



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 12th March, 2020

Place

Council Chamber - Town Council Offices

Councillors

Councillor Pat Evans (Mayor)
Councillor David Attfield
Councillor Roger Blishen
Councillor Carole Cockburn
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Paula Dunsmore
Councillor Brian Edmonds
Councillor John "Scotty" Fraser
Councillor Michaela Gray
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Alan Earwaker, David Beaman, Michaela Martin and Kika Mirylees

Officers Presents:

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk
Sara Jones, Assistant Town Clerk

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

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Jacqueline Drake-Smith of St Peter's Church, Wrecclesham.

C151/19 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs David Beaman, Alan Earwaker, Michaela Martin and Kika Mirylees

C152/19 Disclosures of Interest

In addition to the standard declarations by dual or triple hatted Councillors, Town Clerk and the Mayor recorded an interest in item 9 on Pensions Triennial Actuarial Review.

C153/19 Minutes

The minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 23rd January 2020 were agreed to be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

C154/19 Questions and Statements by the Public

1) Carolyn Weston, a resident of Farnham.

Raised the state of littering on the A31. Mrs Weston Commended FTC staff for their support with local litter picking and commended FTC for how clean and tidy the town centre was. However, she noted there was a lot of fly tipping in evidence especially on Alma Lane and the A31. Mrs Weston suggested a campaign in schools to encourage children to respect their countryside may help to keep the roads clear of litter.

The Mayor responded that FTC were very proud of how the team of staff and volunteers have kept the town free of litter and would pass on the observations made by Mrs Weston to Surrey County Council SCC, the principal authority in charge of the roads and highways.

2) Colin Shearn, a resident of Farnham.

Mr Shearn spoke on behalf of Extinction Rebellion in Farnham and asked what changes had been made by the Council since the Climate Emergency had been declared.

Town Clerk responded detailing Council actions and decisions taken during the last year including the purchase of gas-powered vehicles and the use of the electric watering vehicle and agreement to purchase electric tools for the outdoor workforce. The Town Clerk advised other areas were being investigated to help to reduce the carbon footprint including supporting the Sustainability Festival on 24th May.

Cllr Dickson responded noting the work by the Community Enhancement Working Group who were in discussion with the Area Manager of Stagecoach looking at the availability of additional local bus routes and increased frequency of the buses.

The Leader responded the Council was participating in the formation of the new tri council Farnham Project Board which would be looking at the Farnham air quality issues.

The Town Clerk noted the local network of Parish and Town Clerks were also organizing a Surrey Clerks network sustainability event for all parish and town councils.

C155/19 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reported since the last Council there have been more than 20 Mayoral appointments and events including the Ugandan Children's Choir visit, a reception for The Queen's Awards for Voluntary Services and the planting of commemorative trees at the Memorial Hall. The Mayor had hosted two Mayor's coffee mornings for residents with a third scheduled for April, and she had hosted a reception in the Council Chamber for the World Craft Cities Assessors attended by many local partners. The Mayor reported that the presentation of the Services to Farnham Awards to 13 recipients had been a lovely occasion and she had been pleased to open the Conference on Repair Cafes at the UCA.

C156/19 Questions by Members

None were received.

C157/19 Strategy & Finance Working Group

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of the Strategy and Finance Working Group held on 3rd March at Appendix B.

Cllr Neale advised Council that the forecast for year-end expenditure was within the budget with savings made from staff changes, on the deferral of a project in Gostrey Meadow and receipts from an Arts Council and Heritage Lottery grants and monies received from Section 106 and CIL.

The forecast saving was estimated to be £80,000 and it was proposed to spend £30,000 of that saving to repay the Public Works Loan balance.

Councillors discussed the merits for repaying the loan early. Town Clerk confirmed there would not be an early repayment charge (or saving) and that the settlement figure included the outstanding loan and interest due. Town Clerk noted if the loan was repaid early the allocated budget could be used for a new loan (if required) with lower interest rates for works proposed as a result of the acquisition of property from principal authorities.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
FTC repay the outstanding Public Works loan of approximately £30,617.96 from 2019/20 funds.**

Council considered the issues and minor notes contained in the interim report from the internal auditor and the Officer responses.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con*:
To note the interim report received from the internal auditor.**

C158/19 Infrastructure Planning Task Group

Cllr Neale reported on the recent task group meeting which had a presentation from the Farnham Cycle Campaign and the ongoing investigation into the proposed spend of Section 106 monies for new and improved cycle routes in Farnham.

