



MINUTES OF THE 13th ANNUAL FLEET TOWN COUNCIL RESIDENTS' MEETING

Tuesday 11th March 2025 at 7.00pm
The Harlington, Fleet

Attendees:

Council Members – 10 (plus 1 apology)

Residents – 61

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Bob Schofield, welcomed everyone to the thirteenth Annual Residents' meeting.

Presentations were made by Hart District Council, Basingstoke Canal Authority, Hart Community Safety Team and Hampshire Police.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the 12th Annual Residents' Meeting held on Monday 18th March 2024 were adopted as a correct record. The Chairman signed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Presentation by Hart District Council

Cllr Woods spoke on behalf of Daryl Philips, Chief Executive Officer of Hart District Council.

The presentation was on what Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation are and how they will impact Hampshire residents.

The presentation included a video from Cllr Nick Adams-Kind, Leader of Hampshire County Council who spoke on the same subject matter.

Questions for Hart District Council

Will, GU51

Q. It doesn't sound like there will be a reduction in the number of tiers at all, it goes from District and County to Mayor's Authority and Unitary – is that correct?

A. The Mayors Authority is not a service delivery organisation but a lean strategic organisation, so in that sense, there is a reduction in tiers in terms of service delivery.

Michael, GU51

Q. Where is the Mayors Authority getting its resources from?

A. This is only the start of the process – will be debated and decided in next few months.

Q. Who is ultimately in charge – the Mayors Authority or the Unitary?

A. Mayor's office will have a strategic overview with the ability to cover resources for whole area, infrastructure projects, major planning projects. Everyday running will be down to unitary authorities with more consolidation of responsibilities than current structure.

Peter, GU51

Q. Will there be a reduction in headcount in management?

A. There is likely to be a reduction in headcount in both management and in the number of Councillors serving the area.

Presentation by Hart District Council

Mark Jaggard, Executive Director, Place Services, Hart District Council

The presentation was on how the Government's new planning reforms will impact the residents of Fleet and on what having a new Local Plan will mean.

Questions for Hart District Council

Ruth, GU51

Q. Why such an increase in the number of houses? The current numbers have changed the feel of the community in a not positive way. And will additional services be provided alongside the additional houses?

A. Numbers coming from central government, district council can only shape type of houses to ensure they meet needs of the community. Infrastructure is needed – local plan aims to join up those elements. Devolution will streamline and give more powers to combined authority to drive change.

Resident

Q. Is there a plan to revitalise the Shopping Centre?

A. The shopping Centre is privately owned but Hart District Council have offered to work in collaboration with the owners to improve occupancy.

Resident

Q. Does the 750 houses needing to be built include affordable homes?

A. Yes – 40% of all new developments of 10 or more homes need to be affordable.

4. FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

Aspirations and Budgets

Cllr Schofield, Chairman of Fleet Town Council

The presentation was on the Council's vision for Fleet and how the Council delivered services in line with that vision. It also covered the 2025/26 budget breakdown on income sources and areas of expenditure.

Questions for Fleet Town Council

Rob, GU51

Q. You said The Harlington loses a lot of heat, but I thought its rating was a Band C for efficiency?

A. Yes, the rating is a B and C, which was a surprise to us. However, heat is lost due to single glazed windows and lack of insulation so there is a lot that can be done to make it more efficient.

Resident

Q. Band D council tax has gone up by 17% - what criteria is used to limit the amount council tax is raised?

A. The precept was raised by 6.9% in cash terms and 5.9% in Band D Property terms – not 17%. Parish and Town Councils do not have a statutory limit on how much they can raise their precept by. However, they are expected to ensure overly high increases are supported by their residents because they are providing a service or project residents want.

Harlington Development Project

Cllr Schofield, Chairman of Fleet Town Council

The presentation gave a brief history of The Harlington and some of the current issues with the building. With the signing of a 99-year lease, the Council have appointed consultants to look at how the building issues can be addressed and other enhancements to make The Harlington the community hub of Fleet.

