FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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Notes
Strategy and Finance Working Group

Time and date
9.30 am on Tuesday 10th September 2019

Place
Town Clerk Office - Town Council Offices

Attendees:

Members: Councillors John Neale (Lead Member), Roger Blishen, Mark Merryweather, Carole Cockburn, Alan Earwaker, David Beaman, Brian Edmunds, Pat Evans and John Ward.

Officers: Iain Lynch (Town Clerk) and Iain McCready (Business and Facilities Manager).

1.   Apologies

POINTS	ACTION
Apologies were received from Cllr Attfield and Cllr Dickson.	

2.   Declarations of Interest

POINTS	ACTION
There were no declarations of interest.	

3.   Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th July 2019

POINTS	ACTION
The notes of the previous meeting were tabled (notes attached to agenda were a repeat of the June meeting)	

4.   Finance Report

POINTS	ACTION
i) Members noted the latest overview of the finances of the Strategy & Finance Working Group and reviewed the Council's income and expenditure to 2nd September including a detailed budget heading report and the bank reconciliation.	

5.   Updates and Matters Arising from Working Groups and Task Groups

POINTS	ACTION
Infrastructure Planning Group report held on the 2nd and 30th August The Working group noted arrangements for the independent examination on 1st October. A meeting to finalise details was being held with Waverley Borough Council. The working Group agreed that officers from Surrey County Council should be invited to a forthcoming meeting to discuss highways issues including removal of HGV's **Vision for Farnham** i) Cllr Neale provided an update on The Vision for Farnham following the Councillor briefing held on 7th September. Members noted the challenge of an improved road network with Surrey County Council focussed on strategic network changes whilst residents were more focussed on connectivity for the town. ii) It was agreed that the Waverley Local Committee should be asked to reinstate the Farnham Task Group so any matters could be discussed between the tiers and highways improvements to be funded by CIL could be discussed. iii) Cllr Neale advised that there would be a meeting soon with Surrey County Council on strategic highways matters prior to the draft vision document being finalised for a wider public endorsement. Engagement would follow a further meeting with Councillors. iv) Cllr Neale emphasised that the vision document would not come up with all the answers. Cllr Cockburn reminded the Working Group of the Towns vision to 2032 agreed following referendum.	**Recommend to Council.** **Contact Surrey County Council and ask them to reinstate the Farnham Task Group.**

6.   Grant Applications

POINTS	ACTION
Members discussed a grant application from Pass and Play (Netball) and agreed to award £500 for them to spend on new equipment.	

7.   Consultations

POINTS	ACTION
Members considered the Waverley Polling Station Review consultation. The following response was agreed: *(table below)* Members suggest that where possible INSET days should be encouraged on polling day.	

Polling District	Current Polling Station	WBC Proposals	FTC Response
Bourne North	St Thomas-on-the-Bourne	No change	
Bourne South	South Farnham Infant School	Suggestions sought	New Cricket pavilion could be considered
Castle 1	Memorial Hall	No change	
Castle 1	United Reformed Church	No change	If needed the Town Council offices could be used.
Firgrove 1	St Joans Centre	No change	
Firgrove 2	Brambleton Hall	No change	
Hale and Heath End	Baptist Church Hall	No change	
Hale and Heath End	Gorselands	No change	
Moor Park (1)	TA Centre	No change	
Moor Park (2)	Abbey School	Suggestions sought	
Boundstone	Leverton Hall, S Peter's Church	Suggestions sought	
Shortheath	Leverton Hall, St Peter's Church	Suggestions sought	An alternative location would be preferable but limited options available.
Upper Hale	Hale School	Suggestions sought	Hale Institute could be considered.
Weybourne	Weybourne Village Hall	No change	
Badshot Lea	St Georges Church Hall	No change	
Wrecclesham	Wrecclesham Community Centre	No change	
Rowledge	Rowledge Village Hall	No change	

