

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 4th August 2021 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall

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

Present: Cllr Hale – Chairman
Cllrs Adams, Anstey, Earth, Goldsmith, Jackson, Lewendon, Mouland, Paton, Perkins and Wilson

In Attendance: Mr Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs Rachel Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
A local businessman
1 Member of Public
A reporter from the Salisbury Journal

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr White and Cllrs Bellows and Sevier (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 9th June 2021 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Mouland proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 9th June 2021 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters Arising

Agenda item 5 – No information on parking tickets has yet been received from Cllr Heron
Agenda item 10 – Hampshire Swifts reported that none of the Town Council buildings are suitable for the installation of swift boxes
Agenda item 17 – Councillors have visited the refurbished Pavilion
Agenda item 18 – The July General Council meeting was cancelled due to Covid self-isolation regulations.

4. To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary General Council meeting held on Wednesday 30th June 2021 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the Extraordinary General Council meeting held on the 30th June 2021 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters Arising

No matters arising

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

A member of the public spoke passionately about traffic issues and pedestrian concerns in Fordingbridge. He was very concerned that someone would be killed one day. Having already spoken to Highways and to the Police he asked the Council to do something, highlighting the following issues in particular:

- No safe places to cross the road at Market Place – poor visibility and very dangerous for pedestrians
- Speeding cars on the High Street
- Large lorries overhanging pavements when driving through the town
- Cars parked on pavements and double yellow lines
- New housing developments increasing traffic volume
- No consideration given to a bypass
- Car drivers abusing private parking spaces outside shops at Provost Street

Councillors agreed with the member of the public saying that the NFDC Local Plan has been imposed on the town with little consultation. Cllr Hale said that with the CIL money and plan, there is the opportunity to influence the infrastructure.

13. To consider Highways and Footways in Fordingbridge

- **To consider pedestrianising Roundhill**

Agenda item 13 was brought forward in the meeting.

Councillors discussed the pros and cons of pedestrianising Roundhill. Cllr Wilson liked the idea of more open space in the town centre which could be used for markets and special events. Cllr Lewendon was concerned that traffic would increase in the High Street and Green Lane if access to the car park at Roundhill was blocked. Cllr Goldsmith recommended that if the area were to be pedestrianised, access to the car park be physically blocked off so that vehicles could not drive through regardless. Cllr Adams was concerned about the practicalities to businesses with the need to load and unload near their premises. Councillors planned to conduct a survey via SurveyMonkey to gauge public support of pedestrianising the area and discussed the necessity of presenting both sides of the argument in the way the questions were worded. Cllr Wilson said that a public information day was also needed to engage with the town.

A local businessman said that the Council needs to decide whether it considers vehicles or pedestrians more important. He sees Roundhill as a valuable asset and thinks the area should be pedestrianised and designated a jewel in the crown of Fordingbridge. He considers a survey to be overdue.

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

No report received.

7. To receive a report from the Town Mayor

On Friday 30th July the Mayor attended the AGM and Presentation Evening for the Sandleheath Sea Scouts. He reported that it was good to see how active this group is for local younger people in the town and surrounding villages.

8. To receive a report from the County Councillor

No report received.

9. To receive a report from the District Councillors

No report received.

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

- Planning Committee – 16th June 2021 – received Cllr Paton
- Staff & Remuneration Committee – 30th June 2021 – received Cllr Lewendon
- Finance and Policy Committee – 30th June 2021 – received Cllr Adams
- Planning Committee – 14th July 2021 – received Cllr Paton
- Amenities Committee – 21st July 2021 – received Cllr Mouland
- General Purposes Committee – 21st July 2021 – received Cllr Earth
- Finance and Policy Committee – 28th July 2021 – received Cllr Adams

11. To consider the Survey Monkey survey of residents

Councillors discussed the draft survey which had been circulated to all members. Technical points were noted such as not being able to select all relevant options for some questions. Cllr Wilson thought the introduction could be better worded and asked for clarification on what is meant by a 'Commercial and Social Hub'. Cllr Adams advised that an opt-out box is necessary so that people don't have to give their ages. He also said that the survey needs the negatives and qualifications added to the questions, for example, if extra parking is provided at the Recreation Ground then alternative provision would need to be made for sports pitches elsewhere.

