



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 14th March, 2024

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Brodie Mauluka
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor George Murray
Councillor John Ward
Councillor Graham White
Councillor Tim Woodhouse

Officers Present:

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

There were 2 members of the public and no members of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were said by Pastor Michael Hall of the Wey Church. The Mayor handed over to the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Brodie Mauluka to chair the meeting.

C106/23 Apologies

All councillors were present.

C107/23 Disclosures of Interest

The Town Clerk advised that he was a former Director of and saver with Boom Community Bank.

Cllr Fairclough, Cllr Merryweather and Cllr Mirylees declared interests as Executive members at Waverley Borough Council.

Cllr Ward declared an interest as his wife was a Trustee of Abbeyfield Housing Association and left the Chamber for items 5.4 and 5.5 of Appendix C.

C108/23 Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25th January 2024 were approved for signature.

C109/23 Questions and Statements by the Public

Goodman asked the following statement:

“Farnham town council has been at the heart of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme ever since the pollution summit five years ago. One of the key objectives of the programme was to reduce the illegal air pollution levels in central Farnham. I would be grateful if you could tell me how the proposed build works costing more than £10m that will be starting later this year are going to reduce air pollution levels in the town centre”.

In response, Cllr Beaman advised that there would be a discussion on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme later in the agenda and that if all the measures were implemented, it should improve the environment significantly.

C110/23 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor recorded with sadness the passing of Roger Steele. He was a hardworking servant of Farnham who served as a councillor on both Waverley and Farnham making a valuable contribution in many areas including the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan and the Farnham Building Preservation Trust.

The Mayor congratulated everyone involved in the Farnham Literary Festival this year. He drew attention to the particular contributions of Cllr Kika Mirylees, Oliver Cluskey and Sue Keogh for shaping and delivering of the Festival ably supported by colleagues and a huge team of volunteers.

The Mayor had been privileged to attend the spectacular 40th anniversary concert and celebration of the Farnham Youth Choir in Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Square with attendees from the whole lifespan of the choir. It was a clear demonstration of why Farnham Youth Choir was going to World Choir Games.

The Mayor highlighted the incredible performance of Farnham Town Football club this year and the fact that they now hold the record for the longest run of consecutive wins, 25, by any team in the English football leagues.

The Mayor announced that Fiona Byrne, the first Artist in Residence, funded by the Farnham South Street Trust, had been incredibly busy and was holding an informal Open Studio. Her finished commission would be the first piece in a collection of the work of World Craft Town Artists in Residence over the next five years.

The Mayor advised that the RNLI Farnham branch were holding a celebration of the 200th year of the RNLI. It was he said an amazing volunteer organisation giving their time to save the lives of others.

Finally, the Mayor invited all electors to attend the annual Town Meeting of electors taking place in the Bush Hotel on Monday 22nd April at 6.30pm.

The Deputy Mayor added that he had been able to represent the Mayor at the Farnham's Got Talent event which was excellent.

C111/23 Questions by Members

Councillor George Hesse had submitted the following question concerning vehicles continuing to speed through the Town Centre's 20mph Zone and the risk to the safety of pedestrians. "Would colleagues support making an official request to Surrey County Council for the installation of the following crossings and a safety improvement:-

1. Reinforcing the need for the previously approved Longbridge Crossing which could be a Belisha Beacon with a speed calming raised table;
2. A new shrouded Belisha Beacon crossing on West Street between Mead Lane and Potters Gate, incorporating a speed calming raised table.
3. A proposal to have incorporated into the Major Road Network stage of the Farnham Infrastructure Program, the installation of a new shrouded Belisha Beacon crossing between the traffic island on the North side of Farnham Station to the opposite kerb, adjacent to the bus shelter, incorporating a speed calming raised table (subject to any complete re-design of the area).
4. Old Park Lane. A new pedestrian crossing at the informal crossing point between Old Park Lane and the Farnham Castle side of the A287 which is dangerous. This was raised as part of the initial FIP consultation.

In response, Cllr White said that the question would be considered by the next meeting of the Infrastructure Planning Group and advised that the question raised questions of pedestrian safety at other locations in Farnham which other members may wish to raise for their own wards. Sites not already earmarked could be included for the Waverley review of the Infrastructure Development Plan.

C112/23 Working Group Notes

I Environment Working Group

- a) Cllr Brown introduced the Notes of the Environment Working Group held on 28th February. He said the meeting had started with an amazing presentation by Alister Young of the volunteer Water Rangers who test water quality in and around Farnham. It had been eye-opening disturbing and optimistic.

