

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 7.30 P.M. AT FARNHAM ROYAL VILLAGE HALL, FARNHAM LANE, FARNHAM ROYAL, SL2 3AX

Present

Paul Rowley (Chair)
Tony Birkett
Katherine Damsell
Bob Milne
David Moore
Jenny Quilter
Judith Hall (Clerk)

Two members of the public.

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 from the Clerk upon request.

24/116/PC Apologies for absence

Clive Robinson

24/117/PC Declarations of Interest

None

24/118/PC To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2024

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

24/119/PC Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda - for information only)

119.1 Update on road safety initiatives (Community Speedwatch & MVAS)

The content of the report was noted and Tony Birkett raised that at a recent roadside session a van passed the group sounding its horn and then later passed again, swerving towards them while sounding its horn. This was reported to Community Speedwatch as an underspeed offence and the Police have asked whether the group would like to pursue this by providing witness statements and attending court if necessary. The group confirmed they would and the Clerk has reported this to the Police.

119.2 Update of antisocial behaviour in footpaths FAR/6 and FAR/7 in Farnham Royal

The content of the report was noted.

119.3 Update on claim received from Cllr. Clive Robinson

Tony Birkett and Katherine Damsell, as the parish council's appointed representatives, advised that work was continuing with the assistance of Clyde & Co and further meetings would be held before the end of the year. The outcome of which would be reported to the parish council in due course.

119.4 Update on work to a tree in Ingram's Copse

The content of the report was noted.

119.5 Update on Kingsway Green flowerbeds

The content of the report was noted and parish councillors expressed frustration at the damage caused to the Green by Cadent Gas Limited during its ongoing works and felt that the Clerk should write to Buckinghamshire Council expressing the parish council's disappointment and requesting confirmation of whether any future works were planned that would impact the Green prior to creating the new flowerbeds. It was also suggested that the parish council should seek a contribution towards the cost of the flowerbeds from Cadent Gas Limited, as they had ruined the one by the service road.

119.6 Update on Design a Christmas Bauble competition

The content of the report was noted and Jenny Quilter clarified that she would be joined on the judging panel by Paul Rowley and the Clerk.

24/120/PC Appointments:

120.1 To consider the appointment of Paul Rowley as Co Lead Councillor for Communities

Paul Rowley advised that he would like to work with David Moore on community matters. David Moore confirmed he was happy to work with him and this **was agreed**.

24/121/PC Projects:

121.1 Woodlands and Open Spaces

121.1.1 To consider clearing rose beds at Rectory Close and laying turf

The content of the report was noted and the quote of £375 plus VAT for clearing the rose beds, levelling the soil and laying turf ready for bulbs to be planted in 2025 **was agreed**.

121.1.2 To consider tidying the shrub beds at Rectory Close

The content of the report was noted and the quote of £325 plus VAT for removing the tree saplings from the shrub beds and ensuring that the shrubs are pruned and trimmed **was agreed**.

In addition, the quote of £205 per month, starting once the flowerbeds on Kingsway Green have been planted, for pruning, weeding, mulching, edging and dead heading the shrub beds and strimming the bulb areas at Rectory Close together with weeding, trimming, dead heading, feeding and edging the flowerbeds on Kingsway Green **was agreed**.

121.2 Community

121.2.1 To consider Buckinghamshire Council's Agreement for free parking sessions in The Broadway car park

Tony Birkett noted that the Agreement provided by Buckinghamshire Council provided for a minimum term of 12 months when 6 months had been discussed. He also asked those present whether they had any questions regarding the Agreement. The majority of those present expressed concern that once free parking all day on Sundays and Bank Holidays was advertised, visitors to Burnham Beeches SAC may choose to park in The Broadway car park at a cost to the parish council rather than pay to park in one of the onsite car parks.

It was therefore **agreed** that the Clerk would revert to Buckinghamshire Council requesting a six month minimum term and the removal of free parking all day on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It **was further agreed** that, on the assumption these amendments are made, the Agreement can then be completed.

Katherine Damsell reminded those present that the identification of success criteria to review the impact of the scheme was now urgent.

24/122/PC Contracts:

122.1 To consider whether to express an interest in Buckinghamshire Highways Devolved Services for 2025/2026

The content of the report was noted and during a discussion parish councillors expressed nervousness at the cost of carrying out the services required given that Buckinghamshire Council had not disclosed what they would pay the parish council and doubts about whether the parish council had sufficient manpower to manage the services. It was acknowledged by the majority of those present, however, that most complaints received from residents related to issues that would be covered by Devolved Services such as grass cutting, weedkilling and overgrown vegetation blocking pavements and street signs etc. As such it **was agreed** that the Clerk would write to the Devolved Services Officer seeking a discussion or meeting with parish councillors to better understand the proposition before deciding whether to express an interest or not.

