



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 24th June, 2021

Place

University for the Creative Arts

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor Pat Evans
Councillor David Attfield
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Roger Blishen
Councillor Carole Cockburn
Councillor Paula Dunsmore
Councillor John "Scotty" Fraser
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Cllrs Sally Dickson, Brian Edmonds, Michaela Martin and Kika Mirylees

Officers Presents:

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk; Iain McCready (Contracts and Facilities Manager), Jenny de Quervain (Planning and Civic Administrator)

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

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Pastor Guy Pritchard, of the Vineyard Church.

C13/21 **Apologies**

C14/21 **Disclosures of Interest**

Apart from the declarations of double and triple hatted-councillors, there were no additional declarations of interest.

C15/21 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 20 May 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

C16/21 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions or statements by the public.

C17/21 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor announced he had been delighted to have made a presentation of a watch to Robin Cooper who had just celebrated twenty-five years working in the Outside Workforce team. This was quite an achievement, and he passed on the congratulations of the whole Council.

The Mayor congratulated Cllr Carole Cockburn on the award of her British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday honours. She was a credit to Farnham and a role model of what councillors could achieve.

The Mayor advised that he had attended 28 engagements already including the judging for the Green Flag award for Gostrey Meadow. He was looking forward to getting out and about and supporting the community as the Covid restrictions were lifted.

The Mayor thanked staff, councillors and volunteers for the huge amount of work that had been done to get the everything ready for the South and South East In Bloom judging. The town looked beautiful.

C18/21 Questions by Members

There were no questions by Members.

C19/21 Working Group Notes

C20/21 Community Enhancement Working Group

Cllr Dunsmore presented the notes of the Community Enhancement Working Group meeting that had been held on 10th June. It was a productive meeting. The Working Group had reviewed arrangements for the In Bloom Judging noting that this was a challenging year with the result of 'No Mow May' being long grass in many areas. There had also been a significant increase in graffiti which was taking up additional resource.

Iain McCready gave Council an overview of the challenges facing the Council in maintaining its high achievements in the In Bloom awards. April had been the coldest for years and May had been the wettest on record. The fire in the greenhouses had been a set back and the reduction in maintenance by the Waverley contractors during no Mow May meant there was a huge effort needed, particularly as general maintenance had been reduced during Covid lockdowns. The Outside Workforce Team was putting in additional hours and additional support from Waverley contractors was being requested.

Councillors expressed their support and offered to assist in preparing the judging route.

C21/21 Strategy & Finance Working Group

Cllr Neale introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 15th June. He advised that the Income and Expenditure report to 31st May had been reviewed and it had been agreed to move an additional £400k into the Public Sector Deposit Fund for a slightly better investment return.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* to award a grant of £800 to the Farnham Art and Design Educational Group for the 2021 Big Draw.

C021/21/ii

Cllr Attfield reported on the Assets matters that had been presented by the Assets Task Group. Council noted progress on a number of contract matters including the Central Car Park toilets and the progress of the Greenhouse fire insurance claim. The detailed discussion on the Hale Chapels was set out in Appendix B. Council noted the huge efforts that had been undertaken, working alongside the Hale Chapels Trust and the community to save the chapels, but the cost benefit analysis did not really stack up.

Council agreed with the Working Group that it was time to resolve the issue of the unsightly dilapidated buildings and improve the cemetery. Members felt it was important to retain the character of the area and the sympathetic reduction of the height of the walls with the creation of a community garden was considered to be the best option. Members agreed with the suggestion that part of the garden could be a lasting memorial and place of reflection for the whole community to remember those lost to the pandemic. It was noted that the Hale Chapels Trust had offered to assist with fundraising to restore the buildings and the Working group proposed that the Trust should be given the option to raise the difference between the cost of creating a garden and the restoration cost, and if there was clear community support and funds becoming available within 6 months (the time used as a benchmark for raising funds for assets of community value) then the Council could reconsider the restoration project. If not it was suggested the works could be targeted to commence in 2022.

It was RESOLVED *with one objection* to:

- 1. Sympathetically reduce the structure of both Chapels to a safe height and create a landscaped garden which could also incorporate columbaria in the future;**
- 2. Give an opportunity (of 6 months) for the Hale Chapels Trust to raise the money with the local community to restore the Chapels rather than convert them into a memorial garden;**
- 3. Allocate up to £200,000 of earmarked reserves to complete the project if external funds cannot be raised;**
- 4. Designate part of the garden as a lasting memorial garden for the Farnham community to remember those who have died from Coronavirus;**
- 5. Authorise the Town Clerk to progress these matters.**

C021/21/iii

Cllr Attfield gave Council an update on the detailed report on the condition of the Grade II listed West Street Cemetery gates that had been removed for assessment. Special features discovered through the sandblasting (the use of mortice and tenon joints, lead fillers and the integrated casting of the lock were noted the views of the Historic Building officer had been sought to ascertain what level of restoration was required and that a mix of materials could be used. Council noted that the costs of the work would require a formal tender through the online tendering system although some elements (such as pattern making) may be separately tendered for specialist contractors. It was also noted that grants applications for external funding would also be made.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Farnham Town Council:

- 1) Meets its obligations to restore the listed gates;**
- 2) Seeks the advice of the Waverley Borough Council Historic Buildings Officer on materials and methods which could be used for the restoration of the gates;**

- 3) Seeks external funding to help defray the costs;**
- 4) Earmarks £80,000 for the restoration from reserves;**
- 5) Authorises the Town Clerk to progress the tendering of the work in the most expedient manner.**

C021/21/iv

Cllr Neale advised that the anticipated meeting with Waverley on planning concerns was still awaited. It was noted that Waverley had shared plans for overhauling processes which should be beneficial. Council commented that stronger relationships with Town and Parish Councils were essential.

