

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 7.30pm
held at the Town Hall.**

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

Present: Cllr White – Chair
Cllrs Anstey, Cameron, Hinton, Howard, Lewendon, Millar, Paton, Shering and Wilson

In Attendance: Paul Goddard, Town Clerk
Rachel Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
Ruth Croker (Footpath Officer)
Wendy Rees, Divisional Director of Operations,
Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust
Rachael Mejia, Deputy director of Nursing,
Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bailey and Perkins, and Cllr Woods (NFDC).

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest.

3. To confirm the minutes of the General Council meeting held on Wednesday 7th February 2024 and to report on any matters arising

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Shering and therefore RESOLVED: that the minutes of the General Council meeting held on the 7th February 2024 are signed as a true record.

Matters Arising

Agenda item 6 – The Dedicated Neighbourhood Officer for Fordingbridge is PC 20752 Dawn Pritchard. PCSO May said he cannot see why the reported recent spate of damage to vehicles in the town centre car park would not be on these figures.

Agenda item 15 – The Clerk submitted a response to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Partial Update, alongside a complaint about the process of preparation and consultation of this partial update, in particular the proceedings and decision of Hampshire County Council's December Cabinet Meeting.

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

No matters raised.

5. To receive a report on the future of Ford Ward and Community Care

Wendy Rees, Divisional Director of Operations, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust and Rachael Mejia, Deputy Director of Nursing, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust spoke. Ford Ward at Fordingbridge hospital is a 15-bed rehabilitation unit which was closed in September 2023 due to a lack of staff. The NHS had been struggling to staff the unit for 18 months despite a big recruitment drive. The existing staff have since been deployed to Lymington hospital and care is now provided to patients either at other hospitals or at home with support. The rest of the

Fordingbridge Hospital site is still being used - Ford Ward is just a quarter of the site. Ford Ward will remain under NHS control and is likely to be used for outpatients' appointments in future – for clinics, dialysis or to meet other local need. The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee will need to approve any changes to the use of Ford Ward.

[Wendy Rees and Rachael Mejia left the meeting.]

6. To receive a report on any matters under Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act
Members considered the following report.

Current 90 days up to: 29/02/2024

Preceding 90 days up to: 28/02/2023

	Current R90	Previous R90	Difference
1b Violence with Injury	7	8	-1
1c Violence without Injury	16	23	-7
2a Rape	1	1	0
2b Other Sexual Offences	1	7	-6
4a1 Burglary Residential	2	8	-6
4a2 Burglary Business and Community	3	0	3
4b Vehicle Offences	7	8	-1
4d Bicycle Theft	0	1	-1
4e Shoplifting	7	11	-4
4f All Other Theft Offences	5	11	-6
5a Criminal Damage	7	14	-7
5b Arson	0	1	-1
6a Trafficking of Drugs	0	1	-1
6b Possession of Drugs	1	1	0
7 Possession of Weapons Offences	2	1	1
8 Public Order Offences	7	11	-4
9 Miscellaneous Crimes Against Society	1	0	1
TOTAL	67	107	-40

	Current R90	Previous R90	Difference
Residential Burglary (Excl Sheds/Garages)	0	0	0

7. To receive a report from the Town Mayor

The Mayor gave the following report.

I attended a meeting at Burgate School on the 20th February with Cllr Paton & the trustees of the Burgate School 3G All Weather Pitch project. This is now almost complete, and the school are hoping it will be finished by this Friday. I have asked Mrs Shering if we can arrange a visit & she will be arranging this shortly.

Also, on the 20th February Paul & I had a catch up at the Recreation Ground with representatives from the FA, RFU & NFDC in relation to the potential pitch changes to accommodate, hopefully, the new pathway around the Rec. This meeting went well & there appeared to be no major issues. We also had a member of the Turks & Rugby Club present who were also very supportive.

I attended the public meeting in the Town Hall on the 22nd February about the new CCTV installations in Fordingbridge. A real positive step for the Town & one that was well received by the audience.

On the 26th February I went along to a meeting & information session at the Salvation Army on a local charity 'Stronger Together Across Ringwood & Fordingbridge (STARF) who support local families in hardship. Some really good work being done by this group & hopefully one we can support further as a Council. They will be offering support during the Easter holiday for families. The charity has also announced their next networking event on Wednesday 15th May which you are all welcome to attend at Moyles Court School.

On the 27th February I accompanied a member of Go New Forest in a walk around the Town so she could compile a video to be used while we are their 'Town of the Month' in March on their website. We had a good look around & hopefully the finished product will show us off well!

Finally, on the 28th February I was privileged to attend the Institution & Induction of The Reverend Luke Wickings at St Mary's. On behalf of Fordingbridge Town Council and the surrounding Parish Councils I welcomed our new Vicar to Fordingbridge.

8. To receive a report from the County Councillor

No report received.

9. To receive a report from the District Councillors

Cllr Millar reported that

- the NFDC Full Council meeting approved the budget.
- The NFDC has accepted the proposal to review the Local Plan.
- The decision to accept the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan has been called in and this will go to a meeting on Thursday 7th March.
- The dates have been moved back in the CIL timetable.

