



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

# B

## Notes

### Strategy & Finance Working Group

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#### **Time and date**

9.30 am on Tuesday 7th March, 2023

#### **Place**

Town Clerk's Office - Farnham Town Hall

#### **Attendees:**

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

Officers: Iain McCreedy (Business and Facilities Manager), Iain Lynch (Town Clerk) and Lisa Tremeer (Communities and Administration Manager)

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Kika Mirylees for the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March.

For the reconvened meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March to discuss Policies (at Agenda item 5) Cllr Mirylees was in attendance but apologies were received from Cllr. Attfield.

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

Cllr Merryweather declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding CAB – as a family friend with Jonathan Pepper, one of the board of Trustees of CAB Waverley.

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

The minutes of the last meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 were agreed.

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

- i) The Working Group reviewed the latest finance papers including the Bank – Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 02/03/2023 at Annex B, the Budget Comparison to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at Appendix C and received details of the anticipated Outturn for end of financial year. Members noted that with the additional income (after CIL funding had been transferred to earmarked reserves) and the current capital project at Hale, the

outturn would be balanced by drawing down the relevant portion of reserves.

- ii) The Working Group reviewed the Actuarial Valuation for the Pension Scheme received via email dated 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at Appendix D. It was noted that Surrey had initially added Farnham into the Town and Parish Council Pool despite the fact that Farnham had specifically opted out previously. It was noted that the Employer rates were increased for Farnham (from 14.2% to 16.9% but reducing from 18.4% to 17.7% for the pool. This was despite the fact that the Farnham pot was 132% against a pooled funding pot (with Farnham in it) of 116%. It was noted that the Town Clerk had put in an initial holding response asking that the agreed position of Farnham outside the pool be maintained and that he had asked for an explanation of what seemed incorrect figures. The Working Group agreed with this approach (subject to further information being received). The Town Clerk explained the changes over recent years as Surrey pension Fund has had to adapt to changing pensions legislation.

**Recommendation to council:**

**It is recommended that FTC remains outside the Town and Parish Council Pool for the next three years. FTC made the decision not to join the pool.**

- iii) The Town Clerk advised members of the request by Hoppa to release £20k held in earmarked reserves towards a new electric bus for Farnham (at Appendix E). Members also considered a request for a meeting by Citizens Advice to discuss their funding received for 2023 and review their grant offer. It was noted that a mutually agreed date for the meeting with CAB had not yet been arranged.

**Recommendation to council:**

**It is recommended that FTC release the £20,000 held in earmarked reserves for HOPPA to purchase a new electric vehicle.**

- iv) Members received a verbal update on Sponsorship and noted that despite the challenging environment FTC had performed fairly well with a reduced sponsorship budget. The budget was set at £27,500 for 2022, and the income from sponsorship is £29,500. Officers were considering a different system to supplement lost income from In Bloom sponsors. The Business and Facilities Manager had been in contact with a potential new sponsor for next year. It was noted that any personal contact or recommendations from councillors would always be beneficial.
- v) Members were advised that the latest BACS and cheque payments were available for inspection. It was noted that the list of companies paid via BACS and cheques would be available at the next meeting for the Working Group to review.
- vi) Town Clerk gave an update on the complaint to the Financial Ombudsman. He confirmed that a complaint was necessary as HSBC wanted to do a personal credit check on staff or signatories who had an FTC credit card in order to increase the corporate credit limit. Currently FTC had a combined £10,000 limit (but approval to increase this to £25,000) on all the credit cards but the purchases required by the Support Fund were putting a strain on the credit limit. The option to move accounts away from HSBC was discussed and the Town Clerk advised that there had been no further progress yet.

## **5. Review of Council Policies**

The new/updated Council policies were not ready for the scheduled meeting and members agreed to adjourn to discuss these papers on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March at 9:00 am.

The Minutes below are the Notes of the discussion on the 14<sup>th</sup> March.

