



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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Notes Culture & Business Working Group

Time and date

10.30 am on Thursday 15th January, 2026

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Culture & Business Working Group Members Present:

Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Brodie Mauluka
Councillor Kika Mirylees (Lead Member)
Councillor Graham White

Officers: Oliver Cluskey and Megan Cross (Events Assistant)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

None were made.

3. Notes of the Last Meeting

Notes were approved.

4. Review of Recent Events

Members discussed the recently launched 'Town of Culture' and agreed there was not enough capacity to get the application in by 31st March 2026.

a) October Craft Month

Members noted that 159 events were held throughout October and that visitor feedback was positive. Frensham Heights had become a key partner and sponsor and had hosted a successful launch event. Feedback showed that 88% of visitors were aware that Farnham is a World Craft Town, and that there were now 5,700 followers on Instagram as a result of sustained posting throughout the year. Members suggested that Farnham Craft Town should consider creating a TikTok account to further raise awareness among a younger audience.

Members agreed that the Farnham Lantern Festival was reaching new audiences and engaging residents who would not typically attend Farnham Town Council events. Members also agreed to change the date of the 2026 festival to either Thursday 29 October or Friday 30 October.

Recommendation to Council: Investigate setting up a TikTok account for Farnham World Craft Town

b) Christmas Lights Switch on, 15 November

Members agreed that the Farnham Christmas Lights Switch-On was extremely busy, with Gostrey Meadow reaching full capacity, resulting in significant benefits, particularly for local hospitality businesses in the town centre.

Members noted that the new lighting scheme did not illuminate simultaneously in the Town at 4.30pm. Contractors had been made aware of this issue, which will be rectified for 2026.

Members were also informed that a meeting had been arranged with the new contractors to discuss the scheme.

c) Christmas Market, 14 December

Members agreed that the Market had been very successful, with what appeared to be record attendance. Feedback from visitors had been very positive, including from those travelling from as far away as Chichester. Members also noted and enjoyed the performance by the Michael Bubl   tribute act.

5. Future Events and Projects

a) Farnham Farmers' Market and other Markets

Members noted that the Farnham Farmers' Market would continue on the fourth Sunday of the month (except December) but due to the impact of Farnham Infrastructure Programme on footfall, the Vegan Market organisers had decided not to go ahead in 2026. The following dates were proposed by ACVR Events for the use of Central Car Park for Markets in 2026:

31 May – Artist and Makers Market	21 June – Antiques and Vintage
20 Sept – Antiques and Vintage	4 Oct – Artist and Makers Market
29 Nov – Antiques and Vintage	

Members suggested contacting Frensham Heights to see which operator organised their market as the stalls were very good.

Action: Events Manager contact Frensham Heights

b) Music in the Vineyard

Members were informed that Specsavers were confirmed as Silver sponsors of Music in the Vineyard and their sponsorship would help cover the cost of the bands. Specsavers would also be attending the events with a stand to engage with the community.

January – The Revivals Band (Charity: Hale Community and Youth Centre)

February – The Why Band (Charity: Bake Natter and Roll Farnham WI)

March – Brobed Stils (Charity TBC)

c) Farnham Literary Festival

Members noted that the Farnham Literary Festival programme was complete with over 60 events scheduled and that the brochure was about to go to print. Members were happy with the range of talks and workshops on offer and the political headliners.

Key Authors/Events included:

• Reeta Chakrabarti	• Alexander Armstrong
• Ruth Ware	• Lord Michael Heseltine
• Merlin Crossingham	• TJ Power and Dr Martha Deiros Collado
• Joel Dommett	• Jeremy Hunt and Vince Cable

Members expressed disappointment that Reel Cinema was still yet to be involved in the festival, despite attending meetings regarding the 2026 festival.

d) Summer Events schedule

Members were informed that the sustainability festival had officially been renamed the Farnham Wellbeing and Sustainability Festival, with an increased emphasis on a dedicated wellbeing zone. Cllr Mirylees requested that Hampton Estate be contacted regarding the possibility of delivering a talk, and that officers explore involvement from Compassion in World Farming.

Members were informed that officers were still in the process of booking bands for Music in the Meadow, and that all charity tea tent slots had now been allocated. Members requested that officers book a folk or folk-rock band for one of the dates.

