



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

A

Minutes Council

Time and date

6.00 pm on Thursday 30th October, 2025
and adjourned meeting which was held on 6th November 2025

Place

Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall

Councillors

Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor David Beaman
Councillor Mat Brown
Councillor Sally Dickson
Councillor Tony Fairclough
Councillor George Hesse
Councillor Chris Jackman
Councillor Andrew Laughton
Councillor Michaela Martin
Councillor Mark Merryweather
Councillor Kika Mirylees
Councillor George Murray (Mayor)
Councillor John Ward
Councillor Graham White (Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Tim Woodhouse

Apologies for absence

Brodie Mauluka

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 Jane Walker of the Benefice of Frensham. There was also a presentation to the Mayor by Cllr Earwaker of a painting by Susie Lidstone entitled 'Sails of Gold'.

The Mayor thanked Cllr Earwaker on behalf of the Council for his generous gift.

C53/25 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mauluka for both meetings, and Cllr Merryweather for the adjourned meeting

C54/25 **Disclosures of Interest**

There were disclosures of Interest by:

- 1) Cllrs Fairclough, Mirylees and Merryweather for discussion on Asset Transfers in view of their roles on the Waverley Executive;
- 2) Cllr Ward for discussion on the Farnham Building Preservation Trust as his wife is a Trustee; and
- 3) The Town Clerk for discussion on the Farnham Building Preservation Trust as he is a Trustee of that organisation, and also in relation to the HR Panel report.

C55/25 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 31st July and 18th September were agreed as a correct record subject to the addition of Cllr Dickson to the list of apologies, and the removal of Cllr Mirylees in the list of councillors present under Minute C38/25.

C56/25 **Questions and Statements by the Public**

Ionela Emmett made a statement about the state of Farnham having been a resident for four years and concerned that things had been going down hill over the past year. She drew attention to a number of issues including:

- the lack of planning relating to roadworks with closures across the town as well as the town centre works causing significant disruption for people. She felt Surrey Highways should stage the works better and inform people;
- the impact of the current works affecting the historic core of the town. She did not think the design made sense and the materials used were not right, replacing historic materials with concrete, and she was concerned about the inconsistencies in the new footways.
- Poor lighting in car parks which meant they were not safe as well as poor maintenance with potholes that were not repaired. She was also concerned about the cost of using automated payments with Ringo being charged at 20p per each hour booked on top of the car parking charge. There were alternatives that were better value. Ionela felt the free car park at Brightwells should be reinstated to bring footfall back to the town.

In response, the Mayor thanked Ms Emmett for coming and raising her concerns which were primarily the responsibility of Surrey County Council or Waverley Borough Council but there were councillors present who were representatives on those councils and could take the matters forward. The Mayor understood the road works had been disruptive and painful and the matters raised had been discussed several times. The Leader advised that there was a Farnham Infrastructure Programme taking place the next day and relevant matters would be raised by Cllr Hesse, the Town Council's representative. He also encouraged Ms Emmett to email any additional questions or comments and he would respond further.

C57/25 **Town Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor thanked everyone for their support and kind wishes after the Mayoress broke her elbow which was now on the mend. He also thanked those who had attended his Quiz and karaoke night raising much needed funds for his Mayoral Charity.

The Mayor reported on a number of excellent events during Farnham Craft month including the opening at Frensham Heights School, and the Surrey Artist of the Year awards at the New Ashgate Gallery.

The Mayor had attended the South and South East in Bloom awards where Farnham came away with a clutch of gold awards and had been delighted to host the unveiling of Lt Col John Luard, founding chairman of the UCA on the Notable Names of Farnham wall.

In Rowledge, the Mayor had dug a hole in the ground for the new Rowledge Village Hall alongside civic dignitaries from other councils who were supporting the project which would be a lasting legacy for the village.

C58/25 **Questions by Members**

There were no Questions by Members.

C59/25 **Working Group Notes**

1) **Culture & Business**

Cllr Mirylees introduced the notes of the meeting held on 8th October. She reported that the Craft Month events had been going well and that the Lantern Festival was taking place on the 31st October with more kits distributed than in 2024.

The Craft Town Artist in Residence Scheme had attracted 18 applicants to date. Cllr Mirylees advised that she and the Town Clerk had attended the presentation of the Craft City status to the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter, meeting the new President and team of the World Crafts Council who were interested in building on the connections with Farnham.

