

Information for the Parish Council Meeting on 25 April 2022

3 Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda - for information only)

3.1 Update on Farnham Royal Broadband Issues

The Clerk has been contacted by a resident who has advised that Swish Fibre have been inviting “pre orders” and have stated that a minimum of 147 are required to proceed with installing their equipment in Farnham Royal. The resident has also advised that as of 15 April 2022 only 11 “pre orders” had been received and this is after a notice was placed on the Facebook page, ‘Lets fight for fibre in Farnham Royal’.

The resident believes that the costs of the service are likely to be the reason. The costs quoted by the resident are £400 for installation and £45 per month for broadband, which does not include the line rental. The resident claims that the monthly charge is about double that paid for fibre by residents in Farnham Common. He feels that should this situation continue, there is little prospect of fibre in Farnham Royal for some years and has asked that the matter is brought to the attention of parish councillors and anyone else who can help.

The resident has also raised that previously the Government (the Department of Culture, Media & Sport) announced a £5billion rollout for “gigabit fibre” in the United Kingdom and this year they announced a public consultation, which he responded to. The Government then replied to him stating that he is eligible, providing there are no other commercial plans like Swish Fibre. In addition, the resident has raised that on 7 January 2022, Buckinghamshire Council in its newsletter announced that during 2022/23 additional funds would be added to the funds already available for rolling out high speed broadband into additional areas. The resident would like to know whether Farnham Royal will be included and whether this additional money is part of the £5billion being made available by the Government.

3.2 Update on Buckinghamshire On Street Parking Review

Buckinghamshire Council have advised the Clerk that the scheme is currently at councillor sign off (known as Key Decision Report sign off), it is the officer’s understanding that before the report is approved or rejected some points are being clarified with ward councillors in one of the nine areas the scheme covers. If the scheme is approved, it may contain recommendations which differ from the original advertised scheme. If the scheme is rejected, officers will need to undertake further discussion with Buckinghamshire Councillors in relation to the points it was rejected on and subject to that process the report will be re-drafted for councillor sign off.

The officer confirmed that new restrictions cannot be added to the original formally advertised scheme without undertaking a new formal public consultation. However, restrictions can be removed or reduced (e.g. a 24/7 restriction such as yellow lines can be reduced in days or time or both) without a need for further public consultation. He noted that if restrictions are rejected and removed from the scheme it does not stop or limit the Police in undertaking enforcement actions at that location in line with Highway Code rules.

The Clerk asked for details of the scheme currently being considered by Buckinghamshire Councillors but was told that the officer is unable to provide these as it is these recommendations that are subject to approval or rejection and the final decision may differ from what is currently detailed in the draft report. He did advise that any officer recommendations in the draft report would firstly be subject to Highway Code rules and in areas not covered by Highway Code (e.g. permit holder only parking) they would be subject to comments received from the public and Council policies. He continued that once the report is signed off for the next stage, he will be able to advise the parish council of the details as the report will be in the public domain.

The Clerk asked if there was a timescale for this process and the officer stated that there are no time limits detailed in the national legislation, however, most authorities work on the basis that it is good practice that if the process is not completed within 2 years from the date of the formal public consultation, a new formal public consultation should be undertaken, which would require additional new funding.

3.3 Update on Neighbourhood Plan

A verbal update will be provided by Paul Rowley at the meeting.

4 To receive a report from the Projects Working Group and consider any recommendations

The minutes of the Projects Working Group meeting held on 25 March 2022 have been circulated to councillors. The most recent meeting of the Group is being held on 22 April 2022 and a verbal report will be provided at the Parish Council meeting.

5 To consider the principle of obtaining a restrictive covenant to protect the land at Farnham Common Sports Club

It is understood that some of the land currently occupied by Farnham Common Sports Club is subject to a restrictive covenant to ensure that the land is used for community sports and recreation purposes. It has been suggested that a new covenant is obtained to protect all the land and possibly that occupied by the playground and Guide Hut. Parish Councillors are being asked to consider whether, in principle, they agree with this proposal. If so, the Clerk will contact local solicitors for advice and cost estimates.

6 To consider the revised Councillor Expenses Policy

At the March 2022 Parish Council meeting it was agreed that this policy would be revised to include a provision for councillor mileage incurred in carrying out contract management inspections within the Parish. A copy of the revised draft policy has been circulated to councillors.

7 Finance:

7.1 To receive a report from the Finance Committee

At the February 2022 Parish Council meeting Bob Milne advised that there was an error in the 2023/24 projection as the surplus brought forward amount had been incorrectly stated. The Clerk was asked to correct this and circulate the amended document. Bob Milne noted that the reserves required would now not be met until 2024/25 rather than 2022/23 as originally planned but expressed that the budget set for 2022/23, whilst remaining tight, would allow things to be done. The revised final budget has been circulated to councillors separately. In addition, Bob Milne has prepared a further budget document which includes a projection for 2024/25. A copy of this document has also been circulated to councillors.

The last meeting of the Finance Committee was scheduled to take place on 13 April 2022. Unfortunately, the meeting could not be held as it was inquorate. It is also noted that attendance at previous meetings has been limited. It would therefore be useful for parish councillors to discuss whether the time/date of future meetings should be changed to enable better attendance. The dates of future meetings are currently:

15 June 2022 at 10.00am

13 July 2022 at 10.00am

12 October 2022 at 10.00am

7.2 To consider the 2021/22 Annual Management Accounts

The 2021/22 Annual Management Accounts together with accompanying notes has been circulated to councillors. The Clerk forwarded the required financial information to the Parish Council's accountants on 4 April 2022 and the draft accounts are expected to be received in a couple of weeks. The internal audit will commence on 31 May 2022.

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

The cashbook has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Finance Committee and has been circulated to councillors separately.

7.4 To consider quotes for replacement flagpoles

The company that carried out the annual service on the villages' flagpoles reported that both poles should be replaced within 12 months as they had become brittle. The Clerk has contacted five companies requesting quotes for supply and installation. To date, two quotes have been received.

Company A - £2,034.52 plus VAT

Company B - £2,063.00 plus VAT

The Clerk hopes that further quotes will be available for consideration at the meeting.

8 Planning:

8.1 To ratify comments submitted on recent applications

The schedule of comments submitted to the planning authority has been circulated to councillors.

8.2 To note recent planning decisions

The schedule of planning authority decisions has been circulated to councillors.