



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 4th August, 2022

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor Michaela Wicks (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor David Attfield
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Roger Blishen
Councillor Carole Cockburn
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Pat Evans
Councillor Paula Dunsmore
Councillor John "Scotty" Fraser
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

George Hesse, Michaela Martin and Mark Merryweather

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Iain McCready (Business and Contracts Manager)

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

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Pastor Michael Hall of the Wey Valley Church.

C27/22 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Hesse, Martin and Merryweather.

C28/22 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

C29/22 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on June 23rd were agreed as a correct record for the signature of the Mayor.

C30/22 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions from members of the public.

C31/22 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced he had attended the National Association of Local Councils Annual Parliamentary Reception in the House of Lords. Farnham was invited as being the Council of the Year and it was a useful opportunity to help raise the profile of all the good things happening in Farnham. He reaffirmed his thanks to the community, staff and councillors for their contribution.

The Mayor said he was delighted to announce that Farnham had been re-awarded its Green Flag for Gostrey Meadow which was a good indication that things were progressing well in the Management Plan for Gostrey Meadow.

The Mayor had been pleased to be part of the team hosting the Britain in Bloom judges. Farnham was second on the list of the eight towns the judges were visiting, and Farnham's volunteers, as always, did a fantastic job. The judges were very positive in their comments but there was now a wait until October to hear Farnham's result.

The Mayor advised Council that 24th August was the National Day of Ukraine and Farnham's community of visitors from Ukraine was hosting a family afternoon and evening of activities with a focus on Ukrainian cooking.

C32/22 Questions by Members

Although Cllr Edmonds was not present, he had asked the following question: "Why are work group meetings held during the normal working day as this is a barrier to councillor diversity? Such scheduling makes it difficult or even impractical for the employed and perhaps other groups to attend workgroup meetings?"

In response, the Town Clerk advised that the meeting times of Working Groups and Task Groups were determined at the first Working Group/Task Group of the year.

This is set out when Members opt for which groups they wish to serve on during the year. In practice, most members adjusted their diaries to allow for meetings first thing or at the end of the day although it is recognised that this can cause a difficulty for some. In practice there were also challenges in terms of availability of councillors when meetings take place in the evening especially when councillors were representatives on more than one council and also had evening meeting commitments (examples of this were the Overview and Scrutiny or planning meetings at the District Council).

When Councillors on a specific Group had difficulties because of work commitments officers do try to find the optimum time as the aim is that Working/Task Group meetings are arranged at a time that provides the best result for the organisation.

It should be recognised that if all the meetings were held in the evening, then there could well be a staffing impact since staff would be working in excess of their working week without taking compensatory time off during the day. If time was taken off during

the working day, there would inevitable be inefficiencies as the staff members would not be able to progress matters with colleagues or external partners. In addition, when offered a choice of meeting times, partner organisations had more often than not requested a day time meeting because of other conflicts.

C33/22 **Working Group Notes**

C33/1 **Tourism and Events Working Group**

Cllr Mirylees introduced the notes of the Tourism and Events Working Group held on 13th July at Appendix B to the agenda.

She reported that Helen Lewis has been appointed as the new Craft Co-ordinator, and that the Literary Festival arrangements for 2023 were underway. With Sue Keogh continuing as co-ordinator.

Council noted progress made on the 2022 events which had been very successful, including the Jubilee Big Lunch and the Sustainability Festival. It was noted that Farnham Community Farm had requested a mid-June date for 2023 and this had been agreed. The West Street Markets had continued to be popular with both ACVR events and the Ethical Vegan market performing well and requesting additional dates for 2023. This was agreed subject to having one event a month.

Council noted the full programme for the rest of the year and that matched funding for the Snow Windows from Waverley Borough Council was being sought to enable the programme to continue again at a subsidy for participating businesses.

Council noted the progress on the Business Improvement District and the new Business-led committee that had been formed working with consultants MOSAIC.

Cllr Mirylees advised that a request for staff support for the Fringe Festival had been requested, and that whilst a grant had been agreed by Council, there was insufficient capacity to provide further FTC staff support for the event which took place at the busiest time of year but assistance in promoting the need for volunteers would be given.

Council welcomed the report.

C33/2 **Strategy & Finance Working Group**

Cllr Evans introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 26th July at Appendix C to the agenda. The meeting had covered a lot of ground and had a particular focus on the draft response to the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and a paper drafted by Cllr Beaman which was attached at Annex 1 to Appendix C.

