

# FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY 2021 AT 10.00AM VIA ZOOM

### Present

Mr. Bob Milne (Chairman)  
Mr. Paul Rowley  
Mrs. Marilyn Rolfe  
Mr. Roger Home  
Mrs. Judith Hall – Clerk

### 21/1/FC Apologies for absence

Mr. John Hodges

### 21/2/FC To approve minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020

Having considered the amendments to the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 as detailed in the 16 November 2020 minutes, the Chairman requested additional amendments to item 7 as follows: 'The Chairman expressed his opinion that ***the Parish Council was in the middle group with four other parishes and that*** the next big project would be the ***playground and*** Guide Hut ***area*** and stated that the Parish Council should start saving when the project has been costed. Those present were reminded to consider the number of people who would benefit from the ***playground and*** Guide Hut project versus the number that would benefit from other projects such as crossings, footpath improvements, drainage, road resurfacing etc.

Following this the minutes of both meetings were **confirmed** as a true and accurate record and they were then signed by the Chairman.

### 21/3/FC Matters arising from previous minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

3.1 The Clerk advised that the defibrillator has now been installed at the Farnham Royal Village Hall.

3.2 The Clerk advised that she had spoken to the donor who had agreed to allow his donation of £1,000 to be used to create the new flowerbed on Kingsway Green instead of the flower bed along the strip of land next to Kingsway Green.

3.3 Mr. Rowley advised that he and the Clerk had spoken regarding the asset register and he felt that the register should quote the current asset value and a replacement value. He continued that it should be ensured that the Parish Council's insurance policy was 'new for old'. The Chairman expressed that this may affect the insurance premium and felt that it would be interesting to know what other parish councils do. Mr. Rowley agreed but stated that this decision was about this parish.

3.4 The Chairman asked whether the holly tree in St. Marys Churchyard had been felled. The Clerk advised that the contractor had confirmed that this had been done.

### 21/4/FC To consider the External Auditors report for 2019/20

Those present reviewed both of the External Auditors reports and it was agreed that the External Auditor had no concerns regarding the Parish Council's finances and had reported only the delays in the audit process experienced due to Covid19 issues. It was felt that this would apply to many parish councils throughout the country and was unlikely to arise again.

### 21/5/FC To consider the December 2020 Management Accounts

Those present reviewed the management accounts and notes circulated ahead of the meeting. The following additional points were discussed:

1. Kingsway Green/Devolved Services – The Clerk explained that the contractor had advised that he would not charge for the time spent digging the new flowerbed and planting the bulbs on Kingsway Green as

there were unspent hours in the devolved services contract for the year. The Chairman advised that he would prefer that a charge was made for Kingsway Green, as the expenditure had been budgeted for, and then the available hours could be used for additional verge work such as the one at the far end of One Pin Lane. It was agreed that the Clerk would raise this with the contractor and request a site meeting to progress it.

2. Arboriculture Work – The Chairman advised that the revised figure for the year included the work in respect of the December 2019 report based on the approved quote and the December 2020 report based on the one quote received so far as it was felt that going forward the work identified in the December report should be carried out between January and March the following year before the nesting season. This approach was agreed and the proposal will be added to the January 2021 Parish Council Meeting agenda.
3. Grants – The Clerk asked whether the grant awarded to the Farnhams Magazine was to be allocated against Parish Council grants or the Covid19 grant received from Buckinghamshire Council. Those present agreed that it should be allocated to the Buckinghamshire Council Covid19 grant.
4. Other Community Events – The Chairman asked what this budget line represented. The Clerk advised that it could actually be deleted given that it was unlikely any community events would be held before the year end due to Covid19 restrictions.
5. Farnham Royal Charities – The Clerk advised that an extra line was present in respect of the funds spent on behalf of the Charities. She continued that this line will also show the income as negative expenditure when reimbursement is received from the Charities as this is how the Internal Auditor has advised he wants it to be shown.
6. Balance Carried Forward – Mrs. Rolfe suggested adding a note to the notes document explaining the change in this item. All those present felt that this was a good idea.

It was also agreed that the following proposals should be added to the January 2021 Parish Council meeting agenda:

1. To consider granting Farnham Common Sports Club an additional three month rent free period.
2. To consider waiving charges to the retailers/businesses who contribute to the hanging baskets along The Broadway.

