



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

# A

## Minutes Council

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### **Time and date**

6.30 pm on Thursday 10th December, 2020

### **Place**

Meeting 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 John "Scotty" Fraser  
Councillor Michaela Gray  
Councillor George Hesse  
Councillor Andy MacLeod  
Councillor Mark Merryweather  
Councillor Kika Mirylees  
Councillor John Neale

### **Apologies for absence**

Cllrs Brian Edmonds, Michaela Martin and John Ward

### **Officers Present:**

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

There were 2 members of the public in attendance.

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

### **C106/20 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Edmonds, Martin and Ward.

**C107/20 Disclosures of Interest**

The Town Clerk declared a pecuniary interest in relation to Exempt Appendix H including the Town Clerk's appraisal and left the meeting for discussion on this item.

**C108/20 Minutes**

The minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October were agreed to be signed as a correct record.

**C109/20 Questions and Statements by the Public**

Mr David Wylde asked about the ongoing closure of the Town Hall to members of the public and what happened to members of the public who were vulnerable or needed someone to talk to.

In response, the Town Clerk advised that any members of the public who needed to see a member of staff during lockdown were invited to make an appointment and a covid-compliant meeting would be arranged. The Coronavirus Helpline was still being co-ordinated from the office and any specific help was being directed to anyone who needed it. Waverley Borough Council, who supported the community requesting benefits or had housing need had moved their appointments to the Memorial Hall.

**C110/20 Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor began her announcements by saying that as lockdown continued no-one would forget 2020. She commended the staff who worked extremely hard to achieve what they achieved and continued to organise events where possible, such as the farmers' market, in accordance with the Covid restrictions.

The Remembrance Services for both schools and the wider community had been very poignant with reduced numbers.

The Mayor had attended the Christmas Beams of Light switch on which had been well received and had been participating in a range of Zoom events with young and old, most recently with the 11<sup>th</sup> Farnham Beavers group.

The Mayor has recently supported the Round Table with their Christmas Sleigh collecting for the needy and commended Farnham Assist who were distributing food parcels.

The Mayor was participating in the Farnham Civic Christmas Carol Service with the Lord Lieutenant and Leader of Surrey County Council which would be broadcast on 23<sup>rd</sup> December. She hoped that despite these difficult times, everyone would have a happy and healthy Christmas.

**C111/20 Questions by Members**

Question by Cllr George Hesse

"Can the Town Clerk please give an update on the proposal that came before Council on the 30th of July, for the re-location of the children's playground in Gostrey Meadow, the building of

a Cafe to be operated by pupils of The Ridgeway School, on the site of the disused bowling club on the south side of the River Wey and the proposal to build an additional bridge across the river.

Is this still a priority given two factors :-

- the first being the almost unanimous opposition to the proposal by a considerable number of users of the playground polled on Facebook in the last few weeks and
- the second, the budgetary constraints which are likely to result from the Covid 19 Pandemic?

Can this issue be reviewed in early 2021? “

In response, the Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had only provided landlord consent for the use of Gostrey Meadow for the building of a café. The Ridgeway School proposal was in their hands to progress and the Town Council would await further discussions and a formal application to see the details proposed.

Councillors would understand that the Town Council does not create policy or priorities based on partial information garnered on social media. The informal survey referenced by Cllr Hesse, followed a confidential Town Council Task Group meeting when potential options were being discussed but nothing had been decided at this stage. The Town Council would consult on any proposal were one to emerge.

The Town Council was currently refurbishing the current playground, repairing and updating obsolete equipment. Further plans to improve the playground and Gostrey Meadow with some funding earmarked from developments in the town would be discussed in due course.

Councillors would of course review all proposals coming forward in light of resources available and whether required funding could be met from the revenue budget, earmarked reserves or other sources.”

