



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Notes Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Monday 9th June, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Strategy & Resources Members Present:

Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor George Murray (ex-Officio)
Councillor Graham White (Lead Member)

Officers:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk)
Ben Binnell (Interim Business & Facilities Manager) -part
Lucy Dorkins (Business & Facilities Manager) -part

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Fairclough.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes

The Notes of the meeting held on 23rd April were agreed.

4. St Andrew's Church Farnham - Vision 2030 Project Consultation

Nick Patrick, Heritage Consultant, gave a presentation on St Andrew's church's bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for £2.5m to make urgent repairs and upgrade facilities for use by the local community.

He advised there were four main priorities for the NLHF and that the application met all of them:

- Saving Heritage
- Inclusion, access and participation
- Protecting the environment
- Organisational sustainability

The church was also going to be put on the Heritage at Risk Register in the autumn.

As well as fixing the tower, and adding toilets, the aim of the project is to create a centre of bellringing excellence, the only one with a peal of 12 bells for some distance apart from the Cathedral; to create a walking and pilgrimage hub; to celebrate Farnham's Craft heritage and to connect with nature.

The project was not looking to Farnham Town Council for finance but to collaborate, support and add expertise in other ways. Contributions of staff, councillors and volunteers time would be counted as matched funding.

The application was due for submission in the autumn with an initial decision due in March 2026.

In discussion, councillors were supportive of the project overall and raised questions about contributions of the Church Commissioners, whether the concept of reclassifying St Andrew's as a Minster was still being progressed, and whether CIL funding could be applied.

The Town Clerk advised that a letter of support could be made by the Town Council for the funding application at the appropriate time.

Nick Patrick agreed to follow up the questions raised.

5. Land adjacent to Farnham Park

Cllr Powell had been invited to outline initial discussions held with representatives of the Ismaili Trust following the awarding of Planning Permission on Appeal. In discussion, the potential of part of the site being made available to the local community as an extension to the Farnham Park SANG with mutual benefits was discussed. There were potential opportunities to improve the walking cycling route through Farnham Park avoiding veteran trees, improving a long neglected pond for biodiversity and improving connections into the Farnham Park SANG.

It was recognised that the site belonged to the Ismaili Trust and that their objectives were to do the best for their community but the Trust acknowledge the concerns and interests of the local community and were interested in building community links.

Initial discussions had taken place on the area to the west of their ownership which contained the large pond and whether this could be transferred to a community trust (independent or owned by an organisation such as the Town Council), the Town Council, or other body and be connected to the Farnham Park SANG.

The land was surplus to the requirements for the burial site and was topographically difficult but good for biodiversity and improvements for the future. If connected to the SANG there would be a small car parking requirement.



It was agreed to **recommend to Council that:**

- 1) **FTC work together with the Ismaili Trust to optimise the land as a green space in perpetuity for the local community; and**
- 2) **The Town Clerk writes a letter to Cllr Powell outlining the Council's support for the discussions that have taken place to date and of being involved in future conversations.**

6. Finance

The Working Group received and noted the Income and Expenditure report at appendix B.

The Working Group considered two applications for grants, one for an individual sports person selected for an international pathway and the other to support mental health and well-being in a Farnham school.

Although FTC could support an individual for a small grant it would be unusual and may create a demand that the Town Council would not be able to meet. It was agreed that officers explore with the Farnham Sports Council whether a bursary scheme might be considered for such applications with a report back in due course. Action: Town Clerk.

In terms of the second application it was noted that the school mentioned had not submitted the application and it came from an organisation out of area. Officers would contact the school and how the proposal fitted with work already being undertaken with a report back.

The Working Group received an update on the Rowledge Village Hall Trust Project and a request for support from the Town Council at Appendix D to its agenda. It was noted that £1,510,000 had been pledged in addition to the Trust's own estimated funds (depending on the sale price of the current village Hall site) of £1,080,000. The project costs are estimated to be £2,789,000 with a shortfall of around £200k. A number of organisations and individuals were being approached to meet the shortfall and it was hoped to start on site in the autumn of 2025.

