

FRPC Parish Council for The Farnhams

**Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING of the PARISH OF FARNHAM ROYAL
held on Monday 23 May 2022 at Farnham Common Village Hall, Victoria Road, Farnham
Common SL2 3NJ at 8.00pm**

Parish Councillors Present: Mr. P. Rowley (Chairman), Mr. R. Thomas, Mrs. M. Rolfe and Mrs. J Quilter.

In attendance: Buckinghamshire Councillor David Anthony, Buckinghamshire Councillor Trevor Egleton, the Clerk and twenty members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from parish councillors Mr R. Milne, Mr J Trivedi and Mr D Moore

2. Report from the Police

PCSO Kam Benawra

appended to these minutes

3. Report of the Parish Council 2021-2022

Paul Rowley, Chairman

appended to these minutes

4. Report on Parish Projects

Jenny Quilter, Chair of the Projects Working Group

appended to these minutes

5. Report of Buckinghamshire Council

Cllr. David Anthony

appended to these minutes

6. Guest Speaker – The Farnhams’ Neighbourhood Plan

Steve Stagg, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

appended to these minutes

7. Close of meeting

The Chairman thanked everyone who had attended the meeting and invited them for refreshments. The meeting closed at 9.30pm

A report pack was uploaded to the Parish Council website containing written reports from:

Farnham Common Village Schools
St Mary’s Farnham Royal Church of England Primary School
Girl Guides
Farnham Common Community Library
The Farnhams Magazine
Farnham Common Village Hall
Farnham Royal Village Hall
Burnham Beeches
Rotary Club of Burnham Beeches
The Royal British Legion (Farnham Common Branch)
The Farnhams and Hedgerley Community Church
Farnham Common Sports Club
Farnhams Open Gardens

These reports are also appended to these minutes

APPENDICES

1. Thames Valley Police Report

PCSO Benawra advised that the Neighbourhood Policing Team for our parish is the Burnham, Farnhams & Taplow Neighbourhood Policing Team. She further advised that a new Sergeant had been appointed, Sergeant Gabriel.

She advised that the main priority for the Team was burglaries and that there had been a decrease from 47 to 26 in the last period being a 45% reduction. The Team had joined with the Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Policing Team and the Denham & Gerrards Cross Neighbourhood Policing Team to work together to tackle this. The Team had also met with the Hampshire Police and Surrey Police. The strategy is to maintain high visibility and to carry out regular foot patrols in crime hotspots.

Another target area is Theft from Motor Vehicles which had increased from 97 to 124 in the last period being a 25% increase. The strategy is to carry out regular patrols in streets and car parks and to place notes on vehicles where items such as mobile phones are visible to remind owners to keep these items out of view. The Team is working with the Buckinghamshire Council Community Safety Team on this initiative.

A further priority is Theft of Motor Vehicles which had increased from 38 to 39 in the last period being a 3% increase. Again, the Team is working in partnership with the Buckinghamshire Council Community Safety Team on this issue.

PCSO Benawra advised that, in general, now the pandemic restrictions have been released, Neighbourhood Policing Teams in South Buckinghamshire are expecting lots of unauthorised encampments. She advised that the Team would be making contact with the local LandWatch WhatsApp Group managed by Beaconsfield Town Council to monitor the situation and share information.

PCSO Benawra then asked if anyone had any questions.

Chris Foulds, expressed his concern that speeding on the A355 was not a priority. He noted that there was definitely less traffic but what was there was going fast. He suggested having police interceptor vehicles positioned along the A355. PCSO Benawra advised that the whole Team was getting trained on the radar guns but availability was limited. She advised that she had carried out some activity herself but she can't be there all the time.

Trevor Egleton asked whether there are any initiatives to tackle drug taking and drug dealing as there is lots in Burnham Beeches car park, in Farnham Park Playing Fields and along Church Road. PCSO Benawra asked how often the activity was taking place. Trevor Egleton advised quite regularly. He continued that a PCSO carries out regular vehicle patrols in Burnham Beeches car park but there needs to be more effort to get out of the vehicle and walk around. He also advised that the Iver, Wexham & Stoke Poges Neighbourhood Policing Team has a new sergeant who is very proactive and is making it awkward for those involved with drugs. He asked if she could take back a request for a more proactive approve in the Farnhams to the Team.

Jerry Houdret expressed his frustration that he has previously tried to contact any type of police officer and has spent lots of time on hold as it is almost impossible to speak to someone. PCSO Benawra asked whether these attempts were by telephone. Jerry Houdret advised they were by telephone and email. PCSO Benawra acknowledged that 101 is difficult but that this is a non-emergency number. She recommended emailing the Neighbourhood Policing Team and advised that if she was on duty, she will always pick up an email and try her best to contact those involved.

