



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 13th June, 2024

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker (Mayor)
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Brodie Mauluka
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor George Murray
Councillor John Ward
Councillor Graham White

Apologies for absence

Michaela Martin and Tim Woodhouse

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk); Iain McCready (Business & Facilities Manager)

There were no members of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Sandy Clarke – vicar of St Thomas-on-the-Bourne.

C13/24 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Martin and Woodhouse.

C14/24 Disclosures of Interest

Cllr Merryweather made a declaration as Waverley Borough Council Executive Councillor for Assets.

C15/24 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2024 were agreed.

C16/24 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

There were no questions or statements by members of the public.

C17/24 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor said how pleased and humbled he was to receive a message from the President and first Lady of Malawi on his election as Mayor. He was truly grateful for their kind words. He was also pleased to host a councillor Gertrude Chirambo from Blantyre City Council in Malawi, who was in the UK on a short visit. He asked her to send greetings from Farnham to the Mayor of Blantyre and hoped Farnham might be able to create links between schools and have a deed of friendship with them.

The 80th anniversary of D-Day was a historic occasion and Farnham Town Council organised three very special civic events as part of the national commemoration. The Mayor thanked the Deputy Lieutenants, the Royal British Legion, the Town Crier, staff and all the volunteers and participants for their support in creating such a moving and memorable day.

Since the last Council, the Mayor had attended a number of events including the Farnham Walking Festival, the launch of the North Farnham Arts Trail, the Creative response Summer exhibition and the Farnham Arts Society Schools photographic exhibition. He was very impressed by the quality of the pupils' photography.

C18/24 **Questions by Members**

There were no questions by Members.

C19/24 **Working Group Notes**

Cllr White introduced the Strategy & Resources report at Appendix B and covered a range of matters for Council.

1) Finance

As part of the finance month-end papers, the Working Group considered charges for the hire of equipment by community groups at weekends and bank holidays, noting the cost and imposition on staff time and that this cost would often be met by a grant from the small grants fund. Council noted the informal request for a contribution towards the Heath End School Astro and agreed that it would not be right to allocate funds from CIL for an individual community project without opening a formal CIL application round (not expected until 2025 subject to further income being received) but agreed that an ad hoc community grant application could be considered. The Working Group had considered the rent review for Wrecclesham Community Centre and recommended a phased increase over four years. The Working Group had reviewed the No Interest Loans Scheme to be run by Boom Credit Union and recommended loan values to support consolidated loans.

It was Resolved unanimously that

- i) A charge for delivery and collection of equipment for community groups be at a rate of £75 and the rate for businesses be on actual cost if higher.**

- ii) **The Wrecclesham Community Centre lease be £9,000 plus VAT in 2024/25, with an increase of £1,000 per annum over the following three years up to £12,000.**
- iii) **The range of No Interest Loans from Boom Community Bank be from £300 to £1,500 to provide greater opportunity for debt consolidation if required.**

2) **Contracts and Assets**

- i) Council noted progress on a number of contract and assets matters including the Gostrey Gates widening, the purchase of the new Goupil, and the latest position on the Library Gardens where a further meeting with the SCC officer was expected. In terms of the Gostrey Meadow toilets and playground, it was noted that several points had been raised for discussion with the architect prior to more detailed drawings being supplied including the toilets being shuttered at night to minimise the potential for vandalism; the nature of the 'labels' on individual toilets with a strong view that there should be some which were specifically for women; and on the possibility of introducing a ground source heat pump. Council agreed that the consultation on the playground layout/equipment should take place in parallel with the planning application to reduce delays and that advice of Waverley on similar consultations would be sought.
- ii) Council noted there had been several instances of land encroachment and agreed with the proposed action.
- iii) Council noted the Christmas Lights tender was being prepared with some elements planned for 2024 but the majority for 2025 under the guidance of a Task Group. The new scheme should involve some input from the Business Improvement District as it was part of their areas of focus.

