



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Notes Environment Working Group

Time and date

4.30 pm on Wednesday 27th September, 2023

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Environment Working Group Members Present:

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

Officers:

Iain McCready (Business and Facilities Manager), Iain Lynch (Town Clerk) Stacey Wills (Community Enhancement and Projects Officer)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Woodhouse.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosures of Interest.

3. Notes of the previous meeting

There were no notes of the previous meeting as it had been a presentation of previous Community Enhancement works and projects..

4. Plastic Free Farnham

Councillors welcomed Dr John Lewis from Plastic Free Farnham who gave a presentation on what the group had been doing. This included creating a list of businesses that had signed up to be Plastic Free Champions and organisations that had become Plastic Free allies. Councillors concluded that further work and thought is required on what Farnham Town Council can do further to become more Plastic Free after looking at what the Council had achieved so far (attached as an Annex) and what it could realistically achieve going forward.

5. **Climate Change and Biodiversity**

- 1 Councillors welcomed Carolyn McKenzie, Director of Environment at Surrey County Council (Via Zoom) to update members of what SCC was doing to reduce carbon and achieve the net zero target of 2050. The presentation highlighted aspects such as reducing emissions from Transport, a 1.2 million tree planting programme, engagement with communities and grants that can help with solar panels, EV charging infrastructure and insulation schemes.

Carolyn commented on how well Farnham was doing already (documents attached to the agenda on work achieved to date) and recommended that Farnham Town Council contact Ben McCallan to support Farnham with a Town Climate Action Plan to consolidate many aspects of what has been achieved already and to find out what gaps there might be.

- 2 In discussion the Working Group noted the Climate Emergency statement made in 2019 and the actions progressed since that time (set out in two mind maps at Annex 1 and 2 to Appendix B) and agreed to create a Climate Task Group to progress work further. It was agreed it would start after the Strategy Workshop where the key objectives moving forward would emerge.

Recommendation

1. **To produce a Town Climate Action Plan.**
 2. **To create a Task Group for Climate Change.**
- 3 The Working Group received the report from the Farnham Biodiversity Action Group (at Annex 4) which set out achievements to date and noted the adoption of the Biodiversity Policy by Farnham Town Council in 2021. The Group which involves around 20 key partners aims to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Farnham; to raise awareness of biodiversity within Farnham and enable community engagement; and to incorporate biodiversity enhancement in Farnham developments and businesses. The Biodiversity Group won a 'High Flyer' award in 2023 for its leadership in promoting biodiversity and wildlife in the community. FTC has a role to play in helping to deliver the Biodiversity Action Plan including having management plans for sites under its control and raising awareness of it.
 - 4 The Working Group noted a meeting had taken place on 19 September between the joint leaders and Cllr Brown with Jen Smallwood (involved in Zero Carbon Guildford) to discuss ideas of how FTC could progress its climate change declaration. The work undertaken with the support of Surrey County Council at East & West Horsley (attached at Annex 5) and the IMPACT Carbon report for Farnham prepared by officers at Annex 6 were noted and would form part of the Climate Action Task Group and a series of goals and objectives for an FTC to progress with a Climate Action Plan. There were options as to how this should be done and whether FTC co-ordinates a Climate Action Network or whether one should be community led, as in Alton, with its own focussed Climate Action Network.

6. **Budgets**

The Working Group noted the current budget.

7. **Parks and Open Spaces**

Members received an update regarding the current works at Gostrey, Riverside, UCA (Evelyn Borelli Garden of Rest), Battings and Maltings Riverside and were agreed that Hale Cemetery would be entered into Green Flag scheme in January 2024. Officers were awaiting detailed

inspection reports for two Lombardy Polar trees (Gostrey Meadow and Haren Gardens) which are over-mature and are at risk of decaying from the middle of the tree outwards.

Two tree stumps (one 8m high in West Street Cemetery and one in Gostrey Meadow - retained from trees that had to be removed for safety reasons) and an additional 6m section of the West Street tree appropriate for a bench, had been identified as being suitable to be carved by a specialist tree carver (ideally local). The Working Group discussed options for suitable environmental carvings and agreed to recommend they be carved once alternate quotes had been received.

Recommendation to Council

The tree carvings in West Street Cemetery and Gostrey Meadow be undertaken at a cost of no more than £8,000 with the costs split between the Gostrey Meadow and Cemeteries budgets.

8. Farnham in Bloom

Due to the change of chair of the Farnham in Bloom Community Group and the desire from current members to refresh the annual schedule of events, officers met with the group for a 'Brainstorming session' in September to discuss increasing volunteer numbers; refreshing the programme of events to be more inclusive; and how to focus more on biodiversity and sustainability. There were some positive ideas emerging such as combining the Farnham in Bloom Launch with a bigger event in Gostrey Meadow where community groups can meet potential volunteers and also sponsors, and with various activities on offer for families and children to get involved such as litter picking, weeding, planting and creating new biodiverse areas.

The Working Group welcomed the idea of moving Bloomin' Kids practical sessions from the nursery at West Street to the various Community Groups allowing more children to access the activities. It was agreed to trial this October's one-day workshop to take place at Badshot Lea Community Garden and be supported by Badshot Lea Bloomer volunteers.

The Working Group noted that officers would be working on the rest of the revamped programme of events, launching it next year and that a new chair of the Farnham in Bloom Community Group would be elected at its next meeting in October.

In terms of sponsorship, the Working Group noted the sponsorship figure in the agenda was incorrect and £16,045 had been achieved. The income was down from previous years primarily as a result of a late change of the Principal Sponsor becoming a Gold sponsor for business reasons and reduced income from the sale of the hanging baskets to businesses. A lot of businesses had been affected by the South East Water road closures and the impact on their businesses and did not have the capacity to support Farnham in Bloom.

It was noted that officers were looking at promoting Winter hanging baskets to businesses to boost the funds with one new business in West Street ordering 5 in the last week.

9. Cemeteries and Burial Matters

The Working Group were informed that the Hale Chapels' Garden was to be judged on the 5th October by a Civic Trust Award judge and that the garden had already achieved a BALI award.

Officers also gave an update on the maintenance programme for the rest of the year which would include a major cut back of undergrowth from Green Lane Cemetery to ensure visible sight lines as the cemetery had experienced some anti-social behaviour over the summer.

10. Allotments

The Working Group noted the results of the 2023 allotment show and the suggestion to the Allotment Liaison Group that the date be moved to June or July 2024.

Officers updated the Working Group on the current waiting list of the allotments and informed the Group that the new leases were due to be sent in October. Income was likely to be below target this year and it was proposed that an increase be considered during the Budget Setting process effective October 2024. It was agreed comparison rates from other town and parish councils be sought.

The Working Group noted the latest position on the fence at Six Bells which would be installed with the help of a working party of allotment holders.

11. Street Furniture

- 1 Members discussed the nature of vinyl wrap to update bus stops and officers explained that the vinyl wrap is an effective way of updating what are very old bus stops and in turn extends the life of them. Some of the current bus stop coverings had faded or had out of date images. Some were being replaced, and officers would share new designs to the next meeting.
- 2 The Working Group noted the installation of plaques to celebrate Sir Ray & Lady Tindle and Kitty Milroy. Four new nominations for the Notable Names of Farnham Wall were considered by members (list set out at Appendix I) and all were recommended to Council for adoption.

Recommendation:

The four names proposed be included on the Notable Names of Farnham wall over the next 12 months.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the working group will be held 22nd November at 4:00pm.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Notes written by Iain McCreedy