8.   Climate Emergency

The draft report for Council (attached at Annexe 1) which incorporated comments from the discussion at Community Enhancement Working Group. Following detailed discussion, it was agreed that the report and recommendations at Annex 1 be proposed for adoption. Farnham Town Council i) Agrees there is a "Climate Emergency" that requires urgent action. ii) Aims to become carbon neutral by 2030, acting directly on activities within its responsibility, and in cooperation with principal authorities where they have the mandate. iii) Continues to review its operations and the way it delivers services, so developing an action plan to consider positive changes that would reduce carbon emissions. iv) Recognises that to achieve its carbon neutral targets, it is essential for central government to provide powers, funding and other resources; so, the Council calls on UK Government and local climate change partnerships to provide the necessary support. v) Continues to encourage the local Farnham community to take all practical steps to reduce its own carbon footprint, harmful omissions and greenhouse gasses.	**Recommendation; Adopt the report attached to Annex 1**

9.   Policies

POINTS	ACTION
Members noted that updated CCTV policy was required following GDPR and the new cameras installed. It was agreed the updated CCTV policy attached at Annex 2 be recommended to Council. It is scheduled for a review in 3 years. read through and agreed the updated CCTV policy.	**Recommendation to Council to adopt the new CCTV policy at Annex 2.**

10.   Contracts Update

POINTS	ACTION
An update on contracts matters was provided as follows: i) The current state of the air conditioning in the Council Chamber. ii) CNG supply unit to fuel the new vehicle has been fitted. iii) External works at the Town Council are being undertaken with additional work added as it is felt that as the building will have scaffolding in place then it would be a good time to work on the soffits, fascias and gutters. Also, it was noted that the Christmas lights would be replaced with LED variants whist the scaffolding is erected. It was also noted that the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Leader and mayor, after consultation with Cllrs Attfield and Dunsmore agreed to extend the contract for the additional works and to waive standing orders and Financial Regulations to award the contract without tendering.	

11.   Community Engagement

POINTS	ACTION
The Working Group read through the review of Farnham Town Council's approach to community engagement and regular activities undertaken as set out in the report at Annex 3. It was agreed to recommend the following actions. i) Agree to officers designing a process for gathering and analysing data from social media feedback, letters, emails, complaints, compliments, phone calls, face to face comments etc and for this to be regularly fed back to members. ii) Commit to the principles of best practice set out so that any new engagement exercise is supported by well-thought out plan. iii) Pilot a new Younger people Task Group which would report back into Strategy and Finance to consider how best to engage with Younger people and meet identified needs.	**Recommend to Council** **I. To welcome the report at annex 3.** **II. Create a Young people Task Group to progress Farnham Town Councils approach to engaging younger people.**

12.   All Councillor Strategy and Workshop

POINTS	ACTION
Members discussed the forthcoming Councillor Strategy Workshop to be held on the 19th October and noted that a facilitator would be sought for the workshop.	

13.   Expenditure of Brightwells Section 106 Contributions

POINTS	ACTION
Members discussed the report and recommend the following to Council: i) FTC offer to lead on a town wide wayfinding project. ii) In preparation for the conclusion of the WBC Car Parking Strategy review, the Tourism & Events Working Group develop a town wide wayfinding strategy, in consultation with: FCAMP and Farnham Visitors Forum. iii) Any larger infrastructure works proposed by the Park & Stride project team are discussed by the Infrastructure Planning Group and CIL/S106 Task Group. iv) The Assets Task Group progress plans to develop a new CCTV system. v) Council Officers liaise directly with Crest Nicholson to ensure required infrastructure to support Farnham in Bloom and the Christmas lights is installed at Construction stage.	**Recommend to Council** **Tourism & Events Working Group develop the town wide wayfinding strategy, in consultation with FCAMP and Farnham Visitors Forum.**

14.   Town Clerk Update

POINTS	ACTION
The Town Clerk reported changes affecting the Staff Structure which would be considered by the HP Panel in due course.	Town Clerk to action.

15.   Date and time of next meeting

POINTS	ACTION
Tuesday 25th October 9.30am.	

The meeting ended at 11.45am

Notes written by Iain McCready

FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Time and date
Tuesday 10th September, 9.30am

Place
Town Clerk's Office

Climate Emergency

Introduction

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report in October 2018 on 'Global Warming of 1.5°C'. The report states that:

- Human activity has already caused 1°C of warming to earth.
- To limit warming to 1.5°C it will be necessary to halve global carbon emissions by 2030 and to achieve net-zero net emissions by 2050.
- The consequences of 2°C warming are significantly worse than 1.5°C warming across all areas.