The group had proposed catching water from FTC buildings and encouraging others to do the same to help with watering town centre floral displays.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that

- i) **Water butts and irrigation systems be sourced to help with the watering of the seasonal floral displays and businesses and residents be encouraged to adopt the same approach;**
 - ii) **Water testing kits be purchased for schools (3 sets) and individual volunteers (6 sets) at a cost of £1,500 from the 2023-24 Community Initiatives budget.**
- b) Council noted the training that had taken place for councillors and staff on the new biodiversity legislation and received an update on the allotment liaison meeting and dates for the year ahead.
 - c) Cllr Brown advised that the Allotments Liaison Group meeting had been very good and the group had accepted the rent increase from October 2024 and also agreed that the insurance policy was required.
 - d) Cllr Brown provided an update on works taking place on parks and open spaces and Council noted the top up graffiti programme that continued. He said that the Green flag entries had been submitted and judging was awaited.
 - e) The proposed dates for the installation of names of the Notable Names of Farnham wall were agreed and

It was RESOLVED unanimously that Alan Mitchell, (1922-1995) Internationally acclaimed Tree expert and Dendrologist be included on the Notable Names of Farnham wall.

- f) Council received the dates for Farnham in Bloom 2024 and welcomed the nomination of Farnham as a Finalist in the town and city centre category of RHS Britain in Bloom. Council noted that former councillor Pat Evans had been elected as chair of the FIB Community Group.
- g) Council noted the latest position with the cemeteries service which was working smoothly.

Cllr Dickson thanked the outside workforce team for the removal of graffiti in north Farnham, although noted that those doing it would come back.

2 Strategy & Resources Working Group

Cllr White introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Resources Working Group held on 5th March at Appendix C to the agenda. He advised that the potential end of year financial outturn had been considered noting that income was above budget and expenditure was running slightly under budget and that not all commitments may be implemented in the current year. In response to a question by Cllr Beaman, the Town Clerk advised that the small write off had been processed in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Council noted there would be an adjustment to the allotments income for those who had terminated their sites late.

- i) Cllr White reported that the Working Group had considered a proposal from Boom Community Bank to support the launch of a no-interest or low interest loan scheme to help those facing hardship and avoid the need for people to take out loans from loan sharks at exorbitant rates of interest. Council noted one of the benefits of the Boom Community Bank was its financial literacy education programme and its requirement for borrowers to become savers to help create financial resilience. The Working Group recommending supporting a pilot No Interest Loan Scheme for Farnham residents as it would help with the ongoing financial crisis and supplement the work done by the Farnham Support Fund with its hardship grants and fuel poverty payments. The contribution, effectively a grant would be governed by a formal agreement. The Working group also recommended that Farnham Town Council opened a savings account with Boom Community Bank with an initial deposit of £15k.

Cllr Dickson expressed reservations about the proposals and asked for confirmation, which was given, that the Community Bank was regulated by the FCA. She did not support the idea of a loans scheme and was concerned that the deposit investment was too high a risk for taxpayers' money. Cllr Mirylees and other councillors who had been part of the Strategy & Resources discussion advised that it was a unanimous recommendation from the Working Group who felt it was a very good scheme as it help some of the poorest in the community with a no-interest loan but also helped educate people on financial matters. Cllr Merryweather agreed and advised that Boom was a not-for-profit bank and deposits were covered by the financial compensation scheme (although Council noted this did not apply to the town Council as it invested more than £500k annually).

It was RESOLVED, with 15 votes in favour and one against, that Farnham Town Council:

- 1) Opens a savings account with Boom Community Bank with an initial deposit of £15,000;**
- 2) Supports the creation of a No-Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) for Farnham with a contribution of £15,000 for the pilot; and**

3) Authorises the Town Clerk to finalise the parameters of the NILS project in Farnham with Boom Community Bank.

- ii) Council noted that a review of banking arrangements was taking place and a further report would go to Strategy & Resources.
- iii) Cllr White outlined progress on a number of contract and assets issues set out in the Notes of the meeting including 2023-24 pathway improvements advising that quotation prices had increased significantly from the previous year. A further price was awaited.

It was RESOLVED *unanimously* that the works in Gostrey Meadow progress subject to a maximum cost of £16,950 and that the tender be let to the most economically advantageous tender.

