



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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Notes

Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Monday 10th March, 2025

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 George Murray
Councillor Graham White (Lead Member)

Officers: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Ben Binnell (Interim Business & Facilities Manager), Lucy Dorkins (Business & Facilities Manager), Lara Miller (Community Projects Officer) -Part, Jenny de Quervain (Planning & Civic Administrator) -part

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

The Notes of the meeting held on 20th January 2025 were agreed.

Cllr Beaman confirmed the response to the Transport for the South East Strategy consultation had been submitted.

4. Finance Report

- 1) The Working Group received the latest financial report including the Income and Expenditure report to the 28th February.
- 2) There were three additional grant requests:

- 1) For £2,000 for an additional Talking Teens Course at Space2Grow;
- 2) For £1,255 for additional activity days at the Rural Life Living Museum for less advantaged families following a very successful programme in the half term holidays;
- 3) For in-kind sponsorship of gazebos and tables for three Children's Business Fair events in Farnham 2025 in April, July and December.

Councillors also considered a request for a bursary programme to support five young entrepreneurs from a less advantaged background at the Farnham Children's Business Fairs. The Working Group proposed that supporting this bursary in the name of Stewart Dakers who had done so much to support opportunities for younger people would be a fitting tribute.

- 3) The Working Group noted Cala homes had asked for suggestions for a community group that could receive a community grant of £1,500. The Working Group agreed that the Chantry's should be put forward as it was the community group closest to the Coxbridge development and that officers should discuss opportunities for sponsorship of FTC activities in the year ahead.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that FTC provides

- i) **£2,000 towards an additional Talking Teens Parenting Course at Space2Grow from the 2024/25 Community Initiatives budget;**
- ii) **£1,000 towards the two activity days at the Rural Life Living Museum over Easter and May half term from the balance of the 2024/25 grants budget;**
- iii) **Continued support the Children's Business Fair through in-kind sponsorship at all 2025 events (provided equipment is not required for FTC commitments); and**
- iv) **£850 from the Younger People's budget for the 2025 scholarship programme in the name of Stewart Dakers, with the caveat that any young entrepreneurs must be from Farnham.**

5. Contracts & Assets update

- 1) The Working Group received details of a complaint to the Public Procurement Review Service by an unsuccessful tenderer for the recent Website Contract. 28 applications had been received but the complainant had not received a response to queries during the tendering process and had submitted an FOI request prior to the contract award decision. The Working Group noted there were some learning points that were being introduced as a result of this representation one of which was to include a statement in tender documents clarifying that there would be no correspondence until an award was made.
- 2) The Working Group noted that the specification for the new Christmas Lights tender was in preparation and would contain several elements which officers would develop in conjunction with the Task Group. Initial discussions had taken place with the BID and also with the Brightwells Yard Management.
- 3) The Working Group noted there had been a leak from a water heater that had caused damage in the Members' Room but that repairs were in hand from the property maintenance budget.
- 4) The Working Group received details of the recent tree survey which had identified a number of trees diseased or in distress that needed felling and also remedial work. Urgent action would be taken where needed from within existing budgets, but a programme of other remedial works would be drawn up.
- 5) The pathway repair programme was awaiting a third contractor quotation with the lowest economical tenderer being asked to complete the works within the 2024/25 budget provision.

- 6) The Working Group noted the latest position on the Gostrey Meadow Amenity Centre planning application for the new storage area, public conveniences, and shade for the new playground. It was noted that some councillors had asked for elements to be re-discussed but it was agreed that this was unnecessary and inappropriate and that the planning application should run its course.
- 7) The Working Group noted that there had been some 549 responses to the consultation on the preferred design for the playground and that Option 1 had been preferred. Councillors received details of the additional suggestions made on a range of matters and agreed that a list of the comments and responses would be put on the website and circulated to respondents. There had been a request for a new sandpit, more seating, improved provision for children with disabilities, more shade, additional water features, more equipment for older children and additional facilities including a buggy park and cycle stands.

It was agreed that buggy parking and cycle stands could be incorporated as part of the amenity centre development and that a communications board be added within the playground. Councillors noted that plans for a trim trail and other facilities for older children were already being considered for other areas.

Recommendation:

- 1) **The Christmas Lights Tender specification be delegated to the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Christmas Lights Task Group;**
- 2) **Space for buggies and cycle stands be incorporated in the new amenity centre and a communications board for people with learning disabilities be included in the playground.**

6. FTC branding guidelines update

The updated Branding Guidelines (attached at Annex 1) were agreed for recommendation to Council.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the updated Branding Guidelines be adopted.

Cllr Brown left at this point.

7. Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution

The Working Group noted that regular briefings were being circulated by Cllr Paul Follows Leader of Waverley Borough Council and that the papers on the draft structure proposal would be considered by the Boroughs and Districts in coming weeks for an outline reorganisation plan to be submitted to Government by the end of March.

It was noted that the County was likely to put in a two unitary proposal (although preferred a one unitary option) whilst the districts and boroughs were favouring a three unitary option (or possibly two). The key issues of concern were the size of the debt (as a result of Woking, Spelthorne and Runnymede in particular) and how it would be dealt with as well as the huge costs faced in services such as adult social care and Special Educational Needs. There was a difference in approach to how the voice of the communities would be considered in areas where there were no town and parish councils with Surrey favouring community boards/Forums rather than new town or parish councils.

2) The Working group noted the matters arising from the NALC/SALC briefing with Chippenham Town Council held on 17th February and the amount of time it took before the new unitary there discussed service and asset transfers.

