



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 12th September, 2024

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Brodie Mauluka (Mayor)
Councillor George Murray (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Andrew Laughton, Mark Merryweather, Kika Mirylees, Graham White and Tim Woodhouse

Officers Present: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Iain McCready (Business & Facilities Manager)

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

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by the Revd David Uffindell, Rector of Farnham, St Andrew's.

At the start of the meeting Mr Michael Stephens, the Farnham Town Crier presented to the mayor a framed limited edition copy of the Cry he had read on the occasion of the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles. The Mayor thanked the Town Crier on behalf of the Council.

C40/24 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Laughton, Merryweather, Mirylees, White and Woodhouse.

C41/24 **Disclosures of Interest**

There were no Disclosures of Interest apart from those affecting dual or triple hatted councillors.

C42/24 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th July were agreed as a correct record.

C43/24 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

- 1) Mrs Brenda Ellison raised the need for a crossing in West Street to get to the Museum, Library and Adult Education Institute. She was concerned that elderly people could get knocked over.

In response Cllr Hesse advised he had discussed the matter with local County Councillor Andy MacLeod and was also pressing for a crossing between Gostrey Meadow and the maltings on Longbridge.

The Town Clerk advised that Cllr Hesse's proposed crossings had been raised with Surrey County Council as part of the Infrastructure Programme discussions and it was being raised with Waverley Borough Council as part of the Infrastructure Development Plan revised list since having these crossings listed would be important for future funding.

- 2) Mr David Gill said that one of Farnham's all-time sporting greats, Graham Thorpe had passed away recently. He was a genuine cricket legend for Surrey and England but his cricketing journey started in Farnham. The town had acknowledged two of his contemporaries, Mike Hawthorn and Jonny Wilkinson, with road naming and other appreciations and they each had a plaque on the Notable Names Wall of Fame. He asked if - in conjunction with his family - the town might now consider further and appropriate recognition for Graham Thorpe?

In response, the Mayor thanked Mr Gill for his proposal and advised that this would be discussed further.

- 3) Mr David Gill raised the matter of the current financial pressures on the Rural Life Living Museum in Tilford, one of the most unique and outstanding visitor destinations in the area. He understood that unless it received considerable financial help it would be forced to close. He asked if the town council could contribute in any way to ensure the sustainability of a precious local amenity?

In response, the Mayor advised that the Town Council had not yet received any request for support but would consider any approach received.

C44/24 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor started his announcements with two sad tributes. The first to former town councillor Mike Hyman whose funeral was taking place on 13th September. He was a considerate and thoughtful councillor who included amongst other activities Lead Councillor for planning. The Council's thoughts go to his family at this sad time.

The Mayor added to the tribute made by David Gill and the Farnham Sports Council over the premature death of outstanding Farnham cricket legend Graham Thorpe MBE. The Council passed on its sincere condolences to his father Geoff and his wife and children.

In terms of events since the last Council meeting, the Mayor had been pleased to present a number of grant cheques to community organisations including Farnham Assist and Space2grow and some of the projects funded from the Town Council's new Holiday

Activities Fund. He was delighted to hear about the Lottery grant receive by Space2Grow that would underpin their excellent activities over the next three years.

The Mayor had attended RAF Odiham's annual reception and enjoyed the unique experience of putting the top on a Totum pole at Woodlarks. He had also been privileged to host Farnham's first World Music day with excellent musicians and entertainment and a special stall from his charity 'Charlie's promise'. He hopes World Music would form part of the annual events programme for future years.

CLlr Jackman thanked the Mayor for his excellent music set at World Music Day and said it was great to have a connection with the public through the medium of music.

C45/24 **Questions by Members**

There were no questions by Members.