Plans for new waste and recycling services from spring 2025 were approved at the NFDC Cabinet meeting on 21st February. Properties in the New Forest District are being assessed for suitability for wheelie bins. There will be an appeal process later in the year to request using black sacks and recycling bags rather than wheelie bins.

Cllr Wilson asked how the decision had been made by the portfolio holder on the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan. Cllr Millar assured Cllr Wilson that it had been done properly.

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

- Planning Committee – 14th February 2024 – received Cllr Paton
- Amenities Committee – 28th February 2024 – received Cllr Anstey
- Finance and Policy Committee – 28th February 2024 – received Cllr Millar

11. To consider Footways in Fordingbridge

The footpath officer reported that the vegetation on the Avon Valley Path needs cutting, the section by the Junior School is muddy and unusable and the Avon Valley Path is still underwater in many places. Metis Homes is improving the footways between the schools and the town by installing tactile paving. The Waverley Road bus stop is muddy. The footway along Salisbury Road is wet and muddy and a mobility scooter would not be able to use this route.

Cllr Lewendon reported that the entrance to Augustus Park is covered with stones and that the subsurface of the road has washed away. Also, the road is covered in mud and the gullies are blocked.

12. To consider Highways in Fordingbridge

The Clerk reported that the High Street will be closed overnight on 9th – 10th March for carriageway investigation works. High Street resurfacing works are expected to take place between April and September this year.

Action: Clerk to ask HCC if these works will be completed to a decent standard

The potholes on Southampton Road have been reported numerous times. Cllr White recommended that temporary traffic lights be installed.

13. To consider a response to the Hampshire County Council Future Services Consultation

Cllr Hinton reported that HCC budgets have been under strain for years and gave the following presentation:

The County Council has launched a public consultation to understand people's views across Hampshire on proposals to change and reduce some local services and help the Authority address a £132 million budget shortfall faced by April 2025.

Next stage in the County Council's plans to ensure it can focus support to the most vulnerable people in Hampshire – such as protecting children from harm, social care for older people, and supporting adults and children with disabilities and additional needs - while meeting its legal duty to deliver a balanced budget in 2025/26.

Covering various local services, the consultation sets out 13 detailed options to help lower costs in future – by doing things differently and moving towards providing only those services that the County Council is legally required to deliver. Change proposals outlined within this consultation would contribute around £17.5 million in total towards these savings.

1. *Adult social care charges: Proposals to change the way contributions towards non-residential social care costs are calculated, so that the amount someone pays towards their non-residential care and support increases from 95% to 100% of any assessable income remaining, once standard outgoings are paid for and an allowance is made for general living costs such as food, utility bills and clothing. Doing this would save the County Council around £500,000 per year.*
2. *Adult social care grant schemes: To withdraw funding for three Adult Social Care grant programmes that assist voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations in Hampshire; namely the Council for Voluntary Services Infrastructure Grant, the Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant and the Local Solutions Grant. The total value of the proposed savings is £620,000 per year.*
3. *Competitive (one-off) grant schemes: To withdraw three competitive grant schemes which provide one-off grants to a range of community groups and organisations; namely the Leader's Community Grants, the Rural Communities Fund (including country shows) and the Parish and Town Council Investment Fund. The total value of the proposed savings is £481,000 per year.*
4. *Hampshire Cultural Trust grant: To reduce the amount of grant given to Hampshire Cultural Trust to manage and deliver arts and museums services. This proposal would reduce the annual grant figure by £600,000 by April 2027.*
5. *Highways maintenance: To reduce planned highways maintenance activities, incorporating larger-scale structural repairs, surface treatments on roads, and drainage improvements. Saving £7.5 million each year.*
6. *Highways winter service: To comprehensively review and revise the criteria used to determine which roads should be treated as part of the Priority One network to better align with current national guidance and reflect changes in travelling and commuting patterns, and to update the routes accordingly. Saving £1 million.*
7. *Homelessness Support Services: To stop funding services that the County Council does not have a legal requirement to provide, that support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Saving around £2 million.*
8. *Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs): To provide a sustainable, cost-effective and fit for purpose Household Waste Recycling service within a reduced budget. This might involve introducing charging for discretionary services, implementing alternative delivery models, reducing opening days and/or hours or reducing the number of HWRCs. Saving minimum of £1.2 million.*
9. *Library stock: To reduce how much is spent on new library stock, such as books and digital resources, each year. Savings of £200,000.*
10. *Passenger transport: To reduce the amount of money spent on passenger transport by withdrawing all remaining funding that the County Council is not legally required to provide. This includes funding for community transport services, subsidies for bus routes that are not commercially viable, additional funding to extend the Concessionary Travel Scheme (older and disabled persons bus passes) and a review of potential impact of reductions on the school transport service and social care budgets. Savings around £1.7 million.*

11. *Rural countryside parking: To introduce car parking charges at rural countryside car parks (such as nature reserves and conservation sites) that the County Council manages, where it is expected that doing so would be commercially viable. Raise £65,000 each year.*

12. *School Crossing Patrols: To review the School Crossing Patrols (SCP) service by looking at each SCP site to decide if alternative safety measures exist or could be put in place that would enable the SCP to be safely withdrawn or be funded by other organisations. Savings up to £1.1 million each year.*

13. *Street lighting: To reduce the brightness of streetlights further and to extend the periods that streetlights are switched off during the night (by 2 hours) – where it is considered safe and appropriate to do so. Saving £500,000 each year.*

Members discussed the proposals and were concerned about all the cutbacks but especially the proposed cuts to Highways Maintenance, Highways Winter Service, Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), Rural Countryside Parking and School Crossing Patrols.

