



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 30th January, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

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

Apologies for absence

Michaela Martin and Tim Woodhouse

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk)

There were 3 members of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd David Ufindell, Rector of Farham, St Andrew's.

C81/24 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Martin and Woodhouse.

C82/24 Disclosures of Interest

The following declarations were made:

- 1) Cllr Beaman as a Trustee of Creative Response;
- 2) Cllr Fairclough as Deputy Leader of Waverley Borough Council and portfolio holder of parking and enforcement;
- 3) Cllr Merryweather as an Executive Councillor at Waverley Borough Council and portfolio holder for finance, assets and property.

C83/24 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th December were agreed as a correct record for the signature of the Mayor.

C84/24 Questions and Statements by the Public

Mr John Neale of Castle Ward asked if the Council would meet with the Farnham Society given its concerns over the mass form and location of the proposed public conveniences and storage in Gostrey Meadow.

The Mayor thanked Mr Neale for his question and advised that this would be discussed later in the meeting.

C85/24 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor recorded his thanks to Farnham's twin town Andernach for inviting him to join their wonderful Christmas concert. It had been a great community event and a privilege to attend.

The Mayor advised it had been a busy start to the year including a special reception with the Lord Lieutenant presenting the Kings Award for Voluntary Service to the Farnham Repair Café. This was a much deserved honour as they have been an exemplar nationally since they were founded just ten years ago.

The Mayor had also hosted another reception to say 'goodbye' to Iain McCready as he left Farnham to be the Chief Officer of Berwick on Tweed Town Council. Many community partners attended to wish him well and congratulate him for his contribution to Farnham life and the Farnham In Bloom success.

Cllr Mauluka said he was interviewed for Farnham Talking News - a wonderful charity that helps anyone who is 'print disabled' - and he encouraged councillors to recommend it to those who may benefit from its service.

Finally, the Mayor had been honoured to attend the Installation service for the new Dean of Guildford, the Very Reverend Bob Cooper. Farnham looked forward to welcoming him and his wife Kate to Farnham as they settle in to their life in the diocese.

C86/24 Questions by Members

There were no Questions from Members.

C87/24 Working Group Notes

I Community & Culture Working Group

Cllr Mirylees reported on the Community & Culture Working group meeting held on 8th January at Appendix B. She commented that the Literary Festival programme had come

together well with keynote speakers including Lorraine Kelly and David Walliams. The writing Festival had three good prizes for authors.

The proposed Film Festival was on hold with a meeting planned to consider venues.

The summer programme included a VE Day 80 commemoration as part of the national programme, a repeat of the World Music Day and the Craft Month would include another Lantern Festival.

Council noted discussions on collaboration with the Farnham Maltings and Waverley Borough Council on the future of the Museum was underway.

Council received an update on the Farnham Support Fund (FSF), noting that the balance was currently £9,731.90 with spending of £5,869.57 to date, but totalling £14,365.11 when combined with donations from the other charities on the panel. Cllr Earwaker noted that there was likely to be a bigger call on the Fund as the Government had stopped the winter Fuel payments.

It was RESOLVED that

- 1) Farnham Town Council, in partnership with philanthropic groups, continues to support the residents of Farnham through the Farnham Support Fund as the financial struggles of the past few years are far from over;**
- 2) Farnham Town Council pledge £2,500 to top up the Support Fund once the balance nears £3,000, to be match-funded by partner charities/organisations.**

2 Strategy & Resources Working Group

Cllr White introduced the report of the Strategy & Resources Working Group held on 20th January at Appendix C.

a) Finance Report

Council noted the latest position financially and that things were as expected at the 9 month period. The Working Group had considered a wide range of matters including the Community Grants for 2025/26 and the Fees and Charges for the coming year. It was noted that WBC would be asked to review the fee paid by FTC for the Farmers' Market. The Investment Strategy was recommended for approval. It was noted that there was not a formal minute recording the loan to the BID for its start up work, and at the suggestion of the Internal Auditor, this was recommended for retrospective endorsement. The remaining elements of the Internal Auditor's report and recommendations and the officers' comments were welcomed.

