



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 23rd June, 2022

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

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

Apologies for absence

Michaela Wicks, Brian Edmonds, John "Scotty" Fraser and John Ward

Officers Present: Iain Lynch, 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 Alan Crawley of the Parish of Badshot Lea and Hale.

C11/20 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Edmonds, Fraser, Ward and Wicks.

C12/20 Disclosures of Interest

Cllr Merryweather and Cllr Mirylees declared an interest in relation to the Farnham Museum, as Executive Members with responsibility for Assets and Culture, and left room during the discussion of this item.

The Town Clerk declared an interest in relation to Exempt Annex I and left the meeting for the item.

C13/20 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on May 12th were agreed for signing by the Mayor.

C14/20 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

There were no questions or statements by the public.

C15/20 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor reported that Farnham had commemorated its 30th year of friendship with Andernach with a visit by the Farnham Andernach Friendship Association accompanied by the Bürgermeister Claus Peitz. He had received a new painting of Andernach on behalf of the Council which he showed to Council and together they had re-signed the deed of friendship.

The Mayor was looking forward to the coming weekend which saw both the Farnham Carnival with a Jubilee theme and Picnic and proms in Gostrey Meadow on the Sunday.

C16/20 **Questions by Members**

There were no questions by Members.

C17/20 **Working Group Notes**

C18/20 **a) Community Enhancement Working Group**

Cllr Dickson introduced the notes of the Community Enhancement meeting held on 9th June.

- i) Council noted progress made for the 2022 South and South East in Bloom and RHS Britain in Bloom and in particular a significant increase in biodiversity measures. Farnham had been asked to host the Awards event for South and South East in Bloom in September and officers were working with the Farnham Maltings and SSEiB with sponsorship promised from the Patio Black Spot Removal Company and Graduate Landscapes.
It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Farnham Town Council contribute up to £2,000 towards the costs of hosting the South and South East In Bloom Awards 2022.
- ii) Cllr
Dickson advised that Farnham had been asked to accept more trees for planting in the autumn noting that there were plans to extend the Riverside Avenue with mature Trees and plant near the Co-op in Upper Hale. Council also noted the frustration experienced by communities after WBC had planted trees in informal play areas with no notice or consultation.
It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Farnham Town Council accept more Surrey Street trees to be planted around Farnham and the surrounding areas.
- iii) Council noted the positive reception to the four Jubilee benches that had been installed and the suggestion that one be placed in each of the remaining wards after discussion with the ward members.
It was RESOLVED *nem con* that an additional Jubilee benches be placed in each ward in consultation with ward members.

- iv) Council noted various updates including dates for new names to be added to the Famous names of Farnham wall; details of new vinyl wrapping and woodwork at bus stops that needed refreshing.

C19/20 **b) Strategy & Finance Working Group**

Cllr Evans introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Finance meeting held on 14th June.

- i) Cllr Evans reported the Working Group had reviewed the list of regular Direct Debits and the payments made regularly through the Council's Commercial Cards, and heard of the nonsense being applied by HSBC who would not increase the council's commercial card facility without a personal credit check on one of the signatories personal (not council) accounts. With other issues, the Town Clerk had started a review of the Council's banking options.

Council noted a grant application from 40 Degreez for Outreach work was expected as was a further tranche of funding for the Farnham Support Fund. Council noted the initial Support Fund monies had been distributed and the work of the Panel was commended.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that a further £10,000 be allocated for the Farnham Support Fund from the Community Initiatives Fund subject to the additional funds being matched by a target of £20,000 from the community and partner organisations.

- ii) Council noted the work of the Task Groups reporting to Strategy & Finance and that a preferred sculpture for the Riverside had now been chosen. The Conservation Areas Task Group had met on 26th May and it was noted that the Old Church Lane Conservation Area was to be reviewed by Waverley now the Great Austins Conservation Area Review had been completed. The

- iii) **Farnham Museum**

Cllr Merryweather and Cllr Mirylees left the room for the discussion of this item.

Cllr Evans introduced the Strategy & Finance Working Group discussion on the Museum of Farnham and Willmer House. Council noted that that the concept of a virtual museum had been dismissed following the review of options by Waverley's consultants with two key options being considered further: transfer to an existing trust (or similar organisation) or transfer to a new trust. The idea of separating the building from the collection had been discounted as it would be more expensive than keeping them together.

Cllr Evans advised that Waverley was submitting an application in the new round of MEND (Museums and Estates Development Fund) funding (up to £500k) to deal with the urgent brickwork renovation.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Farnham Town Council make an initial pledge of £10,000 to support the MEND application.

Council noted that the Farnham Maltings had submitted an expression of interest to take on both the museum service and Willmer House and would be considering this at their July Board meeting.

