



SUMMONS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A MEETING OF THE HART DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HARLINGTON WAY, FLEET ON THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 2017 AT 7.00 PM

Joint Chief Executive

CIVIC OFFICES, HARLINGTON WAY
FLEET, HAMPSHIRE GU51 4AE

AGENDA

**COPIES OF THIS AGENDA ARE AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT AND
BRAILLE ON REQUEST**

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

To confirm the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 15 December 2016.
Paper A

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare disclosable pecuniary, and any other, interests.

4 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 – QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

To receive any questions from members of the public submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12.

*Note: The text of any question under Council Procedure Rule 12 must be given to the Chief Executive not later than **Noon on Friday, 20 January 2017.***

5 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 – QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

To receive any questions from Members submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 14.

Note: The text of any question under Council Procedure Rule 14.3 must be given to the **Chief Executive not later than 5.00 pm on Monday, 23 January 2017.**

The text of any question under Council Procedure Rule 14.4 must be submitted to the **Chief Executive before 10.00 am on Thursday, 26 January 2017.**

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

7 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

8 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

9 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

The Minutes of the following Committees, which met on the dates shown, are submitted.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14.1, Members are allowed to put questions at Council without Notice in respect of any matters in the Minutes to the Leader of the Council or any Chairman of the relevant meeting at the time those Minutes are received by Council.

Meeting	Date	Page Numbers	For Decision
Planning	14 December 2016	38-73	
Overview & Scrutiny	20 December 2016	15-17	
Cabinet	5 January 2017	30-35	
Licensing	10 January 2017	7-9	

NB Planning Committee meeting of 11 January cancelled.

10 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR FLEET PARISH

To consider whether a Community Governance review for Fleet parish should be undertaken in the Spring of 2017 with a view to decreasing the number of Councillors from 19 to 18 and making amendments to the parish ward boundaries of two wards with effect from the parish elections due in May 2018. **Paper B**

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 That Council resolve to consult on the number of Councillors for Fleet Town Council in a spring edition of the Fleet Town Council Newsletter.
- 2 That the consultation consists of a table of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the proposal and the current arrangements and a means to collect responses from electorate.
- 3 That officers collate the responses and make a recommendation for the changes to the member numbers for consideration by Council in summer of 2017.

II COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR CHURCH CROOKHAM PARISH

To authorise the undertaking of a Community Governance review for Church Crookham Parish in spring of 2017 in order to consider an adjustment of the number of Councillors across the existing wards of that parish. Any resultant changes from the review would come into effect from the parish elections due in May 2018.

Paper C

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 That Council resolve to consult on the number of Councillors for Church Crookham Parish in a spring edition of the Church Crookham Parish Council Newsletter.
- 2 That the consultation consists of a table of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the proposal and the current arrangements and a means to collect responses from electorate. The review should be restricted solely to the number of councillors that represent each parish ward.
- 3 That officers collate the responses and in conjunction with Church Crookham Parish Council make a report and recommendation for any changes for consideration and resolution by this Council in summer of 2017.

Date of Despatch: 17 January 2017

COUNCIL

Date and Time: Thursday, 15 December 2016 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Fleet

Present:

COUNCILLORS –

Southern - (Chairman)

Ambler	Crampton	Makepeace-Browne
Axam	Crisp	Morris
Bailey	Crookes	Neighbour
Billings (7.05 pm)	Dickens	Oliver
Blewett	Forster	Parker
Butler	Gray	Radley (James)
Clarke	Gorys	Radley (Jenny)
Cockarill	Kennett	Renshaw
Collett (7.05pm)	Leeson	Wheale

Officers Present:

Patricia Hughes	Joint Chief Executive
Daryl Phillips	Joint Chief Executive
Gill Chapman	Committee Services

64 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 November 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Burchfield, Kinnell, Woods and Wright.

66 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Billings declared a personal, but not pecuniary interest, in the Licensing minutes.

Councillor Billings entered the meeting during this item.

67 INSPIRE BUSINESS AWARDS

Councillor Crookes gave a short talk about the Inspire Awards, and introduced the winners and finalists.

Winner of New Business of the Year, Jen Copeland, transformed an empty space into the successful community based Harletts Café. Finalist Rob Tillier from Accelerate Driver Training works closely with young drivers helping them to understand the risks of driving. Family Business of the Year Finalists, Emma and Gareth Jones from Odiham Cake Company make 'showstopper' cakes. Employer of the Year, Fleet Mortgages, specialise in the buy to let market. Finalist for Entrepreneur of the Year was Rob Collard, and Collards were Business of the Year,

Members congratulated everyone on their hard work and success.

Councillor Collett entered the meeting during this item.

68 PRESENTATION – WORKING WITH VULNERABLE VETERANS

Lucy Nield talked about Vulnerable Veterans. Working with armed forces veterans, reserves and their families they help the transition on leaving the armed forces. Some veterans find integration difficult, small numbers struggle and fall through the cracks and the organisation helps with support in the form of signposting to other services, mentoring, bespoke buddying system, online support and helping them to find work.

Members queries and discussions were around PTSD, homelessness, mental health, other local support, networking, sharing ideas and support and how the Armed Forces themselves were recognising the problems.

Members thanked Lucy for the interesting and enlightening presentation, and the valuable work being done.

69 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 – QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

No questions received.

70 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 – QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Questions put by Councillors are detailed in Appendix A attached to these Minutes.

71 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had attended the following events on behalf of the Council.

28 November	HDC Fundraising event at Hartley Wintney Golf Club
29 November	Reception to celebrate achievements of Hampshire's Olympians and Paralympians at 2016 Olympic Games, The Castle Winchester
5 December	Mayor of Winchester Civic Event in Winchester
8 December	Mayor of Farnham Christmas Carol, Farnham United Reformed Church, Farnham
11 December	St John Ambulance, Hampshire – Christmas Celebration Carol Service at Holy Trinity Church, Fareham
13 December	Visit to Royal Mail Delivery office, Waterfront Business Park, Fleet

72 CABINET MEMBERS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, **Councillor Parker**, announced:

Apart from the Chairman's dinner in Hartley Wintney, which was excellent, I attended a party in London thrown by the RSPCA to honour the winners of the RSPCA Gold Footprint Awards. Both members of the Hart dog warden team were there enjoying the event and surroundings and networking with peers from other authorities. The event was attended by a number of MPs including the member for North East Hampshire, Ranil Jayawardena.

