



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

## Notes

### Strategy & Finance Working Group

---

#### **Time and date**

9.30 am on Tuesday 17th January, 2023

#### **Place**

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

#### **Attendees:**

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

Officers: Iain Lynch, Iain McCreedy, Lisa Tremeer, Rachel Aves (part)

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mirylees and Merryweather. Cllr Evans advised that she would be arriving part way through the meeting.

#### **2. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Evans advised (in relation to item 4 (viii)) that she was a Trustee of Hale Community Centre.

#### **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup> 2022 were agreed.

#### **4. Finance report**

- 1) The Working Group reviewed the detail of the finances at December 31<sup>st</sup> with detailed papers on the Trial Balance (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), the list of debtors (at appendix E) with BACS and cheque payments available for inspection.
- 2) The Working Group noted the current position and that income was running at 117% of budget (partly because of £218,812 of CIL receipts, which was ringfenced.) Expenditure was at 83.5% of budget but with two significant projects about to start. Debtors were at a good position with none that were a cause for concern at this stage. The Statement of Investments was reviewed and the impact of the movement in interest rates was noted.
- 3) The Fees and Charges for 2023/24, attached at Appendix F to the agenda, were discussed. A number of changes were agreed for recommendation to Council including a standard £15 charge per stall for the organised West Street Markets', a £20 fee per socket for use of the electrical

infrastructure in Gostrey Meadow, fees for the use of Gostrey Meadow in Winter and summer, and a basis for costing troughs, hanging baskets and ad hoc planting on a quasi-contract basis to third parties, and a small increase for the use of the Council Chamber.

A proposal for streamlining charges for allotments with a minimum charge equivalent to half a plot (62.25sqm) was recommended, effective 1<sup>st</sup> February, with an increase of allotments rents to 50p per square metre from October 2023.

Following a review of neighbouring cemeteries, the fees for Cemeteries would be adjusted to £4,890 for non residents for the purchase of a double depth grave with a 50% reduction for residents. It was proposed that the cost for inclusion in the Garden of Reflection Book of Remembrance be reduced to £300 for non-residents and £200 for residents to encourage more take up of this facility.

In terms of other fees and charges the Working Group agreed to recommend a cost of £40 per week for banners (in addition to installation costs), an hourly rate of £40 for commercial and statutory use of the Council Chamber, and various charges for the use of Gostrey Meadow, and noted the ratecard for the Residents' Guide.

#### **Recommendation to Council**

- 1) The fees and charges set out in the report at Annex I be agreed;**
- 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.**

Cllr Evans arrived at this point

- 4) The 2023/24 Investment Strategy (attached at Annex 2 to these minutes) was agreed for recommendation to Council. Council noted the requirement to minimise risk and the short-term nature of investments (less than 1 year).

#### **Recommendation to Council.**

**The Investment Strategy at Annex 2 to the Notes of the Strategy & Finance Working Group be adopted.**

#### **5) Community Grants**

Members considered the Community Grant report at Appendix H with suggested grant allocations for the Community Grants for 2023/24 at Annex 1 (attached at Annex 3 to these minutes).

The funding proposed in the budget for 2023/24 is as follows:

Service level agreements:	£60,000
In-year community grants:	£18,000
Grants funded from other budgets:	£4,500
Small Grants (in year allocation)	£2,000

The Working Group noted the detailed presentations made by organisations in receipt of regular grants towards running costs (the Service Level Agreement organisations, noting that the presentations had been very good and there were difficult decisions to make. In the end, it was agreed to recommend an increase for the CAB, 40 Degreez and the Hale Community Centre given their increasing demand, and reduce the sums for the Brightwells Gostrey Centre and the Farnham Maltings. The increase for 40 Degreez would be for outreach work funded by the Young People's budget.

