

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 28 JANUARY 2019 AT 7.30 P.M. IN FARNHAM COMMON VILLAGE HALL

Present

Mr. Paul Rowley (Chairman) Mr. Bob Milne
Mrs. Judy Tipping Mrs. Marilyn Rolfe
Mrs. Jennifer Jebson Mr. Roger Home
Mrs. Judith Hall – Clerk
Nine members of the public and District Councillor Dev Dhillon.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.35pm. The meeting was adjourned for OPEN FORUM noted at the end of these minutes. The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

18/146/PC Apologies for absence

Mr. John Hodges, Mr. Clive Robinson and Mr. Richard Thomas

18/147/PC Declarations of Interest

Mr. Rowley declared an interest in item 152.1 (To approve comments on recent application).

18/148/PC To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2018

The minutes were then **approved** and signed by the Chairman.

18/149/PC Matters Arising (not covered on the agenda and for information only)

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website or a hard copy can be requested from the clerk.

- 141.1 Update on Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (“NPSG”) – report noted
- 141.2 Update on Facebook page – report noted
- 141.3 Update on Beeches Road consultation – report noted
- 141.4 Feedback following meeting with SBDC following the result of the car park referendum – report noted
- 141.5 Update on May 2019 election – report noted
- 141.6 Update on agreement with enforcement company – report noted
- 141.7 Update on changes to household recycling centres – report noted

18/150/PC Open Spaces

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report and supporting documents detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website or a hard copy can be requested from the clerk.

150.1 To review recommendations of the Open Spaces Working Group

Mr. Milne advised that the Group met earlier this month and following discussion at that meeting the Group was making the following recommendations.

150.1.1 Arboriculturalist’s Report (December 2018) – report noted and **it was agreed** that the work highlighted in the report should be done. Mr. Milne advised that once obtained any quote(s) would be brought to a future Parish Council meeting for agreement prior to any work being carried out.

150.1.2 Contracts – report noted and Mr. Milne advised that the Group proposed a change to the previous

decision to request one year extensions to the Parish Council's contracts to deliver devolved services. The Group felt that new four year contracts should be offered as this was likely to encourage more contractors and a better contract price. To protect the Parish Council a one year break clause would be inserted into the contracts to enable termination should BCC not continue with their agreement with the Parish Council. **This was agreed.**

150.1.3 Additional sign for Ingrams Copse – report noted and the purchase of another sign **was agreed.** Mr. Milne advised that once obtained any quote(s) would be brought to a future Parish Council meeting for agreement prior to any purchase being made.

150.1.4 Clearing tent encampment in Boundary Copse – report noted but the Clerk advised that Capability Landscapes Limited had now confirmed that they did not wish to quote for the work due to the nature of the waste. **It was agreed** that the matter would be reported to the Environmental Health Department at SBDC as the land is leased from SBDC.

150.2 To consider setting criteria for the Kingsway Green project and holding an extra-ordinary Parish Council meeting to make a decision on the way forward

Mr. Milne advised that there was concern about the speed of progress for this project. The Chairman stated that everyone would like to see something different and that currently the designers were struggling to agree a design and he felt that the Parish Council would struggle to agree a design so it was necessary to go back to the original brief and look at what should be included. It would then be important to set the criteria. The Chairman also advised that it is unlikely that the Parish Council could afford this project in one year. To take matters forward, the Chairman proposed that Mrs. Rolfe and he meet with the Kingsway Green Working Group to clarify these issues. Mr. Rhodes (a member of the public) shared his view that black metal bollards should be added to Kingsway Green where it borders The Kingsway to prevent vehicles from parking there. Mr. Milne advised that it was this that started the whole discussion. Mrs. Jebson requested that there be an indicative programme and suggested seeking funding from local businesses. The Chairman thanked Mrs. Rolfe for providing him with some information about third party funding as a way of paying for the project. Mrs. Jebson also suggested looking at community volunteering schemes operated by local companies.

18/151/PC Finance

The chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report and supporting documents detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website or a hard copy can be requested from the clerk.

