



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 23rd January, 2020

Place

Council Chamber - Town Council Offices

Councillors

Councillor Pat Evans
Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor David Attfield
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Roger Blishen
Councillor Carole Cockburn
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Paula Dunsmore
Councillor Brian Edmonds
Councillor John "Scotty" Fraser
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor John Neale

Apologies for absence

Michaela Gray and John Ward

Officers Presents:

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk
Iain McCready, Business and Facilities Manager
Sara Jones, Assistant Town Clerk

There were 3 members of the public and 1 member of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Jacqueline Drake-Smith of St Peter's Church, Wrecclesham.

C131/19 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Gray and Cllr Ward.

C132/19 Disclosures of Interest

In addition to the standard declarations by dual or triple hatted Councillors, Cllr Beaman declared a disclosable interest on agenda item 7, re Farnham Town Council Community grants arising from his position as WBC Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing. Cllr Merryweather declared a disclosable interest on agenda item 9 re the Precept 20/21 arising from his position as WBC Portfolio Holder for Finance, Assets and Commercial Services.

C133/19 Minutes

The minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 19th December were agreed to be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

C134/19 Questions and Statements by the Public

The Mayor reminded those members of the public present of the guidelines for questions and statements from the public as set out in the agenda and invited anyone to come forward if they had a statement or question.

1. Mr Mark Westcott resident of Rowledge
Mr Westcott read a statement to Council. The statement included support for the proposed closure of West Street for the use of a weekly market and referenced the article in the Farnham Herald.
The Mayor thanked Mr Westcott and confirmed this matter of the West Street market and road closure would be discussed in a later agenda item.

2. Mr Philip Jenks residing in Churt
The Mayor acknowledged that although Mr Jenks did not reside in Farnham as the subject concerned Farnham he was invited to ask his question.
Mr Jenks' question to Council concerned the process for permission to convert the tennis court at the Farnham Library Garden to be a Padel tennis court. He described Padel tennis to be a relatively new sport that had seen recent growth in the UK and was suitable for all ages. He advised there were now 29 Padel tennis clubs in the UK with the nearest club to Farnham being in Winchester. Mr Jenks asked the Council on advice on how to take this further.

The Mayor thanked Mr Jenks for his question and advised the tennis court in question belonged to Surrey County Council SCC and suggested he seek advice from Cllr MacLeod as the local Surrey County Councillor. The Mayor also suggested contacting Me David Gill at the Farnham Sports Council for his support.

Cllr MacLeod confirmed he would be happy to advise Mr Jenks in contacting SCC regarding the library tennis court.

C135/19 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reported that the Town Crier, Mr Jonathan Jones, had decided he would retire after 17 years of successful service to Farnham. The Mayor confirmed FTC would begin the process to recruit a successor shortly, working with The Farnham Herald to launch a competition to recruit a new Town Crier.

Cllr Cockburn commented the Town Crier had made the role his own and had been superb with his humour and presence, and it would be hard to find another like him.

The Mayor and Councillors echoed this sentiment. The Mayor hoped to find a suitable occasion where the Town Crier could feel the appreciation from the town and Councillors.

The Mayor expressed thanks to Cllr Attfield for chairing the December Council meeting and thanked everyone for being at the civic carol service noting the generosity of the congregation supporting the young person's homeless charity Step by Step, including an individual donation of £1,000.

The Mayor noted Farnham would be welcoming children from the Ugandan King's Kid Choir who were visiting Brighton Hill Community School in Basingstoke.

The Mayor advised Council of future events, including the Mayor's Coffee Mornings, The Services to Farnham Awards evening, The Mayor's two charity events comprising An Evening of Variety on the 14th March and the Mayor's Bollywood Ball on 1st May.

C136/19 Questions by Members

There were no questions raised by Members.

C137/19 Community Enhancement Working Group

The notes of the Community Enhancement Working Group held on 8th January 2020.

Cllr Dickson introduced the notes of the Community Enhancement Working Group at Appendix B to the agenda.

