



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL



## Notes Strategy & Resources

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### **Time and date**

2.00 pm on Tuesday 10th December, 2024

### **Place**

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

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### **Strategy & Resources Members Present:**

Councillor David Beaman  
Councillor Mat Brown  
Councillor Tony Fairclough  
Councillor Andrew Laughton  
Councillor Brodie Mauluka (ex-Officio)  
Councillor Kika Mirylees  
Councillor George Murray  
Councillor Graham White (Lead Member)

In attendance:  
Cllr George Hesse

Officers: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Iain McCready (Business & Facilities Manager)

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Michaela Martin

#### **2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on October the 14th were approved.

#### **4. Council Business Plan Review 2024**

Councillor White introduced the report of the Council's strategy review 2024 at appendix B to the agenda. The Working Group noted that the refurbishment of the Hart toilets would be a

capital project item and not necessarily a revenue impact. Similarly, the suggestion that the Library Gardens be not progressed would have a revenue impact since the budget contained income for the management of the gardens, and a response from Surrey CC was still awaited.

In terms of the Badshot Lea community hub proposal, the Working Group noted that the land at the Kiln was owned by a separate charity and its trustees would need to make a specific approach to the town council for support rather than the town council leading a project on behalf of another organisation. It was agreed that councillors Brown, Jackman and Fairclough would suggest that the trustees present a formal proposal for the town council's consideration. The Town Clerk advised that the proposed project (or a feasibility study) could potentially be supported through the community initiatives budget allocation.

The Working Group endorsed suggestions for the town council's presence in the wards being more engaging such as the Mayor's coffee mornings and the council Civic Service taking place across the town but there was mixed support for the idea of the councillor-led ward walks continuing. It was agreed that community events in the wards as part of the various festivals such as Literary Festival, the upcoming film festival and world craft town would be welcomed and promoted and supported by the town council rather than be led by the town council.

In terms of administrative matters discussed at the strategy workshop the suggestions for an improved sound system for broadcast and the suggestion to aim for a decision notice list being published within 48 hours of Council was agreed for implementation.

After a discussion on the pros and cons of moving all Working Group meetings to a specific day such as a Thursday to assist double hatted councillors was not agreed. The Town Clerk advised that if a regular evening meeting were adopted, it should be expected that staff would need to take time off in lieu the following day (which does not currently take place with the varied meeting times). It was agreed that the Strategy & Resources meeting would move to a Monday afternoon to assist double hatted councillors who were Executive members at the Borough Council.

The idea of limiting councillors to speaking once per item and for four minutes was discussed but not agreed for recommending to Council as it was considered it would stifle debate and flexibility.

In terms of the transfer of properties from Waverley Borough Council, it was noted that Waverley had requested Farnham Town Council propose one property for transfer now. It was agreed that the Waggon Yard car park garages was the highest priority as there was already a plan for converting them into makers' spaces' and a World Craft Town asset. In response to a separate proposal to add the Badshot Lea Orchard onto the list, it was noted it was already included in the Business Plan.

The Working Group considered services at risk because of funding pressures at Waverley BC and Surrey CC. In particular, the Working Group noted the position at the Museum of Farnham which was about to be renovated. The Museum service was being managed by the Farnham Maltings and its Trustees were concerned about continuing to support the running costs from its own funds. A meeting was due to be held with the Farnham Maltings and Waverley representatives to consider the idea of a joint board or advisory group being formed and some ongoing funding support from the Town Council. It was agreed to recommend a new budget line for a contribution to the Museum be included in the Communities and Culture budget with an initial sum of £10,000.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) Councillors speak with the Trustees of the Badshot Lea Kiln;**

- 2) **The Waggon Yard garages be the priority for a transfer from Waverley Borough Council;**
- 3) **The project to improve the clarity of the sound system for remote participants/listeners of meetings be progressed;**
- 4) **The idea of further activities and community engagement in the wards be supported;**
- 5) **A new budget line be created within the Communities and Culture Working Group budget to support the Farnham Museum.**

## **5. Finance Report**

The Working Group considered the Bank Reconciliation and Income and Expenditure reports at Appendices C & D noting the additional CIL funding received that would go into earmarked reserves. Income and expenditure was broadly as expected with £125% of budgeted income (100.1% excluding CIL contributions) and 67% of budgeted expenditure.

The Working Group discussed the levels of reserves noting, in particular, the balance of the general and earmarked reserves and also the composition of the earmarked reserves and the CIL receipts. The Working Group discussed how the CIL receipts could be utilised to deliver the Gostrey Meadow playground project in 2025 without external contributions, and how earmarked reserves and CIL could be used to help progress the public conveniences and storage project in Gostrey Meadow and be used to support the Hart toilets refurbishment.

Cllr White left the meeting at this point and Cllr Loughton was elected as chair for the remainder of the meeting.

## **6. Budget 2025-26**

The Working Group discussed in detail the budget report attached at Appendix E which had been circulated to all councillors. No specific comments had been received by other councillors.

The budget had been drawn up based on ideas emerging from the Strategy Workshop noting that the workshop attendees had not wanted to reduce any current activities but had suggested an extra £50,000 be added to the budget to support community groups providing important services for local residents who were facing reductions in grants from principal authorities.

The Working Group noted the budgetary impact arising from national finance changes (such as the increase in employers national insurance contributions), additional staffing costs (pay award, extra outside workforce member and fundraising officer) and inflationary pressures still running at over 3%. These were mitigated by some increased investment income but the implied budget shortfall created some difficult decisions. The Working Group noted that the funding of the shortfall could be from additional income from activities and fees and charges, a use of reserves or precept income. The precept would be decided in January. After discussion on where further pruning of expenditure items amounting to £65,000 could take place, it was agreed to propose to Council a budget of £1,946,650.

