Agenda item 7

For information – Review of the Community Engagement & Development, Marketing & Communications, Climate Action and Town Centre work programmes

Community Engagement & Development
Author: Hannah Stopford, Community Partnerships & Development Manager

Highlights

- Young People's Health and Wellbeing Apprentice recruited and started working 5th October. This is a joint hosting partnership with Frome Medical Practice.
- CYP grant awarded to Young Somerset and Focus Frome to deliver a programme of mental health and wellbeing drop ins at the Key Centre.
- Engagement complete on Brunel Green Corridor – suggestions for development with rangers. Highly successful and wide-reaching programme of engagement https://myfrome.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/brunel-green
- Skatepark research taken into account with redesign by Maverick resulting in exciting, accessible proposal.
- Community Organisation Networking planned for 25 November.
- Play Day at the Key Centre huge success: https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/playday-at-the-key-centre-and-a-play-area-upgrade/
- Grants programme underway, full applications all received and advisory panel recruited and currently scoring. https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/new-process-for-town-councils-community-grants-scheme/
- Next round of YOU grant (Young People's Participatory Grant Programme) underway, assemblies held in schools and first codesign workshop 14 October. All Year 8 schools engaged and Home Ed groups approached. Grant due to open Dec/Jan.
- Mary Baily YP codesign project complete and celebration event held 5th October
- Welcome Hub working with Frome Welcomes Refugees to pursue Council of Sanctuary status.
- Successful tender process for Key Centre Nursery – new operator aiming to begin lease in January 2027. Organisation to be announced as lease confirmed.
- Equalities Impact Assessment tool developed as part of Improvement Action Plan – being tested on projects internally. Preparing to bring Equalities Action Plan to November Operations and Assets Committee.
- Post 16 Education explorations underway, key stakeholders met and working group developing alongside Frome Economic Prospectus project.
- Café in the park lease successfully retendered and details of arrangement being worked out with potential new operator (likely to be confirmed by the time of meeting).
- New Secret Shopper round opened with DofE students, applications open and training sessions booked for after half term.
- Exploring next steps with Somerset Council re: the Connect Champion role.
- Working with Fair Frome on a proposal for supporting the Crisis Resilience Fund Partnership – a new tranche of funding coming through DWP and Citizens Advice to boost capacity in VCFSE sector tackling financial resilience for residents

Sticking points

- Continued change and uncertainty in the education world, both with changes to alternative provision and consultation about future tier changes.

Marketing & Communications

Author: Rachel Griffin, Marketing and Communications Manager

Highlights

- We are at the beginning of the Communications Strategy, and had an interesting workshop with staff and councillors, establishing a clearer shared approach as we begin on the next stage of developing the communications strategy
- Progressed the new Council website procurement, issuing the brief, assessing submissions and holding presentations with three shortlisted suppliers and appointing Zonkey as our contractor. We are currently in discovery phase.
- Extended engagement both in person and through My Frome, supporting the Movement and Place Plan project and introducing budget engagement.
- Promoted skatepark fundraising events and gathered design feedback, helping the project progress as we inch towards a new skatepark.
- Taken 'Meet the Councillors' into community settings, including Carnival Fun Day, the Cheese Show and the weekly market, connecting conversations with current projects and currently around budget engagement.
- Supported the Nature Recovery Engagement, producing materials and combining online participation with practical activities and seed giveaways at the Children's Festival. We also used this opportunity to promote FIND and My Frome
- Strengthened community groups' communications through the development of Community Communications Volunteers, Jonathon and James, introducing newsletters, ticketing and website updates for Let's Talk and Wild Bunch, and transferring Walking Festival administration to Walkers are Welcome.
- Supported energy advice activities and other teams events such as Key Centre Playday and upcoming Green Open Homes PR and collateral
- Supported the weekly markets through appointing Sam, our new Markets Coordinator, and also with trader communications, promotional activity and work to rebuild processes and strengthen engagement. We are currently working on a new inhouse website to provide a collective web presence for the market
- Maintained promotion of Frome's visitor offer through Discover Frome, including seasonal activity guides, event listings and support for the volunteer information service. There is a particle focus on developing pop – up elements at the museum for days/times when the market isn't open
- Continued clear public updates on Council decisions and projects, using the website, newsletters, press and social media to answer questions and encourage participation.
- And we were delighted to welcome our new Digital Intern, George, who is on placement with us until July through Somerset Skills and Learning.

