

FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 13 January 2025 at the Riverside Centre

Councillors present: Ian Norman (Chair), Richard Ayres, Jill Pass, Tim Plant and Annabel Warne.

In attendance: Katherine Abbott (Parish Clerk)

Before turning to the agenda, the Chairman wished to record the Parish Council's condolences to the family of Perry Hunt, recently deceased, and who had always been a keen supporter of the parishes.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and approved from Councillors Rosemary Conibeer and Jeremy Williams. Councillor Richard Sayer was not present.

2 Declarations of Interest for items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest related to the agenda.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 December 2024

The unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting were approved without amendment.

4 Matters arising

Bike rack This had now been installed at the Riverside Centre. It had been formally transferred as an asset from the Parish Council.

Drain cover Despite its repair just before Christmas, the drain cover at Farnham was now rattling again. **ACTION:** The Clerk was asked to raise this again with the County Council.

Barrier There had been no response from the County Council to the further report regarding the outstanding repairs to the barrier at Farnham. **ACTION:** The Clerk would raise this again with the County Council.

Thermal imaging surveys Councillor Pass and Councillor Warne had undertaken the training to be able to carry out these surveys in March. A flyer would be distributed to homes within the two villages.

Briefing by SZC It was noted that representatives of SZC were not now able to attend the meeting in February and would instead attend the March meeting to provide a briefing on the final design plan for the two villages bypass. It was not possible to hold the rearranged meeting in the main hall and so it would need to be held in the bar room to

Signed(Chair)

Date.....

ensure sufficient space for any public wishing to attend. The Clerk said she would place an update in *Ebb and Flow*.

5 Reports of the County and District Councillors

Both Councillor Sally Noble and Councillor Andrew Reid had sent apologies for the meeting. Both had provided a written update report and these were noted.

6 Questions from members of the public

There were no questions from the public.

7 To review and set the Budget for 2025/6

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) had provided a draft budget for consideration and amendment by the Parish Council. This included recommendations on the usual running costs and required Council to consider what services it intended to deliver in 2025/26. The RFO had included as key information within the draft budget spreadsheet the actual income and expenditure for 2022/3 and 2023/4 (for comparison purposes), year to date income and expenditure for 2024/5 and budget projections for 2025/6.

Councillor Ayres stated that the average income over four years was £5400 whilst the average expenditure in the same period was £7200. This was discussed at length by the Council. It was acknowledged that this position was clearly untenable and, therefore, in setting its budget, the Council would need to increase its Precept.

The Parish Council resolved by unanimous vote to approve the final budget for 2025/6 as presented. The Council's resolution allowed the Parish Council to set the Precept (next item), allowed the Clerk to make spending commitments in line with the Council's decisions and enabled progress monitoring during the year by comparing actual against planned spend.

ACTION: The RFO to explore placing Community Infrastructure Levy funds within a separate account to earn interest.

ACTION: The RFO to record receipts and payments to the PWLB separately in the new financial year, as this was the preference of the Parish Council/

8 To review and set the Precept Demand for 2025/6

Further to the debate at item 7, above, the Parish Council resolved by unanimous vote to request a Precept of £9000 for the 2025/6 financial year.

This decision was considered necessary as it was evident the Council's average income no longer met its average expenditure. This position meant the Parish Council was restricted in what it could do to represent its local community, to deliver services to meet local needs, and its endeavours to improve quality of life in the Parish. The increase would mean that an average Band D property would pay £4.95 a month instead of the current £2.75 within its Council Tax bill.

Signed(Chair)

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ACTION: The Clerk to advise ESC of the Precept Demand for 2025/6.

9 Responsible Finance Officer's verbal report

The RFO sought Councillors to check and authorise the reconciliation sheet for payments approved last month.

Receipts since the last meeting included the payment from the Riverside Centre for the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) – the two payments would be made during January.

The balance of the bank account was £3563.31 (including ear-marked PWLB monies).

Invoices for approval to pay were circulated, agreed and signed for authorisation to pay

These were:

Clerk's salary £291.62; HMRC £72.90; Leiston Press £42; East Suffolk Services Ltd (grass cutting ten times p.a.) £352.80; Councillor Richard Ayres for new and replacement items for the Emergency Planning Box £89.80

The balance after payments would be £2714.19 (including ear-marked PWLB monies).

10 Clerk's verbal report

The Clerk had no additional business to report.

11 Urgent business for discussion (not decision)

The Chairman reported on a gentleman who was rough sleeping in and around the Parish. He had refused offers of help.

12 Future meetings

The next meeting would be on 10 February 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed(Chair)

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