



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes
Council

Time and date

7.00pm on Thursday 23rd October 2014

Place

The Council Chamber, South Street, Farnham

Councillors

- * Jeremy Ricketts (Mayor of Farnham)
- * Jill Hargreaves (Deputy Mayor)
- A David Attfield
- * David Beaman
- * Patrick Blagden CBE
- * Carole Cockburn
- A Pat Frost
- * Carlo Genziani
- * Stephen Hill
- * Jennifer O'Grady
- * Stephen O'Grady
- Sam Hollins-Owen
- * Graham Parlett
- * Dr Jessica Parry
- * Julia Potts
- A Susan Redfern
- * Roger Steel
- A John Ward

- * Present
- A Not present

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk)
Rachel Aves (Team Leader Corporate Governance)

27 members of the public were in attendance

Prior to the meeting, prayers were said by Rev. Michael Hopkins of the Farnham United Reformed Church.

Questions by the Public

There were no questions from the public.

C090/14 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Attfield, Frost, and Ward.

C091/14 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Farnham Town Council Meeting held on Thursday 25th September 2014 were agreed for signature by the Mayor as a correct record with the addition of Cllr Potts to the list of apologies received.

C092/14 **Declarations of interests**

Apart from the standard declarations of personal interest by councillors who were dual or triple hatted by virtue of being elected to Waverley Borough Council or Surrey County Council, there were no declarations of interest.

C093/14 **Statements by the Public**

- i) Dr Penny Marriott spoke of the sense of frustration and anger emerging from a packed meeting of the North West Farnham Residents' Association. There appeared to be, she said, a 'perfect storm' surrounding housing development which means that everyone seems to be pushing for new development. Developers and farmers are focused on profit; the planning authority receives 'planning gain' from every development and the planning system has a presumption in favour of development.

Many planning authorities have yet to produce a new development plan and town and parish councils are yet to produce Neighbourhood Plans. As such many areas are completely unprotected from catastrophic over-development. Even where plans are produced, the lack of infrastructure cannot be used as a 'material planning consideration. This will have an impact across the South East said Dr Marriott but in Farnham the sewage treatment system is over the designed capacity; there are drainage problems, a lack of school places and extremely high pollution levels; congestion at peak times reflects the fact that seven of the ten most congested roads in Waverley are in or near the centre of the town.

There are at least eight potential development sites of 100 plus properties in the town and more on the periphery. Infrastructure should be the priority in deciding where development should go because of specific problems of road layout – with two A roads crossing the middle of the conservation area with no room for expansion.

Dr Marriott said that any lack of necessary infrastructure should be an overriding planning consideration. New development should add to the town not make it a worse place to live. Secondly, no planning permission should be granted until the relevant councils have produced up-to-date and relevant development plans with the criteria for infrastructure in place.

- ii) John Williamson made a statement on the Neighbourhood Plan. He noted that it contained much detail and the Infrastructure Planning Group and staff were to be thanked for their hard work but it was supporting greenfield development. The North West Farnham Residents' Association strongly objected to the inclusion of the Beavers Hop Fields as one of the development sites supported and has

consistently requested that this area be protected, including submitting a formal petition with 400 signatures for the area to become Local Green Space. The Draft Neighbourhood Plan omits any reference to the continuation of the previous Area of Strategic Visual Importance which covered the Hop Fields and much of the adjacent land. Mr Williamson noted that Farnham Town Council's letter dated 15th October to Waverley Borough Council requested the continuation of this status. However, on the same day the Town Council responded to the Taylor Wimpey application on the Hop Fields saying that if SANGS were provided on site then the application could be acceptable.

Mr Williamson hoped the Town Council could have fought to eliminate the need to destroy its heritage and remove the necessity to build on greenfield sites. He urged the Town Council to withdraw or amend the Town Council's response to the Taylor Wimpey Beavers Hop Field application and postpone acceptance of the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

- iii) Mr John Powell commented on Dunsfold Aerodrome and that Waverley Borough Council should realise its full potential as a brownfield site to avoid building on precious greenfield sites. He understood that Waverley, in its Local Plan consultation, was stating that the maximum capacity of Dunsfold was 3,400 houses but that Bidwells, acting for Trinity College (owners of the site), stated that up to 6,000 houses could be built which would give sufficient critical mass for the necessary infrastructure and roads to make Dunsfold self-sufficient.

Mr Powell stated that 6,000 houses at Dunsfold would mean that greenfield sites in Farnham could be saved – a no-brainer for Farnham residents. He urged the Town Council to be more robust in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan to protect the precious green hinterland and mount a campaign with other local town councils such as Godalming and Haslemere to put pressure on Waverley to make full use of Dunsfold.

- iv) Mr Stephen Spence thanked Farnham Town Council for its open and transparent approach in allowing people to make statements. He supported the opposition to build on the Hop Fields. 120 homes would take out a greenfield site and put pressure on the infrastructure. Farnham was a great place in which to live and grow up. More well-off citizens were well-catered for but there was a real problem for lower income families. People in Farnham cannot get on the housing ladder and there was a need for low cost housing on brownfield sites.

