

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 25 MARCH 2024 AT 7.30 P.M. AT FARNHAM COMMON VILLAGE HALL, VICTORIA ROAD, FARNHAM COMMON, SL2 3NL

Present

Paul Rowley (Chair)

Katherine Damsell

Bob Milne

Jenny Quilter

Judith Hall (Clerk)

Buckinghamshire Cllr. Dev Dhillon and eight 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.

24/23/PC Apologies for absence

Tony Birkett and David Moore

24/24/PC Declarations of Interest

None

24/25/PC To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024

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

24/26/PC Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda - for information only)

26.2 Update on Community Speedwatch

The content of the report was noted. The Chairman expressed his opinion that the initiative is having an impact as the group is not recording many speeders. Bob Milne noted that whilst there are not a lot of speeders, the average speeds recorded are very high.

26.2 Update on office lease

The content of the report was noted. Katherine Damsell advised those present that the method of calculating the service charge had not yet been agreed but she would be progress discussions with the landlord.

24/27/PC Policies:

27.1 Reserves

Katherine Damsell, as Lead Councillor for Finance and Contracts, advised that as requested the Internal Auditor had reviewed the draft policy previously presented and provided guidance which had been circulated to all parish councillors. She continued that the guidance was to aim for reserves equivalent to three months of net revenue expenditure subject to an increase for unforeseen events and unusual circumstances specific to this parish council. Bob Milne expressed his belief that this parish council is a middle sized authority and should be aiming for reserves of between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure. Katherine Damsell noted that the policy as drafted stated that reserves should be between three and six months net revenue expenditure. The policy **was agreed and adopted** and it will be reviewed annually.

27.2 Grants

Katherine Damsell advised that previously the parish council had discussed replacing the existing policy with a more user friendly version that made it easier for community organisations to apply and obtain funding. Bob Milne asked whether all funding requests including from the Farnhams Magazine and Farnham Common Sports Club would be covered by this policy. Katherine Damsell confirmed they would. The policy **was agreed and adopted** and it will be reviewed annually.

27.3 Commemorative Items

Katherine Damsell advised that this new policy had been discussed at previous parish council meetings and now states that the council's decision is final and reserves the right of the parish council to review, amend and cancel this policy in the future. The policy **was agreed and adopted** and it will be reviewed every two years.

24/28/PC Projects Continued:

28.1 Highways

- Community Speedwatch
- To consider purchasing two additional road signs
It **was agreed** that two additional road signs, making a total of four, would be purchased from Sign Wizzard at a total cost of £497.08 plus VAT. It was noted that this cost was not included in the agreed 2024/25 Budget and as such it **was agreed** that the required funds would be reallocated from the MVAS (Stage 2) Project.
- To consider purchasing 30mph wheelie bin stickers
It **was agreed** that 100 white 30mph wheelie bin stickers would be purchased at a cost of £120 for distribution to residents particularly at the Annual Parish Meeting and Orchard Day 2024. It was noted that this cost was not included in the agreed 2024/25 Budget and as such it **was agreed** that the required funds would be reallocated from the MVAS (Stage 2) Project.
- Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign
- To consider adding activities relating to the Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign to Amersham Town Council's Physical Assets contract
It **was agreed** that the movement and management of the Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign would be added to Amersham Town Council's Physical Assets contract at a cost of £624 per annum. It was noted that this cost was not included in the agreed 2024/25 Budget and as such it **was agreed** that the required funds would be reallocated from the MVAS (Stage 2) Project.

28.2 Woodlands and Open Spaces

- Woodland Management Plan
- To consider the Draft Woodland Management Plan
Bob Milne advised that he and the Clerk met with Peter Harding, the consultant preparing the plan, to review the latest version, which was subsequently circulated to parish councillors. He expressed that the plan was not as detailed as he thought it was going to be but that Peter Harding would be giving a presentation at the Annual Parish Meeting on 8 April 2024.
- To consider appointing GS Ecology to review the Draft Woodland Management Plan
Jenny Quilter proposed that GS Ecology were appointed to review the plan once prepared to ensure that any ecology matters requiring mitigation are identified and appropriately dealt with. Bob Milne queried the need to incur the cost of a second professional when the plan was being prepared by a qualified arboriculturist and would be reviewed by the Forestry Commission who he assumed would consider the ecology aspects of the plan. It **was agreed** that this assumption needed to be confirmed so the Clerk was asked to investigate whether the Forestry Commission will consider the ecology aspects of the plan.
- Kingsway Green
- To consider options for grass cutting and flowerbeds
Bob Milne outlined his proposals for the flowerbeds as detailed in the report. It **was agreed** that all of the proposals should be reviewed again once they had been fully costed with the costings to include initial set up costs and ongoing maintenance costs.