Sticking points

- An issue with FIND has meant that we have had to put a work around in place until the new website is developed

- The high volume of engagement activity across multiple major projects continues to stretch team resources as we move into the Budget Engagement.
- Capacity to manage and deliver events remains a key consideration

Town Centre

Author: Katie Fraser, Town Centre Coordinator & Rachel Griffin Marketing and Communications Manager

Highlights

- Positive engagement continues with Town Centre stakeholders, including our Neighbourhood Policing Team, with regular meetings. Last week's Town Centre Meeting for Businesses saw a Planning Update from Owen King on FTC's role in the planning process, the Frome Area Movement and Place Plan and the Shop Front Design Guide.
- Recent mapping exercise shows encouraging percentage of occupied commercial premises in the town centre. We continue to work closely with proprietors of empty retail premises and offer support where possible to expediate renovation works and/or occupancy.
- Our preferred commercial waste, Grist Environmental have now been appointed as our preferred commercial waste contractor. Our Project Manager continues to liaise directly with local businesses to address their needs, support compliance and reduce the current impact of multiple service providers and will hold a meeting at the Town Hall on 17th November to reach wider stakeholder group.
- License for 2 large planters at the entrance to Cheap Street has been granted. The current noticeboard in this location is due to be removed and replaced with one of our new Discover Frome maps imminently, at which time planters will be installed.
- Conversations to explore Post 16 education opportunities continue with various potential partners with a focus on provision of work experience and volunteering in our town centre.
- We continue to explore Coach Friendly Accreditation for Frome to increase weekly footfall. Looking to work with Somerset Council to address coach parking, and other constraints.
- Community Art Programme is underway to address tagging and graffiti in the town centre. Tom Sturgess of The School of Graff is leading a year-long programme of workshops
- Our new Markets Coordinator, Sam Jukes, started in August and has been actively developing the Wednesday and Saturday Market offers, including ensuring gaps in produce are filled. Sam is building relationships with traders and other stakeholders and feedback has been immensely positive. A Halloween themed market with fancy dress is planned for 31st October.
- Town Centre Ranger, Mike, has completed work on the Discover Frome map boards in readiness for new Town Centre maps which have gone to print and should be arriving shortly. Mike also continues to carry out regular street cleansing, weed removal and general public realm maintenance.
- Invitation to tender for a Masterplan for the Riverside Vision: Market Yard Toilets and Library Apron was published in August. From 6 applicants, we shortlisted 2 architects to interview.

- Continuous support for community events, as well as residents, businesses and traders, to create a vibrant and welcoming town centre.
- Currently working on October's Halloween Drone Show, and the Christmas Light Switch on and lantern parade at the end of November, two highlights of the calendar! Lantern workshops will start at the end of October with Frome Lanterns.

Sticking points

- Flyposting continues to have an impact on the appearance of the town centre. Engagement with venues to tackle flyposting on both public and private property has proved challenging, particularly where premises operate primarily in the evenings. A longer-term, partnership approach is now being explored and a verbal update will be provided at the meeting on both this and our work to address graffiti/tagging in the town centre.
- Parking on Boyle Cross continues to present challenges for market operations and event delivery. Staff have developed options to improve compliance, including the installation of a physical barrier.

Climate Action

Author: Matt Mellen, Climate Action Lead

Highlights

- FTC continues to support local screenings of the National Emergency Briefing and offering support to community climate groups that have been increasing their activity following the summer's heatwaves.
- We produced a climate adaptation "walkshop" in partnership with Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Somerset Council (SC). Good new connections were made and new opportunities for collaboration identified.
- A follow up meeting has been scheduled with SC officers to discuss opportunities around solar canopies on car parks in Frome owned and managed by SC. Top of the list is the car park outside the leisure centre.
- Discussions are ongoing with businesses in Marston Trading Estate and Commerce Park that are interested in support from our Solar and Beyond programme.
- FTC continues to review and improve our own renewable energy portfolio with approval given for new solar panels to go onto the ranger base and a process of beginning to upgrade the key centre system.
- Key stakeholders including Wessex Water and local professional leaders are interested in producing a "Sponge Town" event in Frome next year looking at how to fit new Suds (sustainable urban drainage) across town which can help slow the deluge of water in winter and hold back water for use in future droughts.
- FTC and FRECo are taking steps to review and formalise their relationship ahead of anticipated new projects. Multiple funding bids are going in from FRECo to increase capacity. A significant new project could generate revenue to support future climate action in Frome. Exactly how this will work will be agreed shortly.
- Healthy Homes continues to offer energy advice and fuel poverty support; retrofit assessments & Home Energy Pans and Solar and renewables advice and support
- A significant new funding bid is being prepared to go into the next round of the national Energy Redress scheme. If successful, this could cover and increase the capacity of both

our energy (Solar and Beyond) and energy efficiency (Healthy Homes) work programmes.

