



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Notes Environment Working Group

Time and date

16th July 2025, commenced at 4 p.m.

Place

Council Chamber

Environment Working Group Members Present:

Councillor Matt Brown (Lead Member)
Councillor Graham White
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor Tim Woodhouse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor David Beaman (in attendance)

Officers: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk) and Lucy Dorkins (Business and Facilities Manager)

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies received.

2. To receive any declarations of interest

None were declared.

3. Notes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 27th February were agreed.

4. Farnham in Bloom

The Farnham in Bloom Community Group had been re-established, with John Ely elected as Chair. One of the group's key aims will be to revitalise the Bloomin' Litter initiative by re-engaging existing volunteers, promoting the scheme to attract new members, and exploring a ward-based volunteer model proposed by local Councillors.

Sponsorship update and income

Cala Homes had agreed to be a new Gold Sponsor for 2025, and Waitrose & Partners Farnham a Silver Sponsor. The support from Waitrose will help fund two themed activity mornings for disadvantaged primary school children, focusing on families living in the Chantry and Beldham estate in Wrecclesham.

A total of £18,950 in sponsorship income had been pledged, with £13,535 received to date.

This figure excludes contributions for services provided by FTC such as:

- Grounds maintenance at the Lion and Lamb Yard
- Plants supplied to Weyhill in Bloom and Odiham Parish Council

The Working Group noted that with sponsorship and other income streams, the projected total is approximately £22,000.

Secret Gardens of Farnham

This year's competition had seen a rise in entries, including several new entrants. Judging will take place in August, with a Councillor joining representatives from the Farnham in Bloom Community Group and FTC staff as part of the panel.

All entrants will be invited to the Farnham in Bloom Awards, held at Squire's Garden Centre this October. Squire's is kindly donating £450 in gift vouchers for the winners, as part of their in-kind Gold Sponsorship.

5. Tree Survey 2025

The Working Group received details of the comprehensive tree survey that had been completed across all green spaces managed by Farnham Town Council. In total, 188 trees were assessed as requiring remedial works across 17 sites, with all identified works classified as Priority 3. It was noted that there was an inevitable increase in works given the amount of land transferred from the Borough Council and climate impacts.

Completed Works: Urgent tree maintenance at two sites, covering 24 trees, was successfully carried out in early July 2025.

Scheduled Works: A local contractor had been appointed to undertake work on a further three sites, affecting six trees; planned for September/October 2025.

An application had been submitted to Waverley Borough Council at the end of June 2025 for permission to carry out tree works in conservation areas—specifically at Gostrey Meadow and Haren Garden.

6. Allotments

It was noted the allotments waiting list was currently 118 people. There are only 6 allotments to be allocated with 25 plots allocated since March 2025.

i) Allotment Liaison Group

The Allotment Liaison Group met on the 27th of April and the notes of the meeting were received. Several matters were discussed:

ii) Uncultivated plots

The Working Group noted 14 plots across Farnham's allotment sites remained uncultivated and plot holders had been contacted in line with tenancy rules. If no satisfactory response or explanation was received following two written notifications the tenancies would be terminated and additional plots would be available.

iii) Water and hosepipes

The Working Group heard that several allotment holders had made unauthorised water connections to their plots, which constitutes a serious breach of the Tenancy Agreement. This issue was particularly pronounced at the Wrecclesham site, where water usage had surged to more than double the average across other locations. All unauthorised fixings were currently being removed. In order to manage demand and improve water access for compliant users, an additional water tank was being installed at Wrecclesham.

iv) Insurance

A number of allotment tenants had chosen not to pay the £2 annual public liability insurance, withholding this amount from their overall payments. The highest number of refusals was concentrated at the Wrecclesham site, with six tenants declining coverage. Farnham Town Council was writing to all individuals who had opted out of the public liability insurance and required to provide evidence that allotment cover was included under their household insurance, in accordance with tenancy requirements.

v) Disputes and housekeeping

The Working Group received an update on the Six Bells dispute noting that the case has highlighted several additional tenancy breaches requiring attention including:
Instances of decking installations on plots, which are not permitted under allotment rules and reports of barbecues being held on site, raising concerns around safety and regulation.

vi) Dogs

Recent requests to allow dogs on allotment sites had been reviewed, but permission was not agreed in order to preserve site safety and hygiene. The Working Group endorsed the approach of assistance dogs only were permitted.

7. Parks and Open Spaces

i) In Bloom and Blooming Friends

Judging for Farnham in Bloom 2025 was well underway, with visits taking place at several locations:

Cemeteries — including Badshot Lea, Hale, and West Street — were judged on 4 July 2025

Town Centre judging took place on 8 July 2025

Farnham Train Station was judged earlier on 30 June 2025

The judging panel had been highly complimentary of Farnham Train Station, calling it one of the finest examples nationally of Town Council involvement in enhancing a station environment.

