



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 30th July, 2020

Place

Held remotely via Zoom

Councillors

Councillor Pat Evans (Mayor)
Councillor Alan Earwaker (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor David Attfield
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Roger Blishen
Councillor Carole Cockburn
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Paula Dunsmore
Councillor Brian Edmonds
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andy MacLeod
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor John Neale
Councillor John Ward

Apologies for absence

Councillors John "Scotty" Fraser and Michaela Gray

Officers Presents:

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk
Sara Jones, Assistant Town Clerk

There was 1 member of the public and 2 members of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Jane Walker, Vicar of the Benefice of Frensham.

C44/20 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Fraser and Gray.

The Mayor wished both Councillors a speedy recovery.

C45/20 Disclosures of Interest

In addition to the standard declarations by dual or triple hatted Councillors, Cllr Cockburn as Trustee for The Ridgeway School and Cllr Merryweather as the relevant Portfolio holder at Waverley Borough Council for Agenda item 7ii (Appendix C) in relation to the transfer of assets and neither took part in the items in question.

C46/20 Minutes

The Minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 25th June 2020 at Appendix A were agreed to be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

C47/20 Questions and Statements by the Public

David Howell a resident of Farnham and Chair of The Farnham Society spoke about the planning application submitted by Veolia to develop an Energy Recovery Facility in Froyle, Alton that would replace the current recycling centre with an incinerator.

Mr Howell informed Councillors that The Farnham Society strongly objected to the application due to the scale of the facility, the proximity to the National Park, the detrimental impact on both the environment both locally and regionally and the increase in HGV traffic that would be experienced through Farnham.

The Mayor thanked Mr Howell for his statement about the incinerator and question to Council and responded that this had been considered by the Planning and Licensing meeting on Monday 27th July and would be discussed in a later an agenda item.

C48/20 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reported that normally at this time of year the civic diary would be full but with the impact of Covid-19 the Mayor had been supporting Farnham in a different manner than usual.

She had recorded a podcast titled 'Surrey's Greener Future' an initiative that had emanated from the Repair Café conference and had attended the second Farmer's Market held since lockdown restrictions had been eased.

The Mayor reported on a series of Coronavirus activities:

- the weekly Farnham Covid-19 Coordination Group continued to meet and had been supported by over 30 organisations from Farnham and Waverley.
- The Hale Community Centre had continued to open its branch of the Share Farnham Store and had initiated the Community Cupboard, a scheme to redistribute surplus food from local suppliers to residents to help to reduce food waste.
- The volunteer buddying scheme which was an extension of the Helpline was being developed through the partnership between the Farnham Maltings and Farnham Town Council.
- The Hardship Fund had received £36,000 in donations and had allocated £9,000 to hardship cases to date.
- Farnham Town Council's weekly management meeting continued to take place to focus on the Council's delegated decisions that needed to be taken during the Coronavirus recovery period.

The Mayor had taken part in a film made by the Farnham Maltings documenting the journey and experience of living and working through Covid-19 lockdown, and the film made by Farnham Town Council marking the 30th anniversary of Farnham in Bloom. She expressed admiration for all the work and community spirit shared within the films.

The Mayor reminded everyone of the Pride in Surrey bus that was visiting Farnham on Sunday 9th August.

C49/20 Questions by Members

None were received.

C50/20 Tourism & Events Working Group

Cllr Earwaker introduced the notes of the Tourism and Events Working Group held on 15th July at Appendix B and updated Council on actions taken since the last meeting.

Cllr Earwaker commented on the plans to restart Music in the Meadow commenting on the revised processes that were being established in accordance with social distancing guidelines to keep the public safe. Cllr Earwaker confirmed that during the Music in Meadow events Gostrey Meadow would be closed to the general public.

Cllr Earwaker commented that due to Covid-19 the Sustainability Festival had been postponed till 2021 and due to social distancing it would not be possible to hold the Food Festival on Castle Street and The Borough in September but that other venues were being looked at to hold a smaller Food Festival.