The Working Group had discussed the ongoing issue of pollution and having heard from the area manager from Stagecoach and from Surrey County Council's Local Bus Service Manager, the Working Group agreed FTC and Stagecoach should work together to promote the bus service through publicising the Stagecoach App and investigating further into real time signs for Farnham bus stops.

The Working Group received a presentation on Surrey Car Club Scheme and agreed to investigate further the potential spaces available in Farnham noting Brightwells would have 3 car club bays and Members had discussed the possibility of adding bays to local carparks.

All notes were received and accepted from Community Enhancements.

C138/19 Strategy & Finance Working Group

The notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 14th January 2020

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of the Strategy and Finance Working Group at Appendix C to the agenda which had considered detailed finance papers to the end of December 2019. He advised that income was ahead of target but expenditure was on track.

The Working Group had reviewed the statements of Investments at 31st December and the spread of investments in different institutions. Members had reviewed the general and earmarked reserves as at 31st December and considered the detail of why they were held and the continuing need to hold them. There was a requirement to review the Investment Strategy annually, and it was recommended to Council for adoption.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
The Investment Strategy for 2020/21 be adopted.**

It was noted the Precept and Risk Management recommendations would be covered in later agenda items.

Cllr Neale advised that the Working Group had given detailed consideration to proposed community grants for 2020/21. These included:

Service Level agreements of £53,000

Community Grants of £17,500

Grants from other budgets £3,000 eg tourism and events

Small Grants at the Town Clerk's discretion of £2,000

After an initial discussion it was proposed that Council should accept all the grant awards en bloc as recommended by the Strategy and Finance Working Group.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con*:
To agree as set out in Annex 2**

- i) Service agreement contributions to Waverley Hoppa, The Farnham Maltings, Citizens Advice Waverley, 40 Degreez and The Gostrey Centre.**
- ii) The award of community grants to organisations listed.**

The Working Group had noted the history and background of the current grants programme and agreed that it would be a useful point to review the arrangements.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
A review of the process and allocations for grants be undertaken in the coming year.**

Cllr Neale advised, in reference to the appendix Ci, that the proposed creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) would have significant benefits for Farnham. The Working Group had noted that a BID is funded by the businesses within a defined area within the town through the payment of an additional business rate. It was agreed it would be advantageous to expedite the business engagement for the BID process by contributing a grant to support the move to a BID ballot with the expectation there would be additional support from WBC, SCC and the Chamber of Commerce.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
FTC allocates £5,000 from the new initiatives fund towards the development of a business led Business Improvement District for Farnham.**

Cllr Neale reported on the ballot being held for representatives to represent the town and parish councils on the Waverley Standards Committee.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
The nominations of Cllr Reynolds from Elstead and Cllr Taylor from Cranleigh be supported.**

Cllr Neale introduced the notes from the Task Groups reporting to Strategy and Finance starting with the notes from the Infrastructure Planning Group and asked Cllr Cockburn for a review of progress on the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design Statement.

Cllr Cockburn advised the referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan was expected to be 12th March 2020. Purdah would commence from 3rd February 2020 meaning councillors and Farnham Town Council would not be able to campaign for the plan or be quoted in the press using council resources from 3rd February 2020.

Cllr Cockburn reported that the Design Statement first draft had been circulated and encouraged councillors to encourage members of their ward and ward residents' associations to respond so their comments were recorded. Cllr Cockburn noted there would be a workshop to finalise the text of the Design Statement.

Cllr Neale expressed thanks to Cllr Cockburn for the work on both projects.

Cllr Neale reported on notes from the recent meeting with SCC over the Hickleys Corner proposal. It was noted SCC were investigating building an underpass at Hickleys Corner to increase the capacity, rather than speed, of traffic. It was noted an application had been made to Transport for the South East to fund this project.

Councillors noted Farnham had not been consulted regarding the Hickleys Corner proposal, and as a major road scheme in the centre of Farnham FTC should be engaged and at the forefront of any proposal. Councillors believed the 2004 plan for the Hickleys Corner underpass needed to be thoroughly reviewed as much had changed since 2004 and in addition a new analysis of traffic use of the roads was needed.