It was noted a representative from Crest Nicholson would be invited to the next IPG to discuss the road works at the Royal Deer Junction. Councillors discussed the importance of the careful and considered timing of the roadworks and the impact this would have on the Farnham economy in the build up to the Christmas retail activity. It was noted that SCC had already approved the planning for the new road plan for the Royal Deer Junction. Also discussed was the planned Southern Gas Network (SGN) works which would impact on the Farnham town centre roads. It was noted SGN would be attending the next Planning and Licensing Working Group.

Cllr Cockburn updated Council on the Neighbourhood Plan and referendum taking place that day. Cllr Cockburn advised on a correction to the notes that should have read the Neighbourhood Plan had previously successfully prevented the planning approval for 800 new homes in Badshot Lea alone and 1,300 in Farnham.

CI59/19 Farnham Project Board Update

Cllr Neale reported the newly formed Board would meet on 20th March at FTC. The Board would comprise the Leaders of Surrey County Council, Waverley Borough Council and Farnham Town Council. Terms of reference would be discussed followed by a reception held by the Board with a wide selection of Farnham Stakeholders.

It was noted it was designed to be a governance board. SCC had appointed a project manager from ARCONIS, who was already working in SCC. There would be a Local Liaison Forum for local input to the Board.

Councillors discussed the representation of the Board. It was considered that there needed to be more than two members of FTC on the Board. There was concern that only 4 out of the 12 members of the Board were Farnham based. Opinions expressed included that Cllr McLeod should be on the Board as he was Portfolio Holder for the Brightwells development, and that the local ward members should be involved.

After much discussion the original recommendations from Strategy & Finance to Council were amended. Cllr Neal proposed the amendments, Cllr Hesse seconded.

It was RESOLVED with one abstention to item 2, *nem con* that:

- 1) FTC welcomes a collaborative Council approach to Farnham Matters and looks forward to FTC playing an effective role on the Farnham Project Board;**
- 2) FTC nominates a Member (Leader or substitute) and an Officer (Town Clerk or substitute) on the emerging Board; and**
- 3) The Town Clerk in consultation with the Leader provides the FTC input into the Terms of Reference.**

Councillors discussed the Terms of Reference which, once formulated by the Board could be taken to IPG and then recommended to Council.

CI60/19 Community Infrastructure Project Group

Cllr Neale reminded Councillors to submit proposed projects in their wards that could be funded by CIL monies.

CI61/19 Farnham Air Quality Action Group

Cllr Neale noted the FCAMP group had met on 27th February to update progress on the Action Plan.

CI62/19 Younger People Task Group

Cllr Neale reported on the meeting held on Wednesday 26th February 2020 which was well attended by leaders of youth provision in Farnham and was a very positive start. A subsequent meeting with young people was to be held.

CI63/19 Farnham Conservation Area Management Plan

Cllr Neale noted the FCAMP group had met on 27th February to update progress on the Action Plan.

CI64/19 Grants 2020/21

Cllr Neale reported that Strategy & Finance had reviewed three applications for the Community Grant funding of which two were presented to Council for approval (the third had already received funding).

It was RESOLVED *nem con*:

- 1) To commit £450.00 for Bells Piece Fitness and Wellbeing Project.**
- 2) To contribute £5000.00 for the Kitty Milroy Mural Conservation Project from the 2019/20 New Initiatives Budget.**

CI65/19 Annual Town Meeting

Cllr Neale reminded Councillors the date for the Annual Town Meeting was Thursday 26th March 2020 to be held at the Farnham Maltings. It was discussed that the previous format would be used.

CI66/19 Coronavirus

Cllr Neale advised Council that FTC was following closely the guidelines set out by Public Health England PHE and was working with SCC and Waverley. Actions taken so far by FTC were the wall mounting of additional hand sanitisers in the Council Building and preparations for social distancing.

Town Clerk advised that under the circumstances with the Coronavirus escalating it would be prudent to suggest a new recommendation for Council to consider. This would allow Council to continue to function with an emergency power of delegation if Council was unable to meet to make decisions.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

Should the COVID-19 pandemic develop in such a way to prevent the holding of decision making meetings, the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Town Mayor, Leader and relevant Working Group Lead Councillors (if appropriate), be delegated authority to make all necessary decisions not already covered by the scheme of delegation.

CI67/19 Contracts and Assets Update

Cllr Neale reported that the Strategy & Finance Group had discussed a range of matters including expenditure on maintenance to the Council Building, Gostrey Meadow and fencing at West Street Cemetery.