- a) Council noted that there had been further discussions with Surrey CC and Waverley Hoppa for an electric charging point at the Council offices (with all costs funded by Surrey) to charge two vehicles overnight and one during the day.

It was RESOLVED *unanimously* that the installation of charging points suitable for charging the Hoppa Connect vehicles overnight be agreed subject to a contract and costs payable by Surrey CC.

- b) Council noted that the renewal of the insurance had increased significantly to c£20,000 and officers were in discussion with Zurich on adapting the long-term agreement.

Cllr Ward left the Chamber at this point.

- c) Cllr White reported that a request by the Abbeyfield Wey Valley Society for the lease of a piece of land at Farnham Riverside had been consider (papers at Appendix G to the Working Group agenda). Officers had visited Wey Valley House regarding the proposed extension of its garden following some redevelopment works. Iain McCready advised that the piece of land to the North East (Area A coloured blue) would not interfere with plans for the area (subject to a final measuring of the extended request and there being no access from the FTC land) but the land requested adjacent to the river (Areas B and C) could cause problems for the Walk and Stride widening which had been agreed for the Brightwells Yard Scheme. He also advised that some temporary repairs to the path were being implemented pending the park and stride work on the footpath widening.

Cllr Fairclough proposed, seconded by Cllr Merryweather, that the first area should be leased but that the other areas should be deferred for further consideration.

It was RESOLVED *unanimously* that:

- 1) Officers pursue a lease for a rectangular piece of land to the North East, to be coterminous with the Abbeyfield lease from Waverley for Wey Valley House (believed to be 85 years);**
- 2) The additional land request be deferred.**

- d) Cllr White reported that the Working Group discussed the general issue of registering unadopted land that had an amenity value for the local community. This had arisen as a result of the improvements required to the access to the allotments at Six Bells, and the plans by Abbeyfield Wey Valley to register a piece of land by

Farham Riverside which was being cleared by them to create a car park. Cllr White advised FTC had taken on the land along Farnham Riverside to improve it as an attractive green space and improve the biodiversity. It had initially been considered it might also include the piece of land in question, with a historic footpath over it, but ownerships in this area were complex. At the Working Group some councillors wondered if a compromise might be available for a smaller footprint to be made available with the land retained for biodiversity whilst others thought that a car park was unnecessary as the Care home was next to a large public car park. Cllr Dickson, supported by Cllr Murray felt that the loss of this very diverse area was a really bad idea. Cllr Merryweather advised there was plenty of car parking in the Riverside Car Park and this should be used rather than tarmacking a piece of countryside whilst Cllr Fairclough suggested officers at Waverley may be able to help with obtaining permits.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that Farnham Town Council:

- 1) Reviews unregistered public amenity land that has community or environmental benefits and registers appropriate sites to be retained in public ownership.**
- 2) Objects to the loss of the green corridor next to Farnham Riverside and seeks to register the land for public ownership.**

Cllr Ward returned at this point.

iv) Farnham Infrastructure Programme.

Cllr Beaman reported on the FIP discussion at the Working group and advised that the clock was ticking. Work at Water Lane had started and there was a mapping of utilities in the town centre. He advised that the next FIP Board meeting was taking place on 22nd March, and the papers had already been circulated. He advised that the example paving had been delivered to the Town Hall for members to review at the next Infrastructure Planning Group.

v) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Martin updated Council on the current position with the Local Plan and neighbourhood Plan. Waverley had held a briefing for town and Parish Councils on 15th March, and the next Infrastructure Planning Group meeting would be on 26th March. Council noted FTC had commissioned some mapping layers for the Urban Capacity Study; and the Planning advisor to progress several tasks to the end of March.

vi) Younger People Task Group

Cllr White advised that SLA meetings for the new activities were being held in week commencing 25th March. In particular, clarification on who would provide the services in Wrecclesham would be determined. Council agreed the monies between Hale and Wrecclesham would be broadly split equally and the other allocations would be as per Council decisions in January now the issues around 40 Degreez delivery had been settled. Cllr White said the expectation was the primary deliverers in the first year would be 40 Degreez and Hale with discussion required for the provision in Wrecclesham, whether club based or outreach.

