



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.30 pm on Thursday 21st January, 2021

Place

Remote meeting held by Zoom

Councillors

Councillor Pat Evans (Mayor)
Councillor Alan Earwaker (Deputy Mayor)
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 Michaela Wicks
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Michaela Martin

Officers Presents:

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk

There were 3 members of the public in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Michael Hopkins of the Spire Church.

A presentation was made by Hannah Dix, Chief Executive of Creative Response on the work carried out by Creative Response in Farnham in supporting vulnerable adults of all ages with mental health issues. She outlined the extra work Creative Response had undertaken during the pandemic and the support several organisations had provided to enable them to reconfigure a remote service – 'Reconnect'.

Councillors commended Creative Response for the valuable work being undertaken and offered to continue to support its evolution at this difficult time.

C126/20 **Apologies**

Cllr Martin

C127/20 **Disclosures of Interest**

There were no disclosures of interest beyond those for dual and triple hatted-councillors

C128/20 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December were approved as a correct record.

C129/20 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

Cllr Jerry Hyman (Waverley BC) spoke of the new housing numbers published in December which allocated an additional 1971 homes to Waverley with a consequent impact on Farnham of 650. He asked whether FTC considered it time to impose a limitation on housebuilding to protect Farnham.

In response, Cllr MacLeod advised that Cllr Hyman was right under the new standard calculation method but that the numbers would not apply until 2023 and the Local Plan revision (every five years) would also come into play.

The Mayor thanked Cllr Hyman for his question and confirmed the matter would be considered by the Infrastructure Planning Group.

C130/20 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor provided an update since the last meeting. In between the new lockdown had been implemented with increased restrictions and the vaccination programme had commenced. Locally the community owed its grateful thanks to the NHS and also to volunteers at the vaccination centre at Farnham Hospital who were also being supported by FTC staff.

The Mayor extended condolences to the family of Brian Pittuck who had led the Farnham Walks for many years and was remembered for his contribution to the Farnham community.

C131/20 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by Members.

C132/20 **Reports from Working Groups**

C133/20 **Strategy & Finance**

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 12th January, at Appendix B to the agenda.

- 1) Strategy & Finance had considered a full range of financial documents for Income and Expenditure at the 9th month stage noting that income with additional grants was just above target, whilst expenditure with reduced events and activities was running at just over 60% with savings on the staffing budget as well as service area and that there was forecast to be an underspend overall in the current year.

Council noted the position in terms of investments and reserves ahead of discussing the precept requirement for the year ahead later in the agenda.

- 2) Cllr Neale advised that no councillors has made any suggestions for the draft Licensing Policy, and Cllr Hesse advised that any comments could be made direct to Waverley Borough Council by twin-hatted councillors.
- 3) Cllr Neale highlighted the steps that the Town Council makes in terms of meeting transparency requirements and that details were both on the Council's website and in the Councillors' handbook.

Task Groups

- 1) Cllr Cockburn reported on the draft supportive letter in response to the Local Plan Part 2 attached at Annex I. Whilst there were concerns, the juxtaposition with the Neighbourhood Plan was key and the test was of one of 'soundness'. There was still time for additional comments from councillors but the draft was agreed.
- 2) Cllr Attfield reported on the Assets Task Group and provided an update on matters being progressed which were set out in the agenda. There had been a significant water leak in the council offices which was being dealt with by the insurer's loss adjuster.
- 3) In terms of the Younger People Task Group, it was noted that a meeting was scheduled with Waverley Borough Council over a site for a new Youth Shelter on Borelli Walk.
- 4) Cllr Neale introduced the proposal for a Cultural Task Group which would look at options for a suitable iconic attraction for Farnham as part of the Brightwell's Scheme or elsewhere which could complement the World Craft Town status. It was suggested that the Task Group comprise representatives of Waverley Borough Surrey County and Farnham Town Councils and a series of relevant external inputs including the Director of the Crafts Study Centre, the recently retired Managing Director of the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Director of the Farnham Maltings and the President of World Crafts Council.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that a new Cultural Task Group be created to look at options for a suitable iconic attraction for Farnham as part of the Brightwell's Scheme or elsewhere which could complement the World Craft Town offer.

C134/20 Farnham Infrastructure Programme.

Council noted that Chris Tunstall, Programme Director at Surrey County Council, and Jonathan Foster-Clark, Alkins, had been invited to attend the Strategy & Finance meeting to provide an update on the programme. The Optimised Infrastructure Plan was about to be published and would be open for a further period of consultation until mid March.

The OIP would be a multi-modal package that showed how traffic could be better managed in the town. It had a balanced approach so that improvements to one area did not create a problem elsewhere. The proposal for an HGV ban had been discussed and Chris Tunstall said that it would likely restrict through traffic on an access only basis but more work would need to be done on this in the consultation phase.

