

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Date: Thursday, 17 October 2024

Venue: Council Chamber - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Mrs P K Hayre
(Mayor)

Mrs L E Clubley
(Deputy Mayor)

Councillors: C A Bainbridge, I J Bastable, Mrs S M Bayford, R N Bird, F W Birkett, Mrs L M Birkett, Mrs P M Bryant, F L Burgess, Miss J Burton, M R Daniells, Mrs T L Ellis, J M Englefield, D G Foot, M J Ford, G Furnivall, D J Hamilton, Miss T Harper, Mrs C L A Hockley, S P Ingram, Mrs K Mandry, S D Martin, A M J Murphy, Mrs J Needham, P M Nother, A West, L J Whittle, P W Whittle, D P Wiltshire and K Wiltshire



1. PRAYERS

The meeting commenced with a service of prayers led by Reverend Ian Meredith.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Dugan.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Mayor be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meetings of the special Council and the Council, both held on 25 July 2024.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that on 25 September, she held a party for the winners and runners up in the annual Fareham in Bloom competition and was pleased to present them with their prizes and certificates.

The Mayor stated that as Members were aware, Fareham Live is now open and she had attended two wonderful opening performances – the Wave of Thanks Gala on 28 September and the Rocky Horror show official Gala opening night on 1 October. The Mayor shared the wording of a letter she received from the joint co-founders and Chief Executive Officers of Trafalgar Entertainment, Sir Howard Panter and Dame Rosemary Squire:

“We thought the evening went really well and was a fitting celebration for the new theatre, you should all be very proud of your commitment and foresight in seeing the project through during and after the pandemic.

Please pass on our congratulations to the Leader, your fellow Councillors and the team who have all worked so hard in achieving this great outcome. Our sincere thanks on behalf of Trafalgar Entertainment to everyone. We are looking forward to continuing to work with you all and seeing you at many more events at Fareham Live.”

The Mayor went on to announce the very exciting news that the Council has received confirmation of a Royal Visit to commemorate the opening of Fareham Live. HRH The Duke of Edinburgh will tour the theatre and community spaces on Wednesday 13 November and we are very excited to host His Royal Highness.

On 8 October the Mayor was very pleased to attend a royal visit by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, at Warsash Sailing Club.

The Mayor announced that her next tea party will be held on Thursday 14 November (this is a change from the 7 November). There will be a guest speaker on the Lee-on-the Solent Tower.

Finally, the Mayor asked that Members note that the Council meeting in February has been changed from Friday 21 February to Friday 14 February. As this is the annual budget setting meeting, the meeting will start at 5pm.

5. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader was delighted to share in the news of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh coming to Fareham in November.

The Executive Leader made the following announcements:

Fareham Town Centre Regeneration

We are at the beginning of the transformation of a regeneration programme for Fareham Town Centre, The aspirations are clear and have been shared increasingly where we want to deliver a vibrant go to destination, to grow pride in our town; to create a new sense of purpose; to improve the perception of our town, and to restore and improve the personality of the town. We are focused on creating realistic plans that can be delivered and this will be the focus of the actions going forward and reports will be presented to Council meetings over the next couple of months.

Purchasing Fareham Shopping Centre has opened up opportunities to make meaningful changes to create a town centre that suits modern trends and lifestyles. The opening of Fareham Live has contributed by enhancing the leisure offer with a nighttime activity, capitalising on increasing numbers of people coming into the town. In the first week of Fareham Live performances (week commencing 30 September) there were an additional 4,290 visits to Fareham Shopping Centre during trading hours and 1,833 trips through the Fareham Shopping Centre evening route. We've already seen businesses starting to tailor their offers for Fareham Live theatre goers, with pubs offering early bird deals and Fareham is therefore going to benefit from the newest jewel in our crown.

Westbury Manor

Westbury Manor is in the heart of Fareham town centre and is therefore a key part of our regeneration programme. It has significant potential to support the aspirations that I've previously mentioned. Following the decision by Hampshire Cultural Trust to leave Westbury Manor we are actively seeking a new operator which will be both commercially viable and will also bring an exciting offer to the town to assist us in driving forward the regeneration programme. Our asset management and regeneration teams are working closely with the appointed agent to consider all potential offers from established operators as well as independent local businesses and we are clear that Westbury Manor is too important to the town and our aspiration to not take the time to explore all the opportunities and to make sure that we secure the right operator for the town going forward.

