



FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 6th November 2024 at 7pm

* Councillor Schofield (Chairman)

0 Councillor Einchcomb (Vice Chairman)

Councillor Chenery
* Councillor Fang
* Councillor Holt
* Councillor Hope
* Councillor James
0 Councillor May
0 Councillor Neves

* Councillor Oliver
* Councillor Richmond
* Councillor Robinson
* Councillor Taylor
* Councillor Tilley
* Councillor Wildsmith
* Councillor Willcocks
* 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

Charlie Gray – Representative of Fleet Town Football Club

Janet Stanton - Candidate for Co-Option

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 1

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Members received and accepted the apologies as noted above.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Oliver, Taylor and Wildsmith declared an other registerable interest in Agenda Items 16 on the grounds that they are also Councillors of Hart District Council. Councillor Wildsmith left the meeting before the Confidential session started. Councillors Oliver and Taylor took part in the discussion but did not vote on this item

Councillor Holt declared an other registerable interest in Agenda Item 10 on the grounds he lives within the Conservation Area.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 3

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr Gray read a statement on behalf of Mr Darren Mcgrath, Vice Chairman of Fleet Town Football Club in relation to Agenda Item 18.

Responding to questions from Members, Mr Gray confirmed that no complaints had been received from spectators on the lighting and that the Club intended to replace the floodlights which would cost around £58,000 but needed the security of tenure the lease would provide to access funding from the Football Association and other sources.

Mr Gray left the meeting on conclusion of this Agenda Item.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 4

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Schofield reported his attendance during the period as follows:

- Citizens Advice Bureau presentation evening
- BID Board Meeting
- Hart Parish Engagement meeting to discuss planning issues
- Hart Youth Achievement Awards and presented two awards on behalf of the Council
- Along with Executive Officer Quarterly Review Meeting with HDC
- Along with Executive Officer met representatives of Fleet Phoenix to discuss future options.
- Had enumerable meetings and discussions on the Harlington Lease
- Had several conversations with Terena Plowright regarding the Greening Campaign

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 5

HCC/HDC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following reports were received from Hampshire County Council.

Cllr Adrian Collett (HCC)

- Gave an update on the issue of school buses for Ancell Farm residents.
 - Parents meeting was held 5 November 2024. Parent's have set up a campaign group regarding this issue.
 - Those involved are trying to reach a long term resolution before the temporary measures end at the end of the current school term.
- Gave an update on the budget reductions.
 - Cabinet have now reviewed all proposals put forward.
 - School buses are not being reviewed.
 - Street lights will be turned off and / or dimmed for longer periods.
 - No cuts proposed to budget for fixing potholes, but a £7 million reduction in the budget for pothole prevention.
- Managing Flood Risk Community Toolkit has now been published on the Hampshire County Council website.
- A consultation on the proposed pedestrian and cycle improvements along Hitches Lane is open until 10 November 2024.
- A wider consultation on creating safer cycling and walking routes is open until 22 December 2024. The Council is seeking information on barriers to walking and cycling on local streets such as where paths are not wide enough for pushchairs or lack of dropped kerbs. Whilst the Council doesn't have the money to address the issues raised, it is intending on using the information gathered to access central government funding.
- Vacancy in Bishop's Waltham Ward been filled by a Liberal Democrat in a recent election.

Cllr Oliver asked whether the budget reductions would impact Hampshire Libraries. Cllr Collett said there was a £250,000 reduction in the book budget.

Cllr Steve Forster (HCC)

- The pedestrian crossing at Calthorpe Park School has now been approved with work scheduled to commence mid-January 2025.
- Cllr Forster urged Members to respond to the public survey on the proposed pedestrian and cycle improvements along Hitches Lane.
- Minor issues identified from the consultation on barriers to cycling and walking routes could be done, especially if Town and Parish Councils were willing to contribute funds toward the works.
- Information regarding the Ancells Farm school bus issue can be found on the Council's website. Hampshire County Council is currently providing a £35,000 subsidy.
- Many budget reduction proposals were not approved for a variety of reasons. However, a balanced budget for 2025/26 has been drafted. It should be noted that Central Government have not offered any rescue plans for principal councils and principal councils are facing increased costs due to the increase in minimum wage and NI contributions.
- Should residents have any issues or objections regarding safety due to the reduced street lighting proposal, they should lodge their concerns with the Council.
- Hampshire County Council have 40 libraries and have no plans to close any of them. Savings will be made by through buying paperbacks as opposed to hardbacks. The Council intend to invest in libraries to develop community hubs.
- Cllr Forster reminds all residents that they should take their own preventative measures to avoid the risk of flooding.

