Agenda item 5

For discussion - Work programme priorities for 2027-28

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Summary and introduction

The main focus at this meeting and other committee meetings in November will be on the priorities for the work programme building on the adopted Council Plan and current activities. Discussions around next year's budget will follow in a public session at the December Council meeting.

This report provides essential background reading around the elements of the work programme that are relevant to the Community & Place Committee. It also sets out the process that we will go through on the night.

Background and purpose of the meeting

This committee meeting and paper are part of the process of developing our work programme and budget for next year. We're doing things differently this year because we want the process to be more transparent and open, creating more opportunities for residents to understand, influence and engage with the decisions we make. This is a genuine opportunity to discuss our work, hear what matters most to local people, and consider where our priorities should lie for the year ahead.

However, we need to be realistic about what can be changed. We are in the final year of this administration, and our work will continue to be guided by the existing Council Plan, which was shaped by extensive, town-wide engagement with residents a couple of years ago. This process is an opportunity to sense-check those priorities, understand whether they still reflect what matters most to people, and consider where we can make the greatest difference.

Work programme – current and suggested priorities

Communities – current workstreams

- Work with partners, stakeholders and residents to develop a thriving community hub at the Key Centre
- Shape a strategic approach to local fundraising, improve the impact and reach of the Community Grants programme. Incorporate direct resident input into the assessment of grants.
- Ensure Children and Young People are meaningfully involved in decision making, especially through co-designing projects such as Mary Baily play feature, participatory grant making, secret shopper etc. Begin to map Post 16 opportunities.

- Engage with and support the most vulnerable or hard to reach residents through: neighbourhood level engagement projects, welcome hub for displaced community, connections with relevant services and organisations
- Build capacity, adaptability and resilience in our local VCFSE (Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise) sector, through training, networking, grants and advice or resources, thematic forums for children and young people focused organisations.
- Ensure new and devolved assets, particularly open spaces, reflect community needs and align with our Play Strategy: key projects are Brunel Green corridor, Broadway Community Gardens, St Johns and Tower View/the Mount.

Communities - suggested work programme priorities for 2027/28

- Continue to develop the community offer at the Key Centre, and work in partnership with the new Children's Nursery to establish a successful tenancy and support them to work with stakeholders and families to reach the wider community.
- Convene stakeholders, and respond to explorations, commissioned research and mapping to improve local post-16 education and work opportunities, putting Young People's voice at the heart of shaping responses.
- Possible town wide engagement to gather resident input and action on the next Council Plan
- Continue to support the most vulnerable and hard to reach residents, by focusing community development work on priority areas (e.g. peripheral neighbourhoods, older people or those experiencing frailty), taking an active role in a new Crisis Resilience Partnership to tackle financial vulnerability, supporting displaced people through the welcome hub, and supporting representation e.g. in the Grants Advisory Panel, participation in events.
- Continue to support the VCFSE sector with a focus on a town wide approach to improving Equality Diversity and Inclusion, collating and sharing data and connecting organisations with 'experts' to support accounting, legal, HR and governance.
- Work in partnership with the Environment Team to conduct a co-designed accessibility and playfulness audit of selected open spaces with local residents and those with lived experience of protected characteristics. Resulting in set of working principles to inform management of open spaces as well as other areas of work such as planning.

Climate action – current workstreams

- Townwide renewable energy coordination: increasing renewable energy on the FTC estate and associated community buildings; providing free and impartial support to residents and businesses to support solar uptake via our Solar & Beyond platform; working in partnership with FRECo on potential new large projects for Frome possibly a wind turbine or large solar array to generate a new income stream for climate action
- Home energy advice and retrofit support: promote and support small energy-saving measures; deliver Home Energy Plans and long-term Retrofit Support cases;
- Climate adaptation planning: build on act-to-adapt process to launch adaptation plan; link up with Somerset Council, LCN and other key partners to plan and prepare; liaise with community groups;
- Fundraising: research carried out on potential funders; fundraising consultant engaged to support bids; Energy Redress application in progress – aiming to submit bid before Christmas