Farnham Town Council's views would be welcomed once the OIP had been published and further Local Liaison Forum meetings would be held.

C135/20 **Other updates from Working Groups**

Council noted the following:

- 1) The continued support for the Farnham Coronavirus response being managed by the Town Council and other partners and the excellent work of the volunteers.
- 2) The cancellation of the winter programme of Music in the Vineyard because of the ongoing restrictions.
- 3) The deferment of the Services to Farnham Awards.
- 4) The 30th anniversary of the friendship and twinning with Andernach and the formal invitation to the OberBurgermeister to be invited to be involved in marking the anniversary (covid restrictions permitting).
- 5) Arrangements for the centenary of the War Memorial in Gostrey Meadow.

C136/20 **Precept 2021-2022**

Cllr Neale introduced the Precept report attached at Appendix C. He noted that the indications were that Waverley would be increasing its precept by 2.7%, Surrey by 2.49% and the Police Authority by 5.5%. Farnham Town Council had been delivering excellent value for money and been prudent in the way it had managed resources over many years. Council noted that Farnham had seen rises less than the average of town and parish councils in each of the last six years and its average precept over that time had increased by £8.50 compared to the sector average of £15.77.

In December Council approved a reduced gross budget of £1,399,850 and, after discretionary income of £204,870 was taken into account, there was a revised net budget of £1,194,980, a shortfall of £47,459. In determining the level of precept Council should consider whether it wished to use any of its reserves; increase further the income targets for services, or set unallocated in-year savings targets. These matters had been considered in detail by the Strategy & Finance Working Group and it was proposing that the shortfall be partly met from reserves (£25,150) and partly by a small increase in the precept of 1.94%. This would result in a Band D equivalent amount of £67.37 per annum, (just under £1.30 per week) for the Farnham element of the Council Tax.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* with one abstention that the 2021/22 precept be £1,169,830 representing a Band D equivalent amount of £67.37.

C137/20 **Planning and Licensing Applications**

Cllr Edmonds introduced the notes of the Planning & Licensing consultative Group at Appendixes D, E and F. He said that Covid-19 had not affected demands on the Planning Group which were extensive but the Consultative Group always tried to be succinct and precise in its comments.

Cllr Cockburn highlighted the upcoming Appeal at Lower Weybourne Lane and it was agreed that she should represent the Town Council. Cllr Merryweather expressed gratitude to Cllr Cockburn for the considerable contribution she made to planning matters and proposed a vote of thanks which was agreed.

C138/20 **Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

There were no matters to report that had not already been covered.

C139/20 **Reports from Other Councils**

- 1) Cllr Dickson reported that the Waverley Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee had discussed the Farnham Museum. Waverley was focussing on repairs that had been outstanding since 2014 and were looking to find funding and the new MEND fund. It was hoped that a solution would be found that was fair and equitable.
- 2) Cllr Ward added that the Borough was determined to do something useful with the building but that consideration was also being given to whether the exhibits and building were irrevocably entwined. He noted that the O&S Committee did not have any budgetary responsibility and wondered if councils should own Grade I listed buildings with the obligations that brings.
- 3) Cllr Neale advised that the question of the Museum was an issue locally and there would be an informal FTC on 11th February.
- 4) Cllr Ward reported that the KPMG report commissioned by the District and Borough councils as a result of the County Council bid for unitary status had now been published. It looked at other options but recommended that areas begin co-operating on service delivery and joint arrangements now.
- 5) Cllr Ward reported on the new Fibre Spine that the Local Enterprise Partnership was developing to link Basingstoke and Guildford for a very fast broadband network. It has been agreed that it would pass through Farnham and Elstead.
- 6) Cllr MacLeod reported on the upcoming County Council elections which were progressing as scheduled in May. He also advised that the County Council Headquarters had now closed in Kingston and had moved to Reigate.
- 7) Cllr Attfield raised the issue of the Library and was concerned that valued assets in the town get sold off for the benefit of taxpayers elsewhere. Cllr Mirylees agreed with Cllr attfield and felt that Principal authorities should have a duty of care on buildings and how they are used to benefit the local community. Cllr Hesse raised the issue of the Library Garden and how it should be kept with public access even if the buildings were repurposed.

C140/20 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

- 1) Cllr Cockburn congratulated Daryll Morgan for his OBE and the excellent work that he and the Ridgeway School does.
- 2) Cllr Cockburn commended the New Ashgate Gallery for the new David mayne sculptures that had been unveiled.

C141/20 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 11th March at 6.30pm.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.45pm

Chairman

Date