

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 25 JANUARY 2021 AT 7.30 P.M. VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING

Present

Mr. Paul Rowley (Chairman) Mr. Bob Milne
Mrs. Marilyn Rolfe Mr. Roger Home
Mr. Richard Thomas Mr. Clive Robinson
Mrs. Judith Hall – Clerk
One member of the public, County Cllr. David Anthony and County Cllr. Dev Dhillon

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.30pm. The meeting was adjourned for OPEN FORUM noted at the end of these minutes. The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

21/1/PC Apologies for absence

Mr. John Hodges, Mrs. Judy Tipping and Mrs. Jennifer Quilter

21/2/PC Declarations of Interest

In respect of item 6.1.1, Mr. Thomas declared that he is Chair of the Farnham Common Sports Club.

21/3/PC To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 23 November 2020

The minutes were **approved** and **it was agreed** that they would be signed by the Chairman the next day.

21/4/PC Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda - for information only)

4.1 Update on Community Payback projects – the report was noted. Mr. Home advised that the Parish Council had not yet received the invoice from the Community Payback Scheme for the £100 per day charge for the supervisor. He confirmed that including this invoice the project will come in on budget. Mr. Home advised that the snow indicated that there had been significant footfall on the newly cleared path and he was happy to see it being used. Mr. Robinson asked whether the Scheme would undertake work in Footpath 4 (Barn Close) to remove a bank which creates a pool of water when it rains. Mr. Home agreed to note this for submission in the next applications. Cllr. Dhillon advised that he had a meeting with the TfB LAT on Thursday morning and would raise it with him. Mr. Milne felt if it was a drainage issue, as BC had tarmaced the path, BC were the right people to refer the matter to.

4.2 Update on Kingsway Green Project – the report was noted. Mrs. Rolfe advised the bulbs are up about 2 inches and some of the wild flowers are showing. The Clerk advised that due to the location of the Christmas Tree it had been suggested that only one new bench should be installed and that she would be discussing this with the family wishing to place a commemorative bench on the Green. Mr. Milne confirmed that he would be visiting the Green to confirm whether the existing benches are installed directly onto the grass or on paving as it would be good if the new bench matched.

4.3 Update on the installation of the defibrillator at Farnham Royal Village Hall – the report was noted. The Chairman advised that the Clerk would be checking the defibrillator pads and batteries etc to ensure nothing is out of date. The Chairman also asked whether anyone present wished to be the second guardian of the defibrillators. No one volunteered so he confirmed he would do it.

4.4 Update on the installation of the new noticeboards – the report was noted and the Clerk advised that Mr. Milne had offered to attend the site in Farnham Royal to ensure the noticeboard is installed in the best location.

4.5 Update on 2021 Local Elections – the report was noted and further discussion had taken place in the Open Forum detailed below.

4.6 Update on Covid19 Support Group – Mr. Thomas advised that the Group still had 75 volunteers and that those in need are getting the help required. He continued that he had asked the other organisers of the Group whether they felt another leaflet drop in the area would be beneficial but they did not as

connections had already been made. He gave special thanks to Isabelle Shepherd who has been collecting gifts for the staff at Wexham Hospital. He advised that as tasks such as collecting prescriptions and shopping has reduced other tasks are being done such as transporting residents to vaccinations and taking residents to hospital.

21/5/PC To consider a timetable for returning to face to face meetings and reopening the office

The Chairman recommended continuing with virtual meetings and that the Clerk continued to work from home and **this was agreed**. The Chairman advised that BMKALC were lobbying local MPs on behalf of NALC to have legislation drafted in due course to make permanent the right given in Covid19 emergency legislation for local councils to be able to hold remote (and future hybrid) meetings. They claim that recent evidence suggests an increase in attendance online from many local councillors, including those on local councils in remote rural areas. NALC would like a permanent extension of the ability for these councils to meet remotely after the Covid19 legislation expires. Cllr. Anthony expressed his belief that the legislation is likely to need to be extended but not necessarily made permanent. The Chairman advised that the Parish Council would consider the issue if it becomes relevant.

