

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 22 JULY 2024 AT 7.30 P.M. AT FARNHAM COMMON VILLAGE HALL, VICTORIA ROAD, FARNHAM COMMON, SL2 3NL

Present

Paul Rowley (Chair)
Katherine Damsell
David Moore
Jenny Quilter
Judith Hall (Clerk)

Buckinghamshire Councillor Dev Dhillon and six members of the public.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 7.30pm. The meeting was adjourned for OPEN FORUM noted at the end of these minutes. The Chair reconvened the meeting and advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report giving information on agenda items. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website or a hard copy is available upon request.

24/74/PC Apologies for absence

Tony Birkett, Bob Milne and Clive Robinson

24/75/PC Declarations of Interest

The Chairman made a declaration in respect of item 24/81/PC below that whilst he does not believe he has a pecuniary interest, another party does so in order not to create conflict and escalate matters he would leave the meeting when that item is discussed.

24/76/PC To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2024

The Clerk advised that Bob Milne had requested the following addition to paragraph 71.2 'The Clerk advised that crudely it would be a 10% increase although in practice this would be reduced by making savings on other projects that year.' The minutes were **approved**. It was **agreed** that they would be signed by the Chair.

24/77/PC Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda - for information only)

77.1 Update on Community Speedwatch

The content of the report was noted and those present expressed their feeling that this was a good initiative.

77.2 Update on 30 minutes free parking trial in The Broadway Car Park

The content of the report was noted and the Chairman confirmed that the parish council was waiting for the Memorandum of Understanding from Buckinghamshire Council. The Chairman asked David Moore, in his capacity as Buckinghamshire Councillor, whether he supported the proposed trial. He confirmed he was very supportive and that he had spoken to Buckinghamshire Council as he felt this scheme should be established countywide. The Chairman expressed that it will be important to review the success of the trial and David Moore advised that he was planning a review in January 2025. Katherine Damsell expressed that several factors would need to be included in the review including car park ticket sales and if possible, the impact of local business turnover. The Chairman asked Jerry Houdret whether he could help with the second measure.

77.3 Update on the new contract performance management process

The content of the report was noted and Katherine Damsell advised that thanks to Jenny Quilter's input, a small trial using Google Forms had taken place and this seemed to provide an efficient and easy to use format. She continued that a little more stress testing would take place with a view to training councillors and starting a trial from September 2024.

77.4 Feedback from latest Meet Your Local Councillors session

The content of the report was noted and Katherine Damsell and Jenny Quilter advised that one of the residents that attended was quite animated but the issues raised generally related to the condition of the villages and law and order. They felt it was a positive session as they were there to meet residents and receive feedback. The Chairman commented that if residents become so animated as to be abusive then something needs to be said. Katherine Damsell expressed that she was glad that Cllr. Dev Dhillon was with them and that there should always be two parish councillors present and if this wasn't possible the session should be cancelled.

24/78/PC Appointments:

5.1 To consider appointing Bob Milne as a member of the Finance Committee

The appointment of Bob Milne **was agreed**.

5.2 To consider appointing Bob Milne as representative on Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common Consultation Group

The appointment of Bob Milne **was agreed**.

24/79/PC To consider Burnham Beeches Rotary's request for the weeping willow in Temple Dell to be cut to allow 8ft ground clearance.

Following a discussion, it **was agreed** that it would not be appropriate to cut the weeping willow to accommodate a gazebo underneath. The Chairman offered to meet with Burnham Beeches Rotary to explain, if required.

