

Farnham in Bloom

South and South East in Bloom Judges' Briefing Notes

Town Centre





A welcome to Farnham in Bloom 2025

So far, 2025 has been an exciting year. Farnham in Bloom is honoured to take part in the South & South East in Bloom competition this year in the Town Centre category.

In March, Farnham in Bloom 2025 was launched with a Community Day which combined local horticultural based community groups, children's activities, volunteering and networking opportunities. This successful event took place in Gostrey Meadow and included litter picking, and wildflower and perennial plug planting.

This event was an opportunity to thank the many volunteers who have supported Farnham in Bloom, spending 400 hours planting 42,000 plug plants and creating over 200 hanging baskets and helped to water, weed and plant-up additional beds in Gostrey Meadow and other public spaces.

For a second year there have been two cemetery help outs, with the events attracting even more volunteers eager to support Farnham's green spaces.

The hard work of councillors continues with the Environment Working Group meeting four times a year to discuss green spaces, Farnham in Bloom, allotments, burials, cemeteries and biodiversity. The group also looks at practical ways to reduce Farnham's carbon footprint and to support residents on how they can reduce theirs.

Recognising the importance of supporting biodiversity and wildlife has had a further boost with freshly planted wildflower meadows in additional greenspaces. Instead of removing felled trees, they are turning them into valuable habitats. At West Street Cemetery, over a thousand small holes have been drilled into the deadwood to encourage nesting by solitary bees and beetles, supporting vital pollinators and decomposers in the local ecosystem.

Farnham Town Council is supporting climate change by watering less and increasing support for pollinating insects. The Council has also reduced the annual plant order by 26% since 2023. Introducing perennial plants such as sedums and geraniums alongside spring bulbs in Gostrey Meadow has already made a positive impact.

Farnham Town Council was the 2024 regional finalist in the prestigious Civic Trust Awards for creation of a garden on the site of two former chapels at Hale Cemetery and the garden also won a BALI National Landscape Award.



In Britain in Bloom 2024, Farnham won Gold and best in category for its entry into the Town Centres and City Centres award. Farnham in Bloom's outstanding commitment to community and environmental excellence caught the attention of the judges.

Farnham is enormously grateful to gold and silver sponsors and many other businesses for their support. Farnham in Bloom has helped local businesses to raise their profile and show their support for the local community. At a time when many local businesses are facing difficult trading conditions due to the extended roadworks in Farnham. the presence of Farnham in Bloom has brought a much-needed boost. The vibrant floral displays and community involvement help to lift spirits, improve the town's appearance, and encourage footfall during a challenging period for the high street.

The Council's scheme to sponsor a hanging basket is just one way local businesses have contributed and benefited. Supporting the community has been a focus again this year, helping community groups such as Space2Grow, Hale Community Centre and Men in Sheds. The continuous support of Men In Sheds, a woodwork club, has helped repair and refurbish wooden noticeboards for Farnham's villages.

Other floral displays around Farnham are cheerful, colourful, creative and enhance the appearance of the town, encouraging shoppers and supporting local businesses.

Farnham in Bloom continues to engage volunteers and the community, nurturing new and old friendships and producing stunning displays that lift spirits and provide places to relax.

We all hope you enjoy Farnham in Bloom as much as we do.

Councillor George Murrey Mayor of Farnham

About Farnham In Bloom



Farnham in Bloom is about making Farnham an attractive place to live and work or to visit; filling it with flowers and keeping the town and surrounding villages looking their best and encouraging people to work together. Farnham in Bloom is part of the wider community enhancement work for the town with a particular focus in the summer months on:

- A range of floral displays throughout the town and local villages including hanging baskets, troughs and planters with village flowers being watered and maintained by residents, community organisations and local businesses.
- Ten fun and engaging school competitions such as best hanging basket, best biodiversity area, flowers in a boot, tallest sunflower, largest pumpkin, and art competitions.
- A secret garden competition for businesses, residents and schools which includes categories such as Best Bee Friendly Border, Courtyard and Vegetable Garden.

Farnham in Bloom at a glance

Since its early beginnings in the 1990s, Farnham in Bloom has relied on voluntary commitment, local sponsorship (financial and in-kind) and support of local authorities and local businesses.