Cllr Earwaker updated Council that the preparations for October Craft Month were making good progress and there was ongoing research into additional online craft events for the October event.

Cllr Earwaker mentioned work had started on looking at alternative options for the Christmas light switch on event in November and that the inaugural West Street market was planned to take place in October.

The notes of the meeting were adopted.

C51/20 Strategy & Finance Working Group

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 21st July at Appendix C and the Adjourned Strategy and Finance Working Group on 28th July at Appendix Ci.

C52/20 Finance Report

Cllr Neale reported to Council the financial update noting the recommendation to Council to underwrite the cost of the planters for the pavement widening scheme. The Town Council had been pressing for more attractive barriers to be used.

Cllr Ward questioned Councillors that if FTC was going to spend more money on planters would there be a guarantee that the planters would replace the barriers that SCC had used to edge the widened pavements.

The Town Clerk responded that if the additional planters were purchased then some barriers would be removed. The Town Clerk clarified that the recommendation was to underwrite the cost of the planters as SCC had not yet confirmed that the retained on-street carpark funding money could be used.

Cllr Hesse asked how long the pavement widening scheme would last for and how many planters would be purchased for £10,000.

Cllr Neale responded that the scheme had originally been planned to be in place for 12 weeks but that it was likely it would last longer.

The Town Clerk confirmed that each planter cost approximately £500 each and that SCC had used barriers extensively to safeguard children to stop them from running into the road.

Councillors discussed the merits of the pavement widening scheme and the impact it was having on the traffic through Farnham. It was noted that the replacement CCTV cameras that were being installed as part of the project would also monitor the type of traffic travelling through Farnham. It was commented that traffic had been moving steadily through Farnham until the SGN gas main replacement had necessitated temporary road closures.

Councillors discussed SCC's proposal to introduce temporary fixed pavement kerbs rather than using the barriers. Councillors agreed that the fixed kerbs, in addition to the planters would be a positive step and that the use of planters would help stop HGV lorries mounting the kerbs and causing damage and impact to pedestrian safety. Councillors felt a better solution for HGVs was for SCC to remove them on environmental grounds.

It was RESOLVED with fifteen for and one against that FTC: underwrites the cost of additional planters up to £10,000 to be met from the 2020/21 revenue budget.

C53/20 Community Infrastructure Task Group

Cllr Neale reminded Councillors to look at potential projects for CIL funding.

C54/20 Infrastructure Planning Group

Cllr Cockburn reported that the recent consultation draft version of the Farnham Design Statement was being updated with photos would be available for a formal consultation and review in September.

C55/20 Wellbeing Task Group

Cllr Neale reported that FTC and the Farnham Maltings were working together to develop the Farnham Neighbours Network (FNN) an initiative to develop a buddying scheme to help continue the neighbourly support that was encouraged by the paused Helpline during the Coronavirus lockdown period. Cllr Neale Work commented that FNN was developing safeguarding processes and confirming insurance arrangements.

C56/20 Younger People Task Group

Cllr Neale reported that the task group met in June. An outcome from the group was to look at progressing three engagement sessions with young people and to use the skills and expertise of the Surrey Clubs for Young People (SCYP). Cllr Neale commented that SCYP

had already been working with PC Dave Barnes from Surrey Police and had held a series of engagement sessions throughout Surrey and was happy to extend this exercise to Farnham.

Cllr Neale reported that the task group and Farnham youth providers had also discussed the need to hold summer activities for young people.

Councillors commented on areas where there had been some drug related problems and incidents of ASB with young people from outside of Farnham and requested these areas be included. Cllr Mirylees reassured Council that all areas were going to be covered by the engagement sessions and commented that the work of the Task Group was progressing well.

Cllr Hesse left at 8.10pm

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
FTC commission SCYP to undertake engagement project at the cost of £600.**

C57/20 Coronavirus Recovery Task Group

Cllr Neale commented that the main focus of the task group had been the pavement widening project which had been discussed earlier.

