

Agenda item 4

For Decision: Frome Volunteer Base

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Summary

This report recommends the establishment of a volunteer base for Frome that will be called *Volunteer Frome*. It will be commissioned by FTC from SPARK (formerly Mendip Community Support and South Somerset Community Voluntary Action) and the project will be managed by a steering group comprising Frome Rotary Club, Frome Selwood Rotary Club, Frome Lions and FTC.

The establishment phase is proposed to start in the next few weeks and £5k has already been allocated in this year's budget for this purpose. Funding in 2017/18 and the following two years is £16k pa and it is recommended that Council underwrites this. It is expected that external funding will be secured, by the steering group, in order for the project to become independent of the Town Council during the three period and thereafter.

Why have a volunteer base?

As statutory services in Frome decline, local and voluntary organisations are reporting an increase in demand and levels of threshold. They are also facing a competitive funding market. To meet this increasing demand, they are having to adapt their working models and respond to these changes through diversifying the work that they do, expanding their services and trying new methods of fundraising.

To do any of this they need a larger pool of volunteers. Generally, volunteers are recruited through press releases and local campaigning run by each individual organisation with limited success and at a significant time and financial cost. And, while there are regional and national on-line volunteer databases, recruitment from these is limited.

In addition, the benefits of volunteering to the individual contribute to their wellbeing and help build strong communities and increase training and personal development opportunities.

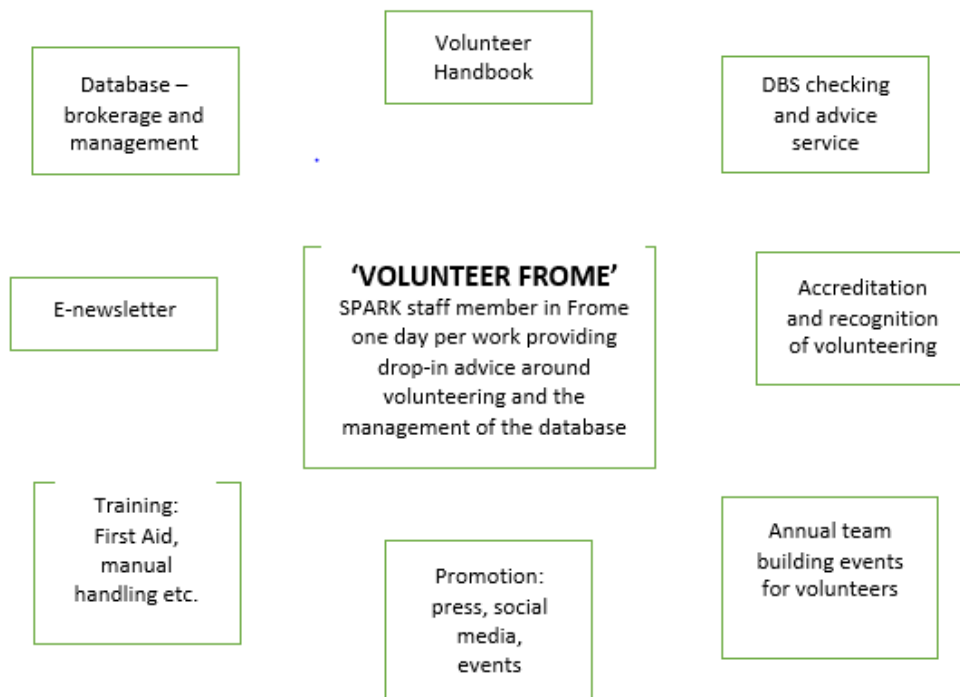
In order to support local groups, recruit more volunteers and build on the 'can do attitude' of Frome, FTC agreed to develop a volunteer base. This is a key part of the 2016/17 work programme.

As a result, SPARK was approached and has helped the steering group develop a model that has been built combining the knowledge of local groups with national examples of good practice and expertise.

The aim is to be much more than just a database. Specifically, *Volunteer Frome* will:

1. Increase the number of local people involved in volunteering and to the demographic cohort of volunteers.
2. Share information with existing volunteers about new opportunities, training opportunities, social and networking opportunities.
3. Support local organisations in recruiting, training and retaining volunteers.
4. Increase the role of businesses, schools and other organisations in supporting and enabling volunteering.
5. Provide support, advice and guidance to individuals, schools, businesses and organisations through a physical base in the new Frome Town Hall with satellite events across the town.
6. Promote the individual and community benefits of volunteering.

Illustration of what the *Volunteer Frome* project will deliver:



How will it operate?

There will be a physical and an online presence, both are central to success.

A physical volunteer base will be based at Frome Town Hall and will:

1. Offer advice and support to businesses, schools and organisations
2. Support increased capacity of organisations to recruit and manage trustees
3. Provide a DBS checking service.
4. Identify and co-ordinate delivery of training needs.

5. Offer advice on policies and legislation.
6. Build the offer for volunteers in terms of work experience and career development
7. Train FTC's information centre staff to support members of the public on a day to day basis.

There will also be an **online tool and database** which will underpin the physical base. People who want to volunteer will:

1. Register an interest in volunteering
2. Sign up for updates
3. Access volunteering opportunities
4. Have a profile, including photo if they wish, with the option to log how many hours they have volunteered and for whom.

Local organisations will:

1. register volunteer opportunities
2. promote their work
3. share volunteers

In addition, the *Volunteer Frome* project will:

1. Generate a weekly newsletter
2. Collate training, opportunities and social events to populate the newsletter
3. Be a searchable resource for new and prospective volunteers
4. Contain links to guidance and policies for organisations
5. Promote peer support of businesses, organisations and residents.
6. Gather detailed info from volunteers
7. Automatically log all enquires
8. Automatically create a branded pdf for each volunteering opportunity that is emailed to potential volunteers
9. Provide enhanced reporting
10. Manage online applications
11. Can actively promote opportunities that are difficult to fill, could have an 'Opportunity of the Week'
12. All administration that takes place on the system is logged, so you can see who did what and when.
13. When organisations register, as part of the initial process they are asked various questions about what policies/procedures they have in place e.g. insurance, safeguarding, confidentiality, H&S etc. This automatically identifies any gaps that may exist – which would prompt us to send them a template policy, give advice on DBS etc.

Project timeline

Action	When?
Agree terms of reference of the steering group	October 2016
Draft and agree a contract with SPARK	October
SPARK to develop database	October - December
Rotary Clubs and Lions Club to work together to identify additional funding for 'bolt ons' to the core project. i.e. laptops, iPads, training events, certification, promotion resources.	October 2016 onwards
Invite local organisations to sign up and promote	Jan to March 2017
DBS service, advice and guidance one day per week delivered by SPARK in Frome Town Hall	April onwards
Training for information centre staff	March onwards
Official launch event	29 March 2017
Deliver a series of events to recruit and promote to businesses and schools	May 2017 onwards
Develop training, celebration and networking events for volunteers	June 2017 onwards

Recommendations

1. Approve the project outlined above to establish a volunteer base called *Volunteer Frome*.
2. Establish a steering group comprising FTC and representatives from the Lions Club and the Rotary Clubs to oversee *Volunteer Frome* from now until March 2020.
3. Agree to allocate £16k for three years, starting in 2017/18, to implement and maintain the project.
4. Delegate responsibility for the delivery of the project to the Community Projects Officer in consultation with the project sponsor Ali Barclay.