Farnham in Bloom remains committed to growing its volunteer base and is actively working to engage new groups, including a local dementia support group. Strengthening partnerships with local businesses is also a key priority, to foster a mutually beneficial relationship that enhances Farnham and makes it a desirable a place to work, relax, and enjoy.

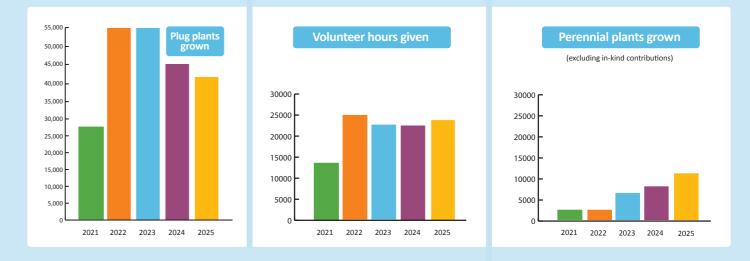
Farnham in Bloom has attracted Cala Homes — a national developer with a strong commitment to environmental responsibility—as one of its main sponsors. Their support underscores the growing recognition of Farnham's green initiatives and the positive impact they have on the community.

Being part of South and South East in Bloom and RHS Britain in Bloom has given a focus to the contribution made by all of Farnham's distinct communities.

The charts below set out how this contribution has grown over the years to deliver high standards and ultimately bring pleasure to Farnham's residents, businesses, and visitors.

Farnham in Bloom activity for 2025 has included:

- A full calendar of events and activities for the community.
- All hanging baskets planted by volunteers and local schools in peat-free compost.
- A new partnership with Hive Helpers to create a bee trail around the town.
- Supplying hanging baskets and troughs for neighbouring councils in Odiham and Weyhill, and the management of the Lion & Lamb Yard in Farnham.
- Maintaining 12 wildflower areas throughout Farnham including cemeteries and open spaces and land belonging to community groups, schools and conservation groups.
- Continued engagement with community groups offering support and guidance with their entries into It's Your Neighbourhood competitions.



Judges' Briefing Notes | Summer 2025

A year-round calendar of events



January	Design a Carpet Bed Competition
February	Biodiversity Workshop
March	Farnham in Bloom Community Day
April	Easter Bloomin' Kids' Workshop
May	Sustainability Festival
June	Walking Festival and VE planting
July	Schools' Gardens competition judging
August	Secret Garden competition judging
October	Farnham in Bloom Awards and winter planting
November	Autumn Litter pick
December	Thank you reception for volunteers



Horticultural Achievement



This year, the 'Friends of Gostrey Meadow' group has designed and further developed two large flower beds in Gostrey Meadow.

The existing roses were carefully relocated to other areas within Gostrey Meadow, making way for the introduction of perennial plants. This transformation was carried out with the help of local volunteers, including residents and community gardening groups, who all contributed their time and enthusiasm.

Farnham Town Council's commitment to sustainable planting continues to grow - in 2025 alone several existing beds were redesigned and over 400 perennial plants were introduced across the meadow.

It remains policy to prioritise sustainable planting practices by expanding perennial displays, which not only reduce resource use but also support biodiversity and provide longlasting visual impact.

The project not only improved the landscape but also helped foster a strong sense of community ownership and pride in the shared green space. This year, Farnham Town Council's horticultural team has been trialling a new eco-friendly planting mix. By combining peat-free compost with manure, the team has created a sustainable substrate that naturally feeds the plants and holds on to moisture for longer. This means using less water while still keeping displays looking their best.

Hazel whips have been planted at Badshot Lea Cemetery as part of efforts to enhance local biodiversity. This initiative is specifically aimed at supporting the habitat needs of dormice, a protected and declining species in the UK. Hazel provides both food and shelter, making it an ideal choice for creating a suitable environment for dormice to thrive.

The planting also contributes to wider ecological goals, encouraging the development of a more diverse and resilient landscape within the cemetery. This thoughtful approach to habitat creation reflects Farnham's commitment to conservation-led planting and the protection of local wildlife.

