



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

7.00 pm on Thursday 27th July, 2023

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Brodie Mauluka (Deputy Mayor) Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Brodie Mauluka
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor George Murray
Councillor John Ward
Councillor Graham White

Apologies for absence

Mat Brown, George Hesse and Tim Woodhouse

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk)

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 Wrecclesham.

C28/23 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Brown, Earwaker, Hesse and Woodhouse.

C29/23 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

C30/23 **Minutes**

Cllr Dickson asked for her name to be removed from the Infrastructure Planning Task Group as she only intended to be involved in the Neighbourhood Plan review. With this amendment, the Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

C31/23 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

There were no questions or statements by the public.

C32/23 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Deputy Town Mayor, standing in for the Mayor who was unwell, wished him a speedy recovery.

The Deputy Mayor advised that since the last Council meeting he had been pleased to represent the Mayor at a number of events when he had other commitments including at St Polycarps School, the 40th anniversary of Farnham Tandoori and the Haslemere Civic Service. It was a great privilege to represent the wider community in this way.

The Deputy Mayor was pleased to announce that Farnham had been awarded three Green Flags: One a renewal for Gostrey Meadow and two new ones for West Street Cemetery and Badshot Lea Cemetery. He congratulated Iain McCready, Stacey Wills and the team for making this happen.

Finally the Deputy Mayor had enjoyed meeting the South and South East in Bloom judges and all our wonderful volunteers and was keeping his fingers crossed for another positive result in what has been a difficult year.

C33/23 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by Members.

C34/23 **Working Group Notes**

i) **Environment Working Group.**

Council noted that the first meeting held on 15th June had been an introductory one with a presentation on the work of the group.

ii) **Community Working Group**

Council received a report on the first Community Working Group that had taken place on 5th July. The presentation had included details of the annual programme of events the latest position on the Business Improvement District progress towards a vote in October. In response to a question, the Town Clerk advised that Council would receive the Business Plan to inform how it would cast its vote at the September meeting.

Council noted that there had been discussion by the Working Group on representations made by residents of Kingham Place about the road closure in West Street during markets, and the request that vehicular access be provided. However, it was noted that such access could not be provided for safety reasons, and that the idea of moving the West Street Markets to Brightwell's once it opened would be explored.

The Working Group had also received details of the Younger People Task Group, the Community Grants Programme and details of Community Centres in Farnham including Wrecclesham, owned by the Town Council but managed by a trust.

iii) Strategy & Resources Working Group

- a) Cllr White introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Resources Working Group that had been held on 18th July. He advised that the quarterly finances had been discussed with a series of documents reviewed including the Trial Balance and Income and Expenditure by code and Committee. A number of points of clarification responding to queries by councillors were set out in the Notes. Small grants to Folly Hill School and the Royal British Legion were noted, as was the Pensions Regulator auto-enrolment renewal.
- b) Council noted the latest position on Brightwell's Yard, including that the East Street road works were not now expected to be implemented until early 2024 and discussions to find agreement on a satisfactory and compliant bridge to replace the haul bridge were continuing.
- c) Cllr Beaman gave an update on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and the briefing paper he had drafted at Annex 1. He confirmed that Surrey County Council had now agreed funding of £14m to the town centre project costs of some £17m, with the expectation that the balance would be funded by CIL funding and other sources. In discussion, Council noted that no application for funding had yet been sought from FTC, and its portion of CIL would generally be spent on environmental or community projects with strategic CIL (75% of the total) managed by the Borough Council covering highways and other infrastructure projects. Cllr Merryweather advised that the Borough Council currently had an application process underway and Surrey would hopefully apply. He also reminded Council that CIL was to fund other infrastructure requirements such as those required for schools, health etc as a result of new development.

Cllr Beaman advised that a series of consultation meetings were being held on town centre matters such as parking and loading arrangements and reported that the idea of restricted access to East Street was not considered possible at this stage unless some land to widen a corner became available. He advised that the parking elements were being incorporated into a wider Waverley parking review.

In discussion about parking spaces outside the Nelson pub, councillors argued that allocation of road space in favour of one business could be giving an unfair advantage now that the original covid reason for doing so had passed. Council agreed that a compromise of allocating some space for cycle infrastructure and some for seating should be put forward to SCC.

Cllr Beaman advised that the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People had walked around the town to identify improvements that could be made and that consultation events in Hale and Weybourne had been planned by the local county councillor.

Council noted the representation received from Surrey Officers that individual councillors should not be writing direct to consultants working on the Infrastructure programme as these were using resources that would impact on the funds available for improvements.

Council agreed that further more detailed discussion on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme would form part of the regular agenda for the Infrastructure Planning Task Group.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* i) that the papers at Annex I be endorsed; ii) the comments as discussed be passed on to Surrey County Council; and iii) the motion considered by Surrey County Council on walking and cycling be noted.