It was RESOLVED that

- 1) The quarterly Finance Report be approved by the Council;**
- 2) The Community Grants proposals set out at Annex I be approved It was RESOLVED Community Grants allocations as set out in Annex I to Appendix C be approved, with specific conditions on:**
 - Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) - Additional £5,000 funding subject to greater transparency over costs.**
 - Hoppa Community Transport - £5,000 increase conditional on matched funding for Farnham to Frimley Park Hospital service.**
 - Brightwells Gostrey Centre - £10,000 grant split into two tranches, second tranche subject to premises security and service sustainability.**
- 3) The agreement to provide a £30,000 initial start-up loan to the Farnham Business Improvement District, subject to a formal agreement for its repayment during the 2024/25 financial year be endorsed;**

- 4) **The 2025-26 Fees and Charges at Annex 2 to Appendix C be adopted;**
- 5) **The 2025-26 Investment Strategy at Annex 3 to Appendix C be adopted;**
- 6) **The Internal Auditor's Interim Report be welcomed and that the officers' comments be adopted.**

b) Risk Management Report 2024-2025

The Working group had recommended the latest Risk Management Report to Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) **The Risk Management report be welcomed and adopted.**
- 2) **The work undertaken by the Working Groups in managing risk be welcomed.**
- 3) **The Fire Safety, Health & Safety, and Environmental Policy statements be re-adopted.**

c) Contracts & Assets Update

There had been a detailed discussion on a range of matters set out including the tender for the playground in Gostrey Meadow which had been won by Eibe Play after interview. There were options being developed for further public consultation on the final preferred design. Members noted the increased accessibility of the equipment proposed. Th Farnham Swimming Baths Trust had offered to pay a contribution to the Council for the resurfacing of the paths in Victoria Garden and this was out for quotation.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) **Eibe Play Ltd be appointed to construct the new play area in Gostrey Meadow with a budget cost of £220,000 funded by CIL contributions;**
- 2) **Farnham Swimming Baths Trust's £20,000 garden path improvements be approved with the cost being funded by a donation from the Trust.**

d) Local Government Reorganisation Task Group

Cllr White gave an update on the Devolution White Paper and it was agreed to recommend a Local Government review Task Group be created.

It was **RESOLVED** that a **Local Government Reorganisation Task Group be created with membership comprising: Cllrs Brown, Earwaker, Hesse, Mirylees, Murray and White. (with Cllr Laughton as a reserve).**

e) Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP)

Cllr Beaman provided an update on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and work was about to start. At the last FIP board, he had reemphasised the Council's position on the retention of Ironstone and the suggested move of the raingardens in castle Street for the optimising of space for 'al fresco' dining. A meeting on this was being organised prior to the next Board meeting on 28th March. As the FIP was moving to implementation, it was suggested that the Terms of Reference for the FIP Board should be adjusted and suggestions had been discussed which would be sent to Surrey to include local representation and a business representative.

Cllr Jackman raised the suggestion that FTC should write to Waverley Borough Council asking that the Borough Council should freeze car park charges for 18 months during the FIP road works because of the difficulties that businesses and drivers would face. In the ensuing debate some members felt there was no impact assessment of this proposal and it could have unintended consequences. Others drew attention to the reliance on car park income to keep council tax low. It was noted there would also be investment in the car parks during the same period and this still required funding but it was also noted that more than 50% of Waverley's car park income was generated in Farnham. There was also frustration that the

data available did not provide any indication of the impact of the evening charges in the town. After further debate the Motion proposed by Cllr Jackman and seconded by Cllr Hesse that FTC writes to WBC to request that parking charges are frozen during the town centre phase of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme was **LOST by 5 votes to three with five abstentions including Waverley Executive portfolio holders.**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- **Farnham Town Council opposes the removal of 103 square meters of ironstone in Castle Street.**
- **Consideration be given to future representation at the FIP Board being changed to include a local ward councillor and a local business representative.**

f) Neighbourhood Plan Task Group

Council noted the latest formula housing numbers for Waverley had been indicated which had increased to a staggering 29,600 over the Local Plan period, equating to 1481 per annum. Although numbers had not been indicated across the Borough this could equate around 9,000 new homes in Farnham if only 30% of the target were allocated. The number had not been accepted as being valid or achievable but it underlined the scale of the challenge for communities as they tried to address the Government's housing targets.