The report summarises how society might limit global warming to 1.5°C. Key findings concluded that meeting a 1.5°C target is possible but would require 'deep emissions reductions' and rapid far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.

Central government and local councils are being asked to declare a 'Climate Emergency' in an effort to commit to reducing carbon emissions. The Local Government Chronicle reported on 31st July that "in the past eight months, 205 of the UK's 408 principal authorities have declared a climate emergency, committing them to take urgent action to reduce carbon emissions at a local level".

Surrey County Council and five of the county's boroughs and districts have now made a 'Climate Emergency' declaration and Waverley is expected to vote on a motion soon.

There is no single definition of what this declaration means. UK Government has pledged to cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 but many Councils say they want to be carbon-neutral by 2030. This is a much more ambitious target to reduce carbon emissions than the central government's aim of 80%.

Principal authorities are also being encouraged to establish local Climate Change Partnership coalitions to fight climate change. The Surrey Climate Change Partnership (SCCP) was set up by Surrey County Council in 2008, but local councils also have an important role to play.

What can Farnham Town Council do?

One of the Co-Chairs of the National Climate Emergency Network, who is also the Leader of Stroud District Council, believes "that local councils have the resources and experience to do the heavy lifting that's needed, in partnership with local communities". Farnham Town Council could take the following steps:

1. Consider a 'Climate Emergency' declaration.

2. Commit to reducing carbon emissions by implementing further changes to Farnham Town Council operations and services. Farnham Town Council has already implemented positive changes showing a commitment to reducing carbon emissions and removing single use

plastics. However, it could review its operations and service delivery to consider further green measures to maintain the good work commenced and minimise its carbon footprint, such as:

- Refitting council buildings to run off renewable energy sources where practicable.
- Switching to renewable energy tariffs.
- Extending the removal of single use plastic.
- Replacing the remaining council owned vehicles with electric or other appropriate vehicles.
- Ensuring that Council decisions consider the impact of climate change.
- Encouraging car share or walk to work schemes for its staff.

3. Commit to working with the Farnham community to reduce carbon emissions.

   A local council may only have jurisdiction over its own operations and services but there are other ways in which a local council could assist in helping to reduce carbon emissions in its area, eg:

   - Helping to influence community habits, eg by encouraging walking, cycling and use of public transport.
   - Working in partnership with community organisations, individuals and local businesses to encourage changes to cut carbon emissions.
   - Work in partnership with principal authorities to develop and implement polices to cut carbon emissions, eg by influencing local planning policy requiring electric car charging points to be provided in new developments, moving towards more energy efficiency and solar panels.

4. Demonstrate a further commitment to addressing the 'Climate Emergency' by working in partnership with local climate change partnership organisations and other bodies.

Conclusion

The evidence presented by IPCC and other non-governmental organisations indicates that the continuing rise of greenhouse gases poses a threat to humanity and life on earth and that urgent action is required to reduce carbon emissions to keep global warming under 1.5°C.

There are a number of solutions available to Farnham Town Council to continue to take steps towards reducing carbon emissions; some could be costly, and others could save the Council money in the long term. However, these costs are currently unknown, and no research has yet been carried out on whether the changes would result in an overall reduction of carbon emissions or on the costs likely to be faced by local council taxpayers. This research would be required to understand the impact on the Council but, by making a commitment to change things within its responsibility, will send a positive example to the community.

Climate Emergency

Farnham Town Council notes that:

- the continuing rise in greenhouse gases globally, if not addressed, represents an existential threat to our civilisation on this planet.

- the impacts of climate breakdown are already causing serious damage around the world.

- the recent 2018 Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report stated that there is just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperature rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius; this assumes net zero emissions are reduced by 2050 from the current 40+ billion tonnes.

- such a reduction will require (in the words of the IPCC) "*rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems. These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options*".

- all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to act, and local governments recognise this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies.

