



FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 2nd September 2020

PRESENT

Councillors: R. Schofield (Chairman), G. Carpenter, G. Chenery, R. Harrison, L. Holt, K. Jasper, A. Oliver, R. Robinson, S. Tilley, P. Wildsmith, G. Woods.

Also Present:

Janet Stanton - Town Clerk
Susanna Walker - Committee Clerk
Wendy Allen - Office Manager
Charlotte Benham - Project and Committee Officer
Alex Robins - Harlington General Manager
Councillor John Bennison - HCC
Councillor Steve Forster - HCC
Samantha Allen
Ruth Hill

FC September 2020 ITEM 1

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Schofield opened the meeting by reminding members that Councillors need to be more formal in accepting apologies. Members should note that any Councillor not present at a meeting should give a reason for absence, and Council should consider each apology fully.

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Pierce, who had technical problems.
- Councillor Einchcomb, who is on holiday.
- Councillor Wright, who is away on holiday.
- Councillor Hope, who had technical problems.

FC September 2020 ITEM 2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FC September 2020 ITEM 3

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Councillor Forster put forward that the point that although it is really good that the Council meetings are accessible by residents, it is notable that the Council meetings are recorded but not published or live streamed. The question asked was why FTC is not currently publishing the recordings or live streaming and if possible, could this be done from next month as many members of the public would like to know what's going on.

The Chairman assured Councillor Forster and all members that FTC are currently involved in looking at streaming and potentially test streaming in the coming week. All being well, the October Council meeting will be streamed.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and updated the members on the following:

- The Chairman attended the VJ ceremony on the 15th August and laid a wreath on behalf of the Town Council. The ceremony was well attended by members of the public and District Councillors.
- The Chairman also attended two Civic Quarter Development Working Group Meetings.
- A number of meetings regarding the pedestrianisation of Fleet Road were attended, together with Councillor Tilley and the Clerk.
- Recently, both Fleet Town Council and the Chairman have been accused on social media of persistently lying about the Town Council's intention to develop on Gurkha Square. It was reiterated to all members that there has been no recent council discussion on the redevelopment of the Harlington, apart from acknowledging the content of the Condition survey.
- The Chairman also reported that the Clerk has been accused of what would be gross misconduct in her dealings with a member of the public over the use of the pedestrianised area for a car boot sale.
 - This incident is alleged to have occurred when signs for the market were delivered to the Town Council's Offices and removed when the car boot sale organisers came to collect the said signs. Although the Clerk has been accused of being abusive and slamming a door on the departing person, members were made aware that there are witnesses and evidence to the contrary.
 - The Chairman outlined to all members that the Clerk takes her job very seriously and acts at all times in a professional manner, and even in relation to this incident, the Clerk continued to do so.
 - The Chairman pressed that the Clerk should know she has the full support of Fleet Town Council.
 - It was reiterated that FTC has had nothing to do with the organisation of the car boot sale on Victoria Road car park or on Fleet Road.
- Members were also reminded that the business of the Council is conducted through planned formal meetings, Committees and Working Groups, and there are no clandestine meetings.
- The Chairman impressed upon the members that relevant data is placed in the public domain as soon as it can reasonably be released. The Council cannot please all people all of the time and cannot please all councillors all of the time, but are bound by majority decisions.
- The Chairman stressed that fair criticism is accepted as part of the role of Council, but unsupported defamatory remarks on social media only go to undermine the efforts and hard work of all Officers and Councillors who are doing their best to make Fleet a great place to live.
- Special thanks were given to Philip Riley, from Basingstoke Canal, Society who has stepped down as Chairman after 9 years. Members noted that Philip Riley joined the committee in 1981 and agreed that Fleet Town Council send a note of thanks to him for his public service on the committee.

FC September 2020 ITEM 4

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the minutes circulated for the meeting held on Wednesday 1st July 2020 had the title Annual Council Meeting. Councillor Schofield verified that he had a corrected version of the minutes, and the minutes of Council held on Wednesday 1st July 2020 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Further to the apologies being amended, to read 'Apologies were given by Councillor Chenery, Councillor Harrison and Councillor Hope', the minutes and Confidential minutes of the Extra Ordinary Council Meeting on Wednesday 31st July were also approved and signed by the Chairman.