24/80/PC To consider Farnham Common Sports Club's request for permission, as landlord, to install floodlights on tennis courts 3 and 4

Two representatives from the Tennis Section attended the meeting and advised that to manage player needs and demands, they would like to install LED floodlights (in the same configuration as on courts one and two) on courts three and four. They confirmed that courts five and six would remain unlit. The lights would not be used on Sundays and would be turned off at 9pm on all other days. They confirmed they have chosen a scheme, have a contractor in mind and are planning for installation in the middle of 2025. The necessary planning application should be ready in the next four weeks and once it has been submitted, they will begin consulting with neighbouring residents. The representatives also gave a general update regarding the activities of the tennis section. They advised that as the club is a community club they are trying to do more with Farnham Common Village Schools offering the courts for one of their PE lessons during the first half term of the 2024/25 academic year. The Club is also looking to launch a junior tennis programme afterschool and the floodlights are crucial to managing the pressure on courts from members when the juniors are playing. Katherine Damsell asked whether there had been any objections to the installation of floodlights on courts one and two. The representatives confirmed that some were received but added that all houses backing onto the Sports Club would receive notice of the proposal. On the condition that the consultation with residents detailed in the paper provided and discussed was completed, the requested permission, as landlord, **was granted**. Katherine Damsell asked whether members could play pickleball on the courts. The representatives confirmed that both mini tennis and pickleball are marked out on the courts.

The Chairman left the meeting and Jenny Quilter took the Chair for the next item.

24/81/PC Claim received on behalf of Cllr. Clive Robinson

Katherine Damsell reminded those present that the Parish Council received a letter from Cllr. Robinson's solicitors in August 2023 and that BP Collins sent a substantive response in October 2023. She advised that up until two weeks ago no further correspondence had been received but ten days ago BP Collins advised that they had received a letter of claim and draft particulars of a claim, which was issued in April 2024 and would need to be served on the Parish Council by 16 August 2024. She confirmed that both parties were now subject to a court driven timescale and that she, Tony Birkett and the Clerk had met with BP Collins to review the claim and discuss the next steps. During the discussion, BP Collins confirmed that the claim received was against the Parish Council and not individual parish councillors. The advice

received was to acknowledge receipt and review all areas of the claim with a barrister to facilitate a detailed response.

81.1 To consider appointing BP Collins to represent the Parish Council

The appointment of BP Collins **was agreed**.

81.2 To consider appointing BP Collins' recommended Counsel to advise the Parish Council

It **was agreed** that the Counsel recommended by BP Collins would be appointed.

81.3 To consider the initial budget suggested by BP Collins

The confidential budget suggested by BP Collins **was agreed**.

81.4 To consider appointing parish councillors to liaise with BP Collins on behalf of the Parish Council

Following a discussion, delegated powers were granted to Katherine Damsell and Tony Birkett to progress this matter, with the assistance of the Clerk, with the following conditions:

- a. They act in accordance with advice received from BP Collins.
- b. Any action taken under this arrangement must be reported at the next parish council meeting, with interim email updates as appropriate.
- c. Costs are limited to the agreed budget, with any increase being considered at a parish council meeting.

Following the end of the discussion, the Chairman returned to the room and took the Chair.

24/82/PC Projects:

82.1 To consider options for Kingsway Green & Rectory Close Flowerbeds

It **was agreed** that the costed options detailed in the report would be put to residents for consultation during September 2024 using a Facebook survey, a vote at Orchard Day and a voting box in Farnham Common Community Library (subject to their agreement).

82.2 To consider improvements to website

It **was agreed** that the proposed improvements detailed in the report would be made to the website and Katherine Damsell suggested adding a portal for volunteer roles in the parish. This **was also agreed**.

24/83/PC Community Engagement:

83.1 Community Showcase

The content of the report was noted and Jenny Quilter advised that the Parish Council would be producing the event management plan to cover health and safety considerations for the event. It **was agreed** that the event would be held between 11am and 1pm and it was reiterated that parish councillors would be required to man the parish council stand (there will be a separate Community Speedwatch stand). The Chairman and Jenny Quilter advised they would draw up a volunteer schedule for circulation to parish councillors.

83.2 Orchard Day

The content of the report was noted and Jenny Quilter reiterated that parish councillors would be required to man the parish council stand. Katherine Damsell advised that she and her husband would help with set up and take down of the stand and she would help man the stand as well. She also offered to work with the Clerk to produce the materials for the stand. The Chairman and Jenny Quilter advised they would draw up a volunteer schedule for circulation to parish councillors.