The Working Group had been asked to consider how it could best help whether by a grant or a short term loan. The Town Clerk advised that both options were possible but in terms of a

loan options would need to take into account the Council's own need for funding and security of the funds. A grant could be used to fund environmental aspects such as ev chargers and cycle racks plus other kit-out elements.

In discussion councillors were very keen to be supportive given this was a once in a century project. After considering a range of options, it was agreed to propose to Council a grant of £25,000 which could be funded from the Community Initiatives fund or reserves, and that a short term loan of £75,000 with suitable guarantees be made available. Discussion would take place on whether this could be interest bearing (at the same level of FTC's current investments).

Recommendations:

- 1) A grant of £25,000 be made to the Rowledge Village Hall Trust towards then new Village Hall**
- 2) A loan of £75,000 be made subject to guarantees on its repayment.**

7. Contracts & Assets update

The Working Group received the report at Appendix E on contracts and assets.

- i) Tree Survey. The results of the triennial tree survey by RM Tree Consultancy had identified 181 trees which required work within six months (four that required immediate work had already been complete). Officers were awaiting prices to complete the initial works prioritised in the areas which had the potentially greatest public risk (Gostrey Meadow and Badshot Lea Cemetery). Councillors proposed the creation of hibernaculum and other habitats from the removed wood.
- ii) Gostrey Play Project. Eibe commenced the contract on 2nd June. The first phase was scheduled for completion ahead of the summer holidays, and semi mature trees for the tree pits (agreed following public consultation) were being sourced with a budget estimate of around £3,000. Councillors discussed the tree that was causing damage to the Borelli Shelter with some favouring removing the tree or the adjacent leylandii which was causing the building to heave and move apart. It was also suggested dismantling the shelter and rebuild or relocate at a future point. Officers would get a further view on the options for the tree.

Recommendation:

It was agreed to recommend:

- 1) Fixing the Borelli Shelter potentially on a floating slab to minimise future damage;**
 - 2) Taking advice from the local planning authority on dismantling the shelter pending a decision on its future.**
- iii) Library Gardens. The Working Group noted the initial works had been completed and that more significant costs and investment were on hold as Surrey had only issued a Tenancy at Will at this point. This included not being able to do substantive works on the tennis court which other than sweeping and removing moss. The Working Group noted additional works required before the gate to Bishops' Meadow were to open. It was agreed an information sheet should be provided to make people aware of responsibilities.
 - iv) Gostrey Meadow. Entrance. The Working Group noted that prices were being sought to see if the pedestrian entrance at the junction to Longbridge could be made more wheelchair-friendly as part of the FIP works.
 - v) K6 Telephone box. The Working Group welcomed the completion of the restoration of the K6 telephone box in West Street and it was agreed to explore the potential of using digital projection of art or images of Farnham on the rear panel. Officers to contact UCA Film and animation department.
 - vi) Council Chamber Audio. Quotations had been received from three suppliers for a new audio and video system for hybrid meetings using as much of the existing infrastructure as possible. The Leader proposed recommending to Council using Creative Spark at a cost of

approx £10,000. Their solution (which had a wired microphone system which adjusted automatically when a councillor spoke) was significantly lower than other estimates received and was simple to set up and operate.

Recommendation to Council

It is recommended that the Creative Spark solution be used at a cost of £10,000

vii) Other matters. The Working Group were advised that the works done on the Weybank Trees noting that the Town Council had not accepted any liability for a claim made prior to the Council's ownership of the land. The progress on *A Hands Turn* was welcomed and the prices by the artist for fixing and relocating the sculpture appeared appropriate. The Working Group received an update on CCTV; the Victoria Garden pathway works which would be undertaken at a cost of some £15,000 through FTC but funded by a contribution from the Swimming Baths Trust; and the Council's vehicle fleet, noting that a report on replacement priorities would be considered at a future meeting.

