



## FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020

#### PRESENT

##### Councillors:

R. Schofield (Chairman), G. Carpenter, G. Chenery, P. Einchcomb, R. Harrison, R. Hill, L. Holt, A. Hope, K. Jasper, A. Oliver, R. Robinson, S. Tilley, S. Wheale, P. Wildsmith, G. Woods, J. Wright.

##### Also Present:

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

#### FC October 2020 ITEM 1

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Schofield opened the meeting by reminding members that the Council meeting would be streamed live on YouTube and would be retained for 24 hours. Members were also reminded about voting regulations. Councillor Schofield made members aware of the following:

- **Fleet Town Pedestrianisation.**

Members were asked to put forward any comments or suggestions on the HDC website, as a decision is to be determined by the end of October 2020.

- **Saturday Market.**

There is a meeting with the operator of the market on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020 to discuss the quality of the market.

Members received and accepted apologies for absence from Councillor Pierce, who has ongoing technical issues.

#### FC October 2020 ITEM 2

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

#### FC October 2020 ITEM 3

#### QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

*As stated in a recent newsletter, the concept of FTC building a New Harlington (or refurbishing the old one) is dead. Any future developments of the "civic quarter" will be initiated by Hart, not Fleet Town Council. By the end of the financial year (March 2021) FTC will have collected some £2million to fund this now extinct project, and spent some £500,000.*

*It would be a grave breach of trust to divert these remaining funds to another project, or to use them to fund an HDC project unless equivalent per capita funding was contributed by all other parishes in the District.*

Therefore:

1. Will the Full Council instruct the Finance Committee that the additional New Harlington Precept is to be removed from the rate set by FTC for 2021/22?
2. Will the unspent funds in the Harlington reserve now be returned to the taxpayers?
3. If, (as the Council Leader has stated) the funds cannot be returned, will FTC publish the legal advice on which this decision is based?

Councillor Schofield reiterated to members that under Standing Orders, the Council is not obliged to respond but that he had already been in contact with Mr Hunt, regarding the submitted questions, and shared his response and the following with Council.

- The concept of a new Harlington is not dead.
- FTC is awaiting the HDC Civic Quarter redevelopment proposals.
- FTC wishes to work with HDC.
- The Council cannot instruct the Finance Committee to remove the New Harlington Precept for 2021/2022 until it has been debated by Council.
- Following guidance from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), funds will not be returned to tax payers. Under Clause 42 of the Local Government Policy and Finance Act 1992, there is no provision for the precepting authority, FTC, to repay individual tax payers.

Councillor Schofield read out to all members, Clause 42 – Substituted Precepts, of the Local Government Policy and Finance Act 1992 in response to Mr Hunt's questions (as detailed below).

#### **42 SUBSTITUTED PRECEPTS**

(1) Where –

*(a) a precepting authority has issued a precept or precepts for a financial year (originally or by way of substitute); and*

*(b) at any later time it makes substitute calculations under section 49 [F1, [F249A,] [F352ZU,] 52J or 52U] or (as the case may be) section 51 below [F4 or section 95 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999], it shall as soon as reasonably practicable after that time issue a precept or precepts in substitution so as to give effect to those calculations.*

(2) Any precept issued in substitution under subsection (1) above must be issued in accordance with section 40 or (as the case may be) section 41 above, but subsection (5) of section 40 and subsection (4) of section 41 shall be ignored for this purpose.

(3) Where a precepting authority issues a precept in substitution (a new precept) anything paid to it by reference to the precept for which it is substituted (the old precept) shall be treated as paid by reference to the new precept.

(4) If the amount stated in the old precept exceeds that of the new precept, the following shall apply as regards anything paid if it would not have been paid had the amount of the old precept been the same as that of the new precept –

*(a) it shall be repaid if the billing authority by whom it was paid so requires;*

*(b) in any other case it shall (as the precepting authority determines) either be repaid or be credited against any subsequent liability of the billing authority in respect of any precept of the precepting authority.*

(5) Any reference in subsection (4) above to the amount stated in a precept shall be construed, in relation to a precept issued by a major precepting authority, as a reference to the amount stated in the precept in accordance with section 40(2)(b) above.

Councillor Schofield summarised to members that any monies underutilised have to be paid to the billing authority which is HDC. There is no legal liability to return money to the tax payers.

Members were reminded that the precept was raised for a new or refurbished Harlington, and that if a new building is not viable, then FTC would look to refurbish the existing Harlington.

