



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Notes Strategy & Finance Working Group

Time and date

9.30 am on Tuesday 12th January, 2021

Place

Held remotely via Zoom

Attendees:

Members: Councillors John Neale (Lead Member), David Attfield, David Beaman, Roger Blishen, Brian Edmonds, Mark Merryweather, Carole Cockburn, Sally Dickson, Alan Earwaker, George Hesse and Pat Evans (ex-Officio)

Officers: Iain McCready (Business and Facilities Manager), Iain Lynch (Town Clerk) and Clare Kennett (Governance & Community Engagement)

1. Apologies

POINTS	ACTION
No apologies were received.	

2. Declarations of interest

POINTS	ACTION
No declarations of interest were received.	

3. Minutes of the last meeting

POINTS	ACTION
The notes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020 were agreed. It was noted that the Town Clerk had not received any representations from members relating to agenda item 10.2 and the Licensing Policy Review consultation. Members agreed to send comments to the Town Clerk ahead of the deadline of 17 January so that a response could be submitted.	

4. Finance report

POINTS	ACTION
<p>i) Members received and noted the bank reconciliation to 31 December 2020.</p> <p>ii) Members received the budget comparison to 31 December 2020 by committee. It was noted that income was just above target at 101.7% as the precept and grants had been received. Expenditure was at 61%, which would normally be between 60-70% at this time of year. This was lower than normal due to the impact of Covid-19 and in addition were some staff vacancies. It was noted that there were still larger items of expenditure due in the final quarter of the year relating to In Boom.</p> <p>iii) Members received the comparison to 31 December 2020 by account. It was noted that the income for the cemeteries was just over half expected in a normal year and additional burials were normally expected in the first quarter of the year.</p> <p>Cllr Dickson enquired as to whether funding could be allocated towards a cycle path at Farnham Park. The Town Clerk advised that this could be possible and recommended that a report was brought to members for consideration at the next Working group meeting. It was noted that as this was another authority's project on their land using already identified Section 106 funds and SANG funds so there would need to be a clear rationale as to why it was necessary for the Town Council to contribute.</p> <p>There was a discussion on SANG and Cllr Cockburn reminded the Working Group that additional SANG was still required to ensure the delivery of all of the allocations identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>iv) Members received the statement of investments at 31 December 2020. It was noted that the rates of interest are currently exceptionally low and the rates were reducing to the same level as the moneymarket account at HSBC. The Town Clerk said that the Local Authority Property Fund was a medium-term investment and was expected to be in surplus from next financial year after the initial dealing costs had been paid and dividends received. The Town Clerk said that there was an opportunity to invest in projects to provide the best value of the council's purchasing power with the value of investments potentially reducing further.</p> <p>v) Members received the confirmation of reserves at 31 December 2020 and considered the detail as to why they were held and the continuing need to hold them. It was noted that members should consider the reserves to ensure they meet the Town Council's objectives.</p> <p>In response to a question on the costs for Gostrey Meadow, the Town Clerk explained that the earmarked reserve for Gostrey Meadow was £65k as it included reserves for the other Town</p>	

<p>Council assets in Gostrey Meadow pre-transfer including the war memorial and toilets. It was separate to the ongoing revenue costs for Gostrey Meadow.</p> <p>The Town Clerk said that following the sale of the Green Lane cemetery chapel, the money had to be retained for cemetery capital purposes. It could be potentially used for new land to expend cemeteries or further refurbishment of the cemeteries.</p> <p>The Town Clerk said that an earmarked reserve was available for a future replacement of the boiler at the Town Hall, and that all other general refurbishments were planned as part of general fund expenditure.</p> <p>vi) Members noted that the latest BACS and cheque payments were available for inspection.</p> <p>vii) It was noted that the report on Community Grants for 2021-22 has been deferred to the next meeting to allow for a review of the latest Covid situation implications.</p> <p>In response to a question about the availability of data in accordance with the Transparency Code with the Town Clerk advised that the Town Council complies with the requirements and all information was published on the website. There were some elements which were being updated such as land holdings after the transfers from Waverley Borough Council.</p>	<p>Grants report to next meeting.</p>
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5. Precept 2021-22

