



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.30 pm on Thursday 11th March, 2021

Place

Remote Meeting 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 Michaela Martin
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk
Katie Knowles, Governance and Community Engagement Manager
Iain McCready, Business and Facilities Manager

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

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Jane Walker, Vicar of the Benefice of Frensham and Area Dean of Farnham.

Prior to the meeting, a presentation was made by Gavin Stride, Director of Farnham Maltings on their current work programme and future plans as an organisation that was not just managing a building but also concerned about the quality of people's lives. He outlined his aspirations to work collaboratively with the three tiers of local government to deliver projects that give positive outcomes for residents of Farnham. He said that when the Town Clerk asked to him to work collaboratively in response to the

pandemic it was right to do so and the two organisations had grown closer as a result. He highlighted a programme of work that had evolved and was currently being developed around loneliness and isolation in partnership with Surrey County Council. Future plans include making better use of the outside spaces, improvements to the digital infrastructure for small businesses to connect and use and to trial running community events.

Councillors commended the valuable work undertaken at the Maltings and look forward to its re-opening on 12th April, subject to government guidelines.

C142/20 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence, all Councillors were present.

C143/20 Disclosures of Interest

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

C144/20 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st January were approved as a correct record.

C145/20 Questions and Statements by the Public

Isobel Robson provided an overview of Plastic Free Farnham. The focus of the group is single use plastic. Ms Robson would like to work with the Town Council to reach out to more residents in Farnham.

In response the Town Clerk advised the focus on climate change is through the work of Community Enhancement Working Group. FTC made a declaration to be plastic free in June 2019. It was proposed that Ms Robson meet with the Lead Member of the Community Enhancement Working Group, following the April Council meeting.

C146/20 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced that the funeral of the late Brigadier Paddy Blagden CBE had taken place. Due to the current restrictions, attendance at the funeral was limited and the Town Council was represented by the Town Clerk. Paddy had a distinguished military career after which he was asked by the United Nations to set up their mine clearance office and served as Mayor of Farnham in 2013-14. The Mayor extended the Council's warmest wishes to his widow and family.

Since the last meeting, The Mayor had attended 45 virtual zoom meetings and 2 outside Farmer's Markets. A virtual reception was held the Surrey nominees for The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The Mayor's virtual coffee mornings were underway, covering three wards at each meeting with residents invited on a random basis.

The Mayor marked Commonwealth Day on Monday 8 March by raising the Commonwealth Flag outside the town council offices. She was joined by Colour Sergeant Dean Smith from the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

The Mayor was presented with 200 face marks made by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association to mark International Women's Day on Tuesday 9 March.

Subject to the lifting of restrictions, the Annual Meeting and Mayor Making had been put back to the 20th May in the hope that a physical meeting may be held.

C147/20 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by Members.

C148/20 **Working Group Notes**

C149/20 **Community Enhancement**

i) Community Enhancement

Cllr Hesse chaired the meeting on 27 January and presented the notes of the Working Group at Appendix B.

He reported that the 'Design a Carpet Bed' competition was won by a third-year student at South Farnham School and would be placed in a new bed in Gostrey Meadow.

Council noted that alternative film makers for Farnham in Bloom as John Collins had moved from the area. Cllr Hesse extended the groups thanks to Mr Collins for his work to help make Farnham in Bloom a success.

Cllr Hesse reported that a generous donation of £700 had been received from former resident Mr Richard Pettigrew who had moved back to the US. Members agreed a specimen tree with a hand-crafted metal guard to protect it, would be planted in Gostrey Meadow.

Council noted that £3,000 has been allocated from the 2020/21 budget to plant a mix of specimen and British Native Trees in Gostrey Meadow, Evelyn Borelli Garden and Batting's Garden.

Cllr Hesse advised that the Working Group proposed that the Memorial Bench in Gostrey Meadow, made by a graduate of UCA, be moved to the Evelyn Borelli Garden.

Cllr Hesse advised that the criteria for the Famous Names Wall has been reviewed and updated to enable those who had made a significant contribution to the Town to be recognised following a review of a nomination for Sir John Verney to be included. The proposal was that:

Those nominated must fall into three of the four following criteria: -

- They must either be born, lived for a significant period of time or died in Farnham.
- They must have contributed to the local community of Farnham in a remarkable way.
- Their achievements will or have outlived them.
- Their achievements are nationally or internationally renowned.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1. The revised criteria for including into the Famous Names Wall is adopted.**
- 2. Sir John Verney MC Bt is added to the list of Famous Names.**
- 3. The Gostrey Meadow Memorial bench be moved to the Evelyn Borelli Garden**

The notes were received and accepted from Community Enhancements.

C150/20 **Cemeteries & Appeals**

Cllr Cockburn presented the notes of the Working Group held on 28th January, 2021 at Appendix C.

Cllr Cockburn reported an appeal is proceeding advising that since the procedures had been regularised there were very few to consider.