In addition to planting over 8,000 spring and summer bulbs, the crocuses throughout the parks and town centre provide a vibrant and colourful start to the spring season.

To ensure sustainability and community benefit, bulbs from previous spring displays are carefully lifted, replanted in other areas across Farnham, and shared with local community groups to help enhance their own green spaces.

During her visit to Hale Community Centre, Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh actively participated in the planting of over 2,000 tulip and daffodil bulbs. This initiative aimed to enhance the local environment and foster community spirit.

Brightwell's Yard is a long-awaited development in Farnham with a mixture of retail and residential units. The three separate living walls which contain 16 separate panels housing a mixture of foliage and flowers are continuing to develop well. As well as providing a food source for pollinating insects, this living wall is a great addition to the town and complements other planting schemes. There is also a sedum roof, additional trees and attractive shrubs around the town square.

Following the great success of last year's Bloomin' Kids' workshops, the Easter event took place in an additional venue in The Chantrys a more financially challenged area of Farnham.

All Bloomin' Kids' events and workshops are delivered by our dedicated team of volunteers, who continue to inspire and engage young people through fun, naturefocused activities.

In 2025 we nurtured:-

- 42,000 plug plants
- 12,000 perennial plants
- 30,000 Spring bulbs
- 100% of bulbs used in floral displays are reused by community groups the following year.
- 250 hanging baskets (made up by volunteers)
- 100 planters and troughs planted.
- 14 schools took part in school competitions







Judges' Briefing Notes | Summer 2025



Environmental Responsibility



Farnham in Bloom is passionate about helping the local environment, strengthening biodiversity, and supporting Farnham Town Council's Aim of becoming a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030.

Last year a Climate Change Task Group was set up to work on a Climate Action Plan for Farnham as well as highlighting the top 10 carbon emitters. Collaboration has also continued with Plastic Free Farnham to make sure single use plastics are reduced and Farnham has been designated a 'Plastic Free' town

At the Farnham in Bloom Community Day, with help from the Farnham Biodiversity Group, volunteers planted wildflower plugs.

The Friends of Gostrey Meadow have created an additional perennial bed as part of their ongoing enhancement of the space. Overgrown lavender shrubs were carefully removed, the soil was replenished, and a diverse selection of pollinator-friendly plants was introduced to support local biodiversity and provide lasting seasonal colour.

There has been an increase in residents and school children wanting to help clean up their local areas. Numerous litter pickers have been lent out to residents and schools to collect litter near where they live.

The Eco Club at William Cobbett Primary School demonstrated commendable community spirit by organising a litter-picking event in the areas surrounding their

school for which Farnham Town Council awarded a grant towards equipment. Twenty eco monitors from various year groups participated, collecting approximately six bags of litter, including plastic bottles, food wrappers, and even discarded toys.

The initiative, supported by staff and governors and Farnham Town Council, aimed to raise awareness about littering and promote sustainability within Farnham. To mark the British Spring Clean Campaign, a litter pick event is held with over 80 residents invited to take part. Groups of Scouts, Brownies and schools have also arranged litter picks.

These elements supplemented over 50 regular Bloomin' litter volunteers who are insured and supplied with high visibility vests and litter pickers.

Graffiti, fly and sticker posting issues have increased so an external cleaning company does extra cleans.

Farnham Town Council has also awarded Community Grants to a number of local organisations and schools for projects aimed at improving the environment including Wrecclesham Conservation Group, Hive Helpers and a school honey bee project.



- Monthly graffiti cleaning days
- 300 pickers lent out (100 more than last year)
- 500 bags of rubbish collected (100 more than last year)

Following a series of controlled experiments in the Farnham Town Council greenhouses, an informed decision to transition away from using mulching and soil improver supplied by a local contractor was made. Instead, well-rotted manure is used as primary soil conditioner.

Farnham Town Council trials demonstrated that the manure provides superior water retention, which is especially beneficial during dry periods, reducing by 25%, the need for frequent irrigation and supporting more resilient planting schemes.

In addition to moisture retention, rotted manure offers a rich source of organic matter and essential nutrients that improve soil structure and fertility over time.

This change also aligns with Farnham's sustainability goals, as the manure is locally sourced, reduces processing and transportation emissions, and supports circular agriculture. The improved performance of the manure in greenhouse tests has given the confidence to roll it out across all planting beds, where environmental and aesthetic benefits are expected.

Based on the experiment, Farnham Town Council has renewed the top 3 inches of soil and replaced it with the mixture of manure and peat-free compost.

A range of Farnham Town Council vehicles run on CNG gas and an electric small van is used for watering.

Farnham Town Council produces its own environmentally friendly weedkiller using a simple household-based solution. It contains no harsh chemicals, making it a safer alternative for both people and wildlife, while still being effective in managing unwanted growth in public spaces.

Men in Sheds, a group for those interested in making and repairing, undertakes projects for other community groups and organisations. This year, Farnham in Bloom asked them to repair benches, mend its wooden cart after it got vandalised and spruce up notice boards.

A monthly repair café also offers residents the chance to repair items, reducing landfill use.



Judges' Briefing Notes I Summer 2025



- Ivy left to grow on cemetery wall
- No chemical use
- All natural weedkiller solution made by **Farnham Town Council** outside workforce
- Reuse of pots and trays
- Use of water butts
- No peat

Community Participation

Community is always at the forefront of Farnham in Bloom and 2025 is no exception.

The community and volunteers have once again come together to help and support residents, businesses, families, and schools to bloom again.

Kicking off the bloom activities for the year was the successful Farnham in Bloom Community Day where local community groups promoted their groups to potential volunteers and offered a range of different workshop activities to families. Over 100 visitors enjoyed the day with a children's farm, live music, litter picking and planting.

Space2Grow, an acre site near the Bishop's Meadow, continues to provide a valuable outdoor space to a variety of groups. They offer an active Men in Sheds group, parenting classes, gardening groups, and invite schools to enjoy the acre.

The Badshot Lea Community Garden has continued to grow and expand and is now offering 'Green Prescribing'. This support is offering visitors the opportunity to engage in nature-based interventions and activities to improve their mental and physical health. With an allotment, growing areas, a pond, polytunnels and equipment sheds, local school children, residents and Duke of Edinburgh students all helped to make this a thriving community space.

The Bourne Conservation group at Middle Bourne Lane Community Garden continues to develop. Newly formed Wrecclesham Conservation group has been busy clearing rubbish and increasing biodiversity in St Peter's Wrecclesham Churchyard.

The Wrecclesham Conservation Group, along with children and parents from St Peter's School, came together to clear a large section of the pathway leading to the school. Their efforts resulted in the collection of five large bags of rubbish, significantly improving the local environment and promoting community pride.

This year, the annual Sustainability Festival in Gostrey Meadow organised in partnership



lower in a Boot School Competitior





with Farnham Community Farm saw 2,000 visitors attend. Over 45 stalls representing environmental, community groups, open spaces and 'Friends of' groups offered advice and ideas on how to reduce our impact on the earth and resources.

Schools have again been enthusiastic to get involved in Farnham in Bloom activities and events this year. Fourteen schools signed up for the 10 competitions on offer from hanging baskets to wildlife photography and best flower in a boot. Participating schools were also given pumpkin and sunflower seeds to see who can grow the tallest/largest ones.

The annual carpet bed competition was once again a very popular one. This year's theme was 'Minibeasts' with the winning design featuring a ladybird. The design was replicated perfectly by a plant supplier for all to enjoy. This bed was sponsored by The Farnham Lions. To commemorate the 80th VE Day, a 3m x 3m commemorative floral display was designed and planted and sponsored by a local business.

Support has been given to Potters Gate Primary School by volunteers and staff with planting their new sensory garden supporting the children with their health and wellbeing while stimulating their senses.

As part of the annual Farnham Walking Festival, Farnham in Bloom offered a 'Judges' Route' walk, walking the route through the town centre that the judges are taken. Walk leaders pointed out floral displays and flower beds on the route and what preparations need to be made to make sure Farnham is judge-ready!

Volunteers are invaluable to the sustainability of Farnham in Bloom and the Bloomin' Friends have not only helped with potting on the 42,000 plug plants, helping make up to 250 hanging baskets but also

Judges' Briefing Notes | Summer 2025





planted out troughs and flower beds in Castle Street and Downing Street.

