



## **FLEET TOWN COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING**

held on

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

#### **PRESENT**

**Councillors:** R. Schofield (Chairman), G. Chenery, P. Einchcomb, R. Harrison, R. Hill, L. Holt, A. Hope, K. Jasper, A. Oliver, D. Pierce, R. Richmond, R. Robinson, S. Tilley, G. Woods, J. Wright.

#### **Also Present:**

Janet Stanton - Town Clerk  
Susanna Walker - Committee Clerk  
Charlotte Benham - Project and Committee Officer  
Councillor John Bennison - HCC  
Councillor Adrian Collett - HCC  
Councillor Steve Forster – HCC  
Councillor Wendy Makepeace-Browne – HCC

No of live stream viewers - 11

#### **FC December 2020 ITEM 1**

#### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Members received and accepted apologies for absence from Councillor Carpenter, who was working, and Councillor Wildsmith, who was moving house.

#### **FC December 2020 ITEM 2**

#### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **FC December 2020 ITEM 3**

#### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Councillor Schofield welcomed all members to the last meeting of 2020, and briefed members on the following:

- 2020 has been devastated by COVID 19, and the collapse of high street stores combined with the impact of the rise of online shopping will change the face of the high street forever.
- FTC needs to respond to this change with energy, enthusiasm and agility, otherwise Fleet high street will die.
- Residents will return to the high street for convenience, services and to meet and socialise.
- The current situation provides FTC the opportunity to start a transformation of the high street, ensuring it meets not only resident's changing needs but the needs of future generations.
- Preliminary meetings have been held with local council and business representatives, to explore the future of Fleet high street. This debate should be agile and responsive in the short term, and visionary in the long term, and not dictated by bureaucracy.
- The marketplace is changing fast and the Fleet of 2030 will be a lot different to the Fleet of 2020.

Councillor Schofield wished everyone good health and concluded by outlining the desire for FTC to build a platform that unites all the stake holders in Fleet's future and drives change necessary to ensure Fleet has a sustainable, attractive and much valued centre to the community.

Councillor Schofield read out the following question from Mr Russell Hunt:

*In response to my question to Council on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020, Councillor Schofield made two important comments which did not find their way into the minutes. Can he therefore please confirm that the council tax precept cannot be hypothecated, that is, tax collected for a stated project can be spent for any purpose as the Council decides; and given that, the Council could decide to set a reduced precept for 2021/22 and fund any budget shortfall from the £1.6 million notionally set aside for the Harlington project.*

Councillor Schofield explained to members that the Clerk had written to Mr Hunt clarifying the position regarding minutes of meeting:

- a. They are not a verbatim record.
- b. The recital of Clause 42 of the Local Government Policy and Finance Act 1992 clarified that the precept could be used for any purpose which translates as no hypothecation

Councillor Schofield outlined the following to Council:

- The Council could elect to reduce the precept and fund any budget shortfall from the Harlington Reserve.
- What the council has resolved to do is not increase the precept next year when other Councils have been given the authority to increase their Council tax by up to 5%.
- The Council has resolved to finance the predicted budget deficit for both this and next year from the General and Ear Marked reserves, leaving the Harlington Reserve intact.
- In 2020, a Band A property paid £25.90 per annum (50p/week) and Band F (which represents 30% of all properties) paid £56.00 per annum, (£1.07 /week) towards the Harlington Reserve.
- Only 68% of all properties actually paid the full precept.
- In 2021 the Harlington Reserve represents £38.86 (75p/week) for a Band D property.
- FTC does monitor the financial performance of other large Councils, that is Town Councils with a precept over £1m/annum, and a significant number of them have a Band D Equivalent of around £200/annum
- FTC have resolved to maintain the Harlington element of the precept next year, therefore the reserve will accumulate to £2m.
- The original assumption in 2016 was that FTC would borrow £10m, and payback over 45 years, but due to exceptionally low interest rates this currently equates to a 32-year loan at a total cost of £13.025m.
- With £2m in cash, FTC only need to borrow £8m which at the same repayment rate would pay off the loan in 23 years at a total cost of £9.5m, saving the Fleet residents £3.525m in interest payments.
- Therefore, there is significant leverage in collecting cash.

Councillor Schofield responded to the question why FTC is collecting funds for the Harlington, detailing the following to Council:

- At some point in time FTC will need to build a new Harlington. The ongoing investigation by Hart District Council into the Civic Quarter Development includes a new performance / community facility in accordance with Policy 1 of the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan.
- Should all options for a new facility fail, the only option would be to renovate the existing facility. From the recent condition survey, to bring the existing Harlington up to current building standards with no improvement in the physical facility is likely to cost in the order of £5.1m.
- Using the exercise above, having the cash reserve saves the residents of Fleet £2.28m.



**FC December 2020 ITEM 6****MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS AND COMMITTEES**

Members considered the preferences of Councillor Robbie Richmond for service on the RLA Committee, The Harlington/Civic Quarter Working Group and the Parks and Open Spaces Working Group.

**RESOLVED**

To approve Councillor Richmond's membership of the:

- RLA Committee
- The Harlington/Civic Quarter Working Group
- Parks and Open Spaces Working Group

**FC December 2020 ITEM 7****FLEET LINK**

Members received a report on the Fleet Link Bus Service and the contract renewal from April 2021. Members noted and discussed the following:

- Fleet Link has continued to provide service during lockdown.
- The bus seating has been reduced from 12 to 3 seats in the bus.
- Post COVID, there is a possible additional cost to put back all 12 seats in the bus.
- 103 people are registered users, of which 50% use it regularly.
- RVS to advertise for new customers.
- The condition of use is that the individual must live more than 400m from a bus stop and not have access to a car.
- Cost for a year's extension to the current contract will be £11,249.72.
- No annual contribution to replacement bus fund.
- Any exceptional costs are to be settled from the current replacement bus fund.
- FTC and Church Crookham to work together to propose a better way to serve this community group.
- The current cost of a trip to a passenger is £5.
- Contactless payment is available on the bus.