Further to discussion regarding the cemetery it was agreed Cllr Cockburn would attend site when the contractor visited to measure up for the fencing. It was noted the replacement fence had not been discussed by the Cemetery and Appeals Task Group as it had not met before the Strategy & Finance Working Group meeting. Councillors discussed whether there was the need to tender the fence formally, noting the contractor had been used recently for the first phase of fencing following a tender and the costs involved for the Council when tendering a project.

There was further discussion regarding the maintenance to the Council offices with concern expressed regarding the thoroughfare of HGV vehicles aggravating the condition of the walls.

Cllr Neale introduced an additional proposal to purchase a ride on grass cutter following a review of what was available. Cllr Attfield proposed the recommendation and Cllr Cockburn seconded.

It was RESOLVED, with one abstention on point 1, *nem con* that:

- 1) FTC extends the wooden fence between the Cemetery and allotments with a locked gate for emergency access at a cost of approximately £10,000 and that Standing Orders Contracts be waived to appoint Jacksons Fencing.**
- 2) FTC seeks green flag status next year for Gostrey Meadow.**
- 3) Necessary repairs identified by Drake and Kannemeyer to be carried out by Oak Services to repair the cracking in the walls at the FTC offices.**
- 4) FTC purchase an Iseki out front rotary cutter with a collector unit from RT Machinery at a cost of £14,350 + VAT.**

CI68/19 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Edmonds introduced the notes of the Planning and Licencing Consultative Group meetings held on: 3rd February, and 17th February and 2nd March 2020, appendices C, D and E to the agenda. Cllr Edmonds noted the increased amount of planning to be reviewed and the frustration that WBC has taken a different position to FTC which has meant there are times when the FTC recommendations are overruled by WBC without explanation. Councillors discussed the need to keep a close eye on planning applications happening in their wards.

Cllr Dunsmore advised that the planning application for the Heath End School MUGA (Multi-use Games Area) which has been funded from Section 106 money from the sale of the tennis courts at the sixth form college noting the MUGA should be open to the public not just for School use. It was agreed to propose the provision of similar MUGAs to The CIL Task Group.

CI69/19 Pensions Triennial Actuarial Review

Town Clerk introduced the detail of the Pensions Triennial Actuarial Review that had been discussed at the recent Strategy & Finance Working Group meeting. He advised that FTC currently had its own pension pot within the Surrey Local Government Pension Scheme. The recommendation from Surrey LGPS was to pool the pension pots for all Town and parish councils which could give greater stability to the smaller councils. If FTC were to join the pool it would increase the employer pension costs from the current 14.2% to 18.7%. Councillors discussed the current situation and were reassured by Town Clerk that FTC could join the Pool at the triennial review if it wished to do so.

Cllr Ward left at 9.10pm

It was RESOLVED, with one absention, *nem con* that:

FTC maintains the status quo and does not join the proposed Surrey pooled pension arrangement at this stage.

CI70/19 Pensions Discretion Policy

The Town Clerk presented the notes on the Surrey Pensions Scheme guidance at Annex 1 and the proposed updated Discretions Policy at Annex 2. Town Clerk confirmed for Councillors the discretions policy is similar to the discretions policy adopted by WBC, Godalming and Haslemere Town Councils, and is essentially saying discretions available will not be used unless in exceptional circumstances as determined by Full Council.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
The Pensions Discretions Policy at Annex 2 be adopted.**

C171/19 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

Town Clerk noted FTC are making arrangements for staff to work at home with laptops being taken at home and is looking at the impact of COVID 19 and will talk with the HR panel and Leader and Mayor to discuss any specific arrangements.

C172/19 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr MacLeod commented on the roads situation, the upgrade to the Sainsbury's carpark and the SGN pipe replacement scheduled over the summer, noting that the summer months are reported to be quieter on the roads and thereby causing less traffic disruption. It was also noted Crest Nicholson was aware of the issue of the pending disruption from the change to the road layout and Cllr MacLeod encouraged people to representations about the timing of this road disruption.

Councillors discussed the converging of all three roads and the disruption that the works cause if they overlapped and cause impact on Christmas trading. The Mayor noted that SGN would be presenting the proposed works schedule at the Planning meeting on Monday 16th March.

C173/19 Reports from Outside Bodies

Councillors reported on recent meetings of the Brightwells Gostrey, Farnham Sports Council, Biodiversity Group, Maltings Management Committee and the Hale Community Centre Management Committee.

C174/19 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 30th April

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.30 pm

Mayor

Date