



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Notes Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Wednesday 4th September, 2024

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Strategy & Resources Members Present:

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

In Attendance: Cllr George Hesse, Cllr Chris Jackman

Officers: Jenny De Quervain (Planning & Civic Administrator), Iain Lynch (Town Clerk) and Iain McCready (Business and Facilities Manager)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Murray.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

The Notes of the previous meeting held on 9th July were agreed as a correct record.

4. Finance Report

- 1) **Finances.** Cllr White introduced the Finance report and the Working Group noted the Income and expenditure position to 31st August and the latest position on debtors, neither of which had matters of concern with the quarterly more detailed review due at

the end of October. The Working group noted that the latest BACS and direct debit payments were available for detailed inspection.

- 2) **Grants.** The latest position on grants and the grants timetable for 2024-2025 were set out at Appendix D with applications for both Community Grants and the Farnham South Street Trust invited between September and December 2024. The amounts available would be agreed at the budget setting in December with allocations taking place in January 2025. Organisations receiving a larger grant via a Service Level Agreement would be invited to discuss their applications with councillors in November. In discussion, it was agreed to recommend raising the maximum for community grants because of inflationary pressures from £2,000 to £2,500 noting this may not necessarily mean a higher allocation, depending on the overall agreed budget and the number of applications. It was also agreed to recommend the Community & Culture Working Group review the grants programme ahead of the 2026-27 application round.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- i) **the 2025/26 Community Grants, South Street Trust and SLA Grant timelines be agreed;**
- ii) **the maximum sum for Community grant applications be increased from £2,000 to £2,500;**
- iii) **The Community & Culture Working Group review the process and range of grants allocated ahead of 2026-27 grants applications.**

- 3) **Budget setting timetable.** Cllr White introduced the key dates for the 2025-26 Budget and precept setting at Appendix E with each Working Group considering budgets required to take forward services under their remit in the year ahead during the autumn cycle of meetings. These would feed into the all-councillor Strategy briefing/workshop on November 28th and the Council budget setting meeting on 19th December, with the funding of the budget and the setting of the precept agreed on 23rd January 2025.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

The 2025/26 budget and precept setting key dates be agreed;

- 4) Other financial matters. **External Audit 2023-24.** The Working Group noted that an unqualified audit had been received from the Council's External Auditor PKF Littlejohn and thanked the Responsible Financial Officer (Town Clerk), bookkeeper (Sarah Cross), accountant (Claire Connell) and Internal Auditor (Mike Platten) for the work that went in to achieving this.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the external auditor's Unqualified Audit for 2023-24 be welcomed.

5. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman introduced the report on the latest position on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme at Appendix H saying there were five main issues.

- i) **Correspondence on raingardens.** This was a complex matter, not subject to a great debate, but the concept had already been agreed and signed off by the County Council portfolio holder, and the supplementary paper by the Business and Facilities Manager outlined the expected sustainability and other benefits. He confirmed the maintenance was within the abilities of the Town Council team and was the scheme was expected to enhance the town centre from both environmental and safety perspectives. Cllr Fairclough suggested that there could be sponsorship opportunities for maintenance of

the raingardens and the Working Group noted that the existing planters would be redistributed to enhance other parts of Farnham.

- ii) **New stepped design feature at the top of Downing Street and West Street.** Cllr Beaman advised that a new design feature had been proposed to deal with the height levels at the top of Downing Street/West Street. The Working Group expressed concern over this being a potential hazard and Cllr Beaman suggested referring it to local disability groups for their consideration pending a design being circulated.
- iii) **Bus shelters in the Borough and West Street.** The Working Group noted there had been a further long discussion with the FIP Board representatives of all three councils with the programme team and the SCC bus stop specialist on the suitability of the bus shelters proposed for the Borough and West Street. Concerns remained over the fact that businesses did not appear to have been consulted; whether the bus shelters were suitable for the conservation area given their bulk and style, and over their robustness for future maintenance. The Working Group members were divided on which was the best design and whether shelters should be provided in those locations. The needs of bus users requiring shelter in inclement weather was considered to be important in making a decision. It was felt the right option had not yet been found.
Recommendation:
It is recommended that Council decide on a preferred option from:
 - 1) **An alternate shelter suitable for the Conservation area be considered (and if proposed by FTC that FTC take on future maintenance); or**
 - 2) **A shelter chosen by Surrey County Council and for which they would be responsible for future maintenance be taken forward;**
 - 3) **No shelter be provided but real time bus information be available at the bus stop.**
- iv) **Phasing programme for Town Centre Works.** Cllr Beaman advised that there was still no phasing information provided to the Town Council other than the works on the Riverside Walk between the Brightwells Yard development and Riverside Car Park would take place in November, and works in the Town Centre were expected to commence on January 13th.
- v) **Camera enforcement for HGV control.** Cllr Beaman advised that Surrey CC was using portable camera enforcement for HGVs who were ignoring the road restrictions. It was noted that FTC officers were awaiting costs for a potential solution for permanent ANPR cameras which could be used by SCC for enforcement purposes for breaches of the HGV restrictions.