She reported that discussions with partners had been positive about the Museum becoming a Craft Museum – the first in the UK, once the renovations had been completed. She had also had some initial discussions with the National Trust to see if there was an opportunity for collaboration over the Museum. Cllr Merryweather said it was good that Waverley had stepped up to its responsibilities in regard to Willmer House and he drew attention to future uncertainty with local Government Reorganisation. Residents will have to appreciate and support such buildings in future as the new Unitary authority may not.

Cllr Mirylees advised that the BID had agreed to contribute to the Christmas Lights scheme, which was good news as it allowed some additional features to be implemented.

2) **Strategy & Resources**

Cllr White introduced the report of Strategy & Resources Working Group that had taken place on 19th October at Appendix D.

- i) The Working Group reviewed the financial position to 30 September 2025, including the Trial Balance, Income & Expenditure, Investments and Debtors. Overall performance was on target with minor variances to be managed through virements. Anticipated financial

pressures were noted in relation to Community Asset Transfers and Local Government Reorganisation.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the Finance Report, including the Trial Balance and Income & Expenditure Report to 30 September 2025 and the proposed mid-year virements be endorsed as part of sound financial management.

- ii) The Working Group received the External Auditor's unqualified report confirming compliance with Proper Practices. Two minor administrative matters were identified relating to a minute reference and the timing of councillor reviews of bank reconciliations, the latter already having been addressed.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the completion of the External Audit for 2024/25 with an unqualified opinion be welcomed, noting the auditor's comments regarding the incorrect minute reference and the timing of councillor reviews of bank reconciliations.

- iii) The Working Group considered a proposal to transfer governance software from Modern.Gov to Decisions GovMeetings by Cloudy IT, including training for councillors and staff, with implementation planned before the February 2026 renewal.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the change of governance software from Modern.Gov to Decisions GovMeetings by Cloudy IT be approved.

- iv) A presentation was received on the Abavus CRM system. Due diligence had been undertaken, including discussions with other councils. Costs could be met from savings arising from the governance software change, and implementation would be phased. Cllr Woodhouse advise that due diligence on the technology should also be clarified. Cllr Brown agreed with the idea of an organic implementation with engagement with staff before implementation.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that the Abavus CRM system be purchased and implemented on a phased basis over the next year subject to due diligence being completed.

- v) Council noted the Working Group had reviewed the final design proposals for the Gostrey Amenity Building, with the intention to deliver a high-quality building reflecting Farnham as a World Craft Town without being too costly. Design features, tender arrangements and the decision not to pursue a borehole were agreed.

It was RESOLVED *nem con*, with Cllr Hesse and Jackman abstaining, that:

- (1) the updated Gostrey Amenity Building design proposals be approved for tender;**
- (2) the proposed design elements celebrating Farnham's arts, crafts and literary heritage be endorsed; and**
- (3) the Town Clerk be authorised to liaise with Plan A on final clarifications prior to tender.**

Cllr Merryweather left the room for the next item.

- vi) An update was received on progress with Expressions of Interest and Business Plans for the Community Asset Transfers submitted to Waverley Borough Council. Priority assets were identified, and the need for continued negotiation and due diligence was noted, including the potential for parallel purchase discussions for some assets such as Montrose House or Waggon Yard garages. Council noted the requirement for a duty of care by both the transferring and receiving organisation to ensure best value (economic, social and environmental) was considered. Council noted that many of the assets had been gifted to Farnham or had been transferred to WBC as the successor authority to the Urban District Council.

It was **RESOLVED** *nem con* that:

- (1) progress on **Community Asset Transfers** be noted and the **Town Clerk** continue discussions with **Waverley Borough Council** on outstanding **EOIs** and **Business Plans**;
- (2) the proposed priority list of community assets be endorsed; and
- (3) the **Town Clerk** be authorised to enter into negotiations for the purchase of relevant assets in parallel with the **CAT** process.

vii) Concerns were noted regarding a specific item of playground equipment that had been installed in Gostrey Meadow and discussions were ongoing with the supplier. The accessibility of the standing seesaw was also discussed, and it was agreed that an accessible seesaw should be installed during phase 2 of the project.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that an accessible seesaw be installed as part of phase 2 of the playground project.