Jerry Houdret also expressed his concerns regarding a previous experience involving an unauthorised encampment where he claimed the Police failed to use s.61 powers resulting in a apology from the Chief Constable. He requested assurance that future encampments would be dealt with properly. Trevor Egleton advised that this comes down to whether there is an Inspector or Superintendent on duty to authorise the use of the powers and reminded those present that this person is often covering the whole of the area. The Chairman expressed his feeling that encampments in the parish have been better dealt with now there is a better connection between the Parish Council, Buckinghamshire Council and the Police. Jerry Houdret agreed it was better but noted that antisocial behaviour whilst encampments remained was not good.

PCSO Kam Benawra
Burnham, Farnhams & Taplow Neighbourhood Policing Team

2. Parish Council Report

The Chairman expressed how good it was to be able to meet face to face this year after holding a virtual meeting last year and no meeting at all in 2020.

He noted that the Parish is friendly and welcoming and that some families had decided to join the community from Ukraine and the children had started in the local schools.

The Chairman advised that the Parish Council had taken the difficult decision to hand back the services devolved by Buckinghamshire Council for example grass cutting and siding out due to the difference in the cost to the Parish of providing the services and the amount received from Buckinghamshire Council. The cost of providing the required services was approximately £30,000 against an income of just over £9,000. He advised that the Parish Council is under pressure to transform one of the playgrounds and improve the open spaces and a saving of £20,000 will help with this.

The Chairman expressed that the Parish Council wants to spend money on things parishioners want not just things chosen by the Parish Council. He continued that Jenny Quilter would be talking through some of the current and potential projects later but that he wanted to let parishioners know what had been planned for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. He advised that flags and lamppost signs would be installed in Farnham Royal and that bunting would be given to all of the shops and business along The Broadway with a request to decorate their premises. Lamppost signs would also be installed. In addition, the Parish Council planned to take part in the Queen's Green Canopy by planting a number of trees in November. Although the event is still being planned it will be an opportunity for the community to get involved.

The Chairman reminded those present that parish councillors are volunteers and that currently there are three vacancies so it would be great if more people from the community stepped forward to join as this would provide new ideas, energy and capacity.

Paul Rowley
Chairman of the Parish Council

3. Parish Projects Report

Jenny Quilter introduced herself as one of the Parish Councillors and Chair of the Projects Working Group. She advised that the Working Group is where parish councillors identify, prioritise and deliver projects to improve our local parish. These projects may be funded and delivered either solely by the Parish Council, or in conjunction with Buckinghamshire Council, the Community Board, and Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB).

She began by sharing the work that the Parish Council had completed in the last year:

- relaunched the production of our local Neighbourhood Plan
- continued to plant the Wildflower Verge for the third consecutive year of the pilot
- refurbished the Village signs, and life expired flag poles in Farnham Common and Farnham Royal
- repair of a wooden footbridge in Ingrams Copse that had become worn, and not fit for purpose. This now improves accessibility in the copse for our residents.
- reviewed and streamlined the Parish Council IT and Email systems to ensure that we are able to operate efficiently and effectively.
- ran the Christmas 'Carols at the Dell 2021' event with the Burnham Beeches Rotary.

Jenny Quilter advised that the Parish Council also identified a number of projects that were successfully funded, and taken forward by Buckinghamshire Council and TfB. The Parish Council also provides additional contributory funding to enable these projects to take place via the Buckinghamshire Council and TfBs approved contractors.

These are;

- A355 Infant School – Speed and Lining Project where the Parish Council is providing £5,000 match funding.
- Templewood Lane – Dropped Curbs where the Parish Council is providing £6,500 match funding.
- Blackpond Lane – Footway Extension where the Parish Council is providing £7,700 contributory funding.

Looking at current projects, Jenny Quilter advised that for this year (2022/23) the Parish Council is keen to ensure that it continues to make necessary improvements in our parish. She referred those present to some one-page posters that had been placed around the room, to help communicate and share the project priorities for the remainder of the year. She then took those present through the five projects that the Parish Council is focusing on delivering;

1. Farnham Common Playground

The Parish Council is seeking to replace equipment at the existing Farnham Common Playground, located at the Farnham Common Sports Club. The Parish Council is working with a group of parents from the community, who have an active interest in this project, to obtain playground design ideas/concepts from multiple playground suppliers. The Parish Council will then seek to share these with parishioners, and commission the design. It will also look at options to identify the funding that will be needed to build this playground (this may include playground financing, crowdfunding, Grant funding, local businesses). It is anticipated that the construction of the playground will take place in financial year 2023/24 and beyond, subject to identifying the necessary external funding to complete the project.

