



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 19th June, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Brodie Mauluka
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor George Murray (Mayor)
Councillor John Ward
Councillor Graham White (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Tim Woodhouse

Apologies for absence

Sally Dickson, Alan Earwaker, Andrew Laughton and Kika Mirylees

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 Revd Dr Steve Green, Vicar of St James Church, Rowledge

C12/25 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Dickson, Earwaker, Jackman, Laughton and Mirylees.

C13/25 **Disclosures of Interest**

Cllr Merryweather declared an interest in relation to discussions on Rowledge Village Hall and the Waverley Asset Transfers as Portfolio holder for Finance and Assets at Waverley Borough Council. He left the room for discussion on asset transfers.

Cllr Fairclough declared an interest as an Executive member at Waverley Borough Council in relation to Asset Transfers.

Cllr Martin advised that as a County Councillor she had allocated some of her allowance to the Rowledge Village Hall Project.

C14/25 Minutes

The Minutes of Council on 15th May 2025 were agreed as a correct record for the signature of the Mayor.

C15/25 Questions and Statements by the Public

There were no questions or statements by the public.

C16/25 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that he had attended the Runneymede Mayor's civic event and that he had attended the BID AGM with the new BID Manager. The BID had launched its website and the Make It Farnham brand and had some lively questions.

C17/25 Questions by Members

There were no questions by Members.

C18/25 Working Group Notes

1) Environment Working Group.

Cllr Brown reported on a busy time for the Community Enhancement team and the outside Workforce and advised Council of the forthcoming judging dates for South and South East in Bloom and the contribution being made by Lara Miller who had returned to the role. He updated Council on collaboration with the Farnham Infrastructure team, Farnham Railway Station and the Biodiversity Group and on progress with sponsorship. He advised Council that following the Allotment Liaison Group, the allotment representatives felt they were being listened to. Lucy Dorkins provided additional information and advised on the new process introduced for letting vacant plots.

2) Strategy & Resources Working Group.

Cllr White introduced the Notes of the meeting held on 9th June.

i) St Andrew's Church Vision 2030 Project

Cllr White reported that the Working Group had received 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. The Grade I listed church was also going to be put on the Heritage at Risk Register in the autumn. It was agreed that Farnham Town Council would provide a letter of support for the National Lottery Heritage Fund bid at the appropriate time.

ii) Land Adjacent to Farnham Park

Cllr White advised that the Working Group had been informed of discussions held by Cllr Powell with representatives of the Ismaili Trust following the awarding of Planning Permission on Appeal. 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.

Following the Strategy & Resources meeting the Town Clerk had written to Cllr Powell outlining the Council's support for the discussions held to date and confirming its wish to remain involved in future conversations.

It was RESOLVED (with Cllr Merryweather abstaining in view of his WBC position) that:

Farnham Town Council work together with the Ismaili Trust to optimise the land west of their site as a green space in perpetuity for the benefit of the local community.

iii) Grants and Community Funding

Cllr White reported that the Working Group had considered three grant applications.

- 1 One for an individual sports person selected for an international pathway and one to support mental health and well-being in a Farnham school. The latter was deferred for more information. Council noted that whilst FTC could support an individual for a small grant it would be unusual and may create a demand that the Town Council may not be able to meet. It was agreed to investigate with the Farnham Sports Council whether a bursary scheme might be considered for such applications and a report be brought back in due course.
- 2 Cllr White reported on Rowledge Village Hall Project. The Trust had received pledges of over £1.5m in addition to its own estimated funds related to the proposed sale of the current Hall site. There was a shortfall of estimated £200k with an estimated start on site in the autumn of 2025. FTC had been asked to consider how it could best help whether by a grant or a short term loan along with other local philanthropists. The Town Clerk advised that both options were possible but in terms of a loan options Council would need to take into account the Council's own need for funding and security of the funds. The Town Clerk advised that the priority for the Council in a loan situation would be the security of the funds and a charge would be placed on the building. The Trustees accepted this and were prepared to pay interest on the loan which would be less than the cost of a bridging loan. A grant could be used to fund environmental aspects such as ev chargers and cycle racks plus other kit-out elements. Council was very supportive of the request and would be prepared to increase the level of a loan if it were required.