1. The proposed SLA Grant funding for 2023/24 is as follows:

<b>Budget Centre</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>SLA (Provisional allocations) 23/24</b>	<b>2022/2023 allocations</b>
4801	Farnham Maltings	£10,000	£13,000
4802	Citizens Advice Bureau	£20,000	£17,500
4803	40 Degreez	£2,000 + £6,000 for outreach	£2,000
4806	Hale Community Centre	£7,000	£2,000
4808	Hoppa Community Transport in Farnham	£10,000	£10,000
4809	Brightwells Gostrey Centre	£5,000	£10,000
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>£60,000</b>	<b>£54,500</b>

2. Organisations supported from specific service budgets:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Fund from</b>	<b>Allocations</b>
Farnham Carnival	Tourism and Events. Shared costs with Picnic in the Park	£2,000 (23/24 funding)
Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership	Community Enhancement for environmental improvements and advice to local groups	£2,500 (23/24 funding)
Farnham Round Table – Santa’s eSleigh	Community Initiative Fund	£2,000 (from 22/23 funding)
The Farnham Museum – Herald Archive Digitisation Project	Community Initiative Fund	£2,000 (from 22/23 funding)
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>£4,500</b>

3. Proposed Community Grants.

Members agreed to recommend the Community Grants at Annex 3 for approval by Council.

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that:**

- 1) **The SLA Grants set out be agreed;**
- 2) **The Service budget grants be agreed;**
- 3) **The Community Grants listed for 2023/24 at Annex 3 be agreed.**

6) Members noted the timetable for the closing of the 2022/23 accounts. The Town Clerk advised of the time constraints due to the Easter holidays and informed members of the Internal Auditor’s visits due in March and April 2023.

7) Members noted the latest BACS and cheque payments were available for review.

**5. Interim Internal Auditor's report**

The Working Group reviewed the report of the Internal Auditor Mike Platten and welcomed

the findings. The issues raised were addressed in a response by the Town Clerk, and the points set out were endorsed for recommendation to Council.

The Interim Report and Town Clerk's comments are attached at Annex 4 to the minutes.

### **Recommendation to Council:**

**It is recommended that:**

- 1) The Internal Auditor's report be welcomed**
- 2) The Town Clerk's responses be agreed.**

## **6. Precept Report 2023/24**

The Working Group reviewed the Precept Report at Appendix J which is subject to a separate report to Full Council.

It was noted that FTC were not aiming to be below national average, but to provide services to best meet the needs of the local community. The Working group noted that for the last ten years, Farnham had showed a prudent yet effective approach which met the needs of the Council and delivery of services and was mindful of the needs of local taxpayers. The Town Council had consistently increased its share of the Council tax below the level of the average for the Town and Parish Sector and also below the average level of the principal authorities which had been subject to capping. At the same time it had taken on additional land from the Borough Council and topped up services that were being reduced by both the Borough and County Councils.

The Town Clerk explained that the budget for the year ahead had been a difficult one and members considered a range of options for minimising the budget shortfall's impact on the local community. It was agreed to recommend increasing the potential income from the Cemetery Services based on current performance, setting a savings target from the staffing and agency staffing budget, and using £19,000 of reserves.

It was agreed to recommend to Council a precept of £1,315,900 which would represent a small increase of 7p per week (£3.45 per annum) for a band D property, resulting in a contribution towards the cost of Farnham Town Council's services of £73.21 per Band D property.

## **7. Reports from Task Groups**

### **A) Coronation Task Group report**

The Working Group discussed the report of the Coronation Task Group at Appendix K to the agenda and considered a range of options set out. It was noted that the national programme was not yet published but it was understood the King wanted a lower key Coronation, reflecting the current economic circumstances. Proposals to dress the town with bunting, ribbons and flags were supported and the idea of underwriting the insurance for local street parties again (where there was a lead volunteer who would act on behalf of the town council for health and safety matters) would be recommended. It was agreed that a big event in Farnham Park would be too complex and costly and it was agreed to recommend an event in Gostrey with a big screen (already booked) was the best option to enable the community to watch the Coronation and enjoy an afternoon of music.

