



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

B

Minutes Council

Time and date	6.00 pm on Thursday 19 March 2026
Place	Council Chamber - Farnham Town Hall
Councillors	Councillor George Murray (Mayor); Councillors David Beaman, Matthew Brown, Alan Earwaker, Sally Dickson, Tony Fairclough, George Hesse, Chris Jackman, Andrew Laughton, Michaela Martin, Mark Merryweather, Kika Mirylees, Brodie Mauluka, John Ward, Graham White (Deputy Mayor) and Tim Woodhouse.
Apologies	Cllr John Ward
Officers Present	Iain Lynch (Town Clerk), Lucy Dorkins (Business & Facilities Manager), Jenny de Quervain (Civic and Planning Officer) and Mo Ashdown (Community & Wellbeing Officer), as required for relevant items.

Prior to the meeting, prayers were said in the Council Chamber by Revd David Uffindell, Rector of Farnham.

There were 2 members of the public and 1 member of the press in attendance.

- C95/26 Apologies**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Ward.
- C96/26 Disclosures of Interest**
Declarations of interest were received from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct. General non-pecuniary interests as Waverley Borough Council or Surrey County Council councillors were noted as well as Cllrs Fairclough, Merryweather and Mirylees being Executive councillors at Waverley Borough Councillor. .
- C97/26 Minutes**
The minutes of the Farnham Town Council meeting held on 29 January had not been circulated in advance and were deferred.
- C98/26 Questions and Statements by the Public**
The Town Mayor invited questions and statements from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 10.1.

Ms Alexia Warner addressed the Council regarding safety concerns at Hickley's Corner following a number of serious accidents over a four month period. She described the personal impact of these incidents and proposed a practical initiative involving temporary safety banners aimed at encouraging safer pedestrian behaviour. Members acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and supported the proposal, noting that engagement with Surrey County Council would be required.

The Mayor proposed and **it was RESOLVED unanimously that a small grant of £250 be agreed to support the excellent initiative.**

C99/26 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reported on the news that talented artist Charles Bone had died just short of his 100th birthday and passed condolences to his family. He also advised that he would be attending the funeral of The Rt Revd Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford, who had died after a short illness.

The Mayor reported on recent civic engagements including a Royal visit with HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and the Regional Director of the World Crafts Council celebrating five year's of Farnham's recognition as a World Craft Town.

The Mayor also reported on the success of the Farnham Literary Festival and the events he had attended and thanked the volunteers and community groups and FTC staff who had been involved.

C100/26 Questions by Members

There were no Questions by Members.

C101/26 Working Group Notes

Council received the notes and recommendations of the Environment Working Group held on 24 February 2026, the Community & Wellbeing Working Group held on 12 March 2026, and the Strategy & Resources Working Group held on 9 and 16 March 2026. The key matters and decisions are recorded below.

1 Environment Working Group

Council noted that the allotment service was being actively managed, with a marked reduction in vacant plots across the eight sites. Members welcomed the reduction in outstanding allotment rents from 29% in November to 5%, reflecting more effective administration and follow-up. Winter maintenance and clearance of vacant plots had been completed so that plots could be re-let, while site issues such as Farnborough Road drainage, the potential future re-routing of water supply, and additional water points at Wrecclesham were being progressed.

Updates were received on parks and open spaces. The Gostrey Meadow Amenity Building was expected to start in April 2026 for a 36-week build period, requiring temporary public conveniences and partial closure of part of Gostrey Meadow. Members noted the need to manage event disruption and public safety, as well as discussions with SSEN on their delayed electricity cable works. Improvements in Library Gardens, supported by Men in Sheds, Hive Helpers and a proposed Friends of Library Gardens group, were welcomed. Members noted the Carpet Bed designs would be Winnie the Pooh (centenary) and different poppies by the war memorial. It was also noted that Town centre cleansing had improved following the introduction of a new operative, and the Council had seen a good response to its volunteer recruitment page.

