

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th May 2020 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 Anstey – Chairman
Cllrs Adams, Earth, Goldsmith, Hale, Jackson, Lewendon, Mouland, Paton, White & Wilson

In Attendance: Mr P Goddard, Town Clerk
Mrs R Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, RFO
Cllr Heron (HCC)
Cllr Bellows (NFDC)
A representative from the Salisbury Journal
A representative from Metis Homes

1. To receive any apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest

3. To confirm the minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 4th March 2020 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Mouland and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 4th March 2020 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising

Item 10 – The 75th Anniversary VE Day celebrations have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Cllr Anstey thanked Cllr White for his hard work in organising what would have been a great event.

Item 13 – The Fordingbridge Festival has been postponed until 2021.

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

No matters raised.

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

No report received.

6. To receive a report from the Town Mayor

The Mayor reported that Wendy Reid has won the Rotary Club Citizen of the Year Award. On behalf of whole Council the Mayor thanked Wendy and expressed that this was a well deserved

recognition for the efforts by Wendy and her team. He said that in recent times her work with the Community Fridge has been absolutely invaluable.

The Mayor reported that the Council has been successful in obtaining a grant from SSEN Resilient Communities Fund for £2100 for the community. This money will be utilised by Fordingbridge Greener Living and The Branch community fridge, to provide food to vulnerable residents and cover volunteer expenses whilst responding to the COVID-19 emergency. The Mayor reported that the Fordingbridge Greener Living Group was another of Wendy Reid's initiatives.

The Mayor reported that Fordingbridge Town Council would like to name the SANG after Bill Bray, a former head teacher at Fordingbridge Junior School and very involved in the local community. The Mayor thought this an excellent idea and suggested that other SANGs be named after people who have made an impact on the Town, in recognition of their community spirit.

The Mayor said that the bunting and the NHS banner look really good and thanked Cllr Wilson and everyone who has been involved in setting this up.

The Mayor reminded Councillors on the limitation of email correspondence and their responsibility of the content of emails when using their official Council address. He felt that with the ability to hold regular virtual meetings, this will take the pressure off reliance of only email traffic. With the facility of virtual meetings, the Mayor expressed his wish to convene an Annual General Council meeting this month, at which a new Chairman/Mayor will be elected.

7. To receive a report from the County Councillor

Cllr Heron signposted the Council to a report on the response to Covid-19 by HCC which will go to HCC cabinet on 15th May. The report sets out all the County Council has been doing to date, ranging from leading on the local resilience forum to running the Hampshire Shielding Hub. The report can be found at

<https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6847>

Cllr Heron thanked all the community groups that have sprung up to help residents at this very difficult time, thinking particularly of the Fordingbridge In Need group. He said they have done a fantastic job of helping those who haven't been able to rely on family and neighbours.

Cllr Heron reported that the County Council is running a helpline. He said that there are some people for whom the community isn't appropriate for them to help, particularly those who are in the shielding or clinically extremely vulnerable group who perhaps might need people to enter their homes as well. There are also those who for various reasons are unwilling to reach out to community groups. Cllr Heron asked that if members are contacted by anyone experiencing difficulties, to please pass on the phone number 0333 370 4000.

Cllr Anstey concurred about the community spirit and the groups set up over these times. He said it's a true reflection of the people that we have in Fordingbridge and is absolutely amazing.

Cllr Jackson raised concerns over the lack of jobs for the additional 2500-3000 people likely to be moving to Fordingbridge, into the new housing developments. He asked Cllr Heron if it was too late to investigate having an Enterprise Zone in Fordingbridge, bearing in mind that there's a lot

of land being allocated to other uses. Cllr Jackson reported that without local jobs, the environment would be adversely affected by people travelling across the forest to work.

Cllr Heron replied that there would only be a fractional increase in the number of people of working age population, so there will not necessarily be more people requiring jobs than there are today. However, there is always an opportunity to bring forward either redevelopment of existing sites or new sites. He thought that the prime opportunity to consider this is through the neighbourhood plan, but cautioned that evidence would need to be obtained.

