communications clearer, more engaging and easier for people to get involved with. We embarked on engagement about how we communicate with residents and following that piece of work have continued to share timely, accessible information about decisions, services, events and opportunities through our platforms and community networks. Our focus has been on creating more two-way conversations, reaching people in different ways, listening to what matters and making it easier for everyone to have a say in Frome's future.



My Frome - a new way to have your say

We launched My Frome, our new online engagement platform powered by Go Vocal, making it easier for residents to get involved in shaping the town wherever and whenever suits them. From plans for the Riverside and Market Yard toilets to the Community Woodland and skatepark, My Frome has given residents a new way to explore proposals, share ideas, complete surveys and follow projects as they develop. It complements our face-to-face engagement, helping us reach more people and making consultation more accessible and transparent.



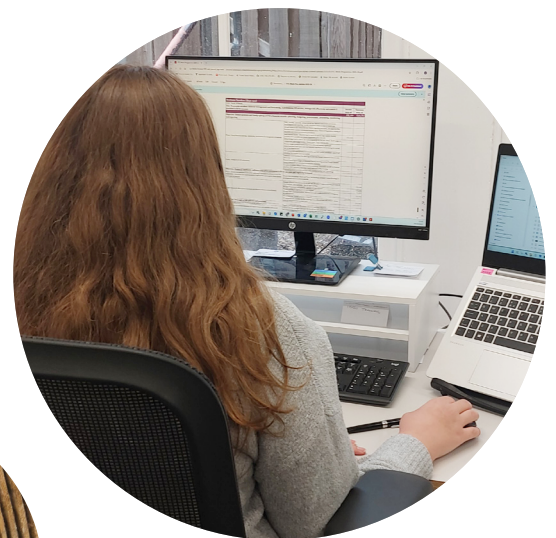
Equalities work

With our continued growth comes the need to ensure our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is robust and embedded in everything we do. To support this, we adopted two equality objectives. The first was to better understand the equality impacts of our work by developing an equality impact assessment tool, which is currently being tested and refined. The second was to identify where we could further improve, embed and evidence our approach across the council's work as part of an Equalities Action Plan, which is in development.

At the town hall

Our Customer Service Advisors Tracy and Sian, Town Hall Steward Sean and Events Administrator Nykki keep the Town Hall at the heart of community life, facilitating bookings and events and supporting community activities with free equipment loans. The Town Hall hosts everything from weddings and meetings to important services including Probation, Frome Learning Partnership, Citizens Advice and our own Welcome Hub.

Our Business & Finance team also provide the essential professional expertise and prudent advice that underpin everything we do – from supporting our staff and managing the Council's finances day to day, to advising on some of our largest and most complex projects, such as our work with the football club. This year they have continued to strengthen the organisation behind the scenes, carefully managing our contracts, finances, budgets, payroll and governance as always while also increasing our HR capacity to provide greater support to our growing organisation and its staff. The team has also strengthened our systems and IT security including progressing Cyber Essentials. Their expertise helps ensure our decisions are robust, our ambitions are achievable and public money is managed responsibly.



Frome Town Council – A Year

I began this year by describing Frome Town Council as a council in transition. Looking back, that feels more true than ever. Frome Town Council has grown considerably in recent years in response to the changing needs of our town. Our annual budget is now almost £4 million, we manage 36 hectares of land and a growing portfolio of buildings and community assets.

With that growth comes a responsibility to make sure that the foundations of the organisation are strong enough to support what we are asking it to do. In July 2025, we invited the Local Government Association and National Association of Local Councils to carry out our first Corporate Peer Challenge. Over three intensive days, the peer team spoke to more than 50 councillors, staff and partners and held more than 19 meetings. Their report has given us a valuable external perspective and, importantly, a clear set of recommendations to help us improve.



Fiona Barrows, Leader - 2025-26

Our resulting Improvement Plan is about making sure that our systems, processes, governance and organisational capacity keep pace with the scale, scope and complexity of our work. This is important work, but it is not about becoming a different kind of council. If anything, it is about making sure we are strong enough to continue being the kind of council Frome needs.

Because while we have grown, we don't want to lose what makes Frome Town Council distinctive. We have built a reputation for doing things differently, finding creative solutions and working with our community rather than simply doing things to it. That sense of possibility, collaboration and innovation matters more than ever as the challenges facing our town become greater and the future less certain.

We have continued to put that approach into practice. We took on 57 new open spaces from Somerset Council and have been working with communities to breathe new life into places that had become neglected or underused. From St John's to Tower View, it has been fantastic to see what can happen when investment, council staff and local energy come together.

At Mary Baily Playing Field, we agreed plans for a new skatepark and social space, shaped by the strength of feeling and ideas of young people. At Badgers Hill, we've

continued our commitment to protecting a much-loved community asset. And through our climate work, we brought people together to think about how Frome can adapt to our changing climate, including a packed event with Rob Hopkins.

We also made a deliberate effort to strengthen the relationships that will be essential to Frome's future, bringing staff and colleagues from Somerset Council together to build stronger connections and work collaboratively on key areas of shared interest, including planning, and economic development.

It has also been a year of change in our own organisation, including saying a sad goodbye to Town Clerk Paul Wynne after 14 years, and welcoming Peter Wheelhouse into the role. And, following a by-election, we became a female-majority council – another important milestone in our continuing evolution.

There is plenty still to do. But as we look ahead, I am confident that we can meet the challenges of the future while keeping the community spirit, ambition and creativity that make Frome such a special place.

Fiona Barrows,
Leader of the council 2025-26

Grants Recipients 2025-2026

Fair Frome

Frome Parkinson's Group

Frome Falcons Powerchair Football Club

Dissenters Cemetery

Avanti Park PTFA

KANG

St John the Baptist Church

The Trinity Community Group

Frome Town Carnival

The Phoenix Project

Young People Frome

Frome Compost CIC

Share Frome

Frome Birth Talk

Rare Species CIC

Neighbourhood Toolbox CIC

Evolve Music

Shared Earth Learning

The Good Heart

Frome Gateway Club

Somerset Art Works

Froglife

We Hear You

Holy Trinity Church

The Kindness Connection CIC

Young People Frome

Songs for the Memory

Citizens Advice Somerset

Frome Carnival Committee

Frome Town Women FC

Frome Community Productions CIC

Edventure Frome CIC

Baby Connections

Open Storytellers

Frome Festival

Sustainable Frome/Everyone Needs Pockets

The Pod

The Good Heart

Focus Frome

Vallis Farm Education Centre

Rainbow Flow

Purple Elephant

Fusion Lifestyle

Youth Production Network CIC

5th Frome Scout Group

Grand total: £89,751