



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Full Council

Time and date

7.00pm on Thursday 11 December 2008

Place

The Council Chamber, South Street, Farnham

Members Present

- * Cllr G M Beel (Town Mayor) Chairman
- o Cllr L Fleming (Deputy Town Mayor) Vice Chairman
- * Cllr D Attfield
- * Cllr C Cockburn
- * Cllr V Duckett
- o Cllr (Mrs) P Frost
- o Cllr R Frost
- o Cllr C Genziani
- * Cllr G Hargreaves
- * Cllr S Hill
- * Cllr D Le Gal
- o Cllr A Lovell
- * Cllr J Maines
- * Cllr S O'Grady
- * Cllr R Steel (arrived 7.36pm)
- * Cllr C Storey
- * Cllr A Thorp (arrived 7.33pm)
- * Cllr J Ward

- * Present
- o Apologies for absence

Officers Present:

Roland Potter (Town Clerk)
Wendy Coulter (Committee and Members Services Co-ordinator)
Ginny Gordon (Receptionist/Farmers' Market Co-ordinator)

C 091/08 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

There were no questions by the public.

Cllr G Beel proposed that in the absence of the Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr L Fleming, Cllr J Ward assist the Chairman for the duration of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Duckett.

Resolved: That Cllr J Ward be Vice Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

C 092/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, (Mrs) P Frost, B Frost, L Fleming and C Genziani.

C 093/08 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 13 November 2008 were signed by the Town Mayor as a correct record.

C 094/08 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Name of Councillor	Agenda/Minute No	Subject	Type of Interest	Reason
G Beel	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
C Cockburn	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
V Duckett	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
V Duckett	6	Grants – Hale Carnival	Personal	Ward Councillor
G Hargreaves	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
S Hill	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
D Le Gal	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal/Prejudicial	Portfolio Holder for Property for Waverley Borough Council
S O'Grady	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
S O'Grady	6	Grants – Hale Carnival	Personal	Ward Councillor
R Steel	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
A Thorp	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor
J Ward	7	Purchase of Council Offices, South Street, Farnham	Personal	Waverley Borough Councillor

C 095/08 STATEMENTS BY THE PUBLIC

Mr Skingle asked if there had been any developments with the repair of Victoria Road.

Enquiries had been made and repairs were scheduled for early in 2009.

C 096/08

TOWN MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor reminded Members that all donations of homemade cakes would be gratefully received for her charity stall at the Farmers' Market to be held on 14 December 2008.

The Town Mayor also reminded Members about the Staff and Members drinks that would be held on Thursday 18 December 2008 at 3pm.

Part 1 – Items for Decision

C 097/08

GRANTS – HALE CARNIVAL

Members received and considered a Grant Application from the Hale Carnival Committee.

Cllr O'Grady reminded Members that the Hale Carnival was a key event and that a sum of £1,600 should be considered in line with Council's policy of reducing grants by 20%.

Cllr Maines pointed out that the costs of the Carnival still had to be met and that the Carnival Committee did a great deal of work themselves to cover the costs of the event.

Cllr Cockburn explained that she was normally very tough on grants and making decisions however, the Hale Carnival was one of those events that brought the community together.

Cllr Hill reminded Members that they should not lose sight of the Council's decision to reduce grants and that Members should remember that they had reduced the Farnham Carnivals' grant.

Cllr Storey suggested that specific items should be funded and follow the Council's policy of reducing the grant by 20%.

Cllr Duckett explained that any profit made at the Hale Carnival would be donated to charity. However, the event would still take place regardless of the weather and even if no profit was made all costs would still have to be paid for.

Cllr Hargreaves agreed that the Hale Carnival was a very good community event, however the Council should not lose sight of its policy for reducing grants.

Cllr Le Gal supported comments of Cllr Storey and it was a wonderful carnival that brought the community together.

Cllr O'Grady proposed that the invoices provided added up to £1,600 which were for traffic signals, toilet hire and security however, the Council follow the same policy as it had done with the Farnham Carnival and suggest that if further funds were required then the Hale Carnival could apply for further funding.

This was seconded by Cllr Storey.

A vote was taken 9 for and 2 abstentions.

Resolved: That Hale Carnival be awarded £1,600 towards traffic signals, toilet hire and security and if the Hale Carnival Committee could prove hardship then the Council would consider a further grant up to a total of £2,000 as originally applied for.

C 098/08

PURCHASE OF COUNCIL OFFICES, SOUTH STREET, FARNHAM

Members received a report on the progress of the discussions with Waverley Borough Council into the possible purchase of the Council offices in South Street, Farnham. Members were asked to consider if the Council wished to enter into formal negotiations with Waverley Borough Council to purchase the Council offices.

