



# FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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## Notes Environment Working Group

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### **Time and date**

4.30 pm on Wednesday 22nd November, 2023

### **Place**

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

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### **Environment Working Group Members Present:**

Councillor Mat Brown  
Councillor George Hesse  
Councillor Chris Jackman  
Councillor Mark Merryweather  
Councillor Tim Woodhouse

Officers: Iain Lynch, Iain McCready, Stacey Wills,

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Councillors Hesse, Merryweather and Woodhouse attended via Zoom.

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

There were no disclosures of Interest.

#### **3. Notes of previous meeting**

The notes of the last Environment Working Group meeting held on the Wednesday 27th September 2023 were agreed.

#### **4. Plastic Free Farnham, Climate Change and Biodiversity**

Members noted the minutes from the Plastic Free Farnham meeting that Cllr Murray attended. Officers also updated the members that the Climate Action Task Group had been created and that the first official meeting of this would be held on Wednesday 20 December at 4.30pm with Cllrs Hesse, White, Woodhouse and Brown.

Following on from the meeting with Ben McCallan from Surrey County Council on Friday 17 November, officers will be working towards putting together Farnham Town Climate Action Plan alongside SCC's officers in the new year.

Libby Ralph from the Farnham Biodiversity Action Group updated members on some of the key developments from projects that the group were involved in. Crest Nicholson had agreed to insert swift brick boxes into the Brightwells Yard development. Residents were also reporting sightings of hedgehogs in Farnham and surrounding areas (near Bishop's Meadow, South Farnham, Rowledge and Wrecclesham) which is helping to identify release sites where the Hart Wildlife Rescue can release hedgehogs once they are recovered.

Farnham Biodiversity Action Group are also working with the Wey Landscape Partnership who continued to promote work to support beaver and water voles habitats and also to eradicate minks. Work had also started on a Strategy for the North Wey with support from the South East Rivers Trust and possible funding through the Landscape Recovery Bid.

Work had started on the creation of a wildlife area in Gostrey Meadow (near the old Bowls Pavilion site). During the Big Help Out to celebrate the King's Coronation a large group of volunteers created a Dead hedge. A dead hedge is made from upright stakes of wood and filled with horizontal prunings, it adds structure to a green space. Contrary to its name, it would soon be teeming with life, providing habitats for many species of wildlife and it uses up prunings and clippings which would otherwise have to be disposed of. It is especially a haven for small mammals and birds giving them somewhere to shelter that is protected from predators and from the wind and rain. Dead hedges create a linear eco-pile which can be added to over time. Other elements that have been added include a bug and bee hotels, built by a Scouts group and made with old wooden pallets and other materials to encourage solitary bees and other bugs. Another group also helped create a hibernaculum. This provides a home for frogs, toads and reptiles during the winter months. It consists of a hole dug in the ground, filled with sticks and stones to leave many gaps for refuge, then covered with soil and vegetation to provide a more constant temperature. Other projects planned for this area include planting of a native hedge, maintaining the wildflower area, building raised flower beds to provide pollinator-friendly planting opportunities and creation signage with QR codes so that visitors can see how they might implement some of these measures at home. Libby Ralph stated that this wildlife area is important in the Town Centre as it offers small animal and insect refuge, helps to provide a green corridors between Bishop's Meadow and is also an important educational area especially for children and young people.

Other groups and projects that Farnham Biodiversity Group are in regular consultation with are Tice's Meadow, Runfold Quarry and Blackwater Valley.

Cllr Woodhouse requested the possibility of funding Water Ranger kits for volunteers to test the water quality. The Farnham Biodiversity Group and the Rivers Group had been testing the water quality and conducting surveys for a number of years. Cllr Woodhouse mentioned that both Haslemere and Godalming Town Councils had recently funded some kits. Town Clerk noted that organisations could apply for Community Grants and the application deadline was 4<sup>th</sup> December. Officers to invite representatives from Water Rangers and River Wey Trust to the next Environment Working Group meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

Following on from the meeting with Ben McCallan, Cllr Woodhouse discussed the idea of having a similar set up to Zero Guildford which is a hub where environmental community groups can meet, put on events for the community and support each other. Town Clerk noted that a similar hub was discussed in 2014/2015 using a vacant space in the old Woolmead building but this was not pursued by the local group. Ben McCallan would be looking into various building opportunities through SCC and WBC. Members discussed whether FTC would want to take a purely supportive role or a more active lead on the set up of such a hub. There were of course risks and liabilities that would need to be looked at and options of either setting up a social enterprise or a charity explored. Members agreed that at this stage a creation of a Climate Action Plan would be the next step.

## 5. Risk assessments

Members reviewed the risk assessments and officers highlighted main risks within the scope of the Working Group. There were no changes proposed.

## 6. Parks and Open Spaces

Cllr Jackman noted how nice Gostrey Meadow looked for Remembrance. Members noted that the large Laurel hedge in Gostrey Meadow has been reduced due to anti-social behaviour and for better management. Four replacement trees were due to be planted at Riverside and quotes for pathway improvement at Battings Garden and Gostrey Meadow were being requested.

Members received an update regarding lighting issues at Riverside and UCA which SCC are looking into.

Members were updated to the likely need for planning permission for the new 'Another Brick in the Wall' sculpture.

### **Recommendation**

**Farnham Town Council to submit a planning application in conjunction with Keppel Nowson to renew the current position of installing sculptures within the park.**

## 7. Farnham in Bloom

Officers updated members that the next meeting of the Farnham in Bloom Community Group was at the end of November where a chair of the group would be appointed. Members noted that the Bloomin' Kids workshop in Badshot Lea were very successful and that Hale Community Centre had also expressed an interest in having the workshops there in the future. Entries to the South and South East in Bloom awards would be made in the new year and would include entries for Town Centre, West Street, Badshot Lea and Hale Cemeteries and Gostrey Meadow.

Events for 2024 were being planned by officers with liaison with the Community Group.

## 8. Allotments

Members noted the current position over the 8 allotment sites, including waiting lists and empty plots. The increase of the cost of a plot by £5 was discussed by members. This increase would help with the upkeep of the allotments as the service has to fund itself and not use public money to do so.

The issue of ownership of the access to the Six Bells Allotment was discussed by members. In addition, the new fence equipment has been delivered and the site prepared for its installation in the new year. Leases alongside Contact Data Consent Forms had been sent to all plot holders.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. To apply to register the land to Six Bells Allotment for better management of the site.**
- 2. To increase the cost of a single plot by £5:00 to £67.50 from October 2024.**

## 9. Street Furniture

Members noted that designs for updated bus stop vinyls were being drafted and that there were no outstanding graffiti issues. Cllr Dickson highlighted various bus stops in Upper Hale that were

in need of improvement and she was directed to both WBC and SCC who could look into their responsibilities.

**10. Cemeteries and Burial Matters**

Members received a verbal update on recent cemetery matters and then discussed the recent application for a bear-shaped headstone to be erected in West Street Cemetery. Members decided that Officers should speak to the family to see if the design could be changed to keep the memorial in keeping with others in the Cemetery.

**11. Finance**

Members noted that there were no significant changes to the budgets. Officers updated members that there would be a separate meeting on budgets.

**12. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next scheduled meeting is the 6<sup>th</sup> February at 4:30pm.

The meeting ended at 6.54 pm

Notes written by Iain McCready