



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL



Notes Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Tuesday 5th March, 2024

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Strategy & Resources Members Present:

Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor Graham White (Lead Member)

In attendance: Cllr George Murray

Officers:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Iain McCreedy (Business & Facilities Manager), Jenny de Quervain (Planning & Civic Officer)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Hesse and Cllr Martin.

2. Declarations of interest

The Town Clerk declared an interest as a former director and saver with Boom Credit Union.

3. Minutes

The Notes of the meeting held on 16th January were agreed.

4. Finance Report

- i) The Working Group received the latest financial position and reviewed the Income and Expenditure report to 28th February 2023 at Appendix Bi and Bii; and the Outstanding debtors and write-off of a £75 invoice for a company that had closed at Appendix C. The Working Group accepted there would also need to be a small write-off of allotment income

for October 2022-September 2023 where there had been unfilled vacancies. The Working Group noted that with income running at just under 110% and expenditure (with commitments) running at some 93% there would be an expected surplus at the end of year. It was noted that not all commitments may be implemented in the current year.

- ii) The Working Group received a proposal from Boom Community Bank at Appendix D to support the roll out of a no interest or low interest loan scheme to help those facing hardship and avoid the need for people to take out loans at exorbitant rate of interest. The Working Group noted that Boom started as the ethical not-for-profit SurreySave Credit Union and had now expanded its area through mergers to cover Sussex and Berkshire. One of the benefits of the Boom Community Bank was its financial literacy education programme and its requirement for borrowers to become savers to help create financial resilience. It was noted that in Farnham there were currently 32 people with loans (totalling £56k). After discussing a range of options, the Working Group agreed that supporting a No Interest Loan Scheme for Farnham residents would help with the ongoing financial crisis and supplement the work done by the Farnham Support Fund with its hardship grants and fuel poverty payments. It was agreed to recommend a contribution (effectively a grant of £15k subject to an agreement on the scheme's operation locally) for a pilot scheme. It was also agreed to recommend that Farnham Town Council opened a savings account with Boom Community Bank with an initial deposit of £15k noting that the dividend payable (proposed 0.35% for 2023/2024) would be similar to the current interest rate on the HSBC call account. It was noted that the Boom Community Bank AGM would be taking place in April and representatives would be invited to attend.

Recommendation to Council.

It is recommended that Farnham Town Council

- 1) **Opens a savings account with Boom Community Bank with an initial deposit of £15,000;**
 - 2) **Supports the creation of a No-Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) for Farnham with a contribution of £15,000 for the pilot; and**
 - 3) **Authorises the Town Clerk to finalise the parameters of the NILS project in Farnham with Boom Community Bank.**
- iii) Grant requests update. The Working Group recommended supporting the proposal from the Environment Working Group for a grant to buy water testing kits for the Water Rangers with a grant of £1,500 from the 2023-24 Community Initiatives Fund.
 - iv) Review of banking arrangements. The Town Clerk advised that initial discussions had been held with a local bank to see if there were advantages in moving the FTC account from HSBC. A further report would be presented.

5. Contracts & Assets update

- I Iain McCready resented the report on Contract and assets at Appendix E. This included:
 - i) Progress on upgrading the telephone system from ISDN when it is switched off from VOIP. Two quotations received to date with others expected as part of the IT support review.
 - ii) The latest position on fixing the CNG compressor at the depot. It appears that a motherboard at a cost of £1,200 may be required following discussions with the Italian manufacturer. This may have been due to a faulty installation. The cost of diagnostic tests are being investigated.
 - iii) The completion of the installation of the new polytunnel with the fencing still to be done, hopefully in 2023/24.
 - iv) The upgrade of First aid kit and equipment required for events and depot (funded out of current budgets).