3) The Working Group notes the discussions between FTC and WBC on potential assets transfers identified by FTC to date in its 2024-2026 business plan and considered what additional assets were important to the local community that should be added to the list for further discussion with WBC and Surrey CC. It was agreed that councillors should identify those in their wards that should be added to the list.

4) Councillors appreciated that pressures to focus on service areas and limited availability of legal support meant that FTC would need to fund the Borough Council's legal resource to progress the agreed transfers.

5) It was agreed that the initial work programme for the Local Government Review Task Group (Cllrs Brown, Earwaker, Hesse, Mirylees, Murray and White with Cllr Laughton as a reserve) include the review of appropriate assets for transfer and what the Town Council could best achieve through the reorganisation of the County and districts and boroughs. It was noted that Ben Binnell would be assisting in identifying the cost impacts of the maintenance of each area of land.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that

i) An earmarked reserve of £75,000 be created towards the costs of legal fees associated with expediting any asset transfers that will retain green spaces and support the delivery of FTC priorities and

ii) An advance contribution be paid to Waverley BC from the 2024/25 budget to enable specific legal resource to be commissioned for the transfer of assets identified in the 2024-2026 FTC business plan (subject to agreement for its return in full or part if the transfers do not proceed).

8. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman advised that after initial problems, the works in the town centre had gone better than expected. The next FIP Board meeting was scheduled for 28th March.

The Working Group discussed the problems caused by inconsiderate parking of a few people that caused jams and tailbacks. Enforcement patrols had been increased and details of offenders were being sent with photographic evidence where possible. It was hoped that the new BID rangers could also assist by engaging with drivers, once in post and avoid the need for enforcement.

The Working Group noted the future phasing proposed and it was agreed the updated dates would be circulated to councillors when received. Phase 3 was due to commence on 20th May covering Downing Street to Longbridge. The Working Group expressed concerns that despite all the FTC representations, the communications on progress and changes was below expectations with some information on the SCC website being out of date or inaccurate.

9. Reports of Task Groups

i) Younger People Task Group

ii) The Working Group received the report at Appendix I to its agenda. It noted that local groups supporting younger people hoped to work more cohesively and collaboratively

and had drawn up a memorandum of understanding between them, but did not currently feel the creation of one overarching group was the right way forward.

- iii) The Working Group noted the Service Level Agreement progress to date and considered the funding that should be allocated for 2025-26. It was agreed that the funding was for delivering desired outcomes not just to pay for additional hours. Wrecclesham had had a slower start but built a good base for the forthcoming year and had some resources available to carry forward. As a result it was agreed to recommending allocating the same funding for 2025/26 with £7,500 retained for allocation later in the year. Cllrs White and Murray would meeting with Jubilee Hub and Wrecclesham Community Centre to consider further areas of collaboration in the coming year.
- iv) In terms of the funding for holiday activity, it was agreed to recommend a further £20k for which applications had already been invited and would be considered at the April Strategy & Resources meeting.
- v) The Working Group noted the Participation People research project was underway and that there was an additional £10,000 in the budget for 2025/26 research if needed.

Recommendation

- i) **Allocations for the outreach Service Level Agreements be as follows: Hale Youth and Community Centre £15,000; 40 Degreez £30,000; Jubilee Hub £15,000 (of which £7,500 is retained from the 2024/25 unspent allocation); with £7,500 available for future allocations;**
- ii) **The School holiday activity grants fund be £20,000 for 2025/26.**

2) Neighbourhood Plan Task Group

The Working Group received the report of the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group held on 3rd March at Appendix H which had included some invited community representatives. It was felt to be a very positive meeting. A presentation by a landowner had been helpful in discussing the approach for future sites being assessed as part of a Farnham Land Availability Assessment. It was expected Waverley would issue a second call for sites.

The updating of the Neighbourhood Plan still awaited information from the Borough Council particularly around infrastructure issues but Members felt there was need to publish what had been updated to date and refocus the Plan with Infrastructure issues being at the start of the document. The Working Group also agreed that progressing an urban capacity study as a desk top exercise similar to that undertaken in Hart District would be beneficial.

Recommendations

It is recommended that

- 1) **The progress on updating the text in the Neighbourhood Plan be noted and completed;**
- 2) **In the absence of information being provided of discussions being arranged between Waverley Borough Council and Infrastructure providers, FTC now conduct its own discussions about capacity to support a range of housing growth (eg 2000, 5,000, 10,000 new homes)**
- 3) **The approach taken in Hart for a desktop urban capacity study be considered for Farnham;**
- 4) **Ward councillors host meetings with residents to identify locations for sustainable development and review appropriate densities;**
- 5) **A representative of the Borough and County Councillors be invited to relevant meetings of the Task Group**

10. Consultations

There were no consultations considered.

11. Town Clerk update

- 1) The Town Clerk provided an update on arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting of Electors taking place at UCA on 24th March.
- 2) The Town Clerk provided an update on the next steps for the *A Hands Turn* sculpture at the end of its temporary Planning Permission in February 2027. Discussions had been held with the UCA to relocate the installation at the end of the temporary period, or sooner, on part of its land and at the Evelyn Borelli garden/sculpture park, once a new planning permission was achieved. There was some remedial work to be undertaken because of the vandalism, and discussions were also underway with the artists to see the best way to do this and adapt the fixings for the new location.

12. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday 23rd April at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 5.41 pm

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