Bob Milne outlined his proposals for grass cutting as detailed in the report. It was noted that the contractor had agreed to continue cutting the grass after 31 March 2024 at a cost of £65 per cut. It **was agreed** that the contractor would be asked to continue with the current regime of grass cutting but to leave grass cuttings as a 'mulch' after cutting.

- To consider installing paving underneath the benches
Katherine Damsell advised that two quotes had been received for laying paving underneath two straight benches and the circular bench in Kingsway Green and that details of the quotes were provided in the information report. It **was agreed** that contractor 2, Amersham Town Council, would be appointed to install the paving. It **was also agreed** that the Kingsway Green Ringfenced Reserves would be used to fund most of the cost with the small balance of £38 coming from general reserves.

- Rectory Close Flowerbeds

- To consider options for flowerbeds

Bob Milne outlined his proposal which is to remove the rose bushes and apply the same treatment as is agreed for the flowerbeds on Kingsway Green. It **was agreed** that this proposal should be reviewed again once the removal of the rose bushes had been fully costed with the costings to include initial set up costs and ongoing maintenance costs.

Bob Milne outlined his proposal for finding out Buckinghamshire Council's maintenance programme for the Shrubberies. It **was agreed** that this should be discussed with Buckinghamshire Council.

- Pump Green

- To consider grass cutting

Bob Milne outlined his proposal that the Parish Council implements the same grass cutting programme as agreed for Kingsway Green. The belief is that Buckinghamshire Council currently cuts the grass and it was noted that some residents in Bishops Orchard have complained about the length of the grass in between cuts. It **was agreed** that a quote would be obtained for cutting the grass.

- Picnic Area, Farnham Common

- To consider wildflower proposal

The Clerk advised that a proposal had not yet been received. It **was agreed** that should a proposal be received in the future, it would be considered at the next available meeting.

Bob Milne raised that there are lots of stones and bricks sticking up through the soil at the site, which he believes is unsafe. It **was agreed** that Amersham Town Council would be asked to look at the area and provide their advice for clearing these unwanted items at the same time as removing the long wooden bench.

28.3 Community

- 80th Anniversary of D Day

- To consider holding an exhibition in Farnham Common Community Library and School Visits

Jenny Quilter advised that Tony Birkett had agreed to hold an exhibition in the library and was discussing attending an assembly at the village schools and giving talks at Signature and McCarthy & Stone. It **was agreed** that these activities would take place. A budget of £200 for printing and publicising **was also agreed**.

- To consider holding a 1940s themed tea dance

Jenny Quilter advised the Katherine Damsell was proposing a 1940s themed tea dance at Farnham Common Village Hall. Bob Milne was concerned that D Day is a commemorative event rather than a celebration and queried whether it was appropriate to hold a dance, which was more of a celebration. Jenny Quilter advised that having looked at what others are organising, social media was showing similar events. It was noted that tickets would be available to all members of the community. It **was agreed** that the tea dance would be held. A budget of up to £3,000 **was also agreed**.

- To consider installing flags

Jenny Quilter advised that installing flags had initially been discounted as previous feedback from residents had been mixed but following receipt of confirmation from neighbouring parishes that they would be displaying flags and/or bunting it was proposed that flags are installed. The Chairman suggested a hybrid approach with flags at the entrances and exits to the villages but bunting on shops and buildings. He did note that providing bunting to third parties did not guarantee that everyone would participate. It **was agreed** that flags would be installed. The quote of £2,280,

subject to a small increase in the cost of Buckinghamshire Council permits on 1 April 2024, **was agreed**. It was acknowledged that this cost was not included in the agreed 2024/25 Budget and as such it **was agreed** that funds will come from general reserves.