- v) The refurbishment of the depot, with clearing and reorganisation of the outside areas and the re-equipping of the outside workforce break room and kitchenette.
 - vi) The Gostrey gates refurbishment tenders had been completed with work allocated to Aegyssus at a cost of £3.075 and Lee Humphries at a cost of £6140 for the pillar rebuilding and internal tarmac works. The dropped kerb roadway improvements would need to await approval from SCC.
 - vii) The search for the replacement Goupil electric vehicle was continuing.
 - viii) The 2023/24 pathway repairs, normally in the cemeteries were proposed for Battings Garden and Gostrey Meadow near the bridge/bowling green. Two quotations had been received so far at a significantly higher rate than usual with a third awaited. **It was agreed to recommend that the works in progress subject to a maximum cost of £16,950 for the Gostrey meadow and that the tender be let to the most economically advantageous tender.**
 - ix) The Working Group considered the further discussions with SurreyCC and Farnham Hoppa Connects service for an electric charging point at the Council offices (all costs funded by Surrey) to charge two vehicles overnight and one during the day. **It was agreed to recommend the installation of charging points suitable for charging the Hoppa vehicles overnight be agreed subject to a contract and costs payable by Surrey CC.**
 - x) The Working Group noted the Wrecclesham Gateways project (funded by Section 106) was in hand and that the repositioning of the Longbridge CCTV was also taking place.
 - xi) Cllr White advised there was an area by Jubilee Walk that had flooded. Iain McCready advised he would be taking remedial action along with maintaining and planting of some new reeds in the adjacent overflow pipe.
- 2 Notification of Zurich Insurance renewal increase. The Working Group noted that as a result an internal review and the fact that Zurich had paid two historic claims in one year, the Council's long term agreement was being re-negotiated and may rise to around £20,000. Officers were in discussion on ways to minimise the impact.
- 3 The Working Group received details of the Wrecclesham Community Centre Rent Review at Appendix F. An initial meeting with Trustees had taken place and a further one planned.
- 4 The Working Group considered a request for the lease of a piece of land at Farnham Riverside by the Abbeyfield Wey Valley Society at Appendix G to its agenda. Officers visited Wey Valley House regarding the proposed extension of its garden following some redevelopment works. Officers advised that the piece of land to the North East (Area A) would not interfere with plans for the area (subject to a final measuring of the extended request and there being no access from the FTC land) but the land requested adjacent to the river (Areas B and C) may cause problems for the Walk and Stride widening which had been agreed for the Brightwells Yard Scheme. Officers also advised that some temporary repairs to the path were being implemented pending the park and stride work on the footpath widening.

Recommendation

It was agreed to recommend to Council that:

- 1) **Officers pursue a lease for a rectangular piece of land to the North East to be coterminous with the Abbeyfield lease from Waverley for Wey Valley House (believed to be 85 years);**
- 2) **The additional land request be not supported.**

5 Registering of unadopted land.

The Working Group discussed the general issue of registering unadopted land that had an amenity value for the local community. This had arisen as a result of the improvements

required to the access to the allotments at Six Bells, and the plans by Abbeyfield Wey Valley to register a piece of land by Farham Riverside which was being cleared by them to create a car park. There was concern that the development of the latter piece of land would impact on a biodiverse green corridor. The Contracts and Facilities Manager advised FTC had taken on the land along Farnham Riverside to improve it as an attractive green space and improve the biodiversity. It had initially been considered that it might also include the piece of land in question, with a historic footpath over it, but ownerships in this area were complex. Councillors wondered if a compromise might be available for a smaller footprint to be made available with the land retained for biodiversity. Others thought that a car park was unnecessary as the Care home was next to a large public car park and land that had a public amenity value should, in principle, not be acquired by a private organisation.

Recommendation:

- 1) Farnham Town Council reviews unregistered public amenity land that has community or environmental benefits and registers appropriate sites to be retained in public ownership.**
- 2) FTC objects to the loss of the green corridor next to Farnham Riverside and seeks to register the land for public ownership.**

Cllr Murray and Cllr Fairclough left at this point.

6. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman provided an update on the FIP advising that following consultation the intention was to move the bus stop shelter from East Street to Dogflud Way and have a bus stop pole with real time information in East Street. The issue with the inline bus stop in the Borough was continuing and further representations had been made by Cllr Powell identifying congestion that would occur using existing CCTV information.

