



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 15th December, 2022

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor David Attfield
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Carole Cockburn
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Pat Evans
Councillor John "Scotty" Fraser
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Paula Dunsmore and Kika Mirylees.

Officers Present

Iain Lynch, Iain McCready, Lisa Tremeer and Jenny de Quervain.

There were 5 members of the public in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Jane Walker of St Mary's Frensham

C67/22

Apologies

Apologies were received from Dunsmore and Mirylees.

C68/22 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest other than those of the double and triple-hatted councillors.

C69/22 Minutes

The minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 20th October 2022 at Appendix A were agreed.

C70/22 Co-option of a Councillor for the vacant position in the Wrecclesham & Rowledge Ward

The Town Clerk set out the process for co-option and advised, in the interests of fairness, that each candidate would be invited into the chamber when it was their turn to present. Each candidate would then be able to stay and listen to the other presentations if they chose to do so. The order of the presentations was decided by a random draw. After each presentation, the Mayor invited 2 questions from councillors for each candidate.

The order of the candidates was: Mrs Pat Frost, Christopher Storey, Stephen Bennet (unable to attend in person but his application was read out by the Mayor), Mark Westcott, and George Murray.

After each candidate had spoken voting took place by ballot with the candidate receiving the fewest votes eliminated until the successful candidate had a majority of those present and voting.

George Murray was duly elected as Councillor for Wrecclesham and Rowledge, signed his declaration of office, and took his seat for the rest of the meeting.

C71/22 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions or statements from the public.

C72/22 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor expressed his personal sadness of the passing of Cllr Blishen and described him as a well-respected, hard-working colleague and friend who was dedicated to his local community and sent the Council's condolences to his wife Ann and his family.

The Mayor announced there had been various events and activities in Farnham to celebrate Armistice Day, with poignant commemorations including the School's Remembrance event, and the Annual Parade and Service at the War Memorial organised in conjunction with the Farnham Branch of the Royal British Legion and Alder Valley Brass Band. He added how impressed he had been to see so many people and community organisations remembering those who died in the wars.

Farnham had the honour of receiving one of the trees from the Queen's Jubilee celebration outside Buckingham Palace earlier this year. The Lord Lieutenant helped plant it at Space2grow in recognition of the difference they were making for the Farnham community.

The Mayor went on to highlight the successful start of the Christmas Season which included the Christmas Lights Switch-on in Gostrey Meadow, the 10th Civic Christmas Carol Service with the outstanding Farnham Youth Choir, and the Farnham Christmas Market.

The Mayor concluded by thanking councillors for the work they did in their wards and the community organisations who always went the extra mile to support those in need and he wished everyone a happy Christmas.

C73/22 **Questions by Members**

There were no questions from Members.

C74/22 **Working Group and Panel Notes**

i) Community Enhancement held on 16th November 2022.

This meeting did not take place and there were no notes for consideration.

ii) Strategy and Finance held on 8th and 13th December 2022.

- a) Cllr Evans introduced the report of the Strategy and Finance Working Group at Appendix B. The Working Group had considered the 2023-24 budget, which was set out in a detailed report at Appendix E to the Full Council agenda.
- b) Cllr Cockburn commented that the Neighbourhood Plan had been discussed at Strategy and Finance and at the Strategy Day. In terms of the budget, she hoped that any review or work on the Neighbourhood Plan would be considered without expenses, as the plan was out of date.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he and Rachel Aves had a very positive meeting with place with officers from Waverley. It was confirmed that Waverley was taking legal advice on a review of the Plan engaging paragraph 14 of the NPPF. Local Plan Part 2 was expected to be adopted in March, but the Waverley Executive were considering whether to do a review of Local Plan Part 1. Cllr Cockburn advised that whilst it had to consider the review it did not have to change it, and if it did the Neighbourhood Plan would be out of date and Farnham would have to start again.

It was noted consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan review had already started with Statutory stakeholders and would continue once it was clear what the best direction to was to bring back the five-year protection. It was noted the NPPF proposed changes could be beneficial.