C58/20 Financial Regulations Review

Cllr Neale confirmed that the Financial Regulations had been deferred to the next Strategy and Finance.

C59/20 Contract and Assets Update

Cllr Cockburn, as trustee to The Ridgeway School, left the meeting for the first item.

Cllr Neale introduced The Ridgeway School's proposal to develop a café in Gostrey Meadow which would include additional toilets for public use. Cllr Neale reported that The Ridgeway School was looking for a minimum of a 50 year lease at a peppercorn rent. Cllr Neale confirmed that a design for an additional bridge was also part of the project.

Cllr Attfield commented that the new toilets must not be developed at the cost of excluding the upgrade of the existing toilets.

The Town Clerk confirmed that this project was all subject to planning permission and that if Council could agree to the proposal in principle then The Ridgeway School could progress further plans. It was also commented that this venture was envisaged by the School to form curriculum enrichment for the pupils and to provide valuable work experience.

It was RESOLVED *with one abstention on all points and 2 abstention on point 4* that FTC agree to:

- 1) Lease the land occupied by the former Bowling Club, on terms to be agreed, to the Ridgeway School;**
- 2) Support the concept of a new footbridge to connect the café to Gostrey Meadow;**
- 3) Investigate the possibility of additional public toilets connected to the cafe with funding from FTC in lieu of providing new toilets elsewhere;**

- 4) Explore the possibility of moving the playground to be adjacent to the café area;
- 5) Authorise the Town Clerk to progress these issues in conjunction with the Ridgeway School and potential funders.

Cllr Edmonds voted against all points and Cllr Mirylees against the move of the playground. Cllr Cockburn rejoined the meeting.

Cllr Neale commented that as part of the Council Chamber redecoration the original fireplace had been uncovered and would be restored.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
FTC proceed with restoring the fireplace in the Chamber costing up to £1000.**

Cllr Neale updated Councillors on the plans to introduce a gas supply to the Depot enabling the vans to be refuelled more efficiently at the Depot rather than at the Town Council offices.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:
A new gas supply be made to the Depot at a cost of £6,500.**

C60/20 Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Neale introduced the Farnham Infrastructure Programme's (FIP) Vision Statement commenting that it had a Surrey centric view that did not reflect the tri-council approach to the FIP. Cllr Neale confirmed that Chris Tunstall had agreed with this view and would discuss with the FIP contractors the rebranding of the document to reflect more accurately the tri-council approach. Cllr Neale confirmed that Chris Tunstall was receptive to all amendments to the Vision Statement suggested by the Councillors.

Cllr Neale confirmed that the Local Liaison Forum Launch (LLF) would be held on Wednesday 5th August.

Cllr Cockburn expressed frustration at the Project Board and lack of clarity about how it operated. She commented that in a recent article in the Herald there was no mention of the 5th project, the Western Bypass, that had been proposed by Councillors to be included in the list of FIP priorities.

Councillors discussed the impact of the FIP branding and commented that documents referenced in the Vision Statement should be documents from all three Councils. Councillors also suggested it would be helpful if FIP officers could be based in FTC offices.

Cllr Macleod commented that the inclusion of listing a 5th project was too late to be included in the Farnham Herald article.

Cllr Neale confirmed that this FIP was prioritising making improvements to Farnham which would include the Western Bypass.

It was RESOLVED *nem con with absentions from Cllrs Edmonds and Ward* that:

- i) Farnham Town Council notes the documents, written from a Surrey perspective, do not reflect the strategic documents and work undertaken by the Borough and Town Councils;**
- ii) Farnham Town Council proposes that the Farnham Infrastructure Programme draft vision document be revised to reflect the perspectives of Waverley and Farnham before being released;**
- iii) The Town Clerk submits comments incorporating proposed revisions with input from FTC Council.**

C61/20 Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Neale said that the Government would publish the Devolution White Paper in the Autumn with the purpose to introduce more unitary councils. SCC had already issued its intention to make Surrey one unitary authority and, in response, WBC had issued its support for three smaller unitaries along with other Surrey Districts and Boroughs.