Last week I attended a Five Councils event on behalf of Cllr. Burchfield who had other commitments. The contract is being rolled out in the first instance in South Oxfordshire and Vale of Wight Horse. It is clear that there are some teething problems in the roll-out which need some attention, but these are being addressed and both contractors are deploying resource not only to ensure the contract is being delivered but also to provide senior liaison to head off future problems where possible. No contract of this complexity is going to be issue free, but we have the assurance that any concerns will be quickly addressed.

Most members attended the Local Plan Steering Group on Tuesday, where members received an update from our planning policy team and discussed some spatial strategy options. The officers took away some good feedback and will be working to refine those areas where members had concerns. Mr. Phillips and I will be meeting with the planning policy team on Monday to determine the management of the output from Tuesday. We are keen not to lose momentum or to allow the timetable to slip significantly, because not only will we progressively be more vulnerable to developer inroads but we will also find ourselves losing New Homes Bonus at a time when our finances will be tightly squeezed, and we may be compelled to make some savings which we would find distasteful.

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, **Councillor Crampton**, had no announcements

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, **Councillor Crookes**, had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, **Councillor Forster**, announced:

Garden waste is now over 950 contracts. The conversion of 'sack to green bin' campaign is going well. The kerbside collections also continue to run well (just one valid complaint this month across the whole of Hart) but this month we've had a further increase in compliments, including from Crookham, Odiham, Blackwater and Fleet, which shows the service is running well across the district.

I'm pleased to inform you that over the Christmas period we've arranged for a significant increase in collections at the bring banks (that's the bottle and recycling collection points around Hart). Some will be collected almost daily. We know that in particular glass and cardboard recycling goes up and some areas suffer if residents leave excess despite them being full, so the extra collections will help.

Last year we had a number of issues of residents leaving general (non recyclable) waste at the bring banks at a few sites last year - most notably at Elvetham Heath. This is fly tipping and we will pursue prosecution if we identify anyone who does this.

We'll once again collect Xmas trees kerbside for free with for garden waste subscribers, through January.

The team here will be working 22 & 23 and 29 & 30 December, but the call centre is closed 27 & 28 December - although there will be collections on those dates.

Finally parking has had a good month doing a great job as usual.

Have a very merry Christmas and remember to recycle!

The Cabinet Member for Housing, **Councillor Gorys**, had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, **Councillor Kennett**, had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Town and Village Regeneration, **Councillor Morris**, reported:

Funding has finally been secured for several community regeneration projects in Blackwater and as much of the detailed planning has already commenced it is my intention to deliver these projects as soon as possible in the new year. These initiatives include the previously announced re-landscaping of the untidy area on the corner of Vicarage Road and the A30, a public clock and the renovation of the railings down the A30 from the railway bridge to the Vicarage Road. The tree will form a much needed piece of greenery breaking up the some what harsh street scene in that area and can be dressed with lights during Christmas periods. The clock will become a focal point and the refurbished railings should break down the somewhat industrial feel of the pathway and gateway into Blackwater by car. All this work will help give a better identity and softer appearance to Blackwater.

I was pleased to learn that Blackwater and Hawley Neighborhood Plan Steering Group Committee met for the first time on 29th November where also in attendance was the owner of Seymours Estate agents Mr James Sharpin the Chairman of the newly formed Blackwater Business Forum. Leading Blackwater retailers Mr Sharpin is very keen to promote and encourage the regeneration work being carried out in Blackwater and his enthusiasm is a perfect example of a community working together to make their environment work both for the public and the retailers.

As a final note, Rotherwick is the first of our communities to complete and have adopted their NP. Their referendum was attended by 54% of the Rotherwick community a huge uplift on the national average of between 25 to 40%. The highest was 65%. Should we vote through this evening Rotherwick NP it will be live and part of Harts Local Plan and will be used to help determine planning applications in Rotherwick. Rotherwick community should be commended.

73 JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVES' REPORT

The Joint Chief Executives' report is attached as Appendix B to these Minutes.

74 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

Meeting	Date
Licensing Committee	2 November 2016

No questions asked.

Minute 13 - Approval Of Stage 2 Review Of Statement Of Principles Under The Gambling Act 2005

Resolved

That the 2nd Stage Review of the Statement of Principles be adopted.

Minute 14 - Approval Of Revised Statement Of Licensing Policy Under The Licensing Act 2003 For Referral To Full Council For Adoption

Resolved

That the revised Statement of Licensing Policy be adopted.

Cabinet	1 December 2016
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No questions asked.

Minute 85 - Rotherwick Neighbourhood Plan – Bringing into Legal Force

Resolved

That under Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Rotherwick Neighbourhood Plan be 'made' (brought into legal force) to form part of the statutory Hart Development Plan with immediate effect.

75 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Council noted the changes in membership of Committees:

Councillor Forster had replaced Councillor Woods on Planning Committee
Councillor Dickens had replaced Councillor Kinnell on Licensing Committee
Councillor Dickens had replaced Councillor Woods on Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

76 MOTION TO COUNCIL

Councillor Crookes proposed a Motion to Council, seconded by Cllr Gorys.

Members discussed the situation and how it could be changed, particularly by encouraging businesses to be part of the district settlements. Members considered

online banking, the need for local branches, access to other parts of the district, other settlements in Hart that had lost banks, and alternative ways of thinking, and alternative ways of keeping the service in the community without keeping branch open, eg post offices

“This Council, as representative of local residents, regrets the recent decision of Lloyd’s bank to close its Odiham branch in March 2017. The service it provides is particularly highly valued, especially by older residents and small business owners who use the branch to manage their finances. Following recent closures, the residents of Odiham, Hook and Hartley Wintney will have no local bank branch. Bank branches in the nearby towns of Alton, Basingstoke and Fleet are almost inaccessible by public transport.