- A) Cllr Beaman introduced the recommendations of Strategy & Finance to Council by stating that all councillors shared a united vision to preserve the integrity of Farnham that makes it such a desirable place to live and to improve standards of air quality recognising that “something needs to be done” to resolve the traffic problems that cause congestion in Farnham.

He acknowledged that the ultimate desired objective would be the pedestrianisation of Central Farnham but there were clear differences over the speed at which this end objective could be achieved. If there was an easy solution, it would have been

identified by now and implemented and councillors needed to be realistic about what could be achieved in the short to medium term.

Cllr Beaman said the Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP) represented the first time all 3 tiers of local government in Surrey (SCC, WBC and FTC) had worked together with a single focus of improving traffic flow and creating a more attractive town centre environment with consequential benefits to air quality.

There was a public consultation exercise being undertaken on proposals to improve the town centre and a number of options regarding the A31. As of 4th August there had been 200 public responses to the town centre proposals whilst the options for the A31 which would require significant Central Government funding had 114 public responses. He advised the public consultation period had been extended to 2nd October.

The Strategy & Finance Working Group meeting was attended by many FTC councillors and generated a lively and broadly constructive debate a number of recommendations at Annex I.

It was noted that when the FIP was first established it was hoped that measures could be identified that would result in radical changes being implemented that would allow the long desired pedestrianisation of Farnham Town Centre. Whilst FTC still wishes for this objective to be achieved it is clear that this was now a longer-term aspiration that requires a change in public attitudes and behaviour regarding use of private transport which has wider national and global implications if Climate Change objectives are to be achieved.

Cllr Beaman said it was disappointing that i) the provision of an improved and better bus service necessary to encourage modal shift had been frustrated by the recent Department of Transport's decision not to allocate any funding for the ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plans of both Surrey and Hampshire County Councils; and ii) that the FIP had not yet included any evaluation of the construction of either a Wrecclesham Bypass (given the number of bridge strikes at the Wrecclesham railway bridge) or the Western Relief Road which previous studies had identified as being essential pre-requisites before any pedestrianisation of Central Farnham could be realistically considered.

FTC urges SCC to take advantage of the current consultation by Transport for the South East on its draft 30 year Strategic Investment Plan to actively promote the construction of both these strategic road schemes.

Council went through each of the proposed recommendations in turn:

- 1) 20MPH.
Whilst Council supported the extension of the 20MPH zones across town there was concern about how such a scheme could be enforced noting that other towns had substantial cameras or had been spoilt by additional paint and street furniture. It was noted proposals to extend the zones around schools was already Council policy and that a wider zone could limit street furniture to the gateways of the zones.
This was agreed *nem con*.
- 2) Downing Street.
The recommendation supporting Option A for the permanent widening of footways in Downing Street **was agreed *nem con*** with Cllr Neal abstaining.
- 3) Castle Street.

The Option A proposals for Castle Street that involve narrowing of the road on a permanent basis so long as there is recognition that part of the character and setting of Castle Street is its broad width and that proposals do not inhibit future community events in Castle Street **was agreed by 12 votes to 1** with Cllr Cockburn objecting and Cllr Neal abstaining.

- 4) Materials
The proposal for high quality materials being used **was agreed unanimously**.
- 5) On Street parking surplus
The proposal that the accumulated on-street parking surplus being used to provide the high quality materials **was agreed unanimously** noting that the agreement for the introduction of on-street paid parking was agreed on the basis that monies would be reinvested in Farnham.
- 6) Option B Proposals
Option B proposals to replace the present one way town centre gyratory system with two way traffic flow on most roads **were agreed unanimously** with the proviso that there were concerns over the effect on the character of the town centre Conservation Area of the consequential significant increase in traffic light controlled junctions. In addition FTC requests that alternative methods of traffic calming and controlling traffic flow at road junctions is investigated for implementation.
- 7) It **was agreed** that Option B have the following changes implemented:
 - i) making Downing Street between Waggon Yard car park and Longbridge two-way (agreed unanimously);
 - ii) removal of proposed bus stop on west side of South Street to allow all buses to Farnham Hospital and Aldershot to continue departing from the same stop (**agreed nem con**, Cllr Neale abstaining);
 - iii) making Woolmead Road (one of the widest roads in central Farnham) two-way throughout (**agreed nem con** Cllrs Fraser, MacLeod and Mirylees abstaining).
- 8) Underlining the importance of the Conservation Area, **it was agreed unanimously** that there were no circumstances under which FTC would support the junction of Castle Street with The Borough becoming traffic light controlled.
- 9) It was **agreed nem con** (with Cllr Neale abstaining) that with proposed road narrowing on The Borough, it is essential that any bus stop is located in a pull-in layby to ensure that other traffic can continue to flow freely when buses are stopped to allow passengers to alight and board.
- 10) It was **agreed unanimously** to propose that East Street should have limited access from Threadneedle Street with one-way from East to West for delivery vehicles, buses, bicycles and taxis only.
- 11) There was substantial discussion on the proposal for a Link Road from Castle Street to the Upper Hart Car Park with an aspiration for a longer-term connection to West Street. Council noted its previous request for this option to be included as part of the Option B proposal had been ignored and there had been a last-minute report to the last FIP Board to dismiss this as an option on the grounds of cost but it had been agreed that the decision be deferred for consideration by FTC.

