

FLEET TOWN COUNCIL — MINUTES

Full Council — Wednesday, 2 September 2026

Published: Friday, 4 September 2026

Attendance

Present: Bob Schofield, Daniel Taylor, George Woods, Janet Stanton, Emil Engstrom, Steve Forster, Alan Oliver, Ellie Ann May, Grahame Chenery, Kevin Davidson, Patricia Powell, Sue Tilley, Paul Einchcomb, Andy Parker, Peter Wildsmith

Also present: Executive Officer Rita Tong

Members of the public present: 3

Declarations of Interest

Steve Forster: declared an other registrable interest in Item 5 — County Councillor Reports — County Councillor responsible for Highways

Steve Forster: declared an other registrable interest in Item 20 — Harlington Update — Hart District Councillor

FC 09/2026 ITEM 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hope, Holt and Kuntikanamata.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 2 Declarations of Interest

Please see above for Declarations of Interest disclosed in relation to this meeting.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 3 Questions from the Public

Ms Christine Lipscombe, a mural artist representing Wonder Walls Fleet, addressed the Council, asking whether the Council would consider commissioning a mural for the town, potentially incorporating the history of Fleet.

The Council does not own properties with suitably blank external walls and therefore cannot grant the necessary permissions. Previous attempts had been made to secure permission from private landowners with suitable blank walls, but that these had been unsuccessful.

The Council discussed the potential for temporary murals on the hoardings surrounding the Harlington development, as well as the possibility of a mural on an interior wall of the Harlington. No formal decision was taken.

Ms Lipscombe left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 4 Chairman's Announcements

During July attended a mixture of on-line and live meetings to review the BFF RIBA Stage 3 report. Primary issue was the Value Engineering Exercise to bring the project cost within budget which culminated in the calling of an Extraordinary Council meeting on the 4th August

August is meant to be a quiet month with no meetings

5th August following the Extraordinary Council meeting of 4th attended a review meeting with the Exec Officer and Harlington Manager regarding the temporary relocation of the Harlington

11th August together with the Exec Officer met with the Chief Exec of Hart District Council

12th August together with the Exec Officer met with Charlotte Tickner regarding the future temporary location of Fleet Phoenix

14th August together with Exec Officer had conference call with Morr & Co LLP Solicitors regarding the temporary lease. Reported further later in the Agenda.

17th August together with Councillors Forster and Woods attended the official opening of the Hartland Village Mens' Shed

19th August Attended a Fleet Bid Meeting

22nd August Music On The Views 2026

On behalf of the organisers, I'm pleased to report that Music On The Views 2026 was a great success, with 853 tickets – a record attendance in the three years that the event has been running. The success was made possible by Alex and the Harlington staff and the many volunteers, together with contributions from sponsors, business and community partners.

Thank you to those Councillors who did attend on the day - (FYI, Kevin and George) The organisers hope that more of you will be able to attend next year. Date: Saturday, 21st August - one for your diaries.

2027 will be an important year for Music On The Views as the Harlington refurbishment gets underway. With the Harlington unavailable, events such as this will be an increasingly important way of keeping The Harlington's name in front of the community.

Councillors Stanton and Tilley have said that they hope that the Council will continue to support Music On The Views next year and help build on what has already become a much-valued community event.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 5 County Councillor Reports

The following reports were received from Hampshire County Councillors:

Cllr Stuart Bailey

- Displacement parking at Ancells Farm - A privately owned car park owner/operator is introducing parking restrictions, including a four-hour limit, which is causing parking displacement issues. Local businesses will be provided with devices to register carpark users attending local businesses. The new parking arrangements will be in place by mid-September.

Members were advised that this issue was on the Recreation, Leisure and Amenities Committee agenda for discussion in relation to the impact on the Community Centre.

- A £1m funding initiative is being launched by Police and Crime Commissioner to support projects working to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour across Hampshire.

Cllr Steve Forster

- Fleet Road resurfacing works were due to commence overnight the following week. Vehicles parked in the affected area would be towed away. The works may incorporate Reading Road South, and if a diversion was required, this would result in an approximately 11-mile redirection. The works were expected to take place over three to four nights, carried out in phases.

- Works to Upper Street and Albert Street were planned, comprising speed tables and a conversion to a one-way system. Cllr Forster acknowledged the proposals were contentious but anticipated they would deliver a benefit in terms of accident reduction. The works would be implemented under a temporary Traffic Regulation Order, allowing for adjustments to be made if required.