- strong policies to cut emissions also have associated health, wellbeing and economic benefits.

- central government has committed to a zero-carbon national target and has adopted a policy whereby sales of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, one of the main causes of emissions resulting in climate change, are to be totally phased out.

- a growing number of UK local authorities have already passed 'Climate Emergency' motions in recognition of the urgency of the climate crisis.

- local authorities working to ambitious targets for achieving net zero carbon emissions will require additional urgent financial and other support from central government in order to achieve their aims.

Strategy & Finance recommendations to Council

Farnham Town Council:

1. agrees there is a 'Climate Emergency' that requires urgent action.

2. aims to become carbon neutral by 2030, acting directly on activities within its responsibility, and in cooperation with our principal authorities on activities where they have the mandate.

3. will continue to review its operations and the way it delivers services, and develop an action plan for the Council to consider positive changes that will reduce carbon emissions.

4. recognises that to achieve its carbon neutral targets, there is a need for central government to provide powers, funding and other resources and calls on UK Government and local climate change partnerships to provide the necessary support.

5. will continue to work with and encourage its local community to take all practical steps to reduce its own carbon footprint and safeguard the environment.

Farnham Town Council
CCTV Policy
September 2019

Introduction

This policy is to control the management, operation, use and confidentiality of the CCTV systems located at Gostrey Meadows, Town Council Offices, Victoria Gardens and internal system within Farnham Town Council Offices and Farnham Depot. The sites are owned or managed by Farnham Town Council.

Farnham Town Council accepts that the management of the Council's CCTV system includes the processing of personal data:

- As it may be possible to identify an individual directly for the information being processed.
- It is possible that, although the data held may not relate to an identifiable individual to Farnham Town Council, it may related to an identifiable individual for another data controller such as the Police.

As such, this Policy acknowledges the following underlying principles surrounding processing personal data set out in Article 5(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation (2018):

Personal data shall be:

a) processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals ('lawfulness, fairness and transparency');

b) collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes; further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes shall not be considered to be incompatible with the initial purposes ('purpose limitation');

c) adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed ('data minimisation');

d) accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay ('accuracy');

kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed; personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in

the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes subject to implementation of the appropriate technical and organisational measures required by the GDPR in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals ('storage limitation');

e) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures ('integrity and confidentiality').

Statement of Purpose
To provide a safe and secure environment for the benefit of those who might visit, work or live in the area. The system will not be used to invade the privacy of any individual, except when carried out in accordance with the law. The scheme will be used for the following purposes:

- To reduce the fear of crime by persons using the Farnham Town Council owned or managed facilities, so they can enter, enjoy and leave the facilities without fear of intimidation by individuals or groups;

- To reduce vandalism of property and to prevent, deter and detect and protect crime and disorder;

- To assist the Police, the Council and other law enforcement agencies with identification, detection, apprehension and prosecution of offenders, by examining and using retrievable evidence relating to crime, public order or contravention of bye-laws;

- To assist all emergency services to carry out their lawful duties.

Changes to the Purpose or Policy
The CCTV Policy will be discussed by Strategy & Finance Working Group and any major change that would have a significant impact on either the purpose of this policy or operation of the CCTV scheme would be approved at full Council.

Responsibilities of the Owner of the Scheme
Farnham Town Council retains overall responsibility for the scheme.

Management of the System
Day to day operational responsibility rests with the Business and Facilities Manager.

Breaches of this policy will be investigated by the Town Clerk and reported to the Council.

A CCTV system prevents crime largely by increasing the risk of detection and prosecution of an offender. Any relevant tape or digital evidence must be in a acceptable format for use at Court Hearings. This policy must be read and understood by all persons involved in this scheme and individual copies of this policy will therefore be issued for retention. A copy will also be available for reference in the secure recording areas.

Control and Operation of the Cameras, Monitors and Systems
The following points must be understood and strictly observed by operators:

- Trained operators must act with integrity and not abuse the equipment or change the pre-set criteria to compromise the privacy of an individual.