### **Working Group Reports**

#### **C112/20 Tourism and Events Working Group**

Cllr Earwaker reported on the meeting of the Tourism and Events Working Group held on 4<sup>th</sup> November at Appendix B. Council noted the success of recent covid-compliant events including the first trial of the West Street Arts and Crafts Market. However, the latest lockdown and subsequent restrictions meant that other events were being curtailed or cancelled and that sponsorship opportunities would be lessened.

Council welcomed the new online transactional website WeareFarnham which would provide low-cost access to ecommerce opportunities for businesses.

#### **C113/20 Strategy & Finance Working Group**

Cllr Neale introduced the notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group held on 1<sup>st</sup> December at Appendix C to the agenda.

Cllr Neale presented the finance report advising that there was still uncertainty over the national pandemic situation.

### **Internal Audit**

CI 14/20 The Internal Auditor had presented his interim report which had been undertaken remotely as a result of covid19 restrictions. Council noted he had undertaken a review of information on the website against the requirements of the Transparency Code and that some updates had resulted.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the Internal Auditor's Interim report be noted.**

### **Strategy Review meeting**

CI 15/20 Cllr Neale advised that notes of the Strategic Planning Meeting in October, which had been circulated to all councillors, had been discussed. The meeting had reviewed achievements previously agreed and considered areas for development. The work of all three tiers of Councils on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme was impacting on both workload and resources, and this was likely to continue

The Council vision was revised slightly and proposed to Council for adoption.

"The Council should be, and seen to be, the influential and effective voice for Farnham, bringing together the views of all organisations working for the good of the Town".

"Farnham Town Council aims to be an effective and efficient organisation providing high-quality, sustainable services and facilities for the residents and businesses of Farnham whilst addressing the climate challenge, with a strong and respected voice representing Farnham's best interests."

Council confirmed that there were no additional priorities for the next financial year and to continue with the same programme of work with a few adjustments including the Farnham Infrastructure Programme, and the prospect of Local Government Re-organisation whilst consolidating the work on being World Craft Town; supporting the recovery from Covid19; developing strategies for the new green spaces taken on by the Town Council and focusing on communication.

**It was RESOLVED *unanimously* to adopt the revised Vision.**

### **Task Groups**

CI 16/20 In terms of Task Groups reporting to Strategy & Finance Cllr Cockburn advised that the Design Statement was being formatted following consultation and Cllr Neale reported that the CIL Task Group was preparing a bid for Gostrey Meadow improvements. Council noted that Idverde had been commissioned to draft a report at a cost of £2,000 that would support this and the Green Flag application.

Cllr Attfield reported that the Assets Task Group had considered a wide range of matters including the need for some refurbishment of the Gostrey War Memorial ahead of its centenary in April 2021. The costs was estimated at £8,000 for the stone work and £2,000 for hedging work.

**It was RESOLVED *unanimously* that:**

- 1) Farnham commemorates the centenary of the Gostrey Meadow war memorial;**
- 2) FTC refurbishes the war memorial ahead of the anniversary; and replaces the laurel hedging with yew with costs met from the 2020/21 budget.**

Council noted that Drake and Kannemeyer were being instructed to develop proposals for the refurbishment of toilets based on discussions in the Task Group and would hopefully have some links into Farnham's Craft Town status. The Task Group had agreed a design for village gateways based on what had been proposed in consultation with local members in

Wrecclesham using approved Section 106 funding. Council agreed that the format should be used across Farnham including in Hale and Weybourne.

Cllr Earwaker advised that as chair of the well-being Task Group he was involved in a project led by Farnham Connects and the Maltings to tackle loneliness and isolation, key issues emerging from the pandemic.

### **New Task Group**

C117/20

Council noted that with Section 106 funding achieved towards a sculpture, discussions would be taking place with Waverley for the transfer of a small section of the triangle of grass off Union Road but that a Task Group should be established to commission the right piece of art. Cllr Blishen and Cllr Cockburn had been agreed as members with the UCA, Public Art Trust and Farnham Maltings to be invited to participate. Cllr Mirylees encouraged commissioning a local crafts person, and it was noted that this was always encouraged but without always attracting the right people. The commission would be widely advertised.

