

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th April 2022 at 7.30pm
held at the Town Hall
(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Council)

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

In Attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Rachel Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
Cllr Sevier, NFDC
PCSO Rhys McCormick
A representative of Ringwood & Fordingbridge Footpath Society (RFFS)
A reporter from the Salisbury Journal
1 member of the Public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jackson, Paton, Perkins and White. Also, from Cllr Heron (HCC) and Cllr Bellows (NFDC).

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

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

PCSO Rhys McCormick gave the following report.

Hello to all, thank you for taking your time to read this beat report for the month of March 2022 in Fordingbridge. I am PCSO Rhys McCormick 18330, part of the Ringwood NPT, I am your local PCSO for Fordingbridge Town. Here to tackle community-based issues and deliver on community priorities.

Figures for March 2022 – 88 reports to Police, 43 of which were recorded crimes. Please note I have only included numbers that are relevant to the community within this report.

5x Theft (Two theft from motor vehicle, Two theft of a vehicle, One theft of a pedal cycle)

3x Burglary Business (Two confirmed break ins, goods stolen from within. One attempted entry, damaged caused)

9x Burglary Non-dwelling (Garages, sheds and outbuildings)

1x Burglary Dwelling (Attempted entry made, minimal forced entry used.)

8x Criminal Damage (One report of public toilets in Fordingbridge subject to damage. Smashed public waste bin. Two reports of damage to the roof of Avonway Community Centre)

2x Making off without payment (Filling with petrol and making off without paying)

4x Public Order

Non-Crime, Antisocial behaviour reports – 5 Reports

Anti-social behaviour is evident in Fordingbridge and sometimes low-level offending can be considered anti-social so the number could be higher than five, but due to an offence there, it has been recorded as such. From general community engagement, it is clear anti-social behaviour is a community priority as it is having a wider impact on residents, businesses and locals.

The Chairman welcomed PCSO McCormick to the town. Members asked the following questions.

Q. How large is the team in Fordingbridge and will it grow in the future?

A. There are four police officers in the Fordingbridge area, however Fordingbridge is also part of the Ringwood team and they help each other out as needed. PCSO McCormick reported that the team has grown over recent months but he didn't not know if it would grow further.

Q. Will CCTV be installed in the town's car parks?

A. The police have no power to install CCTV, they can only make recommendations. PCSO McCormick reported that the public have concerns that there is no CCTV in the town centre, and that NFDC would be responsible for installing it in their car parks and the town centre.

Q. Concerns have been raised about how young the children involved in anti-social behaviour are in Fordingbridge. What are the police doing about this?

A. The children do cause issues in Fordingbridge. The police are building rapport with the youngsters and make the parents aware when there are issues.

[Cllr Adams entered the meeting during this item.]

3. To confirm the minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 2nd March 2022 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Goldsmith proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 2nd March 2022 are signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters Arising

Agenda item 3 – Cllr Lewendon reported that the Whitsbury Road hedge has been cut back by the lengthsman.

Agenda item 3 – The spoil behind the Glasshouse Studios has now been flattened but there is no way of knowing whether this land is contaminated. A planning enforcement is in place at the eastern end of site 18 but not in this location. Barbed wire fencing also needs to be removed.

Agenda item 12 – To approve a 20's Plenty for Us motion

The Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee have agreed to form a working party to support the review that the Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment at Hampshire County Council has commissioned into the current policy for 20 mph speed restrictions in Hampshire. This review has been commissioned to determine whether there is merit in extending the scope for these measures, particularly to support changing travel patterns and improvements to air quality. The review will focus on the evidence about whether such measures are effective and positively contribute to improving air quality and encouraging greater levels of walking and cycling. The working party will consider the evidence and are expected to report back to the Select Committee in autumn.

Agenda item 15

FTC's response to the Glover report has been submitted.

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

No matters raised.

6. To receive a report from the Town Mayor

The Mayor gave the following report.

On Thursday 31st March I attended a meeting with the Clerk, one of the Information Officers and an architect from Fields of Architecture to discuss the Town Hall alterations. The architect thinks there are some options to open up the current office as the Visitor Information Centre, and upgrade the toilets and kitchen. The architect has agreed to provide three layout options. I also hope we can keep the current gents toilet and store above clear as the location for a lift in the future, even if not part of this scheme. These options will mean we can keep the main hall as it is, and not require the Council to take out a large loan.

The Clerk has emailed cost details and a proposal from Sherrin Bettle which we will need to discuss separately. Perhaps we can come back to that later.

The next full Council meeting on 4th May will be the Annual Meeting when we elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman for the next year. I won't be standing as Chairman again as I have had that honour for the last two years. I also think it helps to keep the Council fresh if we change roles at least every two years. Please let the Clerk know your thoughts ready for the meeting next month.