- No public access will be allowed to the monitors except for lawful, proper and sufficient reason, with the prior approval by the Town Clerk or Business and Facilities Manager. The Police are

permitted access to tapes and prints if they have reason to believe that such access is necessary to investigate, detect or prevent crime. The Police are permitted to visit Farnham Town Council to review and confirm the Council's operation of CCTV by arrangement. Any visit by the Police to view images will be logged by the operator.

- Operators should regularly check the accuracy of the date/time displayed.

- Storage and Retention of Images
  Digital records should be securely stored to comply with data protection and should only be handled by the essential minimum number of persons. Digital images will normally be erased after a period of 30 days.

- Images will not normally be supplied to the media, except on the advice of the Police if it is deemed to be in the public interest.

- As records may be required as evidence at Court, each person handling a digital record may be required to make a statement to a Police Officer and sign an exhibit label. Any images that are handed to a Police Officer should be signed for by the Police Officer and information logged to identify the recording, and showing the Officer's name and Police Station. The log should also show when such information is returned to the Council by the Police and the outcome of its use.

- Any event that requires checking of recorded data should be clearly detailed in the log of incidents, including Crime Numbers (if appropriate) and the Council notified at the next available opportunity.

- Any damage to equipment or malfunction discovered by an operator should be reported immediately to the Town Clerk, Business and Facilities Manager. When a repair has been made, this should also be logged showing the date and time of completion.

- Subject Access Requests
  Any request by an individual member of the public for access to their own record image must be made to the Town Clerk for consideration and reply, normally within one calendar month in line with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Accountability
Copies of this CCTV Policy are available in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, as will any reports that are submitted to the Council providing it does not breach security needs.

The Police have been informed of the installation and will be provided with a copy of this CCTV Policy upon request.

Any written concerns or complaints regarding the use of the system will be considered by the Council, in line with the existing complaints procedure.

Status
Farnham Town Council has considered the need for using CCTV and has resolved that it is required for the prevention and detection of crime and for protecting the safety of members of the public. It will not be used for any other purposes.

Date of Adoption
This CCTV was reviewed and adopted by Council on 19th September 2019

Time and date
Tuesday 10th September at 9.30am

Place
Town Clerk Office – Town Council Offices

A review of Farnham Town Council's approach to community engagement

As expectations rise and the cost of delivering services increases, it is more important than ever before to involve residents in shaping services and decision-making. By understanding what people need, service delivery can be more efficient and satisfactory for service users. Involving people in decision-making can help ensure the right decisions are made, manage the electorate's expectations and improve the Council's relationships with residents.

This report looks at how Farnham Town Council currently engages with the community and how it can engage more effectively.

What is community engagement and consultation?

Consultation is a process with a clear beginning, middle and end. The scope for stakeholder input should be clear. The Consultation Institute definition is:

'Consultation is the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action'.

Engagement is seen as a broader term than consultation that includes formal consultations through to informal listening exercises and the seeking of insight into what local people think and feel about various day to day matters. The following is a useful explanation:

'Community engagement is based on the democratic idea that everyone who is affected by an issue that impacts their community should have a say in the decision making around it. It, moreover, holds the promise that public participation can influence decisions that affect the provision of services, future visions and sustainability of our communities.

'Although there is no commonly agreed definition and the use of the term varies widely (sharing in notions of consultation, participation, collaboration and empowerment), community engagement captures its meaning in mutual decision making.' (source: Sally Hussey, Bangthetable.com)

Why engage

There is an argument to suggest that councils that listen and respond to their communities on a regular basis can improve dialogue and relationships.

Combining knowledge about a community's mood and feelings with hard facts and figures, means issues are less likely to emerge as decisions are made in response to people's needs.

How Farnham Town Council currently engages with the community

Over the past five years, advances in technology have provided opportunities for Farnham Town Council to improve its communications and to engage with a wider range of people.

Methods of regular engagement

Social media

Purpose– To listen, inform and provide opportunities for two-way communication.

Farnham Town Council has had a presence on Facebook and Twitter since June 2010. Both channels are used to post information about the Town Council's news and services, to share posts from business and voluntary communities and to provide an easy way for followers to engage and ask questions about Town Council business.

Farnham Town Council has nearly 3,000 followers on Facebook and is approaching 4,000 followers on Twitter.

