



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes Council

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### **Time and date**

7.00 pm on Thursday 16th December, 2021

### **Place**

Council Chamber -Farnham Town Hall

### **Councillors**

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)  
Councillor David Attfield  
Councillor David Beaman  
Councillor Roger Blishen  
Councillor Sally Dickson  
Councillor Pat Evans  
Councillor Paula Dunsmore  
Councillor John "Scotty" Fraser  
Councillor George Hesse  
Councillor Michaela Martin  
Councillor Mark Merryweather  
Councillor Kika Mirylees  
Councillor John Neale

In attendance remotely (non voting):  
Cllrs Cockburn, Edmonds, MacLeod, and Wicks.

### **Apologies for absence**

Cllr Ward.

### **Officers Present:**

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk.  
Iain McCready, Business and Facilities Manager attended remotely.

There was 1 member of the public and 1 member of the press in attendance. Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd John Morris of St Thomas-on-the Bourne.

### **C79/21 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Michaela Wicks.

C80/21 **Disclosures of Interest**

Disclosures of interest were received from Cllr Mark Merryweather as portfolio holder for Finance and assets at Waverley Borough Council; Cllr Kika Mirylees as Portfolio holder for culture in relation to the discussion on the Farnham Museum.

C81/21 **Minutes**

Subject to a correction to say that Cllr Beaman was Acting Secretary and Treasurer of the the Hale Recreation Ground Committee rather than a Trustee, and the amendment of 'world' to 'would' on page 13 para 3 line 2, the Minutes were agreed for signing by the Mayor.

C82/21 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

Mrs Zofia Lovell, Chairman of the South Farnham Residents Association asked a question relating to the Surrey Hills review of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and referencing the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan Policy FNP10 (to Protect and Enhance the Countryside) and Policy FNP13 (to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity).

She asked if Farnham Town Council would support the area identified in the HDA Landscape Assessment Area 13, entitled "Compton Wooded Slopes" being included in an extended AONB as the area directly abutted the existing AONB and had been identified in the report as of High Landscape Value and of High Sensitivity.

In response, Cllr Neale advised that this would be discussed later in the meeting but the response from FTC would support the inclusion of the areas set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

C83/21 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor said he was delighted to announce that the purchase of Tice's Meadow had now been completed by Surrey County Council with financial contributions from six local authorities including Farnham Town Council. This should safeguard public access to the site for future generations and ensure that work undertaken by volunteers from the Tice's Meadow Bird Group who created an award-winning conservation site would continue.

The Mayor recorded our thanks to the vaccinators and volunteers at Farnham Hospital who are now running vaccination clinics seven days a week until Christmas. We are truly grateful that the Farnham volunteers filled up all the available slots within hours of the additional clinics being created.

I should also like to say thank you to our volunteers and funding partners who are running the Farnham Support Fund including the Farnham Institute Charity, Farnham Lions, Rotary, the Dempster Trust and the CAB. This group continues to help those who are facing hardship and we have just received a boost with an initial extra £30,000 government grant via Waverley Borough Council to help those in greatest need in the next few months. Please signpost anyone in need to [help@farnham.gov.uk](mailto:help@farnham.gov.uk) or see the Farnham website for more details.

Finally, may I wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas.

C84/21 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by Members.

C85/21 **Covid Update - Quorum, hybrid meetings, leave of absence.**

Council noted the current position with the provisions made for decision making as a result of Covid and that Resolution 166/19 was still in operation but used sparingly. It was still unclear, with the reintroduction of restrictions as a result of the latest Covid Omicron variant, whether the Government would reintroduce the opportunity for hybrid meetings. As such, it was prudent to review the situation in case there were no enough councillors attending meetings in person given Farnham Town Council's higher than required quorum.

In addition, Council discussed the situation regarding Working Groups again where there had been a difference of view from NALC and other advisors over whether these meetings could be held at all let alone in a hybrid manner. No decisions were made at Working Group meetings (all are recommended to full Council) but under current FTC rules a quorum of councillors physically present (excluding ex-officio members) was required for the meeting to be able to continue even if members were present remotely.