Cllr Stephen Parker (HCC)

- Clarified the law on the distances children are expected to walk to school.
- There are a lot of road works currently occurring to enable the gas industry to replace old pipework.

The following report was received from Hart District Council.

Cllr Oliver (HDC)

- HDC have negotiated a new waste collection contract to extend the food waste collection service and to collect more recyclable items. The new contract will bring HDC in line with expected upcoming legislation. However, the benefits of this new contract are reliant on Hampshire County Council upgrading their waste processing centre.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 6

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

After correcting the date on Agenda Item 16 to read 30 August 2025, the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 2nd October 2024 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

- Development Control 14th and 28th October 2024
- Policy & Finance 16th October 2024

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 7 COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION TO FILL A CASUAL VACANCY

Members received a presentation from one of the candidates. The candidate left the room whilst voting took place.

RESOLVED

To approve Janet Stanton to be co-opted as a Member of Fleet Town Council.

Janet Stanton signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form and remained for the remainder of the meeting.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 8 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Members noted receipt of:

- a) The bank reconciliation and a list of payments for September 2024.
- b) A statement from Councillor Robinson confirming that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for September 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 September 2024.
- 2) To accept the statement from Councillor Robinson that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for September 2024 have been verified and signed off.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 9 TREASURY & INVESTMENT POLICY

At the October meeting, Members expressed general approval of the drafted Treasury & Investment Policy but requested the inclusion of a statement on ethical investment. Councillor James undertook research into practices adopted by other councils and a list of potential statements was circulated to all Members on 3 October 2024.

Members considered the two options presented for inclusion in the Treasury and Investment Policy.

RESOLVED

- a) Members considered the proposed statements on ethical investment and determine to adopt Option B: The Council recognises the importance of ethical investment and commits to considering Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors when making investment decisions.
- b) Members approved the Treasury & Investment Policy, incorporating the chosen statement.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 10 NORTH FLEET CONSERVATION AREA

Members noted that the NFCA Character Appraisal and Management Proposals Approved Document is 16 years old and that its evidence base is even older. With the new pressures to come from the new government regarding the NPPF, Hart District Council is suggesting that Parishes should not start updating their Neighbourhood Plans at this time but could

usefully make sure their Conservation Areas and Design Guides are up to date so that any development can be controlled even if not in Neighbourhood Plan sites.

RESOLVED

Members endorsed the continued validity of Policy 16 concerning the North Fleet Conservation Area. It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan will require review in the near future, with the Conservation Area included as part of this review. In preparation, Members requested the Executive Officer to obtain quotes for updating Policy 16.

Members agreed to maintain a watching brief on developments related to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and their potential impact on Fleet Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 11

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members noted that attendance at Planning Committee meetings has been consistently low, with only three to four Members attending regularly. The Committee requires a minimum of three Councillors to be quorate. Given that this Committee meets more frequently than others to meet the Planning Authority's deadlines for submitting observations, the limited attendance places an unsustainable burden on those Members who attend.

Members considered the following options on restructuring the planning observation function.

- **Option A: Dissolve the Planning Committee.**
As there is no statutory requirement for Town Councils to submit observations, the Planning Committee could be dissolved.
- **Option B: Refer planning matters to Full Council.**
If the Committee is dissolved, the schedule of applications could be circulated to all Members. Councillors may request specific applications be included on the Full Council agenda for discussion. However, this approach may not always be feasible, as Full Council meetings may not align with planning observation deadlines.
- **Option C: Establish a Roster System.**
A roster could be implemented to ensure the workload is distributed evenly. This could involve alternating attendance between two groups of three Councillors.
- **Option D: Delegate planning observations to an Officer.**
Observations could be delegated to an Officer. The schedule would be shared with Members, who could submit their input to the Officer. The Officer would hold responsibility for submitting the final observations on behalf of the Council.

RESOLVED

Members agreed that providing observations on planning applications is an important function of the Council and acknowledged that residents have a reasonable expectation that this function will be fulfilled. Members determined that their preferred approach is to establish a roster system to more evenly distribute the workload. Cllr James expressed an interest in joining the Planning Committee, and the Executive Officer was tasked with identifying suitable training opportunities for Cllr James.

