



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes

Annual Town Meeting of Electors

Time and date

7.00pm Thursday 22 March 2018

Place

The Bush Hotel, South Street, Farnham

Attendance:

Meeting attended by 75 members of the public

- The Town Mayor (Cllr Mike Hodge) (Chairman)
- The Deputy Mayor (Cllr David Attfield)

- Cllr Beaman
- Cllr Cockburn
- Cllr Dunsmore
- Cllr Fraser
- Cllrs Hargreaves
- Cllr Hill
- Cllr Hyman
- Cllr Macleod
- Cllr Redfern

- Town Clerk (Iain Lynch)

- Officers (Iain McCready, Karen Johansen-Berg)

Apologies: Cllrs Potts, Ward and Williamson.

1. Minutes of the Annual Farnham Town Electors Meeting held on 23 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting were agreed and signed by the Mayor, Cllr Mike Hodge.

2. Report on the Town Council's Activities

- 1) The Mayor described the role and responsibilities of the Town Mayor giving examples of functions he had attended in his year in office to date, including Remembrance Sunday, Commonwealth Day and the Armed Forces Day. Three events had been particularly memorable for him: the Schools Remembrance Service, the Services to Farnham Awards (of which there had been 11 in total), and the annual Civic Carol Service. The Mayor outlined how the Council supports the community and local

good causes through Council grants of around £75,000 annually through its Community Grants Fund, as well as an additional £20,000 through the South Street Trust.

The Council working in collaboration with the community and local businesses, especially through the Council's programme of sponsors, had led to Farnham Town Council being declared runner up in the Council of the Year category at the National Association of Local Councils Star Council awards in 2017.

The Mayor praised the tremendous community spirit that prevailed in Farnham and thanked all volunteers from a wide range of community groups who had contributed so much of their time and effort to support those in need, and the life of the town in general.

Finally, he congratulated and thanked Councillor Cockburn for the creation and development of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, and acknowledged the huge amount of work with Infrastructure Planning Group that this had involved over a number of years.

- 2) Cllr Hargreaves presented a summary of events undertaken by the Tourism and Events Working Group in 2017/18. In 2017, Farnham Town Council had organised, ran or supported nine festivals, all completely free of charge. Events included: Music in the Vineyard during January, February and March and the Farmers' Market held every fourth Sunday of the month in Central car park. In May there was a Spring Festival, as well as a Walking Festival – a new venture for 2017 with over 30 walks led by community groups and experts - which had proved so successful that the event was being extended by a further week in 2018, Music in the Meadow was held every Sunday during June to September. Picnic in the Park was another June event where up to 1,000 people gathered for live music as well as a picnic. The Gin Festival held in September had been a total sell-out so due to demand, the next Gin festival would take place over two evenings at The Farnham Maltings. Also in September, the Food and Drink Festival was the Council's flagship event. Around 15,000 people had attended and the BBC had filmed the festival as part of their *Farmers' Country Showdown* programme.

The Christmas Lights event had taken place in November, with the 'switch on' aided and abetted by pantomime casts and the Mayor. In December, the Christmas Market should have been the best and biggest yet but sadly, due to Storm Caroline, the event had to be closed early. Cllr Hargreaves expressed her thanks once again to all residents and stallholders for their understanding, and to the Council staff who had worked so hard in planning the event. Finally, Cllr Hargreaves applauded the contribution of all sponsors, particularly Kidd Rapinet and SpecSavers. On behalf of Farnham Town Council, she thanked all sponsors for their invaluable support and input, and gave special thanks to Helena Jarman, Events Manager, for her outstanding contribution to the events programme.

The audience were reminded that all event information could be found on the Council's website and social media pages.

- 3) Cllr Cockburn reported on how Farnham's cemeteries had improved year on year, giving special thanks to Iain McCready, and staff for such an excellent service. Two cemeteries had been included in Farnham in Bloom, Badshot Lea and Green Lane. Next time West Street cemetery would be included. FTC were continually trying to improve what was on offer, making cemeteries not just for visitors of those who had been buried there, but as a place for anyone remembering loved ones.

