



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

D Notes

Strategy & Resources

Time and date

2.00 pm on Monday 19th January, 2026

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 Michaela Martin
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor George Murray (ex-Officio)
Councillor Graham White (Lead Member)

Officers:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Lucy Dorkins (Business & Facilities Manager --Part), Jenny de Quervain (Civic and Planning Officer - Part)

1. Apologies

There were apologies from Cllr Laughton.

2. Declarations of interest

The Town Clerk declared an interest as a trustee of the Farnham Building Preservation Trust and left the room for the discussion of this item.

3. Minutes

The Notes of the meeting held on 11 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Finance Report

The Working Group received a comprehensive finance report covering the Council's financial position as at 31 December 2025.

Members noted the bank reconciliation, income and expenditure position, investment balances, earmarked reserves and the level of outstanding debtors with the Town Clerk responding to specific questions on individual budget lines. The position was broadly in line with expectations for the third quarter of the financial year, with variations explained by timing of income receipts and the phasing of expenditure against approved budgets.

Income was showing as 162% of budgeted income mainly as a result of the Coxbridge CIL receipt and higher than expected grant income. Expenditure was running at 96%, accounted for primarily by the playground project and professional advice for the Amenity Building prior to tendering.

The Town Clerk explained the earmarked reserves in detail, advising that the playground earmarked reserve was to be transferred to meet the capital cost of the project, but these were usually done at the final quarter. In terms of Tourism Development, it was noted this money could be used for the replacement finger-post arms. In terms of the Wrecclesham Gateway project, Cllr Martin offered to follow up with Surrey officers if she had details of the concerns to the location proposed.

The Working Group reviewed the proposed Investment Strategy for 2026, noting the importance of balancing security and liquidity and agreed the Strategy for adoption by Council.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Investment Strategy at Annex 1 be adopted.

The Fees and Charges for 2026/27 were considered, with members noting that the proposals broadly maintained existing charging structures, with selective increases where justified by rising costs and market conditions. There was a new late payment fee of £20 proposed for allotment holders given the experience in 2025 which was costly in administration terms.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Fees and Charges for 2026/27 at Annex 2 be adopted.

The Internal Auditor's Interim Review (January 2026) at Appendix I to the agenda and the accompanying officers' comments were received. Members noted the positive assurance provided, together with recommendations aimed at strengthening procedures and documentation, which officers were progressing. A specific recommendation on the new Assertion 10 would be considered by Strategy & Resources in March, and the comment on the backup Petty Cash float was noted as being in line with Financial regulations but would be reviewed with a view to maintaining a level in line with expected needs over the financial year.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Interim Internal Auditor's report be welcomed.

The Committee noted information received from Guildford and Waverley Electoral Services indicating that the projected cost of the 2027 elections was estimated to be £12 per elector - a very significant increase from an estimated £70,000 to over £375,000. Members expressed concern at the scale of the increase compared with previous elections and agreed that this would need to be robustly challenged.

The latest BACS and cheque payments were reported as being available for inspection.

5. Precept Report 2026/27

The Working Group considered the Precept Report for 2026/27. The report set out the financial context, budget assumptions and the options on the level of precept required to support the Council's agreed service priorities in the context of a year of great uncertainty with pressures resulting from local government reorganisation and taking on additional land from the Principal authorities. It was also noted that the level of income from investments would be reduced as a result of taking forward the capital projects and the reduced value of reserves. The Working Group noted the consistent and prudent management of the income and expenditure for more than a decade evidenced by increases continuously below the sector average increase and below the capped level of increases set by both the Borough and County Councils over the same period.

Members discussed the balance between maintaining service quality, meeting future liabilities and the impact on local taxpayers. They also discussed whether to set an in-year savings target or use some of the council reserves to reduce the potential increase in Farnham's proportion of the council tax, but the unexpected and significant increase proposed by Waverley Borough Council for the elections cost alone highlighted the financial challenges ahead.

After a long discussion, the Working Group agreed the recommended precept for 2026/27 for recommendation to Full Council should be a modest increase of 16p per week or £8.22 per annum which would still be below the 2025/26 sector average for a town or parish council.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the precept level for 2026/27 be £1,703,930 representing a cost of £91.67 per annum for a Band D property (£1.76 per week).

6. Grants 2026/27

The Working Group received an update on the proposed Community Grants and Service Level Agreement allocations for 2026/27, following consideration by the Community & Wellbeing Working Group.