The Working Group agreed to recommend a budget of £20,000 (from Community Initiatives budget) for the Coronation celebrations, although some of the costs may be offset by contributions. There had not been any confirmation of whether there would be a beacon lighting ceremony. Members discussed that gift of by The Farnham Society of a beacon/brazier and that they had had initial discussions for the beacon to be erected in

Farnham Park. It was noted there could be difficulties with the site indicated by the Farnham Society given its proximity to the scheduled monument (Farnham Castle) and the potential need for archaeological investigation. Cllr Hesse agreed to follow up with Waverley Borough Council.

#### **Recommendation**

**It is recommended that:**

- 1) A budget of £20,000 from the Community Initiatives budget be set for the Coronation Celebrations;**
- 2) The Council underwrite the costs of insurance of Street parties that met the relevant criteria;**
- 3) The position with the gift of the Farnham Society Beacon be noted.**

#### **B) Assets Task Group report**

##### **1) Hale Chapels**

The Business and Facilities Manager updated the Working Group on the Hale Chapels project and confirmed that officers and Landform (the contractor), would commence work on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Information boards about the project would be placed at the cemetery and the Herald and other interested groups would be advised to inform the community.

##### **2) Gostrey Meadow**

Members discussed the potential enhancement project recommended by the Assets Task Group for Gostrey Meadow to replace the Toilets, create an accessible Play Area and build a Community Café. The Café would aim to be in conjunction with Ridgeway to give employability skills for pupils of Ridgeway school and others. It was agreed that options for the design of the scheme should be invited once the response from the planning authority to the outline scheme was received.

Further discussion took place on the need to move the Falkner Fountain as an alternative to widening the gate or creating a new access, both of which were costly. Consideration was given to moving it a few metres to allow for easier access into Gostrey Meadow or to be a centrepiece of a new formal garden on the site of the old Bowling Green alongside the Borelli Shelter. It was suggested that the iron stone where the Cobbett Statue used to be sited be removed for safekeeping to the depot.

#### **Recommendation**

**It is recommended that:**

- 1) FTC commits to deliver new toilets, an accessible play area, and a Community Space/Café and training facility within Gostrey Meadow;**
- 2) Plan A Architects be commissioned to apply to WBC Planning for Pre Application advice on the proposal;**
- 3) Officers meet with the Ridgeway School to clarify their aspirations on the development and usage of the Centre;**
- 4) Officers to seek possible funding streams;**
- 5) Farnham Town Council commits £200,000 of Neighbourhood CIL to deliver the three elements of this project;**
- 6) Officers apply for funding for a Changing Places toilet if one can be accommodated within the scheme;**
- 7) The Borelli Shelter be moved to the site of the old Bowling Pavilion/Green as part of the creation of a more formal garden area;**
- 8) Town Clerk be authorised to investigate the potential for Public Works Loan Board funding for the project; and**
- 9) To agree, in principle, to move the Falkner Fountain 2 to 3 metres or to another location for ease of access into Gostrey Meadow for vehicles.**

### **3) The Bandstand**

The Working Group noted the bandstand was showing signs of its age and in need of refurbishment and should be redecorated ahead of the summer events programme. It was agreed that the colour should be a slightly darker green reflecting the Council's crest. An initial costing had been received.

#### **Recommendation**

**It is recommended that:**

**The Town Clerk be delegated authority to redecorate and refurbish the Bandstand in Gostrey Meadow with a budget cost of £6,500.**

### **4) Croquet Club**

The Working Group considered a request for use of the old bowling green for croquet and the request had included a request for a long-term lease and the construction of a pavilion. Members supported the development of a new club but considered the location was not ideal with the plans for Gostrey Meadow. Some alternate suggestions of location in Badshot Lea and Wrecclesham were proposed for passing on to the new club.