The Council therefore urges Lloyd’s bank to re consider its decision and to keep the Odiham branch open as a valued service to the communities of the district of Hart.”

After consideration and discussion the motion was supported unanimously.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Collett asked the Leader of the Council:

On 4th August the Cabinet decided that a public consultation would take place “*on introducing a Council Tax Support Scheme which requires those covered by the scheme to pay a minimum of 20% of their Council Tax liability*”. This was reported to Council on 29th September for noting, and no debate took place, although I was able to ask three questions.

The wording of that resolution was clear. Anyone who is currently entitled to anything between 80% and 100% Council Tax Support would, if such a scheme were to be adopted, only receive 80% support in future and would have to pay the 20% of their Council Tax that was not supported. Those who already pay 20% or more of their Council Tax liability would obviously be unaffected.

Yet the consultation details set out on the Council’s website said something significantly different. This stated that “*residents of working age who currently receive 100% support would have to pay 20% of the charge and those working age claimants who receive partial support (i.e. not 100%), would see the level of their support proportionally reduced*”. In other words, unlike the Cabinet decision, this was now being extended to a 20% cut for ALL those residents of working age who receive Council Tax Support.

I would therefore like to ask:

On what authority were the terms of the consultation changed in such a significant manner?

Councillor Parker responded:

Resolutions of Cabinet and other bodies are not designed to be read in isolation, and must be taken in the context of the reports which support them. The report to Cabinet on 4th August sought agreement to carry out public consultation on introducing a Council Tax Support Scheme which required those covered by the scheme to pay a minimum of 20% of their Council Tax liability.

5.7.1 of the report stated :

Minimum payment. If the calculation of Council Tax Support was based on only 80% liability, this would mean that someone living in a Band D property would be billed around **£300 per year** if they previously had full benefit. For those not on full benefit, the extra amount to pay for someone in a Band D property would be in the region of **£150 - £200 per annum**.

5.8 of the report advises :

It is the 1,610 working age (but not necessarily in work) claimants where a local scheme can be determined which can change the level of Support provided.

The terms of the consultation were not changed, it is these 1,610 taxpayers who would have their level of support affected if the suggested change was agreed. Basing the Council Tax Support calculation on 80% liability would mean the CTS calculation would change for all

claimants of working age, which is why it was stated in 5.7.1 that those not on full benefit would face an increase as well as those on full benefit.

Thus as Cabinet passed the resolution based on the report, there was no change, and the consultation was on the authority of Cabinet. Any resulting decisions will be taken by Council in February, and I look forward to hearing the member and others in debate.

Councillor Collett asked a supplementary question:

Is the Leader seriously suggesting that resolutions can be interpreted to mean something different to what they actually say in this way? How can any local authority operate when no-one can rely on decisions being implemented in the way that was agreed? Also, bearing in mind that during discussions in the lead-up to this year's budget decisions in February, the Leader told Cllr Neighbour and I that an amendment during the budget debate ruling out such a consultation was unnecessary, because he would never support such a move, now that he has changed his position and this public consultation has taken place, and is now closed, is it still this administration's intention to pick on many of the District's most financially vulnerable residents in this way?

Councillor Parker responded:

This is a consultation and we evaluate responses we receive and use that to help the decisions going forward. The decisions are also considered by Overview and Scrutiny and we take advice from them. Things move on, and we are now in a different financial place and having to look at this as one of the possible savings to balance the books. We always want to help vulnerable people, we don't want to do this but sometimes we have to make difficult decisions.

Joint Chief Executives' Report

Whilst we are still awaiting the final details, and the devil is always in the detail, the provisional local government settlement today reflects what we broadly anticipated for 2017/2018. However, it does not look so good for the following 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 years where there will be significant challenges.

When assessed against current spend we will need to find £500k worth of savings in 2017/18 set in the context of only a £9.6m budget. That will be hard to achieve without having to resort to the use of reserves, although reserves should not be used to subsidise structural revenue shortfalls.

In the following year, from April 2018, in the absence of an adopted local plan and reliance on planning appeals we are likely will lose the whole of the New Homes Bonus, some £2.4m

We need to restate that the Government have made it very clear that no New Homes Bonus will be paid for any properties granted on planning appeal.

Recognising the challenges this presents the Council, Officers and Members have already considered (through Service Boards during this autumn) potential areas for savings or increases in income. Moving forward, we anticipate working with Members during January to present an informed budget in February.

COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING: 26 JANUARY 2017

TITLE OF REPORT: **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR FLEET PARISH**

Report of: Electoral Registration Officer

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Stephen Parker, Leader

I PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider whether a Community Governance review for Fleet parish should be undertaken in the Spring of 2017 with a view to decreasing the number of Councillors from 19 to 18 and making amendments to the parish ward boundaries of two wards with effect from the parish elections due in May 2018.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Council resolve to consult on the number of Councillors for Fleet Town Council in a spring edition of the Fleet Town Council Newsletter.

2.2 That the consultation consists of a table of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the proposal and the current arrangements and a means to collect responses from electorate.

2.3 That officers collate the responses and make a recommendation for the changes to the member numbers for consideration by Council in summer of 2017.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Fleet Town Council has 19 parish Councillors. This figure was set when the Council was first established in 2009.

3.2 The 2007 Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act gave the power to alter the number of parish councillors to the District Authority by way of a Community Governance Review (CGR).

3.3 The Act requires that when undertaking CGR the Council outline the scope of the review and consult as appropriate.

3.3 Fleet Town Council have written to request a CGR on the basis that they do not consider that the current number of town councillors is appropriate for them to deliver effective and convenient local government for their parish.

3.4 Fleet Town Council have also raised concerns with the pattern of parish wards that are due to come into effect in May 2018 as a result consequential changes following the introduction of the new County division boundaries on the 1st December 2016.