Council debated the pros and cons of Farnham Town Council taking on responsibility for the museum service and the building. The Grade I listed building

initial works would need to be supplemented by a substantial additional cost and ongoing maintenance. Willmer House had been home to the Museum for some 60 years and any transfer would need to contain safeguards for public access.

Council considered the option of taking on the Museum service if required, noting that many town or parish councils ran museums. Council noted that the Farnham Maltings had done a good job in running the Museum despite being hampered by a short contract. Council favoured working in partnership with the Farnham Maltings as a preference, but considered whether it should take on the service noting that an increase in precept (based on existing funding and assuming no additional funding - approximately 6%) may well be required if the Museum were to be run locally after any transitional funding from Waverley ceased.

It was RESOLVED by 8 votes to 4 that Farnham Town Council takes on the running of the Museum service directly if the Maltings did not wish to do so.

Council debated the option of Farnham Town Council taking transfer of Willmer House. Some members felt this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to safeguard an historic building whilst others were concerned about the risk and burden that would be placed on future council taxpayers as the amount of investment needed to restore the building was not known. The Town Council needed to be realistic about the implications and the cost implications. Some councillors considered there was a good opportunity to make better use of the asset and generate new income. Whilst councillors were confident about the Town Council taking on the museum service there were concerns taking on the asset would be a 'white elephant'.

Concern was expressed over the transfer of the building to a trust (new or existing) should a trust fall into difficulties in future. Council was keen that public access and local ownership were retained, and a protective clause in any transfer was suggested.

The Working Group recommendation on the proposed transfer of Willmer House to Farnham Town Council was amended (proposed by Cllr Blishen and seconded by Cllr Hesse) with the words 'critical repairs' replaced with 'all repairs' and the **RESOLUTION that Farnham Town Council takes on the transfer of Willmer House, subject to the MEND application being successful and all repairs being completed was LOST with 7 votes against, 3 in favour and 2 abstentions..**

A new recommendation was subsequently considered (proposed by Cllr Evans and seconded by Cllr Hesse) and it was **RESOLVED *nem con* that Waverley Borough Council be asked to ensure that any transfer to a third party includes a reversionary clause such that the building be offered back to Waverley Borough Council, Farnham Town Council or another public sector body if the receiving body faced difficulties in future.**

iv)

Assets

Council received an update on the commissioned designs for the Hale Chapels Garden which would be submitted to the July Strategy & Finance meeting; the progress on the West Street Cemetery Gates refurbishment which were on target for completion in August; and on the latest position on the proposed widening of the Gates for access to Gostrey Meadow from Union Road. The implications of alternate designs or an access from Longbridge had also been discussed but it had been agreed not to proceed further until the proposals for a café and/or playground

improvements were developed. Council noted that officers would be progressing quotes for the refurbishment of the bandstand following storm damage, with the paint colour reflecting the green in the Council Crest.

Central Car Park Toilets

Council noted the teething troubles experienced with the refurbished toilets, and the need for an additional tank to maintain water pressure. This addition, along with some other adjustments had led to an increased cost of £165,000. Rachel Morris had inspected the disabled toilet and had recommended a push button opening which although not a formal requirement was good practice for wheelchair access.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- 1) the latest cost position be noted;**
- 2) an automated door opener for the disability toilet be installed (cost to be determined); and**
- 3) an additional CIL contribution of £10,000 be allocated towards these costs.**

Council Offices

Council noted that issues with the lift in the Council Office continued and initial estimates to resolve the problem ranging from £17,000 to £25,000 had been received. Officers were investigating the optimum solution.

Council noted that the heat exchanger on the Council's boiler had failed and quotations had been sought for a new boiler with increased efficiency. It was noted that an air source or ground source heat pump could not be easily retrofitted without replacing all the radiators.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- 1) a replacement boiler at a cost of up to £15,000 plus associated works be agreed; and**
- 2) the final decision following evaluation be made by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Assets Task Group.**

CCTV

Council considered the proposal to update the remaining analogue cameras with digital cameras and that an initial quotation for four analytic cameras had been received of £15,000. The Working Group recommended that two of these be Pan Tilt and Zoom cameras and that a dedicated laptop be purchased to enable Surrey Police to access the system without the need to use council resources, given the use for evidential data.

It was RESOLVED *nem con*:

- 1) to replace the analogue cameras at Longbridge and the West Street with PTZ cameras to give maximum flexibility with costs met from the 2022/23 CCTV budget; and**
- 2) purchase a dedicated laptop for the police to download evidential data from the Milestone software at a cost estimated to be £1,200.**

v) Infrastructure Planning Group

Council noted the Design Statement Consultation would end on 4th July. Council also noted there had been a call for evidence to the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill. This was an opportunity to raise concerns about the unfairness of the planning system with the limited protection for sites allocated in Neighbourhood Plans. It was proposed by Cllr Dunsmore, seconded by Cllr Merryweather and **RESOLVED**

nem con that FTC submit evidence to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill following discussion by the Infrastructure Planning Group.

vi) Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman introduced the latest position on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme referencing meetings that had been held in early June. The first on materials for Town Centre proposed works had seen councillors object to bland lower grade materials being proposed as these were not right for the conservation area. The Council's representatives had pressed for the highest quality materials in the Conservation Area.