Members reviewed the following policy documents considering changes set out in detail in a covering report which had been circulated to all councillors with appendices F,G,H,I,J.

The following documents attached at Annexe to these Notes, were discussed in detail and are recommended to Council for adoption.

i) **Standing Orders at Annex 1 to these Minutes.**

Apart from minor updates, the key changes were: a) Reduction of Quorum from 10 to 9 as a result of the boundary changes and reduction in the number of councillors from 18 to 16 with consequent changes to the proportions in Standing Order 15.1 f. b) changes to Standing Orders Contracts in light of Brexit and the consequent impact of the Contracts Regulations 2015. c) adding the Civility and Respect Pledge into Standing Order 18.1.

ii) **Financial Regulations at Annex 2 to these Minutes**

Apart from minor updates, clarifications and changes for consistency and legislative changes, the key changes were: a) Inserting 1.14 reflecting Council decision for the Town Clerk to apply Nationally Agreed decisions on salaries after the HR Panel or Strategy & Resources Working Party had been informed; b) adapting Regulation 5.1 relating to telephone banking for the management of the bank account; c) Inserting 6.1 a Regulation allowing for Cash from events and donations to be held in the safe to be used to top up petty cash; d) Inserting a new Regulation 9.11 to allow for electronic payments via a payment device for events and charitable activities; and e) updating values for decisions relating to contracts and goods and the de minimis level for inclusion on the Asset Register at 11.1 h and 14.6 (reflecting inflationary pressures and materiality).

iii) **Scheme of Delegation at Annex 3 to these Minutes**

Apart from minor updates and clarifications it was agreed a) to amend 3.5 to “£10,000 in line with the Financial Regulations”; b) to add to 4.18 “with the consent of the HR Panel” given the financial implications such a decision could have; and c) Adding in at 4.2.1, the Council decision to delegate the implementation of the NJC pay decision as set out in the updated Financial Regulation 1.14.

iv) **Member Officer Protocol at Annex 3 to these Minutes**

This was an amalgamation of the old protocol and the Civility and Respect Pledge.

The new Work Experience Policy at Appendix J was deferred, noting that there were challenges with a small team absorbing Work Experience students at a busy time, and there were still some uncertainties over the insurance position. It was agreed that no Work Experience would take place in 2023 apart from one that had been agreed with More House School.

**It is Recommended that the following Policies be adopted:**

- 1. Standing Orders at Annex i**
- 2. Financial Regulations at Annex ii**
- 3. Scheme of Delegation at Annex iii**
- 4. Member Officer Protocol at Annex iv**

**6. Annual Meeting of Electors**

Members reviewed the arrangements for the Annual Meeting of Electors that would take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 from 7-9pm. The venue was confirmed to be the Barley Room at the Maltings. The Lead members would do a quick review of their Working Groups of approximately 7 minutes each. There would be a PowerPoint Presentation with questions from the public afterwards. It was noted that the event would be publicised using social media, the FTC website and a possible advert in the newspaper as well as direct emails to community groups.

## 7. Reports of Task Groups

The Working Group received relevant updates from Task Groups that report to Strategy & Finance:

- a. Riverside Sculpture Task Group – members received a verbal update and noted that this was part of World Craft Town and would be launched on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March at 2pm. Funds for this project were provided by Section 106 funds from the UCA Campus development.
- b. The Coronation Task Group notes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February were at Appendix K. Members considered the report and Cllr Mirylees had sent some comments to the Town Clerk updating the Working Group on the proposed Beacon. It had subsequently been confirmed that The King did not want any beacons lit as part of the coronation.
- c. The Conservation Areas Task Group (CATG) notes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February were attached at Appendix L. Members noted that the Farnham Flame was with Ian Bishop awaiting restoration but was pressing as Crest would install if they had appropriate plant on site.

The CATG was concerned about the frequent damage to the fabric of listed buildings in the Conservation Area caused by the fixing of agent boards and banners as well as the visual amenity in this protected area and a meeting had been held with Waverley Officers. It was noted the capacity for action by Waverley was limited with constrained resources and a discussion took place on whether the Town Council should consider making a financial contribution to progress this if it were a key priority.