Cllr Ward reminded Council that Surrey CC had often said the Town Council was not clear in its views, and it was time to say what FTC wanted. On a proposal by Cllr Ward, seconded by Cllr Attfield, **it was agreed nem con** (with Cllr Beaman abstaining) that FTC reaffirms its aspiration for construction of a link road between Castle Street and the Upper Hart and its continuation to West Street as an essential element to any measures to provide access and remove town centre improvements.

- 12) Council noted that SCC has not yet been allocated any funds from The Department of Transport to implement its countywide Bus Service Improvement Plan. However FTC i) believes that it is essential that at least the existing level of bus service is maintained and should be significantly improved and enhanced to encourage use of alternate modes of transport; and ii) Seeks confirmation that the proposed electric bus route east-west and north-south will still be progressed. **This was agreed unanimously.**
- 13) With regard to the A31 proposals FTC is concerned that apart from the Firgrove Hybrid Option, which it was recognised would present significant engineering challenges if implemented, none of the proposals would resolve the current problems of connectivity between North and South (A287) which was one of the agreed key objectives. This was agreed unanimously.
- 14) FTC noted the latest Transport for The South East's current consultation on its draft Strategic Investment Plan and seeks support from SCC for both the Wrecclesham Bypass and Western Relief Road to remain on the priority list for investment. **This was agreed unanimously.**
- 15) In light of yet another near fatality at the railway bridge in July 2022 the Wrecclesham Bypass remains a key priority for local people. **This was agreed unanimously.**

Cllr Dunsmore suggested it would be a good time to clarify the Council's position on pedestrianisation and whether it should be permanent or one-off for events etc as was currently the case and which worked successfully. She said there were differing views being proposed in the press and elsewhere.

The Mayor agreed and invited Cllr Neale to make an initial contribution. Cllr Neale said he thought the majority would like to get pedestrianisation in the not-too-distant future and that if FTC did not tackle the question, there was a danger of not doing what the community wanted. It was part of Surrey's adopted Transport Plan to move to less car use and more cycling and walking, yet the FIP project was not converging strategic plans with its proposals for Farnham and Farnham will be left behind other towns. What was being proposed was not what FTC proposed at the beginning nor what was in the Optimised Infrastructure Plan response from FTC and the main objective should be kept and find ways of seeing how the community responds.

Cllr Neale proposed, seconded by Cllr Wicks, to maintain the objective of being a pedestrianised town as soon as practicable with experimental options to more actively engage the community and gauge the level of support for greater pedestrianisation.

Cllr MacLeod said he did not see the demand for pedestrianisation that Cllr Neale says there was, and without alternative routes inadequate roads would be used such as Crondall lane to avoid the area. Modal shift was required to make it work but a lot needed to be done first. Most of the proposals in the Town Council's response would lead to changes in time.

Cllr Evans was concerned about the years of disruption that would be caused by experiments and years of road works. Cllr Fraser said the limited number of closures for events was acceptable but more permanent measures would not be. Cllr Dickson was concerned about shifting the air pollution problem in the town

centre to the Upper Hale Road. Cllr Mirylees liked the idea of experimentation for people to see what it was like and what the impacts were but wondered about mitigation. The need for a Western bypass was talked about but she was concerned that young people who had strong views on pollution and its impact on the planet and may not agree. She felt what was being proposed was the best that could be done at this time.