It was RESOLVED (Cllr Merryweather abstained) that:

- 1) **A grant of £25,000 be made to the Rowledge Village Hall Trust towards the new Village Hall**
- 2) **A short-term loan of £75,000 be offered to the Rowledge Village Hall Trust, but FTC would be prepared to consider a higher sum if required in the future. The loan would be subject to suitable repayment guarantees and it may be interest-bearing at the Council's investment rate.**

iv) Contracts and Assets

Council received details of a number of projects that were underway. These included:

- 1 Council noted that the recent tree survey had identified 181 trees requiring work within six month and that officers would proceed with essential tree works in

- priority areas following the RM Tree Consultancy survey and explore biodiversity enhancements using removed wood.
- 2 Council noted Eibe had started the playground project on 2nd June and phase 1 was scheduled for completion ahead of the summer holidays. Trees were being sources for the tree pits. Council discussed the challenge of the Borelli Shelter (part of Phase 2) and the damage caused by an adjacent tree that appeared healthy. It was noted that it may need to be built on a floating slab. A report would be brought back on options and costs.
 - 3 Council noted that following FIP works at the Union Road/Longbridge junction officers were seeking prices for making the Gostrey Meadow entrance at Longbridge less steep and more wheelchair-friendly.
 - 4 Cllr White reported on the quotations for options for the new Council Audio visual system to enhance hybrid meetings. He recommended the solution by Creative Spark which included fixed microphones that adjusted automatically when someone spoke). There were some supplementary elements and the cost was expected to be up to £12k.
 - 5 Progress on other projects including the K6 telephone box in West Street, Victoria Garden pathway works, and the *A hands Turn* sculpture were noted. Cllr Hesse congratulated the FTC team on the work done at Library Gardens and having them open at the weekend.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i) **Advice be sought from the Local Planning Authority on dismantling (and recording the layout of) the Borelli Shelter pending a decision on its future and the trees alongside.**
 - ii) **Creative Spark's audio-visual system proposal for the Council Chamber be approved at a cost of £12,000. Cllr Woodhouse voted against.**
- v) **Local Government Re-organisation**
Cllr White introduced the report on Local Government Reorganisation (attached at Annex 1 to the Notes of the Working Group meeting), along with the Government's consultation document (at Annex 2) on the options for Surrey. The consultation was running until 5th August.

Council discussed the report and agreed it was important to tell residents of the options and of the Town Council's preference. After discussion, it was agreed that the three unitary option provided the best option in terms of community accessing services, councillor representation and democracy, the voice for Farnham, and the uncertainty over what was happening to Surrey's debt.

Council also discussed what would happen around decision making at a sub-unitary level and the government's clear requirements for engagement at a Neighbourhood Area level noting it was not a question of if these were introduced but when and how. Council considered the Surrey County suggested arrangements. It was agreed to invite both Cllr Tim Oliver representing the two unitary option and Cllr Hannah Dalton representing the districts 3 unitary option to discuss sub-unitary arrangements prior to making a decision on being involved in a 'test and learn' pilot.

There was a view that government appeared not to recognize the part town and parish councils could play in areas that were parished and it was felt the FTC should make representations to the Minister to underline the value of Councils such as Farnham.

Council welcomed that Surrey ALC was commissioning a paper to promote the role of town and parish councils in unitary structures, with Farnham potentially used as a case study and noted that a small contribution was expected.

It was RESOLVED that:

- 1) Councillor Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, be invited to a closed session to discuss the formation and operation of Neighbourhood Area Committees and how town and parish councils may contribute effectively;**
- 2) Cllr Hannah Dalton be invited to discuss the arrangements proposed for town and parish councils in the 3 unitary option;**
- 3) The Minister (Jim McMahon) be invited to hear the perspective of Farnham Town Council;**
- 4) Farnham Town Council support the 3 unitary solution for Surrey;**
- 5) FTC promotes its view and encourages its residents (through a leaflet and social media) to get as informed as possible and complete the government consultation as individual residents;**
- 6) FTC sends a leaflet to residents explaining the options and FTC view;**
- 7) The Town Clerk in consultation with the Leader and Mayor draft the Council's response to the Government Consultation on options for Surrey.**

It was agreed to defer a decision on whether Farnham Town Council participates in the Neighbourhood Area Committee pilot scheme until after the discussion with Cllr Oliver.

Cllr Beaman and Mauluka left at this point.

- vi) Community Asset Transfers** (Cllr Merryweather left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting)

Cllr White informed Council that the Working Group had welcomed the good work done by the LGR Task Group and supported the proposal to engage further with the principal authorities on assets and services that would be valued by the local community, enhance services under a new unitary or may be lost. Council noted 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 that a series of Community Asset Transfer packages be prepared and submitted to Waverley Borough Council under themed headings (sporting, cultural, community, and green spaces), to include income-generating assets to offset costs. Council noted that transfers had to meet Best Value requirements (for the disposing authority) and there was also a duty of care to the successor authorities once the reorganization had been confirmed.