### **Recommendation:**

**The budget to deliver Farnham Town Council services for 2025/26 be set at £1,946,650**

## **7. Contracts & Assets update**

The Working Group received an update on contracts and assets matters at Appendix F to its agenda introduced by the Business & Facilities Manager.

i) General

The Working Group noted:

- 1) The schedule of works for Hale Cemetery;
- 2) The need for additional scalping at the depot;
- 3) The proposal for repairs to the Badshot Lea Cemetery railings which would be subject to a further report;
- 4) The update on council vehicles and equipment
- 5) The proposal for 'green gym' equipment and outdoor table tennis funded by applications for county councillor funds was being progressed.
- 6) A tender process for the toilet cleaning and litter picking contract would begin in the new year.

ii) Gostrey Meadow Play area and planning application

The Working Group noted the tender applications were due on 18<sup>th</sup> December and evaluation would take place in early January prior to a public consultation on the five most suitable designs. It was agreed to recommend that the sandpit be filled in and the new fence be installed early in the new year as the first stage of the installation of the playground. The initial quotes received indicated budget provision for the fence in the region of £15,000 should be allowed. Information boards would update the community. The latest design was considered and agreed for submission with the planning application. The Working Group noted that most external supporting documents for the planning application had been completed and it was expected the application would be submitted before Christmas. It was agreed that the public conveniences be enhanced with some commissioned craft elements to depict the makers in Farnham World Craft Town.

iii) Farnham Riverside

The Working group noted the latest proposed time for the works on the riverside pathway between the Riverside 3 Car Park and Brightwells was January. After further discussion with SCC lighting contractors, heritage lighting had been chosen. A request for lighting Borelli Walk had also been made and the response would be reported back.

iv) Assets Transfers

It was noted that of the four proposed sites suggested to Waverley only one could progress in the current financial year and agreed to endorse the proposal that the Waggon Yard Car Park garages transfer was the priority.

v) Website tender

The Working Group received a report on the outcome of the website tender where 28 proposals had been received by the closing date. Of these five were shortlisted for interview and whilst it was felt four of these could create what the Council was after, the decision came down to two. The recommendation for the final choice would go to Council in Exempt.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The sandpit be filled and the new fence be installed early in the new year.**
- 2) The new fence be installed early in 2025 with the costs met from the 204/2025 budget and that the most economically advantageous tenderer be appointed up to a cost of £15,000.**
- 3) Farnham makers be invited to submit ideas for enhancing the public conveniences and raising the profile of Farnham's World Craft Town Status.**
- 4) The successful website tender be appointed as set out in Exempt Annex I.**
- 5) Progress in preparing the planning application for Gostrey Meadow be welcomed.**

## 8. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman introduced the latest reported position with the Farnham Infrastructure Programme including suggested timeframes for each stage. These included Phase I (Borelli Walk/Riverside now commencing in January 2025); and the second phase seeing the removal of the traffic islands and preparations for two way flows in the Borough and at the bottom of Downing Street (Wagon Yard to Longbridge) scheduled for February/March.

Cllr Beaman advised he still had reservations about a number of aspects but there was positive news that SCC had agreed to fund additional buses during the works to minimise delays and interruptions.

Cllr Beaman proposed Council reconsider who represents FTC as the project moves into the implementation phase and suggested this could perhaps be a ward councillor.

Cllr Hesse drew attention to some concerns around the latest drawing for Castle Street which showed the ironstone removed despite several representations from the Town Council that these should be retained outside Tellers Arms and Piza Express. He also suggested the raingardens outside hospitality businesses should move further up Castle Street. Cllr Hesse also advised that it had been agreed by the FIP Board that hospitality and public seating should be kept separate. The Working Group agreed to endorse these points being pursued again with SCC who seemed reluctant to change what they say are fixed final arrangements even though the work in Castle Street is not scheduled until 2026.

### **Recommendation to Council:**

- i) FTC confirm to SCC its previously advised position that the ironstone outside Pizza Express and Tellers arms be retained;**
- ii) The greening raingardens outside 74/75 hospitality areas be moved further up Castle Street such as 70/71.**

## 9. Reports of Task Groups

### i) Younger People Task Group

The Working Group reviewed the notes of the Younger People Panel at Appendix G and the outcomes of the Westco research. It welcomed the summary of the prestart meeting with Participation People for the second stage research and received the proposed timescale. The Working Group noted that the questions would be focussed on wellbeing issues and would be aimed at a wide group of young people.

### ii) Neighbourhood Plan

The Working group noted that the Government's anticipated paper on changes to the Planning System was expected imminently.

## 10. Consultations

The Working Group considered the Government's consultation 'Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings' set out at Appendix H of its agenda and which had been circulated separately to all councillors for individual representation.

The Working Group recognised the benefits of councillor involvement in meetings remotely and fully encouraged change that would help broaden diversity and widen participation. There were concerns about the idea of proxy voting, but there was support for the idea of substitutes being able to participate when a councillor had to send apologies to a meeting.

There was a strong view that Councillors should not vote remotely in decision making meetings (ie Full Council) and should be present in person to vote.

After discussion, the **Working Group** recommended:

- 1) **FTC welcomes and encourages wider part participation;**
- 2) **Hybrid access to Working Group and Consultative Group meetings should be allowed;**
- 3) **Voting at Full Council should be based on being present in person.**
- 4) **Substitutes should be allowed for meetings but proxies should not be allowed.**

## 11. **Town Clerk update**

There were no additional matters reported by the Town Clerk.

## 12. **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 2pm (please note revised date).

The meeting ended at 5.47pm

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

Date of next meeting Monday 13 January 2025