Cllr Le Gal explained to the Members that the discussions that had been held between Farnham Town Council and Waverley Borough Council had been held exactly as described in the report. Cllr Le Gal reminded Members that the option still remained for the Town Council to lease the building from Waverley Borough Council.

Cllr Le Gal left the meeting having declared a Prejudicial interest.

Cllr Maines reminded Members that Farnham Town Council had not yet seen any figures for the proposed purchase of the building. Cllr Maines asked if the Town Council had received its own valuation yet. The recommendations could not be accepted as they were and that further discussion was needed. Cllr Maines suggested that the recommendations be put on hold until all the figures had been received.

Cllr Atfield explained that negotiations were taking place for the purchase of the offices. However, he pointed out that the negotiations were not as independent as they could be because the dual hatted Members sit for Waverley Borough Council too. Farnham Town Council Councillors needed to make sure that Farnham got a good deal.

Cllr Cockburn agreed that it was a difficult situation but that all dual hatted Members were working for the benefit of Farnham. What was required was the right team to negotiate for the transfer of the Council offices.

Cllr Hargreaves also agreed that all Members were working for the benefit of Farnham. She also agreed that Farnham needed its own set of independent figures for the cost of the building.

Cllr Duckett agreed that dual hatted Members were working for the benefit of Farnham.

Cllr Maines asked if the figures for the building could be seen by Members under the confidential part of the agenda.

The Chairman explained that the recommendations on the report were for the Council to positively go ahead with negotiations.

Cllr Cockburn agreed that as long as the correct team was appointed to enter the negotiations then the Council should go ahead.

Cllr Ward agreed that negotiations should be opened with both sides and that was the only way to negotiate. The wording of the recommendations could be changed to reflect that only negotiations were going ahead.

Cllr Duckett suggested that only single hatted Town Councillors should sit on the negotiating group and that the recommendations should be reworded to reflect the negotiations.

Cllr Steel agreed that it was the best thing that the Council could do, to regain the Town Hall for Farnham and that the Council needed to negotiate. A small team needed to be set up to help the Town Clerk negotiate with Waverley Borough Council.

Cllr Maines reminded Members that the best value was need for Farnham and that the Council needed to see the figures before negotiations started.

She suggested that the recommendations be reworded as follows:

To agreed to formally investigate the purchase of the Council Offices, South Street, Farnham. Cllr Duckett seconded this amendment.

Cllr Maines further suggested that the second recommendation be deleted.

Cllr Thorp disagreed. All Members were working for the best value of Farnham however, the only way to proceed with looking into the purchase of the building was to negotiate. The Council would not be committed to purchasing the building.

Cllr O'Grady agreed that the Council needed to negotiate with Waverley Borough Council and that the recommendation of the financing option needed to stay because if the Council decided not to purchase the building funding would still be needed for further office space to accommodate staff.

Cllr Storey disagreed with the amendment to recommendation. Negotiations had to take place.

Cllr Ward also disagreed with the amendment and that negotiations needed to take place.

Cllr Cockburn agreed that the word negotiation needed to be kept and that there could be misinterpretation, it was very important to get the terminology correct.

Cllr Ward suggested the following wording:

To agree formally open negotiations with a view to an economic purchase of the Council Offices, South Street, Farnham. This was seconded by Cllr Maines.

Cllr Thorp proposed an amendment to Cllr Ward's amendment and proposed the following wording:

To agreed to formally evaluate and negotiate the potential purchase of the Council Offices, South Street, Farnham. This was seconded by Cllr Steel.

A vote was taken and the amendment to the recommendation was agreed.

Resolved: That the Council formally evaluate and negotiate the potential purchase of the Council Offices, South Street, Farnham.

Members then considered the second recommendation of the report in regard to financing options. The Town Clerk explained that if the Council did decide to purchase the building then it would either need to be calculated into the Budget or it would come from reserves and that was the reason for the recommendation.

Cllr Thorp agreed that it was important for the financing option to be kept but suggested that the following wording be used:

To review the relevant financing option. This was seconded by Cllr Duckett.

Resolved: That the Council review the relevant financing option for the potential purchase of the Council Offices, South Street, Farnham.

Members then discussed the composition of a small working group to assist the Town Clerk with the negotiations for the potential purchase of the Council Offices.

Cllr Hargreaves suggested that the Working Group should be made up of Members who were solely Town Councillors .

Cllr Cockburn agreed that although dual hatted Members represented the best interests of Farnham it might be better to have a group made of solely Town Council Members and that there were four Members that were single hatted.

Cllr Maines agreed however explained that it may be better to have Councillors on the group who had some experience and that she did not know anything about the subject.

Cllr Storey was happy to be on the group and that although he did not have direct experience he did have a commercial background.

Cllr Steel explained that Cllr Thorp was the best qualified and experienced for the negotiations.

