



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL



Notes

Strategy & Finance Working Group

Time and date

9.30 am on Tuesday 14th June, 2022

Place

Town Clerk's Office - Farnham Town Hall

Attendees:

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

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

1. Apologies

No apologies were received

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Merryweather declared a relevant Interest as Portfolio Holder at Waverley Borough Council for Financial and property matters in relation to the Museum of Farnham Task Group and left the meeting during the discussion.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The Notes of the meeting held on 19th April were agreed.

4. Finance report

- 1) The Working Group noted the Financial position at 31st May.
- 2) The Working Group reviewed the list of Direct Debits and payments regularly made via the Commercial Cards noting that they were subsequently checked by the Town Clerk and two councillors.
- 3) The Working Group noted the current problems with HSBC as the Council's bankers which included: the increase in the Commercial card facility had still not been actioned by the Bank as they wished to do a personal credit check on one of the signatories (albeit that their finances were unconnected with the Council's business); disappointment with the new monthly charges brought in for the Council's charity accounts; and the closure of the local branch. The Town Clerk advised he had started reviewing banking options and had an initial conversation with one alternate provider to date.

- 4) The Town Clerk advised a request for a grant to support some outreach work from 40 Degreez was expected and it was hoped to present this to the July meeting.
- 5) The Town Clerk advised that a further grant from the Government (via Surrey then Waverley!) was expected to support hardship payments. It was anticipated this would be £15,000 until September with additional funds top sliced for older people and for groups such as Foodbank.
- 6) The Working Group noted that the initial Farnham Support Fund monies had been exhausted and **it was agreed to recommend to Council that a further £10,000 be allocated from the Community Initiatives Fund subject to the additional funds being matched by an additional £20,000 from the community and partner organisations.** The work of the Hardship Fund Panel was commended.

5. Reports from Task Groups

The Working Group received updates on progress on the work of the Task Groups that were part of its responsibility.

i. Riverside Sculpture Task Group

It was noted that the Task Group had shortlisted three artists and these were due to present their findings to the next meeting of the Task Group on 15th June.

ii. Conservation Areas Task Group

Cllr Hesse reported on the recent meeting of the Task Group held on 26th May noting that the Great Austins Conservation Area had been adopted by Waverley on 23rd May, and the Old Church Lane was next on the list for Review. The Task Group had also raised a number of matters to be progressed by Waverley BC or Surrey CC.

iii. Museum Task Group (Cllr Merryweather left the room for the discussion of this item)

The Strategy & Finance Working Group considered notes of the Museum Task held on 8th June. It had noted the outcomes of the Options Appraisal Workshop hosted by Waverley BC on 30th March, noting that the concept of a virtual museum had been dismissed with two key options being considered further: transfer to an existing trust (or similar organisation) or transfer to a new trust. The idea of separating the building from the collection had been discounted as it would be more expensive than keeping them together.

A new round of MEND (Museums and Estates Development Fund) funding had been announced and Waverley was applying for the smaller pot (up to £500k) to deal with the brickwork renovation. **The Working Group recommend to Council supporting the MEND application with an initial pledge of £10,000.**

It was noted that the Farnham Maltings had submitted an expression of interest to take on the Museum service and Willmer House and would be considering this at their July Board meeting.

The Working Group discussed the options in detail concerned that a building that had been home to the Museum for some 60 years may be lost to the community noting charity commission rules about charitable assets. Any transfer would need to contain safeguards for public access. There was also concern at the size of the repair bill with costs having increased significantly. The Working Group considered the option of taking on the Museum service if required, noting that many town or parish councils ran museums, although favoured working in partnership with the Farnham Maltings. Members noted that an increase in precept may well be required if the Museum were to be run locally after any transitional funding from Waverley ceased but confirmed recommending to Council taking on the running of the service if the Maltings did not wish to do so..

The Working Group also recommend to council (on the casting vote of the Task Group chair) that Farnham Town Council takes on the transfer of Willmer House

to Farnham Town Council, subject to the MEND application being successful and the critical repairs being completed. The Working Group noted that additional repair requirements could emerge and these could be very expensive for a listed building and would constitute a risk.

