

## Farnham Town Council's Annual Review of 2019/20

The local elections in May 2019 saw the Farnham Residents' Group win the most seats at Farnham Town Council. The council is responsible for a number of services and works hard to make a positive difference to the lives of people who live in Farnham as well as those who visit, study or work in the town council area.

By working with partners, an army of committed volunteers, the business community and voluntary sector, Farnham is able to achieve far more than the sum of its parts.

### Community Enhancement



Farnham Town Council's ability to enhance the community is greatly increased by the willingness of the wider community to get involved.

A record number of volunteers took part in the spring 2019 Big Pick Week smartening up not only the town centre but also the surrounding villages.

The biannual litter pick is supplemented throughout the year by 55 Bloomin' Litter volunteers who regularly litter pick the streets of Farnham.

'Many hands make light work', and this was certainly the case when it came to planting 6,000 plug plants for the area's hanging baskets and floral displays. Volunteers who make up the Bloomin' Friends group managed to complete the task in just two days.

Bloomin' Friends are passionate about gardening and like nothing more than sharing their enthusiasm with Farnham's younger green fingered residents. This is never more evident than at the Easter and October half term Bloomin Kids' Gardening Workshops which attracted over 100 children.

Farnham in Bloom was launched in May and people got to see behind the scenes during the greenhouse open day.



During the growing season, children from 13 local schools visited the town's greenhouses to plant hanging baskets for display in Central car park and at school. Over several weeks, the children nurtured their baskets and were proud to show their efforts to the Mayor of Farnham when she visited in July to judge the schools' hanging basket competition.

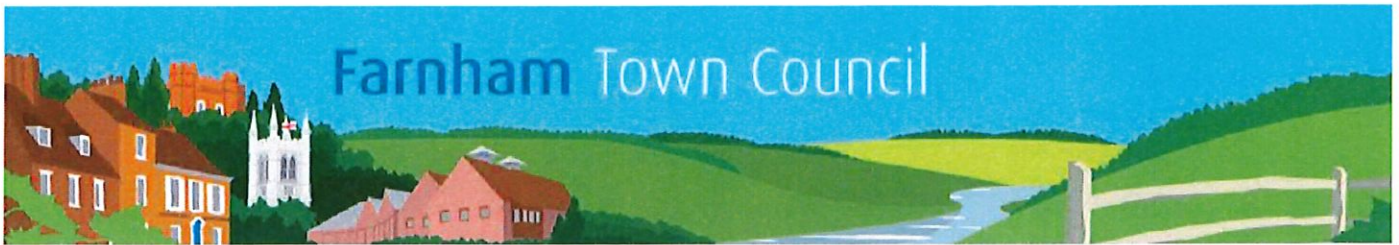
Farnham in Bloom is very much about community and providing opportunities for people to get involved in a past time that is proven to be beneficial to health and well-being.

The 2019 gardening season concluded with a bumper crop of awards. At South and South East in Bloom, Farnham was crowned Best in Category and won gold awards for its entry into the Town Centre and Large Town category.

The judges awarded Farnham with a further eight awards. This was topped in October by the announcement that Farnham had beaten off stiff competition to win gold in Britain in Bloom and to be declared best town / city centre in the UK.

As the grow to eat movement has grown in popularity so has the demand for an allotment. Farnham Town Council lets plots on its eight allotment sites to over 200 tenants.

Allotment holders get to show the fruits of their labour at the annual Allotment Show which was revamped in 2019.



# Farnham Town Council

## Cemeteries

Farnham Town Council is committed to an ongoing programme of maintenance and improvements at its four cemeteries.

In 2019, the makeover of the Garden of Reflection in West Street cemetery was completed. The tranquil space is planted with white flowers to provide a sense of calm. Wildflower meadows were planted at West Street and Badshot Lea cemeteries.

Efforts to improve the year on year management of the cemeteries were recognised by the South and South East in Bloom judges. They awarded Badshot Lea cemetery a gold medal and Silver Gilt to West Street.

## Climate change

Councillors showed their commitment to reducing carbon emissions at a local level by recognising a climate emergency and pledging their aim to become a carbon neutral council by 2030.

Farnham Town Council has already implemented a number of changes including a reduction in the use of single use plastic. Further measures to be considered include switching to renewable energy tariffs, replacing the remaining council owned vehicles with electric or other appropriate vehicles and ensuring that Council decisions consider the impact of climate change.

## Civic and commemorative events

The Mayor of Farnham hosts a number of civic events throughout the year.

In June, the Mayor unveiled a plaque commemorating the late local athlete and coach Ron Stonehouse. The Famous Names plaques can be seen on a wall in South Street which is dedicated to some of Farnham's most memorable sons and daughters.

Armed Forces Day was an opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women of the armed forces and to reflect on the 80th anniversary of the start of the Second World War and the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

In November, children from 18 schools took part in the annual service of remembrance at Gostrey Meadow and on Remembrance Sunday, the public

mood was reflective as people gathered in Farnham to commemorate those who lost their lives in conflict.



2019/20 was a time for celebrating international friendships. In September, the Mayor visited Andernach in Germany to reaffirm friendship ties with Farnham's twin town and early in February, a choir of 11 children from Uganda visited Farnham. This was followed in March by a flag-flying ceremony to observe Commonwealth Day.

Opportunities to meet and thank Farnham's volunteers are always a highlight of the Mayoral year. Half the tickets for the Civic Christmas Carol Service, which features the award-winning and internationally acclaimed Farnham Youth Choir, are allocated to voluntary organisations as a thank you for their services. The remaining half are given away via a public ballot and are always very popular.



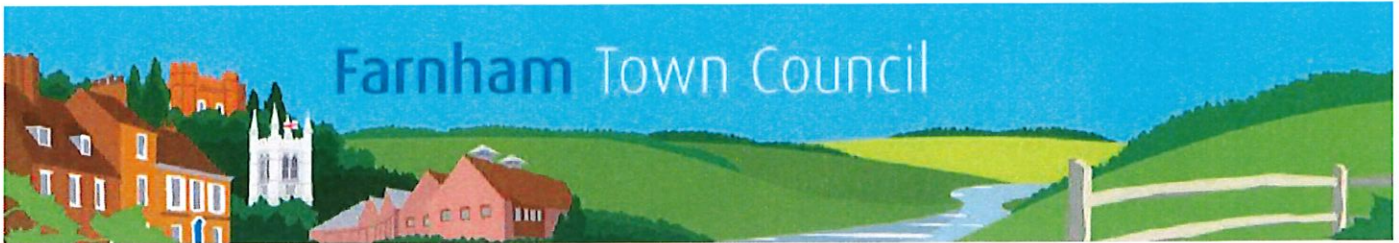
One of the first civic occasions of the new year is a celebration of Farnham's unsung heroes. Services to Farnham Awards were presented by the Mayor to 13 local people in recognition of all that they do for the Farnham community.

The new administration pledged to find ways to take better account of young people's views so as to achieve better outcomes for the town.

## Communication

Social media continues to be a popular method for people to engage with Farnham Town Council. Around 3,500 follow the Council's Facebook page and over 4,000 follow Farnham Official on Twitter. An Instagram page has been set up for Farnham in Bloom and this is attracting a steady number of followers.

Traditional methods of communication continue to play an important role in disseminating information.



# Farnham Town Council

Several press releases are issued each week to the local media. Farnham Town Council also publishes a regular newsletter via the pages of Vantage Point magazine which is distributed to every home in Farnham.

Councillors attend every Farnham Town Council event and respond to enquiries from the public at the information tent. This face to face contact provides invaluable feedback on Farnham Town Council services and matters relating specifically to living in Farnham.

The Mayor's coffee mornings are attended by a randomly selected group of residents. These events give residents the chance to air issues that they may not have otherwise raised and provide councillors with insight from people living in their wards.

The council's regular newsletter continues to be popular and has a higher than average open rate from more than 1,600 subscribers.

A 36-page guide was posted to every resident in Farnham in January. This residents' guide was completely refreshed for 2020 and included a mix of practical information aimed at helping residents enjoy all that Farnham has to offer.

## Tourism and events

Farnham's events calendar is varied and aims to appeal to all age groups and interests.

The dark days of winter are brightened by the monthly Music in the Vineyard concerts which are free to attend and provide mainly older people with the chance to enjoy live music and to socialise.



Farnham people love enjoying the great outdoors. The pleasure of exploring the town on foot was evidenced by the Farnham Walking Festival.

Farnham's Spring Festival got off to a cracking start and signalled the start of the summer season of events.

A relaxed atmosphere and some great sounds from local musicians provided the perfect ingredients for Picnic

in the Park 2019. Gostrey Meadow was turned into a tapestry of picnic blankets as people tucked into food from home or freshly cooked offerings by stallholders.

Food is an important part of Farnham's social calendar. The monthly Farmers' Market provides shoppers with fresh, locally produced food.

The Food Festival in September provided foodies with inspiration and an array of delicious treats to enjoy or to buy as gifts.

