

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 15 January 2025, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Tracey Ashford, Fiona Barrows, Sara Butler, Philip Campagna, Anita Collier, Carla Collenette, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Andy Jones (Chair), Lisa Merryweather, Ben Still, Steve Tanner

In attendance:

Lenka Grimes and Beverley Goddard (Fair Frome), Neighbourhood Police Sergeant Dan Jeffries, Helen Kay (SC Cllr), Adam Boyden (SC Cllr), Dawn Denton (SC Cllr, online), Shane Collins (SC Cllr, online), Paul Wynne (Town Clerk), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Williams (Business Manager), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager), Jane Llewellyn (Planning and Development Manager), Rob Holden (Environment Manager, online), Matt Mellen (Climate Action Lead), Nikki Cox (Partnership Lead), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor), Becca Evans (Business Administrator)

7 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall
4 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

To watch to the discussion in full visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=D979ff2FEZk&t=52025

Minute Ref	Agenda Item	Action
2025/01/FC	<p>1a. Apologies for absence Fiona Barrows proposed to accept apologies from Polly Lamb, Mel Usher and Max Wide, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>1b. Declaration of members' interests Sara Butler declared an other disclosable interest in agenda item 5. Anne Hills declared an other disclosable interest in agenda item 6. Anita Collier and Philip Campagna declared a personal interest in agenda item 6.</p> <p>1c. Minutes from the last meeting on 4 December 2024 Fiona Barrows proposed a wording amendment for minute number 2024/96/FC to 'emphasis on changing on the behaviour of women and girls rather than changing the behaviour of men and boys, in addressing violence against women and girls', seconded by Anne Hills, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>The minutes of the Frome Town Council meeting held on 4 December 2024 were approved as a true record of the meeting</p>	

	<p>and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Philip Campagna, seconded by Nick Dove, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>Andy Jones asked if there had been an update on the removal of the Weymouth Road parking scheme. Jane Llewellyn announced she had had a response from Steve Deakin, Parking Manager, who said he was drafting the traffic regulation order to remove the restrictions. Steve would inform FTC when they were lifted. In the meantime, SC enforcement team had ceased patrolling Weymouth Road. Jane had asked Steve for a meeting to further clarify the timeline.</p>	
<p>2025/02/FC</p>	<p>2. Questions from public and Cllrs</p> <p>Charlotte Carson raised concerns about the lack of swimming and sports facilities due to issues with the boilers at the leisure centre as well as the lighting at football pitches. Dawn Denton and Rachel Griffin provided updates on the boiler issue, with an engineer scheduled to visit on Monday. Nick White discussed the historical lease agreement with Mendip District Council and the lack of upgrades by Fusion. Fiona Barrows suggested contacting Somerset Council for more information. Dawn Denton said she would look into the issue. It was also agreed for Paul Wynne to write to Federica Smith, Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture, and Equalities and Diversity, to ask for a meeting.</p> <p>Dan Jeffries, the Neighbourhood Sergeant for Frome, discussed the police presence in Frome and the focus on drug driving and shoplifting. He emphasised the importance of reporting crimes and anti-social behaviour to ensure adequate policing.</p> <p>Questions from members of the public included concerns about the adequacy of police resources for a town of 28,000 people and hidden crimes in the town. Dan reassured that the police were working to address these issues highlighting the current recruitment drive and a desire to see more of a presence in the town and suggested that police resource could be raised with the Polic and Crime Commissioner who was attending the next Council meeting. Dan encouraged the public to report incidents.</p> <p>Gill Fone raised issues about the Foundry Barton area, including dangerous steps and damaged seats and poor state of the Chateau Gontier engraved stone. She thanked FTC for ensuring that the streetlight in that area is now working. Rob Holden was asked to look into these issues.</p>	<p>DD</p> <p>PWy</p> <p>RH</p>