Council was advised there were Waverley briefings for councillors on 28th January and for town and parish councils scheduled as a hybrid meeting on 3rd February when further information would be shared.

C88/24 Precept 2025-2026

Cllr White introduced the 2025/26 precept report at Appendix D.

As a result of careful deliberation, the Strategy & Resources Working Group recommended to Council a precept of £1,535,300. This equated to an increase of ten pence per week and a cost of £83.45 per Band D property per annum (£1.60 per week) in total for all the Town Council services.

The precept needed to be set in a context of continuing significant economic pressures particularly with energy costs and higher inflation. Inflation over the past 18 months had been at a 40 year high (11% at the in 2023 but falling to 3.2% (CPI, October 2024) or 3.4% (RPI). Costs had risen significantly for many of the Council's activities. The evolving priorities of the new administration elected in May 2023 had seen the addition of £25,000 in the grants budget to meet the increasing needs of community organisations with a reduction in grants from other authorities, a new allocation for the Farnham Museum service run by the Farnham Maltings of £10,000, and additional costs in the personnel budgets as a result of the increase in the National Insurance contribution for employers and provision for an inflationary cost of living increases for employees (subject to national pay negotiations). In addition, the year ahead would see a new playground built at Gostrey Meadow and the start on new toilets and storage in Gostrey Meadow to improve facilities for visitors to events.

Cllr White reminded Council that in 2013, Farnham's precept amount was £5.63 above the sector average whereas in 2024/25 it was £7.73 below the sector average despite having taken on extra land from Waverley Borough Council, significantly expanding the number of activities being run by the Council including a new focus on supporting younger people, and maintaining high standards of service which have been recognised by national awards. The precept proposed was based on prudence and caution and acknowledged need with well-costed projects aimed at the betterment of the local community.

In discussion, councillors felt an extra 10p a week represented incredible value for money and thanked sponsors for their contributions to events and activities that helped keep the level of precept low for the wide ranging programme delivered. It was noted there would be challenges ahead with devolution and the Town Council would need to pay to take on extra services being stopped or handed down by the new unitaries. It was agreed that an informative leaflet should again be distributed with the Council Tax bills to explain how Farnham was spending its contribution.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that the 2025/26 precept be set at £1,535,300, representing a Band D equivalent amount of £83.45.

C89/24 **Planning and Licensing Applications**

Cllr Laughton reported on the two meetings held on 13th and 27th January 2025 at Appendices F & G. Of note were:

1. **Land at the walled garden, Moor Park Lane.** Change of use of existing agricultural land to SANG. Moonriver Ltd, who is providing services for biodiversity schemes to developers and is participating in the first private SANG project with Natural England to increase public access to footpaths, presented its proposal to FTC planning. Supporting infrastructure (include car parking) would be required. Planning applications would follow in due course
2. **Land south east of Farnham sewage treatment works, Monkton Lane.** Plan to erect 3 industrial warehouses with relevant infrastructure. FTC noted the risk of restriction of surface water disbursement and requests additional infrastructure conditions including culvert maintenance.
3. **A proposed base station upgrade at St Johns ambulance off The Hart car park.** This required increasing the mast height by 1m to 17.5m to accommodate 5G technologies. FTC notes the proposal which is all under Permitted Development and was not an application.

Discussion had also taken place on the School Streets project around Potters Gate School.

Council discussed the question raised by Mr John Neale at the start of the meeting but it was agreed after debate that it was not the time to enter into a discussion with the Farnham Society over design as a planning application was under consideration.

C90/24 **Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

None were reported.

C91/24 **Reports from Other Councils**

Cllr Merryweather reported that the Wey Court East renovation had been completed and the new Doctor's surgery was opening. This was a multi-million pound healthcare investment for which the community will be proud.

C92/24 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

Cllr Beaman reported on the Wey Valley Community Rail Partnership and the celebration of 200 years of the railway in Farnham.

C93/24

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next Full Council Meeting be held on 20 March 2025 and that the Annual Meeting of Electors would take place on 24 March 2025 at the University for the Creative Arts.

It was also agreed that the Annual Meeting of Council be moved to 15 May 2025 to accommodate VE Day 80 commemorations.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.21 pm

Chairman

Date