

Business Plan 2024-2028



Introduction

Welcome to Farnham Town Council's Business Plan for the period 2024 – 2028.



Farnham Town Council (FTC) considered its priorities for the coming four-year period at a Strategy Workshop in November 2023, with the outcomes agreed at Council in December 2023. The aim was to prepare a strategic plan to ensure the best use of Council resources are employed to deliver quality services and events for residents, businesses and visitors over the next four years.

These projects and initiatives have been split into short and longer term objectives according.

Some projects can be delivered by FTC, others will require facilitation, partnerships and collaboration with outside agencies e.g. Waverley Borough Council, Surrey County Council and others.

Some projects will be achieved in a short period of time, others may

take longer depending on funding availability and external co-operation. The Plan will be reviewed annually and updated to ensure that changing circumstances are reflected in the priorities and can be resourced accordingly.

Core Council services and business will continue and include:

- A regular events programme run by the Town Council or in conjunction

with partners including a literary festival, a food festival, summer music concerts, and Farnham as a World Craft Town

- Managing four cemeteries
- Managing eight allotment sites
- Managing Farnham in Bloom throughout the year
- Managing open green space which belongs to Farnham
- Reviewing planning applications (approximately 1,000 per annum)
- Supporting the business community through the emerging business improvement district
- Organising a range of civic events throughout the year including Remembrance Sunday, a Civic Community Christmas Carol service and other events or receptions celebrating volunteering, commemorating Commonwealth Day, and Armed Forces Day.

Farnham context



Farnham is a bustling, lively town, with some 42,200 people, situated in the borough of Waverley in the south west of Surrey; it is bordered by Hampshire on its northern, eastern and western boundaries.

It is an ancient town where the remains of Roman, Saxon and Stone Age habitation have been found and in more recent centuries it became notable as a market town of particular architectural merit, with a 12th century castle on a hill overlooking a tight cluster of shops and houses below in the valley of the River Wey. The Town's motto is "By Worth" and is taken from the name of one of the town's benefactors, John Byworth. A clothier by trade, he presented to the town, in 1623, the 'Byworth Cup', a replica of which can be seen in the Museum of Farnham.

The town also boasts a 12th century parish church and is renowned

for some of the finest Georgian architecture to be found anywhere in the country. It is a town that successfully combines the old with the new. Many buildings having Georgian fronts, are often found to conceal structures of Tudor and even earlier times, but while retaining original features, today they provide accommodation for shops, offices and homes. It is a happy mixture that can be found in most of the town centre streets, resulting in lively activity – business and residences in harmony.

● Location

Geographically, Farnham is ideally situated with easy access to the M3, M4, M23 and M25 motorways and airports at Heathrow, Gatwick and Southampton. Farnham offers a wealth of opportunities for residents and tourists alike; it is located at the start of the North Downs Way and is an ideal starting point for exploring not only the immediately adjacent countryside, but also London and the south coast. A direct rail service links Farnham with London in under an hour.

● Heritage

Farnham has focussed on retaining and enhancing its heritage and special character over many decades while developing and diversifying its centre, so as to keep it vital and viable; it boasts one of the longest established conservation societies and one of the longest established building preservation trusts in the country.



● Employment

Until the Second World War breweries and hop growing gave employment to the majority of the town's workforce with some small industries also flourishing from time to time; farming was the major occupation within the surrounding countryside. With the growth of the population, instead of breweries, small factory and light industrial units and offices now give employment to many in addition to the residents who may commute to London and elsewhere. The University for the Creative Arts is a major employer, and its graduates in many disciplines including more recently film often settle in the area adding to the vitality of the World Craft Town.

● Tourism and leisure

In these days of increased leisure and tourism, Farnham is becoming increasingly aware that it has much to offer both residents and its

visitors. Farnham is renowned for its artistic and musical acumen being home to Farnham Maltings, the University for the Creative Arts, the New Ashgate Gallery and Farnham Pottery. The Town Council celebrated the 30th anniversary of formal twinning links with Andernach (Germany) in 2022 and reciprocal exchange visits are made and school exchanges fostered and encouraged.