151.1 To receive a report of the Finance Committee meeting held on 21 January 2019

Mr. Milne (Chairman of the Finance Committee) advised that the Committee had met more frequently recently in order to closely review the Parish Council's financial position.

5.1.1 2018/19 year end forecast

The Chairman advised that for many years the Parish Council reserves had been increasing, which is not the way a Parish Council is supposed to operate. At the beginning of 2018/19 the Parish Council thought that the reserves would increase but actually they have reduced due, in the main, to the following factors:

a. Clerk's salary

The Chairman advised that when the new clerk was recruited the Parish Council wanted to obtain the right full-time support and therefore decided to increase the salary to attract the right candidates. The need to recruit was not known at the start of the financial year.

b. Christmas lights

Given the amount of reserves brought forward from 2017/18 the Parish Council decided to spend £16,000 on new lights, which were well received. This is not a recurring cost although further investment may be needed in five to seven years.

c. Historic pension debt

The Chairman advised that although the Parish Council was aware of a potential liability it was not thought that this would actually need to be paid. In October 2018, the Parish Council sought advice from a parishioner who was suitably qualified and experienced. The advice was that a debt of £31,000 existed in respect of a previous employee's final salary pension scheme. An agreement has been reached with BCC for the debt to be settled in full over an 18 month period and no interest will be charged. The Chairman stated that there was no criticism of current or previous councillors who had been trying to defend the claim and confirmed that their actions did not

worsen the position.

d. Open spaces

The overspend was largely due to the cost of repairs to the footpath at Barn Close, Farnham Common. The work was carried out following a residents' petition. BCC agreed to carry out the work required but would only fund half of the costs so the Parish Council agreed to match fund the project. Again, this is not a recurring payment.

The Parish Council is now anticipating eating into its reserves, starting this month, by a total of £58,000 but this does leave some monies in reserve.

5.1.2 2019/20 budget

Mr. Milne advised that the expenditure figures are mostly fixed but that those that were not fixed had been cut to a minimum in an effort to reach a balanced budget. Mr. Milne noted that as the contracts have not yet been renegotiated, the contract prices are unknown but that the figures used were based on this year's price with a three percent increase. Mr. Milne advised that during the process it became apparent that it would not be possible to set a balanced budget without increasing the precept and the Committee recommended an increase of £10,000 which would lead to an estimated £11,000 deficit for the year 2019/20. Mr. Milne reminded councillors that the suspended reserves policy provided for the Parish Council to maintain reserves of at least half of the annual precept and that the National Association of Local Councils recommended reserves of between three and twelve months of the precept amount.

151.2 To agree the Precept for 2019/20

Mr. Milne advised that it was estimated that if councillors agreed to a £10,000 increase to the precept the reserves carried forward at the end of 2019/20 would equate to just under four months of the precept. The Chairman confirmed that the recommendation was to increase the annual precept by £10,000 which equated to roughly £4 per household although the actual amount would differ as this would be based on council tax bands so some would pay more and some would pay less. He also added that it was likely that the same increase would be required next year with the anticipation that this would lead to a balanced budget for the 2021/22 year. Mr. Home advised that he felt that this was a pragmatic solution and one that couldn't be avoided. Mrs. Tipping advised that she felt the Parish Council would need to increase the precept and that the increase proposed was not overly expensive. **It was agreed** to set a precept of £158,000 for the financial year 2019/20.

151.3 To approve payments and note receipts, as per the cashbook

The payments and receipts, as per the cashbook, **were approved**.

151.4 To note receipt of quarterly management information to 31 December 2018

It was noted that all councillors had received the quarterly management information to 31 December 2018.

151.5 To consider payment of an additional £551.55 towards the LAF project for dropped kerbs/footway reconstruction - report noted and **it was agreed** to pay the additional £551.55. Mr. Denman (a member of the public) asked why the kerbs were being dropped. Mr. Milne advised that it was to assist with accessibility for pushchair and wheelchair users.