Members discussed the continuing concerns around the design and effectiveness of rain gardens, particularly the need for any replacement greening to suit Farnham's historic character and avoid repeating problems experienced elsewhere in the town centre. This provided the context for the recommendation on Castle Street should Surrey County Council propose removing the rain gardens.

The cemeteries update showed increased activity, with burial figures up by just over 35% and income of approximately £107,292 against a target of £102,100. Interim grave digging arrangements were in place following the previous contractor stepping down. Farnham in Bloom preparations were well advanced, with a full programme of events, school involvement, carpet bed designs, and over 20 new volunteer registrations. Members also considered the annual environmental theme, linking Farnham in Bloom with biodiversity and water awareness.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that

- 1) should the information coming back from SCC propose the removal of the rain gardens in Castle Street, FTC would support the replacement of rain gardens with high quality stone planters.**
- 2) FTC adopts Surrey Wildlife Trust's water theme for this year's Farnham in Bloom competition.**

2 Community & Wellbeing Working Group

Cllr Woodhouse advised that he had submitted his apologies for the meeting but was shown as present.

- i) Council noted the presentation from Headroom Young People's Charity, which highlighted escalating complexity in young people's mental health needs and a waiting list of approximately 90 people, with the waiting list for 11-15 year olds closed. Members recognised the pressure on local provision and the importance of connecting Headroom with organisations already supported by the Council, including Hale Community Centre, 40 Degreaz and the Jubilee Hub, as well as signposting to the Waverley Thriving Community Fund. FTC had supported the project with a £2,000 grant.
- ii) The Farnham Neighbourhood Area Committee pilot was reported to be progressing well, with good attendance and engagement and was seen as an exemplar. Its priority area was Children and Young People's Mental Health, with practical actions emerging around collaboration between Primary Care Networks, Mindworks and schools; developing trusted adult and mentoring opportunities; supporting safe spaces; and widening development opportunities for young people beyond formal education. Members stressed that the NAC should produce tangible outcomes and not become a talking shop. The High Sheriff had spoken about his project to support young people who were NEET (Not in Education Training or Employment) and it was suggested that FTC could encourage connections with Waverley Training Services.
- iii) Council noted Youth outreach funded through Service Level Agreements was showing positive engagement, including new lunchtime sessions at Heath End School and growth in participation at Jubilee Hub. The proposed Farnham Youth Choir pilot SLA for 2026/27 was also noted. Cllr Earwaker advised a further grant funding window had opened, with applications to be considered in June. The Working Group recommended support for the Farnham Half Marathon and repairs to the Old Bourne Churchyard Lychgate.

It was RESOLVED that a grant of £5,000 be made to support the proposed Farnham Half Marathon and, subject to clarification of ownership and Guildford Diocese support, a grant of up to £5,000 be allocated to the costs of repairing the Old Bourne Churchyard Lychgate.

3 Strategy & Resources Working Group

- i) Cllr White introduced the finance update to 28 February 2026. Although some income and expenditure lines varied from budget, the overall position remained satisfactory and known variations were either already reported, supported by reserves, or expected to be corrected through year-end coding adjustments. A small grant of £250 had been agreed under the Town Clerk's delegated grant arrangements for the Farnham Theatre Association's Literary Festival production.
- ii) The Working Group had considered the implications of Waverley Borough Council's decision not to award Strategic CIL funding for the Gostrey Meadow Amenity Building. A Freedom of

Information request had been submitted requesting detailed scoring and notes of how the decision was made. As Council had previously resolved to fund any shortfall from Neighbourhood CIL rather than borrowing, the decision materially reduced the funds available for wider community projects, and pavilions, playgrounds and other assets likely to be transferred from principal authorities. The Working Group therefore recommended deferring the wider community CIL round, reviewing the criteria and setting aside a specific sum for local applications, and retaining the balance for green spaces and current or future assets. In discussion, Council agreed to allocate an initial £150k for community projects with the intention to make further allocations later, noting that at this stage there was no clarity over resources required for assets being transferred from principal authorities. In response to a question, it was suggested that a report on Neighbourhood CIL application arrangements would be drafted for June/July. Council was advised that there was another Waverley CIL round noting that the process was quite onerous compared to Neighbourhood CIL arrangements.

