



FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Council Constitution



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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSTITUTION

1 Council Constitution

The Constitution is the Council's internal rule book. It sets out how the Council will operate and how decisions are made. Some of the processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

The Constitution also contains procedural rules which apply to the conduct of meetings of the Full Council and to its Committees.

In order to ensure the sound management of the Council's financial affairs and good corporate governance, the Constitution includes financial regulations and rules that apply to all contracts for works and the supply of goods and services to the Council.

The Constitution is a living document. It is kept under continual review and is re-examined annually by the Policy & Finance Committee.

The Constitution is split into a number of different chapters and articles and the following documents form the Constitution for Frome Town Council:

1. Constitution Contents and Introduction
2. Standing Orders
3. Financial Regulations
4. Staff Handbook
5. Training Statement of Intent
6. Civic Protocol
7. Member and Employee Protocol – Principles of Good Practice
8. RFO Protocol
9. Member Code of Conduct - *Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) 2007*
10. Health and Safety Policy
11. Corporate Governance Policy
12. Risk Management Strategy
13. Accessibility Policy
14. Information Policy – Freedom of Information and Data Protection
15. Publication Scheme
16. Business Continuity Plan
17. Strategic Plan

2 Background

The Town Council is responsible for a number of local services. It must provide some of these services by law; others are discretionary. The Town Council is a statutory corporation - that is, a body created by government under an Act of Parliament. A Council can only do things it is specifically authorised to do by law, by regulations (often referred to as statutory instruments) and by decisions of government ministers, who have themselves been authorised by Parliament.

3 Services

Frome Town Council is the largest of the 52 parish/town councils in the Mendip District, some of our services and functions are noted below:

- ☑ Provides grants to local voluntary or other organisations who demonstrate significant local benefit through their projects e.g. youth activities, Police Community Support Officers, activities for older residents, twinning, the Frome Festival, school crossing patrols and other public events which encourage visitors to the town, help retailers and entertain residents.
- ☑ Manages and maintains Victoria Park, Mary Baily Playing Field, Murrhardt Gardens and adjoining woodland (North Parade), Zion Path, Rodden Meadow at the end of Willow Vale and Merchants Barton public conveniences
- ☑ Provides and maintains floral displays in the town and Victoria Park and is involved with Britain in Bloom
- ☑ Provides Christmas lights displays in the town events and organises the annual Frome Christmas Spectacular
- ☑ Provides 7 allotment sites which are administered by Frome Allotments Association:
 - Cranmore View
 - Queens Road
 - North Hill
 - Mendip View
 - Orchard Street
 - Welshmill
 - Vallis Road
- ☑ Funds provision and maintenance of street furniture, signposts, bollards, seats, bus shelters etc.
- ☑ Provides funding for new street lights and reports street light faults to Somerset County Council
- ☑ Considers every planning application submitted and passes its views back to the relevant authority
- ☑ Supports the Town Mayor and a Town Crier as part of the civic and social life of the town
- ☑ Provides partnership funding for town CCTV coverage, as part of community safety and anti-social behaviour reduction initiatives with Mendip Community Safety Partnership
- ☑ Supports provision of 'Alcohol Restricted Zones', giving police increased powers to tackle anti-social behaviour related to excessive drinking
- ☑ Administers Street Trading Licensing
- ☑ Supports Town Twinning activities
- ☑ Leases the Cheese & Grain building from Mendip District Council and sub-lets it to Cheese & Grain Ltd as a community facility
- ☑ Promotes tourism
- ☑ Reports blocked drains, overhanging hedges, waste issues, highway faults to the relevant authority on behalf of the town
- ☑ Provides member support for committees, forums and working parties; appoints representatives to local organisations and special interest groups
- ☑ Lobbies relevant agencies and third parties on issues of the day that are important to the community

4 Who pays?

Money for services comes from the following sources:

- Income from fees and charges
- Grants – when available
- Specific reserves
- General balances
- Council tax

Unlike Somerset County Council, Frome Town Council receives no income from business rates and its general expenditure is not subsidised through a government grant. There are no central government controls or “cap” on the Council’s expenditure. This makes Frome Town Council directly accountable to residents for the financial implication of its actions.

5 Who decides?

Every four years, voters in Frome elect 17 Town Councillors. They take all major decisions in the full Council; or in a council committee or sub-committee. Decisions are always collective and voted on unless they have been delegated to the Chief Executive or other Officer, these delegated decisions are taken in consultation with Councillors, for example a Committee Chairman or the Mayor.

6 The Council's job

Frome Town Council's role is to deliver its services to the people of Frome in an open, transparent and cost-effective way; acting in the best interests of Frome and its citizens as a whole. This sometimes means that the 'greater good' is more important than individual or particular group's interests, but this is what democratic local government is all about. Taking those decisions, after listening to the community, is the job of the Town Councillors acting collectively as Frome Town Council.

7 How is the Council organised to carry out its job?

The Council makes all policy and other decisions within the powers given to a town council by law.

Committees can make decisions (resolve items) only on those issues the Council has delegated otherwise a Committee has to make a recommendation to Council, for example on policy issues.

The Council's Committees are:

- Policy & Finance Committee
- Planning & Economic Development Committee
- Recreation & Properties Committee

Sub-Committees which include Civic Affairs, Grants, Personnel and Christmas Spectacular can make decisions (resolve items) only on those issues the Committee has delegated otherwise it has to make a recommendation.

Working Parties can be appointed by any of the above and can be made up of Councillors and Officers. Representatives of other organisations may also be invited to sit on a working group. They are informal and will report to Council or a Committee on a specific, time limited, issue where more detail needs to be explored.

Officers deliver the Council's services in line with policies or directions as determined by Councillors, collectively in Council, a Committee or a Sub-Committee. They can advise Councillors on policy issues and statutory requirements the Council has to meet. They carry out the day to day detailed management of the Council's services.

By contrast Councillors look after the policy direction and other high level issues and they should ensure, through the formal framework, that the officers are working in line with those policies and should hold them to account for their actions.

8 Further Information

The Chief Executive of Frome Town Council is Susan Wilthew. She can be contacted at:

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Frome Town Council also has a website containing useful information on news, events, town council details, meeting dates and community information: www.frome-tc.gov.uk