A cocktail of gin mixed with a Michael Bubl  tribute band made for a good night out at the Farnham Gin Festival. Hundreds of people came along to the two-night annual celebration of Britain's favourite tippie which featured over 100 different types of gin.



The countdown to Christmas began in November with the switching on of the town's Christmas lights. This popular community event was attended by hundreds of people.

Shoppers showed they were in the Christmas spirit at the Christmas Market. Around 180 stalls provided ideas for Christmas gifts to the estimated 15,000 people who attended.

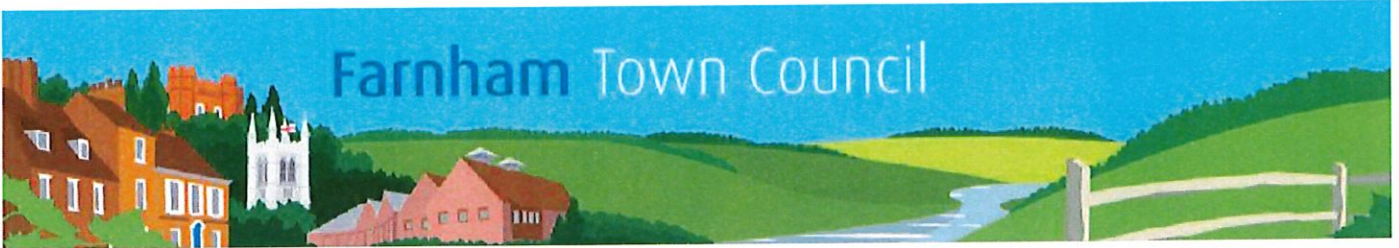
## Supporting good causes

### Community grants

Farnham Town Council gave around £80,000 of funding to local good causes through its Community Fund. Projects made possible by a community grant include the creation of a wildlife pond to encourage more birds and mammals to the Bishop's Meadow, the funding of activities for young people at Challengers and schemes to introduce people to music and heritage crafts.

### South Street Trust

A further sum totalling £20,000 is available from the South Street Trust of which Farnham Town Council is a trustee. This money is for art-based educational activities and enabled 17 projects to happen in 2019/20.



### Planning - Neighbourhood Plan

Following a procedural meeting in June, the independent examiner of the reviewed Farnham Neighbourhood Plan determined that new government planning policy guidance which came into effect in May, meant that the plan should be subject to a further examination and referendum.

Although the examiner's conclusion came as disappointing news to Farnham Town Council, plans began for the second referendum. This included a public hearing which was requested by the independent examiner.

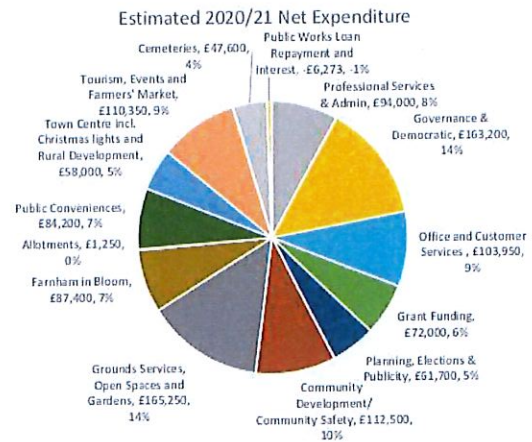
The referendum happened on 12 March and of the 7,848 people who voted, 95.5% said they wanted Waverley Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

### Finances - setting the council tax

Careful money management enabled Farnham Town Council to set its share of the council tax below the national average. In 2015/6, Farnham's precept was just over £3 above the national average for town and parish councils whereas in 2019/20 its precept was £3 below the national average.

In 2020/21, the amount of council tax Farnham Town Council will receive from a Band D property is £66.09 per year.

In setting the council tax, councillors took into account a number of factors, including inflation, the cost of living and residents' incomes as well as global pressures such as the impact that meeting the financial cost of the climate challenge might have on reserves.



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### Looking ahead

During 2020/21, Farnham Town Council planned to celebrate 30 years of Farnham in Bloom, to continue with work to review the Farnham Design Statement and to play an active role in a new partnership with Surrey County Council and Waverley Borough Council aimed at tackling some of Farnham's ongoing infrastructure issues.

At the end of the financial year 2019/20, Farnham Town Council's plans were largely overtaken by the coronavirus pandemic and the council found itself switching to crisis management mode. The emphasis is now on the recovery phase and helping Farnham to bounce back as a stronger and more resilient community.

For a full copy of the annual report and financial statements or to speak to Farnham Town Council about what can be done to improve the community where you live, please visit [www.farnham.gov.uk](http://www.farnham.gov.uk) or call 01252 712667.



#### Farnham Town Council

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