The Working Group also considered a complaint referred to it by Council on the continued speeding by vehicles in Castle Street. The Council noted that its powers were limited as enforcement was the responsibility of Surrey Police or the County Council. The Town Council had funded equipment and hi viz clothing for a Speedwatch Campaign but this had done little to deter offenders. It was noted that once the FIP proposals had been implemented with a raised crossing and narrower carriageway in Castle Street there should be some improvements.

It was agreed that FTC should endorse residents' concerns and raise these with both Surrey County Council and Surrey Police to see what additional action could be taken.

6. Reports of Task Groups

- 1) **Neighbourhood Plan Task Group.**

The Working Group received updates from recent meetings of the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group held on 8th and 29^h July and the 19th August.

- i) All councillors had received a copy of the draft response to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, consultation attached at Appendix I to the agenda, which had been prepared by the Council's Planning advisor.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

Subject to any further comments at Council, and a review of any co-ordinated responses by the National Association of Local Councils or others, that the FTC response be submitted.

- ii) The Working Group noted the response submitted to Natural England regarding the Surrey Hills AONB Boundary Variation report attached at Appendix J. A response back to a local resident raising the same concerns had confirmed that should the Statutory Challenge be successful, the area of land excluded because it had received planning approval for development, would remain under consideration and be reviewed for inclusion. The Working group noted that a second round of Statutory Consultation, primarily for extension areas in East Hampshire, would commence on 16th September.
 - iii) The Working Group discussed arrangements for the **Neighbourhood Plan Community meeting** being held on 11th September which would include a statement on the current position of work on the Neighbourhood Plan in the context of the Local Plan review and the fact that although a formula for new housing had been published by the Government, there was still no clarity over numbers given by Waverley nor whether this exceptionally high number (the equivalent of ten new schemes the equivalent of Dunsfold Park in the Borough) was deliverable. The Working Group asked that an invitation be extended to the Waverley Head of Planning to provide an update to the meeting.
 - iv) **Infrastructure Consultations.** The Working Group noted that a proposal prepared by the Council's Planning Advisor (Steve Tilbury) had been shared with Waverley BC who advised it was duplicating work they were undertaking which underlined the need for improved information sharing. Further discussions were taking place and would be report back to the Task Group, to ensure resources and timescales were optimised.
- 2) **Younger People Panel.** The Working Group received the notes of the meeting held on 16th August and welcomed the progress being made with the funded outreach work and the holiday activities programme. The Working Group also welcomed the start of the Westco Consultation and the proposed dated for the Participation People timetable scheduled to start at the end of the calendar year and building on the Westco report.
 - 3) **Website Task Group.** The Working Group welcomed the draft tender specification for the new website at Appendix L, noting that it would be advertised nationally but that local businesses would be encouraged to tender if appropriate for them.
 - 4) **Conservation Areas Advisory Panel.** It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 1st October, and that Waverley Borough Council had determined that the proposed St James Conservation Area did not merit Conservation Area status.
 - 5) **Infrastructure & CIL Task Group.** The Working Group noted that the Waverley Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy bidding round was open for applications until 25th October. Apart from the Gostrey Meadow project, no specific projects were identified apart from the potential (discussed at the end of the meeting) for the

conversion of the Waggon Yard redundant garages into World Craft Town workshops and a visitor centre.