6. EXECUTIVE MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Executive Member for Planning and Development

The Executive Member for Planning and Development made the following announcements:

Climate and Environment concerns

As Members will recall, we passed a Motion at our July meeting to commit to tackling climate change. Following this, I have written to our three local MPs notifying them of the Council's resolutions. These efforts demonstrate our commitment to both the environmental responsibilities and economic pragmatisms. I'd like to thank officers for support to this conversation and I will keep you all updated as we receive any responses about further developments.

NPPF

I would like to send my sincere thanks to all Councillors who attended the recent NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) briefing and to gather engagement input. It was really valuable, and I also want to express my appreciation to the officers and scrutiny panel for supporting me in responding to the consultation. Our collective efforts ensure that our Council continues to respond effectively and thoroughly to the challenges we face.

Executive Member for Leisure and Community

The Executive Member for Leisure and Community made the following announcements:

Westbury Manor Museum

I thought Members would welcome some further information in respect of the closure of Westbury Manor Museum. I am aware many residents are concerned about its future and I hope this will help you with giving a response.

In June 2016, the Executive approved a 10-year management agreement (2017-2027) for the lease of Westbury Manor with the Hampshire Cultural Trust for the provision of a museum service. The agreement included investment of £448,000 by the Council towards the refurbishment of Westbury Manor Museum. In exchange for the capital investment, the contribution previously made by the Council, towards the cost of operating the Museum, ended, delivering revenue savings of £395,910. The Trust did not have a full repairing lease and the Council was responsible for the roof, boiler, lift and externally the forecourt and garden but not the patio area.

In response to economic pressures, Hampshire Cultural Trust carried out a review of its managed venues in 2023, with specific focus on those venues receiving no local authority funding, this included Westbury Manor Museum. Hampshire Cultural Trust then requested a variation to the 10-year

management agreement, but this was not supported at the May 2023 Executive meeting due to the significant level of investment that was initially made by the Council to the museum.

Although Westbury Manor belongs to the Council, the objects on display inside are part of the Hampshire County Council Museum collections that are looked after by the Hampshire Cultural Trust. The closure from 1 November will give the Trust time to properly manage the removal of the important collections currently housed within the building. Using limited staff resources they have available, it will take them into December to remove all of the collections. Most items will be returned to storage after being cleaned and documented on site.

So, as a reminder, until the end of this month the café will be open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10am to 2pm and the building will be returned to us at the end of December.

Like you all, I am very sad that the Museum is to close. It is a beautiful old building with historic links to the Council. I would like to reassure Members that Officers are actively working with Savills UK in order to achieve a rental income. Christmas will shortly be upon us and I can advise that the building will, as usual, have a large Christmas tree in the forecourt and Officers are working with the Trust to have the festive window boxes brought to site to illuminate the front of the building while closed in the run up to Christmas.

I will keep Members advised of any further developments.

Fareham Live

To echo what the Mayor and Executive Leader have already said, Fareham Live is amazing and I particularly enjoyed the Legends of Dance show last night. I am delighted that we have a Royal visit to mark the opening and I thank everyone for their work and we are rightly proud of that.

Executive Member for Housing

The Executive Member for Housing made the following announcement:

Fareham Live is the jewel in our crown which demonstrates the importance that this Council shows the arts and the culture of Fareham and the wider area which forms part of our regeneration plans which the Executive Leader spoke about.

I wanted to highlight for Members that at its meeting on 7 October, the Executive considered a report on Fareham Housing Development Sites Update. The report outlines what has happened, what is currently happening and what the plans are for the future. I recommend it to Members who haven't read it yet to do so and then inform their residents about the work that's going on to compliment what is happening with the regeneration work.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

8. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions presented at this meeting.

9. DEPUTATIONS

A deputation was received from local resident, Gareth Jones, in respect of item 14(1) – Motion on Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty.

10. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE

(1) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 3 September 2024 of Executive

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on Tuesday, 3 September 2024 be received.

(2) Minutes of meeting Monday, 7 October 2024 of Executive

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on Monday, 07 October 2024 be received.

(3) Schedule of Individual Executive Member and Officer Delegated Decisions

RESOLVED that the Schedule of Individual Executive Member and Officer Delegated Decisions be received.

11. REPORTS OF OTHER COMMITTEES

(1) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 2 July 2024 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday, 02 July 2024 be received.

(2) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 10 July 2024 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 10 July 2024 be received.

(3) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 25 July 2024 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Thursday 25 July 2024 be received.

(4) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 8 August 2024 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Thursday 08 August 2024 be received.