The Town Clerk and Cllr Ward left the room for discussion of the next item.

viii) Council was advised that the Strategy & Resources Working Group received a presentation from the Farnham Building Preservation Trust regarding its future and potential disbursement of funds. Options were discussed, and it was agreed to recommend that the Town Council consider taking on trusteeship on the same lines as the Farnham South Street Trust, subject to further discussion.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that **Farnham Town Council** consider taking on the trusteeship of the **Farnham Building Preservation Trust**, subject to further discussions with the current trustees.

ix) An update was received on Surrey's Local Government Reorganisation and the pilot Neighbourhood Area Committees (NAC). Preparatory work was ongoing, with the first meeting scheduled for 3 November 2025. Members expressed further concern about who was driving the project given Surrey would not exist after the new unitary was created. There was a view that observers should be allowed to attend the meeting for transparency as there had been a reluctance to take on local input into the shape of the NACs

x) In terms of the Farnham Infrastructure Programme, there was significant concern expressed by Council regarding the design and adoptability of new 'raingardens' which were not fit-for-purpose. Furthermore the impact of electrical cabinets in West Street was a blight in the Conservation Area. Cllr Hesse advised he had contacted the Leader of Surrey County Council and he was fully understanding of the situation. Council discussed the concerns of businesses who were worried about the next phase with the closure of the Borough and Royal Deer junction.

Cllr Fairclough proposed, seconded by Cllr Marryweather, that SCC should be requested to suspend all works in the town centre for at least 12 months and give businesses time to recover. In the ensuing debate, councillors felt a delay would see the end of the project as the teams that had been booked would be dispersed. Cllr Martin said that she had spoken to fellow businesses in Downing Street and they wanted the project to move to its conclusion and were more concerned about the Waverley Car Park charges.

Cllr Marryweather said the discussion was very important since residents and businesses have been affected by the unintended consequences of the project and the current economic context with rents, labour rates and taxes all increasing. A break would allow consideration of whether the desired objectives of the scheme were being delivered.

Cllr Beaman reminded Council that the Farnham Infrastructure Programme objectives had been supported by all three Councils and at no time had there been a suggestion of suspending the scheme. Cllr Jackman advised that he had previously proposed freezing parking charges but this had not been supported by Council.

Further debate took place on the public's views and businesses' views on the FIP and car parking charges and overwhelmingly councillors were not in favour of suspending the scheme. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the town and whilst the disruption was painful towns did need to remodel themselves. It was noted that some of the debate appeared to be political but it was important to put people before party and continue with the desired improvements.

Cllr Fairclough responded to the debate by saying it was important to review big projects and he was not a fan of continuing at all costs but having had a detailed discussion he was withdrawing his motion.

Cllr Brown raised again the issue of safety in the car parks which were poorly lit and in a poor state of repair as the public questioner had identified.

- xi) Funding requirements were discussed for the completion of footpath and lighting works at Borelli Walk.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that up to £20,000 be allocated from the Farnham Infrastructure Programme earmarked reserve to enable completion of the footpath and lighting works on Borelli Walk.

- xii) Cllr Jackman suggested Council discuss a further motion to review the car park charges as soon as possible, with a £1 an hour charge and an urgent survey of the car park facilities.

In view of the lateness of the hour Cllr Ward proposed, seconded by the Mayor, and **agreed *nem con*** that the meeting be adjourned to 6pm on Thursday 6th November.

Meeting adjourned at 9.50pm

C60/25 **Continuation of adjourned meeting on 6th November**

Council reconvened at 6pm on 5th November with apologies from Cllr Mauluka and Cllr Merryweather, and apologies for lateness from Cllr Fairclough.

- I The Mayor introduced the meeting by advising that the earlier meeting had ended with some high emotions but a fresh start with the remainder of the items from the Strategy & Resources Working Group allowed new discussion on Cllr Jackman's proposal.
- i) In between the meetings there had been a meeting with businesses attended by Cllr Follows (WBC), Cllr Oliver (SCC), Cllr Hesse FTC, Cllr Martin as a local business, Greg Stafford MP and Mr David Quick and a further meeting which involved the BID. Surrey County Council was proposing to suspend on street parking in the run up to Christmas and WBC was proposing a scheme to support business by making car parking in off-street car parks free in the afternoons during December.

The result of the meeting with the BID and other partners was a revised proposal £1 after 1pm on Mondays to Thursdays from 24th November to 24th December. Figures

on the basis for the costings to be shared between WBC, SCC and Farnham (FTC and the BID) had been promised but had not been received. The Town Clerk advised that the businesses had also suggested that the scheme be extended into the new year for the period when the Borough was closed. Council noted that some support in the busy trading period up to Christmas was good but it would not be a 'silver bullet' to solve all the issues.