- 3.5 Fleet Town Council are of the view that the pattern of wards proposed is not desirable and does not reflect the communities that make up Fleet. The reasons for this are outlined in their request and will also form the basis of the consultation with the community. The detail of the request made by Fleet Town Council is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.6 Hart District could determine not to undertake a CGR. The Act does not require it to act upon the request from the Town Council. It would be compelled to undertake a CGR on receipt of a petition from at least 7.5% of the electorate in the parish.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 4.1 If Council follows the recommendation of Officers and resolves to undertake a CGR then it must decide on the terms of reference, and the degree to which the review is restricted.
- 4.2 For the purposes of this review it is recommended that the review be restricted solely to the matter of the number of Councillors of Fleet Town Council and the warding changes requested in the proposal made to this Council. .

5 NATURE OF CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Act does not specify the form of consultation required for a review, only that Council determine that it is reasonable.
- 5.2 Fleet Town Council has suggested that the town council newsletter could be used as a means of consultation. A full page article summarising the proposal made by the town Council and encouraging responses by way of an email or Freepost address could be used. The responses would then be collated and made available to members prior to the review returning to this Council.
- 5.3 Officers suggest that this level of consultation is reasonable and appropriate for this type of change.
- 5.4 Once this consultation is complete officers will draw up a summary of the responses, share these with Fleet Town Council and then return to this Council for a recommendation for a change, if any, in the electoral arrangements of the Parish. It is expected that this decision will need to be taken sometime in summer of 2017.

Contact: Daryl Phillips, Chief Executive, daryl.phillips@hart.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Fleet Town Council Request



FC/Oct 2016/ITEM 5 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW PROPOSAL

The members received and considered the report of the Corporate Governance Working Group on proposals to be submitted to HDC for agreement and onward transmission to the Local Boundary Commission in England.

It was reported that Members of the Working Group had considered the County Boundary review, looking at the parish, district and County boundaries to see if these arrangements best suited the local Community of Fleet.

It was noted that in 2010 when FTC was formed, membership of the Council was set at 19 Councillors. Since then, members had been keen to maintain electoral equality within the wards whilst still reflecting the identities and interests of the local community.

During the lifetime of FTC, it has never achieved its full quota of 19 councillors either through elections or co-option. In addition, most of the ward elections had been uncontested. It was suggested therefore that it would seem advisable to reduce the number of councillors in order to achieve a full Council with all members being elected.

It was proposed that 17 Councillors spread over 5 wards would provide a better rate of electoral equality whilst maintaining the identity of the local communities.

As a result of the completion of County Boundary Review, members had a serious concern regarding the Wickham Road Ward with one councillor representing 283 electors. It was felt, from a parish council point of view that adopting the recommendations within the County Boundary review would not be in the best interests of the residents of Fleet parish.

It was therefore proposed that the amalgamation of Court Manor, Court Moor and Wickham Road Wards would meet all of the above criteria.

Benefits of this amalgamation:

- Achieves a better Councillor to elector ratio
- All wards are south of the canal which forms a natural boundary
- All wards are within the same county electoral area supporting electoral efficiency
- Helps to integrate the residents of Wickham Road area into the local community
- Is a *better fit*. Residents will use the same local facilities eg schools, pre-schools and churches
- Basingbourne Park is the common recreational area with playground, pavilion, sports pitches/activities and woodland access to Courtmoor School.
- Provides the opportunity to reduce the number of councillors

Two proposals were considered:

Option A which allows for 18 Councillors and Option B which allows for 17 Councillors.

Community Governance Review Option A - 18 Councillors = 966 electors per Councillor

This option allows for the amalgamation of Courtmoor, Court Manor and Wickham Road and reduces the number of councillors in Central Ward to 5

Polling District	Parish Ward	Electors	Cllrs	Electorate / Cllr	Variance (%)
FB (2234) inc FD (1177) and FW (283)	Courtmoor (inc Court Manor and Wickham Road)	3694	4	923	-4.5%
FC	Fleet Central	5112	5	1022	5.5%
FH (1944) & FS (796)	Calthorpe	2740	3	913	-5.5%
FP	Pondtail	3977	4	994	3%
FA	Ancells	1868	2	934	-3.5%

Community Governance Review Option B – 17 Councillors = 1023 electors per Councillor

This option allows for the amalgamation of Courtmoor, Court Manor and Wickham Road and reduces the number of councillors in Central Ward to 5 and Courtmoor Ward to 3

Polling District	Parish Ward	Electors	Cllrs	Electorate / Cllr	Variance (%)
FB (2234) inc FD (1177) and FW (283)	Courtmoor (inc Court Manor and Wickham Road)	3694	3	1231	20%
FC	Fleet Central	5112	5	1022	0%
FH (1944) & FS (796)FH	Calthorpe	2740	3	913	-11%
FP	Pondtail	3977	4	994	-3%
FA	Ancells	1868	2	934	-9%

Following discussion and after careful consideration it was

RESOLVED

To support the adoption of Option A which allows for the amalgamation of Courtmoor, Court Manor and Wickham Road and reduces the number of councillors in Central Ward to 5, for submission to HDC and onward transmission to the Local Boundary Commission in England

COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING: 26 JANUARY 2017

TITLE OF REPORT: **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR CHURCH CROOKHAM PARISH**

Report of: Electoral Registration Officer

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Stephen Parker, Leader

I PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To authorise the undertaking of a Community Governance review for Church Crookham Parish in spring of 2017 in order to consider an adjustment of the number of Councillors across the existing wards of that parish. Any resultant changes from the review would come into effect from the parish elections due in May 2018.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Council resolve to consult on the number of Councillors for Church Crookham Parish in a spring edition of the Church Crookham Parish Council Newsletter.

2.2 That the consultation consists of a table of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the proposal and the current arrangements and a means to collect responses from electorate. The review should be restricted solely to the number of councillors that represent each parish ward.

2.3 That officers collate the responses and in conjunction with Church Crookham Parish Council make a report and recommendation for any changes for consideration and resolution by this Council in summer of 2017.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Church Crookham has 10 parish Councillors. This figure was set when the Council was first established in 2009.