Cllr Neale suggested that FTC would be very capable to take on more devolved powers and although FTC needed to wait for the Government White Paper, the National Association for Local Councils (NALC) had sent out a consultation paper for FTC to respond to.

Cllr Cockburn commented that the changes may create an enhanced role for parishes and towns and that FTC was capable to take on an enhanced role and would need to establish the case to support this before the White Paper was published. The experience from Cornwall quoted was not positive as it did not give much in the way of enhanced powers to town and parish councils. FTC is a terrific council and needed to demonstrate its ability to take on more services and an enhanced role as a strong, informed, knowledgeable and capable council.

Cllr Cockburn left at 9.20pm.

Cllr MacLeod suggested that FTC could manage more services and suggested that Surrey was far too big to form one unitary council.

Cllr Ward commented that the devolution paper would move power upwards and not downwards and as Leader of WBC would he abstain from the Council recommendations.

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

- 1) Farnham Town Council work with SSALC, NALC and the SLCC to achieve the best results from the forthcoming White Paper for the Farnham community;**
- 2) Farnham Town Council works alongside neighbouring Town and Parish Councils to secure the best deal for local communities;**
- 3) Any new rights emerging from the White Paper should be based on a right to deliver services not just the right to be consulted on how those services are delivered;**
- 4) The Town and Parish Councils sector should be seen as an equal partner in effective local governance and should have its role as a service delivery organisation enhanced through any future re-organisation;**
- 5) Finance for services devolved should be allocated with any functions transferred;**

**6) As the details of the White Paper emerge, further work on the best options for Farnham from the perspective of the local community be prepared; and
7) Neighbourhood strategies and Neighbourhood Plans should be enhanced through any reorganisation.**

C62/20 **Planning and Licensing Applications**

Cllr Edmonds introduced the notes of the Planning and Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on: 29th June, 13th July and 27th July 2020, appendices D, E, F to the agenda.

Cllr Edmonds reported that the Veola Incinerator proposal near Alton had been discussed. He expressed the view that it could not be approved unless the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was signed off and that FTC should object.

Cllr Martin said she had grave concerns and agreed with David Howell who spoke on behalf of the Farnham Society earlier in the meeting and that FTC should have been consulted on this application.

Cllr Edmonds agreed and said the Town Council needed to object.

The Town Clerk advised that even though there had not been a formal consultation of the Town Council, FTC could write and object expressing concern on the detrimental effects on Farnham both on the air quality issue and congestion of vehicles, and could reinforce the need for the EIA.

Cllr Martin proposed, Cllr Blishen seconded and

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

FTC objects to the proposed incinerator on the following grounds:

- 1 The Environmental Impact Assessment obligation had not been met**
- 2 The negative material impacts including the HGV movements through Farnham, congestion and pollution.**

Cllr Edmonds commented that FTC was working on creating a better relationship between FTC and WBC Planning to improve communication so that FTC objections were not ignored. He cited a lack of communication and the recent concerns over the handling of street naming.

The Town Clerk commented that FTC could take a more formal approach but to take the diplomatic approach initially.

C63/20 **Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

The Town Clerk commented that all matters had been raised in earlier agenda items.

C64/20 **Reports from Other Councils**

- I) Cllr MacLeod confirmed that the Crest Nicholson scheme would not open until September 2021 rather than Spring 2021 due to the Covid-19 delays and that the Royal Deer junction roads works that were due in the run up to Christmas 2020 would not happen until early 2021.
- II) Cllr MacLeod commented that comments on the HGV issue in Upper Hale needed to be sent to Cllr Spence at SCC.

- III) Cllr Ward commented that WBC had voted against the single unitary proposal and that all eleven borough leaders had signed a letter to the Government setting out their response to the proposal of a single unitary. Cllr Ward confirmed that the WBC Executive had committed to spend up to £10,000 to investigate other options available rather than a single unitary option.

C65/20 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

There were no reports made.

C66/20 **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 17th September.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.57 pm

Chairman

Date