



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 28th October, 2021

Place

Council Chamber - Town Council Offices

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Roger Blishen
Councillor Carole Cockburn
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Pat Evans
Councillor Paula Dunsmore
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Michaela Wicks, David Attfield, Brian Edmonds and John "Scotty" Fraser

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk) and 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 Jacqueline Drake-Smith of St Peter's Church, Wreclesham.

The Lord Lieutenant, Mr Michael More Molyneux, accompanied by his Cadet Mr Lucas Broomfield, was in attendance as President of the Surrey Association of Local Councils, to formally present Farnham Town Council with the Council of the Year Award 2021.

He said he was thrilled to be at the Council as what had been achieved was quite breathtaking and an extraordinary result. Farnham had a very special friendliness and atmosphere which he felt whenever he came to Farnham. The NALC awards ceremony underlined how much had been done during covid for and with communities and congratulations were due to the whole Council. He also commended the Town Clerk, Iain Lynch, whose leadership, he said, had been quite outstanding in what he had achieved

for and with the Council as underlined by the fact that he was also up for Clerk of the Year.. As he presented the trophy, as President of Surrey Association of Local Councils, the Lord Lieutenant passed on the congratulations from Surrey and the whole country on a very well-deserved award.

Receiving the trophy, the Mayor added that the award was not just for the Council but for the whole community of Farnham.

C60/21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Attfield, Edmonds, Fraser, Hesse and Wicks.

C61/21 Disclosures of Interest

Apart from dual and triple hatted councillors in relation to their roles as councillors at Waverley and Surrey, the following made specific declarations of interest and took no part in discussion on the specific items:

Cllr Mark Merryweather as Portfolio holder for Assets at Waverley Borough Council (re Hale Recreation Ground and Farnham Museum);

Cllr David Beaman, as Trustee of Hale Recreation Ground Committee;

Cllr Kika Mirylees as Portfolio holder for Culture at WBC in relation to Farnham Museum.

C62/21 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September were agreed for the signature of the Mayor.

C63/21 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions or statements from the public.

C64/21 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that he had attended the inaugural meeting of the Surrey Association of Local Councils after it had been relaunched after the break from Sussex, and had attended a number of the excellent events held during October Craft Month.

The Mayor announced that 2021/22 celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Green Flag Award - the international quality mark for parks and green Spaces and that Gostrey Meadow had been awarded the Green Flag for 2021. He thanked the Council Staff and volunteers for this great achievement.

The Mayor advised that the 2021 Remembrance events would include the Schools Remembrance on 12th November, and the Main Remembrance Parade and Service at the War Memorial on the 14th. This year's service included the postponed rededication of the War Memorial as it celebrated its centenary, and the commemoration of the centenary of the Farnham Branch of the Royal British Legion, with Bishop Dr Christopher Herbert leading the rededication.

The Mayor looked forward to the Christmas Lights Switch taking place on Saturday 20th November; the Christmas Carol Service with the Farnham Youth Choir on Wednesday 1st December, and the Farnham Christmas Market on Sunday 12th December

The Mayor was pleased to announce that he had personally commissioned a painting by Susie Lidstone of the Council Offices with the Christmas lights and tree which would be the

official Christmas Card. Susie Lidstone formally presented the painting to the Mayor and he in turn donated it to the Council for display in the Council offices.

C65/21 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by Members.

C66/21 **Working Group and Panel Notes**

C67/21 **Community Enhancement Working Group**

Cllr Dickson reported on the Community Enhancement Working Group meeting held on 23rd September. The Group had been addressed by Colin Shearn from Plastic Free Farnham and there had been an interesting discussion on proposals for a Deposit Return Scheme for recyclable bottles.

Council noted the discussion on South East in Bloom and the inclusion of Green Lane Cemetery and Hallifax Gardens in the 2022 competition with the community benefits this brings.

In terms of allotments, Cllr Dickson advised she was still pursuing Waverley Borough Council over the transfer of the Weybourne Road allotment site.

Council noted the interest in Memorial benches in Gostrey Meadow and that these would be progressed within existing budgets. Council also noted a number of maintenance items that were being progressed.

Cllr Dickson reported that the Working Group had noted the adoption of the red telephone boxes in Rowledge Boundstone and West Street with the first option being for defibrillator use. The Rowledge box would be used for a 'little library' at the suggestion of the Rowledge community as the defibrillator was adjacent.

