



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 18th September, 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Brodie Mauluka
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor George Murray (Mayor)
Councillor John Ward
Councillor Graham White (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Tim Woodhouse

Apologies for absence

Tony Fairclough and Michaela Martin

Officers Present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Lucy Dorkins (Business & Facilities Manager)

There were two members of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were led by Revd Lexi Russell of St George's Church in the parish of Badshot Lea and Hale.

C38/25 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Fairclough, Martin and Mirylees..

C39/25 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

C40/25 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th July were deferred to the next meeting.

C41/25 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

Ros Abery and Debbie attended to encourage Council to support a smartphone free childhood, an item that had been discussed at the Community and Well-being Working Group. This was a community and health issue to create smartphone free areas in schools and community buildings. They asked if it was possible for the Council to help raise awareness at other tiers of councils as well as the community, providing leadership and informing parents that there was help available to them. Primary schools in the area were already supportive but Secondary Schools were more challenging but were engaging in the conversation.

The Mayor congratulated Ros and Debbie for their grassroots campaign and for what they had achieved already in raising awareness. Cllr Earwaker advised that the Community Grants programme was open and they may wish to apply for support.

C42/25 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor advised that he had been away for part of September and the Deputy Mayor had stepped in and covered his engagements including a visit to Farnham's Twin Town Andernach with the Farnham Andernach Twinning Association. The Deputy Mayor said this had been uplifting and useful with discussions with the Oberburgermeister and Burgermeister ahead of the 35th anniversary of the partnership in 2026. He would prepare a paper for discussion for a future meeting.

The Mayor said he was really pleased that the Council had played its part in Getting the entrance to Farnham Park named as Graham Thorpe Drive. This is where Graham Thorpe had begun his cricketing career and was an appropriate legacy for him.

The Mayor had attended the Sandy Hill Fun Day, which was part of the activities of one of his charities for the year. It was very good and positive. He encouraged everyone to support his fundraising quiz and karaoke night at the Six Bells on 3rd October.

The Mayor reported on the Mayor of Guildford's Civic Service and reminded that the Farnham Civic Service was taking place on 21st September.

C43/25 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by Members in accordance with Standing Order 9.

C44/25 **Working Group Notes**

I Community & Wellbeing Working Group

Cllr Earwaker introduced the Notes of the Community & Wellbeing Working Group held on 4th September at Appendix B to the agenda. The Working Group received a presentation from Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC) promoting its 'Parent Pact' to delay smartphone ownership until aged 14. Members supported the principles of the campaign and discussed promotion via council channels and events. There was particular concern over peer pressure in schools with bullying and demand for

inappropriate pictures leading to significant mental health issues for younger people. Cllr Mauluka offered to support SFC in its visits to schools.

The Working Group had reviewed community grants, noting quiet demand for the Support Fund and confirming the 2026/27 grant timetable which was open until December. Reports from youth partners (Hale Community Centre, 40 Degreez, and the Jubilee Hub) highlighted ongoing work supporting young people were welcomed, and a discussions on the research by Participation People was noted. The Jubilee Hub had requested an additional £4,875 from unallocated SLA funds for additional work undertaken which was supported.

The Working Group also discussed older people's services with the move of the Brightwells Gostrey Centre to Brambleton Hall; CCTV improvements; and better health integration within the new Neighbourhood Area Committees (NAC) following a presentation by the Chief Executive of the Frimley Integrated Care Board advising of changes being implemented as part of new Government priorities. It was hoped other observers could also attend the NAC pilots to learn how the process worked.