Cllr Ward agreed that the review and repair recommendation was a good one and he was happy to second Cllr Jackman's proposal.

Cllr Fairclough arrived at this point.

Cllr Jackman advised that car parks such as Riverside were underused because staff did not feel safe and the problem with evening charges was that staff working all day go into Farnham to go shopping and have to pay to buy a loaf of bread.

Cllr Earwaker proposed that the vote now take place and

It was RESOLVED unanimously that FTC to write to Waverley Borough Council to progress :

- 1) a review of car parking charges with a view to reducing them for the duration of the Town Centre Improvements;**
- 2) an urgent survey of the car parks infrastructure including lighting and potholes on safety grounds.**

As Cllr Fairclough was to speak in his capacity as Portfolio holder for car parking at Waverley Borough Council, **it was Resolved to suspend Standing Orders** to invite him to address Council.

Cllr Fairclough reiterated details of the meeting between Councils and local businesses and the desire to boost footfall from the lunchtime period onwards. As a result the Borough Council was proposing that Waverley Surrey and Farnham provide funding for a one month period to allow for free or reduced car parking costs.

Cllr Fairclough had figures for December but was unwilling to share the costs for January and February in open session advising only that they would be higher than for December.

WBC officers had done a calculation and on the basis that the scheme would be £1 after 1pm for four days a week, the estimated cost would be £49,079 split three ways.

The Town Clerk said that he could not speak on behalf of the BID but the indication was that they would contribute one third of the Farnham element if FTC funded two thirds.

Cllr Fairclough left the room at this point and the suspension of Standing Orders ceased.

Council discussed the proposal not sure if this was affordable for FTC being the smallest authority. It has not received any income from car parking revenues (unlike Waverley and Surrey) but was prepared to contribute with councillors keen to be supporting businesses and promoting the town in the run up to Christmas. It was noted that the proposal was not a 'done deal' and it would still be difficult to get through the Borough Council decision-making channels.

The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer made a formal statement to Council stating that as he had been provided with no data by the Borough Council apart from three numbers on a piece of paper at the meeting, he could not recommend to Council that this

represented value for money or was a good deal. Council would have to act in good faith. One of the numbers provided was an estimate of the income for the £1 charge after 1pm and this was netted of the total cost. Council should agree that if the income was significantly higher than estimated the amount should be rebated to those contributing.

In putting the proposal to the vote, **It was Resolved by 10 votes to 1 (with Cllr Beaman against and Cllr Dickson abstaining) for FTC and the BID to contribute one third of the expected cost up to a maximum of £16,365 for the period 24th November to 24th December subject to the Council receiving a rebate if the income element was higher than estimated.**

Cllr Fairclough returned

- ii) In the Reports of Task Groups, updates were received on infrastructure planning, the Suez Runfold site, the Local Plan, the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, and conservation matters. It was agreed that data collection should proceed based on the Hart Densification Study.

It was RESOLVED *nem con* that Farnham Town Council proceed with data collection based on the Hart Densification Study including infrastructure, to be funded from earmarked reserves.

- iii) Council noted that the replacement uniform for the Town Crier funded from the unclaimed Honorarium for the Town Crier, would be sourced from Michael's Civic Robes Ltd.

- 2 Cllr Brown gave a verbal update on the Environment Working Group paying tribute to the officers involved in the Farnham In Bloom Awards Ceremony at Squires which had been excellent.

C61/25 **Planning and Licensing Applications**

Cllr Laughton introduced the Notes of the Planning meetings held on 29th September and 13th and 27th October at Appendices E, F and G.

Notable applications included:

- the proposal for extended opening for Papa Johns with the Consultative Group remaining concerned over the negative impact on the amenity of neighbours;
- the request for further nighttime filming at Bourne Woods. FTC had objected on grounds of impact on wildlife and neighbours. Councillors recognised the benefits as an economic generator and wanted to support the application but could not balance the disbenefits by operating in the early hours of the morning;
- amendments to plans for Centrum in East Street with a five year minimum landscaping requirement and a commuted sum to be payable if viability improved;
- concern over the mini mart licensing application in the Borough on grounds of detriment to neighbours' amenity.

It was agreed that the Leader would write to the Forestry Commission to see if there were ways of balancing the needs of the economy and the concerns expressed in relation to filming at Bourne Woods.

