

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 7.30 P.M. AT FARNHAM ROYAL VILLAGE HALL, FARNHAM LANE, FARNHAM ROYAL, SL2 3AX

Present

Paul Rowley (Chair)
Tony Birkett
Bob Milne
Jenny Quilter
Clive Robinson
Judith Hall (Clerk)

Buckinghamshire Cllr. Dev Dhillon, PCSO Angela O'Connell, PCSO Emily Tucker and 23 members of the public were in attendance.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 7.30pm. The meeting was adjourned for OPEN FORUM noted at the end of these minutes. The Chair reconvened the meeting and advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report giving information on agenda items. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website or a hard copy is available upon request.

24/11/PC Apologies for absence

Katherine Damsell and David Moore

24/12/PC Declarations of Interest

None

24/13/PC To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024

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

24/14/PC Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda - for information only)

14.1 Update from the Neighbourhood Policing Team

PCSO Angela O'Connell provided a written report, which is attached to these minutes.

14.2 Update on Community Speedwatch

The content of the report was noted.

14.3 Update on Neighbourhood Plan

The content of the report was noted. The Chairman advised that he would be recalling the Steering Group to review the responses received and draft any necessary amendments. He extended an invitation to all parish councillors to join these discussions. Following a discussion, it was felt that the submission documents should be considered at the parish council meeting on 24 June 2024.

14.4 Update on vehicle access across The Broadway Car Park

Bob Milne asked whether there was any update on this issue. The Chairman advised that further discussions would be held with Buckinghamshire Council.

14.5 Update on 2023 Arboriculture Work

Bob Milne asked whether instructions had been issued for the completion of the required work. The Clerk

confirmed they had and that the work in Jubilee Copse and Temple Dell had been completed.

15 Vacant Positions

Following the sad passing of Marilyn Rolfe, there are a number of vacancies to fill:

15.1 Vice Chairman of the Parish Council

The appointment of Jenny Quilter **was agreed**. Historically, the Vice Chair has also attended meetings of the South Bucks Association of Local Councils and was automatically a member of the Planning Working Group under its terms of reference. It **was agreed** that Jenny Quilter would attend meetings of the South Bucks Association of Local Councils but that the Terms of Reference for the Planning Working Group would be amended to remove the automatic membership of the Vice Chair.

15.2 Finance Committee

Given that currently there are only seven parish councillors in total, it **was agreed** that the Finance Committee's Terms of Reference would be amended to require a membership of four not five serving parish councillors. It was therefore also **agreed** that the following term would be added 'The Chair of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his/her casting vote whether or not he/she gave an original vote.'

15.3 Planning Working Group

It **was agreed** that, as allowed by its Terms of Reference, the Group would continue with three members.

15.4 Lead Councillor – Planning

The appointment of David Moore **was agreed**.

15.5 Lead Councillor – Wellbeing

The appointment of Paul Rowley **was agreed**.

15.6 Beeches Community Board

It was noted that in their capacity as Lead Councillors for Highways, Wellbeing and Environment Tony Birkett, Paul Rowley and David Moore would attend the relevant meetings.

15.7 Bank Account Signatory (to include approval of online payments)

It was **agreed** that the Parish Council would rely on the existing account signatories with no new signatory being appointed.

16 To consider the date for the Annual Parish Meeting

The content of the report was noted. The proposed date of Monday 8 April 2024 **was agreed**. The meeting will be held in Farnham Common Village Hall and will start at 7.00pm.

17 Projects:

17.1 Update on 2023/24 Projects

17.1.1 Highways

- Community Speedwatch

Those present were supportive of expanding the initiative's reach by installing the road signs previously agreed by the Parish Council, subject to Buckinghamshire Highways approval and by providing 30 mph wheelie bin stickers to residents. The Clerk was asked to obtain costs for consideration at the next meeting.

- Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign

The content of the report was noted. The Clerk was asked to keep chasing the supplier for delivery.

17.1.2 Woodlands and Open Spaces

- Boundary Copse (including ecology report)

The content of the report was noted. The Chairman and Bob Milne advised they had been to site to review the wall repairs and repointing. Whilst the repointing had been done there were still gaps in the wall with bricks laying on the ground nearby. The Clerk advised that the agreed specification was for repointing and rebuilding three wall ends and specifically excluded rebuilding the sections of wall where tree roots had pushed through the wall. The Clerk was asked to check the specification against the work completed to ensure that all the agreed work had been completed.

Bob Milne confirmed that contractors had been instructed to remove the boundary trees identified for felling by the arboriculturist.