#### **FC October 2020 ITEM 4                      MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Members noted and approved the minutes of Council held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020, which were signed by the Chairman. The Council also received the minutes of the following Committees:

Development Control	14 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
RLA	16 <sup>th</sup> September 2020

Members noted the following:

- **Planning**  
Government is going to pass secondary legislation to ensure permitted development conversions of offices meet minimum space standards.  
Any applications go through under the current terms.  
Two developments in Fleet which potentially provide very small flats can proceed if the developer wishes.
- **RLA**  
With regards RLA minutes, Item 11 – Fleet Town Football Club, A response is awaited regarding the flood lights and FTC will contact HDC regarding the nuisance.

#### **FC October 2020 ITEM 5      HCC / HDC UPDATE**

##### **HCC / HDC**

Councillor Collett reported on the following:

- **Ancells Farm School Transport**
  - Previous issues with transport and school escort being unavailable.
  - A new school escort has been recruited and the bus can now run.
- **Schools**
  - Return rate of pupils to school is above the national average.
  - A few individual cases of COVID19 have tested positive but individuals have been contacted quickly and sent home to isolate for 14 days.
  - Schools are performing well and have good processes in place to deal with the current situation.

Councillor Bennison updated the members on the following:

- **Schools**
  - 97% of primary school pupils have returned to school.
  - 93% of secondary school pupils have returned to school.
- **Flooding**
  - Residents need to report any issues with flooding online through HDC Flooding Survey.
- **Carbon Neutral**
  - HCC wishes to be carbon neutral from all operations by 2050.
  - Carbon reduction by 20% every 5 years.
- **Library**
  - Opening times are changing.
  - Fleet library will change opening hours up to Christmas.
- **Fly Tipping**
  - Fly tipping from March 2020 to date is less than 2019.

Councillor Forster reported the following:

- **Schools**
  - School children riding through pedestrianisation area which has now been addressed.
- **Fleet Town Pedestrianisation**
  - Pedestrianisation has dispersed traffic onto many side roads, in particular Albert Street and Elvetham Road.
  - Issues with speeding vehicles.
  - HCC speed reminder warnings to be erected in Albert Street and Elvetham Road in both directions.
  - Speeding issues should be directed to the police.
  - Decision to be made regarding pedestrianisation by the end of October 2020.

Councillor Oliver updated the members on the following:

- **Flooding**
- **CCTV**
  - Rushmoor are closing their control centre and outsourcing operations to Runnymede Borough Council.
  - HDC has also agreed to outsource to Runnymede, though there will be a cost to move the infrastructure over.
- **Fleet Town Pedestrianisation**
  - Data of traffic in side roads is being monitored, including monitoring of speeds and volume of traffic.

Councillor Wildsmith stated that all Councillors need to act as leaders during this time, setting the right tone in discussions, setting an example to the public and not being divisive.

## **FC October 2020 ITEM 6**

### **MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS AND COMMITTEES**

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

#### **RESOLVED**

To approve Councillor Hill's membership of the:

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

## **FC October 2020 ITEM 7**

### **BUDGET 2021/2022**

Members received a verbal update from the Chairman of Policy & Finance Committee, who confirmed that the Policy & Finance Working Group has met twice in the last month, to review this year's budget looking at the impact of COVID19. Members noted the following:

- This year's budget 2020/2021 would not be met.
- Loss of revenue from the closure of the Harlington is approximately £20,000.00 a month.
- General reserves will need to be used to balance budget.
- If the COVID restrictions continued into next year, there would be little general reserves at the end of the Financial Year 2021/2022.
- Aim is that by the middle of the next fiscal year, the Harlington will be back to normal in terms of shows.
- General Manager of the Harlington and the Town Clerk to review the budgets, and bring to the next Policy & Finance meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- Is it appropriate to increase precept for next year? If reserves are low, Council tax needs to be increased.

In relation to the update, members discussed the following:

- HDC Civic Quarter Regeneration
- Need to be mindful of the views of local residents
- Could the Harlington section of the precept be suspended for the next financial year?
- Could the Harlington precept be halved for the next financial year, in order to build reserves back up?
- Need to maintain the emphasis of developing, whether new or refurbish, the Harlington post COVID19.
- Precept to be frozen for a year.
- Harlington Reserve element of FTC tax is £39.37 per band D household
- Staffing levels.
- General Manager of the Harlington looking at safe layouts in the Harlington, in order to re-establish shows in the next few months.
- Streaming equipment to be installed.
- Harlington precept is ring-fenced for the Harlington.

Members agreed the following points be taken back to the Policy & Finance Working Group for discussion when considering the budget 2021/2022.

1. FTC support freezing the precept and no increase.
2. Look at whether there is the ability to half the Harlington element of the precept.

Following a discussion, members then agreed the proposal that:

1. Freeze the Council Tax for 2021/2022.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Policy & Finance Working Group take the proposal to freeze the Council Tax for 2021/2022 in the budget calculations.