21/6/PC Finance:

6.1 To consider the December 2020 Management Accounts including:

Mr. Milne asked those present to confirm that they had reviewed the management accounts and accompanying notes. Those present confirmed they had.

6.1.1 Granting Farnham Common Sports Club an additional three month rent free period.

This **was agreed**.

6.1.2 Waiving charges to the businesses who ordinarily contribute to the hanging baskets along The Broadway.

This **was agreed**

6.1.3 Carrying out the work identified in the December 2020 Arboriculture Report by the end of March 2021 and if relevant, the quotes received.

Mr. Milne advised that it is good practice to get the work done in a timely fashion and proposed that the work identified in the December 2020 Arboriculture Report was completed by the end of March 2021. This **was agreed**. Mr. Milne continued that the Clerk had sought quotes for the December 2020 work and details of the quotes received had been provided to all parish councillors. Mr. Milne proposed that South Bucks Tree Surgeons were appointed to carry out the work as they were an approved supplier of BC and had been recommended by Amersham Town Council. The appointment of South Bucks Tree Surgeons **was agreed**. Mr. Milne recommended that the additional work identified by South Bucks Tree Surgeons in its quote should be carried out and this **was agreed**.

6.1.4 Mr. Milne proposed that the grant awarded to the Farnhams Magazine should be allocated to the Covid19 grant received from BC as the need was created by a drop in advertising revenue due to reduced advertising sales as a result of Covid19. Cllr. Dhillon and Cllr. Anthony confirmed that this was an appropriate use of the funds received. This **was agreed**.

6.1.5 The Chairman expressed his thanks to Mr. Milne and the Clerk who he felt had done an excellent job at controlling the budget this year.

The management accounts **were agreed**.

6.2 To consider the 2021/22 budget and projections for 2022/23 and 2023/24

Mr. Milne asked those present to confirm that they had reviewed the budget and projections. Those present confirmed they had. Mr. Milne advised that when the 2020/21 budget was agreed this time last year the Parish Council agreed a three year plan to return its reserves to the recommended amount but due to the additional cost of the arboriculture work and the estimated cost of completing anticipated future projects the Parish Council will not now meet the three year plan at the end of March 2023 and will be looking to the end of March 2024. He continued that based on the projection previously agreed for 2021/22 and 2022/23 the precept was expected to increase by 3% in order to cover known increases in fixed costs and to reach the recommended reserves amount. However, it is clear now that at some time the precept will need to be increased by more than 3%. He stated that the Parish Council is determined to use the s106 monies available from BC so will have to put some match funding in the budget towards the cost of Board projects. As a result, the amounts included in the budgets towards these projects are higher than usual with £15,000 for 2021/22 and £10,000 for each of 2022/23 and 2023/24. The estimated amount for arboriculture work has also been increased from previous levels with £8,000 for 2021/22 and £5,000 for each of 2022/23 and 2023/24. Finally, the Parish Council has been advised that it may need to replace the original Christmas lights and therefore the estimated expenditure has been split over 2022/23 and 2023/24. Mr. Milne concluded that these expenditure items together with trying to build the reserves mean that the precept will need to increase. Turning to the precept, Mr. Milne advised that the Tax Base had gone down this year largely due to more residents claiming relief as a result of

Covid19. Cllr. Dhillon confirmed that a household could claim a £250 reduction in their council tax if its income had reduced due to Covid19. Mr. Milne advised that due to the reduction, any increase would be more in percentage terms to the residents and confirmed that a 3.27% increase had been applied in 2021/22 and a 5% increase had been applied for each of 2022/23 and 2023/24. The Chairman advised that he felt the budget and projections as presented were a well balanced view that took into account the financial effects of Covid19 but also the desire to keep the momentum going on anticipated projects. The Chairman asked Mr. Home, who had worked closely with the Finance Committee, for his comments. He fully endorsed and supported the work done and thanked Mr. Milne for his huge effort in preparing the budget and projections. He added that residents do look to the Parish Council to get things done and the actual cost of the increase is a relatively small amount, about £20 per year for a Band D property. The budget and projections **were agreed**.

