



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Notes

Strategy & Finance Working Group

Time and date

9.30 am on Tuesday 18th January, 2022

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Attendees:

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

Officers: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Iain McCready (Business and Facilities Manager) and Jenny de Quervain (Planning & Civic Administrator - part)

1. Apologies

POINTS	ACTION
Cllr Dickson apologised for late arrival.	

2. Declarations of interest

POINTS	ACTION
Cllr Evans declared an interest as a Trustee of the Hale Community Centre and took no part in relevant discussions relating to 2022/23 grants.	

3. Minutes of the last meeting

POINTS	ACTION
The Notes of the last meeting were agreed.	

4. Finance report

POINTS	ACTION
1) The Working Group reviewed the detail of the finances at the nine month period to December 31 st with detailed papers on the Bank Reconciliation (Appendix B), the Income and Expenditure Report by both account code and committee (at Appendix C), the Statement of investments and reserves (at Appendix D), an update on outstanding payments (at appendix E) with BACS and cheque	Recommendations to Council 1) The fees and charges set out in the report at

<p>payments available for inspection.</p> <p>2) The Working Group noted the current position and that income was running at 117% of budget (partly because of £141,774 of CIL receipts, £32,798 of Section 106 funds received and grant income of £31,920 which were ringfenced for specific purposes.) Expenditure was at 62% of budget but with two significant projects about to start. Debtors were at a good position with none that were a cause for concern. Sarah Cross was commended for her consistent work in managing this.</p> <p>3) Fees and Charges for 2022/23 were discussed and agreed for adoption by Council attached at Annex 1. Specific changes proposed include increasing the fee for the Farmers' Market to £40 (with a continued discount for booking six markets at a time in view of the reduced administration), and decreasing the time included for genealogy searches from 1 hour for to 30 minutes for £10. The Invest in Farnham Brochure and Residents' Guide brochure rates were noted and it was agreed to recommend some flexibility for packages and to ensure officers could secure the best deals for the Council.</p> <p>4) The 2022/23 Investment Strategy (attached at Annex 2 to these minutes) was agreed for recommendation to Council.</p> <p>Cllr Dickson arrived at this point</p>	<p>Annex 1 be agreed;</p> <p>2) The Town Clerk be authorised to use discretion to negotiate the best arrangement for the Council in relation to Sponsorship and items where more complex arrangements are planned using the approved Fees and Charges as the basis for discussion.</p> <p>Recommendation to Council:</p> <p>The Investment Strategy at Annex 2 to the Notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group be adopted.</p>
---	---

5. Internal Audit Interim Report

POINTS	ACTION
<p>The Working Group reviewed the first report of the new Internal Auditor Mike Platten and welcomed its findings. The issues raised were addressed in a response by the officers, and the points set out were endorsed for recommendation to Council.</p> <p>The Interim Report and officers' comments are attached at Annex 3 to the minutes.</p>	<p>Recommendations to Council.</p> <p>1) The Internal Auditor's report be welcomed</p> <p>2) The Officers' responses be agreed.</p>

6. Precept 2022/23

POINTS	ACTION
<p>The Working Group reviewed the draft report as background to determining a precept level to recommend to Council. Members noted the current national situation with inflation running in excess of 5% and forecast to be at high levels until the end of 2023.</p> <p>The Working Group considered whether to recommend using reserves but felt that a below inflation increase was prudent to help local residents but also to maintain reserves for important projects that were commencing. The two capital projects underway would cost over £200,000 with others in</p>	

<p>the pipeline and if FTC were to take on other services from Principal authorities, additional investment would inevitably be required.</p> <p>The Working Group noted the Farnham Town Council precept rises over many years had been lower than the national average and the Council's precept level was below the average for the sector as a whole.</p> <p>It was agreed to recommend a precept of £1,231,570, representing a Band D rate of £69.76 per annum or £1.34 per week.</p>	<p>Recommendations to Council: The precept for 2022/23 be set at £1,231,570, being a Band D rate of £69.76 per annum or £1.34 per week.</p>
--	--

7. Timetable of meetings for 2022/23

POINTS	ACTION
<p>The draft timetable of meetings for 2022/23 which had been circulated to all councillors was noted.</p> <p>The Working Group discussed whether there should be a review of all the Working Groups ahead of 2022/23 as previously discussed, but it was felt that it was not practical to make a recommendation to Council at this stage with everything else happening.</p>	

8. Risk Management Report

POINTS	ACTION
<p>The Risk Management Report at Appendix K to the agenda (and Annex 4 to the minutes) was discussed and the work of the individual Working Groups on potential risks and mitigation for their own areas of activity, considered during the autumn cycle of meetings, was noted. The work of the Internal Auditor (using Governance and Accountability - a Practitioner's guide as the basis for his work) was a key element of the financial and corporate risk management, whilst health and safety issues were independently assessed each year by the Council's contract with Worknest (formerly known as Ellis Whittam). Their normal inspection had been delayed as a result of staff changes, but was booked for January.</p> <p>The Council's usual operations were further supplemented and mitigated by national health and safety legislation and its relationship with its insurers. The Working Group noted the responsibility that all employees, councillors and volunteers had in maintaining a good and safe environment and that the responsibilities were set out in policy statements agreed by Council.</p>	<p>Recommendations to Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The 2021/22 Risk Management Report be welcomed and adopted; 2) The work done by Working Groups in managing risk be noted.