Climate action - suggested work programme priorities for 2027/28

- Townwide renewable energy coordination: aim to progress a large solar project on a commercial roof (e.g. a warehouse or a supermarket); create accessible displays for FTC buildings to show renewable energy generation; progress partnership with FRECo and secure funding; establish Frome Energy Club as dependable local clean energy purchaser to enable more projects
- Home energy advice and retrofit support: evolve programme to expand the support offered to the most vulnerable during heat waves; increase the capacity of the team to progress case work internally; link home energy advice with neighbourhood climate adaptation planning
- Climate adaptation planning: work closely with the Community and Environment Teams to identify suitable locations in the town to improve climate functionality (e.g. drainage and shade); engage and empower neighbourhoods to advance hyper-local climate adaptations; co-produce Sponge Town CPD day event with key stakeholders – Earthday 2027; explore opportunities to pedestrianize in town centre; look for opportunities to increase effectiveness of our climate action by connecting beyond Frome - e.g. LCN, SWT, SC

Economy & town centre - current work streams

- Improve the public realm: with a programme of maintenance delivered by Town Centre Ranger.
- Town Centre development projects: to meet and build effective relationships with all key stakeholders and to understand what is impacting business. Focusing on how to collaboratively deal with issues such as flyposting, graffiti, litter, and enhancing the town centre.
- Commissioning the production of a Frome Town Prospectus defining Frome's identity and potential for economic growth including options for strategic investment and funding, including research of training needs and post-16 education opportunities.

Economy & town centre - suggested work programme priorities for 2027/28

- The development and implementation of an Economic Prospectus for Frome, focusing on how sustainable growth can be achieved, developing new approaches and turning opportunities into projects. Identifying gaps in the provision of support for business and how that support can be enhanced. Identifying the needs of employers in terms of skills and workspace and how those needs can be met.
- Continue to improve the public realm with a programme of maintenance delivered by Town Centre Ranger and work on town centre development projects around flyposting, graffiti, litter, and enhancing the town centre.
- A renewed focus on maximising Income from Frome's Weekly Markets, alongside targeted investment to improve their appeal and long term sustainability, ensuring that they remain a vibrant and valuable asset to the town.

Marketing & communications - current work streams

- Developing a Communications Strategy, working with councillors and staff to strengthen how we communicate, improve consistency across the FTC and help residents better understand what Frome Town Council does and the difference it makes.

- Growing My Frome as a community engagement platform, encouraging more residents to participate in consultations, share their views and help shape projects and increase democratic innovation in areas such as engagement around the budget
- Progressing Market Yard improvements, supporting community engagement, stakeholder relationships and communications around the development of proposals for public spaces and facilities such as the Toilets
- Delivering and supporting a varied programme of community events, and seasonal activities, while strengthening partnerships, event planning and evaluation – current Focus in on the large winter events – the Halloween Drone Show, Remembrance and The Lantern Parade
- Strengthening the FTC's digital communications and sign posting information, including progressing a particularly focus on the new website, improving accessibility, developing more engaging content and ensuring residents can easily find information about our services, projects and decisions.

Marketing & communications - suggested work programme priorities for 2027/28 Rachel)

- Increase community participation and engagement both in person and through My Frome (Go Vocal), growing the number and diversity of residents actively contributing to Council projects and decisions.
- Embed the renewed Communications Strategy, strengthening the consistency reach and effectiveness of Council communications and ensuring residents better understand what Frome Town Council does, the services it provides and the difference it makes to the town.
- Take strategic approach to events, maximising the impact and value of the events budget and making best use of the Events Lead role to support community activity, strengthen partnerships and deliver against Council priorities.

The process we will go through at the meeting

1. Budgeting exercise in groups – each group will be asked to allocate £100 to a range of FTC services to help assess the priority that they attach to these – the responses will be captured by a facilitator on each table (15 minutes)

2. Brief presentations by managers/lead councillors – setting out the broad areas of work that are being pursued this year and suggested work programme priorities for 2027/28 (20 minutes)

3. Questions and debate (25 minutes)