24/84/PC Finance:

84.1 To consider June 2024 Management Accounts

Katherine Damsell asked those present whether they had reviewed the documents circulated and whether they had any questions. There were no questions. She continued that the construction infrastructure levies received would be applied, in the first instance, to fund the 30 minutes free car parking project with the balance becoming a ringfenced reserve for other relevant projects. She also advised that the Clerk was still working to resolve the position regarding the outstanding electricity invoices with Buckinghamshire Council. She summarised that the required reserves are being maintained with a small additional surplus but a cautious approach should be taken for the rest of the year when considering projects that had not yet been started. She also noted that the balance held in the Save Our Green Belt ring fenced reserve is reducing and councillors need to be aware that consultants are expensive so consideration should be given to applying the more standard objections provided by O'Neill Homer to other relevant applications. The Chairman advised that he would like to meet the Clerk to go through the template to gain a greater understanding of some of the information provided.

84.2 To consider the annual flagpole service

The Chairman asked whether it was necessary to service the flag poles every year given the cost. Jenny Quilter advised that the services were being carried out to comply with the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998, which cover flagpoles but that she would do some more research to confirm the recommended frequency. The Clerk advised that she would ask the parish council's insurers for their recommendations. It **was agreed** that the annual service would be put on hold until this information was available.

84.3 To consider purchasing more 30mph wheelie bin stickers

It **was agreed** that 250 30mph wheelie bin stickers would be purchased for £230.

84.4 To consider payments and note receipts, as per the July 2024 cashbook

The payments **were approved** and the receipts **were noted**.

24/85/PC Planning:

85.1 To ratify comments submitted on recent applications

The planning comments on the circulated schedule **were ratified**.

85.2 To note recent planning decisions

The planning decisions on the circulated schedule **were noted**.

The Clerk left the meeting for the next item at 8:43pm.

24/86/PC Employee matters:

86.1 To consider terms of new contract and implications

Katherine Damsell provided an update, personal information was not shared so as not to impinge data Protection rules. The Chairman and Vice Chair advised that they have been a part of the conversations on this issue. It was noted that the Clerk's contract was old and out of date and the parish council wished to bring this up to best practice using the National Association of Local Council's model contract. The new contract includes occupational sick pay, and government job descriptions/pay scale implementation. The Chairman, Paul Rowley, has also requested that the Parish Council's Chair of Finance Committee is the line manager of the Clerk going forward.

Katherine Damsell advised that an analysis of Clerk sickness scenarios had been conducted, including an understanding of key duties to undertake, and how this can be mitigated (e.g. locum and parish councillors) and the main impact on the reserves. The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils recommended Local Government Resource Centre (LGRC) who offer locum clerks for longer term appointments. Having spoken to LGRC, they recommend locum clerks on a 2-week rolling contract which would, if required, enable the Parish Council to fulfil governance requirements. Katherine Damsell recommends creating ringfenced reserves to cover sickness should this take place in future years budgeting for 3 months.

Katherine Damsell requested a vote on the adoption of the new contact with government pay scale and occupational sick pay, this was **This was unanimously agreed**.

86.2 To consider appraisal process, individual development plan and objective setting

Katherine Damsell advised that a standard appraisal policy had been identified which provides for an annual appraisal in January each year with the Clerk and Chair of Finance Committee. All parish councillors will be asked for input into this process. The appraisal policy will include a development plan, which is in place and will be circulated.

86.3 To consider display screen equipment assessment

The content of the report was noted and Katherine Damsell proposed a combined budget of £1,000 to put in place measures required to address risks associated with the use of display screen equipment and lone working (below). **This was unanimously agreed**.

86.4 To consider lone working risk assessment and policy

The content of the report was noted and Jenny Quilter confirmed that some measures will be required and noted the agreement above.

Following the end of the discussion, the Clerk returned to the room.

24/87/PC Any Other Business (for information only)

87.1 The Clerk advised that a member of Burnham Beeches Rotary, had requested that more MOT Type 1 was applied to level out the vehicle entrance to Temple Dell and they had asked that this is done before Orchard Day on 28 September 2024. The Chairman offered to meet the member at Temple Dell to review what work would be required and those present felt this would be a good idea.