3.2 The number of Councillors for the Queen Elizabeth ward has been set at 1 since the council was created in 2009. This was based on the small electorate in the ward at the time. Since then the Crookham park development has commenced construction and those electors are now under represented and the ward needs to have the number of councillors increased to reflect the forecast electorate and to preserve the equality of votes.

3.3 The 2007 Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act gave the power to alter the number of parish councillors to the District Authority by way of a Community Governance Review (CGR).

3.4 The Act requires that when undertaking CGR the Council outline the scope of the review and consults as appropriate.

- 3.5 Church Crookham Parish Council have written to request a CGR on the basis that the the electoral equality in the 3 parish wards is now unbalanced and needs to be corrected. The parish Council are happy that the overall number of councillors does not need to be altered.
- 3.6 Hart District could determine not to undertake a CGR. The Act does not require it to act upon the request from the Parish Council. It would be compelled to undertake a CGR on receipt of a petition from at least 7.5% of the electorate in the parish. However Officers are of the view that this Council should undertake a review as the existing inequality in representation is not a desirable situation to leave unresolved.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 4.1 If Council follows the recommendation of Officers and resolves to undertake a CGR then it must decide on the terms of reference, and the degree to which the review is restricted.
- 4.2 For the purposes of this review it is recommended that the review be restricted solely to the matter of the number of Councillors representing each ward of Church Crookham Parish.

5 NATURE OF CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Act does not specify the form of consultation required for a review, only that Council determine that it is reasonable.
- 5.2 Church Crookham Parish Council has suggested that the parish council newsletter could be used as a means of consultation. A half page article summarising the proposal made by the parish Council and encouraging responses by way of an email or Freepost address could be used. The responses would then be collated and made available to members prior to the review returning to this Council.
- 5.3 Officers suggest that this level of consultation is reasonable and appropriate for this type of change.
- 5.4 Once this consultation is complete officers will draw up a summary of the responses, share these with Church Crookham Parish Council and then return to this Council for a recommendation for a change, if any, in the electoral arrangements of the Parish.

Contact: Daryl Phillips, Joint Chief Executive, daryl.phillips@hart.gov.uk

COUNCIL

Date and Time: Thursday, 26 January 2017 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Fleet

Present:

COUNCILLORS –

Southern - (Chairman)

Ambler	Crookes	Morris
Axam	Dickens	Neighbour
Blewett	Forster	Oliver
Burchfield	Gray	Parker
Butler	Gorys	Radley (James)
Clarke	Harward	Radley (Jenny)
Cockarill	Kennett	Renshaw
Collett	Kinnell	Wheale
Crampton	Leeson	Woods
Crisp	Makepeace-Browne	Wright

Officers Present:

Patricia Hughes	Joint Chief Executive
Gill Chapman	Committee Services

77 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 December 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

78 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bailey and Billings.

79 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

80 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 – QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Questions had been received from Mr David Turver, details of which are set out in Appendix A attached to these Minutes.

81 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 – QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

None received.

82 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had attended the following events on behalf of the Council.

5 January 2017 Opening of new Pumping Station, Hitches Lane

83 CABINET MEMBERS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, **Councillor Parker**, announced

On Wednesday I attended a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Hampshire, where many Members of Parliament and council leaders were present from across Hampshire. It is clear that none of the mooted devolution proposals will proceed in the foreseeable future, and there is little appetite for the larger scale unitary reorganisations which have been suggested following the raising of that hare by the Deloitte report commissioned by Hampshire County Council. However, members should be aware that following their Cabinet Meeting on Tuesday Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council have examined the possibility of proceeding with their own Unitary Council proposal, either on their own or with one or more partners. As this is now on the agenda, it will be necessary for Hart to give it appropriate consideration, in particular whether Hart members have any enthusiasm to participate in such a project

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, **Councillor Burchfield**, reported

The Joint Chief Executive, Ms Hughes, was at the House of Commons this week giving evidence to a Select Committee on how, through mutual collaboration and common goals, we have been able to set up the 5 Council partnership. As I have mentioned previously, the Government is looking at this venture very closely in the hope that they can encourage more councils to collaborate in the same fashion and reduce the burden on the national public purse.

We have also completed the internal Shared Service review that will now come to the Audit Committee. Within the review, we have put together some good suggestions for improvement; however, the review also reflects that our Shared Services are and continue to deliver good value to the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, **Councillor Crampton**, announced

I had heard that there was some confusion over what was happening to Fleet Hospital. We contacted Nicky Seargent who was the Area Director for Southern Health and now with Frimley Park, and he tells us that as part of the service development and transformation with the Frimley system under Primary and Acute Care System Vanguard, the adult community services provided by Souythern Health have been transferred to Frimley Health in order to pilot vertical integration.

This includes Fleet Hospital. There have been not changes to services for local people, however there are benefits from this integration which will improve clinical pathways between acute and community services.

And as for the Community Beds, two beds which are escalation beds at Fleet Hospital have been opened recently due to the high level of demand. No decision has been made on community beds by the CCG as yet. Nicky Seargent will be giving an update at our next Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 16 February.

The official opening of our new Leisure Centre will be on 1st April 2017. Everyone Active have Rebecca Addlington and other members of the Olympic team coming to the event. Further details will follow.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, **Councillor Crookes**, had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, **Councillor Forster**, announced

Service on Waste and CCTV over the Christmas and subsequent period was good, although regrettably there were a few waste rounds delayed due to sickness and one vehicle breakdown, but the teams worked well and kept residents informed, with delays minimised - there was no serious impact. Cctv had a quiet period.

On street parking has also been operating well, although there has recently been an increase in inconsiderate and dangerous parking near schools. We have asked our CEOs to focus on ensuring that safety isn't compromised, and therefore some drivers (who are too lazy to park safely and insist on parking on double yellow lines or in dangerous places) will find they receive FPNs. There is concern about some dangerous parking in these and some other areas, so that will be factored in to the review that is starting regarding on street parking.

