



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A1

Minutes Full Council

Time and date

7.00pm on Thursday 20 March 2008

Place

The Council Chamber, South Street, Farnham

Members Present

- * Cllr C Cockburn (Town Mayor)
- * Cllr G Beel (Deputy Town Mayor)
- * Cllr D J Attfield
- * Cllr V Duckett
- * Cllr L Fleming
- * Cllr (Mrs) P Frost
- * Cllr R Frost
- * Cllr C Genziani
- o Cllr G Hargreaves
- * Cllr S Hill
- * Cllr D Le Gal
- o Cllr A Lovell
- * Cllr J Maines
- o Cllr S O'Grady
- * Cllr R Steel
- * Cllr C Storey
- * Cllr A Thorp
- * Cllr J Ward

- * Present
- o Apologies for absence

Officers Present:

R Potter (Town Clerk)
W Coulter (Member and Committee Services Co-ordinator)

C 177/07 **QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the public present to ask a question.

C 178/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hargreaves, Lovell and O'Grady.

C 179/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2008 were signed by the Town Mayor as a correct record.

C 180/07 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

No members, in relation to any items included on the agenda for this meeting, disclosed any personal or prejudicial interests in line with the Town Council's Code of Conduct, or gifts and hospitality in line with Government Legislation.

C 181/07 **STATEMENTS BY THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the public present to make a statement.

Part 1 – ITEMS FOR DECISION

C182/07 **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor reminded members that they were invited to attend a Retailers Cheese and Wine Reception at the Farnham Maltings on 31st March 2008 to explain to the Retailers the Town Council's plans and projects for the future.

The Town Mayor also reminded Members that the Annual Meeting of Electors would be on 10 April 2008. The meeting was an opportunity for residents of Farnham to meet the Councillors and find out what the Council had done over the previous year and what it intended to do in the future.

The Town Mayor informed Members that the Farnham Traffic Report had been referred by Surrey County Council's Farnham Traffic and Transport Group to the Town Council for observations. A summary report would be available to all Members.

The Town Clerk would arrange a Workshop with Members in May before being considered by Full Council in June 2008.

C183/07 **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

Members received a report which explained the current situation with regard to the structure of Council meetings. The report explained that the Corporate Development and Audit Task Group had carried out an initial review of the progress of the new structure over the past year and their findings and recommendations were reported to the Council for decision. Their proposal was to adopt the structure piloted in the previous municipal year.

Members noted that 9 scheduled meetings were held during the Municipal year 2007/2008. In addition under the pilot scheme the Council was supported by a number of working groups including Corporate Development and Audit Task Group, Planning Consultative Group, Cemeteries Working and Appeal Group, Cemeteries Buildings Group, Farnham in Bloom Review Group, Bandstand Working Group and a Minerals Working Party all of which meet when required.

The Corporate Development and Audit Task Group considered three possible options for the structure of Council meetings, including the piloted option and the reintroduction of Committees. One option was for the introduction of a Services Committee to be accountable for the delivery Services of the Council and the other option was to have a Service Committee and a Policy and Resources Committee. However, it was the view of the Corporate Development and Audit Task Group that the current piloted democratic system had worked well although there were areas for improvement. The report therefore proposed that the Council should operate through Full Council with no committees, but with a simple structure of Working Groups involving Members and Officers.

Cllr Maines asked for clarification as to why only the one proposal was being considered by the Council and not the other two options. Cllr Maines presented her views on the merits of having an additional Service Committee.

The report to Council had identified certain areas of concern including the issue that some members who do not sit on the Task Groups do not receive all the information and supporting papers and only receive reports when they are submitted to Council for decision.

The Town Mayor gave an overview of the Council structure as it had previously worked before the introduction of the pilot scheme. The previous structure limited officers' resources to deliver services as numerous reports were written and duplicated for both committees and Full Council.

The principle of the new system was to make the Council's decision making process more transparent to the public and electorate of Farnham at the same time allowing the Council to focus time on delivering services.

Members acknowledged that the organisational structure of Staff and Services had been streamlined to reflect the pilot project thereby releasing other Council officers to deliver services to the public rather than writing reports for the committees.