- **Highways maintenance**

The roads are already in a shocking state of repair. Dangerous potholes are reported but not repaired and the very foundations of many roads are washed away in heavy rains. Cutting the budget for highways maintenance will further exacerbate the situation, potentially leading to loss of life.

- **Highways winter service**

There was concern that the gritting routes are being cut back. Black ice on rural roads can result in vehicles abruptly leaving the road or cause multiple vehicle collisions.

- **Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)**

Hampshire County Council is legally required under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 section 51 to make HWRCs reasonably accessible to residents. Guidance from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) recommends the following as reasonable minimum levels of HWRC provision, with some exceptions for very rural or very urban areas:

- Maximum catchment radii for a large proportion of the population: 3 to 5 miles (very rural areas: 7 miles).
- Maximum driving times for the great majority of residents in good traffic conditions: 20 minutes (very rural areas: 30 minutes).

Should the Somerley HWRC be closed, Fordingbridge Town Council does not think Hampshire County Council would be able to meet its legal requirement. Fordingbridge residents would need to travel to the Southampton HWRC instead; a distance of 19 miles with a driving time in excess of 30 minutes. The residents of the villages to the north and north-west of Fordingbridge would need to travel further still.

- **Rural countryside parking**

If parking charges are introduced in car parks in the New Forest, vehicles will instead be parked on the verges, so damaging the SSSI.

- **School Crossing Patrols**

Children on their way to schools in Fordingbridge have been struck by cars in the past when crossing Whitsbury Road. A school crossing patrol is essential in this location.

Cllr Cameron pointed out that people would be adversely affected by each of the proposed changes. She thought that HCC should file a Section 114 (bankruptcy) notice and that this would send a message to central Government that these cutbacks are unsustainable.

14. To confirm representatives of the following outside bodies and agree arrangements for reporting back:

Outside bodies with vacancies were considered and members appointed as below.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Almshouses | VACANCY |
| • Avonway Community Centre | Cllr A. Wilson & Cllr P. White |
| • Burgate School Community Management | Cllr D. Paton |
| • Fordingbridge Conservation Group | Cllr A. Wilson & Cllr M. Howard |
| • HALC | Cllr L. Cameron |
| • NFALC | Cllr L. Cameron |
| • N F Consultative Panel | VACANCY |
| • Victoria Rooms Committee | Cllr M. Howard |

It was decided to remove The Rotary Club from the list of outside bodies. The Town Council already has close links and a good relationship with The Rotary Club and the need to formalise this was not felt necessary.

15. To report on any Health & Safety issues

Nothing to report.

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

Cllr Wilson and the Clerk attended an initial meeting on 6th March with a company called Groundworks regarding play equipment for the Recreation Ground. Cllr White asked that a member of the Recreation Ground working party be invited to such meetings in the future.

Action: To consider at the next meeting of the General Council, the merging of the Amenities and General Purposes committees

Cllrs Millar and Bailey and the Asst Clerk attended a tour of Frog Lane sewage works on 24th February. The Asst Clerk reported that investment would be made (by 2030 for Frog Lane and by 2035 for Salisbury Street) to reduce the number of spills to a maximum of 10 per year. She reported that since 1st June 2023 to date, there had been 53 spills at Frog Lane and 83 spills at Salisbury Street, according to the notifications received from Wessex Water.

17. To note any items of correspondence

Correspondence between a local resident and the Environment agency regarding the flooding on Bowerwood Road on 2nd November 2023 and 5th January 2024 was reported, along with the resident's concerns over the way the flood alleviation works were managed.

The Rotary club of Fordingbridge is organising the Citizen of the Year award and has written to ask for nominations of a worthwhile candidate. The award is intended to recognise local men and women who have voluntarily served the local community without concern for themselves.

The Avon Valley Community Matters charity shop on Fordingbridge High Street celebrates its first birthday on Wednesday 27th March from 9.30am – 3.30pm. All are invited to join for fizz and cake.

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

Cllr Hinton reported that the land at Riverside Place has been transferred from Riverside Place Management to NFDC and dedicated as Public Open Space.

The Clerk reported that a Fordingbridge Events Group meeting will be held tomorrow 7th March to discuss the summer festival.

The Clerk reminded members of the briefing meeting with Pennyfarthing Homes on Thursday 14th March.

19. To note the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 3rd April 2024.

The meeting closed at 9.25p.m.