Bob Milne advised that he was unhappy with the content of the ecology report as he did not believe that the points raised were relevant. This opinion was shared by the Chairman. Jenny Quilter advised that the clearance work had been put on hold as recommended until Autumn 2024 when the Woodland Management Plan should be in place to address any concerns.

- Woodland Management Plan
The content of the report was noted.

- Community Orchard
The content of the report was noted.

- Kingsway Green
The content of the report was noted. Bob Milne referred to his email to parish councillors outlining his proposals for Kingsway Green. He also expressed his disappointment that it had been decided at the January 2024 parish council meeting to apply to Thames Water to ascertain the work and costs involved with installing a water supply when the proposal was not clearly stated on the agenda. Those present agreed to review the proposals put forward by Bob Milne.

- Rectory Close Flowerbeds
Those present felt it was appropriate to decide on a plan for Kingsway Green and then replicate that, if appropriate, for these flowerbeds.

17.1.3 Community

- Traders' Association
Tony Birkett advised that the local businesses were willing to work together to support initiatives to improve trading conditions.

- Residents' Association
Tony Birkett advised that another group had joined his contact list meaning about 280 residences are now included and ordinarily those circulated with information are very responsive.

17.1.4 Wellbeing

- Farnham Common Playground
Jenny Quilter advised that the new playground had been completed and the official opening was held on 14 February 2024. In addition, the supplier had carried out maintenance training and confirmed the first year's inspection schedule.

- Former Guide Hut Site
Jenny Quilter advised that the land opposite the new playground that was previously home to the old Guide Hut had been rotavated and seeded with rye grass seeds. The new noticeboard requested by residents had been installed but the wet weather had delayed the installation of the new picnic benches on paving slab bases. Clive Robinson expressed concern that installing picnic benches in that location would create a hub for anti-social behaviour. He suggested delaying the installation. Jenny Quilter thanked him for his comments and advised that the parish council did write to the houses in Drew Meadow that back onto the site and no objections were received. It **was agreed** that the old long bench would be removed.

The Clerk advised that a resident had requested permission to sow some wildflower seeds at the site. Some of those present were not sure this was appropriate given that the area was being grassed and regularly cut but the Clerk was asked to contact the resident requesting detailed proposals for consideration at the next parish council meeting.

17.2 New project ideas for 2024/25

17.2.1 Contracts

- Protection of Green Spaces
The content of the report was noted.

17.2.2 Highways

- Dropped Kerbs
The content of the report was noted. The Chairman suggested that he and Clive Robinson work

together to produce a scope for this potential project.

17.2.3 Community

- 80th Anniversary of D Day

Those present were supportive of Tony Birkett's proposal for an exhibition in the library and educational school visits. They were also supportive of Katherine Damsell's proposal for a 1940s style tea dance. It **was agreed** that a final project scope would be prepared for each proposal.

In addition, there was a discussion regarding the installation of flags as per King Charles III's Coronation and the Clerk advised that she had received a quote from the usual supplier for £2,280, subject to a small increase in the cost of Buckinghamshire Council's Highways permits on 1 April 2024. Bob Milne reminded the Clerk to ask other local councils what they were planning to see if they would be flying flags.

- Christmas lights (replacements and switch on event)

Those present were supportive of purchasing replacement column displays, where necessary and new decorations for the tree in Farnham Royal. They were also supportive of holding a switching on event and it **was agreed** that a final project scope would be prepared.

- CCTV on The Broadway & Playgrounds

Tony Birkett advised that he had met with Smartech Security who had recommended installing 12 cameras along The Broadway, which would cover from Ginger Rabbit down to The Foresters and the same on the other side of the road. In addition, they had discussed a camera at Farnham Common playground, the playground at Farnham Park Playing Field and near The Farnham Pump convenience store. He was just waiting for their formal proposal.

Bob Milne advised that historically the Police had suggested they would install cameras with the parish council being responsible for the costs and ongoing monitoring and maintenance.

The Clerk advised that before taking any proposal forward, it would be necessary to consider certain protocols and take appropriate steps.

Cllr. Dhillon advised that he had been talking to Buckinghamshire Council about monitoring the cameras and the associated ongoing costs. The Clerk advised that when Cllr. Dhillon brought the idea forward he suggested applying to Thames Valley Police's Community Fund and/or the Beeches Community Board for help with the initial set up costs.

Clive Robinson advised that historically the parish council had approached Farnham Common Sports Club to see if a camera could be added to their system to cover the playground. Tony Birkett advised that he had reviewed the Sports Club's CCTV footage and they do have a camera that covers some of the playground but not the new picnic area.