It was noted that Cllr Edmonds had not been able to attend meetings in person for health reasons although he had been taking an active part in Planning and Licensing Consultative Group meetings which met remotely to advise the Town Clerk under the Scheme of Delegation. It was proposed that, for avoidance of doubt, an extended leave of absence be formally authorised.

On a proposal by Cllr Attfield, seconded by Cllr Fraser, **it was RESOLVED *nem con* that**

- 1) for the rest of the Municipal year the quorum for Full Council be a minimum of six members as set out in at the NALC Model Standing Orders.**
- 2) for the rest of the Municipal year, the quorum for Working Group meetings be made up of councillors in person or attending remotely via Zoom.**
- 3) An extended leave of absence be authorised for Cllr Edmonds as a result of him shielding because of the ongoing covid pandemic.**

C86/21 **Working Group Notes**

C87/21 **Strategy & Finance held on 7th December**

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group meeting (at Appendix B to the agenda) held on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

**a) Contracts and Assets**

Council noted actions taken by the Town Clerk under the scheme of delegation. Four tenders were received for the West Street Cemetery Gates, with prices ranging from £41,323 to £118,874. After evaluation and references the contract was awarded to Lost Art of Wigan at a cost of £41,323. Additional costs would apply (to be contained within the agreed budget) relating to some resurfacing of the tarmac entrance to allow the refurbished gates to close

Council noted five tenders were received for the Central Car Park Toilet refurbishment with prices ranging from £143,085 to £221,477. After tender evaluation by the Council's advisors Drake & Kannemeyer with arithmetical errors adjusted and references taken, the tender was awarded to Endwell Contracts at a cost of £143,085.

Council received updates on the cleaning contract, the greenhouse, and the Youth Shelter.

C87/21a

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

- 1) the actions taken by the Town Clerk in issuing the two contracts be endorsed.**
- 2) that a sum of up to £5,000 be allocated to install the hoggin path by the youth shelter to be met from the maintenance budget.**

**b) Task Groups**

Council received updates from the Young People's Task Groups, and the Cultural Projects Task Group. The latter had considered the report of Bonnar Keenlyside on the potential for a new Cultural attraction for Farnham.

Council discussed the findings and future opportunities to underpin World Craft Town status and move it to the next level including

- The benefit of a new structure to drive forward the focus of Farnham as a World Craft City, with more representation of makers involved;
- The need to develop the online offer and raise awareness of what Farnham offers (similar points were identified as part of the assessors feedback of the World Craft Town application)
- The need for the evolving organisation to be underpinned by the Town Council but supported by those with an entrepreneurial stake but with a clear focus.
- Brightwells did not appear to offer a primary location at this stage based on feedback received, but other buildings could be repurposed. This required further engagement with and support of both the County Council and Borough Council.
- The opportunity to create a ten-year strategy and to seek some further Arts Council funding to underpin the development recognising the importance of demonstrating diversity.

C87/21b

**It was RESOLVED *nem con***

- 1) That the report carried out by Bonnar Keenlyside be welcomed;**
- 2) That the recommendations and actions contained within the report be progressed with a further report going back to Strategy & Finance via the Task Group;**
- 3) The Craft Town Co-ordinator be employed for additional days throughout the year to extend awareness and programming for Craft Month throughout the year; and**
- 4) An application be developed in conjunction with the Farnham Maltings for submission to the Arts Council to underpin the programmed development.**

C87/21c

**c) Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

Cllr Neale provided an update on the latest position of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and detailed the consultation of the 20MPH zones. The Working Group welcomed the 20MPH scheme in general but had expressed concern about the consultation purporting to have the support of the Town Council when the Town Council had submitted several significant concerns about what was proposed for Castle Street with build outs and street furniture conflicting with listed buildings. The suggested detail of the Council's response was set out on pages 4 and 5 of the

notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group. Council added concern over speed humps particularly in the conservation area but also in other areas.