Enewsletter

Purpose– To inform and invite two-way communication.

An enewsletter is circulated to over 2,000 subscribers every 4-6 weeks. It provides nuggets of information and signposts people to where they can find out more. On average 44% of subscribers engage with the enewsletter by opening it – this is well above the industry average of 17%.

Press releases

Purpose– To inform and invite comment.

Press releases are prepared and issued about the council's business and to promote events and initiatives. A named councillor (Town Clerk during purdah) is quoted in every press release so that readers know who to contact should they wish to engage in further conversation about the press release subject. The releases are issued to the local media and local government trade press and the publication rate is high. Every press release is published on the Farnham Town Council website and is shared via social media.

Website

Purpose– To inform and provide opportunities for feedback.

The website was re-launched in 2014. The content and design was informed by the findings of focus groups and a survey of local people and organisations. The consultation exercise showed that people wanted a website that offered more than information about council business. They wanted a central hub where they could go to find out about things to do, events and shopping.

Over the past year, the website has attracted 148,500 visitors. Visits rise significantly on days when there are community events such as fireworks displays, the Food Festival and the Christmas lights switch-on.

Vantage Point – residents' newsletter

Purpose– To inform residents about Council services and business.

Farnham Town Council includes a residents' newsletter in Vantage Point magazine eight times a year. The newsletter appears in the centre pages of the magazine and is between two and six pages long. Vantage Point magazine is distributed by the Royal Mail to every household in Farnham.

Residents' guide

Purpose– To inform residents about Council services and how to get the most out of living in Farnham.

The annual residents' guide is distributed in January by the Royal Mail to every household and business in Farnham. It includes information about council services, events and organisations in

Farnham. Councillors' contact details and photos are included so that residents can engage with their local councillor.

The publication is paid for by advertising.

Leaflets, paid for advertising and direct mail

Purpose – To inform about specific services.

Leaflets, adverts and direct mail are used to provide more information about events and services and to promote what the town has to offer to visitors and residents. Opportunities to get involved are promoted and details about how to engage via social media and the website are always given.

Newsletters

Purpose- To engage with specific target audiences.

A quarterly newsletter is sent to allotment holders to provide targeted information and to inform tenants how they can get involved in the day to day management of allotments.

Other newsletters have been created as and when required and have informed readers about matters such as the Neighbourhood Plan.

Face to face

Purpose– To gain insight from two-way conversations with residents.

The Mayor's ward coffee mornings, the information tent at every event, the Annual Town Meeting, competitions such as Secret Gardens, volunteering opportunities and attending community activities such as Hale Coffee morning and Coffee Spot at Rowledge, provide invaluable insight and bring councillors and officers into contact with people who may not otherwise get in touch.

The outside workforce is in a unique position and gains valuable first-hand information from the people they come into contact with while going about their day to day work.

Face to face contact provides opportunities for insight into topical issues and people's feelings about council business.

Noticeboards

Purpose: To inform about services and opportunities to get involved.

There 25 noticeboards located at the heart of Farnham's communities. Being local and located in places where there is a reasonable footfall, information may be seen by those who would not normally interact with Farnham Town Council.

Grant funding

Purpose: In addition to providing funding to a good cause, grants provide an opportunity to engage in two-way communication with the third sector.

Business communication

Purpose: To engage with the business community in two-way communications.

Initiatives such as the biennial customer service awards, sponsorship of Town Council events and activities and opportunities for the Mayor and Leader to be guest speaker at Chamber of Commerce events provide excellent opportunities to engage with the business sector and gauge feelings on council activity.

Partner communication

Purpose: To gain insight from organisations working within the community.

Contact with schools, voluntary organisations, amenity groups, public sector partners etc provide an informal opportunity for Farnham Town Council to hear about the needs of groups who do not engage with the council direct. For example, as a result of the council's relationship with The Dance

Movement, more is known and understood about the needs of disadvantaged young people in the area.

Statutory consultations

Neighbourhood Plan

Purpose: To inform people about the Neighbourhood Plan consultation and to encourage participation.

In recent years, the statutory consultations on Farnham's Neighbourhood Plan have been some of the best examples of community engagement ever undertaken by Farnham Town Council.