- d) Cllr White reported on the potential Judicial challenge on the Waverley Lane decision by the Planning Inspectorate. This decision was very surprising given other recent appeal decisions. Members and Officers felt that there was a significant omission in that the Inspector had seemingly ignored the fact that this was a candidate area for the AONB extension and that there was a specific policy (10c) in the Neighbourhood Plan giving additional protection to such areas. Insufficient weight appeared to have been given to the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan allocations policy FNP 14 and the fact that this site was of rural character outside the Built Up Area Boundary. It was noted that a call in to the Secretary of State was not possible once a decision had been made, and a Judicial Review of the decision was the only way forward. If a challenge were to be pursued, it would need to be made by 14th August.

It was agreed that there was merit in challenging the decision, and that support of Waverley Borough Council in doing would be pursued. It was agreed that to avoid double costs, it would be preferable if Waverley and Farnham Town Council could share legal advice with FTC contributing if required.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that a Judicial Review on the Inspector's Decision on Waverley Lane be considered and that a special Council meeting be held on 7th or 8th August.

- e) Council considered the response to the very short consultation on the proposed closure of the ticket office at Farnham railway station which was part of a programme to close ticket offices across the country. There were concerns for safety of passengers and the availability of tickets for people unable to use the ticket machines or book tickets online. As the consultation had now been extended to September, it was agreed to make some additional points namely:
- i) The volume of passengers using Farnham Railway Station (403rd busiest in the country and in the top 20% for passenger numbers) justified the station being designated a Category 2 Station rather than a Category 3 Station (Category 3 stations are only open staffed until 12.45pm Monday to Saturday and not at all on a Sunday whereas Category 2 are staffed every day from 6am to 9.40pm)
 - ii) As much of the use at Farnham is increasingly as a leisure destination, staffed stations were more important at weekends.

Cllr Martin left at this point.

- f) Cllr White advised Council of the property and assets matters discussed at the Working Group, noting that a follow-up meeting was still awaited with Surrey officers on the Library Gardens; the number of playground repairs undertaken in Gostrey Meadow due to vandalism and the age of the equipment; the outline application drawings for the proposed café, toilets and playground were prepared ready for a pre-application discussion with Waverley; the proposal to widen the

Ron Lancaster Memorial gates in Union Road were subject to a discussion with the family and Surrey highways with a report due back; the completion of the Farnham Flame ready for fixing in Brightwell's Yard; and an insurance claim for potential tree damage prior to the land being transferred from Waverley to Farnham. Other matters raised included the review of the Hands Turn Sculpture at Farnham Riverside by Waverley Planning; the need to repair the Lych gate at Green Lane Cemetery; and the potential for FTC to discuss the potential transfer of a piece of amenity land at Whitmore Green.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- 1) **Officers discuss with Surrey County Council if they wished to transfer land at Whitmore Green to Farnham Town Council with a further report back to the Assets task Group;**
 - 2) **the repair of the Alma Lane Cemetery Lych gate be considered and a provisional sum of £20,000 be earmarked for its repair subject to tenders; and**
 - 3) **The Town Clerk be authorised to submit a Planning application for the Farnham Riverside area for it to be used for sculptural displays including initially 'A Hands Turn'.**
- g) Cllr Jackman reported on the recent Young People's Task Group and outlined the matters discussed which would be considered further at subsequent meetings. He advised that the Task Group was looking forward to visiting the various groups supporting young people and to preparing a list of events taking place over the summer as well as supporting 40Degreez in a wider survey of youth provision in Farnham.

C35/23 Planning and Licensing Applications

Council received the Notes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 5th and 19th June, and 3rd and 17th July. Of note was the Licensing application for Reel Cinema which had been approved by Waverley following an adjustment by the applicant to late hours; and the application for the proposed cemetery buildings at land East of Farnham Park which had received an objection from Surrey Highways.

C36/23 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no additional actions to report.

C37/23 Reports from Other Councils

There were no reports from other councils

C38/23 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Beaman reported that the Wey Valley partnership was seeking additional funding for its work.

Cllr Dickson reported that the Flash Fiction competition had been a success with around 100 entries.

C39/23 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting was agreed as 14th September 2023.

It was also agreed to hold an Extraordinary Meeting on 8th August to discuss the potential for a Judicial Challenge on the Waverley Lane Appeal.

C40/23 Exclusion of the Press and Public

On a proposal of the Mayor, it was **RESOLVED *nem con* to exclude the press and the public in view of the confidential matters under discussion relating to potential legal action.**

C41/23 Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group notes.

Potential Legal action relating to the Waverley Lane Planning Appeal.

Council discussed the detail of the planning appeal decision and whether or not the Inspector had given correct weight to a series of matters relating to landscape designation and potential harm, and to the site allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan noting other recent appeal decisions that had come to a different view.

It was agreed that these were of such importance that discussions should take place with the Surrey Hills AONB and that legal advice should be taken and for Council to consider whether there were grounds to submit a legal challenge.

The Deputy Mayor closed the meeting at 9.25pm

Chairman

Date