● High achieving

In 2021 Farnham was the National Association of Local Councils, Council of the year, having been runner up in Council of the year in 2017 and runner up in the NALC star Councils Digital Communications of the year Award in 2016. The Leader of the Council was runner up in NALC Councillor of the Year in 2016, and the Clerk runner up in Clerk of the Year 2021. Farnham Town Council's events apprentice was awarded Apprentice of the year in 2023.

Farnham in Bloom was awarded Gold Medals in the RHS Britain

in Bloom in 2017, 2019 and 2022 and invited as a national finalist in 2024 following consistent success in South and South East in Bloom. Farnham Town Council has now been awarded four green flags for land it manages having received its first in 2021. In 2023, the Hale Chapels converted by Farnham Town Council into a community garden was best in category in the BALI landscape regeneration awards and a regional finalist in the Civic Trust Awards.

● Value for money

Farnham Town Council, although one of the biggest of the 10,200 town and parish councils in the country (44th in terms of the number of Band D properties with 18,231.9) and 77th with the amount of precept (£1,424,818) its portion of the council tax at £78.15 puts it at 2,368th in the national listing.

Over the past 12 years Farnham's share of the council tax has risen by an average of 2.97% per annum below the average of any other sector (town and parishes have risen by 5.04% on average and districts and counties by an average of 3.2%). This is despite taking on more land from Waverley Borough Council and starting new services and activities, including a new investment in 2024/25 on services for younger people.

● Council vision

¶¶ Farnham Town Council strives to be the influential and effective voice for Farnham bringing together the views of all organisations working for the good of the town and enhancing the well-being of all the community.

"Farnham Town Council aims to be an efficient and effective organisation providing high-quality, sustainable services and facilities for the residents and businesses of Farnham whilst addressing the climate challenge, with a strong and respected voice representing Farnham's best interests. ¶¶"

Your local councillors



Farnham Town Council has 16 councillors across eight wards. Councillors receive no payment for their role apart from the Mayor who receives an allowance for the expenses of his office.

How the council operates and decision making

The Full Council meets nine times a year, defining corporate policy and making decisions in relation to all recommendations from the Working Groups. The Council has three Working Groups to ensure the effective management of its business and a Planning & Licensing Consultative Group.

The Working Groups manage agreed areas of responsibility and each has its own terms of reference which are reviewed regularly. All Working Group proposals are reported as recommendations to Full Council for

adoption. The Planning and Licensing Consultative Group is delegated, in tandem with the Town Clerk, to pass comments to the Planning and Licensing authority, on behalf of the Council although all comments are subject to further comment from Full Council.

- Strategy and Finance Working Group
- Environment Working Group
- Community and Culture Working Group
- Planning and Licensing Consultative Group

Task Groups and Panels will bring together smaller groups of councillors and involve non councillors where appropriate to develop key areas of

work on a start and finish basis and may be re-appointed if the work is to carry on into a new Council year.

In 2024-25 these include

- Assets Task Group (S&R)
- Climate Action Task Group (E)
- Conservation Areas Task Group (S&R)
- Farnham Neighbourhood Plan (S&R)
- HR Panel (S&R)
- Infrastructure & CIL (S&R)
- Literary Festival Task Group (C&C)
- Younger People Panel (S&R)

The Council operates within a framework of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to ensure that decision making is efficient, transparent and accountable and that the Council meets the requirements of new legislation and current best practice.



3 Structures and processes

- Maintaining effective political and managerial structures and processes to govern decision-making
- Maintaining clearly documented protocols governing relationships between Members and Officers.

4 Risk management and internal control

- Maintaining a systematic approach and process for managing and reviewing risk with separation of responsibilities and with effective Internal Audit in accordance with best practice
- Delivering Council's corporate objectives through informed decision-making.

5 Standards of conduct

- Exercising leadership as a role model for others
- Defining standards of personal behaviour that are expected from Members and Officers and all those involved in service delivery
- Maintaining a Member Officer protocol for effective working arrangements

Staffing

Farnham Town Council delivers its services through a mix of employed and contracted staff to ensure maximum flexibility and the ability to provide additional capacity at peak times and appropriate skills to deliver more technical elements of the council's requirements. The directly employed staff are the equivalent of 17FTE staff, both office-based and as part of the outside workforce.