6.3 To agree the 2021/22 precept.

Based upon the budget that had been agreed, Mr. Milne recommended a 3.22% increase to the precept for the year 2021/22 which would be a 3.97% increase for residents due to the reduction in tax base.

Cllr. Anthony advised that the tax base has fallen throughout the county. The proposed increase **was agreed**

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

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

6.5 To consider the following expenditure:

6.5.1 Replacement seat for the Spring Turtle at the Farnham Royal playground

This **was agreed**.

6.5.2 Replacement saddle seat for the chest press machine at the Farnham Common Outdoor Gym

This **was agreed**.

6.5.3 Installation of the old Farnham Royal noticeboard at the public conveniences in Farnham Common

This **was agreed**.

21/7/PC Planning:

7.1 Mrs. Rolfe, as Chair of the Planning Working Group asked all councillors present to review the following applications:

7.1.1 PL/20/4176/FA and PL/20/4263/FA Robinscroft, 131 Blackpond Lane – the concern is the size of the proposed development in comparison to the existing property and that it appears to be almost boundary to boundary. Cllr. Dhillon advised that he had received complaints from residents regarding the application and would be objecting to it and calling it into the BC Planning Committee.

7.1.2 PL/20/3773/FA Merryways, Christmas Lane – the concern is the application is for the demolition of an existing detached bungalow and erection of a new detached dwelling house with associated double garage, bin and cycle stores on a relatively small plot. Cllr. Dhillon confirmed that he will review the application and comment where necessary.

7.1.3 PL/20/3914/FA Silverwood, Parsonage Lane – the concern is the application is for the demolition of all existing buildings and erection of a new dwelling on green belt land. Cllr. Dhillon confirmed that he will review the application and comment where necessary.

Cllr. Anthony reminded those present that due to recent changes all applications can now be decided by planning officer discretion even with ten objections so if the Parish Council has valid objections the application should be referred to Cllr. Dhillon and/or himself and they will call in the application to the Planning Committee.

7.2 To ratify comments submitted on recent applications

The Planning Comments **were ratified**.

7.3 To note recent planning decisions

The Planning decisions **were noted**.

7.4 Mrs. Rolfe advised that notice of an appeal regarding application PL/20/1854/FA – Langdale, Farnham Park Lane had been received.

7.5 Mrs. Rolfe advised that the TfB booklet detailing the process of implementing traffic calming measures that had recently been circulated by the Clerk was very good to receive.

7.6 Mrs. Rolfe advised that 34 conifers had been planted by a resident on a verge by the Old Beaconsfield Road and that these should be removed. The Chairman advised that he had spoken to the resident who had agreed to abide by whatever decision the Parish Council made. He further advised that the Clerk had raised the issue with BC and they were unhappy with the location as they claim the trees are too close to the highway and will cause safety issues in the future. The Chairman advised that this was an enforcement issue and that the resident would be asked to remove them. All those present felt this was the correct

action.

7.7 Mrs. Rolfe raised the tall trees on the other side of the A355 as she feels they make the road dark and dangerous. It was agreed that the Clerk would raise the issue with the TfB LAT and the TfB Operations Manager.

7.8 Mrs. Rolfe advised that a resident had complained about delays in BC processing planning applications. She expressed that she would like to propose that some of the work currently being done by BC should be given to parish councils. Cllr. Dhillon asked for details of the applications so he could refer the issue to the Planning Department. He advised that he was aware of delays being caused by employees shielding and sickness as a result of Covid19. Cllr. Anthony advised that he was aware of the complaint and had referred it to the Chairman of the Planning Committee and that he would feedback the reply received. Cllr. Dhillon advised that he had forwarded the complaint to Cllr. Whyte as Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement and had asked for the fees paid to be refunded. Mrs. Rolfe asked those present to have a think about the Parish Council taking more of an active role in planning locally. The Chairman suggested adding this item to the agenda for the next working group meeting.

