

FARINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

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Clerk: Sally Thurston



The Parish of Great Faringdon, in the County of Oxfordshire

MINUTES OF A TOWN MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 26th JANUARY 2015 at 7.30 p.m. in the Corn Exchange, Faringdon

PRESENT:

For Faringdon Town Council

Cllrs David Price (Town Mayor)

Ian Bell

Jane Boulton

Roger Cox

Angela Finn

Steve Leniec

Mark Greenwood

Alex Meredith

Mike Wise

25 Members of Public

1 Member of the Press

Sally Thurston, Town Clerk

Liz Billson, Assistant Town Clerk

1. Mayor's Opening Address

The Mayor sought permission from the meeting to allow Cllr Steve Leniec to speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Finance Committee, although he lived outside the parish. This was **AGREED**.

The Mayor paid tribute to Alan Hickmore and John Gilman who had sadly passed away since the last Town Meeting. Both had served as councillors and Town Mayors and thanks was given for their hard work and dedication.

The Mayor thanked the staff for all their hard work during the year and highlighted in particular the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan.

Members of the public were reminded that elections would take place this coming May for Town Council. Information about standing for council can be obtained from the Town Clerk.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from C/Cllr Judith Heathcoat, Cllrs Julie Farmer and James Gregory.

3. Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 14th April 2014

The Minutes were signed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Town Council Budget and Precept for 2015/16

The meeting received a presentation on the proposed budget for 2015/16 from Cllr Steve Leniec, Chair of Faringdon Town Council Finance and Audit Committee.

Cllr Leniec explained that the precept setting process this year had been particularly difficult. The Town council had taken on services devolved from county and district over the past few years which were having an impact on finances. These services include the Tourist Information Centre, The Corn Exchange and Youth Services. The absence of local district and County offices also made the Town Council Office the only available place for residents to get information. All of these services have required extra investment in staff with staffing now accounting for approximately two thirds of the total precept. Cllr Leniec also advised that increased energy costs had resulted in high fuel bills for the Town Council operated venues. Due to these increases in costs difficult cuts had been made to maintain current service levels, which included a £2,000 cut to the grants budget.

The Town Council were investigating the purchase of the FAZE site from Oxfordshire County Council to secure it as a facility for the Town. There was a £50,000 grant available for this purchase from Bloor homes. The Finance Committee had suggested that further funds needed to reach the purchase price of £79,000 (plus legal fees) would be found from budget savings, reserves and budgeting for a capital project. The final decision would be made at the Council meeting on 28/1/2015.

Cllr Leniec proposed that, to defend services and give the opportunity to invest in FAZE, the precept would need to be set at £ £ 326,347.00 which represented a 3.54% increase and a cost of £123.82 per band D household.

The meeting was given the opportunity to ask questions and give suggestions.

The following points were raised:

- *Seek grants funding to fund some services.* Cllr Leniec explained that the cinema equipment had been grant funded and staff were continually looking for funding. The planning committee were vigilant in securing s106 funding for new development.
- *Source Volunteers to fill roles in the Tourist Information Centre.* Cllr Leniec explained that the TIC now acted as the front desk for council and provided administrative support to the Clerk as well as fielding district and county queries. It would be very difficult to source and manage volunteers in this role.

- *It was a shame that the grant budget had to be cut as this was the life blood to local organisations.* Cllr Leniec explained that it was a very difficult decision and one that was not taken lightly. But to ensure that the rise for council tax payers was kept to a minimum it was necessary. It was hoped that if further funds became available the £2,000 cut could be replaced.
- *Grants Budget had gone down and staffing gone up and the percentage spent on each was out of kilter.* This was due to the extra services that fell to Town Council due to County and District cuts but in times of austerity the Town Council tried to keep precept as low as possible without affecting services.

The precept figure of £326, 347.00 would be proposed to Full Council on Wednesday 28th January.

6. Faringdon Parking Survey

Gary Kay Smith Limited made a presentation of the Faringdon Parking Survey Draft Executive Summary, recommendations and first draft report which is available on the Town Council website and the Town Clerk's Office.

The meeting agreed with many of the findings in the report. Mr. Smith told the meeting that unless parking restrictions were enforced the suggestions in the plan would not work. It was explained that currently the Police were responsible for enforcement but resources prohibited them from executing the task. To introduce civil enforcement Oxfordshire County Council would need to take the lead and it would be expensive to introduce. VoWHDC have looked at enforcement at length but the expense was an issue.

During discussion after the presentation the following issues were raised as causing particular concern:

- Enforcement of current parking restrictions does not happen, people are allowed to park illegally.
- Camper Vans parked on Coxwell Rd obstruct vision and are dangerous.
- London Rd and London Street illegal parking.
- Coxwell Street illegal parking.
- Single yellow lines on Coxwell Street allowed parking on both sides after 6pm. The road is not wide enough to allow this causing cars to be parked on the pavement.
- Abuse of the restricted parking in the Town Centre.
- Moving bus stops on Coxwell Rd, as suggested in the report, could cause a hazard and would be an expense that could be avoided.
- If residents / visitors were expected to use the car parks they needed to feel safer, with CCTV.
- As the Town grew would the car parks be big enough?
- Not enough parking was provided with new housing
- Public safety should be paramount and not the cost of introducing civil enforcement.

- Speed. 20 MPH zones needed and traffic calming.
- Extra housing has caused increased traffic on the A420 and the junctions adjoining it.

Mr. Smith explained that the survey was the start and provided an evidence base. After a consultation period a detailed costing and outline of the priorities in the report would follow, taking into account residents views. Decisions on enforcement would then fall to OCC and VWHDC.

7. Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr. Mike Wise gave an update on progress of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan. Following the decision to include protection of green spaces, the entire Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan will need to be resubmitted, this would include another 6 week public consultation in the town plus a 6 week consultation by the VoWHDC. The resubmission has resulted in a considerable amount of work. The following green spaces will be included:
Tucker Park, Oakwood Park, Town Park, Folly Woodland, Humpty Hill, Pye Street Park, Marlborough Gardens Park, Folly Park, Coleshill Drive play area and Volunteer Way play area.

8. Public Speaking Time and General Discussion

The increase of traffic due to extra housing and parking problems highlighted in the parking survey were discussed at length.

The cutting of the grants budget in the precept was raised. It was proposed that precept request was raised to include the £2,000 cut. Cllr. Leniec informed the meeting that this would cost a band D property an extra 76p per year.

It was AGREED to propose to Council on Wednesday 28th January that the grant budget should be increased back to the current level of £9,750. This would give a precept figure of £328,347.00.