C62/25 **Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation**

The Town Clerk reported he had received a book from the Farnham Society on behalf of the Council. The book was based on the Brightwells exhibition during Heritage

Open Days and captured images of Farnham Shop Fronts taken in 1986 and 2021.

C63/25 Reports from Other Councils

There were no reports from other councils.

C64/25 Reports from Outside Bodies

Cllr Beaman reported on the recent meeting of the Wey Valley Community Rail Partnership and Cllr Ward on the recent meeting of the Farnham Public Art Trust. The latter had discussed the lost art from the Brightwells development which were being reinstated on a more localised area. The Farnham Flame had also been discussed, and it was noted an alternate price for its installation was awaited.

Cllr Laughton was stepping down from the Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee and it was agreed that Cllr Hesse would take his place with Cllr Jackman as a substitute.

C65/25 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 18th December 2025 at 6pm.

C66/25 Exclusion of the Press and Public

On the recommendation of the Mayor, the meeting **RESOLVED *nem con* to move into Exempt session and exclude the Press and the Public in view of the confidential staffing matters that were to be discussed.**

C67/25 Any confidential matters

Cllr Ward introduced the notes of the HR Panel meetings that had taken place on 16th September and 28th October at Exempt Annexes 1a and 1b. Council received an update on the latest staffing changes, proposals to amend the Pensions discretions policy to allow for a salary sacrifice Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution Scheme to be introduced and to consider the Town Clerk's request for Flexible Retirement.

The Town Clerk left the meeting for the discussion on the detailed proposal for his flexible retirement and arrangements for the recruitment of his successor.

Shared Cost AVC

Council considered the detailed arrangements for a Salary Sacrifice Shared Cost AVC scheme which could help with staff retention and pension planning and would have NI/tax benefits for staff (as a salary sacrifice scheme) and NI savings for the employer. There would be a contractual change for any employee joining the scheme as the employer contribution if offset by a salary reduction.

Flexible retirement of the Town Clerk

Council considered the detailed report which had the benefit of advice from Trevor Leggo (Director of the Sussex Association of Local Councils) who had attended the HR Panel. Council noted that there was no longer any obligation on staff to retire but the Town Clrk's request and the proposal set out allowed for business continuity and a smooth transition ahead of the 2027 elections as well as retained knowledge, experience and capacity which was in the best interests of the Council. It was a good time to recruit with people thinking

of their next roles in the context of local government reorganisation. Flexible retirement proposals had to be formally considered by Council with each case considered on its merits but in this case had no pension strain on the Council.

Members' Allowances

The HR Panel had recommended that an updated review of Members' allowance for expenses of office should be requested to encourage diversity and the recruitment of councillors. At present, FTC has not adopted a scheme and a review would be undertaken by the Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel or the new Unitary authority Remuneration Panel. Council noted the reduction in councillors representing Farnham would lead to an increased workload for councillors being elected from 2027, and so it was prudent to make a request for a review at this stage. Council would consider a further report prior to deciding whether or not to adopt such a scheme once the review had taken place.

It was Resolved *nem con* that the proposals in Exempt Annex 1b be approved.

- 1) A salary sacrifice shared cost AVC scheme be offered to staff and the pension discretions policy be amended accordingly**
- 2) The Town Clerk be approved for flexible retirement at normal pension age from January 2026 under the LGPS discretions policy;**
- 3) The Town Clerk's contracted hours be reduced by 20% (to 30 hours per week – 4 days equivalent) with the current role continuing until a successor is appointed; with any additional hours to be by agreement with the Leader and be reimbursed by TOIL/Paid leave;**
- 4) A six month handover period to take place (30 hours per week) at the Town Clerk salary grade;**
- 5) Following completion of the handover period, prior to the current Town Clerk transitioning to a Special Advisor role at the Deputy Town Clerk Grade at 60% FTE (22.5 hours per week) with any additional hours to be agreed with the new Town Clerk;**
- 6) Employment for the Town Clerk would be treated as continuous but with a new contract issued to reflect the revised role and hours;**
- 7) The costs be met from the existing vacancy in the Team Leader Governance post;**
- 8) The HR Panel be delegated (in conjunction with the Town Clerk) to make any necessary arrangements for the recruitment process for the successor Town Clerk**
- 9) The Waverley Independent Remuneration Panel be asked to meet to review members' allowances and other remuneration of expenses in view of the additional responsibilities and workload FTC councillors will be expected to take on up to and after local government reorganisation.**

The Mayor closed the meeting at 8.54 pm

Chairman

Date