Clive Robinson also reminded those present that the black poles in The Broadway used to house CCTV, which was subsequently removed.

- Free parking in The Broadway car park

The Clerk advised that following an initial enquiry to the Head of Parking Services at Buckinghamshire Council, she had been advised that Buckinghamshire Council has a number of car parks that offer free parking periods, funded by town and parish councils and based on rough calculations the cost of providing free 30 minute parking sessions in The Broadway Car Park would be £11,500 per annum plus an initial set up cost of c. £900 and a percentage of the sales from the one hour tariff, which is yet to be quantified.

Those present were supportive of discussions continuing with Buckinghamshire Council in an effort to prepare a final project scope.

- Community/Volunteer Organisations Event

Those present were supportive of holding an event during Volunteers Week in June 2024 for local community organisations and groups to showcase all the different activities available to enhance the lives of residents and provide the organisations and groups with an opportunity to recruit new members and volunteers. The Clerk was asked to prepare a proposal for consideration at the next parish council meeting.

17.2.4 Any other ideas

Bob Milne expressed his opinion that if the parish council continues to cut the grass on Kingsway Green, then it should also cut the grass on the green next to the Dukes Head public house.

17.2.5 Jenny Quilter advised that she had updated and reinstated the Project Tracker and encouraged all project leads to complete a monthly report using the template document.

18 Finance:

18.1 Spending Decisions

18.1.1 To ratify the purchase of replacement heads for two streetlights in Farnham Park Lane

The purchase of two replacement heads **was ratified**.

18.1.2 To ratify the purchase of replacement pads for two defibrillators

The purchase of replacement pads **was ratified**.

18.1.3 To consider the purchase of a replacement gyrospriral at Farnham Park Playing Fields

Clive Robinson advised that the original gyrospriral had been replaced approximately six years ago and the Clerk was asked to investigate whether it was still under warranty. If not, it was agreed to repair the unit subject to the arm and seats being re-usable, at a cost of c.£3,000 plus VAT.

18.2 To consider payments and note receipts, as per the February 2024 cashbook

The payments were **approved** but the Clerk was asked to hold the payment for the repointing and repairs to the boundary wall at Boundary Copse until it was confirmed that the work had been completed in accordance with the agreed specification. The receipts were noted.

19 Contracts:

19.1 To ratify the addition of Farnham Common Playground to Amersham Town Council's contract

Ratification is not required as this informal decision was ratified at the January 2024 parish council meeting.

20 Planning:

20.1 To consider PL/23/4125/PIP - Land To The North Of Allerds Farm, Crown Lane, Farnham Royal

The content of the report was noted and those present were pleased that the application had been refused. The Chairman expressed his understanding that this site is one of four with the parish's green belt that are being considered by developers so submitting robust objections was very important.

20.2 Update on Land South of Elm Close, Farnham Common

The recent clearance work was discussed in the Open Forum recorded at the end of these minutes.

20.3 To ratify comments submitted on recent applications

The planning comments on the circulated schedule **were ratified**.

Bob Milne asked about the comments submitted regarding application PL/24/0209/FA Badgers Brake, One Pin Lane, Farnham Common for the replacement of the existing single storey garage. Tony Birkett, on behalf of the Planning Working Group, advised that the replacement building is substantially larger and includes glass french doors, which have caused concern that the building will be used as additional living space.

20.4 To note recent planning decisions

The planning decisions on the circulated schedule **were noted**.

21 Any Other Business (for information only)

21.1 It was noted that the contractors carrying out the arboriculture work in Jubilee Copse had damaged a neighbour's fence. The Clerk confirmed that they had accepted responsibility and were arranging the necessary repair or replacement.

21.2 Bob Milne raised a comment made by Clive Robinson in an email to parish councillors where he stated that the parish council had not always protected the green belt and expressed his strong disagreement. Clive Robinson stood by his comment and advised that he was able to substantiate it.

22 Next parish council meetings:

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Full Council (Focus on Contracts) on 25 March 2024 at 7.30pm at Farnham Common Village Hall

OPEN FORUM

One of the Church Wardens for St Mary's Church, Farnham Royal announced that after a wait of 15 years, the church bells would ring again on Saturday 2 March 2024 and Saturday 9 March 2024 with a view to encouraging people to learn how to ring the bells and be part of the St Mary's bell ringers.