'Friends of Gostrey Meadow' have been working on planting more perennial plants and invigorating old flower beds and the 'Friends of West Street Cemetery' can be found regularly weeding the Garden of Reflection.

Hive Helpers, in collaboration with Farnham Town Council, has installed bee-themed oak posts around Farnham as part of the Farnham Bee Trail. This initiative aims to raise awareness about pollinators and promote community engagement with local biodiversity.

The Bee Trail features 12 bee hotspots throughout the town, each marked by a post with a plaque depicting a bee species. These plaques are designed for rubbing, allowing participants to collect impressions at each location. Sites along the trail include Farnham Library, Victoria Garden, Brightwells and Bishop's Meadow, integrating educational elements into community spaces. The trail was officially launched in May 2025, with the first rubbing taken at the Museum of Farnham by the Mayor of Farnham.

The initiative not only educates the public about the importance of bees but also encourages exploration of Farnham's green spaces.



Community facts and figures



Gold sponsor Cala Homes visit the Council's greenhouses

- Over £17,000 of sponsorship income
- Farnham in Bloom is supported by over 50 community groups
- Over 1,300 followers on Farnham in Bloom's dedicated X, Facebook and Instagram pages
- 23,000 volunteer hours
- 13 schools created hanging baskets
- Over 100 volunteers attended the Farnham in Bloom Community Day
- 10 secret garden categories
- Over 50 volunteers took part in the Big Help Out events

Sponsorship is vital to the success of Farnham in Bloom with four gold sponsors and three silver sponsors confirmed for 2025.

Links with local businesses are very valuable and they are keen to support local activities and share the benefit Farnham in Bloom has to the wider community.



Aims and aspirations for 2026



- Expand biodiversity in Farnham's green spaces and increase the use of the new biodiversity area at Gostrey Meadow.
- Invite children to visit the greenhouses to learn about the life cycle of the plants grown, showing them first-hand how tiny plug plants are nurtured—from careful potting and watering to feeding and monitoring—until they are ready to be planted in flower beds and hanging baskets across Farnham.
- To encourage children to help with potting and watering while learning about the care and attention each plant needs to thrive. Farnham in Bloom will be working closely with local schools to tailor these visits for different age groups, ensuring the experience is both educational and engaging for all.
- Expand the tree planting programme with Surrey County Council and other local authorities. Tree planting has been given an annual budget by Farnham Town Council and additional sponsorship from groups.
- As part of the recent roadworks and changes to traffic flow, Surrey County Council is creating new rain gardens to help manage surface water and enhance biodiversity. Farnham Town Council is supporting the initiative by selecting and planting suitable water-loving plants for these areas.

Previous results include

- Gold in the South and South East in Bloom Town Centre category 13 times.
- Gold in the South and South East in Bloom Large Town category 11 times.
- The South and South East in Bloom large town regional category winner 7 years in a row.
- The South and South East in Bloom Chairman's award for Post 19 and Bishop's Meadow.
- Gold in the South and South East in Bloom Cemetery category for West Street Cemetery.
- Gold and Category winner in South and South East in Bloom for Badshot Lea Cemetery.
- Gold in South and South East in Bloom for Hale Cemetery.
- Gold in the Royal Horticultural Society Britain in Bloom awards and join category winner in 2017.
- Gold in the Royal Horticultural Society Britain
- in Bloom awards and category winner in 2019 and 2024.
- Gold in the Royal Horticultural Society Britian in Bloom awards in 2022.
- A Green Flag award to Gostrey Meadow in 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- A Green Flag award to West Street and Badshot Lea Cemetery in 2024.

Parks and open spaces

Farnham Town Council owns and manages several green spaces across Farnham and surrounding villages and also 300 allotment plots across eight sites. Farnham Town Council's outside workforce maintains all the spaces with support from specialist contractors when needed.

