

# Public Document Pack

## **COUNCIL**

**Date and Time:** Thursday, 24 September 2020 at 7.00 pm

**Place:** Council Chamber

**Present:**

## **COUNCILLORS -**

Kennett (Chairman)

|           |                  |            |
|-----------|------------------|------------|
| Ambler    | Davies           | Oliver     |
| Axam      | Delaney          | Quarterman |
| Bailey    | Dorn             | Radley     |
| Blewett   | Drage            | Smith      |
| Butler    | Farmer           | Southern   |
| Clarke    | Forster          | Tomlinson  |
| Cockarill | Kinnell          | Wheale     |
| Crampton  | Lamb             | Wildsmith  |
| Crisp     | Makepeace-Browne | Worlock    |
| Crookes   | Neighbour        | Wright     |

## **Officers Present:**

|                |                                       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Daryl Phillips | Joint Chief Executive                 |
| Helen Vincent  | Committee and Member Services Officer |
| Celia Wood     | Democratic Services Officer           |

## **38 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

It was unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders 9.3 (Show of Hands for Voting), 22.1 (Standing to Speak) and 22.2 (Chairman Standing).

## **39 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of 30 July 2020 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Harward.

## **41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Forster declared an interest on Item 11 on the Agenda as a Hampshire County Councillor.

**42 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 - QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

Questions had been received from Mr Matthew Knowles and Mr Bruce Bulgin, which are detailed in Appendix A.

**43 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 - QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

No questions received.

**44 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman announced:  
Currently I have no charities this year other than the Hart Lottery due to the Covid situation and therefore we are unable to organise any events until the situation improves.

**45 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Neighbour had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, Councillor Radley:  
The current shared community safety team will be dissolved at the end of September. Each of the 3 authorities will have their own in-house team with effect from 1 October. One of the key benefits of this is that it enables us to target our own priorities rather than competing with the priorities and therefore resources (which may be different) of the other 2 councils.

We are excited to launch our own service which will consist of a Community Safety Lead Officer – we have Rachael Wilkinson joining us – she worked in the shared team and will be stepping into this lead role in Hart.

There is a shared analyst role – an officer who prepares the strategic assessment and can analyse crime / disorder data on our behalf.

The team will report directly to the Head of Community Services.

The service will focus on our local priorities around safeguarding, tackling ASB, dealing with the challenges around PREVENT & modern day slavery, and of raising awareness of community safety and developing district wide initiatives to support this.

The North Hampshire Community Safety partnership will continue. There will be one joint Community Safety Partnership Plan. Many of the partners are cross border so it is sensible to continue this approach.

There is a legal agreement – a Memorandum of Understanding to support all of the joint working.

Cabinet Member for Digital Councillor Ambler had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Community, Councillor Bailey:  
Hart Community Hub is continuing to provide support to volunteers who have helped 420 residents and will make the transition to Hart Voluntary.

There was a serious fire at Wickham Place. Partnership working between Vivid Housing Association and Hart Housing Team resulted in 6 households booked into the Premier Inn by midnight on the day of the fire.

The Cabinet Member for Place, Councillor Cockarill had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Councillor Kinnell.  
I would like to advise Members that a formal acceptance of the 2020 DEFRA Quality Report is on the Hart website and that quality met all UK recommendations.

Licensing – all public houses from today will close at 10pm in line with latest Covid-19 guidance.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Oliver had no announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Councillor Quarterman.  
I am pleased to announce that Hart DC has engaged the services of a team to conduct an appraisal of the options for the redevelopment of the civic quarter containing the Hart DC offices in Fleet. Led by surveyors Montagu Evans and including architects HLM, cost consultants Gleeds and community engagement specialists Create Streets, the team will enable the cross-party working group to assess the viability of potential solutions and to make recommendations for future development. We expect a full report to be available early in 2021.