Inspired by this recognition, Farnham Town Council and Friends of Farnham in Bloom were now exploring the creation of a *Friends of Farnham Station* volunteer group to further enrich the station and build community engagement.

ii) Gostrey Meadow playground

Phase 1 was due for completion by the start of the school holidays. Current completion date was the end of July.

Phase 2 would commence once the amenity block was completed. Planning permission for the amenity block had been granted.

iii) Gostrey Meadow – Borelli Shelter

The Borelli Shelter remained closed due to structural concerns. Farnham Town Council officers consulted a tree consultancy, which confirmed that the adjacent tree is healthy and poses no immediate risk.

Officers were currently seeking quotes to assess the shelter's structural stability.

The goal is to preserve the tree and maintain the shelter on-site, allowing it to continue providing shade and shelter in the future.

iv) Gostrey Meadow – Union Road/Longbridge junction entrance

The entrance affected by the SCC Farnham Infrastructure Programme was reopened on 28th June 2025 following construction works. However, concerns have since been raised about accessibility, as the newly installed sloped pathway from the pavement into the park is currently too steep to meet Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance standards. Farnham Town Council officers had requested quotes to re-profile the entrance, aiming to achieve full accessibility while maintaining safety and usability for all visitors.

v) Gostrey Meadow footbridge

The Working Group noted a structural inspection had been conducted by Garrick Consulting Engineers on 14th May 2025. The report identified a number of essential remedial works required to maintain safety, durability and structural integrity including the sealing of open laminated joints within the glulam beams.

vii) Wey powered Gostrey lights

The Working Group was advised that a resident living adjacent to Gostrey Meadow had proposed exploring the feasibility of installing a simple paddle generator beneath the Longbridge bridge to harness water flow and generate electricity that could power the lighting at Gostrey Meadow, supporting sustainability efforts within the park.

Further assessment was required in collaboration with engineering consultants and stakeholders to determine viability and environmental and planning regulations. It was agreed to invite the resident to discuss the possibility further.

viii) Riverside Walk

The Working Group discussed the quality of work delivered, and the time taken to complete the project which was unsatisfactory as it had significantly overrun and was impacting on residents.

Recommendation: FTC make representations to SCC, WBC and Crest Nicholson over the quality of the work and the length of time taken.

8. Cemeteries and Burial Matters

Members received a detailed update on current burial figures and the administration of Farnham's cemeteries, including the results of recent memorial safety testing.

A total of 54 memorials had failed safety inspections across all cemetery sites, with the majority relating to common graves. For graves with identifiable owners, correspondence was underway to inform them of the results and complete paid for repairs if agreed.

In cases where notable memorials linked to untraceable families, Farnham Town Council was covering the remedial costs through its Memorial Budget, helping to preserve the character and heritage of the cemeteries.

Badshot Lea Memorial

Members reviewed an issue involving a recent non-compliant memorial headstone which breached the Cemetery Regulations and potentially copyright laws.

The installed memorial deviated from the signed proof submitted to FTC, prompting several concerns:

1. Height discrepancy;
2. Unauthorised engraving on the reverse side, which is prohibited under current memorial regulations;
3. Unapproved design change.

Members recognised the profound sensitivity surrounding the memorial headstone and emphasised the importance of responding with empathy and understanding. Concerns were raised that the Stonemason had not exercised appropriate professional judgement knowing the non-compliance with cemetery regulations, and had also seen correspondence making it clear the family had knowingly wished to breach the Regulations. Members agreed that the matter be pursued initially with the Stonemason and the Copyright holder.

Other issues

The Working Group received details of two formal complaints have recently received concerning cemetery operations:

- i) **Non-Resident Interment Fee Concern.** A family member of a former Farnham resident who relocated out of area some 30 years ago had expressed concern over being charged non-resident interment fees. Officers had reviewed the policy interpretation and potential exceptions and agreed that an additional advisory note should be added to make it clearer that the resident fee applied to current residents/council tax payers and that if someone moved out (eg to a care home) discretion would only be considered for a limited time (eg three years)
- ii) **Spoil Displacement during Burial Preparation.** A complaint was received about a grave site that had been partially covered with spoil while a neighbouring plot was being excavated for a new burial. Unfortunately, the affected grave belonged (unknowingly) to relative of the complainant. The difficulties of placing temporary spoil to facilitate a burial was discussed, and it was agreed an additional note could be added to the details for the purchase of a grave to emphasise the potential for this happening and the FTC aims for respectful site management and maintaining high operational standards. Once advised, the gravedigger resolved the problem ahead of the funeral.

Recommendation: FTC to update the Cemetery Regulations document and the EROB and Notification of Burial forms.

9 Date of next scheduled meeting

The date of the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 11 September.

The meeting ended at 6.30 p.m.

Notes written by Lucy Dorkins