



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

## C Notes

### Strategy & Resources

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#### **Time and date**

2.00 pm on Monday 20th January, 2025

#### **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 Kika Mirylees  
Councillor George Murray  
Councillor Graham White (Lead Member)

In attendance: Cllr Alan Earwaker, Cllr Michaela Martin

Officers: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Iain McCready (Business & Facilities Manager), Ben Binnell (Interim Business & Facilities Manager, Jenny de Quervain (Civic & Planning Officer – part), Lara Miller (part)

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Fairclough who would be arriving late.

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

There were no specific declarations of interest. The Town Clerk advised that individual declarations would need to be made if there were individual interest for specific grant applicants.

#### **3. Minutes**

The Notes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December were agreed.

#### **4. Finance Report**

##### **A Quarterly Finance Report**

Cllr White introduced the finance report at the 9 month period to the end of December. Income was running at 127% (which included some ringfenced CIL payments) whilst expenditure was running at 75%.

The Working Group reviewed the following documents to 31<sup>st</sup> December:

- Bank Reconciliation at Appendix B

- Income and Expenditure Report by account code and Committee at Appendix C
- Statement of Investments at Appendix D
- Reserves at Appendix E
- Outstanding aged debtors at Appendix F

**Recommendation:**

**The Quarterly Finance report is recommended for approval by Council**

**B Loan to Farnham BID**

The Working Group received the report at Appendix G following the recent visit of the Mike Platten, Internal Auditor, in December. He identified that there had not been a formal resolution of Council for the agreed loan to the Farnham Business Improvement District to enable it to operate pending the receipt of its first year's levy payment.

The Internal Auditor had recommended that the matter be formally resolved.

**Recommendation:**

**The agreement to provide a £30,000 initial start-up funding for the Farnham Business Improvement District as a loan subject to formal agreement for its repayment during the 2024/25 financial year be endorsed.**

*[Post meeting note: The loan was fully repaid on 22nd January 2025.]*

**C Community Grants**

The Working Group considered the report on proposed Community Grants 2025-26 at Appendix J to its agenda. It noted the allocation of an additional £25,000 in the 2025/26 budget which was split between the SLA organisations (an additional £20,000) and the Community Grants (an additional £5,000). It was agreed to add the New Ashgate Gallery as an SLA organisation and agreed in view of the work undertaken in support of Farnham as a World Craft Town and some increases to other organisations subject to some caveats. The CAB additional contribution would be subject to transparency over costs. The Brightwells Gostrey contribution to be paid in two tranches as there were a number of changes facing the organisation and the hoppa increase was subject to matched funding for the new service to Frimley hospital.

**Recommendation**

**The Community Grants proposals set out at Annex I are recommended for approval by Council.**

**D Fees and charges**

The Working Group reviewed the fees and charges for the year ahead at Appendix H. It recommended a number of increases including for the Farmers' Markets fees, the allotment fees (from October 2025) and for attendance at events. In total these were expected to bring in an additional £11,800 per annum. There was also a proposal that the fees charged by Waverley for the Farmers' Market should be reduced because of the disruption anticipated by the FIP works.

**Recommendation**

**The 2025-26 Fees and Charges at Annex 2 are recommended for adoption by Council.**

**E Precept 2025/26**

The Working Group considered the precept report for 2025/26 at Appendix I. The Working Group noted the precept is set to ensure Farnham TC can deliver its programme of activities, with calculations of the total divided by the Council Tax base to create a Band D equivalent amount for transparency to electors. Unlike principal authorities, town and parish councils are not currently subject to a cap on council tax increases, allowing greater flexibility to respond to local needs. It was noted that Farnham has consistently maintained its precept below the national average, reflecting prudent financial management despite expanding services. It continued to be responsive to local needs while balancing long-term financial sustainability and emerging challenges.

The total budgeted expenditure agreed at December Council was £1,946,650, creating a funding gap of £109,226 after income and fees. This is further reduced by £11,800 with the increase in Fees and Charges proposed at this meeting.

Options considered by the Working Group included using reserves, increasing income targets further, or applying savings targets. However, it was agreed that with Local Government Reorganisation looming (not included in the forthcoming budget) using reserves at this stage would not be prudent.