There was a proposal that the West Street telephone box should be made into a golden 'cultural' box with its first use being to celebrate the achievements of Farnham's sporting heroes and the recent successes of Kylie Grimes in the Tokyo Paralympics and Rachel Morris in previous paralympics.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the phone box on West Street be used as a 'culture box', and that the initial use be to celebrate Farnham's Sporting heroes in conjunction with the Farnham Sports Council.

C68/21 **Tourism and Events Working Group**

Cllr Evans introduced the notes of the Tourism & Events Working Group held on 12th October at Appendix C to the agenda. It had been a busy time as set out in the notes, and the Working Group had reviewed events that had taken place during the year as well as planning future events. Council noted the success of the summer programme and the Food Festival and progress on the Literary Festival which was taking place for the first time in 2022 and arrangements for the Platinum Jubilee weekend.

Cllr Evans provided an update on the Farnham Visitors' Forum which was now planning to meet twice a year with a keynote speaker.

Cllr Martin congratulated Oliver Cluskey and the team that had enabled the Snow Windows Project to be pulled together and implemented in a very short time. The Farnham retailers greatly appreciated what had been achieved.

C69/21 **Strategy & Finance Working Group**

Cllr Neale introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 19th October at Appendix D to the agenda.

i) External Audit

Cllr Neale reported that the External Audit had concluded and was unqualified with no matters raised for further consideration.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that the Conclusion of the unqualified External Audit of the 2020/21 Accounts be welcomed.

ii) Six-month Finances

Cllr Neale reported on the detailed finances at the half year point had been reviewed including the trial balance, the Income & Expenditure reports, the debtors at 30th September and the Statement of investments. Council noted that income had held up well and was above the cautious budget figure, whilst expenditure was running at 44% of the budget with staff vacancies contributing to the saving.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that the update on finances at the six month period be agreed.

iii) Farnham Support Fund

Council noted the continued work of the Farnham Coronavirus Support Fund and considered specific proposals to adapt its operation in light of experience which were recommended by the funding partners and the Working Group.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1) The Farnham Coronavirus Support fund be renamed the Farnham Support Fund;**
- 2) The amount that can be requested be increased from £300 to £350 with the possibility of making a grant of up to £500 in exceptional circumstances.**

iv) Wrecclesham Community Centre

Council considered the recommendation to extending the rent waiver agreed in 2020/21 for the first quarter of 21/22 as the Community Centre was unable to open the centre until the end of May.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that a rent waiver of £1,500 be agreed for Wrecclesham Community Centre for 2021/22.

v) Grants Review

Cllr Neale reported on the independent Grants Review undertaken by Wendy Varcoe MBE (former Chief Executive of the Surrey Community Foundation). The review concluded that the FTC framework and process were very good and robust with a clearly worded and logical grants policy. Overall, the grant programme was being delivered to a high standard with the right level of due diligence in relation to the level of grants awarded. The report identified a few points which would help meet the Council's priorities and supporting community groups.

It was agreed to recommend to Council that a summary of grants awarded in previous years be included in the Grant Programme Report split by categories of projects and areas served; an annual grants workshop be held to assist community groups apply for FTC and other funding; create an on-line application form to streamline applications; and invite

feedback on the grants process to continuously improve. The Working Group recognised that some groups (particularly sporting) were more organised in making applications but did not wish to define specific priorities it wished to address each year preferring to address this at the grant allocation stage.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- 1) The response of the Strategy & Finance Working Group to the recommendations of the Grants review be agreed.**
- 2) Councillors encourage community groups to apply for the community grants.**

vi) Contracts and Assets Update

Cllr Neale reported on the discussion on Contracts and Assets. As well as updates on Gostrey Meadow, contract renewals and the nursery greenhouse there were a series of recommendations for Council consideration on the West Street Cemetery Gates, the Central Car Parks Refurbishment; tree inspections and Hale Recreation Ground. Council noted the financial impact of the changes for the toilet refurbishment and that investment in a Changing Places toilet would be deferred for discussion around options in a supervised facility. The request from the Hale Recreation Ground Committee for FTC to consider taking responsibility for the area was supported.