Cllr Jackson was concerned that planning applications will be approved without consideration of local employment and hence opportunities will be lost. He warned that 1274 houses will be built and the new occupiers will not all be retired. He thought that approximately 2000 jobs will be needed to support the new residents and this would have a big impact. There are no business parks in Fordingbridge which can be expanded.

Cllr Heron said that it's not that retired people will move to Fordingbridge but that the existing working population will age and decline over time. He again mentioned the opportunity the neighbourhood plan provides to designate additional employment land should it be needed.

Cllr Wilson said that footpaths are becoming really important with all the new developments coming and asked whether there would be any investment in footpaths, in particular on the Avon Valley Path, the footpath behind the Junior School and the cycle way at Downwood Close. She reported that these will be important parts of the routes to school but these footpaths are terrible at the moment.

Cllr Heron said he agreed with Cllr Wilson's point. He reported that the answer is yes, in two senses. One is walking and multi-user routes and how they are developed within the development will be a key part of how a planning application is judged. If an application doesn't include those connective routes, those upgrades and those new open spaces then it is unlikely to meet approval. The second part of that is then improving the connectivity outside of those sites, so including existing paths. Trying to get new paths to connect in that aren't part of those developments is also part of the New Forest Greenway Project. NFDC will be looking to use CIL funding to develop routes outside of the sites.

8. To receive a report from the District Councillors

Cllr Bellows seconded what Cllr Heron said about the response from Fordingbridge regarding the Covid-19 situation. She also reported that the New Forest District Council responded really well with their shielding hub and had so far received 709 referrals, which is the highest in Hampshire. NFDC have taken in 20 out of the 22 homeless people within the area and placed them in temporary accommodation. The other two homeless didn't want to come in. NFDC has paid out, within seven days, money to 1993 businesses. The essential services are still operating, including the sack collection and the food banks. The planning officers and the enforcement officers are still visiting sites. NFDC will be re-starting planning meetings next week and will hold them weekly to catch up with the backlog. Cllr Bellows reminded members that all NFDC meetings can be viewed online and now is a great opportunity to keep up to date with all that is happening within our district. She reported that NFDC are rolling out their shared ownership plan.

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

- Planning Committee – 11th March 2020 – received Cllr Hale
- Amenities Committee – 18th March 2020 – received Cllr Mouland
- General Purposes Committee – 18th March 2020 – received Cllr Wilson

10. To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Jackson gave his report, which had been circulated to members before the meeting.

As you all know there has been a lot of information and opinions floating around recently and this is an attempt to clarify some of those issues and set ourselves on a forward path. The Neighbourhood Plan has two parts and two functions.

Firstly, it is a formal part of planning law and seeks to set down principals that must be taken into account on any future planning application.

a) The “rules” are first grounded in the New Forest District Council Local Plan Part One which is schedule to be adopted in early May. The second level of scrutiny will come from the contents of our Neighbourhood Plan (if passed at a town referendum). Unfortunately, we are too late to have any influence on matters already prescribed in the Local Plan. We cannot alter the number of houses, the position of roads or accesses etc.

b) We may be able to have some influence on the position of open and recreation space. At the moment NFDC appear to be taking the 4 applications coming forward in isolation. If we could get them to treat them together we could amalgamate the potential recreation and leisure space to provide one grand scheme that could cater for the school’s needs together with the town’s current and future needs. By using space adjacent to the school we could have shared changing facilities and the potential for an indoor sports hall. Also the maintenance would be spread over a much larger number of users (school and public).

c) The situation of employment land appears to have been overlooked and this may give us an opportunity to ask for some modification. I do know that there has been discussion within NFDC for a number of years about expanding their Enterprise Centre at Totton to other areas in the District. With 2500 new employable people coming to Fordingbridge there seems to be an opportunity for us to press this case now. Once the land has been totally allocated the chance will be lost.

So, these are the two issues we need to be talking to with Claire Upton-Brown the head of planning. There may be a half open door here. The door on other issues would appear to be shut.