21/8/PC Any Other Business (for information only)

1. The Clerk advised that she had received a Freedom of Information Act request asking whether the Parish Council has any byelaws relating to the use of UAVs (drones) from its land. She advised that BMKALC had confirmed that there is no necessity for the Parish Council to have a policy or byelaw as these would have been set by the Principal authority so BC. It was agreed that the Clerk should issue a reply advising that the Parish Council does not have a policy or byelaws relating to the use of UAVs from its land as these would be set by Buckinghamshire Council but that any operator must comply with The Air Navigation Order 2016 and Regulations (CAP393).

2. The Clerk advised that the BC Cemeteries Manager was hoping to meet a contractor at St Mary's Churchyard on either Wednesday or Thursday this week to discuss the path repairs.

3. The Clerk advised that she had heard back from the website developer and would be discussing the updates required with him tomorrow with a view to holding a zoom call with the developer and Mr. Home as soon as possible. These discussions would include any amendments required to comply with the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines.

4. The Clerk advised that she had received a report of damage to a lamp post in Kemsley Chase caused by a delivery lorry reversing into it. The residents had obtained details of the delivery company and provided these to the Clerk so she had contacted the company seeking their agreement to take responsibility for the repair/replacement costs. The company had advised that they were investigating the incident but would like to know the costs involved.

5. Mr. Home raised the A355 verge vegetation work agreed with TfB and advised following a site meeting on 20th January that TfB agreed that the limited cutting carried out in November 2020 does not meet any of the specifications agreed last summer. It was also agreed that TfB would carry out further work to be completed by April 2021 which would meet the specification. TfB also indicated that as well as meeting the specification to clear vegetation on the east side of the road between One Pin Lane and the speed limit signs the clearance would extend to Parish Lane.

6. Mr. Home wanted to report back following the Beeches Community Board Highways & Infrastructure meeting on 20th January 2021. He advised that the Parish Council's funding applications are being assessed but it is unlikely outcomes will be known before September 2021. The applications are:

- Blackpond Lane Footway
- Templewood Lane Drop Kerbs
- ATS Tyre Footway flooding (There has been indication that this would be part of the remedial work to resolve flooding in Th Broadway car park)
- Farnham Lane crossing

He continued that in 2020 Buckinghamshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan was published and that a key element was maintaining the quality of the paths and keeping them free of overgrowing vegetation. The Board has been tasked with seeking a commitment from BC that any hedge cutting notices issued by parishes will be fully supported even if litigation is required to ensure compliance. Finally, he advised that the Highway & Infrastructure committee supported the need for a Beeches area Active Travel Strategy and that other parishes would be engaged. Central government funding allocations for this Strategy has provided BC with £2,261,943. Simplistically, this equates to £145,000 per community board.

7. Mr. Home also suggested that the Parish takes part in the Keep Britain Tidy – The Great British Spring Clean project and raised whether the Parish Council should lead a campaign within the Parish as it can arrange equipment etc and stressed that if the parish was to take part planning needed to start now. He suggested engaging residents via the community Facebook page and Mr. Thomas suggested approaching Mr. Dodds for help with this. Mr. Chapman suggested also contacting The Rotary Club as he felt they would be keen to get involved.

8. Mr. Home advised that he had been contacted by Mr. Ballie, a member of The Chiltern Society, representing the Farnhams. Mr. Bailee has walked the footpaths in the Parish since the beginning of the year and reported 5 footpaths with no issues, 11 minor issues and 2 major issues. Mr. Home advised that one minor issue related to the location of a no cycling sign in Footpath 4 and raised whether on the basis that the footpath is used by adults and children to travel to Burnham Beeches SAC does the Parish Council actually want there to be no cycling in the footpath. Mr. Milne felt that cyclist should dismount and walk through the footpath and that if the sign needed to be moved that was BC's responsibility. The Clerk agreed to ask the BC Rights of Way Team.