- (5) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 18 July 2024 of Audit and Governance Committee

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Council endorses the updated Financial Regulations as set out at Appendix B to the Committee Report; and
- (b) the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on Thursday 18 July 2024 be received.
- (6) Minutes of meeting Monday, 23 September 2024 of Audit and Governance Committee

RESOLVED that the Council:

- (a) endorses the revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules attached at Appendix 1 to the Review of Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules report, to be implemented on the same date that the Procurement Act 2023 goes live;
- (b) grants delegated authority to the Assistant Director (Finance and ICT) to update the Appendices to the Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules as subsequent changes needed are identified, including the additional wording to be added to paragraph 56 to clarify when Council is required to take a decision over £500k; and
- (c) agrees that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on Monday 23 September 2024 be received.

12. REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY PANELS

- (1) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 17 July 2024 of Daedalus Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Daedalus Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday 17 July 2024 be received.

- (2) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 30 July 2024 of Streetscene Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Streetscene Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 30 July 2024 be received.

- (3) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 18 September 2024 of Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday 18 September 2024 be received.

- (4) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 2 October 2024 of Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel


RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday 02 October 2024 be received.

13. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 2.12

Questions by Councillor R N Bird:

1. In his capacity as the Council's Armed Forces Champion, would the Executive Member join me in celebrating Fareham Borough Council's ten years as a signatory to the Community Covenant, recognising the hard work of our Armed Forces?
2. Will he further join me in being proud of the five years since 2019 in which the Council has demonstrated practical support as a Bronze tier member of the Defence Employers' Recognition Scheme?
3. Given the large number of people in Fareham who serve in the Armed Forces, will he please outline what plans the Council has, if any, to seek Silver or Gold tier membership of the Scheme when the opportunity next arises?"

Response by the Executive Member for Housing and Armed Forces Champion:

1. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise to acknowledge and understand that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities in which they live. It is therefore entirely appropriate that Fareham Borough Council was a keen signatory to the Community Covenant in January 2014. Fareham has long established strong links to the Royal Navy, as demonstrated by HMS Collingwood being awarded Freeman of the Borough in 1974.
2. There are many ways the Council provides practical support to Armed Forces veterans, over and beyond the requirements as set out in the Defence Employer's Recognition Scheme. Fareham has the third highest proportion of households with at least one veteran ([ONS Census 2021](#) ) across England and Wales. There is some excellent, specialist support available for Veterans and Armed Forces Personnel, as set out on the Council's website and delivered by our hard working teams, to support their individual needs and as the Armed Forces Champion, I am extremely proud of the work carried out by Fareham Borough Council in support of all of Fareham's residents.
3. Fareham Borough Council currently meets the majority of the requirements of the Silver tier (4 out of 5 elements met) and some elements of the Gold tier. It is not currently the Council's focus to satisfy all of the elements for the sake of achieving a certain standard, however this does not preclude us from achieving it in the future.

Questions by Councillor P W Whittle:

Readiness to accommodate homeless evacuees and repatriations from Lebanon and the Middle East

BACKGROUND

The UK Government has recognised the escalating conflict in the Middle East may result in evacuation from Lebanon of British citizens and people with the right of domicile in the UK. Some repatriation has already commenced and 6,000 people are estimated to be at risk in Lebanon (October 2024). Further provision may also be required for occupants of Palestine and other countries in the area. Fareham Borough Council has exercised a supportive response to displaced people from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Fareham Borough Council notes:

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has confirmed to local authorities that eligible groups impacted by events in the Middle East are entitled to benefits, social housing and homelessness assistance.
- In October 2023 emergency legislation ensures those fleeing Israel, Palestine or Lebanon are exempt from the habitual residence test for access to benefits, homelessness assistance and social housing. These changes remain in place [October 2024].
- Statutory guidance exists to local housing authorities on exercising their homelessness functions in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and for allocation of accommodation and for social housing allocations in England.

QUESTION

Will Fareham Borough Council confirm:

1. A commitment to provide humanitarian support to displaced and homeless people, including those arriving from Lebanon and the Middle East?
2. A readiness and capacity within existing arrangements to support those in need entering the UK from the conflict zone who may require support and accommodation in the Borough?
3. Preparations will be made to expand an engagement plan for further support and provision within Fareham, such as home stays, if it should be required at a near or later date?

Response by the Executive Member for Housing:

- 1. We fully recognise the difficult and turbulent situation in the Middle East. The Council will respond in line with any government requirements relating to displaced or homeless persons arising from the ongoing conflict.