	<p>Dr Sam Evans from Prosper Frome noted there is no firm opening date for the temporary banking hub and that she understood that the TSB bank would not close before the temporary hub was in place. Rachel Griffin said she understood that the temporary hub is likely to be in the Library. The site for the permanent hub is not known yet either but she said that the target date was October this year.</p> <p>Lenka Grimes from Fair Frome thanked FTC for its continued support and presented the organisation's annual figures, highlighting the services provided including the Breakfast Club, food parcels, the community garden providing fresh produce, Food at 5, holiday lunches, community pantry and more. Lenka highlighted the work of Fair Frome in partnership with many other organisations in the town. She noted that donations in 2024 were lower than in previous years and this has meant that Fair Frome is dipping into its reserves to continue to provide services.</p> <p>SC Cllr Helen Kay noted that SC was calling for development sites and also as part of the Local Plan process that informal consultation is upcoming to explore how the community envisaged the town in future. Subjects include biodiversity and how people move around, for example. Helen also noted that the new SC Cllr divisions were still being worked on.</p> <p>Tracey Ashford arrived at 7.15pm</p>	
<p>2025/03/FC</p>	<p>3. For decision - To approve the FTC Council Plan 2025-27</p> <p>Fiona Barrows presented the new council plan, emphasising how FTC works and its role in building Frome's economic, social, and environmental resilience. The plan included five broad aims: growing community well-being, supporting a thriving town, cultivating environmental sustainability, improving assets and infrastructure, and being a bold and effective council.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the appearance of the town centre, especially entrance to the Westway Centre at Scott Road. Nick White asked for pressure to be put on the Westway to improve it. Peter Wheelhouse was asked to investigate this He also encouraged FTC get the best devolution deal possible from SC including some revenue streams to offset future impact on the precept. Fiona said FTC were looking at other sources of income in addition to the precept.</p>	<p>PWh</p>

	<p>Helen Key encouraged FTC to ensure that the content of the Council Plan feeds into SC Local Plan.</p> <p>The recommendation was to approve the FTC Council Plan 2025 - 27.</p> <p>Proposed by Steve Tanner, seconded by Ben Still, agreed unanimously.</p>	
<p>2025/04/FC</p>	<p>4. For decision - Work programme, budget, and precept demand for 2025/26</p> <p>Steve Tanner introduced the report, Paul Wynne presented the highlights from the work programme and Sarah Williams detailed the budget and proposed precept increase.</p> <p>Steve summarised the context of the next annual work programme and the need to support the more vulnerable in the community. He felt the proposals struck the right balance between the demand to do more and the cost. He felt the proposals were robust and ambitious and had sufficient clarity about what FTC were planning to do. He noted that a lot of work had gone in to ensuring the budget was as tight as possible, but this would still mean a 6.6% increase in the precept.</p> <p>Paul Wynne noted that the work programme was a fluid document and could change through the year, if need be, that a series of reviews were planned to ensure that FTC is as efficient as possible. He noted that some of the decisions in the work programme and budget were proposed to be made in principle with final decisions being made when more information was available. Paul highlighted that more emphasis and resources would be put into town centre improvements and the devolution deal. There would be continued emphasis put on the climate, ecological emergencies, getting the best development for the town to help address the housing crisis, supporting FTC's key assets in the town including the town hall, the Cheese and Grain and Badgers Hill Stadium, supporting community groups and the core FTC functions of community engagement, communications and marketing and business support.</p> <p>Sarah Williams presented the proposed budget and precept. She summarised how the precept and Band D council tax was calculated and the year end forecast status of reserves, including a proposed General Reserve of £342k. This would be slightly below the amount referred to in the Financial Regulations but was, she advised, acceptable.</p>	