C094/14

Town Mayor's Announcements.

- i) The Mayor announced his delight at the success of Farnham in Bloom in the 50th anniversary year of Britain in Bloom, more of which would be said by Cllr Hill.
- ii) The Mayor thanked the residents for raising their concerns and said it was important for residents to bring their views with clarity and force.
- iii) The Mayor reminded councillors of the Flood Forum, being organised by Farnham Town Council in conjunction with other agencies, taking place on October 29th at the Farnham Maltings.
- iv) The Mayor advised members of the special Remembrance Reception being held at Waverley Abbey House on 7th November in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund.

C095/14 **Questions by Members**
None had been received.

Part I – Items for Decision

C096/14 **Community Enhancement Working Group**
Cllr Hill introduced the notes of the Community Enhancement Working Group, held on 1st October 2014, at Appendix B to the agenda.

He began by underlining his delight at Farnham winning a Silver Gilt Award in the Large Town Category at the Britain in Bloom 50th anniversary awards. Farnham had received some very positive and worthwhile feedback in a private session with the judges and some useful advice on a few areas to improve to win a Gold.

Cllr Hill reported on the substantial increase in sponsorship in 2014/15 and recorded his thanks to everyone who had made Farnham in Bloom such a success. He was pleased to report that many sponsors had already confirmed their support for 2015.

C097/14 Cllr Hill said that the new bus shelters at the railway station were splendid. They were a huge improvement on the old ones and had been arranged by Farnham Town Council in a partnership project with Network Rail, South West Trains and Surrey County Council.

C098/14 Cllr Hill reminded members of the dates for the Big Pick Week at the end of October and for the Winter Celebration (21st December).

C099/14 **Strategy and Finance Working Group**
Cllr Cockburn introduced the notes of the Strategy and Finance Working Group meetings held on 14th October 2014, at Appendix C to the Agenda.

Cllr Cockburn advised that the main item of the meeting relating to the Neighbourhood Plan would be dealt with under a separate item on the agenda. However she addressed matters arising from the Waverley Local Plan Scenario consultation and issues relating to the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) and the concern over the reducing amount of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) which would potentially mean that brownfield development in the centre of Farnham would not be able to take place because of the number of speculative applications that were being submitted in the absence of a Waverley Local Plan.

Council noted that the Local Planning Authority had advised that it considered that it had no choice but to make SANG provision in Farnham Park available to all developers under its current policy. However, members believed that as landowner of Farnham Park, Waverley could adjust its policy and decide to whom the SANG provision should be made available. Members noted that the SANG policy had been drawn up to deal with a different set of circumstances when greenfield land was not under threat and it was proposed that Waverley should be urged to amend its policy to ensure brownfield development in Farnham could progress.

It was resolved unanimously that:
Council write to Waverley Borough Council urging that as the Special Protection Area (SPA) Avoidance and mitigation Strategy was developed

to deal with a different set of circumstances, when the Countryside beyond the Green Belt was not under threat, Waverley Borough Council now only use Farnham Park SANG capacity for the mitigation of Brownfield development in Farnham.

C100/14 Cllr Cockburn advised that a number of people had asked, as had Mr Powell in public questions, whether Dunsfold Park should have a higher number of homes in order to enable the development to be more sustainable with a greater level of infrastructure being provided which would also reduce the need to develop on greenfield sites across the borough help retain the character of other communities across Waverley. Strategy & Finance had agreed to recommend a development of sufficient size (perhaps a large 'garden village) at Dunsfold Park that could support the necessary infrastructure needed.

**It was resolved unanimously that:
Council notes and welcomes the change of Waverley Borough Council policy regarding Dunsfold Park and encourages the development of a community of sufficient size to support the necessary infrastructure such as schools, shops and medical facilities, and minimise the impact on surrounding areas and roads.**

C101/14 Cllr Cockburn reported that the quarterly finance data had been reviewed and that that the External Auditor had given an unqualified Audit for the 2013-14 financial year with two minor issues raised.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Council welcomed the Auditor's report and noted the Issues arising report.

C102/14 Council received the first report from the Council's new Internal Auditor Mr Paul Hartley and agreed the issues arising and the Officers' comments on the issues.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1. Council welcomes the first report from the Council's new Internal Auditor and agrees the comments from Strategy & Finance in relation to the issues arising.**
- 2. A *de minimis* level of £250 be set for small items included on the asset inventory.**

C103/14 Cllr Cockburn advised that Strategy & Finance had reviewed the design and criteria for the use of an adapted Council Crest as set out at Appendix F of its agenda. Council noted the agreed image for license by community groups

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

- 1) the proposed criteria and terms of agreement which will be signed by the requesting organisation prior to any use is agreed be endorsed;**
- 2) approval of use of the Licenced Crest in accordance with the agreement be delegated to the Town Clerk**

C104/14 Council noted the implications of the 2015 elections in terms of the Annual Council and Mayor Making date being 21st May 2015. Members also welcomed the proposal from the Surrey Association of Local Councils to raise awareness of how to become a councillor.

