



## MINUTES OF THE 14th ANNUAL FLEET TOWN COUNCIL RESIDENTS' MEETING

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 7.00pm  
The Harlington, Fleet

### **Attendees:**

**Council Members** – 11

**Residents** – approx. 72

### **1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Bob Schofield, welcomed everyone to the fourteenth Annual Residents' meeting and explained that the Council was trialing Slido during the meeting to allow residents to ask questions via the app and vote in live polls.

### **2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Residents' Meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were adopted as a correct record. The Chairman signed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

### **3. PRESENTATION**

#### **Budgets**

#### **Cllr Schofield, Chairman of Fleet Town Council**

The presentation covered how Council Tax is allocated across the different levels of Council, Police and Fire Authority, Fleet Town Council's income for the year and what services are delivered with that money - parks/open spaces, services, community/youth support, Harlington Transformation project and town centre events and initiatives.

A live poll was held asking residents which budget priority matters most to them (52 respondents):

Facility Improvements - 46%

Parks & Open Spaces - 27%

Maintaining Services - 12%

Community Grants - 8%

Community Events - 8%

#### **Events**

#### **Alex Robins, General Manager of The Harlington**

Alex covered that The Harlington puts on a range of shows as well as participating in major town events and that these events require volunteers to enable them to happen – anyone interested in volunteering at these events should get in touch on [info@fleet-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@fleet-tc.gov.uk) and staff will point them to the right voluntary committee.

## **Fleet BID**

A short video was played, created by the Fleet BID, explaining what they do and some of their successes.

## **Harlington Transformation**

### **Helen Grassly, BFF Architects**

BFF supplied a short video and voiceover giving a brief overview of the project, how three design options were created both within and exceeding the existing budget and that Option A was ultimately selected through a public vote. Helen explained what Option A covered and that they will now be working on details designs.

### **Amy Stanton-Hogg, Marketing Manager for The Harlington**

Amy briefly summarised that The Harlington hosts a variety of community groups and events, and the Council hopes to expand community offerings with the new Harlington.

## **The Views Skatepark**

### **Ben Crane, Facilities and Open Spaces Manager for Fleet Town Council**

Ben gave an update on the project to replace the Skatepark at the Views - that Fleet Town Council invited skatepark users to participate in the project and gathered their feedback on what they'd like to see as well as asking them to help evaluate tenders. Ben highlighted their invaluable help in tweaking plans and ensuring the new skatepark would meet the needs of its users. Ben added the Skatepark is due to open later this spring.

## **Play Areas**

### **Ben Crane, Facilities and Open Spaces Manager for Fleet Town Council**

Ben briefly summarised that the Council is also currently looking at updating play areas at Edenbrook and The Views, and that more information will be available in due course.

A live poll was held asking residents if they were going to build a play area, what would they put in it (49 respondents):

- Swings and Ziplines - 63%
- Picnic Benches and Shelters - 57%
- Mazes and Agility Courses - 55%
- Inclusive Equipment - 53%
- Slides and Towers - 49%
- Climbing Frames and Monkey Bars - 47%
- Learning Activities - 43%

## **Elections**

### **Cllr Richmond**

Cllr Richmond briefly outlined that all councillor positions are up for re-election this May and that if anyone is interested in standing and requires more information about what being a councillor entails, they could arrange a chat with the Executive Officer.

A live poll was held asking residents to rank the Council's future projects and what they would like to see first (42 respondents):

1. Install more robust anti-vehicle measures at Ancells Farm Park
2. Replace Oakley Park Pavilion
3. Replace toilets at Ancells Community Centre
4. Replace Basingbourne Park Pavilion
5. Repair surface on Cemetery Rd
6. Install lighting at Tennis Courts for evening play

## **Local Government Reorganisation**

### **Rita Tong, Executive Officer of Fleet Town Council**

Rita explained what the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation entailed and what a unitary authority is – essentially the County and District Council's merging across a set area to become one big authority.

Rita covered that there are two options on the table, Option 1 where Hart merges with Basingstoke & Deane and Rushmoor and Option 2 where Hart merges with Basingstoke & Deane, Rushmoor, East Hampshire and Winchester.