It was RESOLVED nem con that:

- 1) The Victoria Road (Central Car Park) Public Conveniences refurbishment set out be progressed and the earmarked budget approval for the project be increased to £160,000;**
- 2) The Town Clerk be authorised to accept the most economically advantageous tender for the public convenience refurbishment, and undertake any necessary post tender negotiations and issue a letter of intent to the successful contractor subject to a further report on funding.**
- 3) The Town Clerk be authorised to accept the most economically advantageous tender for the West Street Cemetery gates, undertake any necessary post tender negotiations and issue a letter of intent to the successful contractor, subject to a further report on funding;**
- 4) A Councillor oversee the tender opening ceremony for the bids for both the West Street Gates and the Central Car Park Toilets on 25 November at 1.30pm;**
- 5) The Town Clerk be authorised to award the Quinquennial Tree survey to the most economically advantageous tender within an earmarked budget of £7,000;**
- 6) The Town Clerk continue discussions with Waverley Borough Council and the Hale Recreation Ground Management Committee regarding the potential transfer of ownership to Farnham Town Council.**

vii) Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Neale reported on the latest Farnham Infrastructure Board meeting which had agreed the Final Version of the Optimised Infrastructure Plan. He commented on the workshop held at the UCA on 20th October which involved wider partners and had covered some of the previous issues discussed and had replaced the intended meeting with the Town Council.

Cllr Merryweather thought the workshop had been a productive session but was disappointed that the UCA, Museum and hospital were not seemingly included in the 'town centre' definition.

Cllr Neale advised he was trying to rearrange a seminar specifically for FTC with Tim Oliver, Jeremy Hunt and Katie Stewart. He was concerned that the Programme Team were not engaging with the Town Council as much as desired. He reminded Council that there were clear policy statements through the 'key Objectives' document and the response to the draft OIP which should guide the Programme Team on the FTC position. Cllr Neale was aware that work was underway on wider Major Road Network and North Farnham issues and would seek via the FIP Board proper engagement with communities before any details were finalised.

Cllr Neale reported that feedback from the public on the most recent Local Liaison Forum was that there was not enough explanation coming from the Programme Team and it did not seem to be as open and forthcoming as previous LLFs.

Cllr Neale advised that anecdotal feedback was that the HGV ban was having a positive impact on both the Town Centre and Upper Hale Road; and that further consultation on the 20MPH zones was about to commence. Council felt that a strong response to the 20MPH Zone needed to be sent underlining the response previously submitted for the Short and Medium Term Objectives seeking an extension to zones around schools and objecting to the proposed build-outs in Castle Street.

Cllr Beaman said this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to get things right for Farnham and he couldn't understand why the Western Link Road was not the top priority. Cllr Dickson agreed, adding that the HGV signage needed to be improved and there should be a review of the scheme once fully implemented to see how it works in practice.

Cllr Merryweather thought the topsy turvy approach also applied to funding which was neither clear nor secure as the money required would have to be borrowed by SCC or funded by capital receipts.

Cllr Neale understood no schemes had yet been dismissed but there were clearly a number of factors that had to be taken into account for road building including economic benefits and environmental impacts.

Cllr Cockburn said it was important that there was someone to fight for Farnham. If the national policy is not right, government should be asked to change it.

Following a proposal by Cllr Neale, seconded by Cllr Merryweather **it was RESOLVED *nem con* that Farnham Town Council authorises the Town Clerk to respond to the 20MPH consultation along the lines previously agreed in the response to the Short and Medium Term objectives feedback.**

viii) Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4

Council reviewed a paper drafted by Cllr Neale and agreed subject to any final comments by councillors. Cllr Merryweather was taken by the e-scooter trails in London and would like to see Farnham put forward as a trial scheme.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the draft FTC response on LTP4 be submitted.

Cllr Merryweather and Cllr Mirylees left the Chamber for the next item.

ix) Farnham Museum

Cllr Neale introduced the discussion on Farnham Museum by saying that papers were still awaited from Waverley Borough Council following a meeting held between FTC and WBC with Cllrs Earwaker, Evans, Dunsmore, Neale and the Town Clerk representing the Town Council and senior officers and Executive members from Waverley.

At the Working Group there were a range of views on the extent of the involvement of Farnham Town Council in what was essentially a matter for Waverley to resolve following a lack of investment by WBC over many years. However, the Working group recommended the creation of a Task Group to work alongside Waverley, the Farnham Maltings and others.

Cllr Cockburn said that there should not be a huge investment of time by Farnham Town Council as the group would be subservient to WBC on any matter. Waverley had to determine what it wished to do with its asset but it seemed clear that the cost to put back into shape was significant. Cllr Martin said it was important to look at the bottom line and how much any involvement would cost. Cllr Dickson said that people were fighting hard to keep the building in public ownership and the museum collection there.

Cllr Neale advised that any involvement was to engage in WBC-led activity, not take it over.

It was RESOLVED by 8 votes to 1 with two abstentions that a Farnham Museum Task Group be created to work alongside Waverley Borough Council, the Farnham Maltings and other interested parties to support Waverley in managing the challenges around restoring Willmer House and the future of the Museum.