Questions for Fleet Town Council

Resident

Q. Is there a green energy plan?

A. The Council did explore installing an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) using a £750,000 Government Grant. However, after a detailed survey was completed, the estimated cost of delivering the ASHP was estimated to be approximately £3 million which was well outside the Councils financial resources. Instead, the Council will install the most efficient gas boiler available in the hopes that when that boiler needs to be replaced, the technology will have advanced enough to change to a greener solution.

David, GU51

Q. Will Fleet Town Council continue to exist under the Local Government Reorganisation project?

A. Yes. The Government has no plans to involve town and parish councils in the reorganisation.

Resident

Q. What will happen to staff and users of The Harlington while the building is being renovated?

A. At this stage, we cannot confirm the details of how staff and users will be impacted. However, the Council is committed to maintaining The Harlington's functions throughout the renovation project. We are actively exploring ways to achieve this while ensuring the project remains within budget.

Playpark Development

Cllr Einchcomb, Chairman of the Recreation, Leisure and Amenities Committee

The presentation gave an overview of past park projects and what projects the Council intended to focus on in the upcoming year. It addressed how these projects would be funded and the importance of public consultation in developing the design.

Questions for Fleet Town Council

Resident

Q. How was the consultation done for Edenbrook?

A. An online survey through Facebook.

Resident

Q. Has the Council considered having Community Gardens, the produce of which could help residents struggling with the cost of living?

A. The Council does not operate any allotments and does not have any land identified as being suitable for a Community Garden.

Helen, GU51

Q. Edenbrook is quite new – why does it need to be replaced? And if it does, why can't we get the developer to replace it?

A. The Edenbrook play equipment is made from wood which does not last long under wet conditions. The developers are no longer responsible for the play equipment, having fulfilled their legal obligations by providing the playgrounds and giving Fleet Town Council a sum of money for their maintenance.

5. WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Basingstoke Canal

James Taylor, Strategic Manager, Basingstoke Canal Authority

A presentation gave a brief history of the canal, explained the operational objectives of the Basingstoke Canal Authority and how important partnerships are to its operation.

Questions for Basingstoke Canal Authority

Resident

Q. Is there still a problem with crayfish in the canal?

A. Yes

Resident

Q. What are you doing to put pressure on other local authorities (such as Woking, Surrey Heath and Runnymede) to contribute to the maintenance of the canal?

A. County council understands what it takes to manage the Canal – if others contribute then more can be done.

Resident

Q. Do paddleboarding groups pay towards maintenance of canal?

A. Paddleboard UK pays an annual fee for members to use the canal – new deal currently being discussed.

Presentation from Hart Community Safety Team and Hampshire Police

Mark Ranola, Community Safety Officer, Hart Community Safety Team

Terence Read, Neighbourhood Officer, Hampshire Police

The presentation covered what the Community Safety Partnership is and what their priorities are. It went into detail about anti-social behaviour covers and how they address it. The presenters also emphasised how important reporting by the community was to identifying trends and allocating resources (both financial and staff).

Questions for the Hart Community Safety Team and Hampshire Police

Resident

Q. How can it be safe for children to walk to school (from Ancells Farm) with increased traffic and in the dark?

A. Police look at the data on number of traffic accidents and number of incidents reported to them and take appropriate action based on that data.

Resident

Q. But I have reported traffic incidents, with evidence such as video footage, and nothing has happened?

A. This is not their area, they manage local issues and road safety goes to a different department. The more issues are reported the more likely they are to be dealt with so people need to ensure they report incidents rather than posting on social media.

Resident

Q. If we have a mayor, how is that going to affect you?

A. Unsure yet as plans aren't set yet. Local police will remain focused on local issues.

Ruth, GU51

Q. Why isn't there more of a police presence when it's known to reduce crime?

A. We would love for there to be more local policemen, but it is a question of resources and priorities.

Unsung Heroes Citizens Award

Cllr Schofield announced the council's intentions to hold awards at next year's meeting – the aim being to identify and ultimately reward members of our community who by their actions selflessly support the community. These are unsung heroes who privately provide a public service looking for no recognition of their contribution to make Fleet such a great place to live. Any nominations to be emailed to: info@fleet-tc.gov.uk

Cllr Schofield lastly thanked fellow Councillors, officers, guest speakers and all the residents who had attended and contributed to the event.

The meeting closed at around 9.57pm.