Fleet Town Council — MINUTES

Full Council — Wednesday, 7 October 2026

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Attendance

Present: Bob Schofield, Daniel Taylor, George Woods, Janet Stanton, Emil Engstrom, Leslie Holt, Alan Oliver, Ellie Ann May, Grahame Chenery, Patricia Powell, Sue Tilley, Paul Einchcomb, Andy Parker

Also present: Executive Officer Rita Tong

Members of the public present: 1

FC 10/2026 ITEM 22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

FC 10/2026 ITEM 23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Woods declared a Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 14 on the grounds that he is a carer.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 24 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No members of the public addressed the Council during this item.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 25 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUCEMENTS

6th September Cllr Einchcomb kindly stood in to present prizes at the Summer Scam Jam organised by Fleet Phoenix **8th September** Along with Officers, other Councillors and a representative of Fleet BID attended a review of the Views Play park development. HAGS produced a more exciting inclusive centre piece to the development. **10th September** Meeting with Paul Grinham of Synergy to discuss contractual details for letting the Harlington Construction contract to comply with government procurement rules. **19th September** Represented FTC at the Royal British Legion annual garden party and award ceremony. Two residents achieved 25-year service awards and Bill Tyak announced that the local Branch had collected £104,000 in the past financial year. **21st September** Along with Cllr Tilley and Parker attended Fleet Bid Board Meeting to help finalise the rebid documentation. **29th September** Attended, along with the Executive Officer, Cllr Woods and representatives of Church Crookham Parish Council, a review of the performance of the Fleet Connect bus service. Proportionally usage is being maintained (now only 4 days service). There have been issues with the closure of the M&S on Fleet Road which was a popular destination. Wednesdays which is the Meadows run is fully booked but there is some capacity remaining on Thursdays. Discussed the potential of adding an additional run to the Meadows on Thursday. RVA to explore. The fare has risen from this September to £3.10 per single journey. **29th September** Performed a bench audit at Fleet Cemetery along with Cllr Stanton. There exists a total of 23 benches between the main cemetery and the Garden of Remembrance. The issue is distribution. The matter will be brought to RLA. **5th October** Attended the environment emergency meeting briefing held at The Harlington and hosted by Fleet Film. It was well attended with 104 attendees.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 26 COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS

The following reports were received from Hampshire County Councillors:

Cllr Alan Oliver

• Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – HCC is working through the implications of the suspension of LGR. HCC and the councils involved have committed significant resources to the process to date, with Hart District Council having incurred expenditure of approximately £600,000. Concern was expressed that, should the process recommence, councils may be required to repeat work already undertaken. HCC is making representations to Government seeking clarification on the next steps, including whether councils may be able to recover expenditure incurred as a result of the process. Concern was also expressed regarding the impact of the uncertainty on staff whose future employment arrangements remain unclear.

• Roadworks - Resurfacing works on Norris Hill Road are due to commence in mid-October. No new major roadworks are scheduled for October. The road calming measures on Upper Street and Albert Road are progressing.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 27 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

The following reports were received from Hart District Councillors:

Cllr Alan Oliver

• Recycling - HDC is installing mixed-plastics recycling bins in a number of its car parks to reduce contamination of household recycling bins caused by residents placing plastics in them which cannot currently be recycled. HCC is expected to develop a new recycling facility capable of processing plastics, although this is not anticipated to be operational until summer 2028. In the interim, HDC has identified a reputable market in Europe for the collection of these plastics. A mixed-plastics recycling bin will be installed in the Church Road car park for Fleet residents, with additional bins to be provided in Church Crookham. No suitable location was identified within Victoria Road car park.

• Fur Grove development - HDC refused the planning application earlier in the month. It was then referred to the Secretary of State as planning applications of over 150 properties are not normally allowed to be refused. The Secretary of State have decided to allow the refusal, which was given on Heritage grounds. This does not prevent the applicant from appealing the decision through the normal planning process.

• Local Plan - HDC has completed Gateway 1 and is the first council to do so under the new regime. The HDC website provides the timetable for the Local Plan, including the anticipated timescales for subsequent Gateways. It also identifies potential development sites, including Firgrove Farm and Murrell Green, with further sites to be added as they are evaluated.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 28 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 2 September 2026 be approved and signed as a true and correct record

FC 10/2026 ITEM 29 CONFIRMATION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

• Development Control: 24 August, 7 September and 28 September 2026

• Recreation, Leisure & Amenities Committee: 16 September 2026

FC 10/2026 ITEM 30 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

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

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

RESOLVED

1. That the bank reconciliation and list of payments for August 2026 be received and accepted.

2. That the statement from Councillor Stanton confirming the verification and sign-off of the August 2026 bank reconciliations and list of payments be accepted

FC 10/2026 ITEM 31 EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT & CERTIFICATE FOR 2025/26

Members **NOTED** that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ended 31 March 2026 had been returned by the Council's External Auditor, BDO LLP.

The External Auditor raised one matter which had been disclosed by the Council in regards to non-compliance with one of the governance assertions within the Annual Governance Statement. The External Auditor was satisfied with the Council's explanation for the non-compliance and the details of the actions taken to address the non-compliance.

The matter was addressed by Full Council in June 2026 (FC June 2026, Item 14), when a number of Information Technology policies were adopted.

Members noted the recommendation of the Internal Auditor that these policies should be reviewed annually, rather than on the usual three-year cycle, in line with other key governance documents such as the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The annual review will provide an additional governance check and help ensure that the Council's IT policies remain current and appropriate.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Governance and Accountability Return of the external auditor for 2025/26 be received and accepted by Full Council

FC 10/2026 ITEM 32 NOTICE OF CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26

In accordance with Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Fleet Town Council must publish its Notice of Conclusion of Audit on its website by 30 September 2026 and

make the External Auditor's report and Annual Governance and Accountability Return available to its residents both on its website and from its offices.

