



Frome Chamber Town Centre Manifesto 2019

We first prepared this Manifesto for new Councillors in 2015. Sadly, there hasn't been a lot of progress on these issues

Frome town centre is not in need of "regeneration"; it has adapted and regenerated itself, largely through the efforts of people in Frome. It is unique and its reputation has grown substantially. But it could still be better, and remains vulnerable.

Contrary to newspaper headlines the High Street is not dead. It has changed; we have lost shops to which people were emotionally attached but they didn't use and chains which didn't change

1. Saxonvale

The Chamber opposed the Frontier planning application from 2013 to 2017. It was a poor scheme which didn't meet the Planning Brief, or the needs of Frome. The Chamber's position on this has always been that it doesn't harm the town as nobody knows it is there; it is a threat if done badly and the last big opportunity if done well, with mixed uses and good linkages to the town centres

2. Car Parking

We want a full review of parking provision in Frome, including an open consultation process. This must be done by MDC & SCC together; anything else is only likely to simply redistribute problems. We recognise that MDC has to raise revenue and car parks are one way to do that, but they would raise more revenue if the car parks were managed better.

3. The Market Place

A practical scheme which improves the ability of pedestrians to cross from one side of the Market Place to the other has been a target identified by SCC since the 1980s. Not having the town centre cut in half could transform attitudes to the town centre. This requires SCC, MDC and FTC to work together both strategically and on the detail. We've had Phase I, now we want Phase II to complete this.

4. Better Signs

4.1. to Car Parks

We want road signs that direct visitors to the car park that suits them quickly and easily. That will keep visitors happy and reduce congestion. This includes getting irrelevant road signs removed, and signs in car parks so that visitors who have gone to the wrong car park are directed to the right one. We have had many meetings with MDC who own the car parks and SCC Highways who manage the road signs, with no real action.

4.2. to Public Toilets

This is another cause of visitors being dissatisfied and frustrated. The first priority is for signs that direct visitors to the public toilets that actually exist, not the closed public toilets. This needs to be coordinated with the FTC Open Toilets Scheme, and the signs from the car parks.

4.3. for Visitors

Signs that direct pedestrians to the places they want to go quickly and easily. We want visitors who have come to Frome for a specific reason find that easily, but also be made aware of the other things they might want to do. This needs MDC, SCC and FTC to work together.

5. Better Street Cleaning

The streets of Frome should be free of litter (and dog poo). Litter bins should not overflow – there are not enough of them. This issue is regularly identified in surveys as a negative feature of the town centre. This needs MDC to ensure that Idverde keep to the contract standards and are more responsive. We must work with the community to reduce littering and encourage voluntary action, including the FTC Keep Frome Clean initiative.

6. Better Maintenance and Repair

MDC have a poor record on maintenance, which results in dilapidated features and higher costs for replacement, (e.g., the Bailey bridge and Westway footbridge).

7. Planning and management for public space

FTC have done a lot to improve the “public realm” but there is much more potential, e.g., the Boyle Cross, The Library Square and Saxonvale. Vibrant spaces don’t often happen by accident. This should be facilitating not exclusive; creating spaces which are welcoming to everyone, not anodyne curated space where every activity is licensed, (e.g., Southgate in Bath)

8. Business Rates

Everyone agrees this is unfair to town centres. We want a new system for Business Rates (NNDR) which is based not on retail space or location but turnover, without the artificial off-shoring of sales to avoid tax.