



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

C Notes

Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Wednesday 23rd April, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

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.

Officers:

Lara Miller (part), Jenny de Quervain, Iain Lynch, Ben Binnell (Part), Lucy Dorkins (part)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Martin, and from Cllr Laughton for late arrival.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllrs Fairclough and Murray made a personal declaration of interest in relation to the Internal Audit as they know Mike Platten personally.

3. Minutes

The Notes of the meeting held on 30th March were agreed.

4. End of Year Finance Report 2024-25

Cllr White introduced the 2024-2025 finance report highlighting the End of Year Finance papers at Appendices B to J on the agenda which had been circulated to all councillors. He started by thanking the Town Clerk and colleagues for completing a huge volume of work on the year-end promptly despite the impact of Easter.

- 1) The Working Group reviewed the Internal Auditor's report at Appendix H noting the recommendations of the Internal Auditor which were agreed. In particular the issue with the website certificate for access to the transparency information was frustrating but was about to be resolved. The report was recommended to Council for adoption.
- 2) The Working Group agreed the Governance Statements in the draft AGAR at Appendix I and also agreed the Variance statements that accompanied the AGAR at Appendix J.
- 3) The Working Group considered the detailed income and expenditure reports and background papers at appendices B to D including the explanatory notes that covered specific budget codes at Appendix Biv. In terms of staffing costs, the Town Clerk advised that the position would be challenging in the year ahead and there would need to be an increase in the 2026/27 budget particularly if additional land or services were taken on. In terms of sponsorship, councillors were encouraged to make introductions for potential new sponsors of FTC events and activities.
- 4) It was noted that the overall income position was £2,396,408 (against a budget of £1,784,568) whilst expenditure was £1,825,681 (against a budget of £1,806,950). The Working Group recognised that higher than anticipated income was primarily due to Section 106 and CIL receipts along with significantly higher interest as a result of reserves investment. Overall, the Working Group welcomed the positive working surplus of £81,831 of income over expenditure (after the planned transfers for Christmas lights and elections were made, and the earmarked CIL and section 106 allocations were allocated to reserves. The Working Group noted that this saving would be beneficial for future service priorities, in light of the uncertainties over local government reorganisation.
- 5) The Working Group noted the position on Debtors set out at Appendix D noting and that none were cause for concern, and also agreed the Asset Register updates, noting that there would be a report on obsolete items appropriate for disposal at a coming meeting.
- 6) The Working Group received the draft Report and Financial Statements which included the detail of earmarked reserves and grants distributed during the year noting that the General Reserve stood at £602,597 representing about 39% of the precept level, within acceptable levels for a Council of the size of Farnham. The adjustments to the earmarked reserves were agreed reflecting the monies used for completed projects and the change agreed in March for a Local Government Reorganisation Reserve.
- 7) The list of Standing Orders and Direct Debits for 2025/26 attached at Appendix L to the agenda was agreed for approval by Council.
- 8) The Working Group noted and agreed the dates for the public opportunity to review the background papers to the 2024/25 accounts.

Recommendations to Council

It is recommended that:

- 1) **The report on the 2024-25 finances be adopted;**
- 2) **the 2024-25 year -end Outturn be welcomed;**
- 3) **the Annual Governance Statement (Section I of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, page 4) be approved;**
- 4) **The Internal Auditor's report be welcomed and the recommendations agreed;**
- 5) **The updated Asset Register be approved;**
- 6) **The Report and Financial Statements including the general and earmarked reserves for 2024-25 be adopted for signature;**
- 7) **The variances list for the Annual Return be agreed;**

- 8) The Annual Governance and Accountability Return and associated papers be approved for signature and submission to the External Auditor;**
9) The dates for the Exercise of Public Rights be agreed as 3rd June to 14th July 2025.

5. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Cllr Beaman reported on progress on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme being implemented by Surrey County Council and advised that, after some teething problems from the implementation phase was working better than expected and the right turn from Castle Street was working very well. Businesses had expressed some concerns over a reduction in footfall but Waverley had advised that there was no obvious reduction in car park activity. Cllr Murray advised the BID was more engaged and had asked if there could be more data available on footfall and car park usage. It was understood there was a 3.5% increase in footfall over the previous year, *[according to data from Place Informatics]*.

The Working Group noted the expected challenges from sewer works linked to the new Coxbridge Development and works elsewhere but that the Surrey team was attempting to minimise any additional disruption.

The Working Group noted the discussions that had taken place on the rain gardens and ironstones, and it appeared that the Surrey team was prepared to be flexible in response to the representations made by Farnham Town Council and others.

6. New website update

The Working Group reviewed the detailed page designs and layout for the new website (attached at Appendix M to the agenda). The Town Clerk advised that historical data would be kept on an archive microsite so that it was available when required. Similarly the transparency data would be reformatted without the need to use the modern.gov system and be more speedily accessible.