9. Contracts and assets update

POINTS	ACTION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Working Group considered the report at Appendix L to its agenda noting that the cemetery gates were to be collected by Lost Art on 20th January and were due to be refurbished by May. Whilst on site, the contractor would provide an additional cost for the railings project to be funded by allocated Section 106 funding. 2) The Working Group noted a pre-construction meeting had been held 	<p>Recommendation to Council:</p>

<p>with Endwell for the Public Convenience refurbishment project in Central Car Park. The work was scheduled to commence in March and complete by the end of May. The Working Group considered the suggestions raised by Cllr Dunsmore for amending the plans for the ladies toilet washing facilities to avoid a hidden corner (by constructing a stud wall and relocating the washing unit to improve personal safety) and agreed to recommend to Council that the adaptations be incorporated. Of the options costed, it was agreed to progress option B at a cost of £10,099. It was also agreed to recommend that the refurbishment project be the first to receive a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation and the amount proposed was £40,000.</p> <p>3) The Working Group noted that officers were reviewing a combined mobile phone and radio system to replace the current mobile phone contract and were trialling a scheme developed by Brentwood Communications who had worked for other councils. The scheme had personal safety features built in suitable for lone working and a further report would be submitted to the March meeting with details of hire or purchase options. It was noted that a two year hire was not significantly higher than the current contract and that the increased benefits seemed attractive.</p> <p>4) The Working Group received an update on the Insurance Claim following the fire in the nursery greenhouses. The loss adjuster and insurers had now accepted a settlement figure proposed covering the cost of a new greenhouse and the reinstatement of the electrical supply. As the lead time for the new greenhouse was approaching a year, in the short term, following a review of several options, Secretts of Milford had kindly made some space in their glasshouse available for the nurturing of the 2022 plants. Whilst visiting Secretts, an option to acquire a secondhand greenhouse in good structural condition was discussed. The greenhouse would be dismantled and rebuilt by specialist greenhouse movers. Members felt the reuse of an existing greenhouse was better environmentally if it met the Council's needs. Assuming the insurer was content, it was agreed to recommend to Council that this option should be investigated further and the greenhouse be adapted with appropriate heating and watering systems within the settlement sum.</p> <p>5) Other matters noted by the Working Group included progress on the quinquennial tree inspections and the outcome of the latest Zurich Lift Inspection which would be the subject of a further report at the next meeting. The Group also noted that the Business and Facilities manager had received a demonstration of a Nimos Mosquito II Brush Cutter machine which would be beneficial for clearing moss and weeds from pathways. Alternate prices were being sought with a view to purchasing one from the 2021/22 equipment budget at a cost in the region of £4,000.</p>	<p>1) The proposed safety improvements in the ladies toilets be incorporated at a cost of £10,099;</p> <p>2) A CIL allocation of £40,000 for the Public Toilets refurbishment in Central Car Park be agreed.</p> <p>Recommendation to Council:</p> <p>1) The arrangements for the 2022 planting season be noted;</p> <p>2) The concept of acquiring and adapting a secondhand greenhouse from Secretts be pursued in consultation with the Council's insurer.</p>
---	--

10. Community Grants 2022/23

POINTS	ACTION
--------	--------

The Working Group considered the report at Appendix M to its agenda with suggested grant allocations for the Community Grants 2022/23. The report was in two parts setting out ongoing revenue funding contributions for organisations with a 'light touch' Service Level Agreement who helped deliver the Council's priorities and smaller grants for community organisations who received up to £2000. Applications amounting to £32,259.50 had been received for a budget of £17,500.

The funding proposed for 2022/23 is as follows:

Service level agreements:	£54,500
In year community grants:	£17,500
Grants funded from other budgets:	£6,000
Small Grants (in year allocation)	£2,000

- I The SLA Grant organisations had met with FTC members and officers to discuss their proposed activities for 2022/23. The amounts proposed were:

Budget Centre	Organisation	SLA
4801	Farnham Maltings	£13,000
4802	Citizens Advice Bureau	£17,500
4803	40 Degreez	£2,000
4806	Hale Community Centre	£2,000
4808	Hoppa Community Transport in Farnham	£10,000
4809	Brightwells Gostrey Centre	£10,000
	Total	£54,500

Members noted that The Hale Community Centre appeared not to receive support from Vivid Housing Association and it was agreed the Town Clerk should write to them and also enlist Waverley's support to the request to encourage funding for the work done by the Hale Community Centre for Vivid's tenants. The Working Group was willing to revisit support from Farnham Town Council once the situation had been clarified.

2 Organisations which are supported from specific service budgets

Organisation	Fund from	Allocations
VC Meudon Community Amateur Sports Club (Farnham Cycle Races)	Tourism and Events budget.	£2,000
Farnham Carnival	Tourism and Events. Shared costs with Picnic in the Park	£1,500
Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership	Community Enhancement for environmental improvements/advice.	£2,500

Recommendation to Council:
The grants listed for 2022/23 be agreed.

3 Proposed Community Grants.

The proposed Community Grants are attached at Annex 5 to the Minutes.	
---	--

11. Reports from Task Groups

POINTS	ACTION
<p>1) Cllr Neale provided an update on the Infrastructure Planning Group and the Farnham Infrastructure Programme. He had reported on the Council's decisions at the December Council meeting to the Infrastructure Programme Board and there had been a meeting of the five councillor representatives with the Programme Team on future consultation. It was felt the Local Liaison Forum concept should be adapted for future consultations as the project was now at a new stage.</p> <p>The Working Group noted that the list of what are now termed Medium Term Interventions was awaited, but it was understood from an officer meeting that the list did not seem to accord with the Town Council's responses over many months and appeared to be broadly based on projects that already had section 106 or other designated funding. Members were concerned that Section 106 funding should be spent where it was needed and not be in a pooled pot.</p> <p>A meeting to progress the Wayfinding project had taken place to agree the content of the maps. Jenny de Quervain was providing details of what should be included from an FTC perspective and FTC had requested ward councillors input.</p> <p>2) The Riverside Sculpture Task Group had prepared a brief for the commission but the UCA representative had subsequently suggested the amount proposed for the commission (£19,500) should be increased. A further meeting of the Task Group would be held before advertising the commission.</p> <p>3) The Working Group reviewed the Terms of Reference (at Appendix O to its agenda) for the Conservation Areas Task Group and the date of the first meeting which would be held on 24th February.</p>	

12. Consultations

POINTS	ACTION
<p>1) The Working group noted the position on the AONB Consultation and the responses submitted by the Town Council to date as delegated by Council. Further detailed information and evidence in the format requested was set out at Appendix N to the agenda. The Working Group highlighted the need to include Tice's Meadow to link up to the wider area, and also the importance of extending the boundary outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan evidence prepared by HDA consultants, to link up with Dockenfield and Rowledge as well as Badshot Lea and avoid gaps in designation.</p>	

<p>Members were encouraged to make their own comments by 31st January using the interactive map on the AONB Consultation website.</p> <p>Any further comments from Council would be incorporated and a final response sent after consultation with the Leader, Cllr Fraser as Lead Member for Planning and Cllr Cockburn.</p> <p>2) The Working Group received an update from Cllr Cockburn on discussions with the Secretary of State, and planning officials on forthcoming changes to legislation that may strengthen the Neighbourhood Plan. The Leader and Town Clerk had also raised the matter with the National Association of Local Councils.</p> <p>It was agreed that it would be beneficial if the Leader could write a letter to NALC and the relevant Planning Officials confirming the Town Council's position and Cllr Cockburn's initiative.</p>	
--	--

13. Review of Council Policies

POINTS	ACTION
The new Model Member Code of Conduct was deferred to the March meeting.	

14. Town Clerk update

POINTS	ACTION
<p>The Town Clerk updated the Working Group on a range of matters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Telephone box adoption. Boundstone Road being used for a defibrillator; West Street for the gold painted Cultural Box to reflect the success of Sporting heroes; and the Rowledge Box as a Library organised by the local community; ii) Holocaust Memorial day and the Tree Planting at Rowledge School (one of 80 nationally in association with the Association of Jewish Refugees) organised by mark Westcott; iii) Hardship Fund – additional grant progress; iv) Children's Business Fair. Request for provision of equipment (gazebos/tables) for next fair and to make a small grant to cover the cost; v) Town Crier recruitment which had been launched at the Christmas Market; vi) Health Inequalities project for North Farnham led by Dr David Brown with research underway; vii) Rearranging of Services to Farnham Awards Ceremony to the end of March (provisionally 28th); viii) Progress on the Business Improvement District project and additional funds allocated from the Welcome Back Fund; ix) News about the Corporate Livewire Prestige Awards which the Mayor would announce at Council. 	

--	--

15. Date of next meeting

POINTS	ACTION
The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 8 th March.	

The meeting ended at 1.25 pm

Notes written by Town.Clerk@farnham.gov.uk