Members were reminded that the budget had increased the sum available for Community grants by £30,000 allowing for further in-year allocations if required. A follow-up discussion was planned to finalise the Community & Wellbeing grant report for Council. It was noted that the Farnham Hospital Hoppa scheme had become the most used since its launch in 2025 and an additional allocation of £5,000 was proposed for 2025/26 as well as a contribution of £5,000 for 2026/27.

The Leader advised he had attended all of the SLA grant meetings this year and had been impressed by all the presentations.

The Working Group noted that the Community Initiatives Fund had a balance of £15,000 for 2025/26 and it was proposed by Cllr Beaman, seconded by Cllr Murray and agreed *nem con* that this be recommended to Council to be used as a contribution from Farnham Town Council to support the community Buy-a-brick campaign for the Farnham Museum.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that £15,000 be contributed to the buy-a-brick campaign for the Farnham Museum from the balance of the 25/26 Community Initiatives Fund.

7. Gostrey Meadow Amenity Building

The Working Group received an update on the Gostrey Meadow Amenity Building project. Members noted the assessments from the Council's professional advisers to the 11 bids received for the project and the arrangements for the four shortlisted contractor interviews scheduled for 21 January. The Town Clerk advised a report on the outcome and a recommendation would be made to Council in the confidential part of the meeting.

In terms of project management, Plan A had been appointed to undertake this role and would have regular site meetings with the Town Clerk and Business & Facilities Manager. It was agreed to recommend to Council that a small councillor reference group also be set up to discuss any issues that may arise.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that a councillor reference group comprising The Mayor, the Leader, Cllr Fairclough and Cllr Brown be established to work with officers during the construction of the Gostrey Amenity Building.

The Working Group noted that an application for £600,000 of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy funding had been submitted and that officers had responded to follow-up questions from Waverley Borough Council. A decision was awaited. Subject to funding, it was hoped that work would commence around Easter and would be completed by February 2027.

8. Risk Management Report 2025/26

The Working Group received the Risk Management Report for 2025/26 which would go to full Council.

Members considered the key risks identified and the reviews undertaken by individual Working Groups and the mitigation measures in place. The latest review by external advisor Worknest had just been completed and identified a number of matters for further review, some of which was availability of documentation on key risks. Officers were currently re viewing these and a further report would be prepared for Strategy & Resources along with proposed actions.

The report was agreed for recommendation to Council.

Recommendations to Council

- i) The Risk Management report be welcomed and adopted;**
- ii) The work done by the Working Groups in managing risk be noted.**
- iii) A further report be considered by Strategy & Resources Working Group on the actions required from the Worknest independent review in January 2026.**

9. Local Government Reorganisation

The Working Group received an update on progress with Local Government Reorganisation, the preparations for the initial shadow meetings of the new West Surrey authority and findings from the Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs)

Members noted the work being undertaken through the Neighbourhood and Area Committee pilots and the positive comments from county officers on the benefits of working with Farnham Town Council. Cllr Earwaker advised the emerging themes from each of the NACs were focussed

on wellbeing, younger people or both. An evaluation report had been prepared which was being submitted to the County Council Executive on 27th January. [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 27 January 2026, 2.00 pm - Surrey County Council](#)

Dates had also now been set for additional meetings of the NACS which was welcomed to continue the worthwhile work that had started in the successful pilot with a higher level of engagement with the community than in some of the other pilots. The Working Group noted the positive comments on the support given by Jenny de Quervain in enabling the Farnham NAC go so well.

The Mayor drew attention to the Surrey Association of Local Councils brochure, Strong and Vibrant Communities, which had been part funded by Farnham Town Council, outlining the role of town and parish councils in reorganisation and their benefits in a unitary structure, was received and welcomed. A copy can be found at www.surreyalc.gov.uk/2026/01/salc-strong-vibrant-communities-report. The report underlines the opportunities to maximise the benefits of town and parish councils in a new unitary structure and would be made available to candidates standing in the upcoming elections.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council

- 1) Welcome the continuation of the NACs in line with what Council had requested;**
- 2) Congratulate the Surrey Association of Local Councils on preparing an important and valuable document about the sector's contribution in a new unitary structure.**

10. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

The Working Group considered the latest position on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme, including phasing of works, the delivery of rain gardens and associated street furniture.