It was agreed that videos on the site via an ad-free vimeo account would be beneficial, and that more street camera views would be of interest to the public. The next stage of development after officers had reviewed and updated content would be with councillors during May or June. The Working Group noted that the intention for a relaunch in September was on target.

7. Timetable of meetings for 2025-2026

The Leader introduced the suggested changes to the Working Groups from May 2025. The creation of a Community and Wellbeing Working Group would enable a greater focus to be placed on some of the areas likely to emerge from reorganisation. The Younger People Panel and the Support Fund would come under Community & Wellbeing along with health and public safety matters. The renamed Culture and business Working Group would continue its work on tourism, events and business support.

The reshaping of Task Groups to be more closely linked with the 'parent' Working Groups should reduce the number of meetings with updates to the Working Group if a Task Group was not required. It was agreed that the implementation phase of the Farnham Infrastructure programme could be covered by the Infrastructure Task Group and that the CIL Task Group and Neighbourhood Plan Task Group should be absorbed under this same heading.

The Working Group noted that Council's request for main meetings to be reallocated to a Monday and Thursday as far as possible had been implemented, and the draft timetable (attached at Annex 1) was agreed.

Recommendation to Council

It is recommended that

- 1) A Community & Wellbeing Working Group be created and the Community & Culture Working Group be renamed as Culture & Business. The adjustments to the Task Groups be agreed.**
- 2) The draft timetable of meetings for 2025-26 municipal year be approved.**

8. Contracts & Assets update

The Working Group received the Contracts and Assets update at Appendix O.

1) Gostrey Meadow

It was noted that work on the playground was due to start on 2nd June and be completed in mid July. At the kick off site meeting the requirements for a site compound and its impact on Gostrey Meadow activities was discussed along with the risks attached to maintaining part of the playground during the works. As a result on safety and layout grounds it was recommended that the site compound be set up on the area for second phase of the playground and the amenity building and that all the playground equipment be removed at the same time. Publicity advising of alternate nearby play areas would be installed.

2) Local Government Reorganisation and asset transfers

The Working Group noted the discussion of the Local Government Review Task Group (at Appendix S) as well as the discussion at the Assets Task Group on the initial list of assets to be sought for transfer from Waverley Borough Council.

The Working Group confirmed that in addition to the initial list offered by WBC (following the submission by FTC in 2024: Allotment Gardens, Weybourne Road (plus others); Thurbans Road Open Space; Morley Road Recreation Ground; Borelli Walk), FTC should be seeking all allotments not currently owned by FTC, the Brightwells green space (as it links with the Borelli Walk and the Haren Gardens and Riverside Walk already in the ownership of FTC); Montrose House (as suitably located office space for any additional services that may transfer from the new unitary authority or use as craft workshops) and the Waggon Yard garages to implement the Craft workshops which were to have been created by Waverley. It was agreed that if Waverley were not transferring the freehold a lease of 125 years should be sought.

The Working Group heard that officers had met with the Greenspace Manager at WBC for an initial discussion on other options. He had confirmed that both the Bourne Green and Hale Recreation Ground were designated Village Greens and so would retain the protections under that legislation.

3 Other matters

The Working Group noted the timescale for the Christmas Lights tender which would be published at the end of April with a view to having a shortlist in June and a decision in July. It was also updated on changes to Waste legislation which meant a new type of bin for separate food waste was likely to be needed on FTC land unless an exemption were agreed. The latest position with *A Hands Turn* was noted. The requirement to cut back three willows on the Farnham Riverside was regrettable but essential because of the subsidence claim and would be carried out in the near future.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- 1) The Eibe site compound be based on the Union Road section of the park and that all the existing play equipment be removed on safety grounds.**

9. Reports of Task Groups

1) Neighbourhood Plan

The Working Group received a report on the Neighbourhood Plan Task Group meeting held on 14th April at Appendix P.

Councillors considered bringing the Farnham Design Statement in line with updated national guidance by commissioning a Farnham Design Code, using the Farnham Design Statement and its character areas as a base noting that advice previously sought from AECOM was that the Farnham Design Statement was a good base for a Farnham Design Code. Funding may be available from Locality for technical support and it was agreed that a price be sought from AECOM to undertake the work on creating a Farnham Design Code.

Officers had met with Waverley officers and heard that evidence was still being gathered for the government's proposed housing stock increase of 51% including:

- In-house Urban Capacity Study
- Greenbelt Review
- Infrastructure Review - end to end water cycle study commissioned
- Land Availability Assessment - second call for sites required
- WBC engagement on Visioning in June 2025

FTC had offered to help support the process if it could be expedited with a design study, updating the HDA Landscape Character Assessment; the urban capacity study and Infrastructure review. On the final point, WBC requested this is left to them so not to confuse providers.

