

FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 3rd January 2024 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Councillors: R. Schofield (Chairman), G. Chenery, P. Einchcomb, S. Engström, L. Holt, E. May, A. Oliver, R. Richmond, R. Robinson, D. Taylor, B. Willcocks, G. Woods.

In Attendance: Rochelle Halliday – Executive Officer
Friends of Oakley Park Representative

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs K. Cottrell (family circumstances), A. Hope (away), S. Krishnamurthy (family circumstances) and S. Tilley (unwell).

Cllrs R. Fang and P. Wildsmith were absent.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 3 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Schofield thanked Officers involved with the Christmas Grotto and to Cllr Woods for their contributions. The Christmas Grotto secured over a £1,000 for the local charity, Stepping Stones DS.

Cllr Schofield thanked the volunteer team and staff for another successful Christmas Day Lunch, and special thanks to Cllr Engstrom and her husband for helping at the Christmas Day lunch.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 5 HCC/HDC ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements to report.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 6th December 2023 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

- Development Control 19th December 2023
- RLA 20th December 2023

Members discussed that the Development Control Committee should review the Hart District Council Cycle and Parking New Development Supplementary Planning Document.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 7 BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2024/25 FINANCIAL YEAR

Cllr Schofield provided a summary of the budget and an overview of the accompanying reports.

A discussion ensued, and the following points were made:

- A maintenance budget is being set, with modest provision for future capital improvements built in.
- The draft budget enables the Council to continue providing a full range of services without any reduction in service provision.
- The Executive Officer proposed an amendment to the budget as follows, in light of the Basingstoke Canal contribution amount being latterly confirmed for 2024/25:
 - Reduce the Basingstoke Canal grant to £15,600 (reduction of £3.8k) and increase the Climate Change budget by the corresponding amount to £5,800.
 - The amendment was supported.

Cllr Woods thanked Officers for the budget projections for 2023/24, which shows an improved position in the Council's finances.

RESOLVED

- 1) To approve the Council's budget for the 2024/25 financial year, with the amendment to the budget proposed above.
- 2) To approve the precept request of £1,342,858 for the 2024/25 financial year.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 8 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Members noted receipt of:

- a) The bank reconciliation and a list of payments for November 2023.
- b) A statement from Councillor Robinson confirming that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for November 2023 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 2023.
- 2) To accept the statement from Councillor Robinson that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for November 2023 have been verified and signed off.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 9 CONTRACTUAL RENEWAL FOR THE FLEET CONNECT SERVICE

Members received the proposal from Hampshire County Council for the Fleet Connect community transport service in the 2024/25 financial year, which is a one year extension to the contract.

It was acknowledged that Hampshire County Council is doing a full budget review, which may result in the bus service being under threat. The service does support some of the most vulnerable residents.

Members requested that Rushmoor Voluntary Service is asked to acknowledge on their website the financial support they receive from the Town Council.

RESOLVED

To approve extending the Fleet Connect contract for one year with effect from 1st April 2024 at a cost of £13,152.48.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 10 BASINGSTOKE CANAL FUNDING REQUEST

Members received the request from the Basingstoke Canal Authority to commit to funding the provision for a period of three years from the 2024/25 financial year.

Members raised concerns that the revised operating management model reduces the board involvement and voting rights of riparian funders. Further concerns were raised regarding the reduction and withdrawal of funding from higher tier Councils and the short to medium term viability of the Canal Authority.

The general view was that the Council should not be prepared to commit to funding the Basingstoke Canal for a three year period unless long term viability can be proven and the Council can have full representation on the management board.

RESOLVED

- 1) To approve one years' contribution to the operation of the canal for the financial year 2024/25, as budgeted.
- 2) To seek further confirmation regarding the Basingstoke Canal Authority's management arrangements and ensuring riparian funders have voting rights on the board.
- 3) To withdraw funding with effect from 2025/26 unless the Canal Authority can present a route to a balanced budget and demonstrate long term viability.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 11 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2024

The RLA meeting reviewed the draft Communications Strategy in December 2023.

Members discussed that the Council should follow the themes in the communication strategy at the FTC Stall, 'Pop Up Hub' at Fleet Market.

RESOLVED

To approve the Communications Strategy 2024.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 12 GREENING CAMPAIGN

Members received the report from the Executive Officer.

Cllr Engström volunteered to support the Climate Impacts on Health pillar.

The Greening Campaign launch event is scheduled for 9th March 2024 at The Views.

RESOLVED

- 1) To appoint Cllr Silke Engström to support the Climate Impacts on Health pillar.

2) To note the date of the Greening Campaign launch meeting on 9th March 2024.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 13 ANNUAL RESIDENTS' MEETING

Members noted the proposal that a Working Group be set up to prepare and progress the content of the Annual Residents' Meeting.

Members agreed to form a working group formed of Cllrs May, Schofield, Tilley and Woods to prepare the content of the Annual Residents meeting for agreement at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

To approve Cllrs May, Schofield, Tilley and Woods to form a Working Group to plan the Annual Residents' Meeting and to bring proposals to a future meeting for agreement.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 14 COMPLAINTS

Members noted the complaint regarding the Council's grounds maintenance contractor blowing debris across ashes plots at Fleet Cemetery.

The complaint has been resolved quickly to a high standard by the Council's contractor. The complainant is satisfied with the response and therefore the matter is now closed.

FC JANUARY 2024 ITEM 15 EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Members noted the report from the Executive Officer.

Members requested that a Leases Working Group meeting is arranged soon to review the current situation with the Council's active lease negotiations.

Cllr Willcocks has volunteered to man the Council's stand at Fleet Market 1:00pm-3:00pm on the 13th January 2024.

The meeting closed at 8:25pm

Signed.....
Chairman

Date:.....