#### **FC October 2020 ITEM 8**

#### **CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSURE ARRANGEMENTS**

Members noted the proposal that the FTC office closes at 12midday on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and will re-open at 9am on Monday 4th January 2021. Members also noted that FTC officers will be required to take annual leave to cover the period 29<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (3 days).

Members discussed that as this is a yearly occurrence, Christmas office closure arrangements do not need to be brought to Council every year. The office would close between midday of the last working day before Christmas and reopens on the first working day of the New Year (3 working days).

It was reiterated that there is an emergency service that operates throughout the Christmas period of closure, should any members of public have .

A motion to suspend Standing Orders was agreed by all members and it was

#### **RESOLVED**

1. To approve the closure of the Fleet Town Council Offices from 12midday on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020 until 9am on Monday 4th January 2021.
2. To approve the closure of the Fleet Town Council Offices every year from between midday of the last working day before Christmas and reopens on the first working day of the New Year (3 working days).

**FC October 2020 ITEM 9****THE HARLINGTON**

Members noted that the maintenance work in the Harlington has been completed and the Auditorium is now in the process of being prepared for future programmes. Members also noted that due to current legislation, all events will require table service for drinks not from the bar. As a result of this, an app has been developed for smart phones enabling audience members to order drinks pre the event or from their seats.

Thanks were given to all the officers who have worked during the lockdown period to make the Harlington suitable for reopening.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 10****CALTHORPE PARK PLAYGROUND**

Members noted that the Calthorpe Park Playground was opened to the public Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and has been extremely well received by all ages using the park. Members were made aware that an inspection of the lower field to the park following the recent rain ascertained that there was no flooding in the playground areas and that the surrounding green areas were accessible.

Members also noted that the contractor will be back at the end of this week and start of next week to rectify any defects and to make any final touches. FTC will also be arranging for planting at the entrance to the park and in the area between the upper and lower field.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 11****COUNCILLOR RESIGNATION AND CASUAL VACANCY**

Members noted that James Kirkpatrick has resigned as the Councillor for the Central Ward which has created a Casual Vacancy. FTC will now advertise the Casual Vacancy and, if 10 or more residents from the Central Ward request a by-election, it will be held in line with government regulations in May 2021. Otherwise, co-option may take place.

Thanks were given to James for the time he has given to the Council in support of the town's residents of Fleet and hopes that he maintains good health.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 12****FLEET LINK**

Members received and noted a report on the Fleet Link. The following points were raised:

- FTC has not received an update from RVS regarding usage data and the impact of COVID.
- Meeting with co-funder Church Crookham to discuss the future of Fleet Link is being arranged.
- Fleet Link services a focussed group of people: 135 users; 76% female; 89% over 70 years of age
- Contribution from FTC is £13,500.00 per year.
- Need to improve the service and make it more efficient.
- Are there alternative models for FTC to explore?
- On demand taxi service may be more cost effective.
- Could the service extend to hospital and medical centre visits as well as shops?
- Similar services facing issues including drivers not wanting to drive in the current situation.
- More data is needed in order to make a decision about the future of Fleet Link.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 13**

**FLEET CRICKET CLUB**

Members noted that Fleet Cricket Club (FCC) want to improve the clubhouse. The planned improvements do not include any significant exterior changes or change to the footprint of the building and the interior works will bring the clubhouse up to modern standards and support both male and female members. FCC is a well-run club and provides sporting facilities for many young people.

Members noted that the changes do not require planning permission but under the terms of Fleet Cricket Club lease, approval does need to be obtained from the Town Council. Once the plans have been produced they will be submitted to FTC in order to gain formal agreement, but, in principle, the Council fully supported the Cricket Club in their endeavours to improve the club facilities

**FC October 2020 ITEM 14**

**COMPLAINTS**

Members noted the complaints received and were made aware that all complaints have been dealt with.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 15**

**COVID19 UPDATE**

Members received and noted the COVID19 Recovery Report. It was reiterated that the office is COVID19 secure and any visitors to the office have to make an appointment before entering the building. Members were made aware that FTC is still waiting to hear from Zurich Insurance regarding the business continuity insurance.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 16**

**MEETING DATES**

Members received a copy of the current Council meeting dates. Members noted the change of date for the Annual Council Meeting to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 17**

**TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

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

- Calthorpe Park Action Day is now being rescheduled, and will be held on a week day.
- The Action Day will follow COVID rules and there will be groups of no more than 6 people.
- There will be no service in the Harlington for Remembrance Sunday. A wreath laying ceremony will be held, which will be socially distanced and possibly live streamed. This will be held in the morning.
- HDC markets and car boot sales.

**FC October 2020 ITEM 18**

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next virtual meeting of the Council is scheduled for Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 7pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.39pm.

**Signed**.....

**Date**:.....

**Chairman**