SCC had now issued the proposed design for Castle Street which showed them removing the historic ironstones and using them as a feature around street furniture and trees. This was considered to be worrying and would be looked at by the Infrastructure Planning Group ahead of the April Council. It was noted that Surrey was still meeting groups individually (ie WBC and FTC) despite requests by both for joint meetings. As FTC and WBC officers were discussing the proposals it is known that the concerns are shared.

The scheme materials were due to be installed at the back of the Town Hall shortly and would be available for Council to consider them.

The Working Group noted the next FIP Board meeting would take place on 22nd March.

Cllr Brown left at this point.

7. Reports of Task Groups

I Neighbourhood Plan

Jenny de Quervain gave an update on actions that were progressing on the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan. The funding from Locality was being used to provide mapping layers for the Urban Capacity Review and other elements, and the planning advisor had been commissioned to progress a number of tasks until the end of March.

Andrew Longley had updated town and parish councils of the next steps with the Local Plan, working towards an adoption in 2027. At this stage the Neighbourhood Plan would need to be in general conformity with the new Local Plan, or a further update would then

be required. WBC was holding a Town and parish Councils Planning Forum on 12th March where the Local Plan work programme would be explained further.

One of the issues for consideration was the number of homes to be designated for the allocation of strategic sites to 2043. The number in the Neighbourhood Plan is currently 100 but there was a proposal to reduce this. The Working Group felt that in Farnham, there was no need, at this stage, to reduce this number below 100 particularly as the number of houses being built in Farnham was progressing on schedule. The call for sites was continuing until 31st March.

Waverley was using the CommonPlace engagement platform as a means of seeking input to work on the new local plan and other planning policy documents <https://planningwaverley.commonplace.is/>.

One important element being reviewed was the Infrastructure Development Plan and the Farnham IPG would be seeking ward members' views at what infrastructure requirements should be put forward.

The Town Clerk advised that there had recently been a discussion with agents acting for the owners of Dyas Yard to see if there were further opportunities for improvements to this area. A further update will be provided in due course.

2 Waverley Lane Statutory Challenge

The Working group noted that the Statutory Challenge had now been scheduled for 1.5 days on the 16th and 17th July.

3 Younger People Task Group

The Notes of the Younger People Task Group were attached at appendix H. The meeting of the wider members had included a presentation by the PC Barnes, Surrey Police Youth Engagement Officer who works with local authorities and schools to help keep vulnerable young people safe and support young people at risk of displaying or being victim to anti-social behaviour. PC Barnes advised of the importance of reporting anti-social behaviour and said that in Farnham in 2023 there were 6 public order offences and 2 knife offences reported.

The Task Group heard that Surrey had 'recommissioned' its youth service with all age groups under one umbrella and a loss of some £800,000 for young people services across Surrey.

The Younger People directory on the FTC website was being developed, to be populated with information by each organisation providing services in March.

The Working Group had a useful discussion on the allocations agreed for the new FTC funding and a consideration of the logistics of outreach in the town centre, Hale and Wrecclesham to determine which organisation was best for the outreach in Wrecclesham. Further discussions with various organisations were planned and a service level agreement for the additional funding would be agreed.

In discussion, the Strategy & Resources Working Group clarified that in the first year, the £30k allocation for Hale and Wrecclesham should be split equally as far as possible although one option for consideration was whether the Hale Community Centre team or others would support this work. The Working Group also discussed whether the funding for Wrecclesham might support general provision for younger people in that area rather than specific outreach and this would be part of the conversation with partner organisation.

Cllr White had drafted a paper to help explain the Farnham approach to supporting younger people setting out the different funding elements for external partners and as a basis for funding applications to others. It was agreed that whilst this amplified the Task Group notes it would be useful after agreements with partner organisations had been clarified.

8. Consultations

The Working Group considered two consultations received from Waverley which were issued with a short timescale for response.

- I The Waverley Economic Development Strategy and Action plan (https://modgov.waverley.gov.uk/documents/s61683/WBC%20DRAFT%20Economic%20Development%20Action%20Plan%202024_26.pdf).