In terms of the consultation on the Wrecclesham and Western Bypass, Council noted the challenges of delivering the scheme in the current climate and understood the economic and environmental case made it difficult to progress, but there was a strong view that the scheme should be kept as part of the strategic objective even if it could not progress at this particular time. It was noted that the FIP could not progress without funding and the Western Bypass in particular was a difficult funding proposition. It was also noted that the circumstances of the Scott Wilson report previously were very different now, with significant development taking place in East Hampshire District Council just across the border. Farnham should be arguing for what Farnham needs with collaboration with Hampshire CC and lobbying of MPs. There was no doubt that the only thing that would relieve Wrecclesham was a relief road and the only matter for debate was which route should be followed. Cllr Mirylees advised that this view may not, however, be shared by younger members of the community who were very concerned about climate change impacts.

Cllr Fraser reiterated the need for a meeting of Farnham Councillors only with the FIP Programme team as had been promised, and other councillors expressed the view that Farnham Town Council, and the Leader as its representative on the Board, needed to be more vociferous in articulating priorities and the concerns raised.

It was noted that the Farnham Infrastructure Programme referred some matters to the Waverley Local Committee, but Town and Parish Councils were not represented on that committee so the FTC voice was not effectively represented.

Council was also concerned that the documents submitted to the Department for Transport relating to the A31 corridor had not been shared with partners or even the FIP Board members. Cllr Hesse commented that whilst there was a need to promote the interests of the Council as a whole, the centre of Farnham should shine as a beacon of quality and there was a need to push for the best that can be delivered for the town as a whole.

Cllr Beaman proposed, Cllr Neale seconded, an amendment to the proposal from Strategy & Finance which became the substantive motion, and **it was RESOLVED *nem con*:**

- 1) **the response to the 20MPH Zone consultation on pages 4 and 5 of the Strategy and Finance Notes be agreed; and**
- 2) **FTC notes the Atkins Technical Report but given the importance of connectivity between the A3 and M3, Farnham Town Council seeks agreement for Surrey County Council to have the Strategic Link Road kept as a priority on the Major Road Network programme and also seeks collaboration with Hampshire County Council to achieve this objective.**

C87/21d

**d) Finance report**

Cllr Neale introduced the Finance Report which included a series of recommendations on grants and the proposed budget and precept Strategy being addressed as a separate item on the agenda.

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

- 1) **£1,900 be awarded to the Aston Defibrillator Fund, from within the balance of 2021/22 grants.**

- 2) the request by Frensham Ponds Sailability to reallocate the approved funding towards a replacement boat be agreed.
- 3) Farnham Town Council launch an appeal with Hoppa to fund a third electric bus to be match funded from the Government grants;
- 4) A sum of £20,000 be earmarked from the 2021/22 environmental initiatives budget to match fund community contributions;
- 5) FTC seek funding from Surrey County Council, Waverley Borough Council and other organisations to meet the balance of the costs.

C87/21e

**e) FTC Strategy Workshop**

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of the Strategy Workshop held in November to assist with the development of the 2022/23 budget and Council programme. Overall, councillors did not wish to reduce any services or divert resources to other areas but wished to concentrate on current activity and continuously improve where possible.

The series of points raised at the workshop, reinforcing the Council Vision, as set out on page 8 of the Strategy & Finance Notes were accepted with specific items noted as: Engage further with UCA; Support community safety and well-being; Extend Young people focus; Extend World Craft Town focus; Improve communication and website; Continue to work with business community on development of a Business Improvement District; Focus on the Infrastructure Programme and other Infrastructure matters; Consideration of the wider public estate (properties held by other public bodies). It was suggested another workshop be held in the Spring of 2022.

Cllr Hesse asked that it be recorded that he did not support the idea of a café in Gostrey Meadow.

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

- 1) **The outcomes of the Strategy Workshop be endorsed;**
- 2) **A further Strategy workshop be held in the spring of 2022.**

Cllr Mirylees and Cllr Merryweather left the meeting for the next item with Cllr Merryweather commenting that some matters/omissions in the Leader's briefing paper on the Museum needed to be corrected.