We have a small number of new bins being ordered for deployment to replace damaged ones - if any Councillor is aware of somewhere that in particular should be considered for an additional bin, please contact officers and copy me. Most of these are replacements for older ones: we're not intending to deploy many extra ones (around 4 in Fleet town centre have been identified as necessary), but if there is a definite need, please do let us know so it can be considered. I am bringing a paper to cabinet on litter and dog fouling enforcement (after constructive input from Overview and Scrutiny Committee) which I hope will be approved, as it will improve the area and potentially reduce the amount of Street litter.

At Blackwater Valley Transport Advisory Committee I'm glad to report that SWT indicated they're receptive to more bicycle racks and station improvements at Fleet and I'll be working with them over the next couple of months to agree what's needed and try to secure funding. This may extend to additional safety improvements, to complement the cycle access that Cllr Wheale secured from County which is currently being installed. They are putting in more motorcycle and scooter parking already.

It was also discussed (as a reminder) Waterloo will be shut for 3 weeks in August so commuting will be a nightmare. SWT advice is book holiday or work from home if possible. There's also likely to be disruption before then due to preparatory work. Please do inform your parishes and residents.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, **Councillor Gorys**, reported:

The Housing Service has been successful in securing £385,000 as part of a recent DCLG bidding round for local authorities who wanted to become national "Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers". Hart has led on the concept and inception of the bid, which has been produced in partnership with Rushmoor Borough Council and will operate across both Council areas.

The trailblazer will focus on the early adoption of the Homelessness Reduction Bill, revising the way we assess people so that we are focusing on assets and strengths as well as support needs, and will reach out to the wider public sector to generate system reform in the way that we deal with homelessness. The main focus of the trailblazer will be on prevention, and through the learning we will produce a platform that other local authorities can adopt and embed in their areas. This is a very ambitious and exciting piece of work that will be of great benefit to local residents across Hart and Rushmoor. I would like to offer thanks on behalf of the Council to Phil Turner for his work in delivering a convincing proposal to DCLG, and to officers within the Housing Services at both Hart and Rushmoor Councils, who are now working on a challenging implementation plan together with a view to launching the trailblazer from April.

Members may also want to be aware of Hart led projects that have attracted £1.15m additional investment from the DCLG in homelessness services that have now come to an end:

- The Help For Single Homelessness Project worked across 7 local authority areas and has been wound down over the last 6 months. Special thanks to the Coordinator who worked on the project, Claire Leivers, who we seconded across from Rushmoor Borough Council to lead the project. This project supported countless single homeless people and made a really positive impact across the 7 partner authority areas.
- Hart also led on the bid and delivery of the Hampshire Making Safe Scheme project across the 11 Hampshire Districts. This scheme closes at the end of January. The project involved over £900,000 awarded by the DCLG to support victims of domestic abuse across the County, and achieved some great results, including the legacy of extra dedicated units of accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and ongoing target hardening security measures to make people safe in their homes. Special thanks to Kirsty Jenkins, who provided a pivotal role as the coordinator of that scheme. I'd like to ask members to keep their fingers crossed for us, as we have now led on a further bid to DCLG for **another** £312,225 in order to continue elements of this scheme across Hampshire, with Hart once again as the lead authority. We are yet to hear whether this bid has been successful.

You will recall from previous announcements I have made, that the Housing Service has been working towards the national Gold Standard in front line housing options services. This DCLG endorsed and funded scheme has already awarded Hart the "Silver" standard and at that time we were just one of 6 local authorities nationally to have achieved this. I can now report that we are awaiting - with high hopes - the outcome of 2 challenge applications and the team are working on the 10th and final challenge which will be submitted in the very near future. We are hopeful that all the

hard work will pay off and at some stage in the Spring, once we have been confirmed as achieving all 10 local challenges, Hart will join the handful of local authorities in England to have been awarded the national "Gold Standard".

The work on the housing company is progressing and we are going to meet up with South Norfolk council, who have already implemented one, to see what lessons we can learn and how any issues that may arise have been dealt with.

Lastly, members will have received an invitation to join the Housing Service and Safer North Hampshire colleagues on 15th February at 7pm for an information evening about our Community Services. Officers from the Housing Service and Safer North Hampshire will talk about their work and present a number of case studies. I sincerely hope that as many of Hart's Councillors will come along to the evening which is intended to support members to get to know the services better, and to meet the people who are delivering them on our behalf. It promises to be an interesting evening that should help you to feel closer to the service, and to get an insight into how we work with local residents and partner agencies to provide quality housing and community safety services.

The Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, **Councillor Kennett**, reported:

Members have probably heard about how Nicola Ramsey, of our Environmental Health department, worked diligently over many months to try and get a farm shop to cease selling meat contaminated with fly eggs, dishonestly claiming products were organic and other attempts to defraud residents or put them at risk. Only as a last resort was a court case brought. The circumstances were so egregious that the magistrates ordered the company to cease trading immediately and imposed fines and costs totalling more than £40,000 against it.

Unfortunately the business friendly laws apply to bad businesses as well as good, so the operators were able to set up a new company within days, in the same premises, using the same equipment and were able to carry on trading. It is not clear whether they have taken assets out of the company so it cannot pay the penalties.

The Hampshire Police and Crime Panel has published a proactive scrutiny report on domestic abuse which took evidence from a range of organisations involved with this problem in Hampshire. The report concluded that by using his powers to award grants the previous Commissioner had been able to encourage organisations to cooperate more closely, and recommends that this approach be continued. The document includes verbatim responses by over 20 organisations and is quite lengthy. If anyone would like further information please contact me.

The Cabinet Member for Town and Village Regeneration, **Councillor Morris**, reported:

Members and the public may have noticed that the smart card car park ticket payment facility has been withdrawn. This is due to a change in government legislation and Hart now must comply with the new Public Sector Network Security Requirements. This facility was withdrawn on 20 Jan 2017 and a paper explaining the detail will be presented at cabinet on 2 February 2017. Some £6k has been identified which needs to be refunded back to card holders.