7. To receive a report from the County Councillor

No report received.

8. To receive a report from the District Councillors

Just Got Home

Cllr Sevier reported that the 'Just Got Home' service has just been extended to Fordingbridge hospital, having run successfully in Lymington. Provided in partnership between New Forest District Council and New Forest Disability, 'Just Got Home' is a free service for those returning home after a stay in hospital. It offers a follow up home visit to provide patients with information and help to arrange access to services on their behalf. This is on a six-month trial basis initially.

Footways

Cllr Sevier asked for an update on the town's footways. The Clerk reported that the meeting between himself, Cllr Heron and Hampshire Highways was postponed but has been rescheduled for later this month.

Grants

Cllr Sevier reported that an NFDC grant exists for community work and advised the Council to apply for funding towards the building works in the Town Hall.

Ukraine

Cllr Sevier reported that HCC is overseeing refugees. Also, that the Catholic Church is holding a fundraiser for Ukraine 'Music in May' on the evening of 7th May 19:30 hrs to 22:30hrs

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

- Planning Committee – 9th March 2022 – received Cllr Lewendon
- Amenities Committee – 16th March 2022 – received Cllr Moulard
- General Purposes Committee – 16th March 2022 – received Cllr Wilson

- Extraordinary Staff & Remuneration Committee – 23rd March 2022 – received Cllr Lewendon
- Extraordinary Finance and Policy Committee – 23rd March 2022 – received Cllr Wilson
- Finance and Policy Committee – 30th March 2022 – received Cllr Adams

Cllr Adams asked whether a decision on the Recreation Ground old toilet block was now on hold until after FTC had received a report. The Clerk reported that the architect will produce a lower cost scheme with a conversion of the building to become a shelter only. The architect would not be able to cost the scheme but could send revised drawings. This item would be on the agenda of the Finance and Policy committee meeting on 27th April for consideration.

[PCSO McCormick left the meeting.]

10. To consider Footways in Fordingbridge

The Clerk reported that the meeting between himself, Cllr Heron and Hampshire Highways to look at the condition of the roads and pavements in the town centre has been rescheduled for 28th April. He said that in the interim, there has been some remedial work undertaken in the High Street, notably on two of the collapsed drains. Cllr Wilson reported that some repair work has been poorly done, particularly in Roundhill; also that many of the covers for utilities are not up to standard.

11. To consider Highways in Fordingbridge

Cllr Wilson reported that cars are parking on the verges of Mill Court again and that the area has been driven over so much that an electrical cable has been exposed. A local resident has offered to water a tree, should the Council decide to plant one in this area to prevent parking here.

Cllr Wilson reported that a HGV had become stuck on the old railway bridge at Marl Lane and asked that a restriction be placed on this road; either a width restriction sign, or a not suitable for HGVs sign or no motor vehicles except for access sign. Similarly, for Puddleslosh Lane.

Action: Clerk to write to Cllr Heron (HCC) requesting that access be restricted on these roads

12. To consider a response to the Ukraine crisis

The Clerk gave the following report.

New Life Community Church are looking to do work in relation to Ukraine, firstly by helping with the visa applications (by providing sponsorship), then by looking to provide further support once they are here. They asked if the Town Council was planning to be involved in this type of work or if the Town Council knew of other bodies that did.

There is little the Town Council can do by way of financial support. However, it could signpost people on its website to the guidance provided by the NFDC, including how people can register their interest.

In Ringwood, Love Ukraine – Ringwood has been set up. This has been driven by the local churches, but also involves the Rotary Club, Round Table and the Foodbank. They are looking to co-ordinate hosts and liaise with the schools and health centre. We could also on our website, signpost people to Love Ukraine – Ringwood. Ringwood Town Council as a body is not formally involved with it but its mayor is.

The architect from Sheerin Bettle, who is a trustee of the foodbank, said if wanted, they could share what they have learnt and how they are doing it. They would be happy to share information or indeed collaborate with bodies in Fordingbridge.

I had tried to get Donna Jones, the Police & Crime Commissioner, to the Annual Town Assembly. Initially this looked promising, but she has today contacted me to tell me that due to some diary changes, she is now not able to join our meeting on 20th April. She did, however, send her apologies and said she would be pleased to attend a future meeting.

Given this news, we need to look at an alternative for the Town Assembly. It might be that we ask Love Ukraine – Ringwood to the Assembly talk about the work they are doing, or if we were looking for something closer to home, we might ask New Life to talk about the work they are doing.

Members agreed to invite NLCC to speak on their work on the Ukraine crisis; but if NLCC were not available, to ask the Love Ukraine – Ringwood group to speak instead.