- Christmas lights
 - To consider replacing certain column displays
It **was agreed** that 18 ex-rental column displays would be purchased at a cost of £1,800 plus VAT.
 - To consider replacing certain decorations in the tree by the Farnham Pump in Farnham Royal
It **was agreed** that 10 new 3D spheres would be purchased at a cost of £3,684 plus VAT.
- CCTV on The Broadway, in Farnham Royal & at the Playgrounds
The content of the report was noted. It was also noted that the cost of installing CCTV was not included in the agreed 2024/25 budget and as such third party funding options should be investigated to facilitate the implementation of this project.
 - To consider installing CCTV along The Broadway
Jenny Quilter proposed that further work was carried out to finalise a detailed, costed scope with third party funding options and permissions and a project timeline. This **was agreed**.
 - To consider installing CCTV on The Beaconsfield Road opposite the Farnham Pump Store
Jenny Quilter proposed that further work was carried out to finalise a detailed, costed scope with third party funding options and permissions and a project timeline. This **was agreed**.
 - To consider installing CCTV at Farnham Common Playground & Picnic Area
Jenny Quilter proposed that further work was carried out to finalise a detailed, costed scope with third party funding options and permissions and a project timeline. This **was agreed**.
 - To consider installing CCTV at the playground in Farnham Park Playing Fields
Jenny Quilter proposed that further work was carried out to finalise a detailed, costed scope with third party funding options and permissions and a project timeline. This **was agreed**.
- Free parking in The Broadway car park
The content of the report was noted. It was also noted that the cost of offering 30 minutes free parking in The Broadway car park was not included in the agreed 2024/25 budget but there are reserves that may facilitate the implementation of this project, if agreed.
 - To consider entering into an agreement with Buckinghamshire Council to fund 30 minutes free parking in The Broadway car park
Jenny Quilter proposed that further work was carried out to finalise a detailed, costed scope with a project timeline. This **was agreed**. The Chairman also expressed that the Parish Council must talk to other town and/or parish councils who already had these arrangements in place to find out their experience of such an agreement. Katherine Damsell also noted that there would be a complete review of car parks in 2025.
- Annual Parish Meeting
 - To consider engaging Andy Webb to assist with sound and to record the meeting
It **was agreed** that Andy Webb would be engaged at a cost of £225 to assist with the sound and to record the meeting for publication on the Parish Council's website.
 - To consider engaging Sara Daughtery to provide catering for the meeting
The engagement of Sara Daughtrey **was agreed** at a cost of £6 per head. The Chairman suggested it may be possible to obtain sponsorship or a donation towards this cost.
 - To consider booking Farnham Common Village Hall
It **was agreed** that Farnham Common Village Hall would be booked at an estimated total cost of £145 to allow for setting up and clearing up time.

24/29/PC Finance:

29.1 To ratify the purchase of two banners for the Annual Parish Meeting

The purchase of two banners at a cost of £58.95 plus VAT for the Annual Parish Meeting **was ratified**.

29.2 To consider the £500 grant request from Burnham Beeches Rotary for Orchard Day 2024

Following a brief discussion, it **was agreed** that £250 would be provided to Burnham Beeches Rotary for Orchard Day 2024. The representatives from Burnham Beeches Rotary agreed to publicise that the event

was supported by the Parish Council.

29.3 To consider payments and note receipts, as per the March 2024 cashbook

Bob Milne asked what the payment of £2,280 itemised as 'Save our Green Belt' was for. The Clerk advised that these were the professional fees incurred in reviewing and commenting on planning application PL/23/4125/PIP Land To The North Of Allerds Farm, Crown Lane, Farnham Royal for permission in principle for residential development of five open market dwellings and four affordable dwellings. The payments **were approved** and the receipts were noted.

Katherine Damsell advised that given 31 March is the end of the financial year she was still hoping that some of the outstanding invoices would be received and if so, would recommend that these are paid in this financial year, particularly the invoices due from Buckinghamshire Council for electricity and cleaning the public conveniences as these total just over £11,500. This **was agreed**.

In addition, Katherine Damsell explained that certain payments would now need to be made ahead of the next parish council meeting to progress the projects agreed above such as the deposit invoice for the harmony group providing the entertainment at the tea dance. This **was agreed**.

29.4 To consider the appointment of AGHS Accounting & Taxation Services Limited to prepare the 2023/24 Annual Accounts

The appointment of AGHS Accounting & Taxation Services Ltd **was agreed** at a cost of £625 plus VAT.

29.5 To consider the appointment of Azets Audit Services Limited as Internal Auditors for 2023/24

The appointment of Azets Audit Services Limited **was agreed** at a cost of £1,855 plus VAT.

24/30/PC Employer Responsibilities:

30.1 Display Screen Equipment Assessment

Jenny Quilter proposed that the Parish Council purchases an online training module and assessment to comply with its duties under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations. She advised that the cost of the training and assessment would be between £50-100 depending on which provider was chosen. This **was agreed**.

30.2 Lone Working Measures

Jenny Quilter proposed that the Parish Council purchases an online training module and uses the Health and Safety Executive risk assessment template to identify what mitigation measures are needed. She advised that the cost of the training would be between £50-100 depending on which provider was chosen. This **was agreed**.