### **21/6/FC To consider the updated 2021/22 budget forecast**

6.1 Those present reviewed the updated 2021/22 budget and forecasts together with the notes that were circulated ahead of the meeting. The following additional points were discussed:

- 6.1.1 Mr. Rowley felt that the cost of the arboriculture work was understated at £5,000 given that the work associated with the last two reports was £11,000 and £8,000. It was agreed that this was amended to £8,000 for 2021/22 but the Chairman felt it should be left at £5,000 for the subsequent years.
- 6.1.2 Mr. Home pointed out that although the budget included Community Board Match Funding, the budget and forecasts did not include saving towards future projects and more projects had been identified in the Parish than the Parish Council would ever have the money for. He expressed his feeling that a budget line should be included to fund future projects. The Chairman felt that before a budget line was included for this, the project should be identified with costings and a delivery timeline. He also expressed that the Parish Council had not had a proper debate about the projects identified. The Chairman advised that 2021/22 was different as enough funds needed to be included in the budget to enable the spending of the available s.106 funds.
- 6.1.3 The Chairman explained the changes in the Parish's tax base between 2019/20 and 2021/22 and the effect this has on the actual percentage increase in the precept. He had calculated that due to a reduction in the Band D equivalent tax base, a 3% increase was actually a 3.75% increase and a 5% increase was actually 5.77% increase. Mr. Rowley advised that to afford future projects a 5% precept increase was necessary but also felt that given the effects of Covid19 there is an argument for not increasing the precept at all. The Chairman expressed that perception is important in the current climate and advised that Stoke Poges actually put down its precept last year, presumably as it didn't have any projects. Following further debate, it was agreed that the Finance Committee would recommend a 5% increase in the precept for 2021/22 to enable the Parish Council to achieve the desired projects.

Mr Rowley also advised that he wished to talk to loan providers about the possible options for the Parish Council should it wish to borrow money to fund projects. Mrs. Rolfe and Mr. Home agreed that this was a sensible idea so that the options were fully understood but the Chairman, whilst acknowledging that Stoke Poges Parish Council had obtained a loan previously, disagreed and felt that projects needed to be prioritised,

costed and have a timeline for delivery before funding was sought. Mr Home expressed his feeling that it was necessary to look at all possible income streams to achieve the desired projects. The Chairman expressed his frustration that the Parish Council had been talking about this for years with little action. Mr. Home agreed but advised that he was pursuing funding from Buckinghamshire Council for the Active Travel Strategy projects.

**21/7/FC Any other business**

7.1 Those present discussed the need for a meeting to review the projects highlighted for the Parish. It was agreed that a meeting would be held on 10 February 2021 at 10am and that at the January Parish Council Meeting, all councillors would be asked to provide details of any additional projects in time for discussion at the meeting.

7.2 The Clerk asked whether those present would be in agreement to her salary being paid on the same date every month or on the same day every month i.e. the last Friday rather than after the Parish Council meeting as this changes depending on when the Parish Council meeting is held. The Clerk advised that the Finance Regulations allowed for this. Those present agreed in principle and asked the Clerk to decide what would be best.

7.3 The Clerk advised that following a discussion with Mr. Rowley before Christmas she had been looking into appraisal processes recommended by the National Association of Local Councils and those adopted by other parish councils. It was agreed that she would forward her findings to the Chairman and Mr. Rowley for review. The Clerk also mentioned that she would like to undertake some of the training/qualifications available.

7.4 Mrs. Rolfe asked whether it would be a good idea to have a meeting of the Kingways Green and Village Flowers Working Group. It was agreed that given the current Covid19 restrictions it was not possible to meet so any issues should be emailed to all members.

7.5 Mrs Rolfe asked where the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had got to. Mr. Rowley advised that things needed to get going again having slowed down due to Covid19 restrictions and the withdrawal of the South Bucks Local Plan.

7.6 Mr. Home raised whether it was necessary to replace the streetlights in Farnham Park Lane given its rural location and felt that their positioning may be for historic reasons due to the location of the old rehabilitation centre which has now been redeveloped into housing. Mrs. Rolfe suggested having a look at the area before a decision was made.

7.7 Mr. Rowley asked the Clerk to report again that the streetlight outside The Stag Public House was not working.

**5. Date and time of next meeting:**

The meeting closed at 12.10pm. The next meeting is 14 April 2021 at 10.00am via Zoom

Signed as a true record of the meeting:-

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Chairman