Members considered the report from the Council’s Internal Auditor, Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd, on an interim internal audit conducted on 4 October 2024 for the 2024/25 financial year and responded to the matters raised as follows:

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council Response
B. Financial Regulations, Governance and Payments	I note that the External Auditor’s report and certificate are included within the meeting papers for the reporting to council, but are not listed separately on the council website, and recommend that this is published on the same page of the website that contains the unaudited AGAR and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit.	Agreed. This has now been done.
C. Risk Management and Insurance	At the date of the interim audit, balances held by the council were circa £4 million, and the council may wish to consider increasing the fidelity guarantee cover to ensure that the maximum balance held at any point during the year is covered.	Fleet Town Council believes it has a strong system of internal control which would negate the necessity of increased insurance coverage but will review the matter on insurance renewal.
E. Income	I reviewed a sample invoice for the cemetery which showed rates charged for a transfer of burial rights and inscription. Comparing the fees charged to those published, one of the fees appeared to have a 50% resident discount applied while the other did not, and this may be an area where the council could review its processes for ensuring the accuracy of charging and the correct application of the resident discount is applied.	Agreed. Fleet Town Council will review its processes.

E. Income	I recommend that the Executive Officer and those involved in bookings, invoicing and receipting of funds work together to implement a clear procedure to ensure that accurate details are recorded, invoices are issued in a timely fashion and outstanding amounts are chased immediately.	Agreed. Fleet Town Council will review its processes
E. Income	The current conditions of hire (dated July 2021) state 'Fleet Town Council reserves the right to require payment of the full charge at the time of booking or at any time prior to the date for which any of the facility is booked' and while the amounts at risk are not significant to the overall financial position of the council, this illustrates an area where the council may wish to review this and consider the requirement to pay in advance to avoid the possibility of incurring bad debts for one-off hirers of these facilities.	Agreed. Fleet Town Council will review its processes

RESOLVED

Members considered the findings and recommendations outlined in the Internal Auditor's report and agreed their response.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 13

IMPACT OF MARTYN'S LAW ON COUNCIL EVENTS

Members consider a report from the Executive Officer on the potential impact of Martyn's Law on Council events.

RESOLVED

Members noted that funds had been allocated in the 2025/26 budget for compliance with Martyn's Law.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 14**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members received and noted the following announcement

- Remembrance Parade on 10 November 2024. Members advised that there will be no allocated seating at the church service and that they should be seated by 2.20pm. Following the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial, tea and coffee would be served at The Harlington. If any Members were available to help serve, their assistance would be appreciated.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 15**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled to be held on Wednesday 4th December 2024 at 7pm in The Harlington.

Cllrs Wildsmith and Willcocks left the meeting at 9.05pm, prior to the Confidential session.

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 NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 16**HARLINGTON LEASE**

Members considered whether to sign the Lease agreement with Hart District Council for The Harlington building.

RESOLVED

- a) Subject to the satisfactory resolution of the remaining outstanding items on the lease, Members resolved to accept the Lease agreement with Hart District Council for The Harlington building.
- b) Members authorised two Members to sign the lease, witnessed by the Executive Officer per Standing Order 16.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 16**DESIGN ARCHITECTS**

Members considered the recommendation of the Harlington Working Group on which, if any, tender to accept for the design aspects of the Harlington renovation project.

RESOLVED

- a) Members agreed which design architect to appoint for the design aspects of the Harlington renovation project.
- b) Members authorised two Members to sign the contract, witnessed by the Executive Officer per Standing Order 16, once a signed lease for The Harlington building is in place.

- c) Members requested that an engagement evening be organised with the design architects once appointed.

FC NOVEMBER 2024 ITEM 17

FLEET TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB LEASE

Members received an update from the Chairman on the progress of the Fleet Town Football Club lease.

RESOLVED

- a) Members resolved that no further changes be made to the Fleet Town Football Club Lease.
- b) Members agreed to the request from Fleet Town Football Club to uncouple the resolution of the floodlighting issue from the signing of the lease.
- c) Members requested that a letter be sent to Fleet Town Football Club to formalise the Club's intention to upgrade the floodlights and set this as a priority.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....