87.2 The Clerk advised that the management committee of Ingleglen are interested in installing a defibrillator at a location on the Ingleglen estate and had forwarded a proposal, a copy of which had been circulated to parish councillors ahead of the meeting. The proposal provided that the management committee would purchase an approved defibrillator unit, install it where the Parish Council has an electricity outlet and the parish council would meet the cost of the electricity to power the unit. The proposal was received after the agenda had been finalised but those present felt that it would not be possible to accept the proposal as there would be limited value to the wider community and agreeing may set a precedent for other residential roads within the parish. Those present noted that the nearest defibrillators, provided by the Parish Council, are at Farnham Common Sports Club and Ashford Kitchens.

87.3 The Clerk advised that she had been contacted by PCSO Emily Tucker following representations made to her by residents about parking in Scott Close, Farnham Common. PCSO Tucker had suggested double yellow lines and bollards on the grass area at the top of the junction with Beaconsfield Road. Those present discussed that double yellow lines had been raised previously but after the most recent consultation on road markings carried out by Buckinghamshire Council in 2021. Due to the costs involved in consulting and installing road markings, Cllr. Dev Dhillon (at that time) had advised that it would only be possible for this to be included in another wider consultation in the future rather than as a one off scheme. With regard to the request for bollards, previous advice to the parish council was that these edgework posts can be installed by Buckinghamshire Council following an application from residents. The Clerk was asked to update PCSO Tucker.

87.4 The Clerk advised that a resident had expressed concern regarding planning application PL/24/1774/FA for 1 Hammond End, Farnham Common which was seeking a part single/part two storey side link extension, new garage linked and loft conversion with associated dormer windows and a front porch extension. She understood that the resident would be contacting David Moore. David Moore confirmed that he had spoken to the resident.

87.5 Jenny Quilter advised that the latest quarterly operational inspection for the playground at Farnham Common had been received from Proludic and it had provided some recommendations regarding the playground surface and outdoor gym equipment. She will work with the Clerk to review the recommendations and identify any necessary next steps.

24/73/PC Next parish council meeting:

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Full Council on 23 September 2024 at 7.30pm at Farnham Royal Village Hall

OPEN FORUM

Jerry Houdret read the following statement on behalf of the Farnhams Magazine:

'I am here to advise about the magazine's future.

The magazine is the leading "Community Outreach Pack" for the Parish Churches, and as such is under the direct control and responsibility of our Rector Chloe and the Parochial Church Councils of St Mary's Farnham Royal and St John's Farnham Common.

Any decision about the future of the magazine will have to be taken by Rev Chloe and the PCCs.

As you all know our Magazine promotes many things about the Parish and what is happening, not just Church matters.

The magazine needed a funding review which has taken place as follows:-

- (1) As a result of the Royal Mail being made by the government to restructure post code boundaries, Hedgerley has come into SL2 3 thus meaning an increase in numbers of magazines to be printed and distributed. Now 4,130 copies quarterly. And the costs of postage have risen to nearly £1000 a quarter.*
- (2) Total production and distribution costs are now £20,000. They were £16,000.*
- (3) Income from our existing advertisers was equal to the past costs but is now nearly £5,000 short. However subject to a small increase in costs and the selling of a few extra advertising pages, the revised £20,000 cost should be able to be met.*

The real problem is finding Volunteers to run the editing and the bookkeeping.

Although we have promoted the need for new volunteers to come forward. None have.

Shortly the magazine managers will promote the Volunteer need on the Community Facebook Page and any forms of public announcement available to us. Suggestions welcomed. It is imperative we find new volunteers URGENTLY.

If this was purely a cost issue, we could stop deliveries and put 1,000 or so magazines in shops and the library for those that like a hard copy, and put the magazine online as planned, so that advertisers, and local groups can promote Events as they arise.

However, this is specifically a volunteers issue.

