

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Date: Thursday, 16 June 2022

Venue: Council Chamber - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

M J Ford, JP
(Mayor)

F Birkett
(Deputy Mayor)

Councillors: Ms C Bainbridge, I Bastable, Mrs S M Bayford, R Bird, Mrs P M Bryant, Miss J Bull, Ms F Burgess, Mrs L E Clublely, M R Daniells, Mrs T L Ellis, J M Englefield, D G Foot, N R Gregory, D J Hamilton, Mrs P Hayre, Mrs C L A Hockley, S Ingram, Mrs J Kelly, Mrs K Mandry, S D Martin, Mrs J Needham, P Nother, Ms S Pankhurst, Mrs K K Trott, N J Walker, Mrs S M Walker and S D T Woodward



1. PRAYERS

The meeting commenced with a short service of prayer led by the Mayor's Chaplain.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Dugan and Councillor Miss T Harper.

3. MINUTES

An amendment to item 12(1) was proposed to clarify that at the annual Council meeting in May 2021 the Executive Leader was appointed for a 3 year term of office up to the end of the 2023/24 municipal year.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment above, the Mayor be authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2022.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that he would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who were involved in making the Falklands commemoration event on Saturday 14 May so successful. This event marked the 40th Anniversary of the end of the conflict and he was honoured to unveil a memorial plaque at the Falklands Arch along with Falklands Veteran Derek Kimber. The Mayor announced he would especially like to thank HMS Collingwood, who exercised their Freedom of the Borough, and the band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines as well as the hundreds of people who came to watch the service and pay their respects.

In celebration and recognition of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, more than 1,500 beacons were lit across the UK. The Mayor announced that he was privileged to light Fareham's very own beacon at the top of Portchester Castle and stated that it was great to see thousands of people attending and making the most of the good weather and entertainment.

5. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader announced that earlier this year, the Government announced that £2.6bn of funding would be released for Councils as part of the Levelling Up agenda. The Executive Leader was pleased to be able to advise Members that Fareham has been allocated £1m, spread over the three years (2022/23 – 2024/25). In order to receive this funding each Council has to submit a Local Investment Plan to Government by 1st August that

demonstrates how the funding will be used and the outcomes that will be achieved as a result.

The Council's actions must align with the Government's priorities for the fund which are:

- Community and Place
- Supporting local business
- People and Skills.

The Executive Leader stated that he has asked officers to bring a report to the July meeting of the Executive to provide more details on the fund and the Council will be consulting with business and community representatives as we prepare our plan. At this early stage, however, the emerging priorities for the funding are:

- To develop proposals for improving sports and community facilities in the Fareham North-West area, while delivering much needed affordable homes in this area of high need.
- Improvements to amenities in the Fareham South area, especially having regard to Crossfell Walk play area.
- A programme of business support, with a focus on improving our town, district and local centres and supporting businesses towards net zero carbon and the green growth agenda.

6. EXECUTIVE MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Local Plan

The progression of the new Local Plan through examination continues in a positive manner. Earlier this week, we published on our website a letter we had received from the Inspector outlining her areas of concern, relating to the soundness of the Local Plan, following the conclusion of the hearings in early April.

The Inspector has requested that the Council undertake a focussed consultation on matters relating to housing supply to reflect her findings as follows:

- 1) the removal of two housing allocations adjacent to Fareham station; and
- 2) the pushing back of the housing delivery completions projected for Welborne by one year; and
- 3) a reduction in projected peak annual delivery rates at Welborne

All aspects of the Post Hearings letter, including the housing supply consultation, will be the subject of a report to the 4 July Executive meeting.

There is likely to be a further consultation on all changes, known as modifications, to the Local Plan later in the year, and this will be brought to a future Council meeting.

New Forest Recreational Disturbance

Members will recall that last December, the Council's Executive approved an interim mitigation solution to address concerns raised by Natural England on the potential for impact from residents of Fareham choosing to visit and recreate on the protected sites in the New Forest. At that time, there was much discussion about the findings of the report that Natural England based their opinion on, including the results of telephone surveys suggesting that the average Fareham resident visits the New Forest an average of 15.3 times a year. As part of agreeing the interim scheme, a commitment was made that through monitoring the scheme, the scheme could be reviewed.

I can announce that we have commissioned a repeat of the telephone surveys in order to help us understand whether there is a continuing level of potential impact that may need to be mitigated. Those surveys will take place over the coming weeks and I will keep this Council informed of the outcomes.

The Executive Member for Housing made the following announcement:

I am pleased to advise that the planning application for the redevelopment of Assheton Court is expected to be submitted in the coming weeks. Following community consultation on the initial drawings last autumn, officers have been working with the appointed architects to make adjustments and improvements to the scheme; this was in response to many of the comments raised.

Submitting this planning application is a key step forward for this Council owned site, which has been identified for potential redevelopment for some time. Subject to planning approval, building of the new Assheton Court will start in 2023. Not only will this development provide much needed additional sheltered housing in Portchester, it will also be providing high quality, modern homes, that are more accessible (including a number of fully wheelchair accessible flats), and homes which are "greener".

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

For those members that are not familiar with Access All Areas - it is a programme that provides young Fareham residents aged between 11 and 16 the opportunity to access different activities and experiences during the summer holidays.

This year's programme will run from Tuesday 2 to Thursday 25 August at various locations around the Borough.

