

Minutes of a meeting of Frome Town Council

Wednesday 7 August 2024, 7pm
Frome Town Hall and Zoom

Present:

In the Town Hall: Tracey Ashford, Fiona Barrows, Sara Butler, Philip Campagna, Anita Collier, Mark Dorrington, Nick Dove, Anne Hills, Andy Jones (Chair), Polly Lamb, Ben Still, Steve Tanner, Mel Usher, Max Wide, Andy Wrintmore

In attendance:

Richard Bowles (FAA), Anna Sabine (MP), Dawn Denton (SC Cllr), Shane Collins (SC Cllr), Adam Boyden (SC Cllr, online), Peter Wheelhouse (Deputy Town Clerk), Rachel Griffin (Marketing and Communications Manager, online) Lucy McMahon (Lead Marketing and Communications Officer, online), Laura Flaherty (Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor)

5 members of the public were in attendance at Frome Town Hall

2 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom.

To watch to the discussion in full visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJYPilfR7Zc

| Minute Ref | Agenda Item | Action |
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| 2024/62/FC | <p>The meeting started at 7pm.</p> <p>Anna Sabine, recently elected MP for Frome and East Somerset introduced herself. She addressed the current situation with riots and violence in nearby towns and cities, expressing gratitude that Frome was not experiencing it. Also, the upcoming A36 road closure at Limpley Stoke and a lack of consultation from Highways. She expressed concern about the impact of the road closure on commuters and local communities. She noted that she would be meeting with national highways to discuss the issue and possible solutions. Anna wanted to prioritise local issues and the constituency in her role as MP. Mel Usher emphasised local focus and casework; prioritizing constituents' needs over national agendas. Anna explained that she had faced criticism for not stepping in in the recent decision by SC of who to sell the Saxonvale site to, however Anna saw her role as working with the successful developer to ensure the outcome delivered for the local people.</p> <p>Steve Tanner discovered the Westbury railway station closure could be for up to a month, causing disruptions during Christmas and new year.</p> | |

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| | <p>Andy Wrintmore arrived at 7.04pm and Tracy Ashford arrived at 7.07pm</p> <p>1. A short presentation from Richard Bowles, Chair of the Frome Allotment Association</p> <p>Richard Bowles provided an overview of the association's structure, rules, finances, and community engagement. He explained the Committee consisted of an elected Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and site reps. Historically, tenants were allowed multiple plots, but now there were only a handful left due to amended rules. The Committee reviewed and set fees for plots, including water bill and contract work. Site reps managed the day-to-day operations at the allotment, including inspections and evictions. The Rangers helped with larger site maintenance tasks including hedge cutting. Recruiting volunteers for general site maintenance was challenging.</p> <p>The idea of an annual report on allotment activities was discussed, and Fiona Barrows shared challenges with coordinating produce donations due to work schedules.</p> <p>Nick Dove and Mel Usher expressed concern about the Rangers' involvement in allotment association work. Rob Holden clarified the Rangers' role in maintaining access tracks and boundaries only.</p> <p>Rob Holden and Fiona Barrows expressed their gratitude to all the volunteers and Richard for their contributions to the allotment association.</p> | |
| <p>2024/63/FC</p> | <p>2a. Apologies for absence Fiona Barrows proposed to accept apologies from Carla Collenette and Lisa Merryweather, seconded by Anne Hills, agreed unanimously.</p> <p>2b. Declaration of members' interests None was received.</p> <p>2c. Minutes from the last meetings on 12 June 2024 and 10 July 2024 The minutes of the Frome Town Council meetings held on 12 June and 10 July were approved as true records of the meetings and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Proposed by Sara Butler, seconded by Philip Campagna, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| <p>2024/64/FC</p> | <p>3. Questions from public and Cllrs</p> | |