It was Resolved *nem con* that:

- 1) Jubilee Hub receive an additional £4,875 from the remaining SLA allocation for 2025/26 to support extended youth engagement work, with £2,625 retained for future reallocation;**
- 2) the Lead Member for Community and Wellbeing represent the Council on the pilot Neighbourhood Area Committee to ensure community health and wellbeing issues were prioritised;**
- 3) Farnham Town Council continue to support community awareness initiatives, including Smartphone Free Childhood, through communication channels and event participation;**
- 4) the timetable for community and South Street Trust grants for 2026/27 be approved.**

2 Strategy & Resources Working Group

- a) Cllr White introduced the Notes of the Strategy & Resources Working Group held on 10th September at Appendix D to the agenda. The Working Group reviewed the mid-year finance report showing income at 62% and expenditure at 49% of the profiled budget and noted the budget timetable for 2026/27.
- b) Asset Transfer updates were received with a report at Appendix F to the S&R agenda, noting progress with responses awaited from Waverley on Waggon Yard Garages, Montrose House, Monkton Lane, the Memorial Ground and Brightwells Green Space. Business plans submitted to Waverley Borough Council for nine sites. Council endorsed the concern set out about the time being taken to process the applications (despite FTC paying for the service) and reiterated the need for income generating assets to support some transfers which needed significant investment. It was noted that FTC would still have to do its own surveys and due diligence if transfers were agreed. Business Plans would be circulated to the Assets Task Group Members.
- c) Members discussed Christmas lights contract issues with the successful tenderer withdrawing and the second preferred bidder Festive Lighting being awarded the contract. The costs were slightly higher with additional items being purchased and it was agreed that the five year project cost with contingency be budgeted at

£320,000, but a five year commitment from the Farnham BID to enable new items to be purchased was welcomed in helping generate footfall for businesses.

- d) In terms of asset management updates, Council noted the successful launch of the new website on time and within the agreed budget and congratulated Savage and Grey for their work. The proposed CRM software development was noted and Cllr Woodhouse offered to support the next steps, Council noted the cost (staff plus equipment) of loaning items for community events could be in the region of £600 per event, which were met from an in-kind grant. Council endorsed the continued importance of supporting volunteers running community events.
- e) In terms of the Gostrey Meadow Amenity Building, the challenges with protecting tree roots meant that the solution was likely to require the rebuilding of the Borelli Shelter a metre away from its current position. Trial holes were being dug in preparation. The Tender document was due to be issued before Christmas with the hope that construction on site would commence in April 26. External funding applications (eg Strategic CIL) would be made.
- f) Councillors noted the improvements done to Library Gardens since FTC took over the management of the gardens and officers were thanked for the work done to date. The refurbished telephone box outside the Library was also discussed and it was agreed Cllr Hesse would liaise with Creative Response to provide art inside the box as a feature.
- g) Council noted the report submitted by Cllr Hesse on the ongoing infrastructure works under the Farnham Infrastructure Programme. Planting for the raingardens had been chosen by Surrey and would be planted by FTC but there were concerns things were not as planned and with officers at Surrey changing this could lead to complications. Cllr Hesse and Jenny de Quervain were meeting with Surrey to discuss the layout for Castle Street. The problems of staining on the new footways would be resolved by Surrey sealing the finished works to prevent future issues. The Mayor advised he was meeting with the street cleaning contractor to see if more could be done in keeping the finished areas in good condition.
- h) Council noted the latest position on the Neighbourhood Plan and that the Urban Study proposal had still not been agreed by Waverley.

It was Resolved that:

- 1) the Town Clerk progress discussions with Waverley Borough Council regarding the transfer of identified community assets;**
- 2) Festive Lighting be confirmed as the Christmas Lights contractor for five years commencing 2025, at a cost of £296,000 with a contingency allocation from the Christmas Lights reserve;**
- 3) Farnham Town Council continue to support key community events with the loan of gazebos, tables, and chairs, recognising the cost and community value of such support;**
- 4) The Lead Member for Community and Wellbeing join the Farnham Neighbourhood Area Committee along with the Leader or Mayor;**
- 5) Officers continue to investigate the introduction of CRM software to streamline service delivery and prepare a report for a future meeting;**
- 6) Creative Response be invited to use the West Street telephone box as a showcase for art and craft.**

3 Environment Working Group

Cllr Brown introduced the Notes of the Environment Working Group held on 10th September at Appendix D to the agenda. Cllr Brown advised there was a cross-over with some of the items discussed at Strategy & Resources and he would limit his comments.