Cllr Cockburn provided an update on the new draft Design Statement and also commented on the latest success of the Neighbourhood Plan which had been used as the basis for the Planning Inspectorate refusing the recent Lower Weybourne Lane appeal. This was a fantastic result for Farnham although the fact that Waverley was still short of its five year land supply was of real concern.

Cllr MacLeod advised that Local Plan part 2 was progressing and Waverley were hoping it would be submitted to the Inspector in the summer for Examination in early 2022.

Council also received updates on the work of the Younger People's Task Group and the Cultural Projects Task Group.

C021/21/v

Cllr Neale provided an update on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP) including matters covered at the Farnham Infrastructure Board meeting on June 11th and the briefing for all councillors on the draft 'place-shaping' background document prepared by PJA Associates.

The Board had agreed to remove most of the Covid social distancing measures with some retained in Castle Street and Downing Street. Council noted that the HGV ban would be implemented in August and consideration of the 20MPH zone was progressing. The wayfinding signage (initially a Brightwells Section 106 project that had been considered by both FCAMP and the Farnham visitors Forum) was being progressed to be implemented in the autumn with a mix of finger posts (as per existing) and map-based signs. The road reclassification project was also underway.

In response to councillor questions, it was confirmed that the aim was not to clutter with new signs but to improve the information at key points to help people navigate around town. Any signs would need to fit with the conservation area.

Cllr Fraser asked about the HGV ban details as he had not seen what had been proposed. The Town Clerk agreed to follow up with Cllr Fraser after the meeting.

Cllr Hesse raised concerns over the number of damaged railings and advised that he had written to the Surrey portfolio holder about this. Other councillors also felt that the number of battered railings and broken signs was an embarrassment for the town. It was agreed the Town Clerk should raise this with Surrey County Council.

Cllr Dunsmore reminded councillors to use the reporting function on the Surrey website when there were highways matters needing attention as she had used this successfully recently to get signs and railing replaced.

Councillors raised a range of concerns about the process for involving the Town Council in key matters affecting the town before they were effectively 'rubber stamped' at the Farnham Board meetings. There were also concerns about the proposals to outline the Hickleys Corner proposals to the Department of Transport (DFT) in September as there was no clarity about how this would be discussed with the local community beforehand.

In response the Town Clerk advised that he understood the DFT submission would be high level to confirm the project was still current, and that the September Council meeting was ahead of the next FIP Board meeting.

Council outlined the importance of the varied views of town councillors being represented on the Board given that this was the biggest thing happening to the town. The need for early sight of what was emerging in order that an effective input could be made by the Town Council was emphasised. The proposed number of 'quick wins' arising from the recent consultation events was substantial but there was no indication yet of what would be delivered.

The Town Council has strongly supported a Strategic link road to the west of the town and there needed to be more debate about this for the town. Cllr Ward said that although he was no longer an FIP Board member he had been involved from the beginning and he was concerned that the Surrey approach seemed to favour speeding up east-west traffic flows, whereas the town wanted more north-south connectivity. It was important that Surrey allowed Farnham Town Council to get involved in the formation of ideas at an early stage. It was suggested that a Surrey officer be invited to present the 'route map' to a Strategy & Finance meeting.

C22/21 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Fraser introduced the notes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 24th May, 7th June and 21st June. He reported that at these meetings lasting for over ten hours, the Consultative Group had considered 9 significant or controversial applications, 34 important applications, 65 routine applications (including 24 for works to trees) and four licensing applications.

Cllr Fraser said he felt this volume of applications made the role intolerable as there was inadequate time to review applications, which were often submitted with inadequate information. The Consultative Group were also concerned that the Farnham responses at Waverley were being edited with important qualifications left off. As a result, there had been a change in the way FTC comments were now sent to Waverley. Rather than responding with 'no objections subject to specific qualifications' FTC comments were now to object unless particular mitigation factors were taken into account. It was recognised that this change had caused some concern to residents but it was a more practical way of getting across the Consultative Group's concerns.

Cllr Fraser also updated Council on the detail of comments made on licensing applications and mineral applications.

C23/21 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no actions under the scheme of delegation not previously reported.

C24/21 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr Cockburn reported that councillors had objected to the proposed bike shelter location in central car park on both location and aesthetics. It was surprising that the view was that cyclists could not park more than 25m away from their destination.

Cllr MacLeod reported on the resurfacing of Beavers Road.

Cllr Dickson reported that the Waverley Executive had approved a feasibility study for the upgrade of the paths in the northern part of Farnham Park which should benefit both cyclists and pedestrians.

Cllr Hesse reported that he had ascertained at the meeting of the Thames Basin Heath Strategic Board that there was some £20m available from developers' contributions, and he hoped some could be acquired for Farnham Park.

Cllr Dunsmore announced that she was delighted to have received an email from Surrey CC confirming that a new crossing in Wrecclesham would be installed in the autumn. She thanked former county councillor Ramsdale for his efforts in making this happen.

C25/21 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Blishen reported that since lockdown the Brightwells Gostrey Centre volunteers had prepared and delivered some 12,000 meals and he congratulated the staff and volunteers.

C26/21 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed to be held on 29th July 2021.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.20 pm

Chairman

Date