It was also agreed that if this recommendation were successful officers would need to employ specialist advisor to support discussions with Waverley Borough Council and consideration of creating a separate Farnham Museum Trust with the Council as the Trustee.

iv. Assets Task Group

The Working Group received a detailed report on the Assets Task Group which met on 13th June.

a) Hale Chapels

The Working group noted that Graduate Landscapes had been commissioned to produce an illustrated tender document for the Hale Chapels. This was expected to be ready for the July Strategy & Finance meeting with the tender to be returned in September with an anticipated decision to be made at Council in October.

b) West Street Cemetery Gates and railings

The Working Group noted that the Gates were underway (due for completion in August) and that updated prices for the Phase one of the railings projects (either side of the gates) were expected shortly. The Working Group noted that there were some issues with the Leylandii hedge to the right of the Listed gates that would need addressing. It was noted that the £27,143 of Section 106 money allocated for the refurbishment was likely to be no more than enough for Phase.

c) Central Car Park Toilets

The Working Group noted the teething troubles experienced with the water for the toilets and that a solution was being installed week commencing 20 June. The last cost estimate reported to Council was £158,461.26. Since then several design changes and the unexpected water supply issue have increased this figure to £165,000. Following an inspection by Rachel Morris, it was agreed that an additional feature (not required under Building Regulations, but latest good practice) of having an automated button for the doors should also be installed. The cost for this is awaited.

The Working Group recommend to Council that 1) the latest cost position be noted; 2) an automated door opener for the disability toilet be installed (cost to be determined); 3) an additional CIL contribution of £10,000 be allocated to meet this cost and other updates.

d) Gostrey Meadow

The Working Group noted the latest position on the proposed widening of the gates on Union Road, and discussed the implications of alternate designs, noting the importance of the symmetry of the current structure, and the challenges as a result of the BT access box. After much discussion, including the merits of the alternate access from Longbridge, it was agreed to not proceed at this point until the wider Gostrey Meadow proposals for a café and/or the playground improvements were developed.

The position regarding the storm damage to the bandstand roof was noted. Although this had been fixed it was noted that a wider refurbishment including painting was required. It was agreed that the repainting should be in the darker green of the Council Crest. Officers would progress quotes for the work.

The Working group noted that the pavilion had been demolished and the gas and electricity supply boxed in.

It was agreed to defer discussion on the proposed café until the next meeting.

e) Council Offices

The quotations received for a new boiler were discussed following the failure of the old boiler whose heat exchanger was beyond repair. The Working Group noted that the efficiency of a new boilers would be some 93% compared with around 50% of the old one. Ground Source and Air Source heat pumps had been investigated but advice received was that retrofitting such a system would not be effective without replacing all the radiators, but would be very costly. Some final details were still awaited to have an accurate price comparison, but **it was agreed to recommend to Council 1) that a replacement boiler at a cost of up to £15,000 plus associated works be agreed; and 2) the final decision following evaluation be made by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Assets Task Group.**

The Working Group noted that it may be possible to have the cupola repainted whilst scaffolding was erected for the replacement boiler flue depending on which option was finalised.

The Working Group noted the further issues with the Town Hall lift electronics and that an indication of the repair costs ranged from £17,000 to £25,000 from two lift companies. Officers were investigating the optimum solution and would report back.

In terms of other matters, the Working Group received an update on blind replacement, lighting upgrades and a revision of the five year plan that was proposed.

f) Vehicles Plant and machinery

The Working Group noted the fact that two of the vehicle fleet (Mitsubishi and Ford Connect) were 16 years and twelve years old respectively and it was agreed officers should look for suitable replacements and report back.

g) CCTV

The Working Group received a report on two remaining defunct analogue cameras at the bottom of the Hart and at Longbridge. These were potentially to form part of the analytic camera network to be used as part of the Infrastructure Project, but had not been progressed. The initial quotation for four analytic cameras was £15,000. **It was agreed to get updated prices for these to be replaced with two PTZ cameras rather than fixed analytic cameras, to give maximum flexibility and to recommend their installation from the 2022/23 CCTV budget.**

It was also agreed, given the increased use of the system by Surrey Police, to recommend the purchase a dedicated laptop for the police to download evidential data from the Milestone software at a cost estimated to be £1.200.

h) Tree survey

The Working group noted the detailed list of works proposed as a result of the latest Tree survey, which for the first time included trees on land transferred from Waverley Brough Council. It was noted that officers were proposing getting a schedule of rates for the works and this would be reported to the next meeting.

v. Younger People Task Group

The Working Group noted concerns that had been received following the installation of the Youth Shelter but also noted that the reason for its installation, creating a dedicated space for young people to meet informally had been achieved. The progress of CCTV installation and youth worker informal outreach options was noted.

vi. **HR Panel.**

The Working Group noted the Town Clerk's appraisal had been completed and was being reported to Council.

vii. **Infrastructure Planning Group**

The latest position of the Design Statement Consultation with a closing date of 4th July was noted, and councillors were encouraged to promote to constituents.