The second meeting was on priorities for the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. There was consensus on the priorities (circulated to all councillors), but it was noted these may not all receive government funding as were not 'commuter routes'. Council noted the latest position on the Wayfinding project, 20MPH zones and that responses to several issues were still awaited from Surrey CC including whether or not the build outs in Castle Street would be temporary as previously discussed.

Cllr Beaman advised that concerns had been raised over the proposed consultation being held in the Summer of Town Centre options. The meetings were all town centre focussed and held in one week. It was agreed to encourage Surrey to hold additional sessions in other parts of Farnham and hold geographic Local Liaison Forums. There was concern that the Farnham Board meeting had had an inadequate report 'bounced' in to dismiss the Link Road option. As there had been no previous discussion, the Farnham Board had agreed to defer this for further discussion by the Town Council.

vii) County Deals

Council noted the latest position and that the Town and Parish Council sector was now represented on the Surrey CC Delivery Board looking at this by Cllr Steve Cosser, Chairman of Surrey Association of Local Councils, having previously been left out of the discussions. Surrey was intent on progressing this with a 'coalition of willing partners' and there was real concern over the loss of parish council democracy if Surrey operated with area based committees across the whole county (as it is on one third parished) but also potential with devolved service delivery. **It was RESOLVED nem con that Farnham Town Council gets involved in discussions on County Deals and seeks a wider presentation through Surrey ALC to engage town and parish councils.**

viii) Council noted a number of items from the Town Clerk Update including the Home Office biometric Visa service being hosted in the Council Offices, the arrangements for the World Craft Town Workshop in Bornholm in September, the new North Downs Way sign being installed at Hickleys Corner.

C20/20 Planning and Licensing Applications

Council received the notes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Committee Working Group meetings held on 9th and 23rd May, and 6th and 20th June at Appendices D, E, F and G.

One item was discussed in detail by Council, the proposed 20m 5G telecoms mast in South Street with substantial cabinets. It was agreed to make representations about the inappropriateness of the siting and suggest alternative locations.

C21/20 **Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

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

C22/20 **Reports from Other Councils**

Cllr Cockburn expressed concern over the lack of support from WBC officers on Farnham development sites. A meeting was scheduled with officers to discuss.

Cllr MacLeod advised that he was on the Select Committee for County Deals at Surrey and that there would be no additional resources unless Surrey were to have a Directly elected Mayor, and this was not being sought.

C23/20 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

- i) Cllr Cockburn reported that the most recent Farnham Sports Council meeting had been held at the Ahmadiyya Mubarak Mosque in Tilford which had been a successful occasion.
- ii) Cllr Cockburn commended Irene Phillips and her team for the preparations for an event to welcome Ukrainian visitors using the Bourne Show facilities.
- iii) Cllr Dickson reported that the Farnham Fringe Festival would take place between 2nd and 17th July.
- iv) Cllr MacLeod reported on the Creative Response Summer Exhibition which was taking place until 28th June with some very affordable works of art.

C24/20 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday July 28th at 7pm [Subsequently changed to 4th August].

C25/20 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The Mayor proposed, and it was **Resolved *nem con* to exclude the press and public in view of the confidential staffing matter under discussion.**

The Town Clerk also left the meeting at this point.

C26/20 **Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group notes or Panels.**

Council received a report at Exempt Appendix I on the Town Clerks appraisal. Council noted the impressive list of achievements, despite some real challenges, during the last 20 months appraisal period under the Town Clerk's leadership and especially the rare feat and recognition of being the NALC Council of the year 2022 and runner up in Clerk of the Year. It was also a great achievement to have been recognised as Not-for-Profit Organisation of the year 2021/22 by the Corporate Livewire team's Prestige Awards and receive the first Green Flag and a third nomination into RHS Britain in Bloom.

Agreed objective for 2022/23 were set in line with Council corporate priorities and included recruitment of the new Communities and administration Manager; commissioning a wider staff grading review; completion of scheduled capital projects; preparing for the new Council

in 2023; continuing to develop World Craft Town; continuing to play a part in supporting the Farnham Infrastructure programme and reviewing the next stage of enhancements of Gostrey Meadow. The Panel had agreed an incremental rise for the Town Clerk.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Town Clerk be awarded an incremental increase to LC4 scale point 61 backdated to 01 April 2022.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.10 pm

Chairman

Date