



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 19th December, 2024

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Brodie Mauluka (Mayor)
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor George Murray (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Graham White

Apologies for absence

Mat Brown, Chris Jackman, Michaela Martin, Kika Mirylees, John Ward and Tim Woodhouse

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk)

There were 3 members of the public in attendance.

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

C66/24 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Brown, Jackman, Martin, Mirylees, Ward and Woodhouse.

C67/24 Disclosures of Interest

Cllr Merryweather declared an interest as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property at Waverley Borough Council relating to property matters in item 7 Appendix C.

C68/24 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th October were agreed as a correct record.

C69/24 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

- 1 Ms Faye Sharpe, of Castle Ward, made a statement about the hazardous nature of Bridge Square at the bottom of Firgrove Hill and asked what more the Town Council could practically do to mitigate the hazard. She considered the root cause was excessive speed and had experienced multiple incidences and near misses when crossing the road from Gostrey Meadow on Longbridge. She had met with local councillors and the police but nothing was being done, and she asked whether there had to be injury or a death before anything happened?

In response, Cllr White advised that members of the Town Council were just as concerned as the public about this. Now there was a 20MPH zone this allowed further measures to be implemented such as speed tables. FTC asked for a crossing but it was turned down by Surrey County Council. He encouraged Ms Sharpe to keep pressing the case with Surrey as she made a good case and advised that Cllr Hesse would continue to support her.

- 2 Mr Butler of Castle Street asked a similar question and whether he would receive a response from his previous questions. He considered the raised platform proposed for Castle Street was in the wrong place and that residents' views should be taken into account by the scheme designers. He also asked that FTC put pressure on Surrey for cameras to catch offenders.

In response, Cllr White read the actions taken since Mr Butler raised his questions, as recorded in the previous Council minutes. He confirmed that FTC would continue to raise the issue with the police and Surrey County Council.

C70/24 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor recorded with great sadness the passing of Stewart Dakers BEM who was both a valued member of the Farnham Town Council staff but also an incredible volunteer who was involved in so many things in Farnham. He advised that Stewart was an inspiration and a great ambassador for Farnham and passed on the condolences of the Council to his family.

The Mayor reported on a number of community activities he had been privileged to attend since Council met in October. The first Lantern Festival organised by the FTC events team was outstanding and an immense achievement involving well over one thousand people.

The Surrey Artist of the year judging at the New Ashgate Gallery underlined the talented creative people there are in and around Farnham and the Mayor had chosen one of the images of the winner for his Mayoral Christmas card.

The Remembrance services for the schools and wider community were once again both impressive and poignant. The Mayor advised these occasions mean so much to the veterans and their families, he recorded a special thanks to Ian Hunter who steps down as Parade Marshall for the Royal British Legion.

The Mayor attended Christmas Lights switch on events across town, including Gostrey Meadow, Badshot Lea and Hale , and also enjoyed special carol services at St Andrew's St John's St Joan's and St Thomas's.

The Mayor was also part of a superb Venison Dinner at the Bush Hotel. This long-standing civic occasion maintains a tradition that stretches back 400 years and was a very enjoyable occasion.

C71/24 **Questions by Members**

There were no questions by members.

C72/24 **Working Group Notes**

- i) Cllr Merryweather introduced the Notes of the Environment Working Group at Appendix B to the Council agenda.

- i) **Farnham in Bloom and Open Spaces**

Council noted the dates for 2025 and arrangements to contract supply floral displays to InOdiham and the potential challenges in participation in the In Bloom awards in 2026 and 2026. Council also noted the plans for heritage lighting columns on the Riverside walk and that officers were obtaining costs to extend the lighting to Kimber's Lane. Council noted that the Green Flag sites were all due for judging in April.

It was Resolved *nem con* that Farnham enter all five categories in the South and South East in Bloom Awards and to withdraw the Town Centre if needed due to the planned FiP (Farnham Infrastructure Programme)

- ii) **Notable names**

It was Resolved *nem con* that Roger Remmington (Project Director London Ring Main and winner of the BTS James Clark Medal) to be added to the Notable Names of Farnham wall.

- iii) **Climate Action Plan**

Council noted Surrey County Council were undertaking some pilot schemes for climate action.

It was Resolved *unanimously* that Farnham Town Council to take part in the Parish Pilot project to support the development of a climate and nature action plan.

2) **Strategy & Resources Working Group**

Cllr White introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Resources Working Group at Appendix C to the Council agenda.