As a result, the Working Group recommended a precept of £1,535,300, equating to £83.45 per Band D property per year (an increase of 10 pence per week) and a weekly cost of £1.60.

**Recommendation to Council:**

**It is recommended that the 2025/26 precept be set at £1,535,300 representing a Band D equivalent amount of £83.45.**

**F Investment Strategy 2025/26**

The Working Group discussed the Investment Strategy for 2025/26 (attached at Annex 3).

**Recommendation**

**The 2025-26 Investment Strategy at Annex3 is recommended for adoption by Council.**

**G Internal Auditor Interim Report**

The Strategy & Resources Working Group received the Internal Auditor's Interim Audit report at Appendix L (attached to the minutes as Annex 4) and agreed the officers' annotated comments to the recommendation.

**Recommendation:**

**The Internal Auditor's Interim report be welcomed and the Officers' comments be adopted.**

**H Closing of Accounts 2024/25**

The Working Group considered the timetable for the closing of the accounts for 2024-25 noting that the timing of Easter was mid April. The plan was to have the accounts closed on 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> April ready for the Internal Auditor final visit on 10<sup>th</sup> April. The paperwork would then be circulated for Strategy & Resources on 16<sup>th</sup> April and to Full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> April. It was noted that if the Surrey elections were deferred as a result of Local Government Reorganisation proposals, the Strategy & Resources and Council meetings would move back a week.

**5. Risk Management Report 2024-2025**

The Working Group received the latest Risk Management Report at Appendix M following the reviews undertaken by the other Working Groups in relation to their own service areas, and also the external Health and Safety visit by external advisers Worknest. The Risk Management report and associated policy statement updates (Health & Safety, Fire Safety, and Environmental Policy) are recommended for adoption.

**Recommendation**

**It is recommended that:**

- i) The Risk Management report be welcomed and adopted**
- ii) The work undertaken by the Working Groups in managing risk be welcomed;**
- iii) The Fire Safety, Health & Safety, and Environmental Policy statements be readopted.**

**6. Contracts & Assets update**

The Working Group a contracts and assets update at Appendix N to its agenda.

The update include details of proposed pathway repairs for the current financial year; an update on the works in Gostrey Meadow and Hale Cemetery; the proposed works at Hart toilets; Asset tagging and the website tender including a complaint about the process by one of the tenderers who had not been shortlisted.

The Working Group noted that interviews had taken place for the new Gostrey Meadow Playground and a recommendation to Council was being made to appoint Eibe. The project would be funded for the allocated Cil contribution. The company would be preparing three designs for a further round of public consultation and a contingency sum (of 10%) was proposed to be added to the project cost to allow for any unforeseen issues that may arise. The playground would be commissioned in two phases with phase one completed for the summer of 2025 and phase two to be completed once the new toilets and storage area was undertaken.

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that Eibe Play Ltd be appointed to construct the new play area in Gostrey Meadow with a budget cost of £220,000 funded by CIL contributions.**

Cllr Martin left at this point.

Cllr Fairclough arrived at this point.

The Working Group received details of the Christmas Lights tender project which would include three separate elements (New scheme across town and wards (lease or buy options); installation and take down prices; and storage prices. The Task Group under the Community and Culture Working Group would lead on the project with a representative of the BID co-opted as agreed.

The Working Group received updates on the new five year maintenance plan; Wrecclesham Community Centre, sound in the Council Chamber and the proposal by the Farnham Swimming Baths Trust to improve the garden with bonded gravel pathways. They would provide a donation to the Council to undertake the work which would cost in the region of £20,000.

## **7. Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

Cllr Beaman provided an update on the FIP Board meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January. He advised that he had raised, as requested by Council, the issue of Ironstones in Castle Street also raised by Cllr Hesse. It had been agreed that a further meeting on site with the heritage officers would be held but there seemed to be reluctance on the part of Surrey to change claiming the proposal had been agreed.

Cllr Beaman had also raised the issue of HGV enforcement, advising that no penalties had been issued in the first six months of operation. Surrey had deployed a mobile enforcement camera, but there was a strong need for a fixed camera.

Cllr Beaman advised that the current Terms of Reference for the FIP Board were due to be revised as the project moved into the implementation phase. It was agreed Cllr Beaman and White would draft something for consideration.