Rita covered the proposed benefits and that plans are currently being finalised:

- Simpler
- Reduces duplication
- Saves money
- Faster decisions
- Easier to contact the council
- 4-year term –can implement change

Rita also explained the Mayoral Authority, that they will not replace Councils but rather sit above them, led by an elected Mayor and that they will focus on big picture issues, liaising directly with the Government. Their powers will include:

- Transport Planning
- Skills and Employment
- Housing and Regeneration
- Environment and Net Zero
- Investment and Finance

## **Community Awards**

Cllr Schofield announced the council's intentions to hold these awards every year – the aim being to identify and ultimately reward members of our community who by their actions selflessly support the community, looking for no recognition, and help make Fleet such a great place to live. Cllr Schofield asked any future nominations to be emailed to: [info@fleet-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@fleet-tc.gov.uk)

Awards were presented to:

- **Dave Harrison** – for his all his work with the Friends of Basingbourne Park under the Community Champion category
- **Kate Cottrell** - for her environmental efforts, including litter picks, Greening Fleet and Scoop under the Community Champion category
- **Jake F, Jake K, Lucy and Tate, users of the Skatepark** – for all their help with the Skatepark Project

A live poll was held asking residents what award categories they would like to see in the future:

- Community Support
- Community Champion

- Event Organiser
- Volunteer Award / Voluntary Group Award
- Working with Young People / Leaders of Teenage Groups / Community Champion (Youth) / Youth Awards
- Best Business
- Connecting Older and Younger People
- Local Hero
- Best School Contributor to the Community
- Acts of Kindness
- Environmental Champion

#### 4. **AUDIENCE Q&A**

Cllr Woods hosted the Q&A session - the following questions were asked via Slido:

Alan

**Q. Sadly Fleet folk voted for the cheapest Harlington refurbishment. Could other funds e.g. Lottery be available to enable the middle refurb option?**

**A.** The Council has explored potential external funding opportunities. However, Fleet Town Council does not meet the eligibility criteria for National Lottery funding. An application was submitted to Arts Council England last year but was unsuccessful due to the high volume of applications received. The refurbishment project will therefore be funded through a combination of a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan, the use of accumulated Council reserves, and Section 106 contributions. The accumulated reserves, which were built up following an increase in the Council Tax precept in 2017, currently amount to approximately £3.5 million.

Mike Mellor

**Q. Why have you decided to use gas boilers during the Harlington refit instead of aligning with your own sustainability goals? This seems short-sighted.**

**A.** The decision was based not only on the initial capital cost but also on long-term running costs, with electricity currently being more expensive than gas. A number of additional factors were also considered, including the shorter expected lifespan of Air Source Heat Pump's, the difficulty air source heat pumps can have in managing zoned heating in a building of this type, and the current limited availability of engineers with experience in installing and maintaining commercial air source heat pump systems.

The Council hopes that technology, running costs and the availability of specialist engineers will improve over time. The intention is therefore to convert to a heat pump system in the future, and the refurbishment will include the installation of the necessary infrastructure to enable this transition.

The project will also improve the building's environmental performance in several other ways, including improved insulation, new double-glazed doors and windows, and replacement of the roof. The new roof will allow for the installation of solar panels, enabling the Council to generate some of its own electricity and further reduce its carbon footprint.

Gillian

**Q. Is it true that the Harlington plans to relocate at Hart Shopping Mall and if so when will this be confirmed in writing?**

**A.** The Council is currently in negotiations regarding a lease for a unit in the Hart Shopping Centre. Due to the different layout and design of the space, a revised programme of activities and events will be required. Work is therefore underway to develop an appropriate programme for use of the space. Further details will be confirmed once the lease negotiations have concluded.

Resident

**Q. Last year the Chief of Police said there would be a NEW Police station in Fleet - why has this not happened?**

**A.** The Police have indicated that they would prefer a location on the High Street and have investigated a number of potential premises. However, on three occasions they have been outbid by property developers. A suitable site would also need to provide adequate parking. The Police are continuing to look for an appropriate venue and, in the meantime, officers are operating from nearby local stations.

Resident

**Q. What arrangements will be made to accommodate the technical requirements of the groups that will use the new temporary venue?**

**A.** The Council are intending to contract the services of Charcoal Blue to ensure the technical requirements of the alternate venue are met.

Resident

**Q: The poll about what's most important is not reflective of the town's demographics. Most of the audience is over 50.**

**A:** We have other means of gathering feedback from the public such as surveys, speaking with users like we have done for play areas and the skatepark, attending town events, posting on social media etc.

Gillian

**Comment: Ask kids / schools what they would like to see in play parks**

Fleet Town Council have gathered information from playpark users, residents and surveys in the past and will continue to do so.