C87/21f

**f) Farnham Museum**

Cllr Neale updated Council on the work of the Museum Task Group that had met with consultants Bowles Green who had been appointed by Waverley Borough Council to seek views on the future of the Museum. He also advised that a follow-up meeting of the Task Group with WBC and other partners was scheduled for January 2022. Cllr Neale was concerned that FTC was being treated as a consultee just like any other consultee and not as a partner council and this put the Town Council in a difficult position. There was no information on proposals coming from the Borough Council until the consultants had concluded their report on options. Cllr Edmonds was concerned that the annual maintenance costs were not clear, and Cllr Attfield observed that it appeared the current problems had occurred because maintenance costs had not been invested for many years.

C87/21g

**g) Consultations**

- i) Cllr Neale updated Council on the Waverley Community Governance Review noting that ward councillors had been invited to a meeting in January. Other councillors noted that the desk based review had not been an equal or fair process.
- ii) Council noted FTC had responded to the consultation advising it wished to be an active participant and drawing attention to matters highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan.

## C88/21 **Updates from other Working Groups**

### a) **Tourism & Events**

Cllr Evans provided an update on activities being progressed by the Tourism and Events Working Group noting it had been a very busy period with the 20 years celebration of the Farmers' Market, the Food Festival and preparations for Christmas Lights and the Christmas Market. She passed on her thanks (with applause from councillors) to all staff and volunteers for their support, with particular thanks to Oliver Cluskey, the Events Manager for his efforts.

### b) **Cemeteries and Appeals**

Cllr Cockburn advised that the coffee morning with undertakers was being deferred until the new year. She also advised that a memorial tree for tributes to loved ones had been erected in west Street cemetery with thanks to Castle Street Flowers. She also commented that the cemeteries were looking very good with all the recent maintenance work.

Cllr Evans left the meeting at 8.45pm.

### c) **Community Enhancement**

Cllr Dickson introduced the informal notes of the discussion held on 25<sup>th</sup> November at Appendix C. Council noted the new mechanical bulb planting had taken place outside West Street Cemetery and that Welcome Back Funding was being used to clean and refurbish bus stops throughout town. Council noted the plans for the Riverside tree avenue as part of the Queen's Green Canopy and the financial support of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.

In terms of the allotments, officers had proposed regularising the allotment year and charges to the growing season with each year starting on 1<sup>st</sup> October to maximise the opportunity for new plotters to prepare their plots for the new growing year. It was also proposed that the administration fee for new plotters be increased to £50.

On a recommendation by Cllr Dickson, seconded by Cllr Dunsmore, **it was RESOLVED *nem con* that:**

- 1) **the invoicing year for allotments be 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> September;**
- 2) **the administration fee for new allotment holders be £50 from April 2022.**

## C89/21 **Budget 2022-23**

Cllr Neale introduced the budget report at Appendix D that followed detailed discussion at the Strategy & Finance Working Group.

The draft budget recommended by Strategy & Finance has been drawn up based on a review of expenditure in 2021/22 and on the 2020/21 outturn but in a context of continuing

uncertainty over Coronavirus. The prudent approach over potential sponsorship and income from activities had continued but with a return of some elements to pre-covid levels. Investment income continued at a very low rate. The draft budget included fees and charges broadly based on 2021/22 levels, given the continuing uncertainty in the economic climate but with provision for some increases. It was noted that Farnham has a provisional Band D tax base of 17654.4 up from 17,363 based on a collection rate of 98%.

Council noted the costs being absorbed by Council with inflation running at an historic high in recent decades, an increase of 1.25% in employers' National Insurance costs. It was proposed that a new budget of £10,000 for initiatives to support Young People be agreed; that an increase in the time for the Craft Co-ordinator and the continuation of the Literary Festival co-ordinator be agreed along with an increase in the hourly rate for weekend working (although maintained within the existing budget). Cllr Neale advised that the budget was based on the discussions agreed at the Strategy Workshop, in maintaining the current level of services.