18/152/PC Planning

Mrs. Tipping advised that the property known as Oak Timbers was one of the oldest houses in the village and her worry is that the owner will seek to pull down the property for better access to the new proposed property in the rear garden. Mr. Milne asked why she felt they would do this and Mrs. Tipping advised that it would be to build additional properties on the plot to make money as developers may not have lived in the village long and therefore do not care about the village.

Mr. Milne stated that he was particularly concerned about three current applications. The first for Romney, 57 Blackpond Lane, the second for Oak Timbers, Beaconsfield Road and the third for Springdale, Collinswood Road as these all involved building an additional property in the rear garden. Mr. Milne urged councillors, as individuals, to review and comment on these applications. Mr. Milne requested that a meeting of the new planning committee was held urgently and the Clerk agreed to arrange this. Mrs. Rolfe advised that she was concerned about the volume of applications in a small triangle around Beeches Road and the amount of construction traffic, if approved, these will create on the A355 at busy times. The Chairman advised that whilst at the moment this appears to be an issue for Beeches Road, his feeling is that this will migrate to other areas. Mrs. Rolfe advised that all of the applications are considered in isolation with no regard to other building work in the immediate area. Mrs. Tipping expressed concern that the decision to allow access from the car park to one Beeches Road property set a precedent for other

properties on Beeches Road. Mrs. Tipping again raised the issue of why planning appeals for the villages are considered in Bristol as she feels they do not have sufficient knowledge of the villages. Mrs. Rolfe stated that by holding the appeals in Bristol residents are discouraged from attending and speaking. Cllr. Dhillon advised that not all appeals are held in Bristol. He raised concerns about two stable developments in Parsonage Lane which he was actively looking at. He also reiterated that when he sat on the SBDC Planning Committee, the Committee refused permission for a development of 11 flats and at appeal permission was granted for 13 flats and costs were awarded against SBDC. The Chairman advised that currently there is no plan which protects Farnham Common and Farnham Royal and that is why a neighbourhood plan is needed, particularly as it appears that the planning authority looks at applications individually. Mr. Denham (a member of the public) asked Cllr. Dhillon whether it was right for him to pontificate about the actions of others when he cut down hedges to gain access for a building project and never replaced them. Cllr. Dhillon advised that due to his wife's illness and his subsequent injury he liaised with the Highways Agency to carry out the necessary work. He further advised that the reason the wooden fence is visible is because the height of his garden has been increased and that he planted the new laurels. Mr. Denman continued to dispute this and then left the meeting.

152.1 To approve the comments on recent applications

The Planning Comments were **approved**.

152.2 To note planning decisions

The Planning decisions were noted.

152.3 To consider the proposed names of properties on the Dippingwell site – report noted and the proposed names **were agreed**. The Clerk advised that during her discussion with the developer she asked what measures were being put in place to ensure the maintenance of the hedge along the A355 and that she had been advised that a management company was being set up to deal with this. Mr. Home welcomed this. Mr. Home requested that the Clerk obtain clarification regarding how the visibility splay will be provided.

18/153/PC Any Other Business (for information only)

153.1 Cllr. Dhillon advised that he has received circa 50 emails from residents regarding John Hampden Grammar School's admissions policy consultation, which details a change to the catchment area. He confirmed that he had responded to most emails and was forwarding them to the Education Department.

153.2 Cllr. Dhillon continued that three district councillors have asked for a judicial review of the unitary authority decision. Cllr. Dhillon advised that he voted against this and advised that there was currently huge uncertainty within the district and county council staff.

153.3 Cllr. Dhillon also advised that he had arranged for Bill Chapple of BCC to attend a Burnham Parish Council meeting to discuss the result of BCC's review of their household recycling centres and it was suggested that the Parish Council might like to do the same.

153.4 Mr. Home asked how to access the rights of way survey which had been devised to feed back into the BCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Clerk advised that she would investigate and let him know.

153.5 Mrs. Wagstaff (a members of the public) raised the issue of a tent settlement opposite Fairfield Lane and expressed concern as the land owner appears to be doing nothing despite the existence of human waste on the site. The Chairman advised that the Clerk would report this to the Environmental Heath Department at SBDC.

