



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

D Notes

Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Monday 20th October, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Strategy & Resources Members Present:

Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor Tony Fairclough
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), Lucy Dorkins (part), Andrew Fergusson (part), Jenny de Quervain (part), Ben Binnell (part).

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Fairclough and Cllr Mirylees made declarations of interest in view of their roles on the Executive at Waverley Borough Council.

The Town Clerk made a declaration of Interest as a Trustee of the Farnham Building Preservation Trust.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th September were approved as a correct record after Cllr Beaman's name was removed from those who had sent apologies.

4. Finance Report

The Committee reviewed the financial position to 30 September 2025 with reports attached at Appendices B, C, D and E including the Trial Balance, Income and Expenditure, Investments and Debtors. BACS payments were available for review. Overall income and expenditure were on target, with some minor variances to be addressed through virements.

The Working Group noted the expected pressures for the coming year, particularly if the Community Asset Transfers were completed and preparations for Local Government Reorganisation were confirmed.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that Council note the Finance Report, including the Trial Balance and Income & Expenditure Report to 30 September 2025, and endorse the proposed virements at the mid-year point as part of sound financial management.

5. External Auditor's Report 2024-25

The Working Group received the unqualified External Auditor's Report at Appendix E which confirmed compliance with Proper Practices. There were two minor administrative issues regarding a minute reference, and the timing of councillor reviews of month-end bank reconciliations, the latter of which had already been reported.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that Council welcome the completion of the External Audit for 2024/25 with an unqualified opinion, acknowledging the auditor's comments regarding the incorrect minute reference and the timing of councillor reviews of bank reconciliations.

6. Contracts & Assets update

An update from the Assets Task Group was received at Appendix F.

- i) The Working Group discussed transferring governance software from Modern.Gov to GovMeetings by Cloudy IT with the details set out at Appendix G and including training for councillors and staff. The transition is planned before the February 2026 renewal of modern.gov. It was noted that the transparency documents had already been transferred onto the new website.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that Council agree the change of governance software from Modern.Gov to Decisions GovMeetings by Cloudy IT.

- ii) A presentation of the benefits of workflow and customer relationship management software by Abavus was discussed. The software was in use with many principal authorities and also a number of town and parish councils. As part of due diligence officers had reviewed other options and also met (online) with staff at Royal Wootton Bassett and Chippenham Councils to share their experience. It was noted that the software costs could be covered by the savings from the modern.gov software. The project would be implemented over several months and would include process mapping and automated workflow to improve the customer experience and work allocation.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that Council purchase the Abavus CRM system and implement modules on a phased basis over the next year.

- iii) The Working Group followed up the Asset Task Group analysis of the proposal with detailed discussion on the final design and layout of the Gostrey Amenity Building (details of which had been circulated to all councillors). It was noted that the intention was to create a high end quality building which reflected many elements of Farnham as a World Craft Town, without being too costly. Features which were agreed to recommend to Council included a back lit designed image in the perforated sheets at the top of the building, tiled designs reflecting Farnham within the different toilet cubicles and literary quotations from Farnham in the pavements approaching the building. The design elements would be offered to local artists and also to students at the UCA. Final changes included a urinal/trough in the male side to minimise queues, and robust internal fittings.

The schedule for tenders (published on 3rd November for return on 5th December was agreed.) and it was agreed not to pursue a borehole in Gostrey Meadow after a cost-benefit review.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that Council approve the:

- 1) Updated Gostrey Amenity Building design proposals for tender;**
- 2) The proposed design elements be endorsed to celebrate Farnham's arts, crafts and literary heritage;**
- 3) Town Clerk liaising with Plan A on final clarifications before tender.**

- iv) The Working Group reviewed the latest position on Community Asset Transfers with Farnham having submitted 17 expressions of interest (EOI) with three others in preparation. 12 business plans had been submitted and 9 invoices paid for the Waverley analysis to be done. Five expressions of interest (Waggon Yard Garages, Montrose House, the Memorial Hall, Farnham Park and Six Bells allotments were awaiting Waverley review. One application (Morley Road Recreation Ground) was on the first tranche for consideration by the Waverley Executive. It had been suggested that FTC could consider making an offer to purchase the Waggon Yard Garages and Montrose House outside the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process as the cost of dilapidations and investment required would likely make the cost a peppercorn because of future savings for the Borough. It was also suggested that Hale Recreation Ground (not on the initial FTC list as it was protected in a Trust) could be transferred under different legislation.