It was agreed that the Secretary of State be requested to 'recover' the recent Hawthorn's appeal given the haste with which the Inquiry took place and the anticipated NPPF changes.

- c) It was noted that Landform Limited had been granted the contract for the renovation of the Hale Chapels at a cost of £164,473 further to Council delegating the decision to the Town Clerk in October. The Strategy & Finance Working Group had endorsed the decision who had considerable experience in award-winning heritage and landscaping projects. It was hoped the result would be an award-winning garden for which the community would be proud.

It was AGREED *nem con* that:

- I. The position regarding options to review and update the Neighbourhood Plan be noted;**

2. **A formal request for the Secretary of State to recover the Hawthorns appeal in light of the anticipated changes to the NPPF be made; and**
3. **The Hale Chapels Community Garden Project work be completed and managed by Landform at a cost of £164,773.**

d) Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman was thanked for his draft report summarising the papers for the Farnham Infrastructure Programme Board Meeting being held on 16th December. And for all the work he had been doing. Cllr Beaman confirmed that a list of recommendations set out at Appendix Bi to the Council Agenda and proposed amendments had been completed and put forward to Surrey County Council in draft for the Board meeting as a collective view of FTC.

Cllr Beaman advised that the Board papers included a further paper on the Hart Link Road that was again emphasising negative points in a contradictory way and recommending its removal from the programme.

The Working Group had proposed to Council “That the Farnham Infrastructure Programme maintains the provision of the link road, to provide access for the residents and visitors from North Farnham to the Hart and The University of Creative Arts as an essential part of successful town centre improvements and minimise traffic moving around the town centre. The potential opportunity to extend this link road to West Street at a future point should be retained.”

In discussion, councillors argued that Council should press more strongly for the Link Road. It was felt the cost for delivering and objective, which would have lasting benefits was relatively small in the cost of the overall improvements for the town centre, would reduce a large percentage of through traffic using the current gyratory system. The Link Road would provide access for residents and visitors from North Farnham to the Hart and The University for the Creative Arts as well as West Street, as an essential part of the successful town centre improvements and minimising traffic moving around the town centre. The potential opportunity to extend this link road to West Street as a future point (if not done immediately) should be incorporated within the Farnham Infrastructure Programme.

It was RESOLVED by 10 votes to NIL with four abstentions that Farnham Town Council strongly supports the construction of a road between Castle Gate and West Street as way of ameliorating traffic through the Borough, before the Borough is narrowed.

Cllr Neale made statement regarding the town centre proposals. While he applauded the efforts made in the proposed response, and agreed with certain elements, he wanted to record that he remained unsupportive of the broad position of the council. He did not feel it was possible to meet all the aspirations due to the limited road space and felt it was not possible to meet the needs of the pedestrians, cars, cycles and buses. He felt council should be focussed on the wider parameters for this project in terms of the type of town centre required for the future and how would that deliver for the community in terms of access, community space, health and wellbeing, climate change and pollution. The highways authority should provide the road traffic management solutions; the planning authority should exercise its planning mandate to provide a better, safer community space with no air pollution. Cllr Neale requested council to insist that Farnham follows the path of other successful towns and cities by building a pedestrian zone that would attract more people into the centre and enable the town to regenerate the conservation area.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the response to the FIP Consultation report on the Town Centre at Annex I to Appendix Bi be agreed

e) Strategy Day Notes and new Council Structure

Councillors considered the report at Appendix C on the Strategy Day held on 5th November 2022 with recommendations for the governance of the Council from May 2023 to reflect the anticipated reduction in councillors from 18 to 16. It was proposed that the revised Vision Statement be “Farnham Town Council strives to be the influential and effective voice for Farnham bringing together the views of all organisations working for the good of the town and enhancing the well-being of all the community.

