



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 31st July, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

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

Apologies for absence

Alan Earwaker, Tony Fairclough and Tim Woodhouse

Officers Present:

There was one member of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Jacqueline Drake Smith. As this was her last visit to the Council Chamber, as she was retiring, the Mayor thanked her for her contribution to the Farnham community and presented her with an engraved paperweight of Farnham Town Hall which she accepted with thanks.

Mr Peter Banks presented the Mayor with a wood carved World Craft Town sign and thanked the Council for what it was doing in leading the Craft Town project and supporting local makers

C26/25 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Fairclough and Woodhouse.

C27/25 Disclosures of Interest

Cllr Merryweather declared an interest in relation to potential asset transfers as portfolio holder for assets and finance at Waverley Borough Council and left the room for discussion of that item.

C28/25 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2025 were agreed for signing by the Mayor subject to correction of Cllr Jackman in apologies as he appeared in those present and apologies.

C29/25 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions or statements by the public.

C30/25 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor began by passing on the Council's wishes for a speedy recovery to the past Mayoress Mrs Caroline Mauluka.

The Mayor advised he had had a busy time since the last Council meeting and that being Mayor was an absolute treat. It was an honour and privilege to meet local organisations and individuals and to hear that the Town Council is held in such high esteem.

In particular the Mayor mentioned a number of activities including school visits, judging the Farnham Carnival floats, welcoming the judges for South and South East in Bloom and hosting the Lord Lieutenant as he presented the King's Award for Voluntary Service to the Tice's Meadow Bird Group.

C31/25 Questions by Members

There were no Questions by Members.

C32/25 Working Group Notes

1) Environment Working Group

Cllr Brown introduced the Notes of the Environment Working Group held on 16th July.

- a) Council noted the Farnham in Bloom Community Group had been re-established and that there had been a positive response to sponsorship opportunities with a welcome new approach from the team.

Council noted the outcomes of the Tree survey and the required works and maintenance. In terms of the allotments a number of breaches of the rules were being addresses and the Working Group had endorsed the fact that only assistance dogs were allowed on allotments on hygiene and safety grounds.

The Working Group had reported on various works in Gostrey Meadow and also the delays in the Riverside Walk walking and cycling improvements.

It was Resolved *nem con* that Farnham Town Council makes representations to Surrey County Council, Waverley Borough Council and Crest Nicholson over the quality of work and the time taken to complete the Riverside Walk project.

- b) Council noted the outcomes of a recent safety inspection had resulted in the need for remedial works to 54 memorials. It was also made aware of recent concerns that had been raised on cemetery matters and of an ongoing review into a breach of Cemetery Regulations in Badshot Lea noting the sensitivities around this issue.

It was Resolved *nem con* that Farnham Town Council updates the Cemetery Regulations and the Exclusive Rights of Burial (EROB) and Notification of Burial forms, reflecting recent questions raised regarding non-resident interment fees and an advisory notice about adjacent burials.

2) Culture & Business Working Group

Cllr Mirylees outlined discussions that had taken place at the Culture and Business Working Group held on 30th July.

Council noted the success of recent events but that it had proven difficult to have councillors attending the FTC Information Tent on every occasion. The Working Group had reviewed the Sustainability Festival and how it could be further developed but reaffirmed the long-standing position that political groups would not have a space allocated at community events organized by FTC.

The experiment with longer Music in the Meadow events had generally not worked with most people arriving at the normal start time and with additional costs incurred. Ult was agreed that the World Music Day event would continue.

In terms of World Craft Town, Cllr Mirylees advised that the Artist in Residence was hoped to be a jeweller in 2026 and plans were progressing well for Craft month and a repeat of the Lantern Festival.

In terms of business activities, Cllr Mirylees advised that the Farnham Infrastructure Programme was planning to promote Downing Street during the works with bunting and additional promotion for businesses.

3 Strategy & Resources Working Group

Cllr White introduced the notes of the Strategy & Resources Meeting held on 21st July at Appendix D.

a) Finance

Council noted the quarterly Finance Report with expenditure running at the expected level for the first three months of the year at 37.4% with income at 57.8% given the payment of the first half of the precept. There were no debtors being a cause for concern with 90% being the result of invoices issued in June

It was RESOLVED unanimously that a contribution of 25% of the cost up to a maximum of £5,000 be pledged to the project to restore the St Peter's Lychgate.

b) Reappointment of the current Internal Auditor

The Working group had considered reappointing the Internal Auditor to allow for continuity for the new Council after the 2027 elections. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Council is required to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit. The internal auditor must be independent of the Council's operations and demonstrate competence in reviewing financial and governance controls.

It was Resolved unanimously that Mike Platten of April Skies Accounting Ltd be reappointed as Internal Auditor for a further three-year period (2025/26 to 2027/28), subject to annual confirmation of independence and professional competence.

c) Bank signatories

Council noted that the Council's banking mandates for different accounts required updating

It was Resolved that

- 1) the following councillors: David Beaman, Alan Earwaker, George Hesse, Andrew Laughton, Michaela Martin, George Murray, John Ward, Graham White, be signatories on Council banking and investment accounts with any two to authorise transactions.**
- 2) the Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer continue as the authorised officer to manage accounts and investments.**

d) Contracts and assets

- i** Council received detailed information on a range of current contracts and assets issues including the triennial tree survey, the Gostrey Meadow Playground project and the contribution of £33,000 from a Your Fund Surrey allocation, and preparations for the new Gostrey Amenity Building. There were also updates on Library Gardens and plans for a new vehicle to replace a twenty year old vehicle.