Cllr Fairclough indicated that the pressures on Waverley staff were such that it seemed unlikely that maybe only five assets a month would be processed. The Working Group noted green spaces potentially at risk had been the initial priorities (even before local government reorganisation emerged) and assets that would link to Council priorities and give the greatest community benefit. Some had significant costs attached hence the request for a package of transfers with some income generating assets proposed to defray the costs of transfer. and the Working Group agreed to identify the top assets from the list that had been submitted including, Farnham Park, Morley Road Recreation Ground, the allotments (Weybourne and Six Bells), Borelli Walk and Brightwells Green Space, Waggon Yard garages and the Memorial Hall. From a Surrey assets perspective the Library Gardens were still under discussion. It was noted that Weybourne allotments was agreed to be transferred as long ago as 2013. It was also noted that the Town Council would still have to do its own due diligence if transfers were agreed.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that

- 1) Progress on the Community Assets Transfers be noted and that the Town Clerk continue discussions with Waverley Borough on the outstanding EOIs and Business Plans;**
- 2) The priority list of community assets be endorsed;**

3) The Town Clerk is authorised to enter into negotiations for the purchase of relevant assets in parallel with the CAT process.

- v) The Working Group noticed there was a concern over one of the playground equipment items which had been raised with the manufacturer. FTC was arranging for an independent review of the installer's assessment. It was agreed that the designed age for the playground (primary school age) should be made clear with signs

Separately, a review had taken place over the standing see saw which was intended to be an accessible seesaw. Following further investigation, it was noted that the piece supplied was not accessible, and the Working Group recommended that an accessible seesaw be installed in phase 2 at a cost of £15,000 noting that the fence line may need adjustment for its inclusion.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that an accessible seesaw be installed in phase 2 of the playground.

7. Farnham Building Preservation Trust

Bob Heathcote, Secretary & Treasurer of the Farnham Building Preservation Trust attending to see if the Council would be interested in continuing the legacy of the Farnham Building Preservation Trust. The background to the Trust and the building it had saved were included in Appendix L. The Trust now found that the cost of buying a building to restore and pass on meant that its opportunity to take on new projects was limited. Its most recent project (one of Farnham's oldest buildings in Wrecclesham which had been the home of Billy Beldham) was now rented and could be sold to create funds for disbursement to a few projects, or invested to be paid over a number of years. Any grant investment would ideally be made to give a sustainable future to buildings being supported. The Building Preservation Trust had also approached the Farnham Society to see if it might be interested as an alternate recipient of the Trust.

The Working Group welcomed the approach and discussed a number of options which might be employed. It was agreed to recommend to Council that it should offer to take on the Trusteeship along the same lines as the South Street Trust with the Council acting as the managing Trustee, noting that the potential endowment could be of a similar value. Cllr White was invited to attend the next meeting of the Trust.

Recommendation to Council. It is recommended that Council agrees in principle to Farnham Town Council taking on trusteeship of the Farnham Building Preservation Trust, subject to further discussions with the current trustees.

8. Local Government Reorganisation and the pilot Neighbourhood Area Committee

The Working Group received an update on Surrey's local government reorganisation, and noted that the delayed announcement was expected shortly. The pilot Neighbourhood Area Committee had a preliminary workshop with good attendance and its results were at Appendix H with its first meeting scheduled for 3 November 2025. FTC officers were working with the Surrey team in making the arrangements.

9. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

The Working Group discussed concerns over the poor design of the new 'raingardens,' were neither what was promised or fit-for-purpose, and seemed likely to cause water run-off and higher maintenance costs. FTC was unwilling to adopt them if these matters remained. There was also considerable concern over the multiple electrical cabinets in West Street which were a

blight and not in keeping with the Conservation Area. The latest project timetable was also noted.

It was agreed that the Leader and Town Clerk should raise these matters with Cllr Oliver, Leader of Surrey and that Cllr Hesse should raise relevant matters at the FIP Board.

There was also discussion on the work required to complete the pathway and lighting on Borelli Walk (near the Youth Shelter) and it was agreed that the costs may have to be met from the FIP earmarked reserve if the project was to be completed in one go.

Recommendation to Council:

It is recommended that up to £20,000 be allocated form the FIP earmarked reserve to enable the footpath and lighting to be completed on Borelli Walk.

10. Reports of Task Groups

The Working Group received the Notes of the Infrastructure Planning Group at Appendix J. It had listened to a presentation on the Masterplan for the Suez site at Runfold which was proposed to include a mixed use of activities (SANG, Biodiversity Net Gain, sports facilities and housing). The proposal was being included in Waverley's call for sites.

There was also an update on Waverley's Local Plan and how to proceed with the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Beaman proposed that the Neighbourhood Plan should be updated without housing allocations. The Working Group also noted that the draft Urban Capacity and Infrastructure Study procurement document was with Claire Upton Brown at Waverley and FTC were still awaiting feedback.

In terms of Conservation Areas, there was concern about little action progressing, noting that many of the actions were the responsibility of the Borough Council but it was agreed to have Conservation issues as a standing item on the Infrastructure task Group agenda.

Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that Farnham proceed with data collection based on the Hart Densification Study including infrastructure to be funded from earmarked reserves.

11. Review of Council Policies

This item was deferred.

12. Town Clerk update

The Town Clerk reported on the need for a replacement uniform for the Town Crier. The previous Town Crier had had a uniform in lieu of the honorarium not claimed over several years, and it was agreed to make a similar offer to the current Town Crier using Michael's Civic Robes Ltd.

13. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 8th December at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 5.55 pm

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

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