The Town Clerk is the Head of Paid service and the Responsible Financial Officer responsible to Council for delivering the agreed objectives of Council as set out in the Business Plan in accordance with relevant procedures, laws and regulations with the support of colleagues.

Farnham Town Council recognises that:

- The success and integrity of the Council's activities is derived from understanding the needs of Farnham, including social, economic and environmental considerations, as well as the needs, requirements and aspirations of its citizens, customers and service users
- The importance of having defined roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers and appropriate structures which make effective use of scarce resources, allows challenge and change, including organisational and political collaboration, and promotes a strong and sustainable partnership between Members and Officers; and
- The principles of strong and effective governance and community leadership will deliver the measurable benefits for Farnham and its citizens.

In delivering the defined aspirations and priorities of the Council set out in this business plan, and in following good governance Farnham Town Council will emphasise:

1 Community focus

- Working for and with the community of Farnham
- Developing initiatives that enhance living in Farnham and investment for the future

- Exercising leadership in the community, as required
- Providing representatives to outside bodies to support a two-way exchange of ideas and information and enable reporting back on community issues to Full Council
- Undertaking an ambassadorial role as the 'voice of Farnham' to promote the well-being of Farnham as appropriate
- Communicating with all sections of the community
- Publishing an Annual Report on activities and performance, and
- Publishing an Annual Statement of Accounts and transparency information.

2 Service delivery arrangements

- Ensuring that continuous improvement is sought
- Ensuring that agreed policies are implemented
- Using a blend of in-house staff and external contractors to maintain flexibility and deliver best value for money
- Fostering effective relationships and partnerships with the public and private sectors.

Strategy



In December 2023, Full Council agreed its strategic approach which forms the background to this Business Plan.

Seven key issues were identified as facing the Town Council over the term of the new Council. It was noted that the list was not exhaustive and other priorities could be evolved:

- Farnham Infrastructure Project
- Youth provision
- Climate Change/Carbon Footprint/Sustainability
- Neighbourhood Plan Review/Update
- Brightwells impact
- Relationship with other principal authorities and other partners
- Key properties in the town

● Climate change

The Council has been adapting to climate change impacts since it agreed to work towards carbon neutrality when it declared a climate emergency in 2019. A report on actions to date in all areas of the Council's work was submitted to the Environment Working Group in 2023.

Building resilience for the future, showing leadership to the community and encouraging the community to play its own part are key elements that will continue through the Business Plan period with actions expected to include awareness raising, education, assisting the community with initiatives/projects. An updated environmental audit will be considered in association with

the Greener Futures Team at Surrey County Council and other partner organisations.

● Staff resource

Farnham Town Council values its staff and aims to be a good employer. It supports ongoing personal and professional development and provides opportunities where it can for work experience and apprenticeships to build a future workforce. As a high-cost area, the Council supports the living wage and is undertaking a periodic grading review to ensure staff remuneration is peer reviewed.

With a small team and experienced members of staff in key roles, succession planning and maintaining flexible skills for key staff roles is an important focus for this current business plan period. The taking on of new land and services will need to be costed and funded with additional resources planned over the life of the business plan period, reviewed annually.



● Farnham Town Council administration

- Continue to improve the working and living environment for businesses and residents
- Encourage closer working relationships and collaborative opportunities with Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council
- Improve facilities for effective communication including a renewed website optimised for mobile access and new communications and engagement strategy
- Continue to deliver best service outcomes in a cost-effective manner as determined by Council looking for continuous improvement
- Review and prepare a CIL application process for community projects

● Contracts, assets and capital projects in 2024-26

- Surrey County Council library gardens contract
- Review option for Waverley Borough Council Brightwell Yard green space maintenance contract or land transfer (excluding the bridges)
- Discuss extension to Christmas lights scheme with Surrey County Council and scheme management team
- Discuss first phase of new land transfers from Waverley Borough Council with priorities for allotments, Borelli Walk, Morley Road Recreation Ground and Thurbans recreation ground (extension to Green Lane cemetery)
- Tender Christmas lights scheme
- Take forward new storage, toilets and playground scheme for Gostrey Meadow
- Renew The Hart toilets.