A resident from Blackpond Lane, Farnham Royal who was joined by the residents of eight neighbouring properties spoke of the challenges faced by them since May 2023 because of dangerous and intimidating behaviour involving motorbikes and quadbikes which are being driven on Blackpond Lane into the field behind their homes by people in balaclavas. He reported that the motorbikes speed up and down Blackpond Lane, have no numberplates and use the public right of way between Blackpond Lane and Crown Lane (FAR/6/1 and FAR/7/1) to access a privately owned field. He explained that originally, the riders had been using the field largely for scrambling during the evenings and weekend but having subsided in the winter months activity has recently escalated with the bikes accessing the field as late as 3.45am. This coincides with an increase in burglaries in the local area, which may or may not be linked to the activity. It is the residents' belief that the best option is to stop the motorbikes accessing the field by securing it by either repairing or replacing the old broken stiles or installing kissing gates and that this would deter the dangerous and anti social behaviour that is taking place.

He continued that the residents have made numerous attempts to resolve the issue having contacted the Police, parish council, Buckinghamshire Councillors and the landowner but they are struggling to get a solution and would like some advice as to how to achieve a resolution.

He asked the PCSOs in attendance how the residents should be reporting as they believe the number of reports made to the Police is far greater than the number recorded. PCSO O'Connell advised that they have received 11 reports since May 2023 with only two of those in 2024 and that every time an incident occurs it should be reported as anti social behaviour by ringing 999 if it is an emergency or if not, 101 either by telephone or online.

Cllr. Dhillon and the Clerk advised that they had discussed the situation with the Public Rights of Way Team at Buckinghamshire Council and they had advised that it was not possible to repair or install new stiles or kissing gates on a public right of way unless it was to manage cattle and that the advice was that the Police have powers to deal with the activities taking place. They also advised that any new structure limiting access would only be as good as the adjacent boundary fencing. The residents present expressed their frustration as there are already stiles installed but they have not been maintained and have gradually been broken down allowing access and they are now being told that the stiles can't be replaced due to changes in legislation.

Cllr. Dhillon advised that after a conversation with Matthew Barber, the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, regarding the anti social behaviour associated with the motorbikes, burglaries and theft from shops he was asked to write to him with details of the problems being experienced in the villages and was assured that if funding was needed to address the issues Matthew Barber would make it available. Cllr. Dhillon also suggested that the Beeches Community Board may be able to provide funding. Cllr. Dhillon advised that he was meeting the Clerk to write to Matthew Barber and the Team Leader for Rights of Way Operations at Buckinghamshire Council in an effort to agree some measures to be put in place as the confidence of the offenders is high because they have been left unchallenged. In addition, Cllr. Dhillon advised he had discussed the issues with Superintendent Emma Burroughs, the Local Police Area Commander for South Buckinghamshire and that Matthew Barber had discussed the issues with the local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Tony Birkett asked PCSO O'Connell when anti social behaviour crosses the threshold from low level nuisance to serious crime. PCSO O'Connell advised that the Neighbourhood Policing Team are doing what they can but resources are allocate on an intelligence basis and with only a small number of reports only limited resources will be allocated. She added that the activities need to be seen by the Police with the offenders being caught in the act. She advised that officers are unable to chase the motorbikes as the riders do not wear helmets.

Clive Robinson reiterated that if the footpaths are owned by Buckinghamshire Council and the field is privately owned and the offenders make off on their motorbikes, it is the law rather than a Police policy

that states the Police cannot chase them.

Tony Birkett suggested that it may be possible to install barriers on any footways opposite the entrances, which would impede access for motorbikes. He offered to discuss the problem with Buckinghamshire Highways at the parish council's next regular meeting with them to see if there was any action they could take.

The Chairman suggested that whilst it was not within the powers of the parish council to resolve these issues it could facilitate a working group of key stakeholders such as residents, the landowner, Buckinghamshire Councillors, the Neighbourhood Policing Team and Rights of Way Team at Buckinghamshire Council in an effort to find a workable solution for all.

The residents' representative confirmed they had formed a collective and were ready to help implement a solution. He also thanked the PCSOs in attendance for their help.

Jacob Jefferson from Meeting Place introduced himself and advised he was representing Lansdown Developments who are planning to submit a hybrid planning application for a new integrated retirement community at Farnham Common Nurseries. The Chairman stopped Mr Jefferson and advised that the parish council was not able to hear about the proposal.

A resident from Elm Close, Farnham Common asked whether the parish council had any further information regarding the clearance of the field next to Elm Close. The Chairman advised that the land was within the green belt and designated for agricultural use only. In addition, he advised that a Tree Preservation Order had been granted in respect of eight oak trees. The damage caused to the verge whilst the clearance work was being carried out was also noted and the Chairman advised that the parish council would pursue its repair with Buckinghamshire Council.