It was disappointing that Town and Parish Councils had not been involved in the development of the document after planned meetings with the consultant were cancelled, but the document and its approach were to be welcomed. The covering report at Appendix I to the Working group agenda set out some initial thoughts to be supplemented by Council.

The strategy proposes a 'Creative Waverley' brand to be developed which builds on and benefits Farnham with UCA and World Craft Town designation.

There is a proposal for 'Maker spaces' centred around Farnham, with a focus on activating underutilised public assets and retail units to create a new network of workshops and makerspaces that encourage creative entrepreneurialism and attract inward investment' This has previously been proposed by FTC and fits with FTC agreed priorities.

The document repeatedly mentions collaborating with UCA which is positive. It mentions a review of Council owned assets to be used to 'provide low cost business space' which should be support as it will strengthen the World Craft Town programme and incubator spaces for UCA graduates. The 'low-cost' part is important as traditional makers cannot afford to rent space in Farnham.

Alongside more traditional craft maker spaces, the strategy identifies the need to tap into the digital world by creating a new 'video Games incubator Centre'. This fits with the move to digital and media that UCA have made. Waverley will need to understand the reasons why the digital gaming centre in Aldershot at the old Town Hall in Grosvenor Road did not go ahead.

In terms of gaps, there doesn't seem to be much on events and visitor economy. WBC has a fantastic asset in Farnham Park that could and should be used for larger for Events/Festivals.

There are opportunities to use SCC assets such as Brightwells Yard and the Library as economic drivers with, potentially, a creative hub – including incubator space alongside maker spaces, café and an expanded 'National craft Museum' (with the craft study centre involved).

There is an opportunity lost in the document as much of the resource indicated seems to be 'officer time'. There is concern with staffing reductions and other pressures that this may limit the potential achievements in the action plan.

Recommendation

Subject to any additional comments at Council, the above comments form the basis of FTC's comments.

2 **Waverley anti-social behaviour policy and Public Space Protection Order.**

Waverley Borough Council is currently reviewing the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) that covers Godalming, Farncombe and Waverley managed parks and greenspaces and has given two weeks for comment from 27th February until 13th March. Disappointingly, this timescale is well outside the expected consultation periods which should be a minimum of six weeks. Further details on the current PSPO and background to the order at [Waverley Borough Council - Anti-social behaviour PSPO](#).

The PSPO was introduced in April 2021 and is due to expire on 20 April 2024. It was put in place to address various concerns regarding:

- Alcohol, drugs, and group anti-social behaviour in Godalming and Farncombe
- The lighting of barbecues and bonfires in Waverley managed parks and greenspaces across the borough.

The PSPO aims to ensure that public spaces can be enjoyed free from anti-social behaviour. It is not about stopping the responsible use of public spaces, but they do provide councils and the police with powers and tools to tackle unreasonable and persistent behaviour and issues that are adversely affecting communities.

The proposed order includes all WBC land most of which never experiences any issues but excludes many areas in Farnham that have had significant issues such as Gostrey Meadow, Victoria Garden, Green Lane Cemetery and Farnham Riverside. There have been other incidences in recent years of drug dealing taking place in West Street Cemetery, outside Badshot Lea Cemetery, so it is proposed that all FTC land is included so any issues identified can be addressed.

Recommendation to Council:

Subject to any comments or spaces identified by ward councillors, FTC responds requesting all FTC land be included in the new Public Space Protection Order.

9. **Town Clerk update**

The Town Clerk advised that the HR Panel was recommending a change of public opening hours of the Council Offices to the next Council. One of the drivers for this was to facilitate staff meetings and training, and because the public access requirement was reduced since Waverley closed its shared reception facility. The aim is to open the doors from 10 to 4.30 every day but there would still be a telephone response from 9 to 5 Monday to Thursday and 9 to 4.30 on Friday. When there were pre-arranged meetings to which the public were invited, the doors would still open earlier. This recommended new arrangement was endorsed by the Working Group.

10. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was agreed as being 2pm on Tuesday 16th April.

The meeting ended at 5.40 pm

Notes written by Iain Lynch