Clear objectives, the identification of stakeholders and key messages were supported by a comprehensive communications plan which set down the methods for reaching people and encouraging participation.

The consultation included qualitative engagement such as roadshows, public meetings and live question and answer sessions on Facebook to quantitative activity such as the achievement of over 1,000 responses to a complex and lengthy survey using Survey Monkey software. The engagement exercise was supported with information on the website, social media and in a printed format.

Participants were kept informed and their feedback shaped the final versions of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Consultations by external bodies

Farnham Town Council uses its established communication channels to inform residents about consultations by third parties. Recently, this has included proposals for the re-routing of an Esso pipeline, housing developments and works involving the temporary closure of the level crossing.

Consultation best practice

It is essential to be clear about the ultimate aim of embarking on an engagement exercise. The ladder of citizen participation by Sherry R Arnstein 1969, which was rationalised and updated by The Consultation Institute sets out four levels of aspiration:

- **information-giving**: where residents are informed, but have no influence
- **consultation**: where residents can inform decisions, but don't have the final say
- **co-production**: where things are done jointly, acting together
- **supporting citizen power**: where residents lead and the council stands back

The Consultation Institute has published a Consultation Charter which includes seven best practice principles. In summary, these are as follows:

Integrity
The process must have an honest intention. The *Consultor* must be willing to listen to the views advanced by *consultees*, and be prepared to be influenced when making subsequent decisions.

Visibility
All those who have a justifiable right to participate in a consultation should be made reasonably aware of the exercise.

Accessibility
Consultees must be able to have reasonable access to the exercise. This means that the methods chosen must be appropriate for the intended audience and that effective means are used to cater for the special needs of 'seldom heard' groups and others with special requirements.

Transparency
Stakeholder invitation lists, *consultee* responses and consultation results should be published but only with the consent of participants.

Disclosure
For consultation to succeed, and to encourage a measure of trust between the parties, it is important to provide for reasonable disclosure of relevant information.

Fair interpretation
Information and viewpoints gathered through Consultation exercises have to be collated and assessed, and this task must be undertaken promptly and objectively.

Publication
Participants in a consultation exercise have a proper expectation that they will see both the *output* and the *outcome* of the process within a reasonable time after the conclusion of the exercise.

The Consultation Institute believes that following these principles will enable the consultation to yield its true benefits and assist in evidence-based decision-making.

The principles can be applied to all engagement and consultation exercises.

Alongside the Charter, there are a number of key principles that should be followed during the three stages of engagement:

Before

1. decide whether the exercise is to be a consultation or engagement
2. decide key questions
3. decide stakeholders
4. what's come before?
5. decide resources and timescales?

   During
6. choose consultation methods
7. write communications plan
8. design and implement

   After
9. analyse and interpret
10. provide feedback
11. evaluate

How good is existing engagement

Voter turnout, participation in community activity, anecdotal evidence and previous engagement exercises suggest that people are willing to engage with Farnham Town Council when there is an opportunity to be involved in something about which they care.

This willingness to be involved and a desire from the 2019-2023 Council to be more outward looking, provides opportunities to take Farnham Town Council's public engagement to the next level.

Tools and techniques to increase engagement: pros and cons

Online surveys: can be either promoted publicly and widely or sent to a closed group, or a combination of the two. Online surveys are quick and cheap but require time and careful thought to plan questions. Farnham Town Council subscribes to SurveyMonkey which enables the creation and analysis of surveys.

Online surveys should be supported by paper versions but a little extra time and thought is needed to distribute, collect and process the data.

There are biases about the types of people who participate and how they answer but surveys remain a useful and widely used tool.

Staff resource:low to medium.

Financial resource: low to medium.

Web and social media polls: A quick, easy and fun way for people to give their views. There's a strong bias in terms of who takes part and, by their nature, they cannot be too detailed. Risk of prompting negative feedback on social media.

Staff resource: low.

Financial resource: low.

Citizens' panels: A Citizens' panel is a demographically representative, consultative body of local residents who can be drawn on for surveys and other techniques such as focus groups.

