



FLEET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

held on

Wednesday 7th January 2026 at 7pm

* Councillor Schofield (Chairman)

* Councillor Einchcomb (Vice Chairman)

* Councillor Chenery

0 Councillor Fang

* Councillor Holt

0 Councillor Hope

* Councillor Kuntikanamata

0 Councillor May

* Councillor Neves

* Councillor Oliver

* Councillor Powell

* Councillor Richmond

0 Councillor Stanton

* Councillor Taylor

* Councillor Tilley

* Councillor Wildsmith

* 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 Stephen Parker – HCC

Mike Bye – Chair of Friends of Oakley Park

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 1

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Members received and accepted the apologies as recorded above.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 3

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 4

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

8th December – telecon with Terena Plowrite regarding the current situation with the Greening Campaign. It has been agreed between Terena and HVA to collaborate on the Warmer Homes house surveys and volunteers who had carried out surveys on behalf of FTC would transfer to HVA's volunteer team.

Regrettably only one person has agreed to transfer. Mike Wright who has led the survey team since its inception has retired as he has established his own business and can no longer commit his time. On behalf of us all I would like to express our thanks to Mike for successfully leading the survey team.

Apart from the Repair Café there has not been any significant activity amongst the Pillars.

10th December – Catch up and progress meeting with BFF and members of the Design Team to confirm the decision to proceed with Option A.

18th December- Along with the Executive Officer had a meeting with the Leader of HDC and the Chief Executive to discuss some Harlington related issues.

31st December – As you are all now aware there was a small fire in the Harlington at around 23:50 hours which was brought under control by representatives of our local police force before the Fire Brigade arrived. I would like to say a special thank you and extend your thanks to:

- Charlotte Benham - first on site, personally shut off fire alarm as no one else knew where panel was, Dan, her partner boarded up door where glass was broken to gain entry
- Rodney Marshall and Sarah McKibbin – who cleared glass and debris from area to make safe for members of the public and
- Ben Crane - who came back from Southampton, and did repairs to upper canopy, organised cleaners to come in and clean carpets, aired building to clear smoke.

On a general matter we now have only two formal Council Meetings before the Annual Residents Meeting. Some preparatory work is in hand but we need to ensure that the meeting does not follow the disaster of last year which went on too long and had too many uninspiring presentations.

We do want to introduce our Community Awards for people who have supported the community in a variety of ways without ever seeking any recognition for their efforts and achievements.

I am suggesting we have a maximum of three awards for different categories. We need a team of volunteers to help pull this idea together and select a short list of potential recipients of an award to be determined.

Will all members give some thought to possible recipients, anyone you know of in your Ward or generally in the Fleet area who regularly carries out some activity for the benefit of the community but never seeks any recognition of what they do. We have some ideas for starters but the more names that can come forward the better.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 5 HCC/HDC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following reports were received from Hampshire County Council.

Cllr Steve Forster (HCC)

- **Albert Street Junctions Safety Improvements:** A draft proposal for safety improvements has been received, which includes raised speed tables and road narrowing. The proposals have not yet been reviewed by the emergency services and are therefore subject to change. Approval is expected to be granted in March 2026, with works anticipated to commence during the summer.
- **Salting / Gritting:** Hampshire County Council advised that Priority 1 and 2 roads have been gritted, with 40 vehicles treating approximately 1,500 miles of Priority 1 roads. Responsibility for gritting pavements rests with individual property owners, although Hampshire County Council provides grit bins, the locations of which are available on its website. Members of the public may request additional grit bins via

the website. It was noted that only a small amount of grit is required for effective use (approximately one teaspoon per square metre).

- **Bus Funding:** Central Government has provided funding to increase bus usage. HCC are intending to use this to increase frequency of some existing routes and add new routes where new housing is being built.
- **Stagecoach:** No update regarding previously advised issues with Stagecoach.
- **Hart Countryside Rangers:** Members were advised that a Parkrun event will take place at Edenbrook on 1 February 2026, which may result in parking pressures. The event will be marshalled.
- **Elections:** Members were advised that the Government has confirmed that councils with LGR potential scheduled to hold elections in May may apply for a deferral. Hampshire County Council will make a final decision by 15 January 2026; however, the Leader of the Council has indicated a preference to proceed with the elections.

Cllr Stephen Parker (HCC)

- **Footpath Network:** The tender for the footpath works identified around and between Calthorpe Park School and Crookham Village has gone out with works intended to commence in the summer. The majority of the paths will be surfaced.

Cllr Alan Oliver (HDC)

- **Elections:** Hart District Council has written to Central Government to confirm its intention to proceed with the May elections.
- **2026/27 Budget:** The Central Government settlement for 2026/27 has been confirmed and remains unchanged from the current financial year. As a result, Hart District Council will be required to fund inflationary pressures, increases in National Insurance contributions, and the introduction of the food waste recycling initiative (at an estimated cost of approximately £1 million) through internal cost-saving measures.
- **Food Waste Recycling:** Residents are advised to report missed food waste collections to the Council in the same manner as other missed waste collections. Hart District Council also intends to monitor the extent to which black bin waste is displaced as a result of the new food waste recycling initiative.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 6

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 3rd December 2025 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

- Development Control 15th December 2025
- RLA 10th December 2025

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 7

FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Members noted receipt of the bank reconciliation and the list of payments for November 2025.