Thus, without fresh volunteers stepping forward very soon for bookkeeping and editorial roles, the Management Committee may have to recommend stopping production as from the end of distribution of a full year December 2024, March 2025, June 2025, with the final issue being September 2025. These four quarters represent a full advertising year.

This is a Warning I don't like to propose, because I have been involved for some 15+ years in the magazine, and the magazine has been going since 1901, i.e. 123 years. And the magazine is all set to Go Online if Volunteers come forward.

But written publications are dying around us, and volunteering amongst us is fading sadly.

So become a volunteer yourself please. Or please ask everyone you know if they want to be involved in quite literally saving our "Farnhams Magazine".'

Jerry Houdret stated that he appreciated that the Parish Council cannot do anything but asked that it publicise the urgent need for help as the magazine is the leading outreach communication in the villages. The Chairman stated his belief that this is about saving a means of communication with a lot of groups in the parish, particularly the elderly.

Kathrine Damsell advised that many organisations are struggling to attract and retain volunteers but Jerry Houdret advised that Farnham Common Community Library were very successful at doing just that. It was suggested that the Clerk ask Bob Milne, a parish councillor and library volunteer, why the library is so successful at this.

Jenny Quilter suggested that the magazine managers approach local colleges and universities as students on relevant courses may like to gain some practical experience. Barry Clarke, editor of the magazine, felt this was an excellent idea as the students could develop their media skills and would gain relevant experience and also credit for volunteering on their CV. He expressed that he would be happy to mentor and train young people looking to put into the magazine and learn from the process. David Moore felt it would be excellent to get young people involved as many study journalism but cannot get practical experience. Katherine Damsell advised that she is a governor at Beaconsfield High School and would be happy to look at a proposal for work experience etc. and the Chairman confirmed he could do the same for Beechwood School. She asked that the magazine managers prepare some information that can be given to the schools when they return in Autumn 2024.

Cllr. Dev Dhillon thanked Katherine Damsell and Jenny Quilter for joining him at the library for the Meet Your Local Councillors session and expressed that he felt the conversations with the residents that attended were very worthwhile.

Cllr. Dev Dhillon advised that he had made it very clear to the Rights of Way Team at Buckinghamshire Council that the Parish Council will not be responsible for the K barriers proposed for the entrances to public rights of way FAR/6 and FAR/7. He therefore requested that the Parish Council progressed the funding application for the Beeches Community Board. The Clerk advised that she had not received written confirmation of this from Buckinghamshire Council as previously discussed. Cllr. Dev Dhillon advised he would chase this. The Chairman clarified that the funding application would not now be submitted in time for the next meeting of the Beeches Community Board on 25 July 2024 but it was confirmed that a representative for the residents concerned would be attending the meeting to speak in the public forum.

Cllr. Dev Dhillon also advised that nominations were open until 11 August 2024 for the 2024 Pride of Bucks Awards for the Beeches Community Board. He advised there are three categories: The Good Neighbour award, The Young Champion award and The Outstanding Group award and encouraged those present to think of nominees. He stated that there would be one winner and two runners up for each category.

Cllr. Dev Dhillon announced that Buckinghamshire Council now has the power, without going to court, to issue fines up to £500 to anyone who is caught dropping litter and residents are encouraged, whilst remaining safe, to take photographs and send them to Buckinghamshire Council.

Cllr. Dev Dhillon also updated those present that one of the two individuals suspected of shoplifting from Tesco on The Broadway has been caught and action against the other is in the pipeline.

Cllr. Dev Dhillon asked David Moore to call in the planning application regarding The Jolly Woodman to the planning committee at Buckinghamshire Council as this would mean that all ward councillors would have submitted the request and if it is called in, he will speak against the application at the committee meeting. David Moore advised that he would call it in with a neutral position, as required by committee members.

A resident advised that three nights ago, a young lad on a bicycle had been kidnapped on the cinder track (accessed from Church Road in Farnham Royal) just past the boundary with Slough. He believed it involved a group of three or four males on a moped and bicycle possibly armed with knives and that the Police believed it was a targeted incident with no threat to the wider public.