I attended a meeting last week at the Hart Shopping centre where I met the shopping centre owners new business representative and discussed many initiatives to encourage the successful leasing of the remaining empty shopping units. The representative agreed to be in regular dialogue with Hart and the high street as a whole, particularly the Fleet Business forum and the Business Improvement District representatives. The representative was keen to look at pop up shops and short term leases contrary to previous management who would only entertain long leases.

I attended meetings with regards to my role as Hart's board member of the Fleet Business Improvement District (BID) and the group is holding a BID "drop in" event explaining the BID process on 15th Feb 2017 in the Hart Shopping Centre 4 to 7pm.

I have had several conversations with the my opposite number at Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Cllr Marc Brunnel Walker the Regeneration portfolio holder, and further meetings are arranged to learn how the council processed such a successful reshaping of Bracknell Town. The next meeting will include a visit to see first hand the mechanics of how this project was brought forward.

I have a meeting with the HCC library portfolio holder Cllr Gibson on 1st Feb 2017 to discuss the refurbishment of the library which commences in February 2017, and how they intend to lease out parts of the upper floor.

I accompanied The Leader, Cllr Parker, and Cllr Gorys to the British Research Establishment in Watford on 9th January 2017 and there we were given a short presentation about a factory built home called a ZED pod. The concept is a prebuilt home constructed in a factory and sited over 2 car park spaces. Further work is required by the company but it is a concept that Hart may consider in the future.

Once again I would like to announce my gratitude to the parking management team and all enforcement officers who under difficult manpower challenges are coping admirably with the extra workload.

84 JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVES' REPORT

The Joint Chief Executives had nothing substantive to report.

85 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

Meeting	Date
Planning Committee	14 December 2016

Councillor Crookes referred to page PL60, Land North of Netherhouse Copse, Hitches Lane, Fleet and asked:

I understand that following the Planning Committee's decision to defer the application the applicant has chosen to appeal on the basis of non determination. Could this please be confirmed? And was there now no further opportunity for Hart to consider this application further? I would ask for clarity on whether this decision is now out of this Council's hands.

If this is the case, will the Council defend the decision at Inquiry and what is the estimate of the Council's direct costs for the defence?

If the Council should fail to successfully defend the decision and the Inspectorate were to grant planning permission, what is the extent of the financial risk to this Council in terms of legal costs, loss of New Homes Bonus and loss of community benefit in S106 and any other contributions?

Councillor Ambler replied that the application had been deferred, and he believed the application could still come back to Committee for determination, but could not himself estimate the costs. He would consult with Officers and circulate a written answer which would be appended to the minutes.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 December 2016

No questions asked.

Cabinet

5 January 2016

No questions asked.

Licensing Committee

10 January 2017

No questions asked.

86 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR FLEET PARISH

Members considered whether a Community Governance review for Fleet parish should be undertaken in the Spring of 2017 with a view to decreasing the number of Councillors from 19 to 18 and making amendments to the parish ward boundaries of two wards with effect from the parish elections due in May 2018.

DECISION

- 1 To consult on the number of Councillors for Fleet Town Council in a spring edition of the Fleet Town Council Newsletter.
- 2 The consultation consists of a table of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the proposal and the current arrangements and a means to collect responses from electorate.
- 3 Officers collate the responses and make a recommendation for the changes to the member numbers for consideration by Council in summer of 2017.

87 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR CHURCH CROOKHAM PARISH

Council were asked to authorise the undertaking of a Community Governance review for Church Crookham Parish in spring of 2017 in order to consider an adjustment of the number of Councillors across the existing wards of that parish.

Any resultant changes from the review would come into effect from the parish elections due in May 2018.

DECISION

- 1 To consult on the number of Councillors for Church Crookham Parish in a spring edition of the Church Crookham Parish Council Newsletter.
- 2 The consultation consists of a table of the respective advantages and disadvantages of the proposal and the current arrangements and a means to collect responses from electorate. The review should be restricted solely to the number of councillors that represent each parish ward.
- 3 Officers collate the responses and in conjunction with Church Crookham Parish Council make a report and recommendation for any changes for consideration and resolution by this Council in summer of 2017.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Mr David Turver asked the following questions and **Councillor Parker** responded:

Question:

Last year you issued a press release claiming a reduction of 1,500 houses in Hart's housing target. How do you now explain that Hart's housing target has increased from ~370 dph to 382 dph, despite the starting point based on population projections falling by more than 100 dph?

Response:

Several issues here. First, the reduction of 1500 was the elimination of the potential overflow of unmet need from Rushmoor after a lot of work both by Hart members and officers and our counterparts in Rushmoor who were anxious to seek to meet their own need within their geography. This was assisted by Hart making SANG available to Rushmoor to facilitate their housing delivery.

Second, the figures the questioner describes as "Hart's housing target" is the Objectively Assessed Housing Need calculated according to Government guidance and in compliance with accepted standards. Finally, population projections are only one of a number of elements in the calculation, explained in the Strategic Housing Market Analysis, which I know the questioner has seen, and which will repay rereading.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

Is it reasonable that we should be asked to concrete over our green fields based on unchallenged jobs forecasts that require us to build houses to accommodate people from other districts whose housing needs are supposed to be met elsewhere, many of whom will work outside the district?

Response:

I am not prepared to answer a question based on perjorative assumptions. We work within the legal requirements. If Mr. Turver would like to submit his supplementary question in writing in more moderate terms, I will be happy to respond.

Question:

What is the timeline for the production of the new Local Plan and associated policies?

Response:

We have taken some time to assess the issue of the emerging Affordable Housing Uplift and whether we adopt such an uplift, and are looking to finalise the Regulation 18 consultation in February.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

What impact or delay to the timeline have you allowed for in the Local Plan once the long awaited Government White Paper on Housing is released in March?

Response:

I have spoken to Mr Barwell and Mr Javid about the white paper. The date of publication is extended by about a month every thirty days, and we don't know what is in it because they won't tell us. We are not going to try prejudge what is in it before it gets here.