**Resolved: That the following Councillors work with the Town Clerk to formally evaluate and negotiate the possible purchase of the Council Offices, South Street, Farnham:
Cllr Attfield, Cllr Genziani, Cllr Storey and Cllr Thorp.**

Cllr Le Gal returned to the meeting.

C 099/08

BUDGET 2009/2010

Members received a report on the draft Budget for 2009/2010.

The Draft Budget contained four sections:

1. The Draft Budget for 2009/2010 with notes on variations between the actual figures for 2007/2008 and the Draft Budget for 2008/2009.
2. A schedule of major capital projects for 2009/2010.
3. The Consolidated Budget for 2009/2010
4. The Reserves Schedule: containing the predicted state of the Council's Reserves at 31 March 2009.

Cllr Thorp asked whether the Council could discuss Grant awards.

It was agreed by Members that as Council had made a decision to reduce all grants for 2009/2010 the decision could not be changed for six months. However, many of the applicants would be told that if they were suffering from hardship and could prove it to the Council they would be considered for further funding up to a maximum of the grant originally applied for.

Members considered the Draft Budget page by page and the following questions were asked.

Cllr Hargreaves asked why the allotments were running at a loss.

The Town Clerk explained that Council had agreed a three year increase in allotment charges which should allow for the allotments to break even.

Cllr Atfield asked why the telephone costs had been reduced. The Town Clerk explained that the telephone and internet connection at the depot was now no longer being used as Mr Taitt was now working from the main offices in South Street.

Cllr Maines asked whether the Blackwater Valley Partnership Group had received any funding from Farnham Town Council for 2008/2009. The Chairman explained that the Town Clerk had made a note of her question.

Cllr Cockburn noted that monies had been budgeted for the provision of a Garden of Remembrance and reiterated that it was something that was much needed in Farnham and that she was pleased to see that it had been provided for in the Budget.

The Town Clerk explained the consolidated budget paper to Members and explained that the additional costs would be removed from the Budget for 2009/2010.

Cllr Le Gal asked for clarification with regard to the additional costs that were to be removed from the Budget, could they be reinstated during the year if necessary.

The Town Clerk clarified that if the Council chose to go ahead and either purchase or transfer the Council offices the Council would have to agree to fund it from wither of two options;

1. to fund from Reserves or
2. to raise a secondary precept on the Residents of Farnham

Cllr Le Gal asked whether that would preclude the Council from receiving a loan.

The Town Clerk explained that any capital costs or revenue costs, Council would have to agree additional funding from its reserves to fund any extra costs for that year, if it was not included in the budget.

Cllr Le Gal asked the Town Clerk whether he thought that was the most effective way for the Council to use its Capital.

The Town Clerk explained that he felt that some provision ought to be made in the budget. He explained that the Town Council was running desperately short of office accommodation and that the Town Council needed more space. Whether that space was found in the current offices or elsewhere funding would need to be provided.

Cllr Le Gal asked therefore whether it was possible for the Council to consider contingency funding rather than using reserves.

The Town Clerk suggested that the Town Council include the potential running costs of the building because the Council's final decision would be based on the setting of the Precept in January as to whether funding came from reserves etc.

Cllr Maines asked for clarification of the figures on the consolidated budget that the Town Clerk was referring to the additional costs for running the offices, not the additional costs for a loan for the purchase of the building.

Cllr Le Gal agreed that she would be satisfied with keeping the additional costs for running the building in the Draft Budget for 2009/2010.

Resolved: That the Draft Budget for 2009/2010 be agreed. (Agreed Budget attached to record minutes).

Part 2 – ITEMS NOTED

C 100/08 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Members received the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Consultative Group held on:

6 November 2008
27 November 2008

RESOLVED: That the observations made by the Planning Consultative Group held on 6 November and 27 November 2008 and dealt with in accordance with delegated authority, be noted.

C 101/08 COUNCILLOR/EMPLOYEE WORKING PROTOCOL UPDATE

Members noted the changes to the Councillor/Employee Working Protocol.

Councillor/Employee Working Protocol **attached to record minutes.**

C 102/08 STAFFING UPDATES

Members noted that:

1. Mrs Sydenham will return to work at the end of December 2008 on a part time basis.
2. Mr S Bott has been offered the post of part time Finance and Asset Coordinator subject to satisfactory references.
3. Recruitment of the Rural Development Coordinator will be made in February 2009 after the Council's Job Evaluation has been completed.

C 103/08 OFFICE OPENING TIMES DURING CHRISTMAS 2008

Members noted that the Council offices would be closed on the following dates:

24 December 2008
25 December 2008
26 December 2008

1 January 2009
2 January 2009

C 104/08 ITEMS TABLED

None

The Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.52pm.

Date

Chairman