Council noted that Farnham Town Council's precept increases had consistently been below national averages for seven years in a row underlining the prudent approach taken by the council but that the amount of the Council Tax Support Grant was again reducing in the next year as a result of agreed phasing out.

Cllr Neale advised that the overall increase in the draft budget to £1,473,800, with increased budgeted income of £1,432,607 meant that a shortfall of £41,193 would need to be addressed as part of the discussions on the precept level.

Cllr Attfeld Proposed, seconded by Cllr Beaman, and **agreed nem con** that the grant for the Blackwater Valley Countryside Management Partnership be increased by £1,000 as it had been held static for many years.

Cllr Edmonds asked about the impact of the shortfall on the precept. In response the Town Clerk advised he could not be certain on this since when Council considered the precept, it could agree to set higher income targets (eg from sponsorship) or use agree to use some reserves (as in 2021/22) to minimise any precept rise.

Cllr Attfeld proposed, seconded by Cllr Beaman, and **it was RESOLVED nem con that a budget of £1,474,800 be agreed for 2022/23.**

## C90/21 **Planning and Licensing Applications**

Cllr Fraser reported that there had been four meetings since the last Council meeting which were attached at Appendices E, F, G and H. AT these meetings there had been 11 key large applications, 24 large and important applications and 105 routine or uncontroversial applications including 27 tree applications.

He advised Council that the hybrid meetings were not a particularly satisfactory way of working particularly when there were an excessive number of documents with small images that do not enlarge without a loss of quality. The History and Constraints documents were frequently omitted by the Local Planning Authority and this had to be resolved as this was an important element of the Group's considerations. The Planning Process leaves inadequate time for residents to makes comments.

Cllr Fraser further advised that there continued to be speculative planning applications outside the Built Up Area, many were of excessive size and allocated woefully inadequate parking (half a car per flat was not uncommon).

Cllr Fraser thanked councillors and officers and particularly Jenny de Quervain, for the huge amount of work that goes into reviewing all the applications.

One particular matter that had been considered was a proposal to take the Section 106 funding for a cycleway in North Farnham into the Farnham Infrastructure Programme. In discussion, councillors strongly objected to this as the monies were to mitigate a specific development and should not be added to a wider plot.

Cllr Merry weather proposed, Cllr Attfield seconded and **it was Resolved *nem con* (with Cllr Beaman abstaining) that:**

- 1) FTC strongly objects to any change in the Section 106 cycleway project agreed as part of Planning Application WA/2015/2283 in Badshot Lea; and**
- 2) FTC agrees that the project should be implemented without delay.**

Cllr Cockburn advised Council that the Appeal at 9 Upper South View had been dismissed which was another terrific example of the Neighbourhood Plan success in protecting the Heritage Asset of Farnham Park.

**C91/21 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

There were no matters reported.

**C92/21 Reports from Other Councils**

- i) Cllr MacLeod reported that there was unhappiness among the Residents and Independent Group on Surrey CC that only three projects had so far been allocated a share of the £100m Your Surrey Fund and at least one (that had been allocated over £500,000 to develop a shop and café in Normandy) did not seem appropriate. Cllr MacLeod had asked for a complete review of the programme as there should be £247k per division per year allocated.
- ii) Cllr MacLeod expressed concern that Children's services budgets were proposed for further cuts, especially in the context of recent national tragedies.

Cllr Dickson left the meeting at 9.30pm.

- iii) Cllr Cockburn reported that the Waverley Local Plan 2 was being submitted to the Independent Examiner, but she was concerned as it included a site in the middle of the AONB. The impact was that this weakened the argument for other sites with a lower landscape designation and noted that sites in Farnham at hawthorns and Monkton Lane were being resubmitted.

**C93/21 Reports from Outside Bodies**

- i) Cllr Beaman advised he had circulated a report to councillors on the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership.
- ii) Cllr Cockburn reported that the Sports Council AGM had been very enjoyable with the editor of the Herald making a presentation. There had also been a discussion on how sports clubs could be more sustainable.

**C94/21 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting was agreed as January 27<sup>th</sup> at 7.00pm.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.40 pm

Date

Chairman