Cllr Maines expressed concern that the membership of the current working groups had a large number of Officers in ratio to Members and that the Town Clerk was chairing some meetings.

The Town Clerk explained that each of the elected members of the Working Groups decided who the Chairman of the group would be and that one of the groups had decided that the Town Clerk would chair its meetings. However, it was reiterated that the officers attending the groups were responsible for delivering services.

The officers including the Town Clerk had no voting or decision making rights on any of the working groups and the emphasis was placed on Members to provide guidance, and advice to the officers to influence, improve or deliver services. All decisions outside delegated authority were still the responsibility of Full Council.

Councillor Maines requested that her amendment to the first recommendation of the report be allowed to be considered before the Council considered the other recommendations of the Corporate Development and Audit Task Group.

Councillor Maines proposed the following amendment to the first recommendation:

“To continue with the current piloted democratic structure, with one amendment, to include a Service Committee”.

The amendment to the first recommendation was seconded by Councillor Duckett.

Councillor Maines explained that she was concerned about the public perception of the Council’s accountability, transparency and democratic process.

She also explained that she was concerned that the quorum of the working groups was just three members.

The Town Mayor confirmed that the quorum agreed by Council was 51%, therefore that was usually three members for the working groups however, it was confirmed by the Town Clerk that any Member could attend the meetings of the working groups as an observer.

A vote was taken on the amendment proposed by Councillor Maines and seconded by Councillor Duckett.

The Council voted on the amendment, 2 For, 12 Against and 1 Abstention.

As the amendment had failed to receive a majority vote the Council continued to consider the proposals as recommended by the Corporate Development and Audit Task Group.

The Town Clerk informed the Members that Working/Task Group Agendas, papers and reports would be distributed to all Members prior to any meeting and an improved system of reporting Working/Task Groups findings to Full Council would be developed. This would include an opportunity for an elected Member from the Working/Task Group to present the report and invite questions.

Terms of Reference

The Town Clerk explained that the Terms of Reference for the Working and Task Groups had been revised.

Clarification on the Role of the Town Mayor

The Corporate Development and Audit Task Group recommended that Members clarify the role of the Mayor.

Members noted the following quote from Civic Ceremonial a Handbook and Guide by Paul Milward (4th Edition) “The Mayor and the Council”.

“However, the role of the Mayor as ‘First Citizen’ and the widely accepted idea of the Mayor representing all the people of the authority does support the idea of Political Neutrality.... Political Neutrality may mean ceasing committee work, attending party meetings and even canvassing for themselves or others.... The Mayor whilst being Chair of the Council and First Citizen is not the Leader of the Council and does not as such have a role to play in the political leadership of the Council”.

“The main duty of the Mayor is to preside over principle meetings of the Council and, if present at the meeting he/she must preside (Local Government Act 1972 Sec 12 para 5 (1))”.

Councillor Duckett expressed concern that the Mayor would lose decision making powers if the Mayor was only the Civic Head of the Council and that the Mayor should be the conscience of the Council.

The Mayor explained that the role of Town Mayor had never had decision making powers at Council and that the idea behind making the Mayor the Civic Head of the Council was to strengthen the Mayor's role, not to diminish it.

Councillor Maines expressed concern that if the Mayor no longer attended Working Groups and the Mayor was only chairing the Council Meetings the Mayor would be at a disadvantage through not being part of the decision making process.

The Town Clerk explained that the Working/Task Groups were not decision making bodies and all decisions would continue to be made by Full Council. In addition the Town Clerk had agreed that all Task/Working Group Agendas and supporting papers would be circulated to all Members.

The Town Clerk confirmed that it had always been his practice to brief the Mayor on the Council activities, and this practice would continue.

Venue of Council Meetings

The Members then discussed the merits of taking the Council Meetings 'Out and About' into the community. Although this had been good practice it had not been a successful pilot as the public still saw the Council Offices as the Civic Centre.

The Town Clerk explained that the pilot had still been a useful process as the Council was now able to take meetings out into the surrounding areas should there be a need to address specific ward issues.

Members expressed concern regarding the publicity of meetings and the Council's image, and requested that the Town Clerk should review how the Council informs and encourages members of the public to engage in Council meetings.