Cllr Cockburn confirmed that a decision had not yet been made in relation to Hale Chapels. The application for funding to Heritage Lottery had not been successful but Farnham Town Council were managing the site and looking at a number of ways the project might be taken forward. In closing, Cllr Cockburn invited residents to look into some of the wonderful green spaces that Farnham had to offer.

- 4) Cllr Hill described the work of the Community Enhancement team whose remit included bus shelters, public toilets and allotments. Farnham had responsibility for 262 allotments over 8 sites with the exception of those located in Weybourne, though that might soon change. Farnham in Bloom 2017 had been a great success. Entry to the event was by invitation only and the award presentations had been hosted in Wales that year. All plants for Farnham's event had been grown in greenhouses in West Street and all work undertaken by volunteers.

Planning for 2018 included a Farnham Spring clean by volunteers, and the Farnham in Bloom 2018 Bloomin' Family programme included: 'Bloomin' Kids, a free gardening workshop for children; Bloomin' Litter and Bloomin' Arts.

The Community Enhancement team were continuing to grow and consolidate. Farnham in Bloom had raised over £30,000 in direct and in-kind support and all sponsors and helpers were congratulated on the achievement.

- 5) Cllr Hyman outlined the work of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group, and talked to figures on the slide presentation, citing 957 applications received of which objections had been raised to 257, suggesting a number of potentially unsuitable developments had been prevented. Applications ranged from Large Developments to Certificates of Lawfulness, usually for work already completed. Two applications had been 'called-in' by Waverley Councillors for determination by the Western Planning Committee and several applications had involved consultations with other Authorities.

Applications for works to trees were becoming of increasing concern, with the numbers being felled increasing. A small sub-group were developing a Tree Strategy for Farnham to address this issue which has already resulted in all approvals for felling being required to include plans for replanting of appropriate replacements.

Since July 2017, Farnham's Neighbourhood Plan had assisted considerably in assessing applications. In addition to quoting the requirements of the Farnham Design Statement, the Group were now able to quote specific Policies relative to the majority of developments within the area covered by the Town Council. Cllr Hyman referred the meeting to the slide showing the Council Designation Map.

Cllr Hyman spoke about Waverley's Non-Material Amendments presented at the 8th March meeting which had enabled the contractor to start work before details of items such as proposed finished ground levels had been submitted or approved in writing. Farnham Town Council were so concerned about the lack of due process, a letter of complaint had been sent to Waverley.

The majority of applications had been for extensions to private houses which if not detrimental to neighbour's amenities and in keeping with the general character of the area, go through unopposed. He directed any resident considering an extension to their property to the guidance on the Waverley Borough Council website, as well as to Farnham Town Council's website which outlined the Farnham Design Statement and the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan.

- 6) Cllr Cockburn informed the meeting on the workings of the Council's Strategy & Finance Working Group, advising that all other Council Working Groups fed into the Strategy & Finance Working Group, which in turn fed into full Council. The portfolios and service responsibilities of each Council, Surrey County Council, Waverley Borough Council and Farnham Town Council, were outlined in the slide presentation. The Neighbourhood Plan had proved very successful to date, and was currently under review following 450 more sites having been added to Farnham's allocation. A call for sites would be undertaken to help identify new planned developments.

A slide outlined how money was raised and spent; sponsorship had increased and the Council were working with many more organisations than in previous years. Farnham Town Council was looking continually for other sources of income in addition to Council Tax. Services and activities

the Council deliver and how budget was being spent for 2018/19 was outlined. The coming year would be a year of consolidation; Farnham Town Council were not planning to do anything new but rather to focus on projects already in hand, including the Garden of Reflection. Reviews were planned of the town's CCTV and the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Cockburn thanked all involved in the achievements over the year and advised that FTC would continue with their partnership working approach.