Cllr Cockburn advised the Working Group is progressing proposals for the Hale Chapels. As a long-standing issue, a number of options had been explored over a number of years, including for Columbaria. The Group would be coming to a decision and recommendation to Council, which was welcomed by Councillors.

Cllr Cockburn reported the Cemetery regulations had been updated to reflect children's grave sizes.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
Council adopts the two additions to the Rules and Regulations regarding children's grave sizes.**

The notes were received and accepted from Cemeteries and Appeals.

C151/20 **Tourism & Events**

Cllr Earwaker presented the notes of the Working Group held on 3rd February at Appendix D.

Cllr Earwaker reported the Events Manager had been busy organising the forthcoming events and projects, as set out in the Notes. He advised that the Farnham Residents' Guide 2021 includes a calendar of events for the coming year and is delivered to every household.

Two new leaflets had been produced to support businesses in the Town. 'Open for Business' provided useful information and 'We are Farnham' provided more assistance in setting up for an online market space.

The notes were received and accepted from Tourism and Events.

C152/20 **Strategy & Finance**

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group at Appendix E to the agenda.

Strategy & Finance had considered a full range of financial documents for Income and Expenditure reports were discussed noting the outturn would be in surplus as a result of additional grants received, the management of activity budgets to expenditure during the year along with reduced activity because of Coronavirus, and the management of vacancies.

Cllr Neale advised the Working Group had discussed and reviewed the Investment Strategy 2021/22 at Annex I to the notes.

The Working Group received a request from the Trustees of the Wrecclesham Community Centre to waive the second half of the year's rent given the ongoing closure as a result of Covid-19.

C152a/20

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1. The Investment Strategy 2021/22 at Annex 1 to these Minutes be adopted.**
- 2. The 2020/21 rent for the Wrecchesham Community Centre be waived.**

Cllr Neale advised that the Working Group considered the grants for 2021/22 detailed at Annex 2. Cllr Neale reported there had been some discussion about larger grants funded by service level agreements, and it was agreed that these would be reviewed in the forthcoming year. The Town Clerk advised these were revenue grants generally above £2,000.

A point of clarification on the grant allocation to Space to Grow was raised. The Town Clerk advised the project funding supported 15 people and Officers considered that it was a reasonable contribution from Town Council's resources for the benefits that would accrue. The Town Clerk further commented the Council supports Space to Grow in other ways and other applicants included work with Space to Grow. After discussion, it was agreed to agree the grant proposed but make an additional contribution in-kind from the In Bloom budget.

C152b/20

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1) The 2021/22 Grants at Annex 2 be approved;**
- 2) Any pledges for projects not yet confirmed be retained in earmarked reserves;**
- 3) The Town Clerk allocate funding from the returned grants from 2020/21 to maximise support for the agreed applications; and**
- 4) A review of the organisations supported by Service Level Agreements be undertaken in 2021.**

Cllr Neale reported the Working Group considered the appointment of a new Internal Auditor, following an external tender process.

C152c/20

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

Mike Platten of Farsight Consulting be appointed as Internal Auditor for an initial period of three years.

Cllr Neale reported on the Risk Management Report at Appendix 3, which was reviewed annually. Each year, the Council reviews a range of risks affecting the organisation in each of the service areas and as a corporate body.

C152d/20

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1) The Risk Management report for 2020/21 be adopted.**
- 2) The updated Fire Safety, Health & Safety and Environmental Policies be adopted.**

Cllr Neale advised Standing Orders were reviewed by the Working Group to take account matters that had emerged from remote meetings.

Consideration was also given to the structure of the Working Groups and Task Groups. It was agreed that a review would be undertaken in the forthcoming municipal year in consultation with the Lead Members of the Task Groups.

C152e/20

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1) **The Working Groups should continue to operate as they are with all decisions made at Full Council;**
- 2) **The Planning & Licensing Consultative Group continue to meet fortnightly to prepare the Council's response on application for submission to the Planning or Licensing Authority under delegated authority;**
- 3) **A review of the governance structure be undertaken in the forthcoming municipal year with a Task Group that includes the Lead Members of the Working Groups;**
- 4) **The draft revised Standing orders at Annex 4 be adopted.**

The Council's Comments, Compliments and Concerns Procedure was reviewed by the Working Group. A point of clarification was raised in respect of the title of the document. The Town Clerk advised that the Council receive a number of compliments and generally responds well to concerns raised by residents, that tend not to become complaints.

C152f/20

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

The Comments, Compliments and Concerns Procedure be adopted.