Councillors noted the costs of the Gostrey Amenity Building but agreed these were not unusual compared to other construction projects and the building would support the wider range of events taking place in Gostrey, with much needed storage reducing ongoing staffing and set-up costs, outdoor seating and concession areas and the long-awaited improved toilet facilities.

It was RESOLVED nem con (with Cllr Merryweather and Fairclough abstaining) that

- 1) the wider community CIL round be deferred and the Neighbourhood CIL criteria be revisited with a report taken to the July Strategy & Resources meeting;**
- 2) An initial £150,000 be earmarked for local community applications for qualifying projects from 2026/27.**
- 3) the unallocated balance of some £625,075.61 (after estimated receipts of £184,234 in April 2026 had been received) be retained primarily for investment in green spaces and assets such as playgrounds and pavilions being transferred from principal authorities.**

- iii) On Local Government Reorganisation, Council noted preparations for the West Surrey authority elections and the likely start of the pre-election period. It was considered sensible to rearrange the Annual Town Meeting of Electors until after polling day. This would now take place on 20th May. Guidance on political neutrality and communications during the pre-election period had been circulated.
- iv) Council was advised that the Farnham Infrastructure Programme remained a significant concern. Members discussed problems with cleaning oil from loading bays, materials, signage, traffic management, impact on businesses, the ignoring of the FTC's decision and request to retain the character of Castle Street with the retention of the ironstone, and continuing CCTV issues, (including cameras still not reinstated and the proposed removal of CCTV at the Royal Deer junction). These issues were considered sufficiently important to be raised at the Farnham Board by the Council's representative, Cllr Hesse. Members also discussed redundant telephone boxes at the Woolmead, lighting works at Borelli Walk and the historic milestone at the Royal Deer junction that had been damaged by a bus. Cllr Hesse advised Council that WBC was intending to negotiate with the street cleaning contractor (Biffa) to purchase a Maxwind machine to do the cleaning of town centres.

It was RESOLVED that Cllr Hesse raise the Council's great concern over matters relating to cleaning, Ironstone CCTV and the storage of materials at the Farnham Board on 20th March.

- v) The Working group had reviewed the Christmas Parking Initiative and considered that the figures supplied did not adequately explain the proposed contribution requested from Farnham Town Council. As Waverley's Overview & Scrutiny figures appeared to show a different picture (increased use and a surplus), Members asked for clarification before any payment could be justified. The Working Group also supported a coordinated campaign to promote Farnham as open for business once the Borough works were completed, with the BID potentially leading that initiative.

- i) **It was RESOLVED *nem con* (with Cllr Fairclough and Merryweather abstaining) that Officers seek clarification on cost of the Christmas Parking Initiative given the updated numbers in the WBC Overview & Scrutiny report on 9 March 2026.**
- ii) **It was RESOLVED unanimously that FTC would support a BID-led initiative to promote Farnham being Open for Business after the Borough Works were completed and would encourage financial contributions from other relevant parties.**
- vi) Council noted the Working Group had considered options for managing Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. Members supported further investigation where there may be biodiversity and operational benefits, but noted the long-term nature of SANG commitments and the need for detailed due diligence, financial advice and clarity on capital sums. A proposal for the Council to purchase Moor Park SANG land was not supported because it would place taxpayer funds at risk and exceed available resources.
- vii) Community Asset Transfers were considered in detail. Members reaffirmed the principle that local green spaces and assets gifted to, or historically associated with, Farnham should wherever possible be managed locally. However, the Council also recognised the need for surveys, due diligence and careful consideration of long-term liabilities. The Working Group supported progressing the offered transfers, taking some sites under licence from 1 April where practical, excluding the Borelli Walk wooden bridge, and investigating specific cricket issues at Badshot Lea and Rowledge Recreation Grounds. Members also supported taking on relevant recreation ground trusts and pursuing discussions on Montrose House and Waggon Yard Garages. Cllr Merryweather advised there was potentially some Section 106 funding still available for some community projects eg in Badshot Lea. Members raised that it would be better for FTC to look after the Memorial Ground and Memorial Hall rather than it be managed remotely in future. It was also agreed that the position of Wrecclesham Recreation Ground be checked.

