



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Notes Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Tuesday 9th July, 2024

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Strategy & Resources Members Present:

Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor George Murray
Councillor Graham White (Lead Member)

In attendance
Cllr George Hesse

Officers:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Iain McCready (Business & Facilities Manager (part), Oliver Cluskey (Events Manager (part), Jenny de Quervain (part)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Fairclough, Martin and Mirylees.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June were agreed.

4. Finance Report

The Working group considered the Quarterly Finance Report and the papers attached at Appendices B, C, D and E. Expenditure was running at the expected level for the first three months of the year and income was at 50.8% given the payment of the first half of the precept.

The Working Group noted responses to some specific questions on the detail within the papers, and the finance report was agreed. The Working Group noted the comment of the External Auditor on the additional day for the public inspection of the accounts.

5. Reports of Task Groups

I Younger People Panel

Cllr White introduced the Younger People Panel report at Appendix G and the Working group discussed the comparative merits of the two proposals received for undertaking research into the needs of younger people in Farnham. Cllr White proposed that both submissions could be taken forward as one was more quantitative and the other more qualitative and combined the total costs was only just above the amount budgeted.

Members discussed whether there was the potential for duplication; whether each of the proposals was effectively priced; and whether the two organisations were too 'urban-centric' with their experience. The Group agreed it was important to make sure the briefs did not overlap and noted that there would be different timelines. It also felt that the previous experience of both organisations showed evidence of working in areas similar to Farnham. The Group noted the Westco proposal would get some detailed information ahead of the budget setting for 2025-26 whilst the Participation People proposal would build skills in young people to do some peer research and this was welcomed.

Subject to the views of the Younger People Panel that was meeting on Friday 12th, **it was agreed to recommend:**

- 1) **Westco Communications be commissioned to undertake its proposal at a cost of £11,850 to inform the 2025-26 budget;**
- 2) **Participation People be commissioned to work with younger people on the basis of their proposal during the forthcoming academic year at a cost of £10,710;**
- 3) **Council note that an additional allocation may be required to achieve the optimum outcomes from each proposal and that subject to a review of the outcomes, budget provision for further research may be beneficial for 2025-2026.**

[Subsequent to the meeting, the Younger People Panel agreed with the recommendations of Strategy & Resources and the two phased approach. The group particularly liked the idea of creating Younger People ambassadors through the Participation People proposal.]

2 Neighbourhood Plan Task Group.

The Working Group reviewed the notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Panel that met on 19th June, attached at Appendix H to its meeting, and received a verbal update on the meeting held on 8th July.

The draft timeline for the Neighbourhood Plan had been agreed by the Working Group to operate to the end of 2026 to be in general conformity with the emerging Local Plan update (latest timeline attached at Annex 1). However, the Working Group noted that with the new Government announcing that the National Planning Policy Framework would be changed with a consultation expected by the end of July, the role of Neighbourhood Plans and the timescales for Local Plans were very uncertain. Members noted that Waverley Borough Council was organising a briefing on the Local Plan for 30th July, and more information may emerge at that meeting.

The proposed Community meeting scheduled for the 3rd July (before the election was announced) was rearranged for Wednesday 11th September at 7pm in the Council Chamber.

The Working Group had agreed that some initial work on the Infrastructure requirement should be progressed as well as a review of the policies in the current Neighbourhood Plan. The meeting held on 8th July had made a good start on the policy review and would continue with the detailed analysis at its next meeting on 29th July at 2pm. The Working Group noted that Waverley Borough Council had still not provided the contacts for the Infrastructure Providers incorrectly citing GDPR limitations as a reason why the data was not being shared. Officers were continuing to try and resolve this issue.

There was a discussion on whether any external participants should be co-opted onto the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group, but it was agreed that this would be premature.

3 **Statutory Challenge.**

The Working Group noted the latest position on the Statutory Challenge on Waverley Lane that was taking place in the High Court on 16/17 July. The Judge's decision on the Aarhus ruling was welcomed, noting that the maximum costs that could be paid to the defendants' was £10,000 if they won the case and the maximum of costs that could be claimed by FTC was £35,000 if it won the case.

4 **Business Improvement District.**

The Working Group received an update on the Business Improvement District noting work that officers and Cllr Murray had undertaken to get the right Governance arrangements in place, and that the £30,000 loan to the BID had been made. The Working Group noted that the first bills had gone out in June, and that the BID Board needed to extend its communications and social media presence as there had been feedback from a number of businesses that they were not aware of what the BID was planning to do. The BID Manager, Cat Mitton, had been appointed (titled CEO) and had a temporary base in the FTC offices.

Members noted that the BID was business-led and hoped that there would be some early quick wins. Cllr Murray, as FTC's representative, and officers from FTC and Waverley were continuing to support the Board and were collaborating on a number of projects including preparations for Christmas. It was noted that the BID levy was the only portion of the Business rates that was guaranteed to be retained to spend in Farnham, and this was to be welcomed.

