

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 3rd March 2021 at 7.30pm
held remotely using appropriate technology in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crimes Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) which came into force on 4th April 2020.

(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Council)

Present: Cllr Edward Hale – Chairman
Cllrs Malcolm Adams, Paul Anstey, Pat Earth, Nobby Goldsmith, Mike Jackson, Alan Lewendon, John Moulard, Diane Paton, Brian Perkins, Pete White and Anna Wilson

In Attendance: Mr Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs Rachel Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
Cllr Ann Sevier (NFDC)
A reporter from the Salisbury Journal
A representative from the Rural Market Town Group
1 Member of the Public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Edward Heron (HCC) and Cllr Annie Bellows (NFDC).

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

3. To confirm the minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 3rd February 2021 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 3rd February 2021 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters Arising

Agenda item 7 – Details of the flooded pavement at Augustus Park were sent to Cllr Heron (HCC)
Agenda item 7 – Cllr Lewendon reported that no work has been done on the footpath outside the new Augustus Park development.

Agenda item 8 – The Hurley Farm photo was forwarded to Cllr Bellows (NFDC)

Agenda item 10 – The results of the Open Spaces survey have been published on the website

Agenda item 17 – The dog fouling signs have been delivered to the Information Office.

4. To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary General Council meeting held on Wednesday 3rd February 2021 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Goldsmith proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 3rd February 2021 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

No Matters Arising

5. To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary General Council meeting held on Friday 5th February 2021 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Mouland proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 5th February 2021 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

No Matters Arising

6. To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary General Council meeting held on Friday 12th February 2021 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Anstey proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 12th February 2021 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

No Matters Arising

7. To receive any matters raised by members of the public

No matters raised.

8. To receive a report on any matters under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act

No report received.

Cllr Adams reported that only four businesses were represented at the Police Shop Watch meeting. A radio system and uploading camera footage to the police were discussed. Cllrs Hale and Perkins reported they had technical problems joining the meeting and weren't able to attend.

9. To receive a report from the Town Mayor

Nothing to report.

10. To receive a report from the County Councillor

No report received.

11. To receive a report from the District Councillors

Cllr Sevier clarified that although Cllr Heron said in the last meeting that developer contributions can be spent on upgrading paths, this is usually for paths on the development site only.

Cllr Sevier reported that she and Cllr Bellows will have a meeting with the NFDC Planning department to ensure that the green spaces in Fordingbridge are done well. She thought the green spaces something to be considered alongside the footpaths and would like to work with the Town Council to achieve that.

Cllr Wilson reported that local authorities must spend the levy on infrastructure needed to support the development of their area, with a focus on the provision of new infrastructure, however, CIL can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure, or to repair failing infrastructure if it is necessary to support the development. She said that the definition of infrastructure is broad but does include roads and pavements and that all the pavements and roads that connect our new developments in the town are failing. Cllr Wilson is considering making a formal request for clear guidance and would like to have the following questions answered.

1. Is there any priority for local spending?

2. Who are the decision makers?
3. When will consultations begin between the decision makers, the parish and town councils and the infrastructure providers?

Cllr Sevier reported that it is laid out in law what the District Council can spend their CIL money on, the majority of this goes towards social housing, a smaller amount goes on the upkeep of the green spaces for the next 30 years. She said that roads, pavements and education fall under the responsibility of the County Council.

Cllr Wilson responded that even though the infrastructure provider is HCC, NFDC could still contribute from their portion of CIL. She reported that £1.2M has been received to date from the Ford1 development but that she cannot find any details of how that money is being spent.

Action: Cllr Sevier to find out details of how the £1.2M is being spent

Cllr Sevier hoped that HCC, NFDC and FTC can work together to gain a better understanding of what the town would like with the money available.

Cllr Wilson said that footpaths and roads are a priority. Cllr Sevier thought it would not be easy to transfer the money across from NFDC. She said that the developer also has the right to say what they'd like some of the money spent on.

Cllr Wilson reported that NFDC are obliged to consult with town and parish councils and infrastructure providers but that she cannot find a timetable for that.

12. To receive the following Committee meeting minutes and any recommendations to General Council contained therein.

- Planning Committee – 10th February 2021 – received Cllr Paton
- Extraordinary Amenities meeting – 24th February 2021 – received Cllr Moulard
- Finance and Policy Committee – 27th February 2021 – received Cllr Adams

13. To receive a presentation from the Rural Market Town Group, Part of the Rural Services Network, and to consider membership thereof

The Director of the Rural Services Network, gave a presentation asking members to consider joining the Rural Market Towns Group, with the purpose of working together with other rural market towns to have the rural viewpoint heard by Government. Membership is free until September and then £130 pa.