Task Groups

- 1) Cllr Neale reported on the Assets Task Group and provided an update on matters being progressed which were set out in the notes. Councillors discussed the costings for replacement toilets in Central Car Park and matters relating to the proposed site for the Ridgeway School café refurbishment of the toilets.
- 2) Cllr Neale introduced the main points from the Infrastructure Planning Group. The Task Group considered the Government's consultation on the National Policy Framework and the proposed Design Codes. Jenny de Quervain had drafted a Town Council response. Cllr Cockburn highlighted the implications of the Design Codes and the importance of community involvement from a range of groups in the development of the Codes. Cllr Cockburn further advised that both the Design Statement and Farnham Neighbourhood Plan would feed into the Design Codes.
- 3) Cllr Neale reported on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and the consultation of the draft Optimised Infrastructure Plan. The feedback at the recent round of Local Liaison Forums has been constructive. Councillor Neale advised that the Town Council's response to the consultation would be covered at an extraordinary meeting of Strategy and Finance on 16th March before being presented to the adjourned Full Council meeting on 17th March.

It was noted Cllr Cockburn would be attending the Lower Weybourne Lane Inquiry on 17th March.

C152g/20

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

The Council's draft response to Optimised Infrastructure Plan be deferred to the adjourned meeting of Full Council on 17th March at 6.30pm for further consideration.

- 4) Cllr Neale reported on the Cultural Task Group. Its main aim was to identify a cultural initiative in the Town Centre which would complement World Craft Town. Funding had been received from the three county councillors which needed to be matched funded to commission a scoping study for the project.

C152h/20

It was **RESOLVED** with one objection and one abstention that:

- 1) **FTC match funds the Surrey County Councillors' contribution of £3,000 and seeks a similar contribution from WBC to appoint consultants to prepare the scoping report.**
- 2) **FTC waives Standing Orders Contracts to allow the Town Clerk to appoint suitably qualified consultants up to the value of £7,000 to carry out the scoping report.**

Cllr Edmonds requested his objection against the vote is recorded.

- 5) Cllr Attfield highlighted a decision under the Scheme of Delegation, supported by the HR Panel, to 'buy back' leave for some staff who had continued to work throughout the coronavirus period and accrued leave. The Town Clerk advised this was a pragmatic business decision and the cost would be met by the surplus in the staffing budget in 2020/21. The consequence of not taking this decision would result in staff taking leave at the beginning of the new financial year, at peak time when restrictions were being lifted.

Cllr Edmonds requested his objection to the Panel's decision was noted.

The Town Clerk advised under Coronavirus update, the office will be opened to the public on the 12 April, subject to step 3 restrictions being lifted and from 20 May, it was anticipated hybrid Council meeting could be facilitated.

Cllr Ward advised that Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, recently confirmed that with effect from 7 May (the temporary regulations enabling virtual meetings expires on 6 May), remote and hybrid meetings would be illegal and could not take place. Councils had been advised a change to primary legislation was required, but there was no time in the legislative timetable. This presented significant challenges for Councils, that FTC would also need to consider. Cllr Ward commented that over 50% of Waverley Councillors had indicated they would not attend in Chamber meetings from May.

C153/20 **Planning and Licensing Applications**

Cllr Edmonds introduced the notes of the Planning & Licensing consultative Group at Appendixes F, G and H.

Cllr Edmonds highlighted a long-standing issue regarding the effectiveness of Waverley Borough Council's planning website. He advised Councillors and Officers spent a significant amount of time trying to access and download planning documents. Relating to this, information had been requested on the design and performance of the website, its level of reliability and the page download speed.

Councillors had highlighted the issues with Waverley Borough Council on several occasions and contrasted the performance of Waverley's website with that of neighbouring authorities which did much better.

Cllr Edmonds also highlighted the difficulties Farnham Town Council's Planning Officer experienced reporting the Council's concerns and observations. Councillors commended Jenny de Quervain for her perseverance, commitment and knowledge and valuable contribution to the Consultative Group.

It was **RESOLVED** *nem con* that:

The Town Clerk write a letter to Waverley Borough Council expressing these concerns.

C154/20 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

Actions were discussed in the earlier part of the agenda.

C155/20 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr Ward reported the Boundary Commission are reviewing Waverley. The Borough Council had a compromise figure of 50 Councillors, a reduction of 7, although there had been a wide division of views.

C156/20 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Cockburn reported the robustness of Farnham Neighbourhood Plan was being challenged by a Developer at the Appeal of Lower Weybourne Lane. The decision was pivotal in terms of the Plan's ability to defend other sites in the Town.

Cllr Cockburn reported on the work of the Biodiversity Action Plan Group which had now drafted a Biodiversity Action Plan that, when finalised, would go forward as Farnham's Policy Statement.

Cllr Cockburn commented there was a problem of anti-social behaviour at Langham's in terms of broken glass and dangerous litter which is part of a wider issue in the Town Council's green spaces.

C157/20 Date of Next Meeting

The Mayor proposed and Cllr Earwaker seconded that the meeting be adjourned to Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 6.30pm. This was agreed *nem con*.

The date of the next scheduled meeting was agreed as Thursday 29th April 2021 at 6.30pm.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 10pm

Chairman

Date