Questions

i) Ms Abigail McKern, resident in The Bourne and Director of Farnham Theatre Association (FTA), asked the Council to give support to the FTA in approaching Waverley Borough Council for the retrieval and safe return of a 'Time Capsule' installed in 1972 by Sir Michael Redgrave in the foundations of the Brightwells building. The 'Time Capsule' would then be placed in FTA's archives, along with other material salvaged from the Redgrave Theatre. The Mayor had forwarded Ms McKern's email to Waverley Borough Council who had agreed the 'Time Capsule' would be released to the FTA.

ii) Celia Sanders thanked Councillors and Farnham Town Council for making Farnham such a special town. She then raised concern about the impact of the Brightwells development, asking Council if they would urge Waverley Borough Council to provide information on the following:

- the planned phasing, coordination and enabling works, including the demolition timetable and the priorities and timing for construction of the residential and commercial elements;
- the communal element in relation to car parking access, and congestion resulting from construction vehicles to access and exit the site;
- whether any plans were in place to coordinate activities at Brightwells with construction and traffic works in relation to the Berkeley Homes development on the Woolmead site.

The Council were asked to give reassurance that steps be taken to ensure the life of the town suffers as little as possible from minor disruption, and liaison is coordinated to keep people informed.

Cllr Cockburn advised that the Council had already had one meeting with Crest Nicholson, with another next meeting scheduled. There would be an information included on a dedicated website which was currently under development, by Crest Nicholson. The website would be updated regularly to include any advance information received.

iii) Stephen Cochrane raised two queries.

- Regarding two proposed routes for the Southampton to Hounslow aviation pipeline, reassurance was sought that Farnham Town Council would object to the proposal on safety grounds, and on the issue of disruption to properties.
- Whether the Council petition Surrey County Council to reinstate full lighting in the centre of town? There appeared to be a correlation between increased anti-social behaviour, including graffiti, indecent exposure and cold calling, and the absence of effective lighting. It was thought that the reduction of a police presence in the town was another factor, and the Council were urged to consider the implications and lobby for increased policing.

Cllr Cockburn advised the Council was aware of the existing pipeline and of the latest proposals. The Council had looked at the plans and supporting documentation with dismay, and would be challenging the proposal.

Cllr Cockburn advised that Surrey County Council had been made aware of the lighting issue and of public concern. It was agreed that residents paid a substantial sum of money

through the council tax but seemed to get little in return with regard to policing. The Council would continue to lobby on this issue.

- iv) Geoff Wallis thanked Cllr Cockburn for the update on the Hale Trust project and on the application to secure Heritage Lottery Funding for their refurbishment. Though the funding application had been unsuccessful, the Council would be pursuing this further. It was noted that a solution was needed imminently as the buildings in their current state would not last much longer. A number of solutions were currently under consideration.
- v) Alan Gavaghan (Farnham Society) asked that for the next Annual Meeting, perceived future problems in Farnham be included in the agenda so issues could be discussed and addressed more thoroughly. Examples given included the re-figuration of the traffic lights at the crossroads of the Woolmead, The Borough and South Street; refuse disposal and recycling facilities following significant reduction in opening hours and the types of refuse accepted. The Mayor advised that Farnham issues would be considered through the year and as a potential agenda item.
- vi) Peter Cowan congratulated the Council on plans to keep Farnham residents updated on key elements with regard to the Brightwells and Woolmead developments.
The Town Clerk advised the meeting that updates would be given prior to the next Annual Town meeting, and that the Strategy & Finance Working Group would review this issue.