POINTS	ACTION
<p>Members considered the precept report.</p> <p>The Town Clerk said that due to uncertainties in the year ahead, it was difficult to calculate the right level of the precept. The budget for 2021-22 had been planned with reduced expenditure in response to challenges associated with the pandemic both for the Council and the community. There was likely to be reduced income due to the complexity of holding Covid compliant events and a reduced numbers of attendees. It was also noted that sponsors may experience financial difficulties which could limit their ability to support the Town Council's activities. It was also noted that with prudent management there was likely to be a surplus in the current financial year. The Town Clerk also reminded members of their responsibility as councillors under the code of conduct and to avoid actions that undermined the reputation of the Town Council or the work of councillors and officers in building relationships with local companies.</p> <p>In considering the level of precept, the Working Group noted that Farnham's tax base had provisionally increased by 21.8 additional band D units (equivalent to an income of £1,393 based on the 2020/21 precept of £66.09) with a provisional Band D tax base of 17,363 (up slightly from 17,341.2 Band D properties in 2019). As a result of Covid-19, there had been a significant number of people applying for financial support, including Council Tax support. This had led to a higher number of exemptions from</p>	

the calculated tax base. In addition, Waverley Borough Council had made a judgement that it needed to adjust the collection rate from 99% to 98% to make provision for difficulties it may face.

At the Council meeting in December, Members approved a reduced gross budget of £1,399,850 and, after discretionary income of £204,870 (including a reduced Council Tax support grant of £9,100) was taken into account, a revised net budget of £1,194,980 was agreed. In this budget, Council recognised the pressures on residents and also the income challenges resulting from the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

The Working group noted that if the 2020/21 Band D rate of £66.09 were applied it would raise £1,147,521 resulting in a shortfall of £47,459 and a 1% increase in precept would bring just over £11,475 of additional income for Farnham Town Council at a cost of just over 66p per band D dwelling per annum.

It was noted that inflation at October 2020 was running at 0.7% (Consumer Price Index) with the RPI (Retail Price Index) being approximately 1% higher but that contract price inflation and other expenditure of the Town Council did not necessarily mirror the CPI basket of goods.

In determining the level of precept members considered whether to recommend use of reserves to meet the shortfall, increase the income targets for services, or set unallocated in-year savings targets. Members also considered reducing the precept level by using more reserves; applying a freeze on the Farnham Town Council proportion of the Council tax; funding the agreed budget with an increase in the precept; or funding the budget with a combination of reserves, additional income and precept.

It was noted that many residents relied on services and activities delivered by Farnham Town Council and Members considered that it would be false economy if an increase in a few pence on the Farnham precept led to residents paying a higher cost for services directly.

After discussion, it was agreed to recommend to Council that £25,150 of reserves should be used to keep the impact on the Council tax to a minimum whilst protecting the base level for ongoing support of the community. Cllr Earwaker proposed, Cllr Edmonds seconded and the Working Group agreed unanimously to recommend to Council that the increase would be just under 2.5 pence per week (£1.28 per annum) representing 1.94% on the Farnham element of the council tax with a precept total of £1,169,830 and a Band D equivalent amount of £67.37.

Recommendation to Council:
It is recommended that the 2021/22 precept be £1,169,830 representing a Band D equivalent amount of £67.37.

6. Reports from Task Groups

POINTS	ACTION
<p>I Existing Task Groups</p> <p>i) Infrastructure Planning Group: There had been no meeting since the last Strategy & Finance Working Group but work had continued on the response to Local Plan Part 2.</p>	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) Community Infrastructure Projects Task Group: No update to report. iii) Assets Task Group: Assets Task Group: The Business Facilities Manager reported updates on the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. that work was progressing on the toilet refurbishment with a meeting scheduled with Drake and Kannemeyer (chartered surveyors) next week. b. The play area works in Gostrey were progressing with some replacement equipment in place and more to follow. c. The electrical work was nearly finished with only a meter needing to be installed by Southern Electric. d. The Gostrey Meadow war memorial area was to be started this week dependant on the weather. Works would include the removal of a laurel hedge to be replaced with a Yew one. e. There had been a water leak at the Town Hall due to a corroded pipe from the ground floor toilet. The incident had happened out of office hours night and had been discovered by staff the following day. The insurance company had carried out an inspection and works were now underway to replace the damaged flooring. Furniture had been protected as staff had lifted it onto bricks to prevent further damage and this action had been complimented by the loss adjustor. The impact to the business of the Town Council had been limited as the Town Hall was closed to the public and meetings were being held remotely due to Covid-19. iv) Wellbeing Task Group: There had been no further meeting. It was noted that Cllr Earwaker was representing the Town Council on the loneliness project in partnership with the Farnham Maltings using initial funding from Surrey County Council to support people during Covid-19. v) Younger People Task Group: A meeting of the Task Group was held on 15 December when an outline programme was discussed for the forthcoming year. It was agreed to explore opportunities with Waverley Borough Council for a youth shelter at Borelli Walk; invite youth workers and representatives to the next meeting of the group in February; meet representatives from Upper Hale to discuss The Hut at Sandy Hill; and for twin hatted councillors to discuss a possible youth facility in Farnham with Waverley Borough Council. vi) HR Panel: The Town Clerk informed members that an appointment had been made to the role of Governance and Community Engagement Manager and she was expected to start in March. It was also noted that Lara Miller would return at the beginning of April after lockdown following her maternity leave. vii) FCAMP: No meeting had been held since the last Strategy & Finance Working Group. | |
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<p>2 Proposal for a Cultural Task Group</p> <p>The Working Group considered a proposal to recommend to Council for a new Cultural Task Group which would look at options for a suitable iconic attraction for Farnham as part of the Brightwell's Scheme or elsewhere which could complement the World Craft Town Offer. It was suggested that the Task Group comprise representatives of Waverley Borough Surrey County and Farnham Town Councils and a series of relevant external inputs including the Director of the Crafts Study Centre, the recently retired Managing Director of the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Director of the Farnham Maltings and the President of World Crafts Council. It was to recommend that the Task Group should be established and that an initial meeting should be held to scope its work.</p>	<p>Recommendation to Council:</p> <p>It is recommended that a new Cultural Task Group be created to look at options for a suitable iconic attraction for Farnham as part of the Brightwell's Scheme or elsewhere which could complement the World Craft Town Offer.</p>
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7. Consultations

POINTS	ACTION
<p>Members considered the draft response to Waverley Borough Council's Local Plan 2 (LPP2) pre-submission consultation. Residents' associations had been invited to give input but only a couple had responded. Cllr Cockburn informed members that the existing draft LPP2 document gave an unbalanced view of Farnham and its Neighbourhood Plan and lacked vital maps. These points formed the basis of the comments being submitted. It was agreed to submit the draft consultation response (at Annex 1) to Council.</p> <p>Members were informed of a revised HCC planning application 33619/007: Development of an Energy Recovery Facility and Associated Infrastructure at the Veolia site on the A31, Alton GU34 4JD. The closing date for comments was 15 February and this would be considered by the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group.</p>	<p>Recommendation to Council:</p> <p>It is recommended that the draft response to Local Plan Part 2 at Annex 1 to the Strategy and Finance Notes be agreed.</p>

8. Contracts and assets update

POINTS	ACTION
<p>There was no further update beyond that reported under Task Groups.</p>	

9. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

POINTS	ACTION
<p>Chris Tunstall, Programme Director at Surrey County Council, and Jonathan Foster-Clark, Alkins, were invited to attend the meeting to provide an update on the programme.</p> <p>It was reported that the Local Liaison Forums (LLFs) had been completed, with the exception of one aimed at those working with young people on 14 January. It was noted that many people had attended a number of the LLFs, underlining the interest, and that the webinar for issues relating to Upper Hale had been very well attended by the local community.</p>	

Members were shown a diagram to show how consultation was incorporated into the programme along with the next steps. The Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP), expected to be received imminently, would give a first indication of the programme from a technical perspective. The OIP would be presented to the Farnham Board on 22 January. The OIP would be a multi-modal package that showed how traffic could be better managed in the town. It had a balanced approach so that improvements to one area did not create a problem elsewhere. In response to a question about the OIP being prepared while the LLFs were underway, Chris Tunstall confirmed that an issues log recorded all consultation comments so that they could be incorporated to the OIP. There would be further consultation in February and March ahead of Purdah for the County Council elections in May (it was possible these could be delayed because of the current Covid situation).

Chris Tunstall informed members that Surrey County Council had approved initial funding for the programme. Government funding would be required for many aspects of the programme and a business case would need to be made that met criteria on carbon reduction; supporting the local economy and 'place'. The programme team was in conversation with Guilford, Rushmoor, Hart and East Hampshire councils on neighbouring housing development issues, and Hampshire County Council on highways related issues. Whilst there were concerns that investment in infrastructure had not kept pace with new housing development locally this was considered to be the case across the whole country, and it would be difficult to make a special case for Farnham. The Government and local planning authorities were recognising the issue and funds were being set up, such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund and with more space for public transport, cycles etc

Diagrams were shown to identify the movement of vehicles which had been based on a traffic model that reflected existing movements. The solutions emerging in the OIP would be multi-modal. The proposal for an HGV ban was discussed and Chris Tunstall said that it would likely restrict through traffic 24/7 on an access only basis. There was potentially the opportunity to enforce HGV movement through cameras at entry and exit points, police questioning vehicles and working closely with the haulage industry but more work would need to be done on this in the consultation phase.

Jonathan Foster-Clark detailed the initial thinking that would be incorporated in the OIP consultation draft and further detailed work that would be required as part of making a justification for national Department for Transport Funding.

10. Risk Management Report

POINTS	ACTION
It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.	Risk Management Report to next meeting.

11. Town Clerk update

POINTS	ACTION
<p>The Town Clerk reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That rules for staff in the office had been tightened up because of the latest Covid-19 situation with just one member of staff working in each office. The Town Hall remained closed to the public, although individual appointments could be made. • The Farnham Connects meetings continued and Farnham Town Council was continuing to support local residents by answering the Helpline calls and directing them to the buddying scheme co-ordinated by the Farnham Maltings, Right at Home for shopping and volunteers for prescriptions. Trained volunteers were supporting the local vaccination programme at the hospital and there had been a good response to the Herald's call for additional vaccination volunteers. • The volunteers had been doing a fantastic job with the buddying network and the grants programme was continuing to help those in the community. • It had been decided to cancel the winter programme of Music in the Meadow and start again with the summer events which would be Covid compliant. It had been decided to run the farmers market as a masked event and signs to advise the public were being made. • It was noted that the Services to Farnham Awards were proposed to be delayed until April. A 'Mayor at Home' style event was being considered instead of the Mayor's coffee mornings and the Annual Town Meeting was being planned as a virtual event. • September would mark the 30th anniversary of the Twinning with Andernach and officers were looking at ways to celebrate the event with the Farnham Andernach Friendship Association. The Working Group agreed that the OberBurgermeister should be formally invited to visit Farnham for the celebration of the partnership (covid restrictions permitting) • The Councillor briefing on 28 January on Local Government Re-organisation would include the Clerks of Falmouth Town Council and Chippenham Town Council to share their experiences on preparing for a unitary structure. • Arrangements were beginning for the 100 year anniversary of the War Memorial in Gostrey Meadow on 12 April. 	<p>The OberBurgermeister to be formally invited to visit Farnham for the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the partnership between Farnham and Andernach.</p>

12. Date of next meeting

POINTS	ACTION
<p>Members agreed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 2nd March at 9.30am.</p>	

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm

Notes written by Clare Kennett

Draft Response to Local Plan Part 2 Consultation

Local Plan Part 2 Consultation opened 27 November 2020, closes 29 January 2021.

In brief, Farnham Town Council welcomes this opportunity to comment on Local Plan Part 2 and looks forward to a robust document being adopted swiftly.

This draft response needs to be viewed in conjunction with the Local Plan Part 2 document available at: https://www.waverley.gov.uk/info/1004/planning_policy/1738/local_plan_part_2_non_strategic_policies_and_sites

It is suggested that a written submission be made rather than the online form submission as responses to this consultation will go to the Examiner for review, forming part of the Examination in due course.

Draft LPP2 Consultation Response

In response to a Climate Emergency, Farnham Town Council feels climate change, protecting and enhancing the environment and net gain of biodiversity must be at the forefront of the development plan; mitigation of development is no longer enough.

Waverley Borough Council is an 'agent of change' and needs to ensure that, in conjunction with Local Plan Part 1 policies, development is more than just 'sustainable' but responds to its commitment to reduce carbon emissions and not only conserve but improve the borough's biodiversity.

(Policies in LPP1 to note: Natural Environment NE1, NE2, NE3; Rural Environment RE1, RE2, RE3; Townscape and Design TDI; Protection of Heritage Assets HAI; Spatial Strategy SP2, Sustainable Transport STI; Climate Change and Flood Risk Management CCI, CC2, CC3, CC4.)

In reviewing policies, Farnham Town Council finds that references to the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan are inconsistent and results in an unbalanced description of Farnham, missing vital contextual information such as the map of the urban boundary and the area of high landscape value. There does not appear to be a clear and consistent explanation of the complementary roles of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan Part 2.

Although all planning documents stand alone in their purpose, it is often necessary to repeat or refer to items in other documents for clarity. We have included relevant references to the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan in our comments where they are missing from Local Plan Part 2.

Comments are noted in order of policy and subheadings:

DMI: Environment Implications of Development

Net gain of biodiversity needs to be strengthened throughout LPP2 policies especially in DMI:

g) biodiversity cannot be achieved with superficial landscaping of developments.

h) alternative sites must be considered if the adverse environmental impact requires unrealistic and untenable mitigation.

Design

There is great uncertainty about the future of Government planning policy but it appears that design will be at the forefront of any changes and centrally dictated. It will, therefore, be more important than ever

to define the characteristics of the Borough clearly, to ensure that new development fits well with existing stock.

With this in mind, Farnham Town Council feels that the four larger settlements should be more specifically defined in the introduction to the chapter on design. Each settlement has developed very differently. Each has an historic centre but beyond that centre, each settlement has several areas with very distinctive and varied characteristics.

Farnham has absorbed villages into its boundaries but each village retains its individuality. The Farnham Design Statement and the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan both seek to retain the distinctiveness of each character area and have had some success in protecting these areas at appeal but the Borough needs to reinforce the variety of architecture and materials in different parts of our towns and larger villages.

The wording in para 2.22 should make it clear that the character of the Borough ranges from the historic centres of the main settlements, through very distinctive character areas, exclusive to and an essential part of each settlement, to the varied character of the individual villages.

FTC asks for the wording in 2.23 to be strengthened to ensure that development takes proper account of the character and distinctiveness of the immediate area in which it is located, to ensure that local individuality is taken into account.

DM4: Quality Places through Design

FTC asks that the cumulative effects of development on the character of an area are given more weight and prominence. This should be an essential part of the policy, not a postscript. With increased pressure to build around our villages and edge of town locations this statement should be central to this policy to avoid erosion of the character of existing settlements:

a) Making the most efficient use of land, **build density should not predominate**, while being sympathetic and responsive to the prevailing pattern of development, including areas of urban-rural transition; and **regard will be had to the cumulative effects of development on the character of an area.**

Ensure over-densification does not eliminate the possibility of good design and layout. This should be a major factor in granting an outline application.

Where there are `minimum` standards they should not prejudice good design by becoming the `norm`.

DM5: Safeguarding Amenity – include access to outside space for mental health.

DM11: Trees, Woodland, Hedgerows and Landscaping

The protection and planting of trees and hedges should be strengthened in line with the council's climate emergency commitments/aspirations and a reference to DM11 should be included. DM11 should also be reflected in other policies.

DM13: Development within Settlement Boundaries

Although the introductory text has now been revised to include a paragraph on the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, the map of the Built-Up Area Boundary, map A, should be included with the maps of the other settlements, for total clarity and balance.

3.4 Settlement boundaries identify the area in which development is likely to be considered acceptable. These boundaries will reflect the extent of the main built-up area, planning permissions and site allocations. **Development outside the settlement boundaries will not be supported to help maintain the overall spatial strategy.**

Local Landscape Areas

There should be a mention here of the former South Farnham Area of Special Environmental Quality. This has been replaced by the South Farnham Arcadian Areas and is now protected by policy FNP8. The policy's aims are identical to former policy BE3, to protect the well-wooded area formerly defined in the ASEQ.

Map C from the FNP should sit alongside the maps for Godalming Hillside and Haslemere Hillside.

DMI8: Farnham/Aldershot Strategic Gap

The proposed Strategic Gap and the Settlement Boundary proposals are undermined by DS18 that encourages further development on a site that contravenes both of these policies.

Site Allocations for Gypsies and Travellers

There is much disquiet in Farnham about extending sites into the newly-defined Strategic Gap. If the reduced area is to fulfil its function properly, there should be no such development and other sites, elsewhere in the town, should be sought for new allocations.

Areas of Strategic Visual Importance

During the review of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan in 2018, Farnham Town Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment of the town, to supplement the more general capacity study of the Borough's landscape by Amec.

This study by Hankinson Duckett Associates looked at all the area between the Built-Up Area Boundary and the boundary of the neighbourhood plan area. In addition to the land protected by the ASVI designation, all land, which was deemed to be of High Landscape Value and High Landscape Sensitivity, remains protected from development in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan. Map E in the FNP shows these areas and should be included in LPP2.

Local Green Space

There was some confusion when sites were put forward for inclusion. Initially FTC was told that recreation grounds did not need to be included but it was noticed that other settlements did include such land and recreation grounds were added. However, sites such as Langham's Recreation Ground and Compton Copse are not included on the list in LPP2. The status of all recreation grounds in Farnham should be checked and recreation grounds added, where necessary for their protection consistent with other parts of the Borough.

DMI9: Local Green Spaces

The inclusion of some recreation grounds and open areas whilst omitting others is confusing.

Glossary

Area of Special Environmental Quality (ASEQ) - add policy FNP8.

Copies of FNP2020, Maps A BUAB, Map C South Farnham Arcadian Area, Map E Areas of High Landscape Value and the Farnham Landscape Character Assessment to be attached.