Resident

**Q. Why do residents in Fleet Central pay a higher Council Tax than the other Fleet & Church Crookham residents when they all enjoy (or NOT) the same amenities?**

**A.** Fleet Town Council funds and maintains a number of facilities within the Fleet area, including parks and open spaces, Ancells Farm Community Centre, The Harlington, and Fleet Cemetery. The Council Tax precept collected from Fleet residents contributes towards the cost of providing and maintaining these amenities. Parish and town council precepts vary between areas depending on the services and facilities provided locally.

We have heard concerns about the upcoming Unitary Authorities and whether responsibilities and facilities will be passed down to Parish/town Council's – there are no transference of assets planned.

Resident

**Q. How much extra do Fleet Central residents pay compared to other adjacent parish councils?**

**A.** Band D for local parishes using 2025/26 information are: Church Crookham £62.22; Crookham Village £98.22; Elvetham Heath £80.26; Hartley Witney £183.03 and Blackwater & Hawley £122.79.

Resident

**Q. What happens to groups like U3a who use the Harlington hall?**

**A.** The Council intends to relocate the majority of its hirers to the new venue. The Council are communicating with hirers on its plans as and when new information comes to hand.

Resident

**Q. There should be more help for older people to use technology. The library is rubbish.**

**A.** We suggest you speak to the library about improvements, but we appreciate technology is a concern which is why we had members of staff on tonight to help out with access to Slido this evening for submitting questions and participating in the live polls.

Gillian

**Q. What transport options are available to someone in a motorised wheelchair?**

**A.** There is the Fleet Connect bus service run by Rushmoor Voluntary Services which is supported by via Fleet Town Council via an annual grant of approx. £13,100.

You can use this service if:

- You have a sensory or mobility impairment or find it difficult to use public bus services
- Your nearest bus stop is too far away or there is no bus service when you need to travel
- You do not have access to a car

It is not necessary to be registered as disabled and wheelchairs/scooters can be accommodated. You must register before you can start using the service – once registered you can book services up to 6 days in advance. The bookings line is open Monday – Friday, 9.30am-12.30pm, please call 01252 398451.

It is currently running Tuesday to Friday, 9am – 2.30pm. You can be taken to the High Street, Morrisons (Elvetham Heath), Redfield's Garden Centre & medical appointments within the service area. On Wednesday there are also trips to The Meadows/Camberley and on the first Thursday of the month, trips to Farnborough – Sainsbury's, Asda, B&Q etc.

Resident

**Q. When will we receive formal notice of Year 26-27 Council Tax?**

**A.** It should be this month. Figures appear to now be available on Hart's website <https://www.hart.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-charges>

David D

**Q. Please could the Town Council give money to the Basingstoke Canal?**

**A.** Fleet Town Council already contributes an annual grant of approx. £18k towards the Basingstoke Canal.

Gillian

**Q. Is there any RAC concrete in the Harlington and if so what proportion of the total cost of refurbishment is it?**

There is no RAC in The Harlington.

Resident

**Q. There are many pavements that are not accessible for those with mobility issues - how can these be addressed?**

**A.** Public highways come under the County Council (HCC) – please speak to the HCC Councillors about specific issues, there are several attending tonight's meeting. Issues can also be reported online <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/paving>

Resident

**Q. Scaffolding recently erected by the Citizens Advice building caused real issues for someone in a motorised wheelchair - residents should have been forewarned.**

**A.** This is not a Fleet Town Council building so unable to comment.

Resident

**Q. Will the library service be affected?**

**A.** Not that we know of as The Library has a separate entrance and they will also be separating their services from ours – currently they use The Harlington’s heating supply but they will be putting in their own this year so they will therefore not be affected when The Harlington closes.

Steve Forster

**Q. Does the £11.4m suggested cost of the Harlington include interest on the loan? Or what will be true cost.**

**A.** The interest rate is set the day on which you take out the loan. Repayments are then made with fixed half yearly payments. Cllr Schofield mentioned this frequently checks the interest rates on PWLB website, often daily. If the Harlington project had gone ahead a couple of years ago, the Council could have borrowed at an interest rate of 1%, but we now are unfortunately looking at 6%. The Council hopes the interest rate will dip and we can then sign the loan.

Resident

**Q. Does the retractable seating proposed for the new Harlington remain in place all the time?**

**A.** No, retractable seating can be pulled in and out as needed for events and users.

Resident

**Q. How long is the refurbishment anticipated to take?**

It will take some time to move equipment into the temporary venue once The Harlington shuts so there will be a small period of downtime. The current predicted timeline from BFF is to open the temporary venue in February 2027, with the refurbished Harlington predicted to re-open mid-2028.

Cllr Schofield lastly thanked fellow Councillors, officers, presenters and all the residents who had attended and contributed to the event.

The meeting closed at around 8.30pm