

Draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held virtually on Zoom on Thursday 15th April 2021 at 7:00 pm

Councillors present: N Andrews (NA) (Chair), BE Dack (BD), P Daffarn (PD), A M Hunt (AMH), V Khatwa (VH), S Reader (SR) and N Reynolds (NR)

Officer present: Katrina Henshaw (KH)

Also present for all or part of the meeting: Ward Member Councillor S Dixon (SD) and eight members of the public.

1 Welcome from Councillor Andrews – Chair of Fairfield Parish Council

1.1 Councillor Andrews welcomed residents to the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting and also welcomed our MP, Richard Fuller and Ward Councillor Steven Dixon.

In the last week, we have seen the passing of His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. As a mark of respect, your Parish Council has written to Her Majesty, The Queen, giving our condolences and ongoing support from the residents of Fairfield. Everyone then had a moments silent reflection for us to remember the many years of service His Royal Highness. The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, has given to Her Majesty, the Queen, our Country, and the Commonwealth.

2 Apologies for Absence

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Ward Members Councillors B Saunders and N Harris.

3 Chair's Notice

3.1 FPC's statement on commitment to openness and transparency is available on FPC website.

3.2 The Chair reminded everyone that under FPC's policy of transparency and openness, permission needs to be requested if anyone wants to record part of whole of the meeting. FPC's current Zoom settings do not allow recording without the Chair's permission.

4 Disclosures of Interest and Dispensation requests

4.1 No disclosures of interest and no requests for dispensation were received.

5 Minutes

5.1 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on held on 28th March 2019 had been circulated and with a unanimous vote, it was

RESOLVED

That these minutes be agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings and be duly signed by the Chairman.

5.2 Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 23rd January 2020 had been circulated and with a unanimous vote, it was

RESOLVED

That these minutes be agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings and be duly signed by the Chairman.

6

Reports

6.1 Report from Richard Fuller, MP for North East Bedfordshire

Richard Fuller, MP thanked FPC for giving him the opportunity to speak and gave a verbal report. In his report he explained that his first year as a Member of Parliament had been a frustrating year due to the pandemic.

His role is very varied, and he covers many topics including housing, planning, schools and water. This role is always so much easier if he can call upon local Councillors for support and knowledge. He is very thankful to all the support he gets from local Councillors in his constituency, regardless of political party. He expressed his thanks in particular to Ward Councillor Dixon.

Last year saw the new Coronavirus Act Law and the exit to the European Union. A trade deal was achieved, and the UK is currently in the transaction period with businesses adjusting to how to trade with Europe and the rest of the world.

In the Conservative manifesto it stated they would increase Police numbers and Richard Fuller, MP was pleased to say that progress had been made in this both locally and nationally. A new Crime Bill had been introduced and this included how to deal with illegal encampments which have caused issues for local councils, even during the pandemic.

Transport has been important: -

- Automobiles – Black Cat roundabout is on the next stage of investment.
- Rail – It has been agreed that the East/West Rail link will be to the North of Bedfordshire and South of St Neots. There is currently another consultation on the five possible alignments between Bedford and Cambridge, along with a number of virtual public events for people to attend. The consultation closes on 9th June 2021. Please visit his website (<https://www.richardfuller.co.uk/news/east-west-rail-launches-online-public-events-and-virtual-consultation-rooms>) for more information.
- Airports – The changes proposed that include a new holding position in Huntingdonshire will increase the flights to Luton Airport. Richard Fuller, MP sees this as an opportunity for Luton Airport and Luton Council to review the finances as Luton will receive an increase in revenue as the landowners but there will be nothing for the other Councils despite them being affected by these changes. He believes that the asset should be shared around Bedfordshire, and he is making an ongoing effort to achieve this.

Richard Fuller, MP has a constant battle about achieving housing targets. He was concerned that his area of Central Bedfordshire appeared to have an unfair allocation of new housing to provide. He feels strongly that the infrastructure should be in place before houses are built and the Conservative manifesto has a policy for Infrastructure First.

He is hopefully that the success of the vaccination will soon allow him to start meeting people again in person very soon. If anyone is interested in keeping up to date with Richard's activities, they can subscribe to his weekly e-newsletter by entering their details on the homepage of his website within the 'News from Richard Fuller MP' section at www.richardfuller.co.uk

The following questions were asked: -

1. Question received from Resident prior to meeting, "For some time now, it has become evident that we simply do not have adequate Medical Care provision in terms of the number of doctors available at the Larksfeld Surgery. Whilst the population continues to increase through new housing the actual number of doctors is decreasing resulting in the fact that it is no longer possible to directly book a face-to-face appointment. This leaves us patients with the alternatives of completing a cumbersome eConsultation form or making a trip to the A&E department at the Lister. I do not for one moment attach any blame to the personnel at Larksfeld, but we must seek to find a solution to this very unsatisfactory situation. I ask therefore who is primarily responsible for ensuring that something is done. Is it Central Bedfordshire Council or does it fall to the Minister for Health."