Farnham Town Council initiatives for the plan period that enhance living in Farnham and invest in the future include but not be limited to:

- Contributing to the implementation of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme
- Actions to address the environment/climate change challenge
- Support for young people
- Farnham Neighbourhood Plan
- Culture/festivals/music events/street markets/World Craft Town
- Floral displays/Farnham in Bloom
- Good communication
- Visitor information and signage
- Appropriate transfer of land and services from principal authorities where this will add value to local residents and maintain services at risk
- Management and administration of land for public use and recreation
- Managing burials and allotments.

● Short to medium term 2024-2026

- Biodiversity expansion
- Improving and developing land for biodiversity gain/wildlife habitats/public access
- Minimising climate change impacts from Farnham Town Council's activities and measure and reduce CO2 emissions
- Encourage Town Council area businesses and residents to make appropriate changes to support the climate challenge
- Review and develop resilience preparedness and testing
- Develop an updated Neighbourhood Plan in conformity with the emerging Local Plan.
- Focus on appropriate land transfers with a costed programme of planned maintenance and improvement where needed with additional equipment as required.



● Younger persons support programme

- Monitor, assess and review first phase of the younger person support programme across north, Central and south Farnham in association with service delivery partners
- o (40 Degreez. £30k SLA for 2024-25
- o Hale Community Centre £15k SLA for 2024-25
- o Wrecclesham Jubilee Hub £15k SLA for 2024-25
- Assess impact of holiday activity programme with partners
- Undertake research on needs which could be met in future years
- Consider financial impact of programme for future years and prepare funding case.

● Farnham tourism and business

- Develop and support the Farnham Business Improvement District Board to deliver the best outcomes including joint tourism initiatives/ town centre management, and creating a clean safe and welcoming place for residents and visitors
- Continue to evolve the World Craft Town programme, craft residency and October Craft month with the Farnham Craft Town partners
- Launch new Film Festival.

● Research/development/fundraising

- Review potential for a Farnham lottery
- Review develop and extend commercial sponsorship opportunities
- Work with County councillors on projects that enhance the public realm with funding from Your Fund Surrey.

● Longer term 2026–2028

- Review opportunities for taking on relevant Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council services such as the ‘Barrow Man’ Service when contract renewal takes place or the service is at risk
- Second phase of land transfers in conjunction with Waverley BC with priority for Hale recreation ground, Badshot Lea Pond, Badshot Lea Orchard
- Third phase of land transfers in conjunction with Waverley Borough Council with priority for Bourne Recreation Ground, Wrecclesham Recreation Ground, Weybourne Recreation Ground, Badshot Lea Recreation Ground, Badshot Lea Green, Marden Recreation Ground, Langham’s Recreation Ground.



● **Financial impacts of Business Plan**

If additional activities are funded from the precept approximately 1% would generate £14,250. A precept strategy should be considered along with a review of existing activity during the life of the business plan.

- The 2024-26 land transfers if received will require an additional member of staff (budget cost for person with van £50k). The 2026-2028 land acquisitions will require an additional member of staff plus a tractor and gang mower (budget cost staff £35k and equipment £80k). This excludes specialist sports pitch maintenance and line marking. The land would require ongoing tree surveys and maintenance (estimated cost £2k per annum per site. Playgrounds on recreation grounds would require full surveys and regular inspections and maintenance plus capital

investment (ballpark estimate £5k per annum per playground excluding capital investment)

- Capital projects would require capital investment through CIL, reserves or external sources eg ballpark estimates Gostrey Meadow £750k, The Hart toilets £200k, library gardens tennis court or other refurbishment £50-100k)
- Extension of support for younger people could be anything from £100k.

● **Monitoring and review process**

This Plan needs to be flexible and regularly reviewed and amended to reflect changing circumstances and priorities.

An annual Strategy workshop will take place as part of the budget setting process. The date for 2024 has been provisionally set for Thursday 28th November.