The Council also received the minutes of the following Committees and Working Groups:

Development Control	13 th July 2020 27 th July 2020 10 th August 2020 24 th August 2020
Establishment	8 th July 2020
Policy & Finance	20 th July 2020

The issue of sub-standard flats being built under permitted development was raised, with members noting that locally, permitted developments are not being refused as they are not breaching the three grounds for refusal. Members queried whether HDC take notice of any objections put forward by the Development Control Committee. Members were assured HDC did take on board objections, and that on many of the responses from HDC, they refer to the Neighbourhood Plan.

With regards to RLA July 2020, Item 11 – Fleet Link, it was put forward that due to the current situation, it is not the time for FTC to be reviewing their Fleet Link contract. Members discussed the following:

- Is Fleet Link a financial drain on FTC?
- FTC will keep an eye on the situation and will look at the value of Fleet Link, looking at if there are better ways to serve the community.
- There are still ongoing discussions between HCC and FTC regarding financial claims due to previous bus damage.
- There are also expected excess costs due to the COVID19 and lost revenue. FTC are waiting for a report from Rushmoor Voluntary Services on the use of the bus during this period.

FC September 2020 ITEM 5 HCC / HDC UPDATE

HCC / HDC

Councillor Forster reported on the following:

- **Fleet High Street Pedestrianisation**
 - Concerns have been raised about child and cycle safety.
 - There are also concerns about traffic displacement to surrounding roads in Fleet.
 - If there is a serious safety risk which cannot be addressed, there is the potential for the scheme to be removed
 - Cycling in a pedestrianised area is permitted if done courteously and responsibly. There is a £1000 fine if not.
- **Roadworks**
 - Potential issues with planned roadworks and the restrictions in place for the pedestrianisation – could the extra roadworks be minimised?
 - Resurfacing works planned for Elvetham Road and Fleet Road.
 - HCC are trying to avoid peak hours with roadworks.
 - All planned roadworks are on roadworks.org.
- **Covid19**
 - HDC has one of the lowest infection rates in the area and the country.
 - Thanks were given to HCC, HDC and FTC for the information given and social distancing from the public.
- **Hampshire Residents Forum**
- **School Safety**
 - Local schools have worked hard to provide a safe return to school for pupils, with lots of measures being taken, such as staggered. Start times.
 - Any issues to be raised with the School Travel Team.

Councillor Bennison updated the members on the following:

- **Roadworks**

- Planned roadworks on Watery Lane, near Redfields Garden Centre.
- HDC have sent out a letter to FTC regarding reporting flooding, especially from the extreme weather.
- **Active Places Summit**
 - This will be a virtual meeting to be held in October, to which all parishes are invited to.
 - Putting principles in place for walking and cycling across the whole county.

FC September 2020 ITEM 6 CO-OPTION TO COUNCIL

Further to the Casual Vacancy for the Central Ward having been advertised and 10 registered voters not coming forward to request a by-election, Council were given the option to co-opt a Councillor. In line with The Representation of the People Act 1985, members were asked to consider valid applications for co-option to Fleet Town Council from Mrs Ruth Hill and Miss Samantha Allen.

Both candidates were given the opportunity to give a 3 minute presentation to elaborate on their application submission and themselves to the Full Council.

Mrs Ruth Hill presented the following:

- Lived in Fleet most of her life.
- Very passionate about Fleet, the community and the people, and bringing it all together.
- Wants to get involved more within the community.
- Services Manager at CISCO.
- Into health and fitness.
- Good communication skills and organised and passionate.
- Wants to continue to make Fleet a great place to live.
- Praised the work done at the cemetery.

Members asked Mrs Ruth Hill the following:

- **Involvement on social media**
 - Currently moderates a numbers of Facebook groups but if it became a conflict, would be willing to step down from this and focus on being a Councillor.
- **Charity work in the local area**
 - Involved in litter picks.
 - Involved with Oakley Park and Oakley Park Woods
 - Involved in local support during the COVID19 pandemic, including shopping, telephone support.
- **Time availability to being a Councillor**
 - Able to manage time well.
- **FTC is an Apolitical Council**
 - Supports this.
- **What would you like to see changed in Fleet if you had a magic wand?**
 - Like the use of the green spaces, and making the green spaces safer.
 - Sensory garden for children and adults with special needs.
 - Encouraging people to be a lot greener.
 - Make facilities available for people to walk and cycle more.