Action: Clerk to arrange speaker for Annual Town Assembly

Members agreed to add links to Fordingbridge Town Council's website signposting members of the public to the NFDC Ukrainian response, the Government website and also the Love Ukraine – Ringwood pages. Cllr Wilson asked that local services such as Toy Library etc. be listed in Ukrainian.

Action: Staff to add links to website

13. To consider proposals for the Queen's Jubilee

The working party met again on 23rd March and are meeting again on 21st April. Plans for the event are progressing. Food and drink will now be offered by John Butler, the Crown and Mays butchers. The bunting making is going well and FTC is waiting on a price to hang the bunting on the town's catenary wires, once it has been made.

14. To receive an update regarding a Strategic Plan

Cllr Jackson reported last month it was important to get agreement amongst Councillors of the issues and how they are addressed and implemented. To that end, following a meeting with two representatives of the Neighbourhood Plan steering Group, it was suggested that they prepare a brief survey of members, with a view to achieving this consensus. It was suggested the survey could be issued via Survey Monkey and if responses could be received prior to the next General Council meeting, then the results could be reported on.

15. To consider adopting a Nature Recovery Plan

Cllr Wilson gave the following report

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are one of the government's flagship initiatives in the 2021 Environment Bill. They are a measure to reverse nature's decline. They include Parish Nature Recovery Plans

A group of people in Fordingbridge would like to make a Nature Recovery Plan. The town council will lead it with the help of volunteers. This will not be a long document. This Toolkit will help us to develop the Plan. The initial Plan will be for the next ten years. It is a plan to increase Biodiversity.

The government's overall ambition is that Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be a powerful new tool that will help the public, private and voluntary sectors work more effectively together for nature's recovery.

The key to achieving this will be creating genuine local collaboration with a partnership of organisations and individuals working closely with each of our Local authorities. And in making sure that Local Nature Recovery Strategies are shaped to work with the funding mechanisms already in place.

The only approach that I can find from the District Council is through the Planning system by the 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on new developments. They do not appear to have an overall plan for Nature Recovery.

But what about Augustus Park. That is badly in need of more trees, hedges and pond improvements. Unfortunately, this was approved before the 10% Gain was introduced.

I am unable to find any documents from Hampshire about developing these Plans.

So much of the Open Space land in Fordingbridge is owned and controlled by the District Council and the County Council's budgets. We get no say in how these budgets are managed. We want to be involved and included in decisions that are made about that land.

It is imperative for nature recovery that both the New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council are open and transparent regarding what will be available in terms of funding.

We have good local knowledge and capable people. Fordingbridge needs to and wants to be involved.

The Plan will be a document to present to New Forest District Council, requesting that it become a supplementary planning document.

Other than some printing of maps, it will not involve any staff time.

I would like our Local Planning Authority to give a copy of the Toolkit to developers in Fordingbridge to provide guidance on what Fordingbridge expects.

Firstly, I ask that this council consider leading and developing a Parish Nature Recovery Plan. Then secondly, we endorse the Toolkit as the basis for developing a Parish Nature Recovery Plan.

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED:** that Fordingbridge Town Council consider leading and developing a Nature Recovery Plan and endorse the Toolkit. All in favour.

16. To report on any Health & Safety issues

Cllr Lewendon reported that the diversion route for the footpath works currently being undertaken outside the Augustus Park development, require members of the public to walk over a grass bank. This is not a viable alternative to anyone who uses a wheelchair, children's buggy or pram or has any form of mobility problem. It also becomes slippery if it rains.

Action: Clerk to contact Pennyfarthing Developemnts regarding the alternative pedestrian route

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

Cllr Anstey attended a RoSPA seminar on 17 March. He reported that there are no laws regarding how to set up playgrounds and there is no requirement for safety matting. Playgrounds are not designed to eliminate risk but to manage risk instead.

Cllrs Adams and Anstey attended a Rural Planning meeting on 23rd March run by the Rural Services Network.

Cllr Wilson visited Fordingbridge Infant and Junior Schools Federation on 21st March to judge the 'Bling your Bike/Scooter' competition.

Cllr Wilson reported that work will begin on the Community Garden on Saturday 9th April.

18. To note any items of correspondence

No items of correspondence.

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

A Staff and Remuneration meeting will be held at 6.45pm on 13th April 2022 to approve the spine point increments 2022/23 for eligible staff members and to approve the increase in the rate of Employer Pension Contributions for 2022/23 to 21.4%. An extraordinary Finance and Policy meeting will be held at 7pm on 13th April 2022 to consider the future of the Town Hall. Cllr Moulard asked that the old toilet block in the Recreation Ground also be considered at this meeting.

20. To note the date of the Annual Council meeting as Wednesday 4th May 2022

The meeting closed at 8:36p.m.