9. Mrs. Rolfe asked for an update regarding the Farnham Common village sign. The Clerk advised that she had contacted the person recommended to carry out the repairs, who was also the person who did the work original, on a few occasions with no reply being received. The Chairman advised that he would contact Mr. Whiting, a resident, for help in contacting the recommended person.

10. Mrs. Rolfe asked Cllr. Dhillon about the Green Lane parking restrictions that are due to expire on 31 January 2021. Cllr. Dhillon advised that this is in hand and that he was looking to extend the restrictions up to the end of March 2021.

11. Mrs. Rolfe suggested that when the time was right it would be a good idea to plant some trees in memory of people lost to Covid19 from our local community

12. The Chairman thanked the Farnham Royal Relief in Sickness Charities for giving Christmas presents to the residents in Farnham Common House and Chandos Lodge and other residents in need.

21/9/PC Next Meeting

The meeting closed at 9.25pm. The next meeting will be a virtual meeting on 22 February 2021 at 7.30pm. Details will be published with the agenda.

OPEN FORUM

The Chairman invited issues from the public.

Mr. Chapman suggested that as the Government has declared that the only new vehicles that will be available to purchase from 2030 will be electric vehicles, the Parish Council should look into installing charging points in the villages. Cllr. Dhillon advised that he felt some funding would be made available when the time was right and then would be a sensible time to start work on this. Mr. Milne and Mrs. Rolfe felt that any charging points would be installed in the car park but raised the issue of parking charges. Cllr. Dhillon offered to raise the matter with BC as Mr. Chapman had made the suggestion. The Chairman asked whether BC would fund a survey to see where the charging points should be. Mr. Chapman felt that before doing that it might be sensible for someone to do some research into the practicalities of charging points. Mr Home advised that he had read about this matter in a BC document which stated that the plan was to locate charging points in car parks so suggested finding out what BC are thinking about this. Cllr. Dhillon advised that BC have taken huge steps to reduce its carbon footprint and that BC are far ahead of predicted timetables meaning it should be carbon neutral long before 2050. The Chairman commented that a lot of households already have charging points.

The Chairman asked the County Councillors present if they had any information or issues to share.

Cllr. Anthony said the situation regarding the May 2021 elections was still very uncertain and that he finds his position very uncomfortable as the last election was six years along and the number of councillors should be reduced. He feels it is very unlikely that the elections will take place in May 2021. The Chairman expressed his scepticism as well due to the uncertainty created by Covid19. Cllr. Dhillon agreed and stated that 194 councillors is too many and the intention is to have 147 after the election with a further reduction to under 100 after the following election. Cllr. Anthony advised that the Leader of BC, Martin Tett, feels there should be no more than 88 councillors, which Cllr. Anthony agrees with. Cllr. Dhillon advised that most councillors were against postal votes due to potential fraud.

Cllr. Dhillon advised that there is likely to be a delay with refuse collections this week due to the snow.

Cllr. Dhillon advised that shops in the villages are experiencing customers refusing to wear face masks and confrontations between staff and customers and customers and customers are taking place. Having checked with BC he confirmed that it is within the gift of the shops to refuse entry. He also advised that a few of the people refusing to wear face masks have said that they have exemptions on their mobile phone. Again, he checked with BC and they have confirmed that this does not exist. Cllr. Dhillon has spoken to shops and confirmed that it is up to the Police to enforcement the law.

Cllr. Dhillon advised that BC had agreed to increase its precept by 3.9% including a 2% rise in respect of adult social care.

Cllr. Dhillon also advised that the Chancellor had announced a further £2.4billion to help local councils in this lockdown but BC does not yet know what amount it will receive. He reminded those present that businesses can apply for grants and individuals on low incomes who test positive for coronavirus and need to self-isolate can apply for a £500 payment from BC.

Cllr. Dhillon advised that he had been contacted by several individuals who are concerned that if they can't go to their vaccine appointment, they won't get offered another one. He advised that this was not the case and if anybody is struggling to get to their vaccination, he is happy to support in any way he can.