



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 27th April, 2023

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor Michaela Wicks (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor David Attfield
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Paula Dunsmore
Councillor Pat Evans
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor George Murray
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Cllrs Carole Cockburn, Sally Dickson and John "Scotty" Fraser

Officers Present: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Lisa Tremeer

There were three members of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by the Revd Alan Crawley of the Parish of Badshot Lea and Hale.

C109/22 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Cockburn, Dickson and Fraser.

C110/22 Disclosures of Interest

Cllr Merryweather and Cllr Mirylees declared a disclosable interest as portfolio holders for Waverley Borough Council in relation to the Farnham Museum discussion.

C111/22 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th March were agreed.

C112/22 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the 2019-2023 administration.

He congratulated Millie Sobey Farnham's Events Apprentice who had just won Apprentice of the Year in the Great British Business and Community Awards. This was an amazing achievement beating over 70 other nominations. He added his congratulations to Oliver Cluskey who had been her mentor, and other staff colleagues who had supported her.

C113/22 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

Mr Graham White made observations on the ridiculous traffic situation in town as a result of the closure of West Street. He described a short journey he had just taken which had been an additional journey time of 1 hour 15 minutes because of traffic congestion. In his view, the water works should be suspended immediately until there was a proper plan to manage the traffic implications.

Cllr Beaman thanked Mr White and advised him that he had lost patience with South East Water. He had asked them three critical questions – whether they appreciated and acknowledged the significant economic consequences of their work; whether they would be paying compensation; and what was to stop them doing one lane working with traffic lights. Cllr Beaman was awaiting a response.

C114/22 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by members.

C115/22 **Working Group Notes**

Cllr Evans introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 18th April 2023 at Appendix B to the Agenda advising that the end of Year Finance papers would be taken under a separate agenda item.

- i) Cllr Evans reported that the Working Group had reviewed the list of Direct Debits and Standing Orders that would be applicable in the year ahead and there had been some grant applications considered.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- 1) The Standing Orders and Direct Debits for 2023/24 be noted;**
 - 2) The Farnham Ukrainian Weekend Club be supported with funds for equipment and materials from donations received;**
 - 3) The Council's policy of supporting locally-based charities be re-affirmed but that an opportunity for a fundraising/profile raising event for the Air Ambulance Charity be encouraged.**
- ii) The Working Group recommended that a new door into the kitchen at Wrecclisham Community Centre to improve safeguarding be agreed.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Landlord's Consent to the request for a new internal door to the kitchen at Wreclesham Community Centre be approved.

- iii) Cllr Evans provided an update on contracts and assets matters and Council noted that the Hale Chapels Garden was almost complete. Council considered the delegated decision to finish the scheme on a recommendation from the Cemeteries & Appeals Working Group members with some mature trees and shrubs. The project was one for which the Council can be rightly proud, and an opening was provisionally scheduled for June.

Council also received details of a proposal to add another polytunnel on the allotments (reserved cemetery land) adjacent to the Nursery pending a further report on reconfiguring the Nursery.

Council noted that a tender had been undertaken for the Council's Insurances with Zurich, BHIB and Gallaghers being invited to bid. A three year deal with the potential to extend was being recommended.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1) The progress on the Hale Chapels' Garden be welcomed;**
- 2) the decision to vary the planting scheme with additional shrubs and trees at an additional cost of up to £5,000 be endorsed.**
- 3) a new polytunnel and equipment be purchased with the estimated cost of £10,000 to be met from the insurance earmarked reserve.**
- 4) A new three year agreement (with the potential to extend this to five years) for the Council's Insurances be entered into with Zurich up to a cost of £12,500.**

- iv) Cllr Evans advised that the Terms of Reference for Working Groups and Panels at Annex I had been reviewed and were recommended for adoption.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the Working Group Terms of Reference be approved.

- v) Council received an update from the Infrastructure Planning Group, the Conservation Areas Task Group (CATG), and the Riverside Sculpture Task Group. Following an proposal by Cllr Beaman to strengthen the recommendation, seconded by Cllr Hesse, Council expressed great concern that the Farnham Design Statement submitted to Waverley some 15 months ago was still not agreed despite the Council's suggested changes being included as requested. It was agreed that Waverley should be advised of the extreme concern and requested to deal with the matter without further delay. Council noted the progress of the Yards of Farnham project and the repair of the Farnham Flame. Council also received details of a complaint by residents of Hawthorn Lodge about the new public art by Longbridge and the Riverside, funded by Section 106 funding from the UCA development. It was noted the residents had made a complaint to Planning Enforcement whose consideration was awaited. Councillors expressed surprise that the residents were seemingly unaware of the project which had a lot of public engagement and felt it important that the claim about this being public money should be corrected.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Farnham Town Council express its deep concern and further request that Waverley Borough Council adopt the Farnham Design Statement as a minimum as a Material Planning Consideration pending work on the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.

- vi) Cllr Beaman gave an update of the work of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme, and Councillors acknowledge the detailed response he had sent following the last council. There was a debate on the ongoing position of the planters in Downing Street which were considered by some to be adding to the congestion caused by the closure of West Street.

Some Councillors felt the gridlock would have been just the same if there had been no planters, and the planters were still much better for pedestrians (noting the CCTV showed how much people stepped off the pavement) and had stopped at least two crashes into shops because they had taken the impact. Cllr MacLeod advised this was a matter for Surrey County Council to deal with particularly if there was an issue for emergency vehicles. Cllr Hesse thanked Cllr MacLeod for taking this up with Surrey and asked him to urge Surrey to get improvements on the ground sooner than later.

- vii) Cllr Evans advised that Mr Michael Stephens had been appointed as Farnham Town Crier.