24/31/PC Planning:

31.1 To consider how to deal with the emerging development proposals for Farnham Common Nurseries

It was noted that the Parish Council has a longstanding policy not to take part in discussions with developers looking to build within the green belt prior to a planning application being submitted to the Planning Authority. It **was therefore agreed** that the Parish Council would not be represented at the consultation event being held on 26 March 2024. It was stated that the Parish Council does not support any development within the green belt either in the parish of Farnham Royal or in surrounding parishes. Bob Milne clarified that there was nothing to stop a parish councillor attending in their personal capacity. The Chairman advised that he had spoken to Cllr. Dhillon who was hoping to attend in his capacity as a Buckinghamshire Councillor and Cllr. Dhillon had agreed to feed information back to the parish council.

The Clerk was asked to draft a response to the invitation received and circulate for agreement before 12 noon on 26 March 2024. The Clerk also suggested drafting a statement for the parish council's website and the Farnhams Community Facebook page clarifying its position regarding the emerging proposals. **This was agreed**.

The Clerk also advised that she would close the office and work remotely to avoid any interaction on the emerging proposals given that the event was being held in the Farnham Common Village Hall. **This was agreed**.

31.2 To ratify comments submitted on recent applications

The Chairman advised that David Moore had been appointed Chair of the Planning Working Group. Bob Milne noted application PL/24/0416/FA regarding Bungalow 1 and 2, Farnham Common House, Beaconsfield Road, Farnham Common for a single storey rear extension and raising the ridge height to

create habitable accommodation on the first floor to form two 5 bedroom semi detached dwellings and associated on site existing car parking. The planning comments on the circulated schedule **were ratified**.

31.3 To note recent planning decisions

Bob Milne noted the decision regarding application PL/24/0146/FA for Budleigh, Parsonage Lane, Farnham Common for a dormer loft conversion over the existing roof and front roof lights. He was interested to see that the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and Draft List of Local Heritage Assets had been referred to. The planning decisions on the circulated schedule **were noted**.

31.4 Planning Enforcement and Appeal Cases

The Chairman advised that the Planning Working Group also monitors current enforcement and appeal cases both of which progress very slowly.

24/32/PC Any Other Business (for information only)

32.1 Bob Milne advised that he had reviewed all of the arboriculture and contract work in the woodlands and churchyard and some follow up is required. He will share his report with parish councillors over email.

32.2 Bob Milne advised that when he inspected the work at Boundary Copse he saw at least one encampment so the parish council would need to decide what steps to take regarding this. He suggested talking to Buckinghamshire Council as the landowner and the Chairman suggested discussing it with Constant & Co, an enforcement company the parish council has previously met with.

32.3 Bob Milne advised that the new trees had been planted in the Community Orchard as part of the rejuvenation project. He noted that only two trees had the wooden guards recommended but he felt the Orchard was looking much better because of the work.

32.4 Jenny Quilter gave her apologies for the Annual Parish Meeting and advised that Tony Birkett would present the report on parish projects.

24/33/PC Next parish council meetings:

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

The next meeting is: Full Council on 29 April 2024 at 7.30pm at Farnham Royal Village Hall

OPEN FORUM

Barry Clarke, Editor of the Farnhams Magazine, gave a presentation about the future of the magazine. He advised that the magazine is produced for the community and is trying to fill a black hole in media for The Farnhams. It is designed to appeal to all ages and looks to support community organisations and businesses.

He continued that the Magazine is currently facing two big issues, money and volunteers. This year it is expected that there will be a deficit of c.£5,000 which will be funded from reserves but when added to last year's deficit the total is c.£9,000 which equates to approximately one third of total reserves and is therefore not sustainable. Steps are being taken to increase advertising sales, reduce distribution costs and identify new sources of funding. He also stated that ideally another nine volunteers are needed to help with planning, writing, editing, advertising, sponsorship and bookkeeping.

Katherine Damsell asked whether the magazine had considered going digital. Barry Clarke advised that he had just got the go ahead to produce a digital version with the help of private donors. This new digital version would allow for regular news, a community calendar and business/restaurant promotions all of which is difficult with a quarterly publication. He is currently working with a website developer and if the pilot goes well the digital version could go live by the end of 2024. He continued that it would be ideal to run the digital and print versions in parallel but at the end of 2025 the magazine committee may decide that the print version is not viable although they would be reluctant to do this as a number of residents would then be excluded from the information available.

A resident from Farnham Common asked why businesses would advertise in an online version of the magazine rather than on the Farnhams Community Facebook page. Barry Clarke advised that the hope is they will do both and that a number of restaurants have indicated they would use the digital version of the magazine. He stated that the aim was to compliment rather than compete. Katherine Damsell commented that not everyone is a member of the Farnhams Community Facebook page and it will be interesting to see how the digital version goes.