2. At this stage it would be inappropriate to hold Council homes empty, or to hold resources, for the purposes of potential accommodation or support that may or may not be required. This could disadvantage Fareham Borough residents who need affordable housing or homelessness support. Existing resources are in place at Hampshire County Council and Fareham Borough Council to support Ukrainian refugees and, subject to funding, these could be expanded to meet any new refugee obligations.
3. It is not intended that resources will be redirected to an engagement plan relating to further support/provision in Fareham until such a time as there is national direction on this matter. If such circumstances were to arise, where council support is required, then it is anticipated that this would be in conjunction with Hampshire County Council (as was the case with the Ukrainian programmes).

14. MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 2.6

- (1) Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

A deputation was received in respect of this item from local resident, Gareth Jones.

Motion proposed by Councillor T L Ellis:

“Fareham has a high number of pensioners within the Borough who currently benefit from the Winter Fuel Allowance, irrespective of whether they are in receipt of other benefits. It should not be forgotten that the Borough, among this group, has one of the highest numbers of over 80's in the Country. This allowance, for so many is a lifeline, giving peace of mind that they can keep their heating on, it can mean the difference between affording to stay in their own home or not so has additional risk of overloading the requirement for alternative accommodation in the area. The potential impact of the change will affect up to 25,000 residents across the Borough and I ask Members' consideration to support the following:

Council Notes:

- The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Fareham Borough Council and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.

- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by the sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Fareham Borough sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible for Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners (particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit) are protected from fuel poverty.
- Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that **all** eligible pensioners in Fareham Borough are supported in claiming their entitlement.

Prior to the debate on this item, the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that as all Members present would at some point in their lives likely be eligible to be in receipt of a state pension, and that the withdrawal of Members currently affected would upset the political balance of the Council, a dispensation is

granted, allowing all Members to remain in the chamber, take part in the debate and vote on the item.

During a debate on this item, Councillor G Furnivall proposed an amendment to add the words: “that this Council resolves to consider the actions of the motion after the Government budget is announced on 30 October by holding this debate at the December Council meeting”.

Having been duly seconded by Councillor J Englefield and following the debate, the amendment was declared lost with 2 Councillors voting in favour, 27 voting against and 1 abstention.

On the substantive motion having been duly seconded by Councillor C Bainbridge and following debate, the motion was declared carried with 29 Councillors voting in favour, none voting against and 1 abstention. (Councillors C Bainbridge, I Bastable, S Bayford, R Bird, F Birkett, L Birkett, P Bryant, F Burgess, J Burton, L Clubley, M Daniells, T Ellis, J Englefield, D Foot, M Ford, D Hamilton, T Harper, C Hockley, S Ingram, K Mandry, S Martin, A Murphy, J Needham, P Nother, A West, L Whittle, P Whittle, D Wiltshire and K Wiltshire voting in favour and Councillor G Furnivall abstaining.

15. COUNCIL TAX LONG TERM EMPTY AND SECOND HOME PREMIUM CHARGES

At the Council meeting on 23 February 2024, the Council agreed:

- (a) a new 100% premium on second homes and restricted second homes after 12 months, from 01 April 2025;
- (b) an earlier 100% premium for Long Term Empty Properties which have been empty and unfurnished for a period between 1 and 5 years (previously a period between 2 and 5 years);
- (c) the Council’s Section 151 Officer be granted delegated power to waive these premiums or alter the policy in exceptional circumstances after consultation with the Executive Portfolio holder with responsibility for Local Tax Collection;
- (d) an update to the Council Tax Discounts, Exemption and Premiums Policy (Appendix A to this report).

Whilst the correct elements of the policy detailed above were approved in the report, Appendix A did not reflect those changes. A correction was therefore sought to the formal minute by requesting that Council approve the correct Appendix (Appendix A(V2)) to apply retrospectively, as was originally intended.

RESOLVED that the Council agrees that:

- (a) a correction be made to the formal minute, as detailed above; and
- (b) Appendix A(V2) be applied retrospectively, as originally intended.

16. SCHEDULE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2025/26

RESOLVED that Council:

- (a) approves the proposed schedule of Council, Committee and Panel meetings for the municipal year 2025/26, as set out at Appendix A to the report; and
- (b) notes the dates for the Partnership for South Hampshire Joint Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee are provisional until approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting in December 2024.

17. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

- (1) Earl of Southampton Trust

RESOLVED that, having been duly proposed and seconded, Ian Brewerton be appointed to the Earl of Southampton Board of Trustees for a further 4-year term of office.

- (2) William Price Trust

RESOLVED that, having been duly proposed and seconded, Councillor Mrs P M Bryant and Councillor Mrs T L Ellis be appointed to the William Price Trust for further 4-year terms office.

18. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

There were no changes to the appointments to Committees made at this meeting.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.39 pm).

..... Chairman

..... Date