It was RESOLVED that the proposed Asset Transfer requests be further developed and prepared for submission to the relevant Principal Authorities.

- vii) Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP)**

Council noted the latest position with the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and that additional works teams had been allocated to Farnham to expedite the project. Cllr Beaman was stepping down as the FTC representative and was thanked for his contribution.

It was RESOLVED that Councillor George Hesse be appointed as Farnham Town Council's representative on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme Board.

C19/25 Planning and Licensing Applications

In the absence of Andrew Laughton, Lead Member of the PLCG, Cllr Beaman reported that since the last Full Council meeting the PLCG had met 3 times (12 May, and 2 and 16 June) at appendices C, D and E.

The Minutes of all these meetings provided details of the agreed responses which also took into account comments received from ward councillors.

Most were routine applications which were not controversial but Cllr Beaman drew attention to the following applications : -

- An application to use former Homebase building in the retail park off Guildford Road as a Marks & Spencer Food outlet which was welcomed
- An objection was submitted to the planning application that had been submitted retrospectively for the erection of boarding fencing and gates at The Mulberry on Station Hill.
- Further information was sought regarding a premises licence submitted by Papa Johns Pizza located in Contec House on East Street that sought to allow delivery drivers to collect ordered food up to 0200 hours and at weekends 0300 hours. FTC expressed its concern over potential public nuisance for residential neighbours caused by noise and assurances had been sought.
- An objection was submitted to the proposed erection of 7 new dwellings on two parcels of land separated by Burnt Hill Road.
- An application had been received for use of the building used by Carpetright (Unit 3 Romans Business Park, East Street) by Greggs. There was some surprise that this was not a site location normally associated with Greggs. Although welcome, concern had been expressed over the adequacy of parking and how commercial waste would be dealt with.
- An application by Best Farnham Kebab (trading on Long Garden Walk) for a new premises licence had highlighted the need for those which hold street trading licences to also hold a premises licence if they wished to trade after 2300 hours.
- FTC had welcomed WBC's proposal to name the current unnamed road approaching Farnham Park as Graham Thorpe Way.

Cllr Beaman advised that FTC was represented in public speaking at the meeting of WBC's Planning Committee held on 4 June when an application for erection of 3 industrial / warehouse buildings on land south east of Farnham Sewage Treatment Works was determined. Although designated in the FNP for development of employment opportunities (the applicant states that 200 jobs would be created) there were concerns over the access, and size and scale of the development. This application had a planning officer recommendation for approval and was granted

Cllr Beaman advised that the Planning Inspectorate had finally published their decision, following a public inquiry held in February, allowing the appeal for up to 83 dwellings (24 of which would be "affordable") on land South of Old Park Lane. He said this was very disappointing especially given the problems created by the access arrangements using Cascade Way and Keepsake Close, particularly during the construction phase. This appeal represented yet another residential development that had been allowed on land not allocated for development in the FNP mainly due to the fact that Waverley does not have a

5 year housing land supply. A reserved matters application has still to be submitted giving more specific details of layout, appearance and scale of the proposed development.

Council expressed disappointment and concern over SCC's decision to appeal the refusal of monolith digital advertising at Hickleys corner. FTC had longstanding objections about digital advertising as conflicting with conservation area and heritage. This location was of concern on traffic safety grounds. There was also great disappointment that SCC had not discussed with FTC (which went against its place shaping commitments) and agreed a 10 year deal with Trueform knowing it would not exist after 2026. Cllr Fairclough agreed to take up with the Portfolio holder and Cllr MacLeod requesting SCC withdrew appeal and advise that FTC objected in strongest manner.

C20/25 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

C21/25 Reports from Other Councils

There were no reports from other councils.

C22/25 Reports from Outside Bodies

There were no reports from outside bodies.

C23/25 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 6pm on 31st July 2025.

C24/25 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Following a proposal by the Mayor, it was agreed to exclude the Press and Public in view of the confidential property and contractual matters that were to be discussed.

C25/25 Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group notes.

Council received additional confidential information relating to Land adjacent to Farnham Park that formed part of the planning application for the Ismaili Trust. Council reaffirmed its interest in securing the land as an extension of the Farnham Park SANG if this were possible and confirmed the Town Council's interest in taking on the land if that were practicable and achievable.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.28 pm.

Chairman

Date