



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL



Notes Culture & Business Working Group

Time and date

11.30 am on Wednesday 8th October, 2025

Place

Byworth Room - Farnham Town Hall

Culture & Business Working Group Members Present:

Councillor Alan Earwaker
Councillor Brodie Mauluka
Councillor Kika Mirylees (Lead Member)

Officers: Oliver Cluskey, Megan Cross (Events Assistant) and Iain Lynch (Town Clerk)

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Councillor White, Councillor Laughton and Councillor Martin.

2. Declarations of Interest

None were made.

3. Notes of the Last Meeting Notes of the Last Meeting

Notes were approved.

4. Review of Recent Events

a) Music in the Meadow – 25 May to 31 August 2025

Members noted that it had been a strong season with a good variety of music. The events were well attended with an average peak attendance of 700. Several acts should be considered for rebooking and the 'Musical in the Meadows' with the Woking Wind Orchestra and Alton Concert Band was a fitting finale.

b) Markets

Monthly Farmers' market

Footfall at the Farmers' market in September was slightly down with the Food Festival taking

place but overall traders happy. Live music was enhancing the atmosphere and the craft row was proving popular

Central Car Park, 21 September – Antiques and Vintage Market (28 stalls).

Central Car Park was attracting less footfall than when on West Street. Members agreed to look at options such as moving to Brightwells and potentially partnering or passing on to the BID. Events Manager to meet the operator to review and discuss future.

c) Farnham Food Festival – 28 September 2025

Despite persistent rain, the food festival proved popular with high footfall throughout the whole day. Members were made aware that with increased costs over the years and a lower rise in income, the Festival was not as profitable as it had previously been. Members agreed that it was a very popular and well known event in the area and that benefit outweighed the cost. The Events Manager informed members that the future layout of Castle Street and The Borough would significantly reduce the number of stall spaces and income.

Action: Events Manager to review stallholder and sponsorship price rises and propose a new concept for the Food Festival in 2026 with FIP in mind.

d) Farnham Craft Month Launch – “Make Your Mark” (4 October 2025)

Despite the forecasted storm, the Craft Month launch at Frensham Heights went ahead with extra weights and supports on external structures. The event was well attended with workshops selling out in advance. Frensham Heights were particularly complimentary about the event and were keen to host again.

5. Future Events and Projects

a) Farnham Craft Month – October 2025

Around 90 events were scheduled, including 30+ free events: exhibitions, workshops, open studios, markets, masterclasses, talks, pop-ups, and family-friendly activities.

The Lantern Festival Was scheduled for 31st October and all plans in place. Members suggested asking the Farnham Youth Choir to perform at the Lantern Festival in 2026.

Members discussed and agreed that the signage at the entrances to Farnham need updating. Members suggested that the Craft partners group should discuss the possibility of rebranding Farnham Craft Town to incorporate the new World Craft Cities logo. The new ‘gateway’ signage should emphasise ‘World Craft Town’.

Action: Events Manager to raise branding update in next Craft Partners meeting.

b) Markets

No further discussion as covered earlier

Future dates confirmed:

Farnham Farmers’ Market: 26 October, 23 November, 14 December 2025.

Artists and Makers Market: 5 October 2025.

Antiques, Vintage & Decorative Arts Market: 30 November 2025

c) Farnham Christmas Lights Switch-On – 15 November 2025

Event scheduled for 1-6pm with new lights to be switched on at 4.30pm. There was no ‘celebrity’ scheduled to turn on the lights and members agreed that there was no need as it was a community event with 15 schools and theatre groups scheduled to perform. The Mayor informed members that he had been approached by a local young autistic adult who who’s dream was to switch on the lights. Members agreed that his request should be accepted.

Action: Mayor to accept request to aid switching on the lights.

Councillor Mauluka joined the meeting.

d) Farnham Christmas Market – 14 December 2025

Members were informed that the Christmas market was fully booked and had close to 200 applications.

e) Music in the Vineyard

Dates set for 25 Jan, 22 Feb, 29 March 2026. The bands were not confirmed.

f) Farnham World Craft Town Residency

Members were informed that there were 18 applicants so far, 10 jewellery/metal aligned with UCA facilities. The primary aim was for international applications from a World Craft City, which was proving difficult to date.

Action: The Events manager to verify distribution to World Craft Cities International and relevant EU/UK bodies. Deadline had been extended to 26 October.

g) Farnham Literary Festival & Film Festival – 5–15 March 2026

Members were informed that finding a headliner was proving a challenge as always in particular due to the publishing cycle and time of year. Members proposed some additional names to invite. Aardman Had been confirmed by UCA as part of the Film Festival. Members agreed that with much of the co-ordination being undertaken in house the saving on the coordinator fee could be spent on additional marketing.

h) FIP Phasing 2026 Impact on town centre events.

The Castle Street works were scheduled to be between April and November 2026. Members suggested exploring East Street, Woolmead Road and Brightwells as a potential venue for the Food Festival and Christmas Market in 2026.

Members raised concerns about the future layout of Castle Street and the effect on the Food Festival and Christmas Market. Members also raised concerns with the rain gardens taking up space and requiring extra maintenance due to lack of depth

6. Business Update

a) BID

The new Christmas Lights scheme was a 5 year contract with Festive lighting and was costing £296k with a provision up to £320,000. The Farnham BID were contributing £50k over 5 years. This was a general contribution with one item specifically branded with 'Make it Farnham' and others supported.

FTC Officers were still exploring options of where to place the 1.7m high 'FARNHAM' sign. Suggestions were by Coxbridge roundabout or Bourne Mill by Shepherd and Flock roundabout. Members agreed that Coxbridge roundabout would be more suitable and SCC approval required.

The BID had also confirmed collaboration with the Christmas in Farnham brochure.

7. Sponsorship Update (2025-2026)

Current Sponsorship position:

Principal Summer: £3,000 Kidd Rapinet

Principal Summer: £3,000 Shaw Gibbs

Gold Food Festival: £1,000 Kidd Rapinet
Gold Food Festival: £1,000 Bush Hotel
Bronze Food Festival: £300 Durham House Chiropractic Clinic
Silver October Craft Month: £500 Frensham Heights
Christmas Lights Switch-On: £1,000 Shaw Gibbs
Principal Christmas: £3,500 Laithwaites
Christmas Lights Switch-On: Megan's Restaurant (TBC)
Bronze Christmas Lights Switch-On: £300 Ranger Home Care (TBC)
Gold Christmas Market: £1,000 Kidd Rapinet
Gold Christmas Market: £1,000 Rowledge Family Vets
Principal Farnham Literary Festival: £3,000 Frensham Heights

Members were informed that Laithwaite's had just been confirmed as Principal Sponsors of Christmas in Farnham with their shop opening on 8th November.

Two other sponsors were still in negotiation. Members suggested some other options to approach.

Action: Events Manager to approach suggested companies

8. Financial Update

Members noted current position and were asked to consider what they wanted to do next year with events budgets which would be discussed at the Councillors strategy day.

9. Risk Assessment Review

Events Manager to circulate Risk assessment which was to be reviewed before January Council meeting.

10. Items for Future Meetings

Members agreed that they would like to explore the idea of 'paid' events in the Library Garden once the lease had been granted. Events would be more 'high brow' and include theatre and opera.

Members discussed the further funding needed for the Museum building and agreed that the building itself would be an asset to the community

11. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 15 January 2026 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 2.10 pm

Notes written by Oliver Cluskey