It was also suggested that Members should plant bulbs etc on the Shepherd and Flock Roundabout to help launch the Farnham in Bloom campaign and that the Farnham Herald Newspaper should be invited to report on the activities.

The Town Clerk further confirmed that he would be talking to the Town Council's website provider to talk about marketing and the Council meetings would be one of the issues that would be discussed.

RESOLVED:

- 1. The current piloted democratic structure would continue.**
- 2. The Terms of Reference for the Working Groups would be adopted (attached to record minutes).**
- 3. A more transparent and accountable process of reporting by working groups to Council would be developed by the Town Clerk.**
- 4. The Timetable of meetings be adopted (attached to record minutes).**
- 5. The role of the Mayor was defined as being only the Civic Head of the Town Council.**
- 6. The role of the Mayor as recommended by the Civic and Ceremonial Handbook would not include membership of any working groups for their year in office as Town Mayor.**
- 7. That the Council meetings should take place in the Council Chamber, South Street, Farnham.**

Members noted that the Contract for Job Evaluation had been awarded to South East Employers and that the cost of the Job Evaluation Project would approximately be £2,000.

Members were requested to consider the recommendation of the Corporate Development and Audit Task Group (CDATG) that all Council's Staff and all Elected Members are Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) cleared.

The CDATG recommended that all Council Staff and all Elected Members should complete a CRB check due to their contact with children and vulnerable members of the community.

Members agreed in principle that all members of staff and elected members should be CRB cleared but that the Town Clerk should investigate the matter further.

The CDATG also recommended that the Town Clerk make enquiries to register the Town Council as a provider of the CRB service which could then be made available to other parish Councils and that further enquiries should be made as to the status of Staff and Members who already had CRB clearance.

The Members agreed that this matter should be investigated further.

Members noted that Catherine Cooper had been appointed to provide Maternity Leave Cover for the post of Major Projects Co-ordinator. Miss Cooper would be employed from 7 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That it be noted that the contract for Job Evaluation had been awarded to South East Employers.**
- 2. That the recommendation from the CDATG be agreed that all Farnham Town Council's Staff and all Elected Members are CRB cleared.**
- 3. That the Town Clerk make enquiries for the Council to be registered as a provider of the CRB service and to clarify the position of those who already had CRB clearance.**
- 4. That it be noted that Catherine Cooper has been appointed to provide Maternity Leave cover for the Major Projects Co-ordinator.**

Members noted the project phasing for the Bandstand installation at Gostrey Meadow:

Phase 1. Construction of base and supply of utilities – estimated cost £10,000

Phase 2. Supply and fabrication of Bandstand – estimated cost £25,000

Phase 3. Installation of CCTV coverage.

Members were requested to consider the waiving of financial regulation 11.1(b) which required three quotes to be obtained for each part of the project.

It was noted that the Bandstand Working Group recommended the following:

1. As per Financial Regulation 11.1(b) that three quotes be obtained for Phase 1 of the project.

2. As per Financial Regulation 11.1(c) that Council approve the waiving of Financial Regulations for Phase 2 and 3 of the project due to the limited number of suppliers and the time restraints on completing the project.

Cllr Maines asked why three quotes could not be obtained for the CCTV installation and the Town Clerk explained that the Town Council already had a CCTV provider under the Councils current CCTV contract and as one of the CCTV cameras already installed needed to be moved. It would be less expensive to request the CCTV company who had originally installed the camera to move it and to install the new camera for the bandstand.

Councillor Attfield informed the Council that Gostrey Meadow was gifted to the people of Farnham one hundred years ago this July and that it was hoped that the Bandstand could be finished in time to help celebrate the centenary.

RESOLVED:

1. **That as per Financial Regulation 11.1(b) three quotes be obtained for Phase 1 of the Bandstand Project.**
2. **That under Financial Regulation 11.1(c), Council waive Financial Regulation 11.1(b) to obtain three quotes for Phase 2 and 3 of the Bandstand Project due to the limited number of suppliers and the time restraints on completing the Bandstand Project.**

C186/07 PROJECT UPDATES

Members received a report on the current status of Council Projects, actions taken and proposed actions under Delegated Authority to the Town Clerk (attached to record minutes).