The form was published on the Council's website on 22 September 2026.

RESOLVED

Members agreed that the inclusion of the External Auditors Report and AGAR in the above agenda item and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit in this agenda item met the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

FC 10/2026 ITEM 33 BUDGET PREPARATION 2027/28 - KEY ISSUES

Members considered a report from the Executive Officer identifying a number of issues requiring consideration as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process.

Members **NOTED** that the 2027/28 budget was likely to be the most challenging budget the Council had developed since its inception, due to the number of significant variables and uncertainties involved. It was therefore agreed that a number of Budget Working Groups would be established, each focusing on a specific issue. Members also acknowledged that the Council was likely to require all of the available time to work through these matters and the budget, and that the 2027/28 precept might therefore be set in January 2027 rather than at the usual December meeting.

Members **NOTED** that the Cemetery currently had a very limited number of grave spaces available for purchase and that progressing the cemetery extension project was therefore a priority. Members authorised the Executive Officer to contact a specialist cemetery project company to progress the matter, with the aim of obtaining sufficient information to establish the likely budgetary implications of the project.

RESOLVED

1. To concentrate on the Council's core activities when preparing the 2027/28 budget.

2. To authorise the Executive Officer to engage with a specialist cemetery project company to progress the cemetery extension project.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 34 THE VIEWS PLAYGROUND

Following further discussions with the designer, the proposed playground scheme was currently estimated at £205,500, compared with the original approved tender amount of £200,000.

Members **NOTED** that the increase followed the Council's request to replace the central piece of play equipment with a larger feature to provide greater impact and play value. The designer had confirmed that a significant discount of £78,000 had already been applied and that no further discount was available.

To bring the scheme within the approved budget, the three wetpour mounds had been removed. Members considered the impact of this change on the overall design and play value of the scheme and agreed that the full scheme should be retained. The additional £5,500 would be funded from the Playground Equipment EMR.

Members also considered a request from HAGS to reduce the retention from 10% to 5%, noting the company's established reputation and the 12-month guarantee provided for the project. Members considered the resulting financial risk to be acceptable.

RESOLVED

1. To approve an additional £5,500 expenditure from the Playground Equipment EMR to retain the full playground scheme.

2. To approve the reduction in the retention amount from 10% to 5%.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 35 DEPENDANTS' CARERS' ALLOWANCE

Weymouth Town Council has asked parish and town councils to support its proposed re-submission to Government of a proposal under the Sustainable Communities Act concerning the Dependants' Carers' Allowance.

Principal authorities are currently able to make payments to councillors towards childcare and dependant care costs incurred when attending council business. This provision does not currently extend to parish and town councils. Weymouth Town Council is seeking a change to extend the same provision to parish and town councils and intends to ask the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) to re-submit the proposal to Government, with a submission anticipated in December 2026. Weymouth Town Council has asked councils to contact their local MPs in advance of the submission to raise awareness of the issue and indicate their support for the proposed change.

RESOLVED

1. To support Weymouth Town Council's proposal to extend the Dependants' Carers' Allowance provisions to parish and town councils.

2. To authorise the Executive Officer to write to the Council's local MP expressing the Council's support

FC 10/2026 ITEM 36 HARLINGTON UPDATE

Members received an update from the Chairman on the Harlington renovation project.

Members **NOTED** that it was more than two weeks since the Council had submitted the approved lease for the shopping centre unit. The lease had now been passed to the landlord's in-house solicitors, which was clarified as being in Hong Kong. The wording of the lease had been agreed in principle; however, agreement on the lease plan remained outstanding.

As a consequence of the outstanding lease arrangements, the design work with BFF remained on hold. The detailed design work for the main Harlington project was, however, progressing, with recent work focusing on the location of the proposed sub-station and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. It was anticipated that the planning application would be ready for

submission imminently.

The Chairman reported that he had met with Synergy regarding the proposed appointment of the Design and Build contractor. Further clarification on the proposed procurement process was required and would be followed up.

Members were advised that a meeting with BFF was scheduled for 8 October 2026 to discuss the current project programme and communications. The Chairman **NOTED** that there had been some changes to the programme and that clarification was required regarding the reasons for these changes.

RESOLVED

To note the update from the Chairman

FC 10/2026 ITEM 37 SOCIAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members noted the report from the Communications Officer of social media activity in July & August 2026.

Members passed on their thanks to the Communications Officer for the sterling work done with social media.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 38 ANNUAL DATA AUDIT FOR 2026/27

Members noted the requirement for an annual data audit and approved the undertaking of the Council's 2026/27 data audit.

The Council is required to maintain an up-to-date understanding of the personal data it holds, the purpose and lawful basis for processing that data, and who has access to it. This forms an important part of assessing and managing potential risks associated with the Council's data processing activities and supporting ongoing compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the Data Use and Access Act 2025 and the UK GDPR.

The new Assertion 10 also requires evidence that the Council undertakes a data audit on an annual basis

FC 10/2026 ITEM 39 CARBON EMISSIONS 2025/26

Members noted the Carbon Emissions report for 2025/26.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 40 COMMUNITY AWARDS SCHEME

Members **NOTED** that in 2026 Fleet Town Council launched its Community Awards to celebrate individuals and groups who go above and beyond for the local community. The winners are nominated by the public and awarded during our Annual Residents' Meeting in March.

Members were encouraged to submit nominations which could be done on the Councils website.

FC 10/2026 ITEM 41 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

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

The meeting closed at 20:58.

Signed: _____

Chair of the Full Council

Date: _____