The Working Group noted progress on reviewing Neighbourhood Plan policies against national planning policy and guidance at April 2025. The Planning Advisor (Steve Tilbury) was preparing a scoping report to commission a similar urban capacity study carried out in Hart District for Farnham. The WBC Infrastructure Development Plan Schedule (October 202 which lists 'critical', 'essential' and 'desirable' infrastructure requirements across the borough was noted to be in need of an update to meet infrastructure demands of housing requirement. It was also noted that the SANG capacity data provided by Waverley was out of date

2) Younger People Panel

The Working Group received the update at Appendix Q. Councillors commented that the Children's Business Fair supported by FTC had been very uplifting and the organisers were making a presentation to the next Younger People Panel meeting. Progress on the Participation People Young People Research had begun with seven researchers commissioned, and was progressing well.

The Working Group considered the School Holiday Grant allocations for 2025 with 9 applications totalling over £38,300 for grants available of £20,000. It was agreed to recommend grants totalling £18,055 with a small sum retained for later applications during the year.

The following grants were recommended:

Name of organisation	FTC Proposal
40 Degreez	£4,000.00
Bethel Baptist Church	£750.00
Chantry Community Association	£1,500.00
Farnham Baptist Church	£500.00
Farnham Maltings	£4,000.00
Hale Community Centre	£4,000.00
Hive Helpers	£305.00
Rural Life Living Museum	£3,000.00
Total	£18,055.00

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the grants listed be approved.

3) Christmas Lights Task Group

The Working group received the report at Appendix R and the detailed consideration of the elements required for the tender with a strong preference to retain the simplicity and heritage-appropriate design of the existing scheme, favouring the classic gold and white colour palette to reflect the town's Georgian architecture. The tender would be for a period of five years with the opportunity to renew for five years. Those bidding would be invited to suggest extensions to the scheme and how to offer additional features (such as instagrammable zones, light projection on buildings etc) and reuse existing lights in other area.

Shortlisted bidders would be invited to present to the Task Group in June.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Task Group proposals be endorsed for the tender.

4) Local Government Reorganisation Task Group

Cllr White introduced the report at Appendix S. The Working Group noted the current position of the County Council scheduled to put forward a two Unitary option and the Districts mostly preferring a three option. The initial bids submitted to Government were now being worked up into a submission that would be considered by all councils in early May.

There was discussion about the practicalities of progressing too many sites at once both in terms of the capacity of WBC or Surrey CC to transfer the properties and in terms of the increased costs for FTC in managing them. It was noted that the new unitaries would have a challenge in maintaining many of the new assets they would inherit and would need to engage with town and parish councils and community organisations in future.

The Town Clerk advised on a meeting he had attended with the Surrey Association of Local Councils with the Leader of Surrey County Council. Surrey was proposing to pilot four area boards/panels to find what worked and was proposing that one could be around Farnham. These groups would cover police and health as well as local government. Although there were concerns about the democratic deficit and what was being proposed, the Working Group recommended that FTC offer to be involved in the pilot in order to understand and shape the best outcome for Farnham and town and parish councils and have a seat at the table.

Officers look at bringing in additional capacity and advice, using the proposed earmarked reserve if required.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that FTC participate in a pilot Area Board/Panel, if invited, to assist in shaping the concept.

5) Conservation Areas Task Group

The Working Group noted the site meeting that had taken place and also the request for improving the entrance to Park Row with tarmac to replace the sunken setts installed in the 1970s. It was noted SCC were intending to install width narrowing bollards to limit HGVs turning in Park Row and causing damage to the Alms Houses.

10. Review of Council Policies

The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations would be reviewed at a future meeting.

11. Consultations

There were no consultations for this meeting.

12. Town Clerk update

The Town Clerk provided an update on staffing matters.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was agreed as Monday 9th June at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 5.40 pm

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

Farnham Town Council Meeting Dates 2025-26

ANNEX 1

Council 6pm	Strategy & Resources. 2pm	Environment 4pm	Culture & Business. 10am	Community & wellbeing. 4pm
Thu 15 May 2025				
Thu 19 June 2025	Mon 09 June 2025			Thu 5th June 2025
Thu 31 July 2025	Mon 21 July 2025	Thu 26 June 2025	Thu 10 July 2025	
Thu 18 September 2025	Mon 08 September 2025	Thu 11 September 2025		Thu 14th September 2025
Thu 30 October 2025	Mon 20 October 2025		Thu 02 October 2025	
Thu 18 December 2025	Mon 08 December 2025	Thu 27 November 2025		Thu 20 November 2025
Thu 29 January 2026	Mon 19 January 2026		Thu 15 January 2026	
Thu 19 March 2026	Mon 09 March 2026	Thu 12 February 2026		Thu 05 February 2026
Thu 30 April 2026	Mon 20 April 2026		Thu 16 April 2026	
Thu 14 May 2026				
IPG incorporating Neighbourhood Plan, FIP, CIL				
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 23 June 2025	09:30		Annual Town Meeting of Electors Thu 26 March 2026
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 04 August 2025	09:30		
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 22 September 2025	09:30		
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 20 October 2025	09:30		
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 01 December 2025	09:30		
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 19 January 2026	09:30		
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 02 March 2026	09:30		
Infrastructure Planning Group	Mon 20 April 2026	09:30		