On being put to a vote, **the motion was LOST by 13 votes to 1 with 1 abstention.**

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the full response be finalised by Cllr Beaman in consultation with the Infrastructure Planning Group for submission to the Farnham Infrastructure Programme Team.

- B) Wrecclesham Bridge Strikes
Council noted the discussion on the latest Wrecclesham Bridge Strike and **RESOLVED unanimously to**
- 1) deplore the latest bridge strike in Wrecclesham
 - 2) support the local community in pressing the need for a Wrecclesham Relief Road before a death occurs especially given the significant amount of development taking place;
 - 3) support the actions being taken by Surrey County Council to implement effective measures to prevent bridge strikes;
 - 4) Seek support again for the case for a relief road from SCC , WBC, the local MPs and Transport for the South East.
- C) Hale Chapels
Council received the draft designs for the Hale Chapels Community Garden noting that consultation in Hale through the Coffee morning and from an online survey was overwhelmingly in favour of Option A and **RESOLVED unanimously that the Graduate Landscapes design of ‘the Folly’ (option A) be worked up into a tender document with a view to commencing a formal tender process.**
- D) Design Statement
Council noted the response from Waverley Borough Council on the draft Design Statement and received suggested comments (attached at annex 3 of the notes of Strategy & Finance) for incorporation. Discussion also took place on the potential of creating a Design Code to update the Neighbourhood Plan and it was **RESOLVED *nem con* that**
- 1) **The comments at Annex 3 be incorporated into the FTC Design Statement and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for adoption;**
 - 2) **Design codes for the designated development sites in the Neighbourhood Plan be incorporated if appropriate, with professional support commissioned where needed;**
 - 3) **Waverley be asked to adopt the Design Statement/Design Code with a view to strengthening the Neighbourhood Plan.**
- E) Ukrainian National Day
Arrangements for supporting the local Ukrainian visitors mark their National Day on 24th August were noted. **It was RESOLVED unanimously that Farnham Town Council works with Homes for Ukraine, Farnham Stands with Ukraine, the Farnham Rotary Clubs, Farnham Hedgehogs and other partners in marking the National Day of Ukraine, with costs met from**

the Community Initiatives budget and a contribution from the Farnham Rotary.

- F) Dempster Trust
The Dempster Trust had written seeking confirmation of a nomination to the Trust by the Council in accordance with the Trust Deed. It was RESOLVED nem con that agreed to recommend the nominee Jackie Cassidy be confirmed.

C34/22 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Fraser introduced the Notes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 4th and 18th July, and 1st August. In these three meetings 188 applications were considered.

Items of particular note were a re-applications for proposed development in Waverley Lane and on a site called Hawthorns which were not in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan and was stoutly resisted; a proposal for a 5G mast outside Sainsburys in South Street that was inappropriately located and alternate locations were suggested; and a scoping option for a significant Amazon distribution depot on 32 acres of agricultural land just off the M3. There was concern about the significant traffic increase if this were to go ahead.

Cllr Fraser advised that in the previous seven meetings there were applications for 464 new homes in Farnham, an average of 64 new houses every two weeks.

Cllr Fraser advised that two pre-application meetings has been held, one in Monkton Lane and one on land East of Farnham Park. Cllr Cockburn reminded Council that the latter was on land designated as a Woodland Cemetery and that in the Neighbourhood Plan it had been proposed as extra SANG.

Cllr Dickson reference the considerable complaints received from residents about the activities of Toob, the fibre broadband provider, about their lack of consultation, poor planning and methods of working.

C35/22 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

The Town Clerk advised that comments on the Waverley Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document had been submitted.

C36/22 Reports from Other Councils

- 1) Cllr Cockburn advised she had met with Waverley officers over the Neighbourhood Plan to discuss the importance of the Neighbourhood Plan and its adopted sites as part of the Development Plan. She remained concerned as evidenced in a recent report on Hawthorns that this was not fully appreciated.
- 2) Cllr Beaman advised Council that two Farnham bus services were up for review (46 and 74) and was concerned about the possible outcome as these were heavily subsidised.
- 3) Cllr MacLeod advised that he had raised the issue of the proposed mast in South Street with highways officers and an objection was anticipated on highway grounds.

C37/22 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Dickson advised that the Farnham Fringe Festival had taken place in July, and was planning for 2023.

C38/22 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday September 15th 2022 at 7pm.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.42 pm

Chairman

Date