Members discussed progress on site, design and maintenance issues, and the importance of ensuring that completed works were fit for purpose and sympathetic to the town's character. The removal of the 'raingarden' outside Boots in the Borough was welcomed, but in line with Council's decision, it was hoped Surrey's proposed remediation works would enable the raingardens in Downing Street would be effective. It was noted that there was a proposal to install tree pits in the Borough in place of the 'rain gardens' and that if these were not possible, high quality planters should be used to allow additional greening and soften the landscape.

The Working Group noted the updated map of locations for Castle Street was still awaited from Atkins, and avoiding the mistakes of Downing street was essential so as not to impact on the character of Castle Street and minimise impact on events. It was important to continue to fight for the ironstones in Castle Street to be traditionally laid.

The Working Group welcomed the night works taking place to implement the crossovers in Downing Street and that the issue of excessive signage in Downing Street was being addressed. The Working Group agreed that if appropriate signs could be fixed to buildings as previously it would enable a reduction in clutter. It was agreed officers should progress this with Surrey and property owners. Members were concerned about the appearance of new sign boards in areas where they were in conflict with the County signboards policy, and the Mayor offered to speak with one specific business where this was a problem.

The Working Group raised concern about the redundant telephone boxes in the Woolmead which were still in situ and were hampering the opportunity to make improvements. It was agreed officers should make representation about the removal of these obsolete boxes.

In terms of the additional lighting proposed for Borelli Walk, Members noted the correct fittings for the lamp columns were on order. It was also noted that Waverley were considering a contribution to the trenching work that had been undertaken to supplement the agreed contribution of £20k from FTC to install additional lights near the Youth Shelter.

Members also discussed the need for improved landscaping at the South Street entrance to Borelli Walk once the Belisha Beacon was completed. Officers advised that this could be undertaken by FTC once the land had been transferred by Waverley under the Asset Transfer programme.

11. Contracts & Assets update

The Working Group received a verbal update on contracts and assets. This included progress on the depot and Nursery Spring clean and the asset inventory review, with items identified for disposal subject to inspection by councillors. Changes to the public convenience cleaning arrangements were also discussed with a transition away from using contracted staff.

The Working Group noted costs for two replacement lawnmowers were being reviewed with a view to replacing ones approaching the end of their useful life from the machinery budget in the current financial year.

12. Potential Transfer of trusts to Farnham Town Council

The Town Clerk left the room for the discussion of this item.

The Working Group received a report prepared by the Farnham Building Preservation Trust and an update from the Leader following discussions regarding the Council potentially becoming trustee of the Trust in place of the current trustees. It was noted the form of the trust would be similar to the Farnham South Street Trust and that a transfer would take place once the current asset was sold with the receipts of c £800 to £900k invested to be used for the objects of the Trust. As the current trust with Members and Trustees and a linked company limited by guarantee was involved for VAT purposes, legal and charity commission advice would need to be sought.

Recommendations

It is recommended:

- 1) Farnham Town Council agree in principle to take on the Trusteeship of the Farnham Building Preservation Trust and takes necessary legal and other advice in conjunction with the Farnham Building Preservation Trust to achieve the optimum arrangement;**
- 2) A joint Working Group be established with the Trustees of the Farnham Building Preservation Trust to ensure a smooth transition and agree amended articles and the necessary changes required with the Charity Commission and Companies House;**
- 3) The Council takes on the Trusteeship once the sale of the property is completed with the intention that the Trustee manages a grant programme to deliver the objectives of the Trust with an advisory group including a representative of the Farnham Society and others with expertise in the objects of the Trust as required.**

- 4) A further report be submitted for decision of Council once the form of the revised Trust is prepared.**

Members also noted information from the Farnham Swimming Baths Trust and potential implications for Farnham Town Council as landowner. Further discussions were to be arranged.

I 3. Review of Council Policies

It was noted that because of the pressure of business on the agenda, consideration of new or revised Council policies had been deferred and would be brought to a future meeting with an additional meeting being considered.

I 4. Town Clerk update

The Town Clerk provided an update on current matters, including developments relating to Farnham Museum and the likely procurement of the museum management service; the potential for live streaming council meetings which would be included in the review of Standing Orders; arrangements for a forthcoming VIP visit linked to Farnham's Craft Town status; and preparations for the 35th anniversary visit from Andernach in June with the Oberbürgermeister and Bürgermeister of Andernach along with the concert by the Andernach City Orchestra.

I 5. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Monday 9th March at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 6.16 pm

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

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