18/154/PC Next meeting

The meeting closed at 9.20pm. The next meeting will be on Monday 26 February 2019 at 7.30pm at Farnham Royal Village Hall.

OPEN FORUM

Mrs. Rhodes wished to bring a proposed development at Romney, 57 Blackpond Lane to the attention of the Parish Council as she is concerned regarding the increased level of development in Farnham Royal and Farnham Common. She states that residents have enjoyed a semi rural location which is being eroded by oversized housing, infilling and back garden grabbing. She is concerned about a huge loss of amenity in respect of privacy and increased noise. Mrs. Rhodes advised that a previous application was withdrawn shortly before it was to be rejected by SBDC and she requested that the Parish Council and councillors individually would submit objections to SBDC. She feels that the villages are at a tipping point.

Mrs. King wished to discuss the proposed development at Oak Timbers, Beaconsfield Road. This development was for a two storey property with side windows and doors which would look into her property as currently there is only a one metre fence at the boundary and the plans do not state whether this will be changed. She is also concerned that the position of the driveway will increase noise just outside her kitchen and dining room. She mentioned that initially she had been advised that the property was being built for an elderly father and that there would be three car movements a day for carers but that it now appeared that this had increased to seven cars despite there being no turning space at the proposed property due to the proximity to the existing property. Mrs. King also noted that the proposed property was larger than the existing property and those neighbouring which will mean that the new property will dominate the view. She also expressed her concern that the main access for the property is opposite Forge Drive and has restricted views for getting out onto the A355. Mrs. King continued that the villages are experiencing lots of new applications to build properties in gardens which dominate plots and developers are concreting over the parish.

Mrs. Wagstaff asked what residents can do about disingenuous and false information contained within planning applications and what the Parish Council can do to help residents get the right information out there. Mr. Milne advised that if residents feel misrepresented, they should include this information in their objections to SBDC planning for the benefit of the planning officer and any subsequent committee meeting. He continued that all comments now appear online. Mrs. Wagstaff advised that being misrepresented is frustrating and queried how many people reviewing the application actually did due diligence on what was contained within applications. The Chairman stated that this was one of the reasons for progressing a neighbourhood plan. He continued that currently the planning authority is simply reacting to individual applications and he felt that some of the inevitable restrictions on development as a result of the villages proximity to Burnham Beeches may actually help. He asked for more individuals to join the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as if the plan can be put in place the Parish Council will have real teeth when it comes to planning. He did remind those attending however that the villages will still have to deliver the number of houses sent down from the unitary authority but can shape how that looks. Mrs. Jebson advised that she had visited Blackpond Lane and the drawings are not representative of the actual position. The Chairman advised that the Parish Council would pick this up and encouraged individual councillors to submit objection letter to SBDC. Mr. Milne advised that he had already drafted comments on behalf of the Parish Council and asked the Clerk to circulate these to all councillors. Mrs. Tipping advised that the number of properties required had already been built but that these were not those required for families and she expressed frustration that developers do not always stick to building the number of properties for which permission was granted and nobody does anything. Mrs. King asked how many of the councillors would submit objections and five said they would.

Mr. Denman wished to bring to the Parish Council's attention the actions of a resident in Long Close off Spring Lane as during the last week he had removed and burnt three metres of the hedge to create access to his property for building machinery during an extension. Mr. Denman advised that a similar situation arose three years ago and then the homeowner advised that he would return the effected area to its previous condition but that this did not happen. Mr. Denman's concern is that the footpath will be ruined and following the previous occurrence an old lady fell and was hospitalised and he would not want this to happen again. He advised that the residents are not people to complain but last time the area wasn't put right and they want to make sure that this doesn't happen again. Mr. Home advised that the planning application went to appeal and the planning authority didn't include any conditions about this as they didn't think access could be obtained at that location. He suggested ascertaining whether the transport authority (BCC) had given permission for the work to be carried out. The Chairman encouraged residents to complaint to SBDC planning and BCC and advised that the Parish Council would also report it.