24/123/PC Consultations/Public Notices:

123.1 Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings

Paul Rowley asked whether parish councillors felt that the parish council should respond to this government consultation. Those present felt it should, so Jenny Quilter read through the questions and the following responses were agreed by a show of hands:

	Question	Answer
1.	Are you responding to this consultation as a council body?	Town or Parish Council
2.	Do you agree with the broad principle of granting local authorities powers to allow remote attendance at formal meetings?	Yes
3.	If you answered Yes to the above question, do you think that there should be specific limitations on remote attendance?	a) Any formal meeting allowing remote attendance should have at least two thirds of members in physical attendance. b) Members should only be able to attend council meetings remotely in exceptional circumstances, such as those who are medically or physically unable to attend, or for reasons of local or national emergencies.
4.	If you are an elected member can you anticipate that you personally may seek to attend some of your council meetings remotely?	I am not an elected member
5.	If you are responding to this consultation on behalf of a council as a whole, what proportion of the council's current elected members are likely to seek to attend council meetings remotely over the course of a year?	more than 10% but less than 50%
6.	The government recognises that there may be cases in which it is necessary for councils to hold meetings fully remotely. Do you think there should be limitations placed on the number of fully remote meetings councils should be able to hold?	b) Councils should only have the flexibility to change a meeting from in-person to online, or vice versa, due to unforeseen and exceptional circumstances.
7.	Do you think there are there any necessary procedural measures that would help to ensure a remote or hybrid attendance policy is workable and efficient?	a) Councils should be required to publish a list of attendees joining the meeting remotely and give notice if a meeting is being held with full remote attendance. b) Councils should be required to ensure that standard constitutional arrangements are followed for hybrid and fully remote meetings. c) Councils should be required to make arrangements to ensure restricted items (where a council decision is taken in private to protect confidentiality) are managed appropriately and to require remotely attending members to join from a private location.
8.	Do you think legislative change to allow councillors to attend local authority meetings remotely should or should not be considered for the following reasons?	Should be considered because: It is a positive modernising measure. It would likely increase the diversity of people willing and able to stand for election in their local area, making councils more representative of the communities they serve. Councils would be more resilient in the event of local or national emergencies which prevent in-

		<p>person attendance.</p> <p>Should not be considered because:</p> <p>It could lead to a significant number of councillors habitually attending remotely and ultimately reduce the effectiveness of councils.</p> <p>It would be more difficult for councillors to build personal working relationships with colleagues and engage with members of the public in attendance at meetings.</p>
9.	In your view, would allowing councillors to attend formal local authority meetings remotely according to their needs particularly benefit or disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics, for example those with disabilities or caring responsibilities?	Neither
10.	In addition to provisions allowing for remote attendance, do you consider that it would be helpful to introduce proxy voting?	Yes
11.	If yes, for which of the following reasons which may prohibit a member's participation in council meetings do you consider it would be appropriate?	Physical or medical conditions Caring responsibilities Business travel
12.	Are there circumstances in which you feel proxy voting would not be appropriate?	No
13.	If you think proxy voting is appropriate, are there any limitations you think should be placed upon it?	No limitations required.

Lastly, parish councillors were reminded that they could respond as individual members too, if they wished.

123.2 Disposal of Farnham Park Playing Fields by way of a minimum of 25 year lease

The content of the report was noted and Katherine Damsell advised that she and the Clerk were hoping to arrange a meeting with the Director of Culture, Sport and Leisure at Buckinghamshire Council to understand the process, timescale and likely impact for the proposed disposal on the playground.

123.3 Farnham Common Community Library Vision Survey

Paul Rowley drew the attention of those present to the survey and advised that anyone who wanted to submit a response should do so quickly.

24/124/PC Policy Review

124.1 Social Media Policy (Amended)

The amended policy **was agreed**.

24/125/PC Requests for Commemorative Items

125.1 Royal British Legion bench

The content of the report was noted and it **was agreed** to accept the kind donation of a bench and that the parish council would write to residents bordering the Farnham Pump green advising them of the decision, would seek agreement from Buckinghamshire Council to install the bench on the green and would pay the installation costs and for all ongoing maintenance.

125.2 Tree in Community Orchard for Alan French

Following the discussion during Open Forum, which is recorded at the end of these minutes, it **was agreed** that as a founding member of the Community Orchard it would be appropriate to allow a commemorative tree, Basil's Burnham Beauty, in the name of Alan French.

24/126/PC Finance:

126.1 Spending Decisions

126.1.1 To consider quote for watering flowerbeds on Kingsway Green for the first year until they

are established

It **was agreed** that, to protect the new plants, watering should be carried out weekly between 1 May 2025 and 31 August 2025 at a cost of £60 per visit making a total of £960 plus VAT.

126.1.2 To consider quote for new cupboard in parish council office

It **was agreed** that a new cupboard would be purchased at a cost of £375 plus £45 delivery and VAT.