Citizens' panels are useful when a particular audience is needed - age group or gender, special interest or location etc - but it is difficult to maintain sufficient numbers once you segment the panel in this way.

Membership tends to be skewed to the sort of people who are interested in having their say on local matters so maintaining a representative group can be a challenge. Over time, participants get used to being surveyed so their views may be further skewed and their views less spontaneous or fresh.

Getting the recruitment right when setting up and developing a panel is therefore really important.

Staff resource: Medium to high to set up. Once running, low to medium.

Financial resource: Depending on how the panel is recruited, low to high. Once running, low.

Focus groups: Small group of invited participants who take part in a facilitated discussion around a particular topic. Suggested time would be 1-2 hours. Running a focus group is a skilled and specialist area so recruiting a supplier who can provide high quality facilitation and analysis is important. Focus groups are great for testing ideas at the start of a piece or research or for delving deeper to look further into some research results where further insight is required. Participants would usually be offered an incentive to attend.

Staff resource: Medium. Careful selection of supplier is needed and involvement in planning the purpose.

Financial resource: High

Listening projects: In a listening project, researchers go out into the community and allow the conversation and approach to be led by the participants. They use open questions and gather information in a non-judgemental way to allow the participants' voices to be heard.

They are inclusive pieces of research, looking to hear from all sections of the community but are not necessarily representative. Methods tend to be informal and could include a semi-structured phone conversation with a professional or voluntary sector stakeholder or a chat at a bus stop with an elderly or young person. It's a very empathetic approach.

Results might be used alongside more data driven intelligence. The information gathered will be subjective and anecdotal but is nevertheless valued.

Listening projects are a great for ensuring people are heard and useful when looking at a specific community, e.g. at ward or neighbourhood level. They are not scientific but are good for when there is a need to demonstrate genuine engagement.

Staff resource: Medium.

Financial resource: Medium to high

Phone interviews, street surveys etc: Hard to get a representative sample without investing lots of resource but, done in house, this can be a quick way to get some feedback. Phone interviews can be semi-structured to enable more of a conversation around a topic which although won't be scientific can provide valuable insight to understand people's views.

Phone interviews could be used to seek feedback from stallholders at events or In Bloom volunteers.

Staff and financial resource: Depends on whether the surveys are done in house.

Residents' surveys: An expensive project but useful for gathering residents' views across a range of issues and to benchmark against in future.

Staff resource: High at planning stage and when acting on findings

Financial resource: High

Roadshows: Take an annual roadshow out to Farnham's communities so as to provide opportunities for residents to meet staff and councillors face to face.

Staff resource: High during the roadshow period.

Financial resource: Low to medium

Conclusions

When done well, engagement builds trust and assists with informed, evidence-based decision-making. An ill-thought out engagement exercise where outcomes are predestined, or choices are false is potentially more damaging than no consultation.

While the ultimate aim is that engagement should become second nature to the organisation and an integrated part of the role of officers and councillors, to reach this position, there are resource implications both in terms of officer time and budget. An assessment may also need to be made on whether a change in culture is needed in any part of the organisation.

Formalising engagement may require one or two initial 'warm up' exercises so that Farnham Town Council can build trust with stakeholders by being able to evidence that it acts on what people say. A greater level of planning would also be required to ensure that enough time is allowed for a meaningful engagement exercise.

Farnham Town Council has access to a great deal of information from its existing engagement with residents but much of this insight remains untapped.

Embarking on an engagement strategy will be a learning experience and is a journey that should not be rushed so that lessons can be learned and the quality of engagement and building of trust can be maximised.

For success, it is essential to identify and agree the areas on which councillors wish to engage. An example could be seeking customer satisfaction feedback about an event such as the food festival and using the information to shape and improve future events.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Council:

1.   Agree to officers designing a process for gathering and analysing data from social media feedback, letters, emails. Complaints, compliments, phone calls, face to face comments etc and for this to be regularly fed back to members.
2.   Commit to the principles of best practice set out so that any new engagement exercise is supported by well-though out plan.
3.   Pilot a new Younger people Task Group which would report back into Strategy and Finance to consider how best to engage with Younger people and meet identified needs.