2. Guide Hut Demolition

The Parish Council is also responsible for a building that was formerly used as a Guide Hut, near the Farnham Common Sports Club, this is suffering from dilapidations, and has been identified for demolition. The project is to ensure the safe demolition of the hut and identified asbestos at the location. Once cleared and demolished the Parish Council will look to review and consider the future purpose of this area.

Prior to the demolition the Parish Council worked with the local Guides group, to help them identify a new location within the Parish to continue to operate.

3. Boundary Copse Improvements

At Boundary Copse in Farnham Royal, the Parish Council has identified improvements to make this area more appealing and accessible to our local residents, wishing to enjoy the open-air environment, for wellbeing activities. The Parish Council has commissioned the clear up of an encampment, and rubbish at the copse, and is looking to appropriately clear some of the scrub area, to enable easier access around the copse. There are also plans to improve the walling and access gate into the area, to make this safer and more appealing to our residents.

4. Creation of a Woodland Management Plan

The Parish Council has instigated specialist Arboriculturist support to create a Woodland management plan for our parish.

We have four copse areas within our parish (Jubilee, Boundary, Ingrams and Temple Dell) and this plan will ensure that the Parish Council is protecting and managing the local woodland, which is so important for our wellbeing, community and local biodiversity and environment.

5. Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

In a few weeks' time the Queen celebrates 70 years in throne, the Parish Council recognises that there are plenty of events happening across the country, therefore it is supporting local businesses to decorate The Broadway and the centre of Farnham Royal.

The Parish Council is also going to mark the jubilee later in the year by planting trees in our parish – as part of the Queens Green Canopy project and hope to invite our local schools to help do this. Many of you will know that now is not the best time to plant trees, so this will be done in the last quarter of the year, when the trees will have the best opportunity to thrive.

Jenny Quilter also advised that the Parish Council has discussed the concerns of our parishioners around speeding with both Buckinghamshire Council and TfB and have been advised that they are unable to install any additional speed cameras on the A355, or dual facing cameras. They have also advised that should the Parish Council wish to change the speed limit between the villages from 40mph to 30mph additional speed surveys would be required and these would need to be paid for (in part) by the Parish Council. The advice is that if the speed surveys show that traffic is moving at above 34 mph where the speed reduction is requested, a reduction in the speed limit to 30mph would not be possible. It has therefore been suggested that perhaps speed calming projects may be an option to consider, which will require significant funding from both Buckinghamshire Council and parish.

Jenny Quilter added that the Parish Council was hoping to work with TfB on their project to Create Wilder Verges. As the Chairman explained earlier, the Parish Council has given back responsibility to manage many of the verges within the Parish to Buckinghamshire Council. The initial feedback from TfB is that the parish is not suitable but this is something the Parish Council will keep looking at.

Finally, Jenny Quilter appealed to the community for their support to instigate key initiatives across our parish;

- 1) Speedwatch – to utilise the speed monitoring equipment, in our local neighbourhoods
- 2) Community Litter Picking – to identify areas and run campaigns
- 3) Carols at the Dell 2022 Christmas event – to help organise in advance and on the day
- 4) To form a Residents' Association
- 5) To form a Traders' Association

Jenny Quilter then asked if anyone had any questions.

Jerry Houdret advised that he had spoken to Revd. Chloe Willson-Thomas about this year's Christmas Tree Festival and suggest getting together with the Parish Council again this year. He stressed arrangements should not be left too late.

Another resident asked whether when a play area is installed it would be inspected. Jenny Quilter confirmed that both play areas have regular reviews.

Jenny Quilter

Chair of the Parish Council's Projects Working Group

4. Buckinghamshire County Council's Report

David Anthony started by saying how fortunate residents are to have a supportive and dedicated parish council in the Farnhams and that it is a pleasure to work together.

He congratulated his colleague Dev Dhillon on his appointment as Chairman of Buckinghamshire Council, which is a great achievement.

He advised that Buckinghamshire Council is solvent and operates a balanced budget although it is increasingly difficult to achieve this. He continued that a lot of resources and effort went into Covid19 initiatives and the support from central government is reducing every year. As a result, he was sorry, but it was necessary to increase council tax by 3.99%.

David Anthony turned to the Buckinghamshire Council ward boundaries and explained that currently the village of Farnham Royal is integrated with Stoke Poges and Wexham whereas the village of Farnham Common sits with Burnham Beeches in a separate ward. He advised that he is against this approach as it divides the community. He continued that the Boundary Commission is currently reviewing the ward boundaries and he and Dev Dhillon are recommending that the villages should be united in the same ward. He expressed that the result is currently uncertain but he is optimistic that they are being listened to.

