



MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH ANNUAL FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

RESIDENTS' MEETING

Sunday 25 March 2018

at 3pm

at

The Harlington, Fleet

1) WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chairman of the Council, Cllr Bob Schofield, welcomed almost 200 residents to the eighth Annual Residents' meeting. He explained the fire exit procedure and the location of the facilities and confirmed that Cllr Woods would manage the question and answer sessions

2) MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the seventh Annual Residents' Meeting held on Tuesday 28 March 2017 were adopted as a correct record.

The Chairman explained the format of the meeting to include guest presentations by

Kit Mitchell on older Drivers and Bruce Bulgin of Fleet Business Improvement District(BID)

He also explained that the revised timetable for the no 7 bus service to take effect from 16 April 2018 had been included in the papers provided on each chair.

3) DRIVING INTO OLD AGE

Kit Mitchell, a road safety representative working with the police, made a presentation on various factors connected with driving by older people.

Various slides were projected to show some relevant facts and figures such as :

- Older people were less of a danger than young people
- Older people had less accidents
- Older people killed fewer pedestrians
- Older people involved in serious accidents were more likely to be seriously injured or die
- Older people tended to drive smaller cars
- Accidents involving older drivers were less likely to be caused by speeding and more likely to be whilst negotiating right hand turns across traffic, or roundabouts

Older drivers would be assisted by:

- Improved design of roads

- Better choice of car
- Improvements to small cars
- Advice and training

It was reported that HCC had an excellent record with regards to improved road safety for older people and offered the following:

- Free workshops
- Voluntary appraisals for £30-£40
- Assistance for drivers with medical problems
- Offer of alternatives to prosecutions

A short video was shown to illustrate the appraisal session.

Question/comment

Maurice Kent Fir Tree Way commented on the growing problem of being blinded by headlights.

This had been acknowledged and investigations were looking into the intensity and alignment of headlight beams

4) FLEET TOWN CENTRE-FLEET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Bruce Bulgin, the vice-chairman of the Fleet BID, gave an update on the work and progress of the BID. He explained that there were over 300 BIDs in the UK including in neighbouring towns such as Camberley, Guildford, and Basingstoke. A map was displayed to show the extent of the Fleet BID area from The Oatsheaf junction to the Waterfront Business Park

Funds were raised via a levy paid by the member businesses at 1.5% of the business rate.

Fleet had 300 levy payers and the BID was run by a volunteer Board supported by FTC and HDC both with a representative on the Board

Objectives included:

- Increasing the town centre footfall (Food Festival, trails, consumer magazine etc)
- Savings through bulk purchasing
- Improved generation of income
- Improved Fleet shopping/visit experience (Fleet Watch and Information Points)
- Business support through training
- Supporting good practice
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Robin Cork Medonte Close commented on the impact of internet shopping which was acknowledged.

5 FLEET TOWN COUNCIL PRESENTATION

a) Fleet Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Oliver explained the concept of the Neighbourhood Plan which sought to influence the right types of development in the right place. With input from the local community the document would carry legal weight when adopted

The emphasis was on:

- Protecting the Conservation Areas (north Fleet and the Basingstoke Canal)
- Protecting green spaces
- Maintaining the sylvan character of the town
- Enhancing the vitality of the town centre
- The development of a better civic quarter including the area of the civic offices/the Harlington/The Library/Victoria Road car park

The draft Neighbourhood Plan is ready for consultation but has been delayed pending completion of the Local Plan consultation period on 26 March 2018 and after the local elections on 3 May 2018. The consultation period will therefore run between early May and mid June 2018

The final NP will be considered by a planning inspector and following a referendum, if supported by more than 50% of voters will be used to help determine planning applications

L. O'Shea Keats Gardens GU51 3YY was advised of the current position of Bramshot Common as a SANG and further information would be given on Tweseledown.

b) Events in the community

Cllr Wright reported on regular local events:

- Fleet half marathon with 3000 runners –rescheduled to 29 April 2018 due to bad weather in March
- Friends of Group activities such as quiz nights and Easter Egg Hunts
- The Faulkeners Family Fun Day
- Fleet Food Festival- to be held on 23/24 June 2018 with over 75 stall holders etc
- The Fleet Carnival 6-8 July 2018
- The Fleet Cycle Ride
- Remembrance Day
- Fireworks event with 6,500 visitors 3 November 2018
- Christmas festivities
- Nutcracker Trail
- Christmas Day lunch for 75 guests and volunteers

c) Finance

Cllr Holt reported on the formation of FTC in 2010 with assets comprising:

- Five parks and the Cemetery
- Ancells Farm Community Centre
- The Harlington (not the freehold)

Financial commitments included :

- Community bus service
- Basingstoke Canal
- Youth Services

There were no financial resources but reserves of £250,000 were the target

Cllr Holt referred to:

- The transparent management accounts on the FTC website
- 4 full time equivalent staff
- The parks and pavilions
- Average expenses of Councillors at £29 pa
- Reduction in target reserves to £150,000
- The Harlington programme development and FTC contribution of £180,000 pa
- Pre 2010 historic cost of the Harlington solely to Fleet residents of approximately £227,500 pa
- Expenditure on floral displays/Christmas lights/Fleet Link/ Basingstoke Canal
- Grants to local organisations
- Community Buildings let at £0 rent pa
- Ringfencing of new Harlington funds at £412,000 per annum
- Historic comparison of council tax levels showing an increase over 8 years of less than 1% pa

Steve Forster Waverley Avenue asked a question relating to the cost of a new Harlington and the implications for future Council tax precepts and the cost to residents of Fleet