Council was also concerned about the air quality implications of any scheme and considered that any project needed to be aligned with the priorities of the climate emergency. Cllr MacLeod advised the project was a long way from happening and that there would be consultation. The Town Clerk reported SCC had been invited to the Infrastructure Planning Task Group and did not accept as the plan was not ready for a formal presentation and but that there would be public engagement around June 2020.

The discussion was brought to a close by The Mayor who recognised all councillors had taken the opportunity to speak and express views. Cllr Neale noted there would be consultation with FTC on this road proposal.

Cllr Neale noted the need to come to an FTC view on the future of the town centre and suggested councillors meet at an informal briefing to consider views which would then be developed further via the IPG Task Group. All councillors agreed to the meeting with a date to be arranged.

Cllr Neale reported the Community Infrastructure Projects (CIP) Task Group had not met since the last Full Council. Cllr Neale expressed the need for councillor input on projects needed in each ward.

Cllr Neale introduced the notes from the meeting of the Assets Task Group held on 13th January 2020 where there had been a presentation from The Ridgeway School on a proposed café in Gostrey Meadow on the site of the old Bowling Pavilion.

Cllr Cockburn declared a pecuniary interest (as she is a trustee at The Ridgeway School) and left the meeting

Cllr Neale reported the project was welcomed by the Task Group and would be worked up in more detail.

Cllr Cockburn returned to the meeting.

Cllr Neale noted that after careful consideration councillors in the Task Group had agreed to the purchase of the IVECO Daily CNG gas fuelled vehicle and the purchase of new electric tools as previously advised.

All notes were received and accepted from Strategy and Finance.

C139/19 **Tourism and Events Working Group**

The notes of the Tourism and Events Working Group held on 15th January 2020

Cllr Earwaker introduced the notes from the Tourism and Events Working Group, at Appendix D to the agenda.

Councillors agreed the Christmas Lights Switch On and Christmas Market events were a huge success. The Working group recommended that Gostrey Meadow would benefit from more power sources for events and to strengthen the path edges to help protect the grass when vehicles attended events. Town Clerk confirmed both issues would form part of the Gostrey Meadow management plan.

It was RESOLVED *nem con*:

Subject to Officers seeking the most economically advantageous price, Officers to arrange for the path edges to be reinforced to minimise damage to grass and to extend the power around Gostrey Meadow with costs met from the 2019/20 Tourism and Events Budget.

Cllr Earwaker noted the Working Group continued to investigate the viability of a monthly 'antiques/brocante/arts and craft' market. Two proposals had recently been submitted but had not yet had detailed analysis. Councillors agreed to discuss a more detailed report at the next Working Group meeting. The frequency of the market would be discussed but it was agreed that there should be an experiment first.

Councillors debated the impact of a potential weekly market on the town's retailers, the issue of parking and the impact of closing West Street. The Mayor noted that as the item had not been presented formally to Council, the debate on the merits should be saved for the next Full Council meeting.

Councillors noted the importance of working with retailers and to have an initial trial of the market on a Sunday.

All notes were received and accepted from Tourism and Events.

C140/19 **Cemeteries and Appeals Working Group**

The notes of the Cemeteries and Appeals Working Group held on 16th January 2020

Cllr Cockburn introduced the notes from the Cemeteries and Appeals Working Group, at appendix E to the agenda.

Cllr Cockburn noted the meeting focused on ongoing projects that were being progressed.

All notes were received and accepted from Cemeteries and Appeals.

CI41/19 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Edmonds introduced the notes of the Planning and Licencing Consultative Group meetings held on 23rd December 2019, and 6th January and 20th January 2020, at appendices F, G and H to the agenda.

Cllr Edmonds advised that everyone was aware councillors provided democracy and local knowledge but the ability to make effective decision was hampered by insufficient information and short timescales. He said a recent LGA survey confirmed what many knew, that speed, the appeals driven system and insufficient resources for enforcement meant that the community lost out.