Cllr Mirylees gave an update on the work of Tourism and Events and the planned programme for Coronation weekend. She also reminded Councillors of the Walking Festival programme and other events including Music In the Meadow and the sustainability Festival.

Council noted the launch of In Bloom and that the Green Flag judging would be taking place in May for Gostrey Meadow, and the West Street and Badshot Lea Cemeteries.

The Mayor proposed a vote of thanks (to a round of applause) for all staff, councillors and volunteers who had contributed to the success of the town council's activities.

C116/22 Approval of End of Year Accounts 2022-23

Cllr Evans introduced the report on the end of year accounts at Appendix C. She advised that there had been a long and thorough discussion on the detail at Strategy & Finance which was set out in the report.

Cllr Evans said that 2022-23 was a fairly unique year given the capital projects that took place (completion of the refurbishment of the Central Car Park Public Conveniences, the completion of the restoration of the listed West Street cemetery gates, the commissioning of the public art work at Longbridge with Section 106 funding from the UCA developments, and the undertaking of the conversion of the Hale Cemetery Chapels into a Community Garden. The celebration of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, followed by her death and the proclamation of His Majesty King Charles III, and the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Edward, gave an exceptional Royal flavour to civic and community events. In addition, the international situation with the War in Ukraine and post Brexit issues leading to rising energy prices, high inflation and supply-chain issues has led to significant cost uncertainties in managing the Council finances.

Despite this, Council made a prudent approach to the 2023-24 precept bearing in mind the pressures on the community and made a small increase in its share of the Council Tax which is expected to again be below the sector average for the 11th successive year and the financial outcome has been positive.

Cllr Evans reported that the overall income position was £1,914,697 (against a prudent budget of £1,474,800) whilst expenditure was £1,816,684 (against a budget of £1,474,800). This had resulted in a surplus of income over expenditure of £98,013. However, this was not a straight surplus with some £290,322 required to be transferred to earmarked reserves

(as budgeted or ringfenced) and there was £191,850 of reserves designated for capital projects undertaken during the year used as expected.

Council reviewed the following documents

The 2022/23 Income and Expenditure Outturn at Appendix D; the Bank Reconciliation and Balances at 31st March at Appendix E; the final Internal Auditor's Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 at Appendix F; the Report and Financial Statements for 2022/23 and earmarked reserves at 31st March 2023 at Appendix G; the variances list between 2021/22 and 2022/23 Annual Returns at Appendix H; the Annual Governance Statement (Section I of Annual Governance and Accountability Return at Appendix I.

Council welcomed the report of the Independent Internal Auditor and agreed all the points within it. The movement in earmarked reserves following the capital projects undertaken during the year and new requirements (including some provision for the update of the Neighbourhood Plan, and provision for improving the visitor experience at Farnham Museum following the improvements being carried out.) were agreed.

Council agreed to approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2023 for signature and submission for External Audit, and thanked the Town Clerk, the Bookkeeper and Accountant for the work done.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the:

- 1) report at Appendix B be adopted;**
- 2) 2022-23 Outturn at the end of an exceptional year be welcomed;**
- 3) the Annual Governance Statement (Section I of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, page 4) be approved;**
- 4) Internal Auditor's report be welcomed and the recommendations agreed;**
- 5) updated Asset Register be approved;**
- 6) Report and Financial Statements for 2022-23 be adopted for signature;**
- 7) variances list for the Annual Return be agreed;**
- 8) General and Earmarked Reserves be agreed with the addition of the Pledge for £10,000 for Farnham Museum to improve the visitor experience to be met from the CIL Earmarked Reserve;**
- 9) Annual Governance and Accountability Return and associated papers be approved for signature and submission to the External Auditor.**
- 10) Period for the Exercise of Public Rights be from 12th June to 21st July.**

C117/22 Planning and Licensing Applications

Council received the minutes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 20th March, 3rd and 17th April 2023 at Appendices J, K, and L noting that they had been busy meetings. It was hoped the new Council would pick up where the retiring Council had left off to protect Farnham in the best way it could. Applications in the meantime would be forwarded to Waverley under the scheme of delegation in consultation with councillors who were re-elected.

The Mayor thanked (to applause) Jenny de Quervain for her diligent work in support of the Planning & Licensing Working group.

C118/22 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no additional actions to report.

C119/22 **Reports from Other Councils**

- 1) Cllr Martin reported that a scoping scheme to upgrade Bourne Crossroads was the only scheme in Waverley to get support. Hopefully a signal controlled crossing would be installed within a year.
- 2) Cllr Martin reported that the proposed closure of Park Row to repair damage to the Alms Houses caused by an HGV had been deferred to avoid further problems with the West Street closure extended. Coullors hoped the Alms Houses would be able to seek compensation from South East Water for the inconvenience. Cllr Martin advised that a meeting was being organised with South East Water to discuss comepnasation for businesses affected by the closure.

C120/22 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

Cllr Beaman reported of the closure of Aldershot Bus Station in May which came with some timetable revisions. There was an improved bus service to Sandy Hill which was to be welcomed and the introcuction of new Sunday bus services.

C121/22 **Date of Next Meeting**

The Mayor announced that the initial dates in the new Council year were as follows:

- 11 May 2023 – New Council Inductions
- 18 May 2023 – Annual Meeting of Council (and Election of Mayor)
- 25 May 2023 – Election of Working Groups

C122/22 **Concluding Comments from the Mayor**

The Mayor closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their contribution over the past four years, Councillors, staff and Farnham's wonderful volunteers. He paid particular thanks to councillors who had decided to stand down from Farnham Town Council at this election, many from significant service to our local community including Cllrs Attfield, Dunsmore, Evans, Fraser, MacLeod, Neale, and Wicks.

No one knew what the electorate would decide, but he wished all candidate every success in the forthcoming election.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.56 pm

Chairman

Date