## **46 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORTS**

The Joint Chief Executive reported on the awareness of the evolving picture regarding Covid-19 with statements from the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Officer on Monday, the move back to Alert Level 4 and with an announcement from the Prime Minister on Tuesday around increased preventative measures with the assumption that these may be in place for six months.

Based on this changing context at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum meeting of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group on the 23rd September, the decision was taken by Category 1 organisations to move back into 'response' phase.

Based on this, Hart District Council confirmed that they too were moving back into 'response' phase as this helps ensure the Council can be at a level of preparedness to enable us to react, as circumstances change.

As part of this, we are working away on putting in place the provisions that will allow us to get payments out to those on low incomes who need to socially isolate which must be in place by the 12th October (with payments to eligible residents from the 28th September) which was announced at the weekend. We await guidance (due out tomorrow)

And this builds on the earlier announcement (and work currently happening at pace) that Councils will need to be ready to make further Business Grants available, in the event of a lockdown.

Members will also be aware of the new legal obligation to maintain records of staff and visitors - including displaying QR codes coming into force today. The powers of enforcement laid before Parliament on this last week, gave the powers to the County Councils and Unitary Authorities - not District Councils, however you'll appreciate we have been really active in this space, providing guidance via our Business Newsletter as well as our social media streams and our Environmental Health team will be out and about engaging and educating businesses locally on this.

#### **47 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

No questions on any of the meetings were raised.

#### **48 MOTION TO COUNCIL**

The following Motion had been received from Cllr Crampton:

“Despite great efforts and good intentions from all involved, it is now abundantly clear that the closure of Fleet High Street has not been a success. The negative impact on residents particularly those living near the closure, of traffic congestion and the resulting pollution has not been outweighed by any appreciable benefits to businesses. This Council therefore resolves to have the road closures removed and to reopen the High Street as soon as is possible.”

Members discussed:

- The background as to why this motion had been brought to Council.
- Concerns around the negative impact on residents' and businesses in the area.
- The result of a survey indicating a high level of objection to the Scheme.
- A petition to have the Scheme removed
- Members were reminded that the Scheme had been debated at the last meeting and clear evidence from collecting and analysing data has not yet been submitted.
- This is a 'pop-up' scheme with flexibility built into it, other options could be considered.

Members were asked to consider an amendment to the Motion proposed by Cllr Quarterman:

“Despite great efforts and good intentions from all involved, there is a concern that the closure of Fleet High Street to traffic has not been a success. This Council therefore resolves to actively engage with retailers to understand and assess the nature of their concerns and to physically observe at peak times the impact of traffic on neighbouring roads. If compelling and verifiable evidence gathered indicates that the benefit to retailers does not outweigh any negative impact on businesses or residents, then this Council requests Cabinet to have the road closures removed and to reopen the High Street to traffic as soon as is practically possible and not later than the end of October in sufficient time to support the Christmas trading period”.

After full discussion including reference to a conflict with Standing Orders, a recorded vote was taken on the Amendment to the Motion:

**FOR the Amendment to the Motion:** Ambler, Axam, Bailey, Blewett, Butler, Clarke, Cockarill, Crisp, Davies, Delaney, Drage, Kinnell, Lamb, Makepeace-Browne, Neighbour, Oliver, Quarterman, Radley, Smith, Wildsmith

**AGAINST the Amendment to the Motion:** Crampton, Crookes, Dorn, Farmer, Forster, Southern, Tomlinson, Wheale, Worlock, Wright

Abstentions: Kennett

**Decision:** Amendment to the Motion **carried**.

Members debated on the substantive Motion (as amended):

Members discussed:

- It is clear that opinion is split and this presents a challenge to Members to follow good governance and wait for more reliable data, both in support and against the Scheme to take a clear and balanced decision.
- Scheme lead by Hart District Council with support from Fleet BID, Fleet Town Council and Hampshire County Council.
- The Scheme has been done quickly under difficult circumstances to encourage shoppers to return to the high street during the pandemic, to feel safe and allow for adequate social distancing.