Councillors went on to discuss the new developments in Fordingbridge with an additional 1500 houses planned. NFDC reported concerns over whether the infrastructure will cope with the increase in the population and whether sufficient food could be supplied to the town. Cllr Lewendon said that it is illogical to build the Tinkers Cross site next and that it would be better to keep all new development on one side of Whitsbury Road only. He was concerned that if there was a collapse in the housing market that the link roads connecting the sites wouldn't be built and the current road structure would be inadequate for the increased traffic from partially developed sites. Cllr Paton said she would like to see the primary shopping centre extended. A local businessman encouraged the Council to consider the future of retail in the town. He said that quality food, vintage, local and artisan products were popular and by enhancing the artisan, colourful and bohemian nature of the town, Fordingbridge will thrive and develop.

Cllr Paton proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Mouland and therefore **RESOLVED**: to edit the survey as discussed in the meeting, publish and publicise it. 9 in favour, 2 abstentions.

Cllr Goldsmith recommended introducing a 20mph limit along the High Street asap. Cllr Mouland reported that it takes two or three years to change a speed limit.

Cllr Wilson expressed concern that this is the third survey the Council has conducted in two years and that residents would get survey fatigue if they see no action taken as a result. Cllr Jackson reported that SurveyMonkey would analyse the results and provide evidence with which to make a case to NFDC and HCC.

12. To consider continuing membership of the Rural Market Towns Group

Fordingbridge Town Council started a free 6-month trial of the Rural Market Towns Group in March 2021. Cllr Anstey reported that this Rural Services Network (or RSN) seeks to improve the lives of people living in rural areas. The Defra definition of rural dwellers includes those living in market towns (below a population of 30,000) and other centres serving rural areas. RSN feel in England rural people get a poorer deal than other parts of the country due to more restrictive government funding, grants and services as well as a bigger emphasis being put on urban-centric

areas. RSN seeks to represent the rural case and amplify the rural voice on behalf of all its groupings to argue fairer funding for rural areas.

Cllr Anstey reported that RSN aims to do the following:

- Create a Network across England enabling Rural/Market Towns to share best practice and concerns and arrive at consensus viewpoints
- Give Rural/Market Towns collectively the essential Grouping necessary to create the opportunity to present their views and formulate their asks of decision makers.
- Present a full annual programme that facilitates this joint working and ensures that individual Market Towns absolutely get full value from membership.

During the free membership trial, Cllr Anstey attended a Zoom Rural Market Towns Group meeting on 29th March. He had access to monthly bulletins from April and these have covered a wide range of issues:

- Government policy on Tourism Recovery Plan
- White Paper on Health
- Covid 19
- House of Lords Select commitment
- Response to Queen Speech
- Extremely interesting but exclusively very 'rural' issues

Cllr Anstey also attended a Comprehensive Seminar programme of events (free):

- 26May21 Rural Health& Social Care
- 10Jun21 Reopening Community Buildings
- 30Jun21 Rural Housing
- 28July21 Enabling Rural Business

Cllr Anstey reported that the group takes up a considerable amount of time but proposed joining for one year (only).

Cllr Lewendon asked how many members are in the group and where they are located. Cllr Anstey reported that 200 rural councils and market towns are members of the RSN and they are mainly located in the Midlands and the North of England.

Action: Clerk to find out price of membership and add to agenda for discussion at the Finance and Policy Committee meeting on 25th August 2021.

14. To report on any Health & Safety issues

Cllr Wilson reported that NFDC has removed the unsightly barriers in the car park but not the low-lying wall on which they were sited. This has left a trip hazard, which is especially a danger for partially sighted people. Cllr Wilson read the following Government guidance:

3.7 Street furniture

Bollards are recommended to be at least 1000mm in height. The same minimum height (1000mm) applies to other freestanding objects such as raised flowerbeds, which should also be designed with rounded edges.

Source:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/3695/inclusive-mobility.pdf

Cllr Wilson reported that the Clerk has made several requests for an update on the works but has not received any response.



