



FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 8th January 2025 at 7pm

* Councillor Schofield (Chairman)

* Councillor Einchcomb (Vice Chairman)

* Councillor Chenery	* Councillor Richmond
* Councillor Fang	0 Councillor Robinson
* Councillor Holt	* Councillor Stanton
# Councillor Hope	* Councillor Taylor
* Councillor James	* Councillor Tilley
* Councillor May	* Councillor Wildsmith
* Councillor Neves	* Councillor Willcocks
* Councillor Oliver	* Councillor Woods

* Present # Absent & No Apology Received 0 Apology for Absence L Late

Also in attendance:

Rita Tong – Executive Officer
Councillor Steve Forster – HCC
Councillor Adrian Collett – HCC
Councillor Stephen Parker - HCC
Mike Bye – Chair of Friends of Oakley Park
Paul Collins – Healing Hubs
Residents of Ancell Farms

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Members received and accepted the apologies as noted above.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Willcocks declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 on the grounds he has children who use the bus service.

Councillor Woods declared an other registerable interest in Agenda Item 10 on the grounds he is personal friends with the donors of the funds and Agenda Item 9 on the grounds of being a trustee of HVA who offer Mental Health Counselling.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 3 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Three members of the public spoke in support of the Agenda Item 9 grant application for running costs of a school bus in Ancells farm. The following questions were asked:

Q: Can FTC support parents of Ancells Farm by helping fund school transport?

A: This will be debated at Agenda Item 9.

Q: Is there a Mechanism whereby parents who want to give money towards the bus service can do so?

A: No, there is not a mechanism in place via FTC.

Q: How can we find out how many people are affected in order to see if a private solution could be arranged? What are the actual costs and funding gap?

A: FTC do not have access to this information.

Q: How are the additional 27 cars impacting local residents to the school and emergency services?

A: FTC do not have access to this information.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 4

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

After wishing everyone a Happy New Year, Cllr Schofield reported his attendance during the period as follows:

- 10th December together with EO and FM met with numerous representatives of Thames Water at Ancells Farm. Inspected the critical sewer/drain area including inserting a remote CCTV camera which produced inconclusive results as the camera was rapidly submerged. Thame Water agreed to return with more equipment including pumps and tankers. The EO has followed up with Thames Water today as no communication has been received since the meeting in December.
- 17th December held an informal precontract meeting with BFF our architectural consultants with specific regard to the contract budget. The discussions were positive, and we now await the formal signing of the lease to initiate the renovation contract.
- 18th December, together with the EO, attended a Teams meeting with HDC's consultants working on the detailed design of the Air Source Heat Pump for the Harlington. The contract appears to be growing like topsy! The AHP and ancillary equipment is now occupying two buildings or a single two storey building, and an additional power supply is envisaged coming from a new sub-station on HDC's office car park. There has been no further contact since the meeting.
- 31st December carried out inspection of stream and associated structures at Oakley Park.
- 2nd January 2025 Teams Meeting with EO, Harlington Manager and Hilary Keenlyside to discuss details of a Business Plan for the future of the Harlington.
- Have attended a number of internal meetings regarding the new Ground Maintenance Contract.
- No formal meetings on the Harlington lease but lease agreed in principle subject to clarification of one clause, the demise plan is agreed, and the land transfer plan is agreed. We still have not seen the final version of the HCC/HDC/FTC underlease.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 5

HCC/HDC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following reports were received from Hampshire County Council.

Cllr Steve Forster (HCC)

- Road Works

- Crookham Road resurfacing works are currently underway and should be completed within two days.
- Fleet Road / Kings Road pavement works have commenced and are scheduled to take 13 weeks to complete. Avondale may be used as a compound during this period.
- Utilities works have been timed to coincide with Crookham Road works to minimise disruptions.
- Planning – the Hartland Village school application should be considered within the next six weeks.
- Ancell Farm School Bus Service
 - There will be a meeting on 9 January 2025 between HCC Councillors and residents to discuss this issue.
 - There is great sympathy for residents but HCC are constrained by their budget.
 - The bus provision became a discretionary provision in 1999.
 - HCC are unable to release commercially sensitive information which is why some information (ie around specific costs of the bus service) has not been provided, but what information can be provided has been and in a timely manner.
- Devolution (White Paper)
 - Implications of the White paper are being discussed by HCC on 9 January 2025.
 - Hampshire currently has three Unitaries – Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton. It is not yet known whether they will extend their boundaries or what new unitaries may be established.
 - What is certain is that under the Government’s proposal, Hampshire County Council will not exist in the future.

Councillor Willcocks asked for an update on Hitches Lane. Councillor Forster responded that HCC intended to proceed with the crossing with works scheduled to start mid-February. There was currently some discussion around whether it could be a raised crossing as it is on a main bus route.

Cllr Adrian Collett (HCC)

- Devolution - The meeting referred to by Cllr Forster is a special meeting where Devolution is the only item on the agenda. Members need to consider whether they wish to press to become part of a Unitary, whether to defer local elections and discuss the local government review.
- Ancells Farm Sinkhole - Had an update from the Thames Water CEO who advised no date had yet been set for the tanker / camera process. The CEO indicated he would give a further update by Friday 17 January 2025.
- HCC Staff – all staff members were offered the opportunity to resign. There were 800 applications, of which 350 were accepted. Their employment will end before the start of the new financial year.
- SEN Provision – HCC want to bring more in-house SEN provision rather than outsource to external providers.
- Grit Bins – anyone can use grit bins for footpaths and roads (not driveways). Highways concentrates on main roads so do not always have time to do smaller roads. If the grit bins are low or empty, please contact Highways and they will arrange for them to be topped up.
- Ancell Farm School Bus Service
 - Still working with parents, officers and HCC Councillors to attempt to find a long term solution.

