

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 2nd August 2023 at 7.30pm
held at the Town Hall.**

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

Present: Cllr White – Chair
Cllrs Bailey, Cameron, Hale, Hinton, Jackson, Lewendon, Paton and Wilson

In Attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Rachel Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
Cllr Woods, New Forest District Council
PCSO Stephen May
Footpath Officer and representative of Ringwood & Fordingbridge Footpath Society (RFFS)
A representative from Fordingbridge Avon Bathing
2 Members of the Public

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Shering and Perkins.

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

3. To confirm the minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 5th July 2023 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Lewendon and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 5th July 2023 are signed as a true record.

Matters arising

Agenda item 5 – Cllr Jackson has given copies of the former publication 'The Bridge' to the Clerk.
Agenda item 12 – Cllr Jackson abstained from the vote regarding writing to HCC to request that the blockwork be removed in the High Street as the HCC Access Strategy still hasn't been published and the removal of the blockwork could conflict with this. The Clerk reported that the Access Strategy has been promised by 9th August 2023.

[Cllr Hale entered the meeting during this item.]

4. To confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary General Council meeting held on Wednesday 26th July 2023 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Extraordinary General Council meeting held on 26th July 2023 are signed as a true record.

No matters arising.

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

No matters raised.

13. To consider an application for designated bathing water status

This item was brought forward in the meeting.

The Clerk reported that the water quality tests are currently achieving results of good or excellent and that Fordingbridge Town Council's consent as landowner of the Recreation Ground would be required before an application for Bathing Water Status could be made. Cllr Wilson reported that pollutants flow into the River Avon from several sources upstream, including the overflow pipe at Downton, run-off from septic tanks, animal pollutants, and flood water from the A338 containing plastics and oils from the road surface. The Clerk said that there are possible insurance implications with gaining Bathing Water Status and reported that the SSSI status needs to be considered in conjunction with any application. He said that appropriate signage could notify of the risks of fast flowing currents or underwater objects.

The representative from Fordingbridge Avon Bathing (FAB) reported that the primary purpose of applying for Bathing Water Status is to put pressure on authorities regarding the cleanliness of the water. She emphasised that Fordingbridge Town Council would not be responsible for the quality of the water, nor for improving it, but their role would be to facilitate access. She said that people already swim in the river, and Bathing Water Status would allow people access to information regarding the quality of the water, which they don't currently have. She reported that Wessex Water can give live outflow data. She said that an FTC sign in the Recreation Ground states that bathing is not advised for safety reasons; also, that Defra says that Bathing Water Status is not a sign of safety but of water quality. She then said that FAB are thinking of applying for Bathing Water Status in the FTC side of the river closest to the Rec only, and not in the part of the river by The George opposite, as the current is fast and the river dangerous in that location.

Cllr Bailey queried whether 100 people could be found in such a small area. The representative from Fordingbridge Avon Bathing (FAB) confirmed that 100 people over a 4-hour period were needed (not necessarily consecutive hours) and that people generally congregated in the shallower areas. Cllr Bailey said that they need to think about the area and the representative from Fordingbridge Avon Bathing (FAB) agreed saying that the headcount could be on two separate days and that there were over 100 people on a single day in June. She said that water testing is currently being done informally and doesn't use the same metrics as Wessex Water. The representative from FAB said that an application would need to be submitted in October 2023 and if designated, the Environment Agency would start testing in May 2024. The water testing would be paid for by the Environment Agency.

A member of public spoke, thanking the Council for considering this matter. He referenced the [House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee Water quality in rivers: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2021–22 First Special Report of Session 2022–23](#), page 9 paragraph 6:

We recommend that the Government actively encourage the designation of at least one widely used stretch of river for bathing in each water company area by 2025 at the latest. In their Business Plans for Ofwat's Price Review 24, each water and sewerage company should set out how they intend to work with stakeholders to support further applications for the designation of river bathing waters in their area, and to continue the process in subsequent Price Reviews. (Paragraph 69)

Anyone, including water companies, can apply for a new bathing water designation and the Government then considers those applications. We encourage applications for new bathing water designations annually and are actively exploring ways to make the application process more accessible to build on this.

To be eligible for designation, a bathing water must meet the criteria set for designation in the Bathing Water Regulations 2013, primarily that sites must have a large number of bathers and that bathing is promoted through adequate infrastructure and facilities. Local stakeholders are best placed to know which popular bathing areas may be suitable for designation.

In 2021 two water companies, Severn Trent and South West Water, successfully applied to the Green Recovery Fund to undertake improvements across their network in order to create bathing water quality stretches of river in their areas.

To make it easier for water community groups to understand the criteria for bathing water status and ensure only necessary information is requested, this year the Government will revise its existing guidance on how to make an application for a new bathing water designation.