126.1.3 To consider £200 contribution towards a picture wall at Farnham Common Village Hall

It **was agreed** that the pictures recovered from the Stag and Hounds Public House would be hung on the wall outside the parish council office in Farnham Common Village Hall and that the parish council would settle the cost, limited to £200, of hanging these pictures directly with the contractor. This separate display would not form part of the display being dedicated to Marilyn Rolfe.

126.1.4 To ratify the purchase of a body camera for the Community Speedwatch team

The purchase of a Spikecam 4K body camera for £62.49 plus VAT was ratified.

126.2 To consider the draft budget for 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Katherine Damsell presented the draft budget, mainly for the benefit of those present who had not attended the Finance Committee meeting on 8 November 2024, where the budget was discussed in detail. Those present were happy with the items contained in the budget and the assumptions made. Katherine Damsell advised that between this meeting and the Finance Committee meeting on 8 January 2025 she would be working with the Clerk to prepare the December 2024 management accounts and finalise the budget.

126.3 To consider payments and note receipts, as per the November 2024 cashbook

Katherine Damsell noted that this cashbook included some regular payments due in December 2024 as the parish council would not meet in December. The payments **were approved** and the receipts **were noted**.

24/127/PC Planning:

127.1 To ratify comments submitted on recent applications

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

127.2 To note recent planning decisions

Paul Rowley expressed his disappointment at the Planning Authorities decisions in respect of the following applications:

PL/23/0971/HB - Allerds Farm, Crown Lane, Farnham Royal

PL/23/0970/FA - Allerds Farm, Crown Lane, Farnham Royal

PL/23/3135/FA - 22 Holly Close, Farnham Common

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

127.3 Planning Enforcement Matters

David Moore advised that action is ongoing regarding a potential breach of planning permission in Bracken Close and that he is continuing to liaise with Enforcement Officers and neighbours.

24/128/PC Any Other Business (for information only)

128.1 Katherine Damsell advised that she and the Clerk had taken part in an impressive demonstration of the Scribe accounting package, which she felt would streamline the parish council's accounting processes and would help with the Business Continuation Plan currently being written. She felt there was a bit more work to do but advised that she was looking to bring this to the parish council for consideration in January 2025 with an implementation date of 1 April 2025.

128.2 Katherine Damsell advised that she had received seven acceptances for the Christmas lunch and asked parish councillors to let her have their menu choices and reminded them that they are responsible for paying for their own food and drink.

128.3 Tony Birkett advised that he had now obtained two quotes for a reduced CCTV provision which included one camera on The Broadway and one camera at Farnham Common Playground and that these would cost approximately £5,000. He continued that two other companies had refused to quote due to having to work on the public highway. He confirmed that he is now working with the Clerk to investigate the existing power supplies for the Christmas decorations.

128.4 The Clerk advised that a resident had requested help with turning the telephone box outside Robin Parade into a book exchange. She continued that she had asked British Telecom if the telephone box could be adopted but they had advised this was not possible as recent changes to Ofcom regulations mean that for a telephone box to be adopted there must be less than 52 calls made per year and this particular public telephone has had over 80. Also, this kiosk is considered "Last at Site" which means that it is the only public telephone within a 400m radius and therefore must remain. The Clerk advised that she would let the resident know British Telecom's decision.

24/129/PC Next parish council meeting:

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Finance Committee on 13 January 2025 at 7.30pm at Farnham Royal Village Hall

Full Council on 27 January 2025 at 7.30pm at Farnham Common Village Hall

OPEN FORUM

Two residents and friends of the late Alan French asked for permission to plant a 'Basil's Burnham Beauty', which is a recently rediscovered local apple variety, in memory of Mr French in the Community Orchard. It was explained that this request was being made as the Community Orchard was the vision of Mr French and he had led the team who created it. In addition, he was a Past Master of The Worshipful Company of Fruiterers. They had been advised that it was best to plant the tree before Christmas and to protect it with four stakes and a guard. They would then arrange a ceremony in Spring 2025 to dedicate the tree to Mr French. Some councillors raised a concern about setting a precedent for more trees in the Community Orchard but those present felt that given Mr French's unique relationship to the Community Orchard this was a special arrangement and no precedent would be set. Some councillors also raised a concern that the parish council had decided not to use public funds to provide memorials to past councillors and Alan French was previously a member of the parish council but it was noted that no public funds would be used to purchase or plant the tree and that the friends would take responsibility for maintaining the tree for the first year. After considering all factors outlined, particularly that Mr French was instrumental in creating the Community Orchard, those present were happy to support the request and formal agreement was recorded in item 125.2 above.

One of the residents asked that the contractors take more care when strimming around the trees in the Community Orchard to avoid damaging the trunks. The Clerk agreed to raise this with the contractors.

The resident also reported that the hedge outside Robin Parade required cutting back to improve visibility and appearance. Bob Milne advised him to report this on fixmystreet.com as the maintenance of the hedge was the responsibility of Buckinghamshire Council since the parish council handed back devolved services in 2022. The resident advised that he was not aware of this and agreed to report the hedge as suggested.