Planning & Licensing Consultative Group

CI05/14

Cllr Genziani introduced the minutes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 29th September, and 13th October 2014.

Cllr Genziani advised that there appeared to be a number of large applications emerging and that Waverley and Farnham seemed to be under huge pressure to accept development.

Council discussed one such application raised by members of the public which was the application for the development on the hopfields (WA/2014/1565). It was noted that the timescale for comments had been extended, and it was proposed by Cllr Beaman, seconded by Cllr Potts, that the comments of the Planning and Licensing Consultative Group on WA/2014/1565 be withdrawn and referred back to the Planning and Licensing Group for further consideration.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that:

Comments on planning application WA/2014/1565 be withdrawn and referred back to the Planning and Licensing Working Group for further consideration.

Farnham Neighbourhood Plan

CI06/14

Cllr Cockburn introduced the Neighbourhood Plan documents which were before the Council for approval prior to the Regulation 14 consultation and referred to recommendations 2 and 3 from the Strategy & Finance Working Group.

Cllr Cockburn said that the plan had been produced as a result of discussions with residents and businesses across Farnham over the preceding two years building on the work of the Farnham Design Statement which defines and seeks to retain the individual characteristics of each part of the town.

Cllr cockburn reminded Council that the plan was an updated version to that which was consulted upon in November 2013, but that every part could be debated during the current consultation period.

Cllr Cockburn described each chapter and the process by which the possible housing options and policies had been selected after a long and objective process. Every site had been visited, mapped and judged against a list of criteria, all of which can be found in the appendices to the Neighbourhood Plan. The site densities were calculated based on densities in the areas surrounding the proposed sites. Each site was also judged against the landscape study commissioned by Waverley Borough Council and its relationship to the existing town boundary and other green spaces. Finally the Town Council's Planning Consultant reviewed each site on planning grounds before it was selected.

Cllr Cockburn referred to the impact of the two EU designated Special Protection Areas and the fact that none of the sites can be developed without the provision of SANG on site or elsewhere.

Farnham Town Council was now asking people to make representations, including those who have commented previously, to ensure the evidence base is robust, and highlighted that the status of any of the sites could change.

In conclusion, Cllr Cockburn highlighted some of the infrastructure issues set out in the plan acknowledging that the planning system did not always support the informed views of residents.

The Town Council would be undertaking a comprehensive consultation to seek the maximum coverage and widest participation with a travelling exhibition, postcards to every household, a summary plan, newspaper articles, conversations on Facebook and Twitter.

C106/14 Cllr Ricketts congratulated the Infrastructure Planning Group for all that it had done. He said, to applause, that he had great admiration for the efforts of the group and officers, in particular Rachel Hammond in getting the Neighbourhood Plan to this stage.

Cllr Beaman felt that Farnham found itself in its current situation because of the national Planning Policy Framework and people should speak with a louder voice.

Cllr Steel thought that there was the right number of homes for Dunsfold there would not be a worry about greenfield development. He felt the best of the Waverley scenarios proposed was Scenario 4 but he hoped Waverley would reduce its total housing number requirement based on the evidence.

The Mayor said that a large percentage of the Waverley population seemed to support this idea and suggested that councils should join together to promote Dunsfold as an option. He proposed, seconded by Cllr Beaman that "Farnham should consult Waverley communities coming together to champion the development of brownfield over greenfield land".

Cllr Cockburn advised caution as the Neighbourhood Plan was talking about brownfield over greenfield in Farnham. Cllr O'Grady agreed highlighting the danger of Farnham appearing to point at other communities for development. He felt the focus should be on Farnham otherwise Farnham would be accused of nimbysism.

Cllr Blagden noted that none of the other communities in Waverley had progressed their Neighbourhood Plans as far as Farnham and it was important not to jeopardise the consultation process.

The motion was put to a vote and lost by 9 votes to 2 with 3 abstentions.

C107/14 Cllr Cockburn summarised the position with the Neighbourhood Plan consultation document and invited comments during the consultation period from 31st October to 15th December. She invited councillors to encourage everyone to take part in the process.

It was RESOLVED *unanimously* that:

- 1. The draft pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan and associated documents including the Farnham Land Availability Assessment be approved for the Regulation 14 consultation;**
- 2. The schedule for consultation be approved;**

Part 2 – Items Noted

C108/14 **Reports from Other Councils**

There were no reports from other Councils.

C109/14 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

1) Cllr Parry advised of the Flood Information Drop in event being organised in association with the Farnham Rivers Group to help people who are subject to flooding

C110/14 **Actions under the Scheme of Delegation**

None reported.

C111/14 **Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next Council Meeting would take place on Thursday 11th December at 7.00pm.

The Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.40pm

Date

Chairman