**RESOLVED**

Members approved:

1. A further extension of the current contract for Fleet Link for 1 year at a cost to Fleet Town Council of £11,249.72.
2. A joint Working Group be set up with CCPC, including external advisors as required, to bring forward proposals for a more economic flexible community bus service and/or an alternative means of servicing the needs of our more vulnerable residents.

**FC December 2020 ITEM 8****INTERNAL AUDITORS VISIT - 5 NOVEMBER**

Members received the Internal Auditor's Report from the visit on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and noted the following from the action plan:

- More public information regarding the Virtual Meetings, including the live streaming access link and number of public viewing to be minuted.
- FTC to consider other alternatives to Fleet Link.

**RESOLVED**

Members received the Internal Auditor's Report and approved the action plan.

## **FC December 2020 ITEM 9**

## **FINANCIAL MONITORING**

Members received and noted the following:

1.
  - a. The bank reconciliation for October 2020
  - b. The list of receipts for October 2020
  - c. The list of payments for October 2020
2. Councillor Robinson to confirm that the bank statements match the reconciliation and has signed the bank statements and payment schedules.

### **RESOLVED**

Members approved and accepted into the minutes:

1.
  - a. The bank reconciliation for October 2020
  - b. The list of receipts for October 2020
  - c. The list of payments for October 2020
2. Councillor Robinson confirmed that the bank reconciliation for October 2020 equals zero, and the bank statements match the reconciliation and has signed the bank statements and payment schedules.

## **FC December 2020 ITEM 10**

## **FTC FINANCES**

Members received a report on the FTC finances post COVID19. Members noted and discussed the following:

- FTC is not allowed to become financially unviable.
- Business interruption insurance.
- General reserves need to be built up, through the possible increase in Council Tax in 2022-2023.
- General reserves to include repairs, maintaining and replacement of equipment in the parks.
- FTC to have a more proactive policy on grants.
- Local business sponsorship for FTC facilities such as playgrounds.

## **FC December 2020 ITEM 11**

## **ROYAL BRITISH LEGION POPPY APPEAL**

Members noted the message below received from Bill Tyack, Branch Chairman & Poppy Appeal Organiser for the Fleet, Crookham & District Branch of the Royal British Legion:

*I'd like to thank all members and supporters in the Fleet, Crookham and Crondall area for their magnificent support of the Poppy Appeal 2020. Of course, this year The Poppy Appeal was very different and we were limited in what we were allowed to do: for example, house-to-house collecting was not permitted and street collections were curtailed by the Lockdown on 5<sup>th</sup> November. Nevertheless, we raised the magnificent total of £30,794, whilst this is down on the £50,200 raised in 2019 it is much more than I was expecting in the circumstances. In 2021 we very much hope to be back to 'normal' and those collectors who were unable to take part this year will be able to do so once again.*

*I am very grateful for the generosity of people in the Fleet, Crookham and Crondall area. The money collected will be used well to support members of the Armed Forces community in need.*

Members gave thanks to the Royal British Legion and Bill Tyack for all their hard work, and noted that March 2021 will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of the War Memorial in Fleet. FTC will designate a sub-committee to organise a small event to celebrate this.

**FC December 2020 ITEM 12**

**COVID 19 UPDATE**

Members received the COVID Update report and noted the following:

- The Harlington has reopened, with Government guidance, from 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 and a small number of ticketed socially distanced shows are being put on for the public.
- Christmas films are planned to be shown in the Harlington in December 2020.
- Some hirers are back, with many scheduled to restart in January 2021.
- A National Restrictions Supply Grant application has been submitted to HDC for £2.000.00.
- All playgrounds are operating as normal as possible under the current restrictions.
- No council services have been cut.
- FTC office is COVID secure.

Members wished their thanks to be recorded for all the additional work that Officers had put in to maintain services and operate under difficult conditions.

**FC December 2020 ITEM 13**

**COMPLAINTS**

Members noted that no new complaints have been received.

**FC December 2020 ITEM 14**

**TOWN CLERK’S REPORT**

Members received and noted an update from the Town Clerk. The following matters were discussed:

- Fleet Christmas lights virtual switch on was a success, with over 13,000 views on social media and YouTube. The Harlington’s new streaming equipment was used to film and upload the event.
- Christmas Day lunch at the Harlington is not feasible this year. However, afternoon tea will be delivered to all guests who would usually attend the Christmas Day lunch.

**FC December 2020 ITEM 15**

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next virtual meeting of the Council is scheduled for Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 19.00.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:41.

**Signed**.....

**Date**.....

**Chairman**

### **Part 3 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

**Under 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**

**The following types of business will be treated as confidential:**

- a. Engagement, terms of service, conduct and dismissal of employees**
- b. Terms of tenders, and proposals and counterproposals in negotiations for contracts**
- c. Receipt of professional legal advice and preparation of cases in legal proceedings**
- d. The early stages of any dispute**
- e. Matters of a Commercial nature**

**FC December 2020 Item 16**

**CONTRACTUAL MATTER**

Members received confidential papers and considered the detail of a contractual matter.

**RESOLVED**

To respond to the contractual matter as discussed.