Cllr Murray asked about the timeline for decision making. After discussion about whether the decision needed to go back to full Council, it was agreed that giving clarity to funded organisations as soon as practicable was important and the decisions following the SLA discussions would be under scheme of delegation to Town Clerk, advised by the Younger People's Task Group, to which all councillors would be invited to participate. In response to a question about experience of the panel making the decision, the Mayor advised he had thirty years experience including

as a Trustee of the YMCA and the Deputy Mayor had a long career as a senior youth worker in Hampshire.

vii) **Consultations**

a) **Waverley Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan.**

Cllr White introduced the comments of Strategy & Resources, noting disappointment that the town and parish councils had not been involved earlier in the process but welcoming the approach of the documents. In particular, the emphasis on the creative sector was good for Farnham with the World Craft Town designation and the importance of the University for the Creative Arts was welcomed since it is the largest entity in the Borough. The proposal for 'Maker spaces' centred around Farnham, with a focus on activating underutilised public assets and retail units to create a new network of workshops and makerspaces that encourage creative entrepreneurialism and attract inward investment fits with FTC agreed priorities.

The review of Council-owned assets to be used to 'provide low cost business space' was supported as it would strengthen the World Craft Town programme and incubator spaces for UCA graduates. 'Low-cost' was important as traditional makers could not afford to rent space in Farnham.

In addition to supporting traditional craft maker spaces, the strategy identified the need to tap into the digital world by creating a new 'video Games incubator Centre' and supports the move to digital and media that UCA have made. Council noted Waverley would need to understand the reasons why the digital gaming centre in Aldershot did not go ahead.

In terms of gaps, there should be more on events and the visitor economy. WBC has a fantastic asset in Farnham Park that could and should be used for larger for Events/Festivals. There were also opportunities to use SCC assets such as Brightwells Yard and the Library as economic drivers with, potentially, a creative hub – including incubator space alongside maker spaces, café and an expanded 'National craft Museum' (with the craft study centre involved).

Council noted there was an opportunity lost in the documents as much of the resource indicated seems to be only 'officer time'. There is concern with staffing reductions and other pressures that this may limit the potential achievements in the action plan.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that Farnham Town Council agrees the comments and welcomes the new strategy & action plan.

i)

b) **Waverley Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)**

Council noted an initial comment had been sent to Waverley suggesting FTC land where there were incidents of drugs and anti-social behaviour be added. In response, officers had been advised that this was only an extension to the existing PSPO, and town and parish council and other land would be considered later in the year.

3) **HR Panel**

Cllr Ward, Chair of the HR Panel outlined matters set out at Appendix D. Two Appeal/Grievance panels had been appointed comprising Cllrs Mirylees, Ward and Woodhouse, and Cllrs Brown Jackman and White. It was hoped these would not be required to meet.

The Panel had received the latest staffing structure and gradings for all staff and an update of the Staff handbook and noted that the grading review was about to be undertaken with the expectation that there would be some movement for some staff as job roles had changed since the previous review in 2018.

Council noted and agreed the new hours for the offices to be open to the public for in person visits which would be from 10am to 4.30pm daily to allow for staff meetings and training, with telephone enquiries and electronic communications dealt with from 9am.

Council noted the outside workforce hours were returning to standardised hours and that the HR Panel had agreed some specific matters relating to individual staff contracts and been briefed on vacancy recruitment.

C113/23 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Laughton introduced the minutes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 5th and 19th of February, and 4th March at Appendices E, F and G to the agenda.

The first meeting had a presentation from Villages against Warehouses against an 80 acres industrial park at the M3/A287 interchange. FTC support the concerns over the lack of infrastructure and location.

An application for 6 dwellings in Frensham Vale requiring 200 trees to be removed was objected to as it was out of character and not in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Consultative Group received a presentation on initial ideas for developing the former South Street Club/Liberal Club designed by Lutyens.

Concern was expressed over the Holt Pound outline plan. Initially 19 homes were assessed as being appropriate but now a scheme with 50 had been promoted. It was felt this was too much for the local area.

Cllr Laughton reported that the proposed cemetery in Farnborough Road had been turned down by Waverley Planning Committee on grounds of high traffic flow at a pinch point and that it was out of character for the area and contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Council noted that a public consultation was being held for the proposed Hawthorns development of 65 homes and a presentation would be made to the Town Council.

C114/23 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no additional items to report.

C115/23 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr Martin reported that Frimley Park hospital was due for rebuilding by 2030 and Surrey were reviewing the best site option.

C116/23 Reports from Outside Bodies

There were no matters reported from outside bodies.

C117/23 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting was agreed for Thursday April 25th at 6pm.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.30 pm

Chairman

Date