- Other minor road works were also taking place in the area, including those by SGN .

- Police activity had taken place in the town that morning, following many months of planning based on intelligence gathered. A statement was expected to be issued imminently. The operation had focused on five to six premises simultaneously and had been conducted with the knowledge and permission of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), with a

retail focus on the day. HMRC's investigative work would continue beyond the raid, with forensic examination of records ongoing, and that some outcomes of the investigation could be several months away.

Cllr Woods asked for an update on the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders relating to Velmead Road. Cllr Forster advised that he understood the consultation had been completed and that the Traffic Regulation Orders had subsequently been authorised, but he was not aware of the timetable for implementation.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 6 District Councillor Reports

The following reports were received from Hart District Councillors:

Cllr Alan Oliver

- Police Raid - There continues to be considerable public interest in the number of cash-based businesses operating in Fleet. Proposed legislation relating to vaping and betting shops has not yet been passed and is unlikely to have retrospective effect.
- Fleet Phoenix - Discussions regarding the future accommodation of Fleet Phoenix are continuing. The proposed solution is for Fleet Phoenix to relocate to the ground floor, with Citizens Advice Hart being willing to relocate to another floor to accommodate the proposed arrangements. Work is continuing on the necessary legal agreements relating to the proposed arrangements. The financial implications associated with the proposed arrangements for Fleet Phoenix are considered confidential commercial information.
- Grants - There are approximately two weeks remaining for applications to the current Large Grants programme. Details of grants awarded are available on the Hart District Council website.
- A resident survey regarding Hart District Councils services is currently open.

Cllr Steve Forster

- Resident Survey - The issue of residents being unable to submit comments in the survey has been raised with the Chief Executive Officer. A response is awaited.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 7 Confirmation of Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 1 July 2026 and the Extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 4 August 2026 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 8 Confirmation of Committee Minutes

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

- Development Control: 22 June, 6 July, and 27 July 2026
- Establishment: 8 July 2026
- Policy & Finance: 22 July 2026

FC 09/2026 ITEM 9 Financial Monitoring Report

Members noted receipt of the bank reconciliation and the list of payments for June and July 2026.

Councillor Stanton confirmed that the bank reconciliation and list of payments for June and July 2026 had been verified and signed off against the original bank statement.

RESOLVED

- a) That the bank reconciliation and list of payments for June and July 2026 be received and accepted.
- b) That the statement from Councillor Stanton confirming the verification and sign-off of the June and July 2026 bank reconciliations and list of payments be accepted.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 10 Members' Motions / Notices of Motion

Cllr Forster proposed a motion that the Council:

1. Allocate funding for the purchase and installation of two solar-powered Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs), initially to be sited at approved locations already identified;
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Officer to obtain supplier quotations, confirm the exact siting of the devices in consultation with Hampshire County Council Highways and Hampshire Constabulary, and proceed with procurement and installation; and
3. Request that data collected by the devices be shared with Hampshire County Council Highways and Hampshire Constabulary.

In considering the motion, Members discussed the role of Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Constabulary in relation to the deployment and funding of SIDs, the use of radar equipment by Hampshire County Council to monitor vehicle speeds, and the potential availability of funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Members also **NOTED** that speeding and traffic management had been identified as significant concerns in resident surveys, that Fleet has an existing Community SpeedWatch scheme but that volunteer numbers are declining, and that SIDs may need to be regularly rotated between approved locations. It was further **NOTED** that Hampshire County Council was considering a process to fast-track approvals for SIDs, which may simplify the current approval process.

Cllr Bailey advised that Yately Town Council had recently secured three new SIDs boards from the Police and Crime Commissioners fund. It would be appropriate to talk to Yately Town Council to find out the capability of the new equipment.

RESOLVED

To defer consideration of the purchase and deployment of SIDs until Hampshire County Council has determined and announced its proposed process for fast-tracking SID deployments.

Cllr Bailey left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 11 Review of Financial Regulations

Members considered a report from the Executive Officer recommending a number of amendments to the Council's Financial Regulations to reflect the current financial system and associated procedural changes.

RESOLVED

To approve the amendments to the Council's Financial Regulations.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 12 Internal Auditor Programme of Work for 2026/27

Members considered and agreed the internal audit programme of work for 2026/27.