The Working Group received updates on tree works (with all the priority trees works being on target for completion by the end of 2025), allotment maintenance, park improvements, and cemetery operations. The completion of Phase 1 of the Gostrey Meadow playground was noted, with Phase 2 to follow. Plans for the Riverside biodiversity project, Library Gardens improvements, and composting developments at the nursery were noted.

The Working Group supported reviewing Cemetery Regulations (2016) in 2026 with ICCM guidance and pursuing a Green Flag Award for Green Lane Cemetery.

C45/25 Planning and Licensing Applications

Cllr Laughton introduced the Notes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 11th August, 1st September, and 15th September 2025 at appendices E, F and G.

He drew attention to the proposed extension to the Premier Inn and concerns over the bulk and that it was of an industrial design not in keeping with the area which was an important entrance to the town. Similarly an application for six self-build houses near Switchback Lane was of concern, being in a flood area and a management plan to protect woodland would be required. An application for five dwellings on a tight site in West Street was supported as long as there was sufficient amenity space. In terms of a resubmission of an application in Gardeners Hill Road FTC maintains its objections as contrary to the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Laughton advised that the 26 dwellings near Birdworld had been approved on appeal.

In terms of Licensing applications concerns of residents over Restaurant Bar No 5 in Brightwells were noted and the applicant had been requested to work with residents to minimise any disruption. The application for the new Italian in the Borough was supported.

C46/25 Appointment of a Trustee of the Isabella Schroder Trust

The Council considered the recommendation to reappoint Robert Durrant as Trustee of the Isabella Schroder Trust following the end of his ex-officio term as Churchwarden of St Peter's Church, Wrecclesham.

It was Resolved *nem con* that Robert Durrant be appointed as a Trustee of the Isabella Schroder Trust in his own right.

C47/25 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

There were no items to report.

C48/25 Reports from Other Councils

There were no reports from other councils.

C49/25 **Reports from Outside Bodies**

- i) Cllr Jackman reported that drainage works had been carried out by Waverley at Badshot Lea Recreation Ground and the dugouts for the football pitch had been upgraded thanks to a grant from Your Fund Surrey.
- ii) Cllr Jackman thanked FTC for its support in helping improve the Badshot Lea War Memorial which had been in a poor state.
- iii) Cllr Fairclough and Martin had attended the Farnham BID meeting and with the new BID Manager in place it now had more momentum.
- iv) Cllr White reported he had met with the Chair of Trustees of Wrecclesham Community Centre and there will hopefully be a new Youth Evening in the future.
- v) The Mayor advised that the Farnham Society's exhibition in Brightwell's was really interesting and encouraged councillors to attend.
- vi) Cllr Brown advised the Heritage Open Day's talk on the architecture of Kharkiv and Farnham had been well presented and the UCA art exhibition on Ukrainian Women was worth a visit.

C50/25 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 30th October.

C51/25 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

It was Resolved that members of the public and press be excluded for consideration of an exempt Cemetery Appeal matter.

C52/25 **Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group notes.**

Council received a report at Exempt Appendix I on a Cemetery Appeal. There were a number of matters discussed and a compromise was agreed for discussion with the family. It was noted that there had been direct and abusive correspondence to a member of staff from an out-of-area stonemason. The Appeals panel was the final arbiter but in view of the extra issues in this case it was necessary to report the matter to full Council.

Council reiterated that aggressive or inappropriate behaviour to staff was never tolerated and agreed a course of action in response to this matter including preventing the individual stonemason from being able to work in Farnham's cemeteries.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.13 pm

Chairman

Date