5 **Other Task Groups**

- i) **Website.** The Working Group noted that following Council approval for a new website, a draft website brief was being prepared and is expected to be shared with Members for by the end of July. The brief will address the key issues identified by councillors who took part in the two focus groups, and the findings of the surveys with staff and the public. In parallel, the annual review of entries in the directory of Farnham services is underway.
- ii) **Christmas Lights.** The Working Group noted that a pre-specification meeting had been held with one Christmas Lights provider to shape the specification prior to tender, and that it would include options for lease or purchase, and for installation and storage to be separately quoted. The proposal, with tender timescales, was likely to run into the autumn with the potential for some new items for 2024 to include new lights in the trees in Castle Street and the potential for a new element in Brightwells Yard (subject to the scheme's completion and discussion with SurreyCC/WaverleyBC. An initial meeting of the new Task Group was planned with a view to having an update to the September Strategy & resources Working group.

6. **Contracts & Assets update**

The Business and Facilities Manager provided an update on a number of contract and assets matters including the following:

- i) Gostrey Gates: the extension for gates had been made but due to concerns over the weight of the gates on the remaining pillar, a re-evaluation was being undertaken by the blacksmith with a view to him undertaking the whole job against his original quote.
- ii) Gostrey toilets and playground: Following discussion at the June Council, the architect had progressed the drawing as agreed (at Appendix F) in order to prepare documents for a planning application. However, Cllr Hesse and Cllr White had concerns over what had previously been agreed and it was agreed that the revised proposals be withdrawn in order that the architect could come and discuss further with councillors. The Working Group noted that this would lead to a further delay in the submission of a planning application. It was also agreed that the initial discussion on the new playground with suppliers ready for a consultation with the public could continue in parallel. The Working Group noted that the indicative costs for the scheme from a quantity surveyor were likely to be in the region of £650k to £750K.

7. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

- i) Cllr Beaman provided a verbal update on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme following a meeting which he and FTC officers attended with the programme team. He advised that these briefing meetings were now to take place less frequently (every three weeks) as it was moving to an implementation phase. There was concern over the fact that the town Council views were being diluted and that there had still been no detailed phasing plan produced. There was concern about the intent of the statement of Cllr Oliver asking the three county councillors to co-ordinate local views – it had not been expected that this meant ‘full control’ with the democratically elected views of the town council being filtered by the county councillors. It was recognised that having SCC councillors to assist in fine tuning options should be helpful. It was agreed that the Town Clerk should write to Cllr Oliver for clarification and set out the Town Council’s concerns.
- ii) Cllr White tabled a document (not seen by anyone ahead of the meeting) prepared by Cllr Powell following a meeting he attended with Cllr Powell and Cllr Fairclough (representing Waverley BC) on Friday 5th July. The paper included new street furniture proposals with only two of the proposals agreed by FTC and councillors attending the meeting on 14 May now included (attached at Appendix G to the agenda). A new bus shelter, cycle and seats now seem to have been agreed even though the new bus shelter was even larger than the one previously shown which councillors had already expressed concerns about. FTC had been awaiting the promised further detail from SCC on an alternate bus shelter for the Borough but nothing had been received. Cllr Hesse expressed frustration over the poor quality of the documentation with small images which were very difficult to read. The slant of wording in the document was also not helpful as it implied additional consultation had taken place (eg benches were favoured by young people) that no-one was aware of. It was agreed that Cllr White should raise again with Cllr Powell, the approved street furniture proposals

The work by Cllr Powell in refining the phasing plan was helpful but there were no indicative dates yet to enable an effective consideration to take place. The Working group noted that officers had been in discussion with the SCC project team and Atkins over many months and had submitted key FTC and community events to assist with the optimum phasing plan. Discussions had also taken place with the organisers of the West Street Markets over the implications and they had been signposted to the potential use of the Brightwells Yard Town Square or a car park subject to agreement with Waverley BC.

- iii) Cllr Beaman advised that there were still elements in the proposals that did not accord with the Town Council view (such as the right turn from Castle Street) but these were now being progressed. He suggested it may be the right time to propose that as the project was moving from decision making to an implementation phase, the Farnham Board, which was not really a decision making Board, should perhaps be replaced by an implementation group.

- iv) The Town Clerk advised on discussions with the agents of the owner of Dyas Yard which could, with agreement of others, potentially achieve a much-improved link between Downing Street and the Central Car Park. The timing with the Infrastructure Programme works could be beneficial. **The Working Group agreed to recommend to Council that: Officers discuss potential options with Waverley Borough Council, Surrey County Council and agents for Dyas Yard to improve access to Downing Street.**

8. Consultations

There were no consultations considered.

9. Items for future meetings

There were no new topics added to the list of items for future meetings.

10. Town Clerk update

The Town Clerk advised that Tom Vaughan was rejoining the Outside Workforce team, and that a further team member was working his probationary period via an agency contract. The team were working hard on preparations for the South and South East in Bloom judging.

11. Date of next meeting

The Working Group noted the difficulty of Executive members of Waverley attending on a Tuesday when there was a clash of dates with Waverley Executive meetings on the same day. Cllr White said that a Monday option was not generally practical on days when Planning & Licensing Consultative Group took place. The Town Clerk advised that Monday or Wednesday options could be programmed as required (alongside other Working Groups).

The scheduled date of 3rd September at 2pm would be reviewed [*subsequently noted to be on the same day as a Waverley Executive meeting*].

The meeting ended at 5.40 pm

Notes written by town.clerk@farnham.gov.uk