He went onto say that Bathing Water Status will give targeted investment in Fordingbridge and upstream and this will benefit both the environment and swimmers. He quoted an article in [The Guardian](#) saying that bathing waters will be prioritised for funding:

“Over the next seven years, water and sewerage companies plan to spend £10bn – a tripling on current levels of investment – in the biggest transformation of our sewers since the Victorian era,” they said. “As part of this, bathing waters will be prioritised and among the first to receive funding.”

A second member of public spoke, saying that the purpose of applying for Bathing Water Status is not to attract more people to the area but to improve the water quality for those already here. She emphasised the importance of good mental health and said that swimming improves the mental health of the public.

Cllr Hinton recommended investigating the water company and the Environment Agency's response to applications.

It was agreed to defer this item for further investigation.

Action: Where bathing water status has been achieved, Clerk to ask local Councils for their views, also Wessex Water and the Environment Agency.

The representative from Fordingbridge Avon Bathing said that Fordingbridge was one of the few rivers to meet all the Defra requirements for Bathing Water Status.

[PCSO May entered the meeting during this item.]

[The representative from Fordingbridge Avon Bathing and one member of public left the meeting.]

6. To receive a report on any matters under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act
PCSO May presented the crime report below. He reported that there has been an increase in break-ins to vans and outbuildings, and high value items stolen. PCSO May said there were currently no lines of enquiry. He urged the public to report any suspicious activity and said that at a local level every report will be looked at, irrespective of the central response. Suspicious behaviour can be reported online at <https://www.hampshire.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/> or alternatively dial 101. If a crime is in progress, dial 999 immediately.

Current 90 days up to: 31/07/2023 Preceding 90 days up to: 31/07/2022 Filters applied: FORDINGBRIDGE			
	90 days up to 31/07/2023	90days up to 31/07/2022	Difference
1b Violence with Injury	11	11	0
1c Violence without Injury	20	19	1
2a Rape	4		4
2b Other Sexual Offences	3	1	2
3b Robbery of Personal Property		1	-1
4a1 Burglary Residential	6	8	-2
4a2 Burglary Business and Community	3	2	1
4b Vehicle Offences	11	7	4
4c Theft from the Person			
4d Bicycle Theft	1		1
4e Shoplifting	11	6	5
4f All Other Theft Offences	18	14	4
5a Criminal Damage	15	21	-6
5b Arson		3	-3
6a Trafficking of Drugs			
6b Possession of Drugs	1	1	0
7 Possession of Weapons Offences	4		4
8 Public Order Offences	15	20	-5
9 Miscellaneous Crimes Against Society	3	4	-1
TOTAL	126	118	8
	Current R90	Previous R90	Difference
Residential Burglary (Exc. Sheds/Garages)	1	6	-5

Cllr Cameron queried the four incidents of rape and was told that if there was a community impact then there would have been communication from the Police. PCSO May thought these cases were likely historical.

Cllr Wilson asked if PCSO May was aware of a suspicious parking warden in Fordingbridge, wearing an NFDC uniform and lanyard but driving an unmarked white van and spending time looking into cars. PCSO May asked that anything suspicious be reported online.

15. To consider CCTV in Fordingbridge

This item was brought forward in the meeting.

NFDC have invited the Clerk and Chair of FTC to a meeting regarding CCTV in Fordingbridge. NFDC propose funding the installation of the equipment and have asked that FTC pay for the maintenance and ongoing costs (amounts TBD). These cameras would give the Police live monitoring and playback, which PCSO May said was the preferred method and extremely beneficial, as opposed to the system in the Rec which can only be accessed retrospectively. PCSO May said that the NFDC cameras would give the opportunity for monitoring from the Fordingbridge Police Office and that this would be ideal. Councillors agreed that the general public is in support of CCTV cameras, especially young people. PCSO May asked to be kept in the loop with discussions with NFDC and said he was willing to attend meetings and could recommend where cameras are located. He advised that most problem areas in Fordingbridge could be covered with 3 or 4 cameras, or 5 including the Recreation Ground.

Action: Clerk and Chair to attend meeting with NFDC regarding CCTV cameras.

[PCSO May left the meeting.]

7. To receive a report from the Town Mayor

The Mayor reported:

The Turn Up For Fun (TUFF) summer outdoor play sessions are commencing this week, subject to the weather.

There will also be storytelling for families at the Junior School next Friday (11th August) at 7pm. A full calendar of summer events is available on the FTC website at <https://fordingbridge.gov.uk/events/>

Following the provision of a grant to Avon Valley Community matters by the Town Council, the first picnic took place at Glebe Field behind St Mary's Church last week and was well attended. There was an artist in attendance making pottery with the children. This week's event took place in the church hall due to the weather.

The Town Council allowed the Rotary Club to use the Recreation Ground for no charge last month to hold the annual duck race raising funds for charity. Despite the weather, it was a great success.

The Council has submitted a grant application to fund a generator for the Town Hall from the SSER Resilient Communities Fund and I have started work on updating the Town Council's emergency resilience plan.