- Progress is ongoing to launch Green Open Homes in November to showcase local examples of retrofit, energy efficiency and renewable energy installations.
- A draft climate adaptation plan is in development – the plan is to use My Frome for further community engagement. The plan links up with key delivery partners including SC, SWT, local community groups and businesses and the Vale of Frome LCN. Climate adaptation is complex and affects all FTC departments. The plan is to engage staff, councillors and other stakeholders to consider what we need to do to address the challenges ahead.
- A new LCN working group on food resilience has been formed with FTC participating in and supporting this process.

Sticking points

- Progress towards securing new funding sources has been slower then anticipated. This reflects a national trend of reduction in climate action funding and increased competition for what remains. A fundraising consultant will support the Energy Redress bid.

Community Engagement & Development	
Aim: To improve the wellbeing and resilience of our community and the organisations that support them.	
Objective: A strong, connected community with resilient neighbourhoods where residents have the agency to create and access what they need.	
Project	Status
Continue to develop the Hub model	
Engage with residents at a street and neighbourhood level to build cohesion and resilience by working together on community-led projects	
Empower communities to identify gaps, strengths and assets and to take action or resolve conflict themselves	
Objective: Community organisations are supported to meet Frome's needs, be self-sufficient and work together and adapt to change.	
Project	Status
Support and build capacity for community organisations	
Objective: Residents feel included in the life of the town	
Project	Status
Embed inclusive and accessible practices and processes, internally and with partners	
Increase opportunities for meaningful engagement and ways for all voices to be heard and for residents to influence local decision making	
Embed the inclusive play strategy across the town especially in our parks and open spaces	
Objective: FTC teams are supported with community engagement to deliver their outcomes	
Project	Status
Work collaboratively with other FTC teams to deliver collaborative and engagement processes to deliver their outcomes	
Community grants	
Support community organisations to access appropriate funding	

Key:

- On track
- Project no longer on track without amendment
- Project has been unsuccessful or stopped

Marketing & Communications	
Aim: To foster an informed, engaged, and cohesive community in Frome by delivering innovative communications, participatory initiatives, and inclusive events that strengthen collaboration, celebrate Frome, and support decision-making for a thriving town	
Objective: Inform and engage residents around the work of the council to encourage participation.	
Project	Status
FTC communications	
Through community engagement develop a new and ambitious town-wide climate action plan (CAP)and coordinate actions by organisations in the town to implement it. Put in place an evaluation framework.	
Support a programme of activity that enables people living and working in Frome to participate and engage in decision making.	
Support delivery of Town Events	
Ensure that the Town Hall is safe, accessible, clean, fit for purpose and well used	

Town Centre	
Aim: To progress several key initiatives that will improve the vibrancy of the Town Centre	
Objective: Increased visitor and resident footfall to support our local businesses Objective: Improve the image, experience and pride in the town centre encouraging more residents and visitors to visit and use its facilities	
Project	Status
Improve the appearance of the Town Centre	
Encourage the occupation of empty shops and other vacancies	
Town Centre Events	
Support delivery of Town Events	
Promote the town and its events to residents and visitors	
Promote active travel and sustainable transport to encourage visits to Frome	
Maintain the You're Welcome project	
Footfall Data Mitigation: We plan to use event stewards to provide an indication of footfall in the town centre in the future and will keep this under review	

Climate & Ecological emergencies	
Aim: To co-ordinate town action to mitigate and adapt to climate change	
Objective: ENGAGE & ACT - Enable individuals and organisations to make changes that contribute towards a net zero carbon Frome in 2030 and make a difference to their health, wellbeing and economic sustainability	
Project	Status
Track all appropriate climate metrics and keep councillors, stakeholders and the public up to date with climate science and impacts for Frome	
Climate adaptation planning - present climate scenarios and risks for Frome.	
Through engagement with the community bring sustainability data to life for people in Frome. Help people to visualise climate scenarios and how effective our response is.	
Convene meetings, liaise between groups, lead actions, enable innovation and collaboration. Host the Frome Climate Action WhatsApp Group	
Involve schools in climate action	
Produce climate engagement events	
Working with key stakeholders we want to keep evolving our climate strategy	
Campaign on key issues - community energy, nature recovery, green growth	
Objective: ENERGY - Enable the scaling up of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy generation	
Project	Status
Townwide renewable energy coordination	
Support and enhance FRECo to drive an increase in the number of new community owned renewable energy projects in Frome	
Support Frome householders on their retrofitting journey	
CSE assess 50 homes per year and provide retrofit support	
Provide energy efficiency advice and support - online, in person and at events	
Objective: MATERIALS & WASTE - Develop a circular economy in Frome, reducing the amount of waste leaving Frome and encouraging reuse and recycling.	
Project	Status
Use Keep It Frome as our brand for nurturing and promoting a circular economy in Frome	
Take substantive steps towards the launch of a re-use centre in Frome, for example, by commissioning a feasibility study. Work with Somerset Council and other partners to find a site for a reuse centre	