8. Local Government Reorganisation

The Working Group considered the report at Appendix G (attached as Annex 1 to these minutes) and the pace at which the whole situation was changing. The Government's consultation on the proposals for Surrey was expected take place by the end of June [*Subsequent to the meeting the consultation was announced on 17th June – attached as Annex 2 to these minutes*].

Recommendation: FTC should take a view on which option it wishes to support and whether to brief residents on the options and encourage them to respond.

The Working Group received an update on the proposals for sub-unitary engagement including the Minister's letter (circulated to all councillors), and the Surrey proposal attached at Appendix H. The Working Group noted that it was not a question of *if* these were introduced but when and how. The challenge was of getting an effective voice on the sub-unitary arrangements without them just being talking shops as had happened in other areas.

Cllr MacLeod had recently met with the Leader of Surrey and had suggested it would be helpful to invite Cllr Oliver to make a presentation to Farnham Town Council on the draft proposals circulated and discuss Farnham's potential involvement in a pilot. It was noted that the decision at the last Council to connect with police health and other partners would not be impacted by involvement.

The Working Group recommended to Council that:

- 1) Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey, be invited to discuss how the Neighbourhood Area Committees may be constructed and how the town and parish councils can make an effective contribution.**
- 2) Council consider participating in the pilot Neighbourhood Area Committee.**

In terms of Community Asset Transfers, the Working Group noted the work that had taken place by the Local Government Review Task Group and welcomed the proposal to engage further with the principal authorities on assets and services that would be valued by the local community, that would enhance services under a new unitary or may be lost. It was understood that Waverley was considering updating its Community Assets Transfer Policy to reflect other assets as well as green spaces, and that Surrey CC was preparing its own Assets Transfer Policy.

It was agreed to recommend that a series of packages be put forward to Waverley under themes – sporting, cultural and community and green spaces, and that these packages seek some income generating assets to balance the cost of transfers and minimise any increase in the Farnham portion of Council tax from taking on new services or assets. The Working Group recognised there was a significant amount of work in creating the packages, to demonstrate value for money and the cost and benefit impacts, and that the speed of the process was not

ideal. It was noted the assets identified would meet the strategic priorities of the Borough and County councils around the local community and healthy communities, including green spaces, healthy living, well-being biodiversity, culture and place shaping. The list was required to be submitted imminently in outline form. The list would include all the assets identified as part of the FTC forward strategy as well as those identified in the appendix. It was also noted that some assets would be appropriate for a strategic CIL application in the autumn.

Recommendation to Council:

The proposed Asset Transfer requests be further developed and prepared for submission to the relevant Principal Authorities.

The Town Clerk advised that the Surrey Association of Local Councils was proposing commissioning a piece of work to promote the value of town and parish council within the new unitary structures in Surrey. This would help inform officers and members of the new unitary councils and inform any Community Governance Reviews being undertaken and it was likely Farnham may be included as a case study. A small contribution towards the cost of the research may be requested.

9. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

The latest update on the FIP at Appendix I to the agenda was discussed. There was concern over the proposed works now scheduled in South Street for Union Road and South Street in November and December and further information was awaited. Councillors noted there was a commitment to avoid works during these months. A suggestion had been made that an additional works team be moved to Farnham now works elsewhere were being put on hold during the local government reorganisation process. This could help speed up the programme.

Cllr Beaman was stepping down from the FIP Board and proposed that Cllr Hesse be the Council's representative going forward. Cllr Earwaker seconded and it was agreed to prose to Council.

Recommendation:

Cllr Hesse be the Council's representative on the FIP Board.

10. Reports of Task Groups

The current position with the Neighbourhood Plan was noted and a Waverley Local Plan update meeting was scheduled for the following week.

11. Town Clerk update

- 1) The Town Clerk had authorised the construction of two tree pits as part of the Gostrey Playground in line with the Council decision.
- 2) The Town Clerk reported that the tenders had been opened for the new Christmas Lights and were being evaluated. Interviews for the shortlisted tenderers would take place on 9th July.

12. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 21st July at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 6.05 pm