### **5) Farnham Town Hall**

The Working Group discussed a list of itemised obsolete IT equipment for disposal and removal from the assets register; the need to fix the intermittent fault with the lift and the replacement of fluorescent lighting with more energy-efficient units. The Working Group noted that some redecoration was required for some of the recent replacements, and that new LED clam lights should be replaced at a later date when redecoration was being undertaken.

#### **Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that the Town Clerk be authorised to:**

- 1) Dispose of the redundant IT equipment be approved, and the asset register be updated.**
- 2) Progress quotes and undertake the necessary redecoration of parts of the Council Offices from within the existing budgets.**
- 3) Change the remaining baton fluorescent lighting unit to LED lighting but defer replacing clam lighting units until decoration is done.**
- 4) Progress quotations to repair the lift with use of up to £35,000 of the Town Hall earmarked reserve if required.**

### **6) Depot assets**

The Working Group discussed the disposal of a number of items of obsolete machinery including ride on mowers (2 SCAGs and one Kubota G21) and small items which were no longer needed or were too expensive to repair. It was agreed that subject to an inspection of the assets, the items be listed and disposed of (by sale if possible) and the asset register be updated.

The Working Group noted the Mitsubishi pick up needed some cosmetic work due to bumps and scrapes and that a vinyl wrap similar to the ones on the Iveco vehicles would be a good solution. The ongoing issue with the CNG equipment and the involvement of the manufacturer in Italy was discussed.

The Working Group noted the removal of collected flytipped material needed to be disposed of, and the considered the potential for an additional container to store the Town's Christmas Lights and reduce the contract costs (payback was 18 months).

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that:**

- 1) **Assets that were obsolete or too expensive to repair be listed following an inspection by the Town Clerk and Lead Member of the Assets Task Group, and disposed of;**
- 2) **The Mitsubishi pick-up be repaired and vinyl wrapped;**
- 3) **The issues with the CNG filling system be noted and progressed;**
- 4) **The removal of all flytipped items from the depot be noted.**
- 5) **The purchase of a container (up to a price of £6,500 to house the Christmas Lights) be deferred.**

**7) Wreclesham Community Centre**

It was noted that the current lease was due to be renewed and that the Town Clerk was in discussion with the Trustees of the centre about this.

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that:**

**The Town Clerk progress, with the Trustees of Wreclesham Community Centre, the rent review for the next period.**

**8) Christmas Lights**

The Working Group reviewed the proposal to retender the Christmas Lights installation, takedown and testing with options to replace part and lease, lease or purchase

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended:**

- 1) **A tender for the installation, takedown, call out and testing of the Farnham Town Council's owned Christmas lights be progressed;**
- 2) **New designs and costs (on a lease or purchase basis) for a new scheme of Christmas lights be sought.**

**C) Community Infrastructure Task Group Report**

Members discussed the Report at Appendix M and the latest position on Neighbourhood CIL, noting that £60,000 of the receipts received to date had been allocated to the Central Car Parks Refurbishment. In the current financial year £206K had been received on top of some £40k in previous years. The Working Group agreed that a guidance note for communities and an application form should be prepared for future use.

In discussion the following 3 priorities were agreed:

- 1) **A new playground on Gostrey Meadow – phase 1 of CIL and using Section 106 committed from the Brightwells Scheme.**
- 2) **New toilets on Gostrey Meadow – Phase 2.**
- 3) **Community space – café on Gostrey Meadow in conjunction with the Ridgeway School which would be used as a potential training opportunity for young people.**

It was noted that applications were unlikely to be requested until 2024, if Council agreed with the recommendation of the Working Group to make an initial commitment of £200,000 of CIL towards the Gostrey Meadow projects.