Members received a further report on the Management of Council Buildings.

Councillor (Mrs) Frost left the meeting during discussion of this item, having declared a Prejudicial Interest.

Members were requested to consider whether the Council should accept in principle delegated responsibility for the future management of the Council buildings known as the Locality Office, South Street, Farnham.

Members were reminded that the Town Clerk together with the Mayor and two single hated Town Councillors, Councillors Attfield and Storey, had held two meetings with Waverley Borough Council regarding the Town Council's need for additional office space.

Waverley Borough Council wished to know if the Town Council would in principle be prepared to enter into negotiations with the Town Council to delegate the management responsibility of the whole building to Farnham Town Council.

The Terms and Conditions and Financial Implications would form part of any negotiations.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the Town Council agrees in principle to enter into negotiations with Waverley Borough Council for the transfer of the management of the Locality Office, South Street, Farnham to Farnham Town Council.**

2. That delegated authority be given to the Town Clerk, Councillors Cockburn, Attfield and Storey to negotiate the details and terms of the transfer of the management of the building subject to final approval by Full Council.

Part 2 – ITEMS TO NOTE

C187/07 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Members received the Minutes of the Planning Consultative Group Meetings held on 31 January, 14 February and 28 February 2008.

RESOLVED: That the observations made by the Planning Consultative Group held on 31 January, 14 February and 28 February and dealt with in accordance with delegated authority, be noted.

C188/07 FINANCE

Members noted the authorisation of payments and supporting finance reports.

C189/07 WEBSITE

Members noted a report on the development work to enhance the website services and to improve communication with residents and to provide a mechanism to obtain a flavour of local opinion.

Members noted that the Town Council's Website was entering a new phase of development with Wise Tiger the Council's Website provider. The aim of the development work is to improve the website services and improve the communication with residents.

Members noted that the following development work had been commissioned:

1. **Giraffe Mail** – To allow visitors to the website to register to receive publications. Items such as the Council newsletter and Council promotional material will be more easily and effectively circulated. This will be available from April 2008.
2. **Pod Casting** – This service will allow members of the public to hear recordings of meetings, interviews with members and officers and promotional material on the website or to download material. The first pod cast will be used to record the Council meeting on 3 April 2008.
3. **Opinion Poll** – This is a single question poll which would be placed on the website. Only one response per email would be allowed. The intention would be to have one question per month. The service could be used by Council to gauge opinion on a dingle issue, to ask trivia questions to encourage tourism or community involvement. The Council's officers would establish a protocol for the approval of questions to be placed on the site. This service would be available from April 2008.

4. **Youth** – Development work is being carried out to create a youth page within the website. Officers have already had a meeting with local Youth Workers to establish a contact path with interested young people. The work will involve working with young people, youth workers and the Council's Website developers. The needs of young people will be identified with regard to the website content and establish how and if the Council website can provide the service. The Council will need to ensure that the site can be managed safely at a minimum cost. It is anticipated that this service could be available from January 2009.

C190/07 ITEMS TABLED

None.

C191/07 PUBLICITY

Members agreed that a short review should be written at the end of May summing up all the achievements and activities of the Council over the past year and it should be submitted to the Farnham Herald as a feature article.

C192/07 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in view of the confidential nature of business to be transacted to sign the Confidential Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 February 2008 it was advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

Part 3 – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

C193/07 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 7 February 2008 were signed as a correct record.

The Town Mayor closed the meeting at 9.00pm.

Date

Chairman

28 April 2008

Note: The person to contact about these minutes is The Town Clerk, Farnham Town Council, South Street, Farnham, Surrey. GU9 7RN. Tel: 01252 712667

Membership: Councillors Carole Cockburn (Town Mayor), Gillian Beel (Deputy Town Mayor), David Atfield, Victor Duckett, Lucinda Fleming, Pat Frost, Bob Frost, Carlo Genziani, Gillian Hargreaves, Stephen Hill, Denise LeGal, Alan Lovell, Janet Maines, Stephen O'Grady, Roger Steel, Chris Storey, Andrew Thorp, John Ward.

Distribution: To all Councillors (by post)