I will be attending a Fordingbridge Events Group (FEG) meeting later this month to progress plans for a Christmas event on the first weekend in December. Also, the official guidance from the Pageant Master has now been issued for the 80th Anniversary of D-day on 6th June 2024 and I will be discussing this with FEG as well.

Finally, I thought I would also remind you of the forthcoming 'Last Night of the Proms' event at the Town Hall on 9th September in memory of Cllr Malcolm Adams.

8. To receive a report from the County Councillor

No report received.

9. To receive a report from the District Councillors

Cllr Woods reported that the NFDC meeting in August had been cancelled. He and Cllr Millar attended the Rotary Club's Annual Duck race which raised £9000 for charity. Cllr Woods reported that funding is available from NFDC towards Neighbourhood Plans. The Clerk confirmed that FTC has drawn down some of this funding to pay for Survey Monkey.

Cllr Wilson asked that the NFDC land behind the Co-op be improved. She reported that the brick walls surrounding the trees were falling down and rather than addressing the issue, a wooden fence has instead been put up to surround the walls. One bench was removed but not replaced; another bench was removed and replaced without having been repainted. She said it is difficult even for able-bodied people to push shopping trolleys due to the camber and that there is no risk assessment for this land. Currently, there is no process by which FTC can apply for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds from NFDC.

Action: Cllr Woods to follow up about this land with NFDC

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

- Planning Committee – 12th July 2023 – received Cllr Lewendon
- Amenities Committee – 19th July 2023 – received Cllr White
- General Purposes Committee – 19th July 2023 – received Cllr Hinton
- Finance and Policy Committee – 26th July 2023 – received Cllr Jackson

11. To consider Footways in Fordingbridge

The Footpath Officer reported that the Ringwood and Fordingbridge Footpath Society have now purchased a brush cutter and the first path to be cut will be the footpath behind the Junior School. Garden waste fly tipped by a local resident onto the footpath has now been removed. There are puddles on footpath 84. The footpath officer reported that the new surface on the Avon Valley Path from Tinkers Cross to the A338 is deteriorating; there are a lot of brambles covering the path. Cllr Lewendon reported that the badly installed bollards have now been removed and replaced with oil drums containing concrete and gravel. The new surface on the footpath contains sharp stones and Councillors were concerned about children sustaining cuts and grazes if they trip. The footpath at Folds Farm is flooded due to a sluice gate failure and the Environment Agency is investigating.

12. To consider Highways in Fordingbridge

The Clerk has circulated the response from HCC regarding the blockwork on the vehicular highway in Fordingbridge High Street and Salisbury Street to members.

A meeting with HCC regarding the Access Strategy has been arranged for 16th August. HCC has promised the report a week in advance.

Cllr Wilson asked about the postponed surface dressing treatment works. The latest update from HCC said that the treatment should go ahead on Monday 7th August for Parsonage Park Drive, Waverley Road, Woodgreen Road (Woodgreen) and Woodgreen Road (Breamore). However, the works at Station Road (Sandleheath) may not go ahead due to difficulties gaining the necessary closure permits. These works are weather dependent, and the dates may change again.

Cllr Lewendon reported that the road closure signs on Fryern Court Road contradict each other. Cllr Bailey reported that roadworks are scheduled for outside the Memorial Bungalow on 11th August.

14. To agree occupation terms for the memorial Bungalow

The Finance and Policy Committee recommended a rental charge of 50% of the assessed commercial rent for a new Grounds person to occupy the memorial bungalow, should that person wish to live there. Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Paton and therefore RESOLVED: that a rental charge of 50% of the assessed commercial rent be charged to the new grounds person to occupy the memorial bungalow. All in favour.

The Clerk reported that should no applicants be suitable for the role of grounds person, Ringwood Town Council are unable to provide temporary cover. However, a land management company may be an option, and the other groundsman may be able to pick up some of the work on a temporary basis too. Members then discussed the recruitment process and where the role had been advertised. The groundsman will retire on 29th September.

16. To report on any Health & Safety issues

Cllr Bailey is checking the Council's risk assessments and will meet with the Clerk to discuss.

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

Cllr Jackson met with the Rotary Club and discussed disabled access in Fordingbridge and the appearance of the High Street.

Cllr Wilson presented prizes at the Art Club exhibition. She reported that there is a lot of talent in the club and recommended that members visit the exhibition which is being held at the Salvation Army Hall.

18. To note any items of correspondence

No correspondence.

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

The Asst Clerk reported on a new Community Energy programme being led by NFDC which encourages the growth of community led projects in renewable energy, energy efficiency and fuel poverty, including community owned renewable energy and grant funded projects. The West Solent Solar Group installed a solar farm on a former quarry in such a way that had vastly increased biodiversity on the site. Wildflowers, rare orchids, moths, butterflies, and grass snakes can now be seen there amongst other things.

20. To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 6th September 2023.

The meeting closed at 9:08 p.m.