A recorded vote was taken on the substantive Motion (as amended):

**FOR:** Ambler, Axam, Bailey, Blewett, Butler, Clarke, Cockarill, Crisp, Davies, Delaney, Drage, Kinnell, Lamb, Makepeace-Browne, Neighbour, Oliver, Quarterman, Radley, Smith, Wildsmith

**AGAINST:** Crampton, Crookes, Dorn, Farmer, Forster, Southern, Tomlinson, Wheale, Worlock, Wright

Abstentions: Kennett

**Decision:** Motion as amended **carried**

#### **49     OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS**

There were no updates from Members.

The meeting closed at 9.26 pm

### COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

#### QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

**Question** from Mr Matthew Knowles:

Given the summer weather is soon to end and the closure of Fleet Road is temporary, will the Council now reopen it fully & undertake not to close it again before elections can be held to seek the opinion of the local electorate?

**Councillor Cockarill's** response:

The issue of Fleet Road pedestrianisation is obviously on the agenda to be debated this evening with the Motion that's being put forward, so it would be absolutely wrong for me, at this stage, to pre-empt what Council decides to do. I am sure Mr Knowles will be very interested in progress and the final outcome of the vote. Obviously, as a member of the Cabinet, I will be guided by whatever Council chooses to do this evening.

**Supplementary question** from Mr Knowles:

Thank you. I have lived in Fleet for more than 10 years and it is a great place to live. I am sure you've all shared in that feeling of pride when the town has been blessed with the best place in the country to live several times. During that 10 plus years, I never recall the police having to put in place a dispersal order for the Fleet Road area before. Do you believe as I do, that this new and concerning development is due to the closure of the road and the lack of passing traffic to dissuade anti-social behaviour when the shops are closed on an evening?

**Councillor Cockarill's** response:

Again, thank you for the supplementary Mr. Knowles. I have no evidence to say what has caused the police to issue dispersal orders. It's not something that that I've been made aware of personally. Others may have more information, but I have no evidence to suggest that the pedestrianisation has had any effect in terms of people gathering as they should not be gathering. In fact, part of the whole reason for the pedestrianisation is to provide people in Fleet with enough space that they can shop and socially distance in a safe and secure way.

**Question** from Mr Bruce Bulgin, Chairman, Fleet BID:

*Would you agree that it is far too early to consider taking down the road closure in Fleet town Centre on the basis that evidence shows that a significant number of independent traders both within and outside of the pedestrianised area are seeing an upturn in trade and have communicated this to Fleet BID and other agencies? In addition, all of the evidence we have seen shows that there has been no significant detrimental impact on traffic flows in the surrounding area.*

**Councillor Cockarill's response:**

Thank you for the question. I am afraid my answer is going to be very similar to the answer of the previous question. I will be hoping to make an intervention into the debate later on this evening and members of the Council and members of the public will be able to gauge what my position is in relation to pedestrianisation at that time. Again, I don't want to pre-empt what the Council might decide to do later on.

**Supplementary question from Mr Bulgin:**

I think we've all seen that COVID-19 has accelerated high street decline and footfall is down 50%. Online Shopping is up 30%, many high street businesses will close and 67% of people have told us that they visited this less in early August than they did in February. So if you are a Councillor planning to vote the scheme to be removed before time for it to be evaluated, to determine whether it's successful, what are your alternative plans to revive the high street and Fleet and when will they be implemented?

**Councillor Cockarill's response:**

Thank you for the supplementary question. What I will say is that as the portfolio holder for economic development, which falls under the Place portfolio we are very keen to try and support all of the businesses in Fleet and the Hart area through this very challenging and very difficult economic situation, which seems challenging and then not very good for next few months, either. We will be happy to look at any schemes that come forward, whether it be something similar to this pedestrianisation scheme or anything else that Fleet BID or other organizations think we can help with. So there is an open invitation to come and talk to us about ideas that you think might help, and we will certainly do our best to facilitate those as we have done, for example, with the recent street markets in Fleet High Street, which I gather have been successful.