Cllr Hale asked if the group is exclusively for councils. He was advised that local authority groups such as housing associations and healthcare trusts have also joined.

Cllr Anstey queried whether Fordingbridge is actually a rural market town. The director of the RSN said that a market town is defined not by ancient charters or cattle markets but by being a hub to the surrounding area. A healthy market town has a healthy catchment area.

Cllr Adams asked if there was an example of the type of advice given by the group. He was told the group doesn't give advice but aims to increase awareness at Government level of the funding needs of rural communities.

Cllr Jackson thought that the rural market town aspect of Fordingbridge would be lost once the new housing developments are built. The director of the RSN said that the group has towns with populations ranging from 2k to 30k people. The group can help with advocating for the rural communities and presenting facts to Government to take into account in their considerations.

Cllr Goldsmith asked if there was a monthly magazine. There is a weekly rural newsletter, giving information about the rural situation week by week and publicising consultations of interest.

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Adams and therefore RESOLVED: to join the Rural Market Town Group for the trial free membership period until September. All in favour.

Cllr Anstey volunteered to be the Council's representative at this group.

[The Director of the Rural Services Network left the meeting.]

14. To consider the Town Hall alteration design work

The Clerk reported that the Conservation Officer thinks the heritage report does not deal sufficiently with the history and age of the building and how it evolved, and that further detail is needed regarding the existing fabric. The Conservation Officer has concerns regarding the cumulative effect of the proposed work and the change to the character of the building. The Clerk said that she seems satisfied with the proposed glass doors, the removal of the kitchen and toilets, the reinstatement of the door at the back of the hall and the proposed staircase and that overall, she is sympathetic to the intention of making the building better suited to the needs of the Council.

The Clerk reported that Sheerin Bettle Architecture is still waiting to hear the views of the NFDC planners formally under the pre-application.

The Conservation Officer's comments will be sent to Heritage Advisory with a view to addressing some of the issues raised. The next step after that would be to submit a planning application.

Cllr Adams raised concern about reducing the size of the hall, saying that it wouldn't meet the needs of the growing community; he thought the hall would become unusable. Cllr Anstey reported the Town Hall building needs to be practical for the staff to work in and serve the needs of the public. Cllr Wilson said that the installation of a lift at the Town Hall would make it possible to use the building as a registry office. Cllr Jackson reported that when the work is complete, the Council would no longer need to pay rent for the building at Kings Yard.

15. To consider replacing the commercial boiler at the Pavilion

The Clerk reported that the boiler at the Pavilion is working at only 25% efficiency and there is not enough hot water for showers. The Clerk reported that a water softener had been installed some years ago but not used.

He said that K&B Builders have recommended that the boiler be replaced and have quoted £9,738.98+ Vat to do so. The Clerk reported that Asprey, who last serviced the boiler in June 2020, have expressed surprise that a new commercial boiler is needed and have offered to inspect the boiler and quote for the work. He advised that the replacement of the boiler is not urgent, is a separate piece of work to the refurbishment of the Pavilion and will not slow down the refurbishment project.

Action: Clerk to ask Asprey to inspect the boiler and quote if necessary

16. To consider charging for parking at the Recreation Ground

Members discussed whether to charge for parking at the Recreation Ground car park after the car park has been resurfaced. It was agreed to defer this matter until after the resurfacing work is completed. Cllr Mouland will obtain some quotes for the car park works, to be considered at the Amenities meeting on 17th March.

17. To consider street signage in Fordingbridge

Cllr Wilson showed photographs of several signs in Fordingbridge which she considered redundant. Cllr Perkins reported that visitors to the town often aren't able to find the car park as it is poorly signed. He also reported that a "Provost Street" street sign was installed in the Market Square (rather than in Provost Street itself) by NFDC in February. Cllr Hale recommended that this matter be discussed at April's General Council meeting with Cllr Heron.

Action: Cllr Wilson to email the street sign photographs to Cllrs Heron, Sevier and Bellows.

18. To agree to continue managing the Lengthsman Scheme for HCC

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore RESOLVED: to continue managing the Lengthsman Scheme for HCC. All in favour.

19. To agree a response to the Southern Water – Water for Life Hampshire consultation

Southern Water are seeking planning consent for a desalination plant in the Fawley area which will produce up to 75 million litres of water per day that will be used to supply water to the Hampshire region during periods of drought. The Southern Water – Water for Life Hampshire consultation runs until 23rd March and can be found at www.southernwater.co.uk/water-for-life-hampshire. The consultation also outlines the alternatives Southern Water are exploring in case desalination proves undeliverable – ensuring customers' supplies are maintained.