Richard Fuller, MP confirmed that there was Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) locally who were responsible for ensuring that sufficient health care is provided and then the responsibility fell to the Government. CBC had very marginal responsibility.

He explained that he shared this concern and in January 2020 had raised it with the Secretary of State for Health at the House of Commons. He was also in discussions with CCG last year, but they were having a reorganisation between January and March and then were only dealing with healthcare and Covid-19 and more recently the vaccination rollout. Fairfield comes under the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes CCG.

He said that this matter was very much on his agenda with the CCG and the Secretary of State.

2. Question from Councillor Dack, "When we met just before your election you said that you were hoping to change the way policing of Luton Airport is funded from local to a National Airport Police Force who would Police all airports as this would reduce the cost to Bedfordshire for Police. How are you progressing with this?"

Richard Fuller, MP explained that Kathryn Holloway, Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, had been successful for obtaining additional grants to support airport security. However, the Bedfordshire Police budget is just not big enough to cover the additional cost of Police Luton needs due to the Airport as the formula used nationally to calculate the Police funding just does not work for Bedfordshire.

As Luton airport does provide funding for Luton Borough Council, Richard Fuller, MP thinks it would make more sense to move the land ownership to a separate organisation, so the funding is paid to them, and this organisation then funds the policing needed for the airport.

It was interesting to note that during the pandemic unlike Bedfordshire Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council, Luton Borough Council had to seek a bail out of £35 million to cover its shortfall, The Government has asked Luton Borough to review its reliance on funding received from Luton Airport.

6.2 Report from Ward Members

Councillor Dixon read the following report: -

"In a year like no other most residents can remember, it is difficult to know where to start. However, reflecting on the last 12 months, the resilience and community spirit of residents clearly stands out. From the early days in March and April 2020 to the evolving needs of people as we ease hopefully out of lockdown, the willingness to help one another has been evident across the village, ward and country.

The collaboration between local charities, residents, CBC and the voluntary sector has been exemplary. Indeed, the volume of offers of assistance and the desire to volunteer is something to be built on going forwards. While many will have lost loved ones in the year, we must build on the positives from this terrible pandemic, into our future plans.

A huge resurgence in the joy that can be had from living in the countryside, together with the exercise benefits are apparent for most to see, as walkers and cyclists radiate around Fairfield and beyond.

While the CBC office at Chicksands started the year as a food parcel assembly centre, it has more recently added capacity to the COVID immunisation programme, with one wing being given over to a second vaccination centre in Shefford. Likewise, the Weatherly Centre in Biggleswade has been re-purposed for the same use and supported by a raft of volunteers from the area.

Throughout 2020, CBC have continued to push on with the adoption of a Local Plan. This has had its final hearing and is currently out for a final public consultation, ahead of hopefully being 'made' in the next few months. It will set out a roadmap of where development will happen across the authority over the next 15 years or so. The introduction and approval of the Article 4 application was a key step in underpinning the determination to protect the aesthetic of the village.

Concerns at the time taken for grants to be processed by CBC has proven thankfully small. The expectation set by the PM and other Ministers at the Downing Street press briefings have often taken some considerable time to filter through to our officers to implement. It has been heartening to see so many smaller businesses able to adapt to the challenge the pandemic has laid before us all but worrying for those most affected. Let us hope that the start of a cautious unlocking today, can signal a return to a degree of normality for 2021 and beyond".

6.3 **Report from the Chair of Fairfield Parish Council**

Councillor Andrews the following report: -

"2020/21 will be remembered in history for the Covis-19 Pandemic and the year the UK left the European Union.

I am sure we all have our own views, including the way the pandemic and Brexit have been handled, but we will leave that to be discussed and debated elsewhere.

Fairfield and the Parish Council saw several changes during this period, including Simon Little leaving the Parish Council, so we had a vacancy for a new Councillor.

We had three residents apply, from which Vinesh Khatwa was selected for co-option by the remaining Councillors, to replace Simon.

Also, Anna Papakosta, who was unsuccessful this time in applying for this position, has taken up the vacant role as Secretary of the Fairfield Community Hall Trust.

At the end of the December 2020 FPC meeting, Councillor Dack notified the Parish Council, he would be resigning as Chair, due to ill health.

At the January 2021 FPC meeting, I was elected by the remaining Councillors as the new Chair for the Parish Council.

We would like to thank Councillor Dack, for his time and commitment in being the previous Chair since 2019 elections. He has also been a mentor for me and all the new Parish Councillors, that were elected at that time.

We need dozens of volunteers to make Fairfield work together as a community.