Miss Samantha Allen presented the following:

- Lived in Fleet all her life..
- Is a single mother with 3 children.
- Helping the community is showing her children how to be in life and making other people happy.
- Owns her own cleaning company.
- Fully supports Fleet Phoenix and Fleet Lions.
- Children attend the LEA Club.

- Looking at forming a new sub group of Fleet Lions for the younger generations.
- Has to get up and get involved, and do what's right, to suit everybody.

Members asked Miss Samantha Allen the following:

- **Code of Conduct, which covers how a Councillor interacts with public online**
- Views shouldn't be broadcast on Facebook, but if there are issues, these should be brought up with the individual,
- **Time availability to being a Councillor**
 - Availability during the day in school hours.
 - Evenings can be hectic but available.
- **FTC is an Apolitical Council**
 - Don't have views in politics, supports what is best for the town and its residents and community.
- **What would you like to see changed in Fleet if you had a magic wand?**
 - Opportunity for the town to have a day where they can voice their opinions about what the town needs and what people would like to see in Fleet.
 - Use the magic wand to get rid of the divide in the town.

Both candidates were thanked for their presentations and passion in standing for Councillor. Members of the public and all external guests at the meeting were asked to leave the meeting, to allow the Full Council to vote securely.

RESOLVED

Members determined the applications for the vacancy of Councillor to Central Ward, and voted to appoint Mrs Ruth Hill to this role.

Members of the public and all external guests were allowed back into the virtual meeting, where the Chairman announced that Mrs Ruth Hill was the successful candidate as co-opted Councillor. Thanks, were given to both Mrs Ruth Hill and Miss Samantha Allen for their presentations and participation in the meeting.

Members noted that Mrs Ruth Hill could join the Council's meetings from October 2020, once all the relevant papers had been signed.

FC September 2020 ITEM 7 POLICE AND THE PUBLIC

Members received and considered a report on Police and the Public. Members noted that there have been a lot of issues with local residents contacting the Police on either 101 or 999. Residents have found that they have not been able to report incidents, such as drug related issues. Members also noted that the government is providing more funding for officers and that FTC needs to let their views be known, outlining residents' concern and expecting improvements in this matter.

RESOLVED

That FTC writes to both the Chief Constable and Police Commissioner outlining residents' concerns.

FC September 2020 ITEM 8 HARLINGTON AUDITORIUM REMEDIAL WORKS UPDATE

Members received and noted the Harlington Auditorium Remedial Works Update report. The following matters were discussed:

- All proposed works have nearly been completed, except the re-establishment of the false ceiling as all the horizontal tiles in the ceiling need replacing.
- Currently getting quotes from companies for the reinstatement work, including provision of the ceiling tiles to see if they can get a better trade discount on new tiles.

- A letter will be finalised and the assessed costs to be sent to HDC, which FTC believe to be HDC's contribution related to the structural work.

The Chairman requested FTC invoke Standing Order 6, xxiii, to bring in some financial information, enabling members to make a financial decision during the meeting. Members supported the suspension of Standing Orders and noted the following:

- Some dangerous cabling in the Harlington Auditorium theatre area had been identified and corrected
- Having identified defective cabling a full electrical survey has been recommended.
- The cost of the survey has been quoted at £5000.00, but FTC is waiting for 2 other companies to quote.
- The sum of £10,000.00 has been proposed as a cost for any electrical works as a result of the electrical inspection.
- A request has also been put forward by the General Manager of the Harlington, to purchase equipment to enable the Harlington to live stream performances.
- These would be ticketed, enabling people at home to be safe whilst still watching performances.
- Large users groups such as TWG and U3A would be able to live stream their meetings to their members.
- Live streaming would also enable the Harlington to take big shows from London and stream them to the public.
- The ability for the Harlington to live stream has been advanced by COVID19 but it is a necessity for now and for the future.
- A quote of £15,000.00 has been secured as the cost for live stream equipment.
- FTC had previously agreed to use up to £25,000.00 from the Harlington Reserve Fund, to enable the Auditorium works to be completed.
- Members were asked to approve the total additional cost of £57639.00
- Members were assured that the money would be taken from all reserve funds, and the final allocation of money would be brought back to Council for approval.