The Working Group noted that the CATG had pursued the enforcement of a non-compliant front porch on a house on Wrecclisham Hill, a part of The Wrecclisham Conservation Area and the offending structure had been rectified.

It was further noted that enforcement notices in Dyas Yard were 2 had been issued as a result of positive action by Waverley and the only bins that Waverley wanted on their leased land was the official Waverley bins, not wheelie bins.

### **Recommendation to council: It is recommended**

- 1) **that officers**
  - a) **progress work to restore the Farnham Flame and seek confirmation of costings;**
  - b) **investigate the cost of defining character areas within the Conservation Area in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority (LPA).**
- 2) **that Council**
  - a) **supports the work that the Task Group has been pursuing to prepare a submission to the LPA on the Article 4 Direction and the Regulation 7 Direction**
  - b) **endorses bringing together the relevant estate/property agents so that views can be exchanged regarding how all parties can work collaboratively to remove banners and boards and avoid the detrimental effects on the visual amenity of the Conservation Area.**
- d. Cllr Cockburn provided an update on the latest position on the review of the Local Plan Part 1 expressing further her concern about the impact this would have on the Neighbourhood Plan and the appeals that were piling up for sites that were not approved by the Neighbourhood Plan.

There was also concern about the level of support that was being given to planning appeals and the

recent Hawthorns Appeal was a good example where the Appeal was rushed through without opportunity being given to local residents who had points to raise. In addition, the Inspector had taken the lowest five year land supply figures provided by the developers, and communities were always losing out since it was the developers were not implementing permissions. The Working Group considered whether the Council should make a challenge to the Inspector's decision. It was noted that the process on the Inspectorate website was for a complaint not a challenge, and it would not be considered in time. It was agreed that the Town Clerk should investigate the process and whether there were grounds for making an appeal.

The Working Group heard that the Borough Council had had the Design Statement for 18 months and the Town Council had made all the requested changes but a new lead officer was now not happy with the document. The whole situation was very frustrating.

In terms of the Neighbourhood Plan Review, the Working Group noted the need for support from the Borough Council to progress the Neighbourhood Plan but there was no dedicated officer identified. Cllr Cockburn had been seeking a meeting with Waverley, to ascertain whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan can be changed without the Referendum, as had happened in other areas. It was noted officers had a meeting scheduled with Dawn Hudd coming up where some of these points would be raised again but an additional meeting would also be sought for Farnham Councillors.

- e. Younger People Task Group – Members received a verbal update noting that Councillors had been invited to a tour of 40 Degreez. It was noted that 40 Degreez were very grateful for the increased funding and outreach money they had received.
- f. Community Infrastructure Projects Task Group – There was nothing to report as the CIL money had been earmarked for the Gostrey Meadow project and no further funds had been received.

## **8. Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

Cllr Beaman provided an update on the Farnham Infrastructure Programme and confirmed that Tim Oliver had agreed to a meeting on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023. There was an update on the Brightwells Bridge regarding the long-awaited meeting with FTC, Crest Nicolson, Surrey County Council and Waverley where options for costings were discussed to enhance the appearance of the bridge. There were suggestions of a closer weave design as well, or detailing suitable for a conservation area. The timing had not yet been confirmed. Concerns were raised about the width of the bridge being very narrow and there was still more work to be done on the design of the bridge with angled gabions. The additional cost to make the top of the bridge more aesthetically pleasing was relatively little, but there was no agreement yet on the overall requirements.

## **9. Contracts and assets update**

The Working Group considered the update report on Contract and Assets at Appendix M.

- i) It was noted that the Hale Chapels' Garden project was currently due to be completed in April, a few weeks ahead of schedule. It was agreed that the name should be "The Chapels' Garden' and the information boards should include the Farnham Castle logo.
- ii) Members considered the quotes to repair the FTC office lift and noted the prices submitted from Orona and Liftsy with the Hampshire Lift Company did not tender. It was noted that Liftsy also operate a competitive emergency and standard call out service.