C46/24 **Working Group Notes**

1) Strategy & Resources

CLlr Fairclough introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Resources Working Group held on 4th September at Appendix B to the agenda.

i) Finances

Council noted that there were no matters of concern with the month end finances and received the latest position on grants and the grants timetable for 2024-2025 with applications for both Community Grants and the Farnham South Street Trust invited between September and December 2024. Organisations receiving a larger grant via a Service Level Agreement would be invited to discuss their applications with councillors in November. The Working Group recommended raising the maximum for community grants from £2,000 to £2,500 noting this may not necessarily mean a higher allocation, depending on the overall agreed budget and the number of applications.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- i) the 2025/26 Community Grants, South Street Trust and SLA Grant timelines be agreed;**
- ii) the maximum sum for Community grant applications be increased from £2,000 to £2,500;**
- iii) The Community & Culture Working Group review the process and range of grants allocated ahead of 2026-27 grants applications.**

ii) Budget and Precept Setting

Council received the key dates for the 2025-26 Budget and precept setting with each Working Group considering their budgets during the autumn cycle of meetings and these would feed into the Strategy briefing/workshop on November 28th and the Council budget setting meeting on 19th December. The setting of the precept would be agreed on 23rd January 2025.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

The 2025/26 budget and precept setting key dates be agreed

iii) External Audit

Council received, at Appendix C to its agenda, the results of the 2023-24 External Audit undertaken by PKF Littlejohn at Appendix C to its agenda which had been unqualified. Council noted the thanks of the Working Group to Responsible Financial Officer (Town

Clerk), bookkeeper (Sarah Cross), accountant (Claire Connell) and Internal Auditor (Mike Platten) for the work that went in to achieving this.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that the external auditor's Unqualified Audit for 2023-24 be welcomed.

iv) Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Council received detailed notes on the latest position on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme including raingardens, the proposed stepped design at the junction of West Street and Downing Street, a design for which was awaited, and bus shelters in the Borough and West Street. In terms of phasing of the programme there was still no detailed information other than a start date in the town centre of 13th January. The bus shelter design had further discussion at Council following some informal research undertaken by Cllr Jackman. The latest advice from Surrey officers was that FTC could choose its preferred design suitable for the conservation area but would then take on future maintenance costs if this was not a normal design supported by SCC. After discussion

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- 1) SCC be requested to purchase for the Borough the ACE heritage bus shelter with quarter panels in laminated or toughened glass and a green roof to be maintained by Farnham Town Council;**
- 2) No shelter be provided on West Street at this juncture but the footings and infrastructure for real time bus information be available at the bus stop.**

Council noted that the Working Group had considered the question raised at the previous council meeting by Mr Butler regarding speeding in Castle Street. Whilst FTC's powers were limited as enforcement was the responsibility of Surrey Police or the County Council the Town Council had funded equipment and hi viz clothing for a Speedwatch. Council also noted that once the FIP proposals had been implemented with a raised crossing and narrower carriageway in Castle Street there should be some improvements but the matter would be raised again with Surrey County Council and Surrey Police to see what additional action could be taken.

v) Neighbourhood Plan Task Group

Cllr Martin reported on the meetings of the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group held on 8th and 29th July and the 19th August. She advised Council that there had also been a very well attended community meeting on 11th September with an excellent presentation by Steve Tilbury. She thanked Jenny de Quervain for the work she had been undertaking. The draft response to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Consultation was recommended for endorsement.

In discussion, Council said it was about time that the Government got planning sorted as there were permissions for about a million homes not being built by developers. Government should allow more social housing to be built by councils and a higher proportion (50%) should be affordable/social housing if Greenfield sites were used. It was also suggested that developers should pay full council tax on approved sites for which permission had been given if homes had not been built after two years, as an incentive to develop.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the FTC response on the NPPF be submitted.

vi) Community Infrastructure/CIL Task Group

Council noted that the Waverley Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy bidding round was open for applications. It also received details of consideration by the Strategy & resources Working Group for the CIL funding for which Farnham Town Council was

responsible. Council considered the recommendations from the Working Group noting that other capital projects such as taking on the Waggon Yard garages for conversion were at an embryonic stage and there was a big shortfall in funding required for the Gostrey project.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- 1) The current policy of prioritising FTC led projects be continued with the current CIL funding;**
- 2) A community bidding round would take place in 2026 subject to sufficient funds being received**
- 3) The current earmarked allocation for environmental improvements and street furniture for the Farnham Infrastructure Project funding be increased to £100,000;**
- 4) An allocation of £150,000 for an additional contribution to the Gostrey Meadow playground project and the toilets and storage project.**

vii) Other Task Groups

Council noted that good progress was being made on the Younger People Panel and that an excellent brief had been prepared for the website tender. There was disappointment that the proposed St James Conservation Area had not been considered worthy of consideration by Waverley Planners but it was noted the small steering group was progressing the idea.

