



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 20th March, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Brodie Mauluka (Mayor)
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor George Murray (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor John Ward
Councillor Graham White
Councillor Tim Woodhouse

Apologies for absence

Michaela Martin

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Lucy Dorkins (Business & Facilities Manager).

There were 3 members of the public and 1 member of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Pastor Michael Hall.

C94/24 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Martin.

C95/24 **Disclosures of Interest**

There were no disclosures of interest.

C96/24 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

C97/24 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions or statements from the public.

C98/24 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor welcomed Lucy Dorkins to her first Council meeting as the new Business & Facilities Manager and Council wished her well in her role.

The Mayor advised that he had a lovely visit to celebrate the Lunar new year with the Triple Fun Chinese Language School where he wrote his name in Chinese.

The Mayor said he was honoured to present prizes at the Farnham Sports awards held at the Farnham Rugby Club. He was very impressed with the achievements of young and old alike in so many sports.

He also attended the Surrey Armed Forces Covenant event at Pirbright which was an excellent reminder of what the armed forces and reservists based in Farnham are achieving and to underline Farnham's own covenant as a community with them.

The Mayor attended the World day of prayer in the Spire Church bringing together all faiths and was also at the Spire Church for the 10th anniversary of the excellent Farnham Repair Café.

On Commonwealth Day Farnham joined others around the Commonwealth in raising a flag and underpinning the connections people across the commonwealth have with each other.

Finally the Mayor congratulated Cllr Kika Mirylees, the events team and all involved in the incredible Literary Festival which was the best yet.

C99/24 Questions by Members

Cllr Hesse Question asked the following question of the Town Clerk under Standing Order 9.

"Please advise Council the position regarding the need for competitive tendering for the proposed new Gostrey toilet and storage building, and a local architect's competition, for both stages - design and also construction, as laid out in standing orders."

In response, the Town Clerk advised that

"The Council has acted in accordance with both Financial Regulations and Standing Orders for the procurement of the design of the new amenity building. The second phase will be subject to a formal tender in accordance with Financial Regulations and the Procurement Act 2023 which came into force in February 2025 and has similar thresholds to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015".

C100/24 Working Group Notes

A Environment

Cllr Brown introduced the report of the Environment Working Group meeting held on 27th February at Appendix B to the agenda.

- i) The Working Group recommended that FTC support the Hive Helpers proposed family Bee Trail around Farnham consisting of Oak posts and plaques with brass or synthetic stone images that could be rubbed. It was also recommended that the trail be replicated in the cemeteries.

It was RESOLVED unanimously to progress the oak posts with synthetic stone images for the bee trail at a cost of £1,680 and to trial further oak post trails in Badshot Lea and Hale cemeteries, with West Street cemetery and Green Lane being considered thereafter.

- ii) The Working Group had considered a range of matters including an update on Library Gardens, the Green Flag judging, plans for changes in the composting arrangements; the initial findings from the latest tree safety survey, a Surrey County Council highways volunteering initiative; the introduction of a natural herbicide control using a mixture of salt and vinegar and an additional name for the Notable Names of Farnham wall; and allotment and cemetery matters.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- 1) Compost bays are created at key sites, including Gostrey Meadow, West Street Cemetery, Hale Cemetery, Badshot Lea Cemetery, Evelyn Borelli Garden of Remembrance.**
- 2) A chipper and mulching decks be purchased to improve efficiency**
- 3) FTC signs up to the SCC community highways volunteering scheme but target activities that would benefit Farnham in Bloom;**
- 4) An experiment of using a salt and vinegar mixture for weed control be implemented.**
- 5) Lt Colonel John Luard be added to the Notable Names of Farnham wall.**

- iii) In terms of street scene issues, Cllr Brown advised the Working Group had discussed graffiti, particularly around the Woolmead; and the poor state of bus stops in Alma Lane. In discussion, the Leader advised that he had met with local MP Greg Stafford to discuss the graffiti as the site was owned by Homes England. Other councillors suggested an art work project with schools or the UCA might be beneficial and help showcase art in Farnham, and others felt that the cost for painting over the graffiti should not fall to Farnham Town Council.

It was RESOLVED that FTC:

- 1) Raise the need for further treatment of all graffiti at Woolmead with Waverley and Homes England and that depending on the response FTC do a one-off paint of the hoarding graffiti;**
- 2) Reviews with Homes England (or the subsequent developer) the possibility of UCA and local schools being commissioned to do art panels for the hoarding;**
- 3) Seeks any remaining SCC Section 106 funding to replace the two obsolete Alma Lane bus stops and agrees to allocate partial or full FTC CIL funding to enable the project to go ahead.**

B Strategy & Resources

Cllr White introduced the report of the Environment Working Group meeting held on 27th February at Appendix B to the agenda.