RESOLVED

To approve the internal audit work programme for 2026/27.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 13 Harlington Lease

Members **NOTED** that the registration of The Harlington lease had been completed. Members further **NOTED** that the Title number is HP894667.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 14 Social Media Performance Report

Members noted a report from the Communications Officer on social media activity for June 2026.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 15 Cyber Essentials Update

Members **NOTED** that Fleet Town Council has successfully completed the written assessment requirements and therefore has achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation. In order to achieve Cyber Essentials Plus, the next stage will involve an audit of a sample of councillors and/or officers to verify compliance with the Council's documented procedures. The audit is expected to take place in mid September 2026 and must be completed within 90 days of successful completion of the written assessment.

Members will be advised of the audit date so they have time to take any necessary preparatory actions.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 16 Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) - Incident

Members **NOTED** that the Council has received a formal complaint and insurance claim following a reported incident involving a pet and an Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) nest on Council land at Ancells Farm.

The matter has been referred to the Council's insurers.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 17 PWLB Loan Approval

Members **NOTED** that Fleet Town Council has been granted approval to borrow an amount not exceeding £150,000 to fund the replacement of the existing playground equipment at The Views. A meeting with approved contractor has been arranged for Tuesday 8 September 2026.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 18 Date and Time of Next Meeting

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

FC 09/2026 ITEM 19 Exclusion of Public and Press

Members **RESOLVED** that, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2), the public and press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Mr Bye left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 20 Harlington Update

Design Works

BFF had submitted a claim for additional fees in respect of work undertaken in connection with the VE exercise, which it considered to be outside the agreed fee.

Members considered the basis of the claim and the subsequent substantiation provided by BFF, including the impact of increased construction costs, amendments to the design requested by the Council and the extension of the project programme. It was acknowledged that some changes initiated by the Council may appropriately be considered separately from the VE claim. Members also recognised the additional work undertaken by BFF and the wider design team in supporting the Council through the VE process and in preparing presentations and visualisations for the Extraordinary Council meeting.

Members **NOTED** that further value engineering may be required as the project progresses and agreed that a clear process should be established for identifying and agreeing any additional fees associated with future VE exercises, including the circumstances in which such work would fall outside the agreed fee.

Project Finance and Procurement

Members **NOTED** that Public Works Loan Board borrowing rates had increased significantly, with rates on 1 September 2026 standing at 6.82% for a 40-year loan and 6.80% for a 50-year loan. It was **NOTED** that the Council would not need to draw down the required borrowing until early 2027 and that market conditions would continue to be monitored.

Members also **NOTED** that the appointment of a contractor would be subject to an open tender process through Find a Tender, in accordance with the applicable procurement requirements.

Hart District Council – The Harlington

Members **NOTED** that the Executive Officer had drafted an Expression of Interest to Hart District Council in response to its asset transfer process arising from Local Government Reorganisation. The submission seeks the transfer of the freehold of The Harlington to the Town Council in place of the existing long-term lease.

In addition, a submission was made to Hart District Council requesting funding which highlighted the significant investment being made by the Town Council in improving the building's energy efficiency and reducing its carbon footprint, including insulation, double glazing and solar panels. Members further **NOTED** that, although the Council had not accepted Hart District Council's offer of support towards the installation of air source heat pumps, new pipework, radiators and pressure vessels were being installed to facilitate their future installation when the technology and associated support infrastructure are sufficiently established.

Temporary Relocation

Members received an update on the proposed temporary relocation arrangements. It was **NOTED** that, following receipt of a draft lease agreement, the Centre's solicitors had issued a side agreement containing additional provisions, including a proposed commencement date.

The Council has indicated the terms it would accept. Recent communications with the Shopping Centre Manager indicate those terms have been accepted. The matter is now with our respective solicitors.

RESOLVED

- a) To approved the additional fee claim submitted by BFF.
- b) To request a process to manage future value engineering to avoid and / or limit additional fees.
- c) To authorise the Executive Officer to submit the Expression of Interest.
- d) To authorise the Executive Officer to sign the lease to the alternative accommodation in accordance with Standing Orders so long as agreed terms are contained within it.

FC 09/2026 ITEM 21 Potential Bad Debt

It was **NOTED** that the account had been brought up to date.

The meeting closed at 21:21.

Signed: _____

Chair of the Full Council

Date: _____