It was explained that this issue would be covered in Cllr Schofield's later presentation on the Harlington development and in the open forum

d) Overview of Open Spaces

Cllr Einchcomb explained that 5 parks and the cemetery had been passed to FTC in 2010 and 2 small parks had latterly been added as a result of the Edenbrook development

Reference was made to the following:

- Expenditure at Ancells Farm Park
- The new Grounds Maintenance contract
- Tennis at Calthorpe Park
- Improvements to paths in Basingbourne woods
- Calthorpe and Basingbourne Parks new play areas
- The work of the Friends of Groups
- Action Day to be held on 2 June 2018
- South and South East in Bloom awards
- Defibrillator locations

e) The Harlington Development

Cllr Schofield reported on progress regarding The Harlington

Reference was made to the following:

- Move to a conventional design team rather than a Framework Contract which had produced unacceptable cost estimates
- List of regular Harlington users
- £115,000 hall hire income
- Over 80 shows with the sale of 15,000 tickets producing an income of over £200,000 plus improved bar income
- Focus on Gurkha Square to site a new versatile public facility
- A building design of 'the time'
- Contribution to the diversification and vitality of the high street
- An amenity at reasonable prices where people live
- Transition without a period of shutdown
- The current planning application
- A 354 seater theatre with a balcony and one-level ground floor
- Reconfigured Gurkha Square
- Latest cost estimate of £11m including land, construction, fees contingency and inflation
- Ring fenced funds already collected being used to finance current activity
- Improved Council tax income through increase in number of residents
- Seeking ways to reduce the projected cost
- The availability of S106 funds to assist
- The search for alternative funding once planning permission has been obtained (e.g. Lottery/Arts Council etc)
- No loan commitment until certain conditions are met ie planning permission/business plan/lease arrangements/land assembly

f) Community Governance

Cllr Walton reported on the Local Government Boundary Commission's draft proposals for Fleet ward boundaries and 19 Councillors.

With the support of HDC, FTC had objected to the proposals and sought a realignment of wards with 18 Councillors. This had now been agreed by the LGBC

The role of a town councillor was explained including the requirements and disqualification for standing for election

6. Open Forum

a) Cllr James Radley Deputy Leader of HDC confirmed that in relation to comments he had received, that the HDC civic offices did not need to be located in the town centre and

HDC was prepared to look at alternative opportunities. This would be progressed when the future of the Harlington was decided but would not include a carpark on The Views.

b) Cllr Schofield dealt with the question raised earlier by Steve Forster, about the cost to the ratepayers of a new Harlington. Like any capital purchase (an individual buying a house or HDC building the Hart Leisure centre) the funding of a loan to meet the purchase price cost money.

FTC has been entirely transparent and is confident that with increased income from new housing there would be no need to increase Council tax to fund the Harlington for the foreseeable future

The current PWLB rates were attractive and once taken the loan would be at a fixed rate for the life of the loan. The cost would always be put to the public and any shift in loan rates would be reported to Fleet residents

There was no intention of developing the Views instead there was a slither of land in front of the skatepark which was inadvertently transferred to FTC which HDC may like to be returned to their ownership to complete the access to Victoria Road car park

c) Russell Hunt Leawood Road asked if a referendum regarding the Harlington could be held as was the case with the Neighbourhood Plan. It was explained the NP referendum was a legal requirement. It was confirmed that FTC was not controlled by Council tax constraints that affect District and County Councils. The majority of residents who responded to the consultation on the Harlington lived in Fleet.

d) Mr Collen Glen Road referred to option C and was assured that the Hype could still be accommodated

e) Caron Holmes Tavistock Road commented that duplicate entries or wrong addresses may have affected the public consultation and asked why a hotel was too large but the new Harlington was acceptable. It was explained that the results of the consultation had been independently verified and the proposed hotel had planning, scale and neighbour implications. It was confirmed that Remembrance Day and the market would still be held in Gurkha Square. There was also a 3m wide access from Victoria Road car park to Fleet Road beside Bakers shop and the design had been mindful of the adjacent residential property.

f) Gillian Wain Church Road commented on the need for all the authorities to work together to secure the best scheme. It was confirmed that the HCC Library Services' objection to the planning application had been addressed resulting in an improved access arrangement. Efforts were being made for FTC/HCC/HDC to work together on the project. It was explained that there was not a "no cost do nothing option" To provide similar new facilities within the existing building would need renovation which would now cost more than a new building

d) Robin Cork Medonte Close raised issues regarding access/steps/ramp arrangements. Cllr Schofield explained the access proposals and assured residents that all safety aspects had been addressed.

e) Peter Le Gros Wellington Avenue commented on the requirement for only Fleet residents to carry the burden of cost. The historical setting of this was explained but it was

made clear the Fleet residents were now contributing less than they ever had to the cost of operating the Harlington

f) John Sturgeon Adams Drive Commented that the existing building was 'state of the art' when it was first built. It was confirmed that the proposed new building had been designed for a life of 40-50 years. The requirement to always need to fund future replacement buildings was explained

g) Cllr Wendy Makepeace-Brown HDC suggested that residents contact their local FTC and/or HDC councillor with views and comments on what they would like to see achieved by the local authorities working together.

7 Close of meeting

Cllr Woods thanked everyone for attending, for their interest and their questions and invited residents to remain and talk to local councillors.

Thanks and appreciation were expressed for the work of the Town Clerk, The Harlington General Manager, all the local councillors and council staff.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm

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