Open spaces managed by Farnham Town Council:

- Gostrey Meadow
- Riverside
- Battings Garden
- UCA
- Halifax Garden
- Haren Garden
- Riverside Maltings
- Library Gardens which have been recently acquired

Initiatives and best practice include:-

Horticultural Achievement

- Wildflower sections
- Tree management with regular surveys
- Sustainable planting including a 10% reduction in the use of bedding plants
- Introduction of perennial plants

Environmental Responsibility

- No chemical use
- Peat free compost
- Compost bins for green waste
- Supporting habitats for wildlife
- Natural weedkiller solution made by Farnham Town Council Workforce.

Community Participation

- Engagement with 'Friends of' groups
- Local schools getting involved
- Hiring out of spaces for community events





- Farnham Town Council has funded water testing kits for schools and individuals from Water Rangers and Wey River Trust.
- The Farnham Biodiversity Group has worked with Farnham Town Council to develop a Biodiversity Action Plan for Farnham, which is now being implemented.

Community Participation

- The 'design a carpet bed' competition ran for the fifth year and the winning design will be showcased in July.
- An active events programme takes place in Gostrey Meadow. The Music in the Meadow weekly live summer live music event is popular and attended by 500 visitors on average.
- A 'Friends of Gostrey Meadow' group has cleared, weeded, and improved flower beds along Union Road, Long Bridge and South Street.

Cemeteries

Farnham Town Council owns and manages four cemeteries across Farnham with West Street being the largest. They each have various graves of note and offer both burial plots and interment of ashes. The cemeteries are all very different unique spaces with a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees, colourful planting, and areas to support biodiversity.



West Street Cemetery

Horticultural Achievement

- A large area of wildflowers and felled trees attracts a range of insects and provides a green corridor to Bishop's Meadow.
- The Garden of Reflection is planted with sustainable plants, seasonal bedding and re-used spring bulbs.

Environmental Responsibility

- 130 species of moths have been recorded in a recent survey.
- Large 'no mow' sections left to increase biodiversity.
- Dead hedge created.
- New dormouse boxes fitted.

Community Participation

A 'Friends of West Street Cemetery Group' has continued to grow.

Badshot Lea Cemetery

Horticultural Achievement

- A large area of established wildflowers continues to attract a range of pollinating insects.
- Bedding plants nurtured from plugs are used to provide a floral display at the entrance of the cemetery.
- Over 1,000 spring and summer bulbs have been planted.

Environmental Responsibility

- Improved pathways around the cemetery for visitors.

Community Participation

- Thousands of spring bulbs which were previously planted in the town's floral displays were planted in the autumn by community groups.
- A memorial tree provides a space for friends and relatives of loved ones to hang memorials.

12



Gostrey Meadow

Horticultural Achievement

Old and poor-quality shrubs

for sustainable perennials.

A green flag was awarded in

2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

wildlife area.

• Additional features added to the

New sections of wildflower turf

have been laid to attract a range

have been cleared to make way

of different pollinating insects.

New dormouse boxes fitted.

Green Lane Cemeterv

Horticultural Achievement

• A wildflower area to encourage pollinating insects.

Environmental Responsibility

The introduction of bat and bug boxes to increase wildlife.

Community Participation

- Engagement with local residents on any future developments.
- Repairing of benches by 'Men in Sheds' group.

Hale Cemetery

Horticultural Achievement

- Additional planting in the Hale Chapels' garden.
- Wildflower area over seeded.

Environmental Responsibility

• Compost bins for green waste and the introduction of bird and bat boxes.

Community Participation

- Continued engagement with local community groups regarding the Hale Chapels' Garden.
- Community carol service event taking place annually.

The Library Gardens

Horticultural Achievement

• A wildflower area to encourage pollinating insects.

Environmental Responsibility

- The introduction of bat and bug boxes to increase wildlife.
- The gardens have been recognised as a significant bee-friendly location.

Community Participation

• Engagement with residents and volunteers on any future developments.

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Farnham in Bloom

CALA

GOLD Sponsors

- BBS Ltd
- Cala Homes
- Squire's Garden Centre
- The Patio Black Spot **Removal Co.**





- Farnham Institute Charity
- The Bush Hotel
- Waitrose & Partners Farnham

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In loving memory of

• Madge Green • Marcia James • Michael Hockey • Patricia Pitman

RHS Britain in Bloom Gold winner 2017, 2019, 2022 and 2024 and Best in Category 2019 and 2024.

Thank you for your support