Farnham Town Council aims to be an efficient and effective organisation providing high-quality, sustainable services and facilities for the residents and businesses of Farnham whilst addressing the climate challenge, with a strong and respected voice representing Farnham’s best interests”.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1. The revised Council Vision be adopted;**
- 2. The achievements of the administration from 2019-2023 be welcomed;**
- 3. The areas focus for the forthcoming period be progressed; and**
- 4. The new governance structure at Appendix I be implemented.**

f) HR Panel

The HR Panel report was attached at Appendix D to the agenda. The Panel had noted the NJC Pay Award had been issued for 2022-23, backdated to April 2022 which had been implemented as a contractual entitlement after consideration by the HR Panel. The Panel recommended that in future the application of the pay award be delegated to the Town Clerk once Members had been informed to avoid an unnecessary delay in payment to staff.

The Panel had considered a proposal to reward staff for a further exceptional year’s activities with the achievement of the National Gold Medal at Britain in Bloom given the unusually difficult weather conditions, and the considerable extra effort undertaken to a high standard by all staff which included the work around the death of the Monarch, the proclamation and the vigil.

The Panel agreed to recommend that a deputising payment be considered for the designated member of staff after 8 working days absence of the Town Clerk.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- i) Future National Pay Awards should be implemented under the Town Clerk’s scheme of delegation once members had been informed;**
- ii) an additional day’s leave be awarded to all staff involved in the 2023 achievements which could be taken between Christmas and the New Year; and**
- iii) a deputising payment be agreed to come into effect after a minimum of eight working days absence of the Town Clerk.**

g) Cemeteries and Appeals verbal update:

Cllr Cockburn updated members on the presence of the memorial tree in West Street for community members to leave messages for their loved ones at Christmas time.

h) Tourism and Events verbal update:

Cllr Martin thanked everyone involved for all the hard work involved in producing the successful snow window trail and Christmas market.

C75/22 Budget 2023-24

Cllr Evans introduced the 2023/24 budget report at Appendix E. She advised Council that this had been a very thorough consideration lasting over two hours. It was noted that the priorities as discussed at the Strategy Day had been reflected in the budget.

Cllr Ward raised a query in relation to an increase in staffing and agency costs and it was agreed that the Town Clerk would clarify the detail and follow this up after the meeting.

Council noted the significant pressures on the budget with inflation running at a 40 year high (11.1% RPI in October and 14.2% CPI) and not expected to get back to the Bank of England target rate for two years. It was noted that this was a cautious budget and a number of areas such as energy costs were very uncertain, but it was clear price inflation was significant.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* to set the 2023-24 budget at £1,643,750.

C76/22 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Fraser advised that the Planning and Licensing Consultative Group had met four times, on 31st October, 14th and 28th November, and 12th December. The minutes of the meetings were noted, and Cllr Fraser drew attention to a number of specific points highlighting there had been 115 applications in total, and that the 56 new homes proposed for Bindon House had been recommended for refusal as not in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan. The decision by Waverley to demolish 17 Frensham Road, built without Planning Permission, was welcomed.

Cllr Cockburn advised that the appeal for Waverley Lane was coming up and said that it was important that the Secretary of State be asked to recover the Hawthorns appeal.

C77/22 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no actions to report other than those noted elsewhere in the minutes.

C78/22 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr MacLeod advised that Surrey County Council was reducing the Your Fund Surrey capital sum from £100m to £60m.

He also advised that there was a lot of work on Climate Change being progressed which was to be welcomed.

C79/22 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

- i) Cllr Cockburn gave an update from the Farnham Sports Council. She said that following the success of the Loneliness Project, Mental Health in Sport was being launched, to get people back into sports.
- ii) Cllr Dickson said that the Fringe Festival committee had been able to recruit enough team members and there would not be a festival in the coming year due to the current economic climate.
- iii) Cllr Ward gave an update on the vandalised Farnham in Bloom ceramic plaque in need of repair. He advised that he has contacted the Repair Shop but thought it was unlikely they would be able to assist and was pursuing other options.

C80/22 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date for next council meeting was agreed as Thursday 26th January 2023.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.36 pm

Chairman

Date