Question:

When will a new LDS be produced?

Response:

After we agree the preferred Spatial Strategy for Regulation 18, a revised LDS will be published shortly thereafter.

Mr Turver asked a **supplementary question:**

Will the new process follow the learned legal opinion of Peter Village QC and consult on the level of employment we want to see in the district?

Response:

We will be taking account of any appropriate information, including that of Mr Village.

Question:

What is the likely cost of the further delay to the Local Plan in terms of lost New Homes Bonus and additional charges from East Hants and other contractors?

Response:

In terms of the New Homes Bonus no loss is known as the current arrangements remain unchanged. It would however, be uninformed speculation to second guess what might result from the Government's consultation on possible changes to New Homes Bonus.

No additional costs are anticipated from either East Hampshire or contractors as there is a longer term expectation that East Hampshire would be providing our Planning Policy Services for the next three years to cover the submission and adoption of the current Local Plan.

Mr Turver asked a **supplementary question:**

What financial contingency has HDC set aside now that Netherhouse Copse is likely going to appeal and how much New Homes bonus will be forfeited?

Response:

It is very difficult to assess because the Planning Committee has not taken a decision, it has been deferred. We don't know what the appeal might consist of and cannot quantify the costs which we may have to bear.

Question:

Last year's consultation estimated Hart's brownfield capacity at 450 units. What is your current estimate of brownfield capacity in the light of Pyestock and Bramshill coming forward for redevelopment and further likely availability of poor quality office sites?

Response:

Taking the government's criteria into account we estimate that Brownfield capacity at the moment including the proposed Hartland Village at Pyestock stands at 2126 dwellings, albeit we have approved more than 300 units over the past year. Approval however is not the

same as take up. The evidence is that there is still little market appetite for office conversions.

That does not include Bramshill, which has particular issues of sustainability, heritage and environment. We have previously specifically commented that Bramshill had particular constraints and that it was being excluded from any calculations because development may be in conflict with those policies relating to sites protected by the birds and habitats directive (see paragraph 119 of the NPPF) and because it comprises a designated heritage assets (grade I listed building within a designated historic park and garden).

Question:

The recent Annual Monitoring Report showed that Hart is systematically under-delivering affordable housing compared to the 40% target. What steps will be taken to address this issue?

Response:

The 40% target is a “policy on” aspiration based upon viability. It’s hardly surprisingly that the Council does not achieve 40% affordable homes across the board because many permissions granted do not have an affordable housing requirement. This is because they either are of such small scale that they do not meet the affordable housing threshold, or there are questions of viability particularly with regard to the costs of building out brownfield sites (Bramshill House is a classic example), or because the developer is exercising national permitted development rights for office to residential conversions which contain no obligation to provide affordable homes.

We are looking at whether we should, through our Local Plan, introduce an affordable Housing uplift to bring forward more priority affordable housing for rent. I am appreciative of the questioner’s concern for the undoubted need for affordable housing for those who struggle to afford accommodation in our community, and I would value his view on increasing the housing delivery and by how much in his supplementary question.

Mr Turver responded:

I would take much stronger steps to encourage office conversion, to deliver much cheaper housing, if you increase the number of dwellings those dwellings come cheaper.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

Would we need quite so many affordable homes if you weren’t planning to massively increase inward migration to Hart?

Response:

You need to differentiate between cause and effect. The SHMA reflects reality and does not drive the numbers. We have to take proper account of it in the way in which we address the housing need.

Response to question at Full Council 26 January 2017 regarding Grove Farm 16/01651/OUT, deferral decision

Planning Committee is a cross party politically balanced Committee. It makes decisions on planning applications without fear or favour and cannot be seen to have its decision-making influenced by non-planning considerations. It would be entirely wrong to encourage the Committee to make decisions based simply upon the fear that the Council will incur the cost of defending its decisions at planning appeals. For example, this was certainly not a factor that the Council was encouraged to take into account recently when we were encouraged to refuse what were generally considered acceptable developments at Hatchwood Farm and adjacent to Archery Field.

In terms of the Grove Farm application the overwhelming consensus of the Committee was that planning permission should be refused because of the acknowledged harm to the Local Gap. This was consistent with the previous decision made by the Council last year and indeed reflects the views of a Planning Inspector a few years ago.

I am advised by the Head of Regulatory Services that the costs to the Council of a major planning appeal varies between £30k-£60k. It is also a well-known risk that in certain circumstances it can be held that the Council acted unreasonably in delaying its decision-making without good reason. In the Grove Farm case the only reason for deferral was because some Members wanted to test if an additional highway reason for refusal should be introduced.

Following a unanimous vote not to accept the recommendation to grant the application, Cllr Wheale moved a motion for deferral which was seconded by Cllr. Gorys. I took advice from the Planning Officer and ensured that members of the Committee were aware that if motion for deferral was carried, there was a serious risk that the applicant could lodge an appeal for non-determination due to the proximity of the agreed deadline for determination. Despite Cllr. Radley's impassioned request for the Committee to determine the application on the night, Cllr. Wheale was supported by Cabinet Members who sit on Planning Committee as they were convinced that they had good reason to question the applicant's transport assessment and the motion for deferral was carried by a single vote.

It is unfortunate that the opaque motivations of some members to delay the decision on this application have now resulted in an appeal on the grounds of non-determination. It gives the impression that this council is prone to indecision. Far better that the planning committee step up to its responsibility of making decisions. Planning Committee members are constantly reminded that specific concerns not covered in the officer report should be raised in advance of the meeting, in order that additional information can be provided.

Whilst it is regrettable when decisions made by the Planning Committee are appealed, any applicant has the right to lodge an appeal and members are always mindful that they have an obligation to take into account all the facts before them before reaching a decision based on sound planning reasons. Members of the public would be horrified if they were to think that Hart would hesitate to refuse an application which was deemed unacceptable on material grounds because of wishing to avoid the risk of having to fight a potential appeal.

Cllr. Simon Ambler
Planning Committee Chairman