- i) **Council Business Plan Review 2024**

Cllr White reported on the detailed discussions that took place on the review of the Council's Business Plan, drawing attention to projects that were to be funded from capital (such as CIL) rather than revenue funding. There had been discussion on a potential community hub in Badshot Lea. Council noted that this was in the ownership of a separate charity (The Kiln) and it was for the Trustees to approach the Council for support rather than for the Town Council to lead on such a project. It was agreed that local councillors would inform the trustees that support for a feasibility study could potentially be supported through the Community Initiatives budget.

Cllr White reported that Waverley Borough Council had advised that only one asset could be prioritised for transfer at this stage and the Working Group recommended

the Waggon Yard garages which would be converted for Makers' Spaces and an information point for World Craft Town. For other service matters the Working Group proposed that a new budget line be introduced within the Community and Culture budget for ongoing support for the Museum of Farnham service currently managed by the Farnham Maltings. The initial amount proposed was for £10,000 with potentially more for the local museum service after the building refurbishments were completed.

In terms of Council business, it had been agreed that the intention would be to issue a list of Council decisions as an aide memoire two days after Council and also review again the quality of the sound system for online engagement. In addition, it had been suggested that the Mayor's coffee mornings could take place in the wards with each councillor identifying suitable locations

Cllr White advised that there had been a long discussion on the merits of choosing a fixed day and time for Council and Working Group meetings (such as a Thursday) to assist councillors in diary managements (particularly for those who worked). In the end it was agreed that Planning & Licensing would remain on Mondays and that the Strategy & Resources meetings would move to a Monday afternoon to assist any double hatted councillors who were also on the Waverley Executive which currently met on a Tuesday. Cllr Merryweather reminded councillors that each working Group could choose its preferred hours at the start of each council year according to the membership and setting specific times could be counter-productive when flexibility was required. It was noted that if staff were expected to attend more evening meetings it should be expected that they would need to take time off in lieu.

After further discussion, it was agreed that the draft programme of dates for 2025/2026 would be scheduled for review with the Environment and Community & Culture meetings scheduled for a Thursday (with times to be agreed by the Working Groups).

For the January Council meeting, Council noted with frustration that Waverley Borough Council had broken the long-standing commitment that Thursdays were for Town and Parish Council meetings and scheduled an extraordinary meeting for the same day of the precept setting meeting. As a result, it was agreed to rearrange the FTC meeting for the following week (30th January) to avoid the risk of the important Farnham meeting being inquorate.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* (with Cllr Merryweather not voting on resolutions ii and v) that:

- 1) Ward Councillors speak with the Trustees of the Badshot Lea Kiln;**
- 2) The Waggon Yard garages be the priority for a transfer from Waverley Borough Council;**
- 3) The project to improve the clarity of the sound system for remote participants/listeners of meetings be progressed;**
- 4) The idea of further activities and community engagement in the wards be supported;**
- 5) A new budget line be created within the Communities and Culture Working Group budget to support the Farnham Museum.**

ii) Finances

Cllr White reported on the review of month end finances which were progressing well. An additional (higher than expected) CIL payment had been received which would be

added to the earmarked reserves. The budget had been subject to a detailed debate and was covered in a separate Council agenda item.

iii) **Contracts & Assets**

Council considered the detailed report on matters discussed at Strategy & Resources including general matters on works being progressed and tenders; elements relating to the Gostrey Meadow Improvements and the outcome of the website tender.

It was Resolved unanimously that:

- 1) The Gostrey Meadow sandpit be filled and the new fence be installed early in the new year.**
- 2) The new playground fence be installed early in 2025 with the costs met from the 2024/2025 budget and that the most economically advantageous tenderer be appointed up to a cost of £15,000.**
- 3) Progress in preparing the planning application for Gostrey Meadow be welcomed.**
- 4) Farnham makers be invited to submit ideas for enhancing the public conveniences and raising the profile of Farnham's World Craft Town Status.**
- 5) The successful website tenderer (Savage and Gray) be appointed as set out at Exempt Annex I.**

iv) **Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

Cllr Beaman advised that he had circulated a more detailed phasing programme just provided by Surrey CC on a confidential basis. He was pleased to inform Council that Surrey had also agreed to fund two additional buses during the works but he still had a number of reservations. He proposed that as the programme was moving into the implementation phase a ward councillor should now be the FTC appointed representative to raise detailed issues.

Cllr Hesse raised again concerns over the removal of 103 square metres of ironstone outside the Tellers Arms and Pizza Express in Castle Street. FTC had raised many objections to the removal of the ironstone which formed part of the character and history of Castle Street but Surrey had changed the plans unilaterally without consultation. He also considered the raingardens in this area could be relocated outside residential properties to enable space for 'café culture' and support local businesses. Other councillors agreed especially as the works in Castle street were not due to commence until 2026 and also advised that the BID board was making similar representations.