Councillor Stanton confirmed (via a statement to Councillor Tilley) that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for November 2025 had been verified and signed off against the original bank statement.

RESOLVED

- a) That the bank reconciliation and list of payments for November 2025 be received and accepted.
- b) That the statement from Councillor Stanton confirming the verification and sign-off of the November 2025 bank reconciliation and list of payments be accepted.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 8 DRAFT BUDGET 2026/27

Members considered a report from the Executive Officer on the draft budget for 2026/27.

Members were then requested to approve the revised estimates for 2025/26 and the draft budget 2026/27 and to agree a precept for the financial year 2026/27.

Additionally, Members were requested to note the budget forecast projections for periods 2027/28 and 2028/29 which are based on Officers' understanding of the Council's potential future activities.

RESOLVED

- a) Members resolved to approve the revised estimates for the financial year 2025/26.
- b) Members resolved to approve the budget for the financial year 2026/27.
- c) Members resolved to agree a precept requirement for the financial year 2026/27 of £1,537,194.
- d) Members noted budget forecast projections for period 2027/28 & 2028/29.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 9 HARLINGTON UPDATE

The Chairman advised Members that, following confirmation of the preferred design option, BFF have now commenced RIBA Stage 3.

Following a meeting of the Harlington Working Group on 5 January 2026, BFF were advised that Members wished the library area to remain open plan to allow flexibility of use. However, the inclusion of retractable screening to enable the area to be closed off when required is considered desirable. Members also noted that the location and design of the Box Office require further consideration.

BFF have been instructed to undertake a heating options study to compare the operating costs of an air source heat pump (ASHP) with gas boilers. This work is expected to be completed within two weeks. The findings will be used to assist Members in making a final decision on the preferred heating solution for The Harlington and whether to proceed with a capital funding request to Hart District Council for the installation of an ASHP.

The Chairman reported on discussions with representatives from a community building where an ASHP has been installed. They advised that their electricity costs had increased from approximately £10,000 to £30,000 per annum. While concerns were raised regarding a lack of control over the system, the Chairman noted that this may relate to a limited understanding of how ASHP systems operate. It was also reported that five smaller ASHP units were installed around the building, rather than a single larger unit, to mitigate noise issues due to the urban location.

The Chairman and Executive Officer met with Charlotte Tickner from Fleet Phoenix to discuss the renovation programme and anticipated timescales, together with the potential implications for Fleet Phoenix.

RESOLVED

To note the update from the Chairman.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 10

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made:

- Members were advised of the sequence of events relating to the fire at The Harlington on New Year's Eve. The Council's insurers' assessors attended the site on the morning of 7 January 2026. It was noted that the Police, rather than the Fire and Rescue Service, extinguished the fire. Members requested that a special expression of thanks be conveyed to the Police in recognition of their prompt action.
- Councillor Einchcomb reported on his attendance at the Christmas Day Lunch held at The Harlington and expressed how well run the event was. He noted that when the Master of Ceremonies thanked individuals and organisations for their contributions, there was a particularly strong response in recognition of Fleet Town Council. Members wished to formally express their thanks to Charlotte Benham, the Council's organiser of the event, and requested that the Executive Officer determine an appropriate expression of the Council's appreciation in recognition of her hard work.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 11

COMPLAINTS

Members noted the following complaints that had been received and the actions taken by the Executive Officer to address them.

Calthorpe Park Sign

The Council has received a pre-action letter of claim concerning an incident on 12 December 2025 at Calthorpe Park, in which a minor allegedly sustained facial injuries after colliding with a sign near the pump track. The claimant alleges breaches of statutory duties, occupiers' liability, and negligence, citing unsafe sign placement, exposed fixings, and lack of lighting.

The letter requests urgent safety action, disclosure of risk assessments, inspection records, and other documentation, and proposes a pre-action settlement of £45,000.

The Council has acknowledged receipt and has refer the matter to its insurers. In the meantime, immediate safety measures have been taken to mitigate any potential hazard. No admission of liability has been made.

Calthorpe Park Tennis Courts

A formal complaint has been received regarding the tennis courts at Calthorpe Park following recent repainting/line marking works undertaken under the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

The complaint raises concerns that the surface of the courts has become more slippery since the works were completed, with reports of an increase in slips and falls during use. Particular concern has been expressed about the potential impact on older users of the courts.

The complainant has requested confirmation of the specification of the paint or surface treatment used and that a health and safety inspection of the courts be carried out by a qualified officer.

The matter is being considered in accordance with the Council's complaints procedure, and relevant officers have been asked to provide information and undertake appropriate checks.

FC JANUARY 2026 ITEM 12 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled to be held on Wednesday 4th February 2026 at 7pm at the Harlington.

The meeting closed at 8.29pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date:.....