Cllr Beaman suggested it would be the right time to change the FTC representation on the Board and he suggested this could be a local councillor and should include a member of the local business community (BID/Chamber of Commerce). After further discussion it was also suggested there could be a local FTC panel to oversee any issues during construction including Cllrs White, Beaman, ward councillors, the Town Clerk and Jenny de Quervain.

Cllr Brown left at this point.

## **8. Reports of Task Groups**

### **1 Neighbourhood Plan/Local Plan**

The Working Group noted an officer meeting had been held recently between planning officers at WBC and FTC. The latest formula housing numbers had been indicated which had increased to a staggering 29,600 over the Local Plan period, equating to 1481 per annum. Although numbers had not been indicated across the Borough this could equate around 9,000 new homes in Farnham if only 30% of the target were allocated. The number had not been accepted as being valid or achievable but it underlined the scale of the challenge for communities as they tried to address the Government's housing targets.

The Working Group noted there were Waverley briefings for councillors on 28<sup>th</sup> January and for town and parish councils scheduled as a hybrid meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February when further information would be shared.

In relation to the current appeal site for a development on land east of Farnham Park where FTC had attended to defend the Neighbourhood Plan position, the Working group noted the Inspector had invited Interested Parties to submit suggested conditions if he were minded to approve the application.

It was agreed, in view of the timescales, that the FTC response would need be submitted under the scheme of delegation and that the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor, Leader, Lead Member for Planning would send a response based on the matters raised by the PLCG.

### **2 Younger People Panel**

The Working Group received an update on the Westco results shared with schools and noted that the Participation People research was about to commence.

### **3 Conservation Areas Advisory Group**

The meeting scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup> was noted.

## **9. Consultations**

Two reports on consultations. One was on the Devolution White Paper (at Appendix O) and the other on Transport for the South East's Strategy Review at Appendix P.

### **1 Devolution White Paper**

Cllr Fairclough observed this was a fast moving situation and whether or not Surrey was identified as a fast track county would likely be known by the date of Full Council.

The Working group noted that The English Devolution White Paper seeks to transfer powers from central government to local authorities, promoting regional autonomy, economic growth, improved public services, and democratic participation with amalgamated/combined authorities and elected mayors. The aim was to restructure counties and districts into units of 500,000 population aims to streamline administration, reduce costs, and enhance local control over key services like housing, transport, and education. Challenges would remain about how to empower smaller communities, particularly in partially parished areas like Surrey and the Government was proposing (without clarity) to 'rewire' the relationship.

The Working Group noted that the Society of Local Council Clerks and National Association of Local Councils (NALC) were advocating for town and parish councils to play a stronger role in devolution, emphasising their position as the first tier of local governance.

The Working Group was mindful of opportunities that will present themselves during reorganisation and lessons from previous reorganisations (e.g. Cornwall, Somerset and Wiltshire) which showed successful asset transfers to parish councils, including libraries, community halls, and public spaces. Farnham was well-positioned to take on additional services and assets and should review what were the best opportunities for the local community.

It was agreed to recommend that a Farnham Task Group be formed which could liaise with other towns and parishes, monitor reorganisation developments, assess potential impacts, and ensure effective representation and lobbying.

**Recommendation**

**A Local Government Reorganisation Task Group be created.**

**2 Transport for the South East Strategy**

The Working Group noted this was a revisiting of the current Strategy & comments were due back in March. Community organisations and individuals were encouraged to respond via the 'Your Voices' survey website <https://tfse.engage-360.co.uk>. The TfSE proposals should enable Farnham to benefit beyond the current work being implemented by the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and existing programmes for Active Travel being developed by Waverley, Surrey and others. The proposals could also be used to inform the updated Waverley Local Plan and Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, ensuring transport improvements are aligned with where new development will go.

Cllr Beaman offered to prepare a draft FTC response.

**10. Review of Council Policies**

Whilst there were no policies up for consideration, it was suggested that consideration should be given to the way Public Questions were taken at the meeting and whether written questions and answers may be more effective for the questioner. The Town Clerk advised this would require a change of Standing Orders and could be considered at the next review which was due in 2025.

**11. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday March 10<sup>th</sup> at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 5.55 pm

Notes written by [town.clerk@farnham.gov.uk](mailto:town.clerk@farnham.gov.uk)