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| | <p>Gill Fone expressed her continued frustration with the lack of maintenance on a small piece of land in Henley Way. She requested help from the Rangers to cut overgrown grass and address weed growth in a local area. Rob Holden noted the Rangers would be happy to help out with grass cutting and weeding.</p> <p>Lenka Grimes raised concerns about the changes to the community facilities at the football club and noted other community users had been affected by the way the CBS handled bookings. She was also very concerned about the public consultation from SC about reducing council tax support and the inevitable impact on residents. Peter Wheelhouse noted he had encouraged the CBS to respond to communications and would raise it again at his next meeting with them. He also noted Andrew Carpenter had been invited to present at the September council meeting.</p> <p>Lenka also noted that it was advised against any form of protest in response to the recent riots. It was suggested to sign post to Multicultural Frome and the Anti Racist Group who focused on education and positive action in their town, including addressing behaviour and language.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows expressed disappointment with the council tax reduction survey, finding it unclear and inaccessible. She felt the survey would disproportionately impact vulnerable individuals, including single adults with dependents.</p> <p>Drew Gardner expressed concern about the closure of the community fridge in the town centre and the SHARE shop, challenging FTC to act. It was noted that FTC have taken on the lease of the Loop de Loop building to enable the community fridge to return to the town centre imminently after the maintenance issues were solved. The SHARE shop was a charity, not under FTC, and they were currently looking for new premises to operate from so were in hibernation. Mel Usher challenged the Council's priorities and suggested that subject to political will, we could drop other things to help those in need. He requested a report to the next Council on the community fridge and SHARE shop.</p> <p>Dawn Denton summarised her report including confirmation of Fromefield road repairs. The D2 bus would be able to run whilst A36 will be closed. There was hope more signage would be put up to try and ease rat runs.</p> | |
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| | <p>Nick Dove requested Dawn reported an issue of a cracked road along Bath St.</p> | |
| <p>2024/65/FC</p> | <p>4. A verbal update on work relating to asset and service devolution</p> <p>Max Wide referred to devolution deals already done in other large Somerset towns. The deals so far have involved taking on ‘low hanging fruit’ in Bill Revans’ letter as part of avoiding a bankruptcy fire sale.</p> <p>Max indicated that we want to do something more ambitious. We appointed consultants, Activist to write a report and they have provided advice on our negotiating position and the beginning of a prospectus. We are now engaging with Cllrs to flesh out that prospectus. It is not simply about taking things on, but it is also about developing an expansive long-term vision for the town.</p> <p>There are three areas of focus. A thriving town, the first part of which, subject to due diligence and negotiation, would involve delivering the Frome Riverside project including taking ownership of both sides of the river and the Cheese & Grain, to influence what goes on in the library and how the car park is used and taking on markets. An inclusive and helpful town, which would involve understanding what early help budgets there are, how they could be used better and gaps in provision, with FTC having greater control over budgets and responsibility. Also looking at what other funding could be leveraged in. A sustainable and resilient town, which would involve mapping open spaces owned by SC, thinking about the future of these spaces e.g. community gardens, biodiversity, growing opportunities.</p> <p>Max emphasized the importance of engaging all players in the conversation and developing a bold vision for the town. He confirmed that a report will come back to Council following negotiations with SC to enable decisions to be made.</p> <p>Dawn Denton suggested supporting the Frome Chamber of Commerce, in a similar way to Bridgwater, to enable them to become more active and take on more responsibilities.</p> | |
| <p>2024/66/FC</p> | <p>5. For information – Badgers Hill Update</p> <p>Peter Wheelhouse gave an update on progress with the Badgers Hill repair and improvement project.</p> | |

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| | <p>Anita Collier raised a concern about hiring out changing rooms. Peter clarified that it was the first aid room that would have the potential to be hired out but that was a matter for the CBS.</p> <p>Fiona Barrows raised concern about FTC’s identity and role, suggesting need for self-reflection and community engagement. Peter agreed, emphasizing the importance of understanding FTC’s purpose and values.</p> <p>Mel Usher clarified FTC did not buy a football club but a community asset that is leased to a benefits society. The club was separate.</p> <p>Peter also clarified that the day to day management of the site was the responsibility of the community benefit society (CBS).</p> | |
| <p>2024/67/FC</p> | <p>6. For decision – additional Oversight Committee meetings and amendments to the Standing Orders</p> <p>Cllrs noted the report.</p> <p>The recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the updated calendar of meetings for 2024/25 with the additional three Oversight Committee meetings 2. Approve the slight amendments to the Standing Orders for 2024/25 <p>Proposed by Nick Dove, seconded by Fiona Barrows, agreed unanimously.</p> | |
| <p>2024/68/FC</p> | <p>The next meeting will be at 7pm on Wednesday 4 September 2024, Frome Town Hall and Zoom</p> | |

The chair closed the meeting at: 8.33pm