**It was RESOLVED *nem con* that a Task Group be established with external input for the proposed sculpture for the Maltings Riverside, using the UCA Section 106 contribution and any additional funds.**

### **Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

Cllr Neale updated Council on the latest discussions and the consultation events held to date. These had been very useful with a range of matters ranging from Climate Change to HGVs, to cycling and pedestrian safety had arisen. Thematic Local Liaison Forum meetings were being held in the new year. Many people were beginning to realise some adaptation to lifestyles would inevitably come as a result of emerging proposals.

Cllr Dickson said there had been a lot of interest in Hale as a result of the Programme, and a new residents' association - Hale Voice was being established led by Catherine Powell which was a great step forward. Councillors commended Catherine Powell for her inspirational efforts noting she was thorough and professional in her approach.

Cllr Neale reported on other matters discussed including the Waverley Boundary Review; the Local Plan Part 2 consultation being co-ordinated by Cllr Cockburn and Jenny de Quervain; and the Taxi & Licensing Policy Review for which councillors needed to submit comments for the January Strategy & Finance meeting in order that a response could be submitted as the closing date was before the next Council.

C118/20

### **Budget 2021-22**

Cllr Neale introduced the budget and precept strategy report at Appendix D which was recommended by Strategy & Finance for adoption by Council.

Farnham Town Council delivered exceptional value for money when compared against local and national comparators and this proposed budget had been reduced compared with 2020-21 mindful of the pressures on the community. However, income was also forecast to be reduced as a result of the pandemic and caution about sponsorship and event income.

Council noted that with reduced income as a result of more exemptions and a reduction in the collection rate from 99% to 98%, there was still a shortfall of £47,459 in this budget and that how any shortfall would be met would be determined at the precept setting meeting in January. Options could include increasing income (as it was hoped that some events would still take place next year) or using reserves which had been set aside, to minimise any impact.

The draft budget had been drawn up based on a review of expenditure in 2020/21 and on the 2019/20 outturn but in a context of continuing uncertainty over Coronavirus. This meant a prudent approach had been taken over potential sponsorship and income from activities. In addition, investment income had reduced to virtually nothing and there was still the prospect of negative interest rates at some point in the future. The budget included fees and charges broadly based on 2020/ 1 levels, given the continuing uncertainty in the economic climate.

The draft budget attached at Annex 1 (by code) was £1,399,850 (down from £1,400,327 in 2020/21) with draft discretionary income of £204,870 (down from £254,300 budgetted in the current year) and (assuming no precept increase) a total income of £1,352,391) meaning a shortfall of income at this stage of £47,459

In discussion, Cllr Merryweather drew attention to other areas and community initiatives such as Tice's Meadow which may require additional support from Farnham town Council in the coming year. Other councillors drew attention to the pressure on staffing and that it would not be right to pare down the staffing budget, noting that no provision had been made for any pay settlement in 2021. Cllr Attfield, as Chair of the HR Panel thanked Councillors for their supportive comments and agreed that Council needed to give encouragement to staff and thank them for their contribution.

After further discussion, **it was RESOLVED unanimously to agree the budget report and that a budget of £1,399,850 be set for 2021/22.**

#### **C119/20 Planning and Licensing Applications**

In the absence of the Chair of the Planning and Licensing Consultative Group, Cllr Fraser introduced the notes commenting that a lot of time had been spent in recent Waverley meetings on matters that should not have needed to be discussed. He mentioned in particular the work on the Hop Blossom seats and the Woolmead telephone kiosks which had taken a lot of time. He congratulated Jenny de Quervain for her thoroughness in preparing agendas which saved so much time.

Council agreed and said that the Town and Parish Council comments do carry weight if put forward with passion and effectively.