It was suggested Crest Nicholson could be asked to give an update at the next Annual Town Council meeting. Cllr Cockburn responded that it was difficult to know where the project would be a year on and it was not the kind of meeting to accommodate a guest speaker, however a request could be made for a separate public meeting at some point.
- vii) Charles Stuart raised concern in relation to the Wey Valley Fisheries Consultative and the threat to the river Wey, and asked: if the Council could ensure the developers were aware of potential issues with run-off and the management of river pollution?
The Mayor advised that being part of the Farnham Rivers Group, he would ensure concerns were fed back to the developers.
- viii) John Price congratulated the Council on the display of flowers during the summer period and throughout the Christmas activities, and on how marvellous the Christmas lights had been. He trusted the Council would maintain this success in future years.
- ix) The issue of traffic around West Street in the morning rush hour was raised. A 'Park & Ride' facility had been talked about before but the service could not solve all traffic problems, though some believed it might help. Concern was voiced that congestion would get worse once new housing developments in the area were completed.
- x) David Wylde commented that there had been no mention earlier of the Farnham Flash Festival, an event which consists of a variety of theatre events around the town.
Cllr Hargreaves advised that the reason the Farnham Flash Festival had not been mentioned was because the Council did not organise the event themselves, but would be happy to make mention of it at future meetings.
- xi) Simon Bradbury commented on the importance of fire safety in relation to the access route for fire engines to flats in Dogflud Way which could be inadequate and problematic during construction due to changing ground levels.

The Mayor advised that Waverley Borough Council would be asked whether this consideration had been included in their planning, and how it was being addressed.

- xii) Peter Wilkinson raised the issue of air quality, commenting on the recent feature in the Farnham Herald regarding the inaccuracy of readings reported by Waverley Borough Council. He asked whether or not a 'proper survey' had now been carried out.

Cllr Cockburn responded that Waverley Borough Council were undertaking follow-up tests but no outcomes had been reported to date. Various initiatives were underway and Farnham Town Council was aware of the problems, and of the places with the highest recorded readings. Farnham Town Council had challenged applications involving air quality impact, such as the site at the former Waverley Arms public house opposite Farnham railway station which had applied to become a day nursery for 80 young children.

Cllr Macleod introduced himself as chair of the new Air Quality Steering Group, a cross organisation working group which had met recently. The Committee included Surrey County Council, Waverley Borough Council, Farnham Town Council, and the Farnham Society. Cllr Macleod then asked John Slater (Farnham Society) to provide additional information.

John Slater reported he had seen significant change in attitude from Waverley Borough Council officers over the previous six months, and that they had readily admitted to errors in past data. The public could now access new information regularly, and tube diffusion data was being uploaded every month onto the WBC website. A cross party Air Quality Steering Group would look at all the issues and how they were being addressed. Concern was voiced over the impact of increased traffic from the Brightwells development both during and after construction, particularly in relation to dust particles during demolition and re-building. There was agreement that until the traffic problems were resolved, air quality overall would not improve.

Cllr Stephen Spence (Surrey) advised that Waverley Borough Council did not have the powers or authority to change traffic flow, and that Surrey County Council who did have the power, did not have the budget or funding to address it, so it went back up the line to central Government. Cllr Spence informed the meeting that parties including the Chamber of Commerce, Castle Street Residents' Association and Farnham Society were working together on the traffic question and a pedestrianisation scheme for Farnham, with support from Jeremy Hunt. Cllr Spence believed that progress could be made if done in stages, rather than trying to do everything at once.

- xiii) Patrick Webber reverted back to the discussion on combustion fumes, saying how pleased he was that the Police were investigating fully the errors with data readings.
- xiv) Christopher Reeks asked why developers in East Street had been allowed to block the pavement adjacent to the former Swain & Jones site. This had resulted in pedestrians having to cross into the road that was highly dangerous. Christopher Reeks asked that Farnham Town Council complain and ask for the situation to be addressed urgently.
- xv) Laurence Cater commented that he had heard rumours that the cladding being used on the Memorial Hall refurbishment was of the same specification as that used on Grenfell Tower. The Mayor advised that it was highly unlikely the same cladding would be used but that Farnham Town Council raise the matter with Waverley.

The Mayor reminded the audience that Farnham Town Council produce a monthly newsletter and if anyone wanted to receive it, asked attendees to leave their email address at the welcome desk.

The Mayor thanked all Councillors and volunteers who work so hard to get things done for the town. He also thanked the audience for their contribution during the evening.

The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed:
Town Mayor

Date: