

FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 7th June 2023 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Councillors: R. Schofield (Chairman), P. Einchcomb, R. Fang, L. Holt, A. Hope, E. May, R. Robinson, S. Tilley, D. Taylor, G. Woods, K. Cottrell and P. Wildsmith

In Attendance: Rochelle Halliday – Executive Officer
Councillor Steve Forster – HCC
Councillor Stephen Parker – HCC
Friends of Oakley Park Representative

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 1

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Krishnmurthy, Cllr Oliver, Cllr Chenery, Cllr Willcocks, and Cllr Engström.

Cllr Richmond was absent.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made for any item on the agenda.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 3

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 4

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Schofield reported his attendance during the period as follows:

- 15th May- met with Fleet Phoenix to discuss the Harlington development and potential impact on their accommodation.
- 16th May- met with the contractor for the Cemetery paths to try and resolve some issues with the quality of the work.
- 18th May- met with the Facilities and Open Space Manager at Basingbourne Park to investigate the land drain blockage.
- 24th May- met with the Internal Auditor during her visit at Fleet Town Council.
- 6th June- attended the Vision Session, this session was not well attended however a draft vision statement was produced.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 5

HCC/HDC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following reports were received from Hampshire County Council and Hart District Council.

Cllr Forster (HCC)

- There is speed watch training later this month and the new unit will then be deployed.
- The Tavistock Road repair is still outstanding, a date is being allocated for the work to be completed.
- There are works being carried out for various potholes.
- The roadworks on Hitches Lane is going well.
- The Hampshire County Council website has information on support for the cost of living, Greening Campaign and an update on Foster Care.

Cllr Stephen Parker (HCC)

- The Reading Road South pedestrian crossing scheme is progressing, and support has been sought from various sources. A formal pedestrian count will take place.
- Cllr Parker attended the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee meeting. Funding model from Parish/Town Councils is no longer sustainable as so many have pulled out of funding the scheme.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 6

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

With the addition of Cllr Robinson to the list of members on the Policy and Finance Committee, the minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED

Subject to the above amendment, the main and confidential minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Town Council held on 10th May 2023 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

The Council received and noted the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 17th May 2023.

The incorrect minutes were included for the Development Control meetings, therefore, they will be received at the next Council Meeting.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 7

FINANCIAL REPORTING FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 2023

a) Asset Register

Members received a copy of the Asset Register, as at 31st March 2023. The insurance valuation was discussed, and the Executive Officer confirmed that the insurance cover replaces items at their new cost.

b) Financial Statements

Members received the summary of financial statements report for the year ending 31st March 2023. This document provides a summary of the Council's actual year end position, to support the consideration of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Savings have been achieved from the budget due to deferring projects, staff vacancies and better show performances at the Harlington. The uncertainty within the economic environment continues.

RESOLVED

- 1) To approve the Asset Register at 31st March 2023.
- 2) Members noted the summary of financial statements report for the year ending 31st March 2023.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 8

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2022/23

- a) BDO Conflict of Interest Form
Members received the BDO conflict of interest form for the external audit. It was confirmed that there were no known conflict of interests with BDO.
- b) The Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control for the year Ending 31st March 2023
This report provides the supporting evidence for a positive response to the Annual Governance Statement in the AGAR.

Members performed the review and confirmed that they were satisfied that the Council's system of internal control is effective.

- c) Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23, Internal Audit visit report and the Internal Audit Actions Report
Members reviewed the Annual Internal Audit Report in the AGAR.

The Internal Auditor's report and the actions report were reviewed in detail. Members commented that the internal audit process and the Internal Auditor's reports were always useful.

Cllr Parker left the meeting at 7:30pm.

- d) AGAR Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2022/23
Members considered the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 in detail and confirmed affirmative responses to all applicable sections.
- e) AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23
The Accounting Statements for 2022/23 were considered in detail.

RESOLVED

- 1) To confirm that the Council and its Members do not have any known conflict of interest with the external auditors BDO.
- 2) To approve the Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control for the year ending 31st March 2023.
- 3) To note the Annual Internal Audit Report (within the AGAR) and the Internal Audit year end report and to approve the actions report in response to the Internal Audit report.
- 4) To approve the AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23.
- 5) To approve the AGAR Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 9

FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Members considered the financial reports for the period ending April 2023.

Due to a timing issue the bank reconciliation could not be completed in time for this meeting and will be issued at the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED

- 1) Members approved the list of payments for April 2023.
- 2) To defer until the next meeting confirmation that the bank reconciliation for April 2023 has been verified and signed.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 10

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDER 2023- RIGHT OF WAY THROUGH OAKLEY PARK

Members discussed the proposal to allocate a footpath through Oakley Park. Friends of Oakley Park have no objection to the proposal.

Fleet Town Council has reservations regarding the need to dedicate the identified footpaths through Oakley Park, as they are already well maintained by the Council, however, the Council recognises the legal status the paths have acquired through their established use and reluctantly accept that they will be officially dedicated.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 11

MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORTS

Two reports were received from the Monitoring Officer following a complaint in January 2023. Members were asked to consider the recommendations in the Monitoring Officer's reports.

The Chairman requested that the reports be discussed in closed session, due to discussing named individuals.

RESOLVED

That subject to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Exclusion of the public in accordance with Section 1(2) and by reason of the confidential nature of the business of the Town Council, the Public and Press will be excluded from the meeting.

All members of the public left the room at 8.00pm.

Complaint: Alleged Breach of Fleet Town Council Code of Conduct

This complaint was considered by the Hart District Council Standards Committee.

Members considered the report and its recommendations in detail.

RESOLVED

- 1) To approve the recommendations in the Monitoring Officer's report.
- 2) To request that Cllr Oliver delivers an apology to Cllr Forster at the next available meeting.

Cllr Wildsmith left the meeting at 8.15pm.

Complaint: Alleged Breach of Fleet Town Council Code of Conduct by Councillor Schofield

Cllr Schofield left the room at 8.15pm. Cllr Einchcomb assumed the position of Chairman.

Members discussed the report and considered the recommendations.

RESOLVED

- 1) To uphold the recommendation in the Monitoring Officer's report requiring Cllr Schofield to apologise to Cllr Forster but with due consideration to the fact that it would have been impossible to effectively intervene in the exchange between Cllr Oliver and Cllr Forster in that instance.

Members noted that this matter was a learning experience for the Council.

Cllr Schofield returned to the room at 8.30pm and was informed of the decision.

The meeting was re-opened to the public at 8.35pm. The public were informed of both decisions.

Cllr Schofield made an apology to Cllr Forster for allowing a Councillor to challenge an individual regarding the recording of the meeting. Cllr Forster accepted the apology.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 12 COMPLAINTS

A complaint was received from Oakley Park on 15th May 2023 regarding permitting two concurrent events at Oakley Park on 14th May 2023.

A resolution response was submitted to the complainant and accepted.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 13 BADGER ACTIVITY AT FLEET CEMETERY

Members were informed about the badger activity which is causing significant damage. Cllr Schofield and officers are taking appropriate action and have commissioned a licence application to be submitted to Natural England for managing the sett using Council's emergency financial powers. The cost of this work is £1,901.35 + VAT.

Any action will be in line with the strict legal process for managing badger setts.

The council will be required to allocate funds once there is clearer picture of costs.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 14 EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Members noted the Executive Officers report.

Members agreed the meeting date for Climate Change Working Group to be held on 20th June 2023.

FC JUNE 2023 ITEM 15 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the time and date of the next Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday 5th July 2023 at 7pm in The Harlington.

The meeting closed at 8:57pm

Signed.....
Chairman

Date:.....