Cllr Stephen Parker (HCC)

- Wished everyone a Happy New Year.

The following report was received from Hart District Council.

Cllr Oliver (HDC)

- NPPF
 - HDC have taken the decision to start a new Local Plan.
 - There was no meaningful response to HDC's NPPF consultation comments, but the housing provision has been increased from 720 to 750 homes per annum.
 - New government housing numbers will require HDC to build between 11-12,000 additional homes over the Plan period.
- Devolution – not much can be done in any other area until this issue is addressed.

Cllr Wildsmith (HDC)

- Devolution – the intent is to leave HDC residents in the best position HDC can. What that will look like is still being worked through.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 6

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 4th December 2024 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

The Council received and noted the minutes of the following Committees:

- Development Control 25th November & 17th December 2024
- RLA 11th December 2024

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 7

FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Members noted receipt of the bank reconciliation and a list of payments for November 2024.

Due to the absence of Councillor Robinson, Members accepted his email statement confirming that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for November 2024 have been verified and signed off against the original bank statement.

RESOLVED

- 1) To receive and accept the bank reconciliation and list of payments for November 2024.
- 2) To accept the statement from Councillor Robinson that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for May 2024 have been verified and signed off.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 8

BANK MANDATE

In accordance with Financial Regulation 5.1 the Responsible Finance Officer reviewed current banking arrangements and requested Members to authorise that Cllr James be added to the HSBC bank mandate to approve transactions on those accounts.

RESOLVED

Members authorised Cllr James as an approved signatory on the HSBC bank accounts.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 9**GRANT APPLICATION**

Members considered the following applications for grant funding:

- The Healing Hubs Charity for £1,288 grant aid in kind to cover the cost of using the two meeting rooms in The Harlington for 2 hours a week for 46 weeks.
- Cllr Wildsmith on behalf of Ancells Farm parents for £10,082.50 to cover the cost of running a school bus for one term.

RESOLVED

- 1) Members approved grant aid in kind equivalent to three months hire charges for two meeting rooms to Healing Hubs. At the end of the three-month trial, Healing Hubs will be requested to provide an update on their service.
- 2) Although very sympathetic to the reasons for the Ancell School Bus Service grant application, Members did not approve this application.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 10**TREE FUND DONATION**

A donation of £822 was received in April 2024 from Fleet in Bloom to fund the planting of two trees in The Views, with any remaining funds to be allocated toward purchasing wildflowers for Ancells Farm. Fleet in Bloom has specified their preference for two particular tree species: Prunus Shirotae 'Mount Fuji' and Ginkgo biloba. Quotes for the supply, planting, staking, and installation of watering tubes have been obtained, with the lowest quote totalling £1,200. This results in a funding shortfall of £378.

RESOLVED

- a) Members approved the location identified by the FOSM for planting the trees specified by Fleet in Bloom.
- b) Members determined that if the shortfall of £378 could be funded within existing budgets, both trees should be bought and planted. Alternatively, if sufficient budget is not identified, only one of the two trees should be purchased and the balance of funds used to purchase wildflowers for Ancells Farm.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 11**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members received and noted the following announcements:

- The Executive Officer has completed her probation period and been confirmed in post.
- In consultation with the Chairman of Fleet Town Council, the Executive Officer brought forward the replacement of IT equipment budgeted for 2025/26.
- Due to the national phasing out of analog phones, Fleet Town Council is scheduled to move to digital VOIP based phones on 26 January 2025.
- The new website for Fleet Town Council has been handed over to Officers who are working to populate the site with required documentation.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 12**BASINGSTOKE CANAL**

Members acknowledged the new arrangements for managing the Basingstoke Canal and reiterated their objection to the lack of meaningful decision-making power, despite being a

significant financial contributor. They also noted that the BCA will hold an annual meeting for stakeholders on the morning of 19 February 2025.

Additionally, members requested that inquiries be made regarding the increase in Fleet Town Council's financial contribution.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 13 GURKHA SQUARE CARPARK LEASE

Members noted that the lease agreement to hold a market on Gurkha Square has now been finalised, and the signing process has officially commenced.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 14 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled to be held on Wednesday 5th February 2025 at 7pm in The Harlington.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS – CLOSED SESSION

The Chairman stated that the following items for discussion relate to the engagement and terms of service in relation to employees and terms of tenders, and proposals and counterproposals in negotiations for contracts.

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.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 15 BAD DEBT WRITE OFFS

In accordance with Financial Regulation 9.3, invoices AF2206 £121.18, AF2068 £50.94, AF2120 £59.42 and AF2087 £26.00 have been found to be irrecoverable and the Executive Officer requests Council authorisation to write them off as bad debts.

RESOLVED

Members authorised the Executive Officer to write off £257.54 of bad debts.

FC JANUARY 2025 ITEM 16 HARLINGTON UPDATE

To receive an update from the Chairman on the:

- Contract with the Design Architects
- Air Source Heat Pump project
- Business Plan.

RESOLVED

Members noted the update from the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 9.47pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....