It was Resolved unanimously that

- i) **A fence be installed at the Morley Road allotments (from existing grounds budgets) where flytipping was taking place;**
 - ii) **Officers contact the properties accessing Gostrey Meadow with a view to issuing licences;**
 - iii) **Officers contact the owners on the depot access road to seek the reinstatement of the correct fence line;**
 - iv) **A representative of the Farnham BID be invited to join a member Task Group, including Cllrs Hesse, Jackman, Martin, and Mirylees, to help shape the design and review tenders for the new Christmas Lights scheme.**
- iii) Council received an update on the proposed phased approach to land transfers following a meeting between officers at Waverley and FTC noting the detail of the three phases considered at the Strategy Workshop and set out in the draft Business Plan - with phase 1 being current year; phase two 2024-26, and phase three being 2026-28. Cllr Merryweather advised that Waverley had just approved a Community Asset Transfer policy document setting out how transfers across the Borough would take place. In addition, Council welcomed the approach by Waverley Borough Council for Farnham Town Council to be transferred the green space in Brightwell Yard and the land that connected to the Farnham Riverside and 40 Degreez. The Strategy & Resources Working Group had reaffirmed that bridges with their inherent liabilities would not be part of any transfers. Council noted that it was not yet clear whether this was a contract for management or the land transfer, and not everyone was convinced about taking on the asset at this stage.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that officers take forward discussions on land transfers with Waverley and report back.

iv) Council noted the legal update on matters relating to the Statutory Challenge, removal of trees in Gostrey Meadow and a historic claim re damage to a neighbouring property on land taken over at Farnham Riverside.

3) Farnham Infrastructure Programme.

Cllr Beaman referred to the FIP Board meeting taking place on 14th June. He said it was disturbing that papers were not sent out to Board Members in advance. In terms of the HGV ban, he would raise the proposal that the maximum fine (£300) would be implemented for those ignoring the restrictions.

Council noted that Town Council had responded on the materials following the member meeting on 14th May and that a further meeting of the heritage officers was planned after others raised the same concerns as the Town Council regarding the proposed dilution of ironstone (a traditional material in Farnham) in the scheme. It was also noted that Conservation Areas Task Group would take place after this officer meeting when there was something to share.

Council understood that a draft phasing plan for the works had just been produced with zones of work identified rather than specific timeframes. Cllr Martin reported that there were positive and active conversations between councillors and officers and that the concerns and comments of FTC and the Business Improvement District had been taken on board and a timing schedule would be prepared and shared. Cllr Beaman said the Council did not want to be presented with a *fait accompli* and for the town to be closed down over the Christmas period. Cllr Fairclough advised as the WBC portfolio holder for car parks, the Borough would not wish to see core car parks shut around Christmas.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that with implications for town centre retail and residential areas, Farnham Town Council should seek to be involved in the phasing plan with a further report to the July Strategy & Resources meeting.

4) Reports of Task Groups

- i) Council noted the report of the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group on 20 May had included a detailed note from the Council's Planning advisor with a proposed timeline (attached as an Annex) for completing the Neighbourhood Plan. Realistically this was the second quarter of 2026 given the interdependence on data completion and information required from the Borough Council such as housing numbers, which were not expected until the end of 2024/early 2025. There were significant policy challenges.

Cllr White said that when he became Leader his byword was consensus, and it was important to reach consensus with people involved all the way through the process. Cllr Beaman advised that any Neighbourhood Plan must conform to Waverley's Local Plan and he felt the second quarter was ambitious. It was better to go for the fourth quarter of 2026. Cllr Fairclough said it was not the intention to complete a Neighbourhood Plan by 2025 but work should start now. It would be good to go back to the community groups and say what FTC is doing in a proactive way. There was a need for more infrastructure such as schools, sewerage, water, it was not just about housing. Cllr Ward advised that the consensus was to get on with those elements that were not housing numbers dependant and to seek the input of the infrastructure providers.

It was agreed that the community meeting scheduled for 3rd July (the day before the General Election) before the election was announced should be moved to September. It was noted that all the elements discussed were set out in the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group minutes and some were underway. It was agreed

that there should be some additional communication on what was happening and that the next meeting of the Task Group would review the timetable.

- ii) Cllr White introduced the report on the Younger People Panel and the applications for the holiday funding that had been received and said it was good to see the relaunch of the Chantry & Byworth Association and some new applications.
- iii) Cllr White advised that the Website Task Group had its second meeting following surveys of both councillors and members of the public, facilitated by the FTC Communications Manager and an external website consultant. It was agreed that a mobile-first new website be created; with improved accessibility and clear navigation and a more modern design. Council noted there was an earmarked reserve of £25,000 for website developments and some revenue budget available but that tenders would ensure it was competitively priced.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- i) **40 degreez be awarded £2,000 towards their project costs, ringfenced for transport for their out-of-area activities.**
- ii) **The Chantrys and Byworth Community Association and The Parish Rooms (on behalf of the Women's Refuge – I Choose Freedom) be offered additional funding (up to £1,500 and £500 respectively) to extend or expand their offering.**
- iii) **The Maltings be awarded £3,000 towards project costs, ringfenced for their remote projects only in Weybourne, Badshot Lea and Brambleton Hall.**
- iv) **Funding of £2,000 to supplement a grant from Farnham South Street Trust be awarded to the UCA subject to the project being specifically targeted at younger people.**
- v) **The grants list be agreed.**
- vi) **A tender for a new website be developed in conjunction with the Website Review Task Group.**