It was RESOLVED by 7 votes to 1 with three abstentions that the Task Group should include the Leader, the Lead Member for the Tourism and Events Working Group, Cllr Hesse as a ward member, and the Town Clerk.

x) Reports of Task Groups

Cllr Neale updated Council on the Riverside Sculpture Task Group and on the Cultural Projects Task Group. There was a discussion on the Infrastructure Planning Group and lobbying undertaken by Cllr Cockburn to extend the protection afforded to Neighbourhood Plans which allocated sites from two years to five years.

Cllr Neale Proposed, Cllr Merryweather seconded, and **it was RESOLVED unanimously that:**

- 1) Farnham Town Council welcomes the focus on extending protection for Neighbourhood Plans which allocate sites from two years to five years after they are adopted; and**
- 2) Farnham Town Council asks the National Association of Local Councils to lobby for this to become National Planning Policy.**

In terms of the Conservation Area Task Group, Council noted the first meeting would take place in the new year.

In terms of the Younger People Task Group Council note the receipt of a grant of £10,000 from the Police & Crime Commissioner Community Safety Fund towards the costs of the purchase and installation of a Youth Shelter in Borelli Walk (Waverley Borough Council permission received) and

It was RESOLVED unanimously to waive Standing Orders Contracts to purchase an Upton Shelter from Lightmain Ltd (following consultation with young people and quotes received) at a cost of £8,850.

Cllr Ward declared a non-pecuniary interest on item xi) as chair of the Waverley Group.

xi) Boundary Commission Review of Waverley – draft proposals

Cllr Neale introduced the detailed discussion that had taken place at the Working Group on the Boundary Commission's draft proposals for the Waverley area and its implications for

Farnham. The proposals saw the number of Borough councillors for Farnham reduced from 18 to 16 and the number of wards reduced from 9 to seven with the deletion of the Moor Park Ward and amalgamation of other area with a mix of 2 and three member wards. The consequence for the Town Council was that the Boundary Commission were recommending new Riverside and Runfold wards, increasing the number of wards, and requiring a number of one two or three member wards. In discussion, councillors favoured the reduction in town councillors to 16 and the alignment of Town Council ward boundaries with the Borough boundaries. Council felt that the proposal was a mess and resulted from a desk-based assessment without any knowledge of the geography or demography of the area. The results across the town were surprising. There were also issues caused for the County divisions although these were not part of the current review.

Council noted that the Boundary Commission seemed reluctant to use its powers to propose a solution for Town and Parish wards as part of the review and as such a Community governance Review led by the Borough Council would be required.

Concern was expressed about the proposed Weybourne Badshot Lea split, the inconsistencies across the A31 and the confusion that would be caused. A strong preference for 2 member wads and a balance of wards North and South of the A31 was preferred. Cllr Neale had circulated a number of options for consideration which had been reviewed by the Working Group. It was noted that further work was to be undertaken by the Waverley Task Group and agreed to feed in the Farnham Town Council views and also submit the comments to the Boundary Commission.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* (ten for and one abstention)

- 1) Alignment of Town wards within the Borough wards was a requirement;**
- 2) A reduction of Town Council members from 18 to 16 should be investigated;**
- 3) Where possible a pattern of 2 member wards is preferred;**
- 4) The merging of the Bourne and Runfold is not supported and the Moor Park area and name should be retained as a preference;**
- 6) A balance of 8 representatives south and north of the A31 would be preferred if achievable;**
- 7) The Borough Council be requested to undertake a Community Governance Review to determine the best pattern of options.**

xii) Review of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Council noted that the designated area affecting Farnham had been incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan and agreed Farnham Town Council should actively support the extension to the AONB.

It was RESOLVED *unanimously* that officers work with the Surrey Hills AONB to optimise the extension around the Farnham area.

xiii) Review of the Great Austins Conservation Area

Council noted that the review of the Conservation Area was proposing the reduction of part of the area that no longer reflected the Conservation Area characteristics. Whilst this was considered to be beneficial, Council noted that there had been a split view on the change at a public meeting. As a result, Council felt that a decision on this element should be deferred. There was concern that the County Council had stated it would no longer repair the cobbled area to conservation standards because of cost.