It was Resolved that

- 1) the tree works be progressed by three arboricultural companies with a report to vire budget to cover the costs made in the six month financial report**
- 2) the actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation to improve the surfacing outside the playground pending the Gostrey Amenity Building Project be endorsed at a cost of up to £5,000.**
- 3) A vote of thanks be made to Surrey County Councillor Andy MacLeod and Michaela Martin for their very welcome contributions to the Gostrey Meadow Playground.**

ii Christmas Lights

Council noted the detailed analysis of the bids for Christmas Lights and the competitive tenders that had been received with six bids received and costs ranging from £250,000 to £456,000. The detailed analysis was attached as an exempt annex.

It was Resolved unanimously that, subject to references and final design details, the Christmas Lights Contract be awarded to Thomas Nagy at a cost of £280,000 for an initial five-year term.

iii Gostrey Amenity Building

Council discussed a report on the Gostrey Amenity Building attached as an Annex to the Working Group report. The Annex set out the outcome of a recent meeting with the architects and details of the specialists required prior to tendering the project. An Assets meeting was scheduled for 18th August.

It was RESOLVED *nem con*, with Cllr Hesse abstaining, in order to move the Gostrey Amenity Building forward without further delay that:

- 1 **Plan A Architects be commissioned to advise FTC to the tender stage including preparing the detailed specification for tender;**
- 2 **The Town Clerk in consultation with the Leader, Mayor and Lead Member of the Assets Task Group be delegated authority to progress the scheme as required in between Council meetings.**

Cllr Merryweather left for the next item

e) **Community Asset Transfers**

Council received an update on the discussion taking place over Community Asset Transfers. Council confirmed its desire to take on key assets that were at risk in the future of sale to fund historic debt of councils across Surrey as a result of Local Government Reorganisation. Council agreed that there was need to take on some assets that were dilapidated from years of underinvestment but these should be supported by a dowry or income generating asset such as a car park. It was noted that Surrey CC had not yet formalised its own Community Asset Transfer policy.

Cllr Merryweather returned.

f) **Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

Cllr Beaman was thanked for being the Council's representative on the Farnham Infrastructure programme in recent years, and the county councillors were thanked for their ongoing input. Cllr Beaman provided an update on the current position of works and the timetable with the most notable next step being the closure of Downing Street from 18th August to 1st November. This was recognized as being a significant closure

Council noted there was also a Business Case being prepared for the A31 corridor which was anticipated to be submitted to government in August 2026.

Concern was expressed over the constant flouting of the 20MPH zone and Cllr Hesse was writing to Cllr MacLeod to take up formally with Surrey.

4 Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Council discussed the recent presentations by Cllr Tim Oliver and Cllr Hannah Dalton on options for governance under new unitary councils.

A detailed debate ensued on whether or not Farnham should be part of a pilot test and learn Neighbourhood Area Committee, with some councillors believing the pilots were premature and should await the election of shadow unitary councils whilst others it would be a good opportunity to be part of shaping new arrangements.

Some of the points made included:

- Understand FTC wants to sit at the table and shape things but FTC is an award-winning council already doing many of the things the NAC aims to do. There is a risk to FTC of loss of identity and purpose. There is a loss to residents of a local vibrant democratic voice.
- FTC has a lot to contribute and shape the outcome of the NACs. This was an opportunity to make the NACs even better by participating and learning for the future. It is clear this model is part of the future structures.
- Farnham was held in high esteem across Surrey, and people had confidence in FTC's ability to see if things worked and try and create an exemplar with partners.
- Concern that the NACs would falter by being a talking shop with people not wanting to attend or being unable to as there were too many for the voluntary and community organisations expected to participate across Surrey.
- If the NAC did not work FTC would still be there to support its community.

- The whole process was being rushed through and creating additional pressure on the workload of officers.
- The process was being orchestrated by Surrey and it was not clear what was being piloted or what could be achieved in the very short time (3 months) for the pilot.
- There was also a view that reorganisation may not happen given the backtracking that had taken place at central government. NACs had a place in unparished areas but this was not ideal where there were strong parishes as there would be less of an input.
- Potentially this could be a way of engaging better with policing, water/health and other issues in a constructive way and a conduit for future working, but there was concern about how area committees have narrowed or been replaced in the past and there has been less engagement.

It was Resolved by 8 votes to 4 with 2 abstentions that:

- 1) **FTC accept the invitation to take part in the Neighbourhood Area Committee pilot to help shape future arrangements.**
- 2) **To appoint the Leader and Town Clerk to take part initial discussion to develop terms of reference and report back to the LGR Task Group/Strategy & Resources and September Council.**
- 3) **The draft FTC response to the Government's LGR consultation be submitted subject to any councillor comments by the end of 1st August 2025.**

4 Community & Wellbeing Working Group

Cllr Earwaker presented the draft terms of Reference for the Working Group.

It was Resolved *nem con* that the Terms of Reference be adopted.

Cllr Merryweather reported that Hampshire Police had opened a front desk in Alton and wondered if Surrey could do the same in Farnham.

C33/25 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Laughton introduced the Notes to the Planning & Licensing meetings held on 30th June and 14th and 28th July at Appendices F, G and H. Items of note included the refusal of the Trueform sign on appeal (being inappropriately sited) and a presentation by the developers of the Centrum Site with the Waverley Planning Officer. Cllr Laughton outlined the comments made by FTC.

In terms of Licensing, an application had been received for Laithwaites.

C34/25 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

The Town Clerk advised that the National pay award had been agreed by the National Joint Negotiating Committee and that this would be implemented in the August salaries effective from 1st April.

C35/25 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr Martin confirmed that the Your Fund Surrey would be continuing with each of the County Councillors being allocated £50,000 to support local projects.

C36/25 Reports from Outside Bodies

There were no reports from outside bodies.

C37/25 **Date of Next Meeting**

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

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.38pm

Chairman

Date