- iii) Officers recommended Liftsy to undertake the essential repairs but not with a substantial upfront payment. It was agreed to seek a better staged-payment profile if they were to do the work.

**Recommendation to Council: It is recommended that the contract to repair the lift be awarded to Liftsy, subject to satisfactory reference checks and an agreed payment profile at a cost of £26,920 with the costs met from the Town Hall earmarked reserve.**

- iv) Members noted the additional work approved by council had been ordered and FTC awaited the confirmation of the start dates for the Bandstand refurbishment at a cost of £4,450 (Virtuous); Gostrey Pillars repair at a cost of £850 (K Construction); the Green Lane Pillars repair for £450 (K Construction); the office ceilings painting at £1,110 (Tom Scott) and the office hallway ceiling and wall refurbishment for £2,350 (K Construction).
- v) Members noted that the Outside workforce required a further 2 backpack batteries plus chargers as they were quickly depleted with use. The cost of these will be no more than £2,350. It was also noted that a new photocopier contract with KCS would begin shortly. These new photocopiers would replace the existing copier on the ground floor and the 1<sup>st</sup> floor office and be able to print brochures and save documents to the cloud.

**Recommendation to Council:**

**FTC purchase 2 backpack batteries plus chargers with a cost of no more than £2,350.**

## **10. Consultations**

Members noted the Surrey Hills Area of Natural Beauty consultation was running for 14 weeks. Officers would investigate what was in the consultation and whether or not there were any sites or locations included in the Farnham area. A report would go to the next meeting.

## **11. Elections and Induction of New Council - Key dates**

- 1) Members noted the election count of Town and Parish Council wards would take place on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023.
- 2) The following key dates for the new Council were confirmed:
- i) Current Councillors would retire on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May.
  - ii) New Councillors would take up their roles on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May
  - iii) The first induction for new councillors: Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May
  - iv) Mayor Making (Annual Meeting of Council): Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May
  - v) First Council Meeting and appointments to Working Groups: Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May.
- 3) It was noted that there may be insufficient business for the scheduled June cycle with training and induction for new Councils and the late May meeting.

**Recommendation:**

**It was agreed to recommend that the Council Meeting scheduled for 22nd June would be changed to a 'reserve meeting' and only take place if required.**

## **12. Town Clerk update**

Members received an update from the Town Clerk and were informed about the retirement of Achim Hütten, Oberbürgermeister of Andernach after three decades. Members discussed the possibility of the Deputy Mayor attending the ceremony in Germany as well as sending a small gift.

It was agreed for the Town Clerk and the Mayor should discuss a suitable gift to send to mark the retirement of the Oberbürgermeister.

Members were updated on the progress of recruiting a new Town Crier and noted that three of the original candidates were still interested in being considered for the position. Christian Ashdown, the Haslemere Town Crier, and Secretary of the Guild of Criers would assist with the process. A meeting was scheduled for Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March to confirm the process.

Members also discussed the VIP visit taking place on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 that would include the final tree planting on the Queen's Green Canopy avenue of trees by the riverside and would take approximately 1 hour. There would be representatives from various groups, who would be part of the visit but there was no open invitation.

Members noted the tree planting opportunities in March as well as the new office layout to recreate the members' room next to the Byworth Room. The Business and Facilities Manager had moved to the first floor with Cemeteries, Projects and In Bloom staff.

It was noted that there would be an end of administration reception on May 2<sup>nd</sup> in the early evening; and that the date for the Services to Farnham Awards had been set for 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

Members noted the Commonwealth Flag Raising ceremony would take place on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March at 10:00am.

### **13. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 9.30am. It was agreed to adjourn the meeting to Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to discuss the updated policies for the March Council.

The meeting ended at 1.50 pm

Notes written by Lisa.tremeer@farnham.gov.uk and Town.Clerk@farnham.gov.uk