It was RESOLVED *nem con*

- 1) that a decision on the realigned boundary for the Great Austins Conservation Area be deferred for further consideration; and**

- 2) **The maintenance of features such as cobbles that enhance the Conservation Area in accordance with the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan and Design Statement be sought.**

xiv) **Town Clerk update**

Council noted the update from the Town Clerk on matters set out in the report including the replacement of flags for the Badshot Lea Memorial and the addition on female silent soldiers for the war memorials at Gostrey, Hale and Wrecclisham. Council also noted that an offer for the potential transfer of a piece of land in Snailslynch had been received.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the Town Clerk be authorised to continue discussions with the potential transferor family.

C70/21 **Cemeteries and Appeals Working Group**

Cllr Cockburn introduced the notes of the meeting of the Cemeteries and Appeals Working Group held on 21st October at Appendix E. She drew attention to the Gold Award for West Street Cemetery in this year's South and South East in Bloom Awards but commented that the reason for entering the competition was to get feedback to make the cemeteries the best they could be, and as such Green Lane Cemetery would be entered for 2022. It was noted that the replacement of the damaged Green Lane railings by Tilford Forge was progressing and should be completed by February 2022.

The Working Group had discussed the entrance trees at West Street Cemetery as part of the Cemetery Gates restoration, noticing that they were past their prime. Council noted that the quinquennial tree survey would be conducted shortly and the entrance trees would be a part of the survey along with all other trees in the cemeteries. Particular attention would be given to the entrance trees and if required some may need to be removed and replaced with mature alternatives.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that authority be given for some of the conifers at the entrance of West Street Cemetery to be removed and replaced with mature trees as part of the cemetery gates refurbishment project.

Council noted that a Christmas Memorial Tree was to be put up in West Street Cemetery.

C71/21 **HR Panel**

Cllr Evans introduced the report of the HR Panel that met on 20th October. Council noted that the Panel had undertaken checks on salaries and payscales and reviewed the results of a limited job evaluation review that had been undertaken by South East Employers, the results of which were contained in Exempt Annex I, for the posts of the Town Clerk, the Business and Facilities Manager, the Civic and Planning Administrator, and the Communities and Administration Manager.

Council noted that the National Pay Agreement for 2020/21 had not yet been concluded and was currently stalled noting that the employers' side offer of 1.75% had been rejected by the unions.

Council noted the current position with regard to vacancies and that the in-sourcing of the cleaning contract had been delayed pending the receipt of TUPE information.

Council noted that the two appeal panels for any grievances or disputes were:
Panel A: Cllrs Mirylees, Neale and Wickes. Panel B: Cllrs Attfield, Cockburn and Evans.

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that:

- 1) **The outcome of the HR Panel be endorsed and**
- 2) **The results of the Evaluation at Exempt Annex I be implemented;**
- 3) **A wider staff review should be commissioned in 2022.**

C72/21 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Blishen introduced the Notes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 20th September, and 4th and 18th October at Appendices F, G, H.

He drew attention to the volume of work required and the ongoing difficulties with the Waverley Planning Portal. The lack of previous history for applications and missing constraints documents were causing a disproportionate amount of extra work, and a meeting had been arranged with the Waverley Planning Team to discuss this.

Cllr Blishen commended the incredible support from Jenny de Quervain in streamlining the process for councillors.

C73/21 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no additional items to report.

C74/21 Reports from Other Councils

- i) Cllr MacLeod reported that he had attended the Surrey CC Cabinet on 'greener future' and had noted a transformation in the approach of Surrey. He also reported that Cabinet had given approval for the purchase of Tice's Meadow in conjunction with other council partners including Farnham Town Council.

C75/21 Reports from Outside Bodies

- i) Cllr Cockburn advised that the Farnham Sports Council AGM was on 29th and commended the ongoing work of the group.
- ii) Cllr Cockburn reported that she had attended the NALC webinar on biodiversity noting that as Farnham was doing so much the sessions had not been as useful for Farnham.
- iii) Cllr Neale reported on the Farnham Public Art Trust meeting which had been supportive of what the Town Council was doing. He updated Council on the Kitty Milroy Murals, the positive feedback from Craft Month and the aspirations for the restoration and hanging of the Farnham Flame for which FPAT was happy to make a contribution.
- iv) Cllr Dickson reported that the Hale Carnival Committee was in good shape, but that a fundraising event had to be cancelled because of covid concerns.

C76/21 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 16th December at 7pm.

C77/21 Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Mayor proposed, Cllr Neale seconded and Council **RESOLVED** **nem con that press and public be excluded because of the confidential staffing matters at Annex I.**

C78/21 **Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group/Panel notes.**

Council discussed the report from the HR Panel, the decisions of which have been included at Minute 71 above.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.45 pm

Chairman

Date