5. Farnham Infrastructure Programme

1 The Working Group discussed recent meetings relating to the Farnham Infrastructure Programme including

- a) a meeting held on 9th June about proposed materials for the Town centre works – where there was a strong view that the materials were not of the right quality for the conservation area and would create a bland solution;
- b) a meeting of all councillors held on the 6th June about the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – where there was a common view on the priorities (circulated to all councillors) which were supported by Strategy & Finance Working Group. It was noted that some of the prioritised routes may not attract Government funding as they were not designated as 'commuter routes'; and
- c) various meetings between officers to try and achieve appropriate locations and maps for the Wayfinding project. The process had been time consuming and frustrating as there were many errors and there was a rigid approach to the mapping which seemed not to reflect the 'place' of Farnham or all the key locations of interest.

2 The Working Group noted the latest position on the 20MPH zones, and the response of English Heritage not objecting to the proposals as they impacted on listed buildings on the East of Castle Street but no comment was made on the listed light structure. It was further noted that the highways safety audit was still in progress, and that officers have asked whether the build outs were confirmed as being temporary – no response received.

3 The Working Group reviewed the proposed consultation plans for the reduced two options. There was concern that the consultation exhibitions proposed were all town centre focussed and concentrated into one week. Some of the text was considered to be potentially misleading (eg comments about public transport as no resources were available for them). The Working Group said Farnham should press for much greater consultation and a number of alternate consultation locations were proposed (including Hale, Rowledge, Water Lane Sainsburys) and some textual changes. Members also felt the earlier successful Local Liaison Forum's should be reconvened for this consultation to cover North, Central and South Farnham. **Recommendation: SCC should be encouraged to have geographic based LLFs and additional consultation sessions away from the town centre.**

6. County Deals

Cllr Beaman introduced a paper which was to be presented to Waverley Borough Council on County Deals and the Surrey County Council proposal to Government to get more powers from central Government. This was part of the Levelling Up White Paper. Nine early county deals were underway including Devon, Norfolk, Leicestershire, Hull and East Yorkshire.

Surrey was working up a plan with the District and Boroughs, and had initially ignored town and parish councils as consultees or partners. They are now included but with only a third of the county being parished, there is a real concern that the processes proposed will further reduce the opportunities for town and parish councils to be take on devolved service delivery. The Surrey Association of Town and Parish Councils was represented on the Delivery Board by its Chairman Cllr Steve Cosser. The proposed Surrey Deal content

(Surrey is aiming to prioritise Level 1 and Level 2 powers i.e excluding a directly elected Mayor) and draft was being developed in June/July with the expectation that this would be submitted for negotiation with Government in the autumn. Surrey was aiming at a 'coalition of the willing' making clear it intends to move forward with this on powers for economic development, transport and health in particular.

The Working Group agreed to recommend that Farnham Town Council gets involved in the discussions, and seeks a wider presentation through Surrey ALC to engage Town and Parish Councils.

8. Town Clerk update

The Town Clerk provided an update on a wide range of matters including matters arising from the Jubilee celebrations (it was noted the next major celebration would be discussed as part of the Tourism and Events programme); the visit of the Bürgermeister of Andernach to renew the deed of friendship on the 30th anniversary of twinning; the latest position with Ukrainian guest and arrangements to host the Home Office biometric visas and arranging English lessons; the latest position on the expected hardship funds; the arrangements for Craft Month 2022 and the World Craft Town workshop scheduled in Bornholm in September; the new North Downs Way sign at Hickleys Corner; preparations for the new Council following the 2023 elections and the town crier recruitment.

9. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as being on Tuesday 19th July.

The meeting ended at 1.36pm

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