Councillors decided not to respond to the consultation as it is out of area.

20. To approve Risk Register and Asset Register

Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Goldsmith and therefore RESOLVED: to approve the Risk Register and the Asset Register. All in favour.

21. To report on any Health & Safety issues

Nothing to report.

22. To receive reports from representatives on Outside Bodies and meetings attended

Cllr Earth reported that she and Cllr Adams attended the Avon Valley Shed meeting on Monday. She said that the business plan is almost ready for approval by the Council, new membership forms are awaiting approval by the trustees and the Scouts have given verbal permission to use the Scout hut for meetings temporarily. Cllr Anstey commented that the business case should actually have been presented to the Council before the Council was asked to allocate funds.

Cllr Wilson reported that the Fordingbridge Greener Living Group will receive the first payment towards the community composter this month and the second in June. The first will allow the composter to be ordered, the second will pay for boxes and composter bins for the public to use.

Cllr Wilson reported that plot markers were put in the allotments today and looked very good.

The Clerk reported that a meeting was held between FTC, NFDC and Hampshire Highways on Monday afternoon to discuss transport and highways. Hampshire Highways now have a far better understanding of the issues facing Fordingbridge. There was talk of FTC, NFDC and HCC working collaboratively in future and he felt it was a positive meeting. It was suggested that the Neighbourhood Plan would take too long to get in place to manage some of these issues, and that a more immediate plan is needed. NFDC said that this new document could be adopted as a planning document and therefore have to be considered in terms of any planning decisions.

23. To note any items of correspondence

The Clerk reported that the Avon Valley Shed group had sent an email. They are looking to finalise their business plan and are preparing to submit a planning application to NFDC for a certificate of lawful use. The AVS are looking for confirmation of their proposed scheme and that a change of use to the toilet block will be carried out under permitted development rights in line with the advice previously received from NFDC.

The Riverside Kiosk owner asked that when resurfacing the Recreation Ground car park, the Council also consider laying a path from the car park to the slipway for ease of access for wheelchair users, especially in the winter.

The Yarn Communities Easter display will be put up on about the 28th March on the railings outside the front of The Branch in the High Street.

New Life Church asked for permission to run a Fordingbridge treasure hunt on foot around the town for families and groups of up to six people to take part in over the Easter break, once lockdown restrictions are lifted from 29th March. Councillors felt it was too soon for this activity to take place and asked that the church wait a couple of months.

Cllr Heron emailed regarding the forthcoming footway works in Salisbury Street. The intention was to complete both the drainage and footway works together, in September 2020. Unfortunately, due to a utility company having already secured road space in Salisbury Street to follow on from Hampshire County Council's works, there was limited time to complete all the works and as a private property was subject to flooding, the decision was taken to address the drainage first. Cllr Heron advised the Operation Resilience team that while he is keen for the works to be undertaken, the County Council also needs to be mindful of the prolonged closure of businesses within the Town, especially those within the hospitality sector. He said he would therefore be grateful if the Operation Resilience team could consult with Town Council and himself to try and avoid additional disruption for businesses during peak visitor periods.

24. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business

Cllr Wilson said she is concerned that NFDC may not have a full understanding of the CIL spending process and asked the Clerk to find out some more information. She submitted a FOI request to NFDC on 26th February as follows,

Please could you tell me if any consultation has taken place with Fordingbridge Town Council and if not when and how will this take place?

The response from NFDC was

In accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended), we published our first Infrastructure Funding Statement by the 31 December 2020 and this is available on our website at

<https://newforest.gov.uk/article/1891/Infrastructure-Funding-Statement>

To date, no consultation meetings have taken place with any Infrastructure provider or Town / Parish Council with a view to the release of any CIL funds. We are currently reviewing the process for CIL expenditure and at this stage the formal process is not set out and so no dates can be given.

Cllr Wilson raised concerns that money is available to spend on footpaths, pavements and roads but that it isn't being spent. She wanted this looked into as a matter of urgency.

Cllr Lewendon thought it inappropriate for HCC or NFDC to suggest to local residents that FTC spend their portion of CIL money on any particular project, especially when that project would have normally fallen under a higher tier of Government. Cllr Lewendon recommended better liaison between the County, District and Town Councils. Cllr Hale agreed and said that speed enforcement is a matter for Highways and not a Town Council issue.

Action: Clerk to contact Dean Brunton, NFDC, for more information on the CIL spending process

25. To note the date of the next General Council meeting as Friday 5th March 2021 at 6.30pm
The meeting closed at 9:14p.m.