- 1) Finance.** The latest financial position was notes and a number of grants requests considered.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- 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) **£2,500 from the Community Initiatives budget for a three year scholarship programme in the name of Stewart Dakers, with the caveat that any young entrepreneurs must be from Farnham.**

Cllr Hesse arrived at this point

2) Contracts and Assets

Council received the contracts and assets update including the outcome of the Public Procurement Review and the steps being implemented; the specification for the Christmas Lights tender; the results of the recent tree survey and remedial action required; the latest position on the Gostrey Amenity Building planning application and the responses to the playground consultation.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- i) **The Christmas Lights Tender specification be delegated to the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Christmas Lights Task Group;**
- ii) **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.**

3) FTC Branding Guidelines.

The updated FTC Branding Guidelines at Annex I to Appendix C were reviewed by Council.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

The updated Branding Guidelines be adopted

4) Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr White advised that this was a fast moving situation and reported on the detailed discussion by the LGR Task Group and the likely options being put forward by the County (two unitary) and districts (three unitary), with Surrey proposing area boards at below unitary area. The position of the districts and boroughs was not known. Council was provided with an update on the potential transfers from principal authorities, particularly Waverley, and the need to budget for the costs of transfer to ensure there was sufficient capacity for them to progress. 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) included the review of appropriate assets for transfer. It was noted that Ben Binnell would be supporting this programme.

In discussion councillors said it was important to focus on the best results for Farnham as this was a once in a generation review and a massive opportunity. Cllr Merryweather declared an interest as portfolio holder for Waverley assets and reminded council of the Waverley Community Assets Transfer policy. It was also noted Surrey had agreed to create a similar policy. There was a desire to progress the asset transfer requests promptly and councillors were asked to update lists based in their wards. It was agreed to prepare a brief leaflet on reorganisation for the Annual Town Meeting of electors.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* (Cllr Merryweather not voting) that:

- i) **FTC puts priority on an accelerated programme of asset transfers from principal authorities in conjunction with Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council including local green spaces and other appropriate**

assets identified in the **FTC Business Plan 2024** and others identified by local ward councillors;

- ii) **The Town Clerk be delegated to progress transfer requests in consultation with the Leader and mayor and the LGR Task Group;**
- iii) **An earmarked reserve of £75,000 be created towards the costs of legal fees associated with expediting any asset transfers from principal authorities that will retain green spaces and support the delivery of FTC priorities; and**
- iv) **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).**

5) Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman provided an update to Council noting that there had been some initial teething troubles as there had been no advance warning by Surrey of the new right turn at the bottom of Castle Street but the works had gone relatively well and not as bad as expected. It was noted that traders were concerned about the perception of increased pollution in Downing Street from tailbacks and about inconsiderate parking. On a more positive note it appeared satnavs were directing through traffic away from the centre of Farnham. Council agreed that more proactive stories about Farnham being open for business were required and it was noted that improved electronic signage was being installed by Surrey to assist. It was suggested that some banners encouraging people to turn off engines when queuing should be deployed.

6) Task Group reports

a) Younger People Panel

Council welcomed the progress on the Service Level Agreements and noted that the Jubilee Hub project had not been able to complete all elements so some funding would be held over for the new financial year. The progress on the work by Participation People was noted.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- 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.**

b) Neighbourhood Plan Task Group

Council received the Notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group on 3rd March at Appendix H and noted it had been a very positive meeting with community representatives.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- i) **The progress on updating the text in the Neighbourhood Plan be noted and completed;**
- ii) **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);**
- iii) **The approach taken in Hart for a desktop urban capacity study be considered for Farnham;**
- iv) **Ward councillors host meetings with residents to identify locations for sustainable development and review appropriate densities;**
- v) **A representative of the Borough and County Councillors be invited to relevant meetings of the Task Group.**

C101/24 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Laughton introduced the Notes of the Planning Meetings held on 10th February, 24th February and 10th March 2025 at appendices D, E and F.

He drew attention to six issues in particular. The first was an application for the conversion of The Old Hop Garden in Long Garden Walk which was for 22 student rooms. FTC had sought confirmation that the room types were C2 not C3 (hotels and boarding house).

The second was to confirm that the Farnham Park Cemetery application had been approved on appeal.

There were two applications in the Borough (33-34 and 38-39 to create residential units. FTC had made recommendations on soundproofing and glazing as well as challenges of constructing during the town centre works.

In the application for a new door at 17 Frensham Road, following the requirement to remove the top floor and staircase, FTC had no objection if it were regarded as a non material amendment.

In the final comment on Quarry House in Gardeners Hill Road, FTC had objected as the application was outside the built up area boundary and did not confirm with the Neighbourhood Plan policies FNPI, FNPI0 and FNP30.

C102/24 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were none reported

C103/24 Reports from Other Councils

Concern was expressed over the increased cost of the Hoppa dial-a-ride to £3. It seemed odd at a time when everyone was trying to encourage more public transport and it was hoped a reason could be found.

The Town Clerk advised that this was as a result of the cap being raised by the government from £2 to £3.

C104/24 Reports from Outside Bodies

There were no reports from outside bodies.

C105/24 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of Council was agreed as 1st May 2025 at 6pm.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.34 pm

Chairman

Date