Figure 1 Barriers before removal



Figure 2 Low lying wall after barriers removed

Cllr Lewendon reported that the overgrown pavement at Tinkers Cross is getting worse. Cllr Anstey reported on safety at the Recreation Ground and in particular the use of the River Avon. He said that with predicted summer day temperatures rising and more people holidaying in the UK, the number of people using the Recreation Ground and the river will increase. He reported that 25th July 2021 was World Drowning Prevention Day, but this was unfortunately too late for the eight people who tragically died in separate drowning incidents in England on the weekend of 17th & 18th July. Stats from the Water Incident Database (WAID) show In England 2020 there were 41 drownings in rivers. Cllr Anstey asked for it to be minuted that the Town Council wishes that all members of the public safely enjoy the facilities at the Recreation Ground. However, anyone taking to the river does so at their own risk; members of public are responsible for their own actions. The Town Council provides safety equipment (lifebuoys) for the welfare of the public, so please only use this equipment for its intended purpose – unfortunately these are often vandalised, removed or misused. The Town Council checks and maintains this equipment on a regular basis, but if anyone sees any missing or damaged please report it on 01425 654134.

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

Cllr Adams attended the Men's Shed meeting at the Church Hall on 3rd August. He reported that the Men's Shed will hold a public meeting to gauge support.

Cllr Hale attended the Victoria Rooms AGM on Monday 19th July, which covered the last two years. He reported that the Victoria Rooms Trust is in a reasonable financial position and most of the bookings have returned. The external notice board has been replaced. There was discussion about illegal parking outside the building as this is causing issues for some of the bookings, and there have been requests for the Trustees to take action on this.

Cllr Anstey attended the following meetings.

30June	Rural Housing Seminar	Zoom
01July	NFNPA meeting	Brockenhurst
22July	NFALC AGM	Zoom
26July	NPSG (CUB)	Glasshouse
26July	NW Quadrant meeting	Town Hall
27July	NPSG meeting	Zoom

28July	Enabling Rural Business Seminar	Zoom
03Aug	Recreation Ground Visit	Rec

Cllr Jackson attended a meeting with the NFDC Head of Planning on 26th July. He reported that at least 1500 new houses will be built in Fordingbridge. The Government has introduced new guidelines regarding density of housing and therefore the number could be more. Cllr Jackson reported that NFDC has concerns about the social infrastructure in Fordingbridge and how it will manage with this many more people, in particular the impact on the food supply in the town. He said that NFDC are reluctant to issue a compulsory purchase order of land due to the time and cost of doing so. Also that the Community Infrastructure Levy could be reviewed and become a sales tax payable directly to the Government. He mentioned the importance of the railway and footpaths in the town and the possibility of pedestrianising Roundhill.

Cllr Lewendon reported that some of the proposed new railway route goes along a footpath and is therefore not currently suitable for bicycles. Footpaths 83 and 84 were specifically mentioned; these form part of the Avon Valley Path. Cllr Wilson stressed the importance of children being able to walk safely to school. Councillors agreed that NFDC need to meet with the Town Council to visit the area and plan where the route will go.

16. To note any items of correspondence

The Clerk reported that NFDC is conducting a Gambling Act 2005 Policy Consultation, seeking views on its Statement of Principles which will cover the period January 2022 to January 2025. However, the proposal is to make no changes to the current Statement of Principles. The consultation will run **from 19 July 2021 to 10 September 2021** and the draft policy is available on the Council's website at <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/6547/Gambling-Act-2005> The deadline is 5pm on 10 September 2021.

A letter was received from PCC Donna Jones regarding a new Anti-social behaviour ("ASB") Task Force, taking a partnership problem solving approach to prevent and tackle ASB and identify the most appropriate course of action to tackle specific local concerns. 19 – 25 July 2021 was the first national anti-social behaviour week. The ASB Task Force was launched during that week to let residents know that the Police are listening to their concerns and taking action. Posts were shared on social media.

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

Cllr Paton reported that she had taken the open topped tourist bus. Fordingbridge and the Recreation Ground in particular, were mentioned as good places to visit on the tour. Cllr Paton said that due to the hedges not being cut at the Rec, it was difficult to see the town to its full potential.

[The member of public left the meeting.]

Cllr Wilson reported that there will be story telling at the Junior School on Sunday at 7pm.

Cllr Perkins reported that the contractors who recently worked on the highway at Market Place blocked access to businesses and were rude. Cllr Perkins queried why they couldn't have cleared up on the Friday and saved the weekend trade, rather than leaving it until Monday to reopen the road fully. This took less than 2 hours to do on the Monday.

18. To note the date of the next meeting as the Annual Council Meeting on Wednesday 1st September 2021 at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 9:08p.m.