Secondly is the opportunity for us to sound out the views of the people of Fordingbridge and prepare some long-term plans. Something which seems to be non-existent at present. I have outlined many of these recently and there has been views expressed on either side. But it is not really us councillors who should be deciding these issues or at least not without some strong guidance from the towns people. We need to be sounding them out quickly.

a) One method is via the questionnaire which has been designed to fit with the requirements of evidence gathering as laid down in the legislation.

b) The second good avenue for use is via an interactive website which is being created at the moment. This will have the scope for people to register their opinions on the site. Not to engage in debate but purely to suggest ideas and give opinions. We need to get these in operation as quickly as possible.

Cllr Bellows reported that the new builds would be built over 26 years. She thought the three different companies would work together because of the sites being in such close proximity. Cllr Jackson thought instead that the houses would be built relatively quickly. He feared that the developers would operate independently of each other and this wouldn't be of benefit to the town. Cllr Heron advised that developers have to bring forward an application that meets the objectives set out for the site and in the local plan policies. He struggled to see how a developer could do that if they were not working with their neighbouring developers.

11. To agree a quote from BrightSpace architects in relation to the proposed refurbishment of the Pavilion

The Clerk reported that the quote from BrightSpace architects is £3500 + VAT to produce the necessary plans and schedules to go out to tender and submit building regulations applications. BrightSpace have done a considerable amount of work already, free of charge.

Cllr Jackson raised concerns about proceeding with the work without consulting the people of the town.

The RFO reported that if the Council no longer wished to spend the S106 funds on the pavilion, then this money would need to be reallocated by NFDC. Even if they were reallocated, the funds could not be spent on replacement or refurbishing existing play equipment but only on new equipment. The Clerk reported that when he met with NFDC, the funds were all allocated to Recreation Ground with the express wish that the money be spent on the pavilion.

Cllr Hale proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the quote from BrightSpace architects of £3500+VAT in relation to the proposed refurbishment of the Pavilion be accepted. 10 in favour, 1 abstention.

12. To report on any Health & Safety issues

Cllr Anstey reported that the play areas and skate park were closed under Government instructions. Cllr Anstey thanked the Clerk and staff for the working arrangements that have been put in place to enable them to continue working safely.

Cllr Wilson reported that the gates at the SANG on Whitsbury Road would benefit from a self-closer to prevent a child running out onto the busy road. Cllr Lewendon reported that any board walks above 18 inches should have a handrail and the handrails still haven't been installed.

Action: Clerk to write to the developer to request spring closers on the gates and the installation of handrails on the boardwalks at the SANG

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

Cllr White reported on his involvement with the Events committee in cancelling the summer festival and the VE Day Anniversary celebrations due to the pandemic. Cllr Anstey thanked Cllr White and the Events committee for their efforts in attempting to put on these events.

14. To agree the frequency and format of Town Council meetings during the coronavirus pandemic

The Clerk proposed that the Annual Council meeting be held next Wednesday 13th May and then the normal schedule of meetings be recommenced the following week with Amenities and General Purposes on 20th May. All in favour.

15. To note any items of correspondence

The Council has been successful in obtaining a grant from SSEN Resilient Communities Fund for £2100 for the community. This money will be utilised by Fordingbridge Greener Living and The Branch community fridge, to provide food to vulnerable residents and cover volunteer expenses whilst responding to the COVID-19 emergency.

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

The Clerk reported that Wendy Reid has won the Rotary Club Citizen of the Year Award as nominated by Fordingbridge Town Council.

Cllr Wilson asked about the Mitigation project put together by NFDC in 2014. She reported that there were projects that had a lot of money spent on them, for example £50k to improve the Water Meadows and £40k on new signposting for footpaths. She thought this was a lot of money and asked if the work had been done and whether Fordingbridge Town Council had been consulted on these projects. Cllr Heron replied that these were Regulation 123 list projects to mitigate the impact of the last round of development such as FORD1 on the National Park and protected areas. He reported that the work has been done and that Fordingbridge Town Council was consulted on them when the list was first put together in 2009. He said that way of doing things has now disappeared; there will be a new piece of work coming out shortly.

17. To note the date of the next General Council meeting as Wednesday 3rd June 2020

The meeting closed at 8:30p.m.