It was suggested that FTC should contact Waverley Borough Council proposing that as the goalposts had moved with an imposed solution, Waverley should withhold its CIL contribution until this was resolved.

Councillors agreed this matter should be raised at the BID Board meeting on 17th January.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- i) FTC confirm to SCC its previously advised position that the ironstone outside Pizza Express and Tellers arms be retained;**
- ii) The greening raingardens outside 74/75 hospitality areas be moved further up Castle Street such as 70/71.**

v) **Task Groups**

Council noted the latest position on the work of the Younger People and Neighbourhood Plan Task Groups.

vi) **Consultation**

Council reviewed the consultation on enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings agreeing with Strategy & Resources that substitutes would be better than proxy voting at decision making meetings as members should be focussed on the matters being discussed.

It was Resolved *nem con* that

- 1) **FTC welcomes and encourages wider participation;**
- 2) **Hybrid access to Working Group and Consultative Group meetings should be allowed;**
- 3) **Voting at Full Council should be based on being present in person.**
- 4) **Substitutes should be allowed for meetings but proxies should not be allowed.**

C73/24

Budget 2025-26

Cllr White introduced the detailed budget paper attached at Appendix D to the Council agenda which was the recommendation of the Strategy & Resources Working Group after a long and detailed discussion. The original draft budget had seen reductions of some £65,000 but there was still a shortfall over income as a result of a number of factors including increased costs arising out of the Government's increases on employer's national insurance contributions, the new funding for the Farnham Museum, and increase of £25,000 to support community organisations facing a shortfall because of funding cuts at principal authorities, and funding for new activities such as the film festival. In addition, the new Gostrey Meadow playground would be implemented in 2025, with work on the new toilets and storage in Gostrey Meadow also due to commence.

Council noted that in the previous financial year there had been no increase in the FTC precept apart from that allocated for supporting younger people, and this support would continue in 2025/26. Council was aware that fees and charges were being reviewed in January and this would help reduce the shortfall further, but that the discussion on the impact on the precept would again be a difficult one.

It was Resolved unanimously that the gross budget for 2025/26 be set at £1,946,650

C74/24

Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Laughton reported on the four Planning and Licensing Consultative Group meetings that had taken place on 28th October, 11th and 25th November and 9th December and reported at appendices E, F, G and H. He drew attention to four specific matters:

1. **Appeal notification for Old Park Lane, Farnham** for up to 83 dwellings with the inquiry held over 5 days in February 2025. FTC asks that the Inspector to dismiss the appeal and refuse planning permission. The
2. **Land north of Coxbridge Farm, West Farnham.** FTC welcomed amended plans which incorporated the changes to the orientation of some dwellings on the NE side of the development following consultation.
3. **The Luxe, Lion and Lamb Yard, Farnham.** FTC felt insufficient time had passed to demonstrate significant improvements following previous complaints of noise and smells to allow a request for variation of a premises license,
4. Change of use to provide 6 residential units and associated parking, landscaping at **38-39 The Borough Farnham.** FTC noted more consultation was required to ensure local residents were not compromised by this development.

In discussion, Cllr Beaman advised that with the Government's Planning Reform Paper local controls on planning were being eroded and there were further changes ahead.

C75/24 **Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

The Town Clerk advised that the tenders for the Gostrey Meadow Playground would be opened the following day and the results resported back to the next Strategy & Resources Working Group.

C76/24 **Reports from Other Councils**

Cllr Beaman reported that according to recently published statistics, bus use in Surrey had increased by over 11% in the past year, no doubt helped by the fare cap. He also reported that Transport for the South East had a new consultation on its strategy which was open for comments until March.

C77/24 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

Cllr Hesse reported on the meeting of the Farnborough Airport Consultative Committee held in November at which new Chairman Colin Flack OBE took up his role.

C78/24 **Date of Next Meeting**

In view of Waverley Borough Council arranging an extraordinary meeting on the same date as the scheduled FTC meeting, it was agreed to rearrange the precept setting meeting to January 30th at 6pm.

C79/24 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

On a motion by the Mayor, **it was Resolved unanimously that the press and public be excluded in view of the contractual and HR matters being discussed.**

C80/24 **Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group notes.**

It was RESOLVED unanimously that an additional day's leave for all staff be allocated between Christmas and New year in view of the successes in a range of activities during a busy year. A gift voucher was agreed for certain contract based staff who had contributed to specific activities.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.08 pm

Chairman

Date

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