The notes were agreed with a small additional amendment to WA/2020/1744 as per the additional comments from the FTC Planning Officer.

#### **C120/20 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

The Town Clerk advised there were no additional actions apart from those already referenced in the Working Group Notes.

#### **C121/20 Reports from Other Councils**

- i) Cllr Ward provided an update on matters being progressed at Waverley Borough Council including the new Corporate Strategy, the Boundary Commission Review; the KPMG report on opportunities for collaboration and the threat of unitaries and the Borough Council work on supporting the creation of vaccination centres around the Borough.
- ii) Cllr MacLeod reported on the new Surrey funding programme worth £100m over five years, which worked at around £250k per annum per councillor Division. He encouraged councillors to support their communities in developing bids.

- iii) Cllr MacLeod also advised on the County Medium Term Financial Plan which had funding allocated for Farnham through the Farnham Infrastructure Programme.

#### **C122/20 Reports from Outside Bodies**

- i) Cllr Cockburn reported on the excellent Farnham Sports Awards and congratulated the Sports Council under the leadership of David Gill for running the only Sports Awards in Surrey during 2020.
- ii) Cllr Cockburn advised that the Bourne Conservation Group had questioned progress on the provision of Swift Bricks in the Brightwells development and the Town Clerk said this had been followed up with the WBC project team.
- iii) The Mayor reported on the Maltings AGM.
- iv) Cllr Blishen reported on the Brightwells Gostrey Centre which had been struggling during the pandemic and would ideally like to be based in the heart of town.

#### **C123/20 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January at 6.30pm

#### **C124/20 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Cllr Cockburn proposed, Cllr Blishen seconded and it was agreed unanimously to exclude the press and public in view of the exempt staffing information included in Exempt Appendix H.

#### **C125/20 HR matters**

Council considered the report at Exempt Appendix H with recommendations on the Christmas closure and the Town Clerk's appraisal.

##### **Christmas Closure**

Council noted the exceptional efforts undertaken by staff during 2020 and agreed to close the offices on 22<sup>nd</sup> December to allow staff to visit relatives during the five day Christmas bubble announced by the Government.

##### **Cycle to Work Scheme**

Council discussed a proposal to introduce the Government's cycle to work scheme. As well as being of benefit for the environment, fitting with the Council's climate change proposals in reducing carbon emissions, and good for the health of employees, it was also tax efficient as a salary sacrifice scheme with employees paying less tax and the employer saving 13.8% on the National Insurance contributions.

The employee is able to purchase a suitable bike (including adapted bikes for people with disabilities, e-bikes, and cargo bikes and any accessories. It was noted that a secure bike area would also need to be created depending on the take up of the scheme.

The Town Clerk left the meeting at this point

##### **Town Clerk Appraisal**

Cllr Attfield reported that the Town Clerk's appraisal had been undertaken on 28<sup>th</sup> October and that all the objectives from the previous appraisal had been achieved along with a substantial number of additional outcomes. New objectives for 2020/21 had been set in accordance with the Council's priorities and matters discussed at the Strategy planning meeting. In view of the performance achieved, the Panel recommended that the Town Clerk be awarded an incremental increase with effect from 1st April 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that:

- 1) **The Town Hall close on 22<sup>nd</sup> December and that 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December be included as additional leave days in view of the extra work staff had undertaken during the pandemic;**
- 2) **Farnham Town Council joins the Cycle to Work Scheme;**
- 3) **The limit for the amount an employee could spend on a bike and accessories be set at £3,500;**
- 4) **The Town Clerk make the necessary arrangements for the introduction of the scheme including a legal agreement for employees and the deductions from salary for any participating employees; and**
- 5) **A secure bicycle storage area be constructed in consultation with the Assets Task Group with costs met from the 2020/21 budget.**
- 6) **The outcome of the Town Clerk's appraisal be noted and an increment be awarded effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.**

Chairman

Date