

**FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 8 January 2024 at the Riverside Centre**

**Councillors present:** Ian Norman (Chair), Rosemary Conibeer (Vice Chair), Jill Pass, Tim Plant, Richard Sayer, Annabel Warne and Jeremy Williams

**In attendance:** Katherine Abbott (Parish Clerk)

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and approved from Councillor Richard Ayres.

**2 Declarations of Interest for items on the agenda**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Minutes**

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 were approved, without amendment, as a correct record.

**4 Matters arising from the last minutes.**

The Clerk referred to historic safety concerns about the overgrown state of the Farnham footpath immediately adjacent to the south bound carriageway of the A12. This had been reported again to Suffolk Highways, but it had replied that the location did not meet the criteria. Councillor Andrew Reid, County Councillor, assured the Parish Council that he would get the footpath cleared and would take the matter up with Highways directly.

The railings at Farnham had been damaged in a road traffic accident in October and subsequently reported. The Clerk had been advised that an order had been made to repair these although no timescale for this had been indicated.

Councillor Williams had queried why the results of the water sampling analysis were not to be put in the public domain and the Clerk had raised this with the Alde and Ore Association. The response from the Association was noted but had not fully answered the questions posed. The matter was discussed further at item 7 of the agenda and further action agreed.

Councillor Sayer had previously asked how best to regularly communicate with residents and the Clerk had suggested a routine item in the *Ebb and Flow* be investigated with its Editor. The Editor's response and potential costs had been circulated to the Councillors. It was agreed that an A5 insert in *Ebb and Flow* be prepared with proactive items of news for the residents of Farnham and Stratford St Andrew specifically. Councillor Sayer volunteered to lead on the preparation of the insert and Councillor Williams volunteered to assist with the printing. The Clerk would be available to assist as needed.

Signed .....(Chair)

Date.....

The Clerk advised the meeting of continuing issues with meeting the requirements of the process to amend the mandate with Barclays Bank. It was agreed that the Clerk investigate other options whilst trying to resolve the outstanding actions with the Bank.

## **5. Reports from the County and District Councillors**

Councillor Andrew Reid referred to his report which had been circulated to the Council in advance of the meeting. Councillor Reid updated on the budgetary and financial constraints facing the County Council as well as cost pressures. He referred to the specific demand on adult and young people social services and the need to identify £75m to meet this demand. Councillor Reid outlined the potential actions that might need to be taken with non-statutory services and the possible impact on Council Tax. The meeting was also updated on the work of Trading Standards to tackle several on-going scams and the County Council's efforts to encourage the National Grid to undertake a review of the connection of offshore to onshore and, generally, to adopt a more coordinated approach.

Councillor Sally Noble's report was circulated after the meeting. Councillor Noble also reported on the latest budget position of the District Council and that the Government's grant funding had been reduced by 50%. The proposed budget for 2024/25 would include earmarked funding for flood relief.

The Chairman thanked the County and District Councillors for their reports.

## **6. Questions from members of the public**

The Chairman stated that he had been contacted by several residents regarding flooding of the road at the Gromford Burial Ground. The meeting discussed the possible causes of this including standing water from run-off from the fields, the lack of a ditch and/or water gups in the verges. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to the landowner to ask if they would take action to divert the water away from the road. It was noted that if this request was unsuccessful the County Council might invoke its enforcement powers.

Councillor Pass referred to several footpaths which had become impassable due to ploughing by the landowner. It was agreed that the landowner was obliged to maintain the access to the footpaths and that Councillor Pass would report this on the Public Access website in the first instance.

Issues with a hedge and the use of razor wire in the village were discussed and it was agreed the Chairman would speak with the relevant parties in the first instance.

An issue with the displaying of a Palestinian flag in Farnham were discussed and it was noted that this had been removed as it had been hung on a listed building.

Signed .....

(Chair)

Date.....

**7. Written update from the Water Monitoring Warden**

The Council noted the brief update from the Warden which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Warden for her report.

Further to the discussion under item 4, above, it was agreed that the Clerk would write to both East Suffolk Council and the Environment Agency to seek a more comprehensive reply to the Council's queries about legal levels and what should be in the public domain.

**8. Clerk's report including the correspondence log**

The correspondence log was noted. The Clerk had no other items to report beyond those raised elsewhere on the agenda.

**9. Responsible Finance Officer's report, including balances and invoices**

The current balance was £6670.01.

The following invoices were submitted for consideration.

Item	Payee	Amount	Legal power
Clerk's salary	K Abbott	£448.68	Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 s.112
PAYE	HMRC	£112.20	LGA 1972 s.112
*Maintenance of the villages	East Suffolk Services Ltd	*£481.68	LGA 1972 s.111

The three invoices were approved for payment, but the last for East Suffolk Services Ltd was to be challenged before payment as there was no indication of the number of times the grass would be cut, or the bus shelter cleaned on the invoice. The balance after the invoices were paid would be £5627.23\*.

\*Clerk's note: The East Suffolk Services Ltd invoice was challenged after the meeting and it was clarified that the grass would be cut ten times in the year, but the bus shelter would no longer be cleaned due to a lack of resources. A revised invoice was provided for £321.60. The revised balance was therefore revised to £5787,31.

**10 Community Emergency Plan**

A revised and updated Community Emergency Plan was submitted to the Parish Council for its review.

The Plan was approved without amendment.

Signed .....(Chair)

Date.....

**11 Year-to date income versus expenditure report**

A report indicating the position of the Budget as of 31 December 2023 was provided to the Parish Council for review, in addition to estimated income and expenditure in 2024/25. The report also updated the Council on its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) ear-marked reserves.

The Clerk responded to the Council's questions on the report. The report was received and noted.

**12 Annual Budget 2024/25**

The Council asked that an additional £500 expenditure be indicated for maintenance of the two noticeboards and benches. It decided not to utilise its CIL funds at this time.

The Budget for 2024/25, having been discussed and questioned, was proposed, seconded, and unanimously approved.

**13 Annual Precept Demand 2024/25**

The Clerk referred the Parish Council to the letter received from the District Council to advise of the overall increase in the tax base for the coming year and its implications for the precept and Council Tax. The Clerk also referred the meeting to the the estimated increase/decrease in the tax base by parish compared to 2023/24.

It was proposed by Councillor Norman, seconded by Councillor Conibeer and by unanimous vote agreed that the 2024/25 precept demand be £5000.

**14 Urgent business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**15 Items for the next meeting**

**February:** Review of the Asset Register, Feedback on Thermal Imaging Surveys, Risk Assessments, East Suffolk Services Terms and Conditions Schedule of Works.

The meeting concluded at 21.35hrs.

Signed .....(Chair)

Date.....