The Mayor noted the hard work of the Planning and Licensing Consultative Group and said that Council was grateful for the efforts of the councillors.

CI42/19 Precept 2020/21

Cllr Neale introduced the Precept 2020/21 Report at Appendix I to the agenda.

Cllr Neale advised that the last Full Council meeting had agreed a budget of £1.4 million and, after discretionary income of £254,300 was taken into account, a revised net budget of £1,146,027. It was noted that in this budget, Council had absorbed the costs of the freehold transfer of properties from WBC (approximately £80,000 per annum). It was also noted that FTC's share of the total Council tax bill for Band 'D' property in Farnham in 2019/20 was £64.49 and that if the same amount was applied in 2020/21 there would be a shortfall of £27,693.

Cllr Neale advised there were three main ways to meet the shortfall:

- i) Increase fees and charges;
- ii) Use reserves (noting the FTC general reserves were currently in line with what was recommended as good practice); or
- iii) Raise the precept by a modest amount.

Cllr Neale noted the Strategy & Finance Working Group had considered all the options and would ideally want to avoid raising the precept. The Working Group had noted that in 2015/16 the Band D level of Council Tax in Farnham was just over £3 above the national average but in 2019/20 was £3 below, underlying that the Council had shown continued restraint whilst increasing other income. In 2019/20 the average council tax precept for Town and parish councils was £67.18 against the Farnham level of £64.49.

The Working Group agreed to recommend to Council a precept level of £1,137,027. The increase in the precept would meet the shortfall of £27,693 representing an increase for the average Band D household of 3.1 pence per week to £66.09 per annum. This would enable the council to continue to provide good quality services in the year ahead whilst mindful of the impact on the community.

Cllr Merryweather expressed support for the precept but asked why the budget and precept were agreed at different meetings. The Town Clerk advised that by holding the decisions at consecutive Full Council meetings there was time for reflection on any amendments and how to meet any agreed shortfall that both could be held in the same Full Council meeting.

It was RESOLVED by 15 votes for with 1 against that the precept for 2020/21 should be £1,146,027 equating to a Band D cost of £66.09 per annum (£1.27 per week)

Cllr Edmonds asked for his vote against the precept to be recorded.

C143/19 Risk Management report

Cllr Neale introduced the Annual Risk Management report, at Appendix J to the agenda.

The Strategy & Finance Working Group had reviewed the Annual Risk Management report and recommended to Council that it be adopted.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
The Risk Management Report at Appendix J be welcomed and adopted.**

C144/19 Timetable of meetings for the 2020/21 municipal year.

Councillors noted the timetable of meetings for the 2020/21 Municipal Year, at Appendix K to the agenda.

C145/19 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

Town Clerk noted all actions had been covered.

C146/19 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr MacLeod provided an update on the SCC options to replace the Cedar of Lebanon tree in the Library Garden advising there was currently a consultation and he urged Councillors to respond.

Council noted there was a proposal to close Drovers Way to facilitate the construction of a new roundabout to serve the Folly Hill development. This was of great concern to the local community and a meeting had been arranged to discuss this with the Highways Officers.

C147/19 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Blishen reported the Brightwells Gostrey Centre was going well and was providing 40 meals on wheels daily. He also noted the three minibuses were providing regular transport.

Cllr Cockburn reported she has received complaints from some outside bodies that councillors did not always attend the committee meetings bodies to which they were and urged councillors to do so and keep Council informed

C148/19 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of full Council was agreed as Thursday 12th March 2020 at 7pm.

C149/19 Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was Proposed by Cllr Earwaker and Seconded by Cllr Attfield and agreed *nem con* that the Press and Public be excluded because of the confidential business to be transacted at item 17 of the agenda (Services to Farnham Awards)

C150/19 Services to Farnham Awards

The list of nominees for Services to Farnham Awards set out at Exempt Appendix L to the agenda was agreed.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.00 pm

Chairman

Date