Some of the activities on offer will include;

- Inflatable pool parties at Fareham and Holly Hill Leisure Centres
- Top Rock climbing at Fareham Leisure Centre
- Sailing with Seafarers Sailing Club in Hill Head
- Motorcycling with Solent Stars
- Paddleboarding/kayaking with Portchester Scouts
- Driving lessons for 14, 15 and 16 year olds with Phoenix Driving School

All of these organisations are offering the activities and use of their facilities for free and these are partnerships we are very grateful and thankful to have.

The Access All Areas scheme will open for registrations later this month.

The cost is £10.00, and this will entitle each young person to take part in 4 different activities – which is very good value for money. There will also be some free spaces on offer for those from disadvantaged backgrounds which will be taken by referral from partner organisations

For more information about Access All Areas, and other Council run summer events, such as Play Day and Thumbs up Friday, these can be found on the Council website under 'events'. You can also find out about other events from the Countryside Rangers, libraries, Fareham Shopping Centre, Everyone Active, Play Rangers and Westbury Manor Museum.

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 made by local resident Mr Gareth Jones in respect of Item 16 on the agenda.

16. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

With the permission of the Mayor, this item was brought forward on the agenda and heard directly after item 9.

A deputation was made in respect of this item by local resident Mr Gareth Jones.

The Group Leader of the Liberal Democrats Councillor Mrs Trott made the following changes for the Liberal Democrat group:

Housing Scrutiny Panel – remove Councillor Norris as a member of the Panel and replace him with Councillor Mrs Kelly with Councillor Ms Bainbridge appointed as a deputy.

Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee – Councillor Hamilton to be appointed as a member of the Committee with Councillor Nother as deputy.

These changes will come into effect from 17 June 2022.

10. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE

- (1) Minutes of meeting Monday, 16 May 2022 of Executive

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on Monday 16 May 22 be received.

- (2) Schedule of Individual Executive Member and Officer Decisions

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

11. REPORTS OF OTHER COMMITTEES

- (1) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 13 April 2022 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 13 April 2022 be received.

- (2) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 25 May 2022 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 25 May 2022 be received.

12. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 2.12

Questions by Councillor R N Bird:

Empty Homes

The Fareham Borough Council website gives advice about bringing empty homes back into use, an approach which smartens streets, reduces the need for greenfield development and increases Council Tax receipts. Would the Executive Leader:

- 1) Confirm how many empty homes there are in the Borough;
- 2) Agree that the Council would benefit from adopting an Empty Homes Policy to provide a framework for concerted action in this field; and
- 3) Agree that such a policy has the potential to generate income for the Council, by reducing Council Tax arrears, increasing the tax base and increasing grant income through the New Homes Bonus?

Response by the Executive Member for Housing:

- 1) There are over 50,000 dwellings in the Fareham and, according to council tax records, approximately 196 properties are recognised as long term empty properties, having remained empty for more than two years, although this number can change on a daily basis.

There are many reasons why a property may remain empty for long periods. For example, of the 196 long term empty homes,

- 138 properties relate to 3 specific developments of new “retirement living” homes in the borough.
- 18 are FBC owned properties held empty for strategic reasons (such as Assheton Court and Menin House) where there are plans for redevelopment.
- 8 properties are held by developers.
- 3 form part of a deceased estate.

This leaves 28 other empty properties that are privately owned homes, representing just 0.055% of the rateable residential properties in the borough.

- 2) The Council has an empty homes strategy, and when problematic properties are brought to our attention, the most expedient approach is to work with the owners to bring them back into use or resolve the issues of concern.

The Council also has various powers available to address issues with empty homes through direct intervention using Planning and Environmental Health enforcement powers, as well as CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) and EDMO (Empty Dwelling Management Order) powers. Direct intervention should, however, be the last resort, as it is very resource intensive and does not resolve issues quickly. This is why the Council’s first approach is to try and work with owners to bring homes back into use, and the Farelets scheme is a good example of where homeowners put their empty homes to good use, under the custody of the Council. 77 properties are managed under this scheme.

Nonetheless, the Council has used enforcement powers previously, and the Empty Homes policy is due to be reviewed and refreshed later this year, to ensure that we have a framework for using the powers available, in a proportionate way.

- 3) The Council already uses its council tax discretion to encourage empty properties back into use, by levying a premium charge of up to 300% on top of the normal council tax, for long term empty properties.

Of the 196 long term empty properties, 182 are charged a 100% premium, 11 are charged a 200% premium and 3 are charged a 300% premium, on top of the normal council tax charge.

As council tax is already chargeable on empty properties, at a premium, bringing a property back into use would not increase council tax income, nor would it increase the council tax base.

However, the Council’s approach to empty homes is primarily about encouraging them back into use for the benefit of the borough and to address the shortage in housing for those in need.

13. MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 2.6

There were no motions submitted at this meeting.

14. STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS - APPOINTMENT OF A DESIGNATED INDEPENDENT PERSON

RESOLVED that the Council agrees to re-appoint Mr Andrew Day as the Designated Independent Person for Fareham Borough Council with effect from 26 July 2022 for a term of 3 years.

15. REVISION TO THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Council received a report by the Head of Democratic Services which invited members to consider an adjustment to the Special Responsibility Allowances to include provision for remuneration to the Vice Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

RESOLVED that the Council agrees that the position of Vice Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee attracts 15 points in line with other Vice Chairman positions as set out in the Members' Allowance Scheme handbook under the table of Special Responsibility Allowances.

(The meeting started at 6.00 am
and ended at 6.27 am).