RESOLVED

Members agreed to the expenditure of £57,639.00 be taken from all reserve funds, and that the proposed allocation of costs would be brought back to Council.

FC September 2020 ITEM 9

PEDESTRIANISATION UPDATE

Members received and noted a verbal update on the pedestrianisation of the town centre. The following matters were discussed:

- Concerns about the quality of the current set up, which is transitional to the next phase.
- There have been claims of an increase in traffic around the surrounding roads to the High Street.
- There is still an issue with the car access between Branksomewood Road and Santander.
 - Negotiations are still in place to try and get access from the back of Birchayes Car Park instead, as permission is still needed from the land owner over a narrow strip of private land, which is currently preventing the access.
- Concern was raised about a double decker bus driving along Clarence Road.
- Signage needs to be updated.
- Concerns were given about both public and cyclists using the pedestrianised areas.
- Aiming to get the more permanent gateway entrances into the pedestrianised area on the 14th September 2020.
- HDC officers are working hard on this scheme, to make it successful.
- The potential date for Phase 3 is 7th September 2020.
- Radar sensors are in place to count vehicle numbers and speeds. Traffic volume data is available from HCC on a weekly basis.
- HDC traffic wardens are very active in the area.

- 3 disabled parking spaces have been approved and should be active.
- The placement of red and white bollards at The Oatsheaf was queried. These were implemented to condition traffic.
- A request has been put in for an additional pedestrian crossing on Albert Street.
- The car access to the flats behind Greggs may have to be accommodated, as the traffic volume is small, and not a general access route.

Members were reminded that safety is key for everyone, and although change is sometimes difficult to accept, the current pedestrianisation is being closely monitored and the benefits will be weighed against the negative issues.

FC September 2020 ITEM 10 FLEET TOWN COUNCIL - COVID19 RECOVERY

Members received and noted report on FTC's COVID Recovery. Members noted the following:

- The socially distanced Sunday music events at The Views during August were a great success.
- Thanks was given to the Clerk, General Manager of the Harlington and all their staff for the work they all put in to making the events so successful. Although the working days were long, it was a good effort and a great public event.
- Thanks were also given to Councillor Einchcomb and his wife for their support every Sunday.
- FTC continue to apply for grants and funding where possible, but have yet to be successful in securing any funding.
- A number of members of staff are still furloughed.
- FTC's insurance covers business disruption, but our insurer like many others are declining claims under Covid 19. This issue has been taken to the High Court, due to the number of insurers not paying out. A court decision is expected in September.
- FTC is transitioning back to working in the office, hopefully by 7th September 2020. The office is COVID secure but not open to the public.
- Finances are being monitored on a daily basis.
- Many hirers are due to come back to the Harlington and Ancells Farm from September. Work continues to be done with groups on updated risk assessments and providing the right spaces for them, with access to toilets and access around the building without too many people present and congregating at one time.

FC September 2020 ITEM 11 BUDGET 2021/2022

Members noted that a Budget Working Group Meeting will take place in mid-September (date to be finalised) to review the latest financial situation prior to the setting of the draft budget.

FC September 2020 ITEM 12 CALTHORPE PARK PLAYGROUND

Members received and noted an update report on the Calthorpe Park Playground. The following matters were discussed:

- The playground is looking good.
- Snagging issues now need to be sorted.
 - Issues with wet pour as a consequence of the extreme weather.
- There have been issues with people breaking into the site, and also the Pavilion, with a number of signs being taken down.
- Electrical work for CCTV is on target.
- Playground hopefully to be opened on 18th September 2020. However, there will be no grand opening of the playground, due to COVID19.

FC September 2020 ITEM 13

TOWN CLERK’S REPORT

Members received the Town Clerk’s report and noted the following:

- Gurkha Square Market
- TownTalk Newsletter
- Christmas
- Annual Return

The Clerk thanked all the staff and Councillors for their support to help keep the Council operational throughout these last difficult months. This has included being totally flexible in their working arrangements, using their own equipment when working from home and taking on many different and various roles.

FC September 2020 ITEM 14

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next virtual meeting of the Council is scheduled for Wednesday 7th October 2020 at 7pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.14pm.

Signed.....

Date:.....

Chairman