Members were informed that The Hedgehogs had decided to continue with Farnham Carnival without the involvement of the Farnham Lions, and that World Music Day would take place the following day. Members expressed concerns regarding stewarding arrangements and the need for the event to comply with new legislation (Martyn's Law).

e) Farnham Food Festival and Farnham Christmas Market

Members discussed alternative options for the Farnham Food Festival and the Farnham Christmas Market in 2026 due to the impact of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme.

Members agreed to aim to proceed with closing East Street to traffic and using the green space at Brightwells for both events, and not to use The Borough or Castle Street in 2026. Members noted that, for the Farnham Food Festival, the cookery demonstration stage could be positioned as a central feature within Brightwells, with stalls facing away from the green space to help preserve the grass.

Members agreed that officers should arrange a meeting with Brightwells and Surrey County Council to discuss this option and to assess the financial viability of the events.

Action: Events Manager to speak to SCC regarding Brightwells and East Street

f) Library Garden Events

Members discussed the potential to explore future events in the Farnham Library Gardens as paid, ticketed events with food and drink vendors. Suggested ideas included Shakespeare performances, plays, and operas during the summer months. Members noted that this could only be progressed once the lease had been formalised.

Action: Events Manager to get update on lease

g) Proposed Events

Members were informed of the dates proposed by the for future events. Members agreed that Farnham Town Council would support the principle of a Farnham Half Marathon, provided it did not clash with the Farnham Literary Festival.

h) Abbeyfield Celebrating 40 years

Members were informed that the Abbeyfield Wey Valley Society's 40-year celebration would take place on Saturday 19 September 2026 in Gostrey Meadow.

Members were also informed by Cllr White of the 35-year anniversary of Farnham's town twinning with Andernach, with celebrations planned for June, including a concert at Farnham Maltings involving the Farnham Youth Choir. Cllr Mauluka offered his support if required.

6. Business Update

a) BID

Members were updated on Business Improvement District (BID) matters. The Events Manager, Cllr Martin and Cllr Fairclough had attended BID board meetings. Members were informed that Farnham Town Council's relationship with the BID had become very challenging with the current set up and expressed concern for the future. Officers were requested to arrange a meeting with the BID Board to clarify and address Farnham Town Council's relationship with the BID going forward.

Action: Events Manager to arrange meeting with Chair and Vice Chair of the BID

b) Museum of Farnham

Cllr Mirylees updated the Working Group on the current position of the Museum. Members were informed that Waverley Borough Council would need to put the management of the service out to tender through procurement. This development could affect Farnham Town Council's position. Members acknowledged that additional support was still urgently required and agreed to refer the matter to the Strategy and Resources Working Group.

Members noted that there were ongoing discussions about exploring a potential long-term partnership with the National Trust.

7. Sponsorship Update

2025-26:

• Principal Summer: £3,000 Kidd Rapinet	• Principal Summer: £3,000 Shaw Gibbs
• Gold Food Festival: £1,000 Kidd Rapinet	• Gold Food Festival: £1,000 Bush Hotel
• Bronze Food Festival: £300 Durham House Chiropractic Clinic	• Silver October Craft Month: £500 Frensham Heights
• Christmas Lights Switch-On: £1,000 Shaw Gibbs	• Principal Christmas: £3,500 Laithwaites
• Bronze Christmas Lights Switch-On: £300 Ranger Home Care	• Gold Christmas Market: £1,000 Kidd Rapinet
• Gold Christmas Market: £1,000 Rowledge Family Vets	• Silver Music in the Vineyard: £500 Specsavers
• Principal Farnham Literary Festival: £3,000 Frensham Heights	• Silver Farnham Literary Festival: £300 Specsavers

Members were informed that Specsavers had just been confirmed as silver sponsors of Music in the Vineyard and Farnham Literary Festival.

Cllr White had begun conversations with a local business for potential sponsorship.

8. Financial Update

Members noted current position.

9. Items for Future Meetings

Members agreed that they would like to explore the idea of 'paid' events in the Library Garden once the lease had been granted. Events would be more 'high brow' and include theatre and opera.

Members discussed the further funding needed for the Museum building and agreed that the building itself would be an asset to the community

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 16th April 2026 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 1.15 pm

Notes written by Oliver Cluskey