5) Council Policies

- i) Cllr White introduced the draft Business Plan at Annex 3 to the Working Group Minutes. It was based on the Strategy Workshop held in 2023 and was a useful working document/overview of the Council's aspirations. Further discussion was agreed for the detail of the timescales and resource impacts and the 2024 Strategy Workshop was planned for Thursday 28th November as part of the 2025-26 budget setting process.
- ii) Cllr White advised the Working Group had welcomed the Dependant' Carer's Allowance scheme which should be of benefit for new councillors and those with dependant responsibilities.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- i) **the draft Business Plan be agreed as the focus for Council in the coming period noting that additional work on timescales and resourcing of the plan was required.**
- ii) **The Dependant Carer's Allowance Scheme be adopted.**

C20/24 **Updates from other Working Groups**

Cllr Brown said the emphasis for the year was to get behind Farnham in Bloom which had a distinct focus on diversity and community spirit. The involvement in the awards helped inspire those taking part and engage businesses. The judges had a close eye on sustainability and biodiversity which was important for wildlife corridors. There was hope that more businesses would get on board through the Business Improvement District.

C21/24 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Laughton reported on the two Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings that had been held on 13th May and 3rd June at Appendices C and D to the agenda.

Items of note were:

- i) the Farnham Liberal Club in South Street where the external work to the grade 2 listed building should be kept in line with local architecture.
- ii) A canine hydrotherapy business in external work with FTC maintaining its objections since this was in a residential area.
- iii) Headway House Care Home, Crosby Way with FTC awaiting further details on surface water management.

Cllr Laughton advised there were many tree cutting/ pruning applications where FTC was guided by the Arboricultural Officer's comments. There was also an increasing number of residential applications for new build or extensions within already dense built-up residential areas. FTC would object accordingly as required. Planning applications for developments above 4 storeys, especially around East Street/ Woolmead areas, would be carefully considered to ensure plans remained in line with FNP guidelines.

In terms of Licensing issues, Cllr Laughton advised The Local off license in The Borough, needed to submit additional information whilst FTC had objected to The Luxe, in Lion & Lamb Yard, extended hours application, since it was not in line with the local environment with concerns over noise, nuisance, and waste management.

Council noted with regret that the Blue Bear bookshop was closing and moving elsewhere. This was understood to be because of high rents and the owners were thanked for their contribution to Farnham.

C22/24 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no actions under the scheme of delegation to report that had not already been covered.

C23/24 Reports from Other Councils

There were no reports from other councils.

C24/24 Reports from Outside Bodies

- i) Cllr White reported that FTC had had a meeting with Peter Glanville the CEO of the Farnham Maltings. He had now spent his first year and was focussed on getting ore connected into the community. Cllr Mirylees advised the Maltings had an amazing set of events and was working nationally and internationally. She advised that the maltings had been described as a 'cultural colossus' and what was ahead was very exciting.
- ii) Cllr Jackman thanked the Mayor for opening the Badshot Lea Fete and North Farnham Arts trail both of which had been successful.

C25/24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 18th July at 6pm.

C26/24 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

On a proposal by the Mayor, it was agreed *nem con* to exclude the press and the public in view of the confidential matters being reported.

C27/24 **Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group notes.**

Statutory Challenge

The Town Clerk advised Council of an unorthodox approach by the President of the Bourne Club proposing that if FTC withdrew from its Statutory Challenge, the developer, Wates, would make a £200K contribution to the Bourne Club and pay the Council's legal costs. Councillors were shocked at the underhand way in which this had emerged and RESOLVED by 12 votes to 1 to reject the proposal and release information to the media after the General Election had taken place.

It was agreed to brief the South Farnham Residents' Association and issue a press release to the local media with details of what had happened.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.15 pm

Chairman

Date