viii) Contract and Assets

Cllr Fairclough advised that the Gostrey Meadow Toilet design had progressed and a curved roof was being taken forward as it could have greater solar panels, was easier to maintain. The new design had additional storage, increased glass sections for natural light, and addressed issues raised by members previously over litter and access. He thanked everyone for their contributions that had led to an improved design. Council noted the initial playground consultation had begun prior to tendering the project.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- i) The curved roof design be approved for the Gostrey Meadow public conveniences;**
- ii) Plan A architects take forward the outline design for planning approval;**
- iii) Cllr Jackman work alongside officers in progressing the playground project.**

Council noted progress being made on a number of other projects set out in the Working Group Notes.

ix) Other matters

Council noted the temporary planning permission for *A Hands Turn* and that officers would seek an alternate location following the expiry of the permission such as the Evelyn Borelli Garden/Sculpture Park by UCA; arrangements for the VIP visit at the end of September to Hale; Library Gardens lease; and action taken on invasive species.

C47/24 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Murray introduced the report on three Planning and Consultative meeting held on 29 July, 12 August and 2nd September at Appendices D, E and F.

Key points that had arisen included:

- 1) discussion on the new National Planning Policy Framework. Issues of particular concern are the removal of the phrase 'character' and the threatened development on designated green/grey/brown belt areas.
- 2) Centrum Business Park, for 162 dwellings in East Street – FTC supports the application for extra residential units close to town but raised concerns about the following: There are no affordable units allocated; the proposed developments are too high above street

level (4 storeys at East Street, 6 storeys at Dogflud); sight lines would be severely restricted; deteriorating air quality was a concern; and the newly developed East Street would create a canyon effect more in keeping with a cityscape.

- 3) Weydon Academy , Weydon Lane – FTC supported the plans but felt consideration should be given to local residents over increased lighting and noise.
- 4) Land north of Coxbridge Farm, 320 new dwellings. FTC feels that more infrastructure is required to allow pedestrians and cyclists to easily and safely access Farnham town. Council noted this was going to the October Waverley meeting.
- 5) Ismaili Trust, proposed Muslim Cemetery site, Hale Rd – Following the application refusal on 12/3/24, FTC noted the applicant had proposed a modification to plans (including removal of 23 community car park spaces) and this had been refused by Waverley.
- 6) 17 Frensham Road, opposite the Fox pub – FTC noted the appeal decision which is that within 12 months the dwelling, materials, hardstand, steps, walls, be removed and land restored to the levels before engineering operations took place.

C48/24 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no actions under the Scheme of Delegation to report.

C49/24 Reports from Other Councils

- 1) Cllr Martin reported that a new Pedestrian crossing at the Bourne had been agreed by Surrey
- 2) A new Civic Agreement for Surrey with the three Universities (Surrey, Royal Holloway and University for the Creative Arts) and other partners was to be launched on 20th September.
- 3) Surrey had agreed for Bullers Road in Weybourne to be created as a 'School Street' and this should bring massive benefits for the community.

C50/24 Reports from Outside Bodies

- 1) Cllr Beaman advised that Farnham Railway Station would be celebrating its 175th birthday on 8th October.
- 2) Cllr Hesse advised there had been no further meeting of the Farnborough Airport Consultative Committee but the Planning application was still pending.
- 3) Cllr Jackman advised that Tice's Meadow had an exciting film premiere on 20th September and encouraged councillors to attend.

C51/24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 24th October at 6pm.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.15 pm

Chairman

Date