This brings me to my first thank-you. To all the volunteers that registered with the Parish Council, plus the various resident groups that helped and supported one and other during the pandemic, freely giving their time, money, and energy to support one another.

A great example was when a group of residents came together to help manufacture over 5,000 PPE masks, using their ingenuity, time, and money, distributing these masks across Hertfordshire, Central Beds and beyond, when there was a real shortage.

We would like to see this spirit continue. If you have a neighbour who is struggling, maybe a quick hello and an offer of help, or even a chat will often help with their mental health and wellbeing.

Several residents are already volunteering to help those less fortunate locally, either helping in the Garden House Hospice shop or the 'Need Project' in Stotfold.

Fairfield as a village is unusual in the way it is set up, with a Parish Council, Resident / Management Companies and Associations and finally the Community Trust, which runs the Community Hall. All needing volunteers, giving up their time and energy to make Fairfield the community residents enjoy living in.

We would ask you to remember these people are only volunteering their time to support you (the Residents) so please be supportive and respect what they do for the Community on a daily/weekly basis.

The second thank you is to all the community groups that have remained active, using modern technology to stay in touch and keep their groups running and interactive. These have included the First Fairfield Scout leaders, the WI committee, and the Fairfield Community Church. I am sure there are also other groups that have managed to stay in touch and are supporting each other.

A third thank you is to all the residents who act as the Wombles of Fairfield and regularly pick up litter. If anyone wants to do this bin bags and litter grabbers can be collected from and returned to the Community Hall. Further details are available on the FPC website, and we will also be taking part in the Great British Spring Clean during the campaign (28th May – 13th June 2021).

Coming together as a community was really highlighted when the Bowls Club decided to extend and refurbish their clubhouse and changing rooms. Little did they know at the time, we would be going through a Pandemic.

Many residents, both bowls club members and non-members came together to help make the club a real asset for the Community. The Parish Council was also happy to support this with a grant to help the refurbishment.

Fairfield has a unique design and layout that is based around a Victorian asylum which was opened on the 8th March 1860 and cost the sum of £53,626.00. The building was designed by George Fowler Jones in a Gothic Romantic style with a medieval French influence. He had taken inspiration from a visit to Hatfield House.

This year, we have had approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment, especially the area west of the Hitchin Road, an article 4 exemption. This now means that all home extensions on Fairfield will require planning approval and hopefully we can keep the unique award-winning character of Fairfield as it was originally developed.

The local plan (East of Arlesey) enquiry has continued through the year, with the Parish Council making representations.

So far, this has led to agreements with CBC Planning Team, that no land, East of the National Gas pipeline, will be built on and the land between, will be used for either farming, recreation, or as natural resources.

A red line for no more development, has been drawn at the edge of the western shelter belt on Fairfield, but at present, does not include a small square of land off Livingstone Way.

The Parish Council will continue to make representations through its legal team and advisors, to try and get this area of land included. The reason we are doing this is to prevent coalescence between Arlesey and Fairfield.

During this year, the Fairfield Park Residents Association have shown the way by using the Urban Park to introduce us to various different food and drink outlets from different countries. Hopefully, this can be built on in the future.

Looking forward, your Parish Council would like to invite all residents to a Community Event. 'Fair-stival in the Park' is planned to be held in late summer (Covid-19 restrictions allowing) or early 2022 to celebrate the various different cultures, religions, community groups living in Fairfield, with music, food, and entertainment, highlighting the diverse nature of our Village.

Hopefully, we can look forward to our annual Apple Day Event in September. We will again be looking for volunteers to help and support on Apple Day.

Volunteers will also be required in keeping the orchards in magnificent condition, with continued planting of new and ongoing management of existing fruit trees.

In the last couple of years, the Parish Council and Community Trust have actively supported groups and activities for the seniors in Fairfield, with the set-up of Fairfield Friends, Café in the Park, Short mat bowls, Exercise classes and Table Tennis, held in the Community Hall.

We can also see a need for the younger generation. We already support the 1st Fairfield scout group, but are aware, we need to do more for this demographic. The Parish Council would welcome any new ideas from the Community, we could possibly develop and get involved with.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors as well as the current Parish Council Clerk (Katrina Henshaw) who more recently, has had to deal with constant requests for advice from both myself and the newer Councillors. Katrina's help and knowledge have been invaluable".

7 Date of next meeting

- 7.1 The next Parish Council meeting will be the Annual Meeting and will be held on virtually on Zoom on 6th May 2021 at 7.00 pm.
- 7.2 The next Annual Parish meeting will be held between 1st March and 1st June 2022.

Councillor Andrews thanked Richard Fuller, MP and Ward Councillor for their reports and thanked all residents for attending.

Meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

Glossary of acronyms

CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Groups
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FPC	Fairfield Parish Council
MP	Member of Parliament.