The Working Group reviewed the unallocated CIL contributions and the Regulation 121B Monitoring Report submitted to Waverley Borough Council at the end of the 2023-24 financial year to consider whether a formal CIL round should be opened. It was agreed to recommend to Council that the current policy of supporting identified Infrastructure projects being led by the Town Council be endorsed and that a formal CIL round would not take place until 2026 after additional funding from developments had been received. It was agreed to recommend committing the remaining unallocated CIL receipts funding for the Farnham Infrastructure Project and the Gostrey Meadow improvements, noting that if applications elsewhere were successful, the funding could be reallocated. It was also noted that with FTC taking on responsibility for more land from Surrey and Waverley, there would be capital as well as revenue funding requirements.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- 1) The current policy of prioritising FTC led projects be continued with the current CIL funding;**
- 2) A community bidding round would take place in 2026 subject to sufficient funds being received**
- 3) The current earmarked allocation for environmental improvements and street furniture for the Farnham Infrastructure Project funding be increased to £100,000;**
- 4) An allocation of £150,000 for an additional contribution to the Gostrey Meadow playground project and the toilets and storage project.**

7. Consultations

The Working Group noted that the SCC EV charging consultation had not resulted in any comments from FTC councillors and that subsequent EV placements were likely to be based on a similar approach.

8. Anti Social behaviour

The Town Clerk briefed members on an inter-agency meeting that had taken place to address some of the recent anti-social activities that had taken place in the town centre and other parts of Farnham. It was noted that there had been no mention of activities by younger people which was very positive given the activities in recent years had involved groups of younger people. Recent activities had been the result of actions by a small group of adult perpetrators who were receiving focussed attention, as well as an increase in organised shoplifting and drug-related activity. A number of co-ordinated actions were agreed including shared information gathering and recording. The Town Clerk also advised that some additional CCTV was coming on stream as a result of the Section 106 funding from the Brightwells Yard project and some of this would cover the Youth shelter on Borelli Walk.

9. Contracts & Assets update

Cllr Fairclough introduced the notes of the Assets Task Group held on the 22nd August at Appendix F.

- 1) The main item of discussion had been on the roof design for the Gostrey Meadow public conveniences, further set out at Appendix G. There had been a full and frank discussion on the options with the curved design favoured as it was more sympathetic to the setting,

would be preferable for solar panels and cleaning and would not make much difference in terms of cost. The Task Group had considered options and suggested improvements to extend the curve by the playground to create cover, and also glass bricks or alternate to add to the natural light. The Working Group noted that the initial playground consultation had begun prior to tendering the project. It was agreed to recommend, in view of his experience, that Cllr Jackman work alongside officers on the playground project.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- i) The curved roof design be approved for the Gostrey Meadow public conveniences;**
- ii) Plan A architects take forward the outline design for planning approval;**
- iii) Cllr Jackman work alongside officers in progressing the playground project.**

2) The Working Group received updates on a range of current projects including: the Gostrey Meadow gates; new asset tags for FTC property; the CNG gas supply at the depot; CCTV and maintenance at Wrecclesham Community Centre; resolving sound issues in the Council Chamber; the Hale Cemetery Water supply; and repairs to the Hart public conveniences.

3) The Working Group welcomed the positive news on arrangements being progressed for the Library Gardens lease and immediate improvements that would be undertaken once the initial tenancy at will had been signed.

10. Town Clerk update

The Town Clerk provided a number of updates including:

- i) A temporary planning permission for 18 months for the *A Hands Turn* sculpture had been granted. It was proposed that repairs now take place and that planning permission for an alternate location at the end of the current permission be sought with priority for a relocation to the Winifred Borelli Memorial Garden, adjacent to the University for the Creative Arts, which already contains other sculptures.
- ii) The Town Clerk updated members of a number of insurance related matters (none of which was subject of a formal claim)
- iii) The Business and Facilities Manager advised on action being taken to deal with unwanted invasive species.
- iv) The Town Clerk outlined details of an informal VIP visit at the end of September which was in preparation.
- v) The Working Group was saddened to hear of the sad death of former England cricketer Graham Thorpe whose achievements were on the Notable names of Farnham wall. It was hoped a further tribute could be made.
- vi) The Town Clerk advised of the death of former councillor Mike Hyman which would be announced by the Mayor at full Council and condolences passed to his family.

11. Matters for future meetings

No additional items were added to items for future meetings.

12. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 14th October at 2pm.