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that:**

- 1) **The priority of investing in Gostrey Meadow be agreed;**
- 2) **An initial £200,000 of Neighbourhood CIL funding for the Gostrey Meadow playground toilets and community café projects be agreed.**

## **8. Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

The Working Group received an update on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and a report prepared by Cllr Beaman with an updated position paper for adoption by Council at Appendix N.

Following discussion at the December Council meeting, Cllr Beaman confirmed that the FIP Board meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022 confirmed that the construction of a Hart Link Road should “remain on the table” for further discussion rather than taken out of the programme as initially proposed.

This position paper represented FTC’s contribution in a balanced way to this further discussion on the basis that FTC has consistently argued that construction of a Hart Link Road is an essential part of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme (FIP) if it is to meet its objective of reducing traffic passing through Farnham Town Centre and improving air quality.

It was agreed that subject to Council endorsing the paper, Cllrs Beaman and Hesse along with the Town Clerk arrange a meeting with the Chairman of the FIP Board to discuss this further.

### **Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that:**

**The report on the Link Road at Annex 5 to the Strategy and Finance minutes be adopted.**

## **9. Risk Management Report**

Members discussed the detailed Risk Management Report at Appendix O and noted that in 2022, Farnham Town Council undertook a number of activities to minimise risk. These included the refurbishment of the West Street Cemetery Gates and Central Car park toilets with new nonslip flooring. Regular inspections of cemeteries, allotments and Gostrey Play Area were undertaken, and FTC’s insurer Zurich conducts its own survey annually on the play area and the Town Hall lift.

FTC are continuing to invest in pathway repairs and the removal of dangerous trees. The quinquennial tree survey was conducted in 2022 and a number of trees (24) were identified that required felling. The most dangerous of these were felled immediately with the other identified trees being felled in early 2023. Continual investment in training and personal protective equipment for staff.

The Working Groups had all conducted their Risk Assessments during the year.

### **Recommendations to Council**

**It is recommended that:**

1. The Risk Management report at Annex 6 be welcomed and recommended for adoption;
2. The work done by the Working Groups in managing risk be noted

## **10. Review of Council Policies**

There were no new or revised policies to consider.

## **11. Consultations**

- i) Members considered consultations on the approach to the National Planning Policy Framework changes at Appendix P circulated to all councillors. It was noted that Rachel Aves would prepare a draft response with any comments submitted by Councillors. Comments had been requested by 30<sup>th</sup> January. Cllr Cockburn noted that



many of the changes/benefits were dependant on an up-to-date Local Plan. If Farnham can update its Neighbourhood Plan, the protection it affords would continue until 2028. She was concerned about a wider review of Waverley's Local Plan Part I would have a detrimental effect.

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that:**

- 1) Councillors submit their comments to Rachel Aves by 30<sup>th</sup> January;**
  - 2) The Town Clerk submit the Council's response in conjunction with members of the Infrastructure Planning Group by 3<sup>rd</sup> March.**
- ii) Members considered the approach to the WBC Local Plan Part 2 Main Modifications Consultation at Appendix Q which had been circulated to all councillors. It was noted that there had been a WBC briefing for its own councillors, but no further feedback had been provided yet for Farnham.

**Recommendation**

**It is recommended that:**

**Farnham Town Council respond to Waverley Borough Council's Local Plan Part 2 Main Modifications consultation via the portal to stress the importance of the adoption of LPP2 as soon as possible. The adoption must be followed by a minimal review of LPPI to give the Borough an up-to-date Local Plan and protect against speculative development.**

## **12. Draft Calendar of meetings for 2023-24**

Members reviewed the draft calendar of meetings for 2023-24 and agreed to have quarterly meetings for the main Working Groups and ad hoc meetings as required. No additional meetings were required. The Town Clerk would revise the calendar and circulate to all councillors.

## **13. Town Clerk update**

There was no update from the Town Clerk on any relevant matters.

## **14. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed for Tuesday March 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 at 9:30am.

The meeting ended at 12.29 pm

Notes written by Lisa Tremeer/Town.Clerk