	<p>Lisa Merryweather noted that there had been a lot of work to keep the precept increase as low as possible but for some households the increase would still be an issue. She was encouraged that there would be a review of the staff structure, and that future belt tightening would be explored throughout the year. Sarah Williams said that savings could be explored across the board on all budgets as further detailed proposals came back to Council for approval so there was flexibility and compromise available.</p> <p>Nick Dove felt there was a default position to ask the public for more money and he felt that wasn't right without being convinced that the staff are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible and he did not see much evidence of that or that FTC had looked deeply enough at savings within the work force before we ask the public for another large increase in the precept. Tracey Ashford asked Nick to clarify whether he meant that there was no evidence of the staff working efficiently or whether he was unconvinced that FTC had investigated whether staff were working efficiently. Nick confirmed he thought the staff were doing a brilliant job but didn't know what various initiatives are costing.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows emphasised the importance of spending the town's money effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the residents and that there were processes that were being put in place to review some of these, as highlighted by Paul Wynne.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the work programme for 2025/26 at Appendix 4.1 2. Approve the proposed management structure for 2025/26 at Appendix 4.2 3. Approve the budget for 2025/26 at Appendix 4.3 4. Approve the General Reserve to be £342k at 1/4/2025 and thereby waiving the Financial Regulations which state that the General Reserve should be £350k 5. Approve the forecast Earmarked Reserves at 1 April 2025 at Appendix 4.4 6. Approve the precept demand of £2,777,932 to be submitted to Somerset Council <p>Proposed by Sara Butler, seconded by Steve Tanner, agreed by majority. Nick Dove objected.</p>	SW
2025/05/FC	<p>5. For decision – Support for Cheese & Grain's project to extend the building</p> <p>Sara Butler introduced the proposal to expand the Cheese and Grain venue. She highlighted its growing reputation and the</p>	

	<p>need to expand the Cheese and Grain for a new studio that would be more accessible to the community. The venue was actively applying for grants, but funders are unlikely to grant because the current 15 year sublease with FTC was too short. She encouraged Cllrs to approve the recommendation to extend the lease to 30 years to make applications attractive to funders.</p> <p>Sara Butler left the room at 8.36pm.</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse explained that the expansion aimed to make the studio more accessible to the local community and young bands, with a focus on technical skills. He confirmed that Somerset Council (which is the freeholder of the Cheese and Grain) agreed that the sublease can be extended and that the area within FTC’s lease can be expanded marginally so the studio can be built.</p> <p>Nick White suggested that Frome Town Council should own the freehold of the Cheese and Grain building, and Somerset Council should transfer it. Peter Wheelhouse said that that was matter for FTC Cllrs to consider but sometimes only Somerset Council as a principal authority, and not the town council, could apply for Government funding.</p> <p>Philip Campagna noted that Frome College now has probably the best music department in Somerset, and he hoped that the Cheese and Grain project would encourage more young people to become go world leading technicians.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm FTC’s support for the project 2. Approve the extension of the term of the Cheese & Grain’s sub-lease to 2055 3. Delegate authority to the Deputy Town Clerk to work with Somerset Council to complete the necessary legal work to enable the project to proceed 4. Delegate authority to the Planning & Development Manager to work with the Cheese & Grain and their architects to submit a planning application for which the application fee is estimated to be £1226.00 (to be funded from the current New Projects budget) <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Tracey Ashford, agreed unanimously. Sara Butler did not vote due to her declared interest.</p> <p>Sara Butler re-entered the room at 8.42pm</p>	<p>PWh</p> <p>JL</p>
--	---	----------------------

2025/06/FC	<p>6. A verbal update on Badgers Hill Peter Wheelhouse noted that the restoration project was progressing well albeit a little slower than planned because deeper foundations were required once excavation had begun. Planned completion by mid-March was well within the funders' deadline. The new CBS board were considering ways to use the clubhouse more efficiently and effectively.</p>	
2025/07/FC	<p>7. A verbal update on the Devolution Project Peter Wheelhouse provided an update, and that detailed business planning was ongoing, as were negotiations with Somerset Council.</p>	
2025/08/FC	<p>8. For decision - Calendar of meetings 2025/26 starting May 2025 Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendation was to approve the calendar of meetings for 2025/26.</p> <p>Proposed by Anita Collier, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed by majority. Tracey Ashford had temporarily left the room.</p>	
2025/09/FC	<p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 12 February 2025, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p>	

The chair closed the public meeting at: 8.46pm