David Anthony advised that he is Chairman of the Beeches Community Board, which represents five parishes in the south of the county one of which being Farnham Royal. He stated that the purpose of Community Boards is to be the face of Buckinghamshire Council in the parishes to take local issues forward. To assist with this the board has a budget of £108,000 and can make grants up to £15,000. Working with the Parish Council the Community Board has agreed:

1. Blackpond Lane footway extension
2. Templewood Lane dropped kerbs
3. New outdoor storage for the Girl Guides
4. A355 Infant School lights and road markings

David Anthony shared that Buckinghamshire Council is aware that there are over 90 celebrations taking place around the County for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. He urges anyone organising an event to take a look at their website for activity and resource packs, which he hoped would be helpful.

Finally, David Anthony advised that several hundred requests had been received by Buckinghamshire Council to home Ukrainian refugees and that approximately 100 have arrived in South Buckinghamshire. He stated that South Buckinghamshire communities should be very proud of the help they are giving these families.

Trevor Egleton advised that the contract with Transport for Buckinghamshire/Ringway Jacobs comes to an end in April 2023 and Buckinghamshire Council felt the way forward was to have one contract for design and another contract for development as this would enable Buckinghamshire Council to go out to tender allowing it to benefit from market rates and greater flexibility. He also advised that the Local Area Technicians were receiving more training as are the local inspectors who will be reporting to local councillors ensuring much more say on local projects.

Trevor Egleton also advised that Buckinghamshire Council would be looking at a new way for filling potholes and the process will be brought in house. In addition, 80-90 management staff have already been brought inhouse which allows Buckinghamshire Council to have much more say. He feels that these changes will lead to a much more proactive approach.

The Chairman then asked if anyone had any questions.

A resident asked when the new country park will be finished. Trevor Egleton advised in about one year's time as the contract was for three years.

Anna Gray asked whether there could be cycle paths in the parish. Trevor Egleton advised that this was included in the Active Travel Strategy which is on the horizon with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Jerry Houdret advised that he is delighted that councillors are fighting about the ward boundary as at a meeting three days ago Thomas Broom, Chair of the recommendation committee and Joy Morrissey MP were proposing that the boundary remains unchanged.

Chris Foulds asked why there are so many tipper lorries along the A355. Trevor Egleton advised that there are a lot of major projects in the local area and HS2 has a lot of soil to move. Chris Foulds asked whether as HS2 moves north, the tipper lorries would also move north. David Anthony commented that the new nature park is taking soil from HS2.

Councillor David Anthony Councillor Trevor Egleton
Buckinghamshire Council Buckinghamshire Council

5. The Farnhams' Neighbourhood Plan

Steve Stagg started by explaining that the Steering Group is made up of seven local residents including the Parish Council Chair and supported by the Clerk to the Council.

He continued that the reason they are working on a plan is because they care passionately about where we live and want to ensure the best possible future for current and future residents. They are looking to create a vision for what the Farnhams will look like in 15 years and the plans that need to be in place to get there.

He explained that the Group meets at least monthly at the Parish Council offices and that all meetings and agreed actions are minuted for the public record and the meetings are open to the public.

He stated that the Group is trying to develop on behalf of local residents a Vision and Plan for our villages that reflects the community's aspirations, needs and concerns for the future. With resident's help, this hopes to cover both villages, and most aspects of village life over the next c15 years.

Steve Stagg continued that the purpose of the Plan is to help guide Buckinghamshire Council and others, on decision making in regard to future development of the two villages.

He provided an update on what the group has done so far and advised that since late 2018 (non-operative during much of Covid 19) the Group has engaged directly with the local community, businesses, services, technical specialists and people who have already been involved in the Neighbourhood Planning process including consultant support and shared the ongoing learnings with the community via the Parish magazine.

Currently, the Group is in the closing stages of research in regard to:

- a future Housing Needs Assessment,
- identifying Local Heritage Sites and Assets,
- understanding our Green Assets and how we might develop a more sustainable approach,
- understanding the views of local businesses, services, and community facilities.

The Group has gathered a wealth of other insights as it progressed but are not yet able to paint a clear vision for the future, although that picture begins to emerge.

There are still many open questions to answer.

- How can we retain or attract younger people to an area with an ageing demographic?
- How do we protect our Green Belt whilst at the same time recognising the need for lower cost housing?
- Are there opportunities to create a greener, more sustainable way of life in our community?
- How do we preserve our Green Assets and promote biodiversity projects in our area?

- How do we retain or achieve a more vibrant, aspirational High Street that continues to serve an ageing local population, but also boosts the cross fertilisation between the two villages and offers jobs, housing & schooling to the local families?
- Can we create a better sense of identity, wellbeing, and singular community across our two villages?

Steve Stagg advised that now that the Group understands the bigger questions, the most pressing priority is to achieve more ongoing engagement and share the learnings with the community via a defined communication plan. Your help is needed.

Steve Stagg
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

6. Written Reports

See attached.