With Cllr Merryweather and Fairclough abstaining, it was RESOLVED *nem con* that

- 1) **FTC progress the offered transfers and complete the required surveys and due diligence;**
 - 2) **FTC do not take on the wooden bridge at Borelli Walk;**
 - 3) **FTC seek to take on Thurbans, Weybourn allotments and Morley Road Recreation Ground under licence from 1st April.**
 - 4) **FTC further investigate the unresolved issues at Badshot Lea and Rowledge Recreation Grounds.**
 - 5) **FTC take on managing the recreation ground Trusts responsible for Hale and Ridgeway and any other Trusts inherited by Waverley from the Urban District Council.**
 - 6) **Ward Councillors advise of other assets that could be sought in future Community asset transfers by principal authorities (Waverley, Surrey or the West Surrey authority once established).**
 - 7) **FTC pursue discussions with WBC on Montrose House and Waggon Yard Garages.**
- viii) Operational updates on contracts and assets covered depot and nursery clearance, the asset inventory, public convenience cleaning arrangements, and replacement machinery. Although the Council had an aspiration to move away from machinery using fossil fuels, Members accepted that operational reliability and performance in wet grass meant petrol replacement mowers were the practical choice at this stage. The disposal of obsolete assets was also required to keep the asset register accurate. Members also considered the proposed long lease of garden land to Abbeyfield Wey Valley Housing Association, with a modest rent and Abbeyfield meeting legal costs.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that:

- 1) **the replacement mowers be petrol in view of the efficiency and workload benefits;**
- 2) **the list of obsolete consumables and assets be approved for disposal and the asset register updated accordingly.**

3) Subject to further discussions with Abbeyfield, the Garden land lease with the Abbeyfield Trust be progressed with a small annual rent of £300 per annum (reviewed on a five yearly basis) for an 85 year period with legal costs met by the Abbeyfield Society.

ix) Council noted updates from the Infrastructure, Neighbourhood Plan and CIL Task Group, arrangements for the Andernach 35th anniversary visit and concert, and the need to continue strengthening international and cultural relationships. The Working Group recommended two new policies for adoption: the new Assertion 10 statement for external audit and a new Artificial Intelligence Policy to manage legal, data protection, accuracy, confidentiality and reputational risks arising from AI use. The policies were agreed with the addition of an extra objective under the AI policy relating to ensuring councillors and staff are trained.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that the AI Policy and the Assertion 10 policy be adopted.

x) The Town Clerk reported that a request had been received to reappoint two existing trustees of the Farnham Institute Charity. Council supported continuity in the trusteeship.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that Council confirm the nomination of Mrs Emily Joyce and Mr Peter Greenyer as Trustees of the Farnham Institute Charity for a further term of office.

xi) The Leader advised that as Deputy Mayor he had the privilege of visiting Farnham's Twin Town Andernach and it had been an uplifting experience. Members noted the Town Clerk was also attending in advance of the 35th anniversary of the signing of the Deed of Friendship, and the visit of the Andernach City Orchestra. Members agreed the importance of fostering international partnerships and benefitting the local economy and tourism. The link with other World Craft Towns was also important in promoting the cultural aspects of Farnham.

C102/26 Planning and Licensing Applications

Council received the minutes of the Planning & Licensing Consultative Group meetings held on 9 February, 23 February and 9 March 2026. The minutes recorded comments on a wide range of planning and licensing matters, including larger developments, heritage matters, tree applications, licensing applications and pavement licences.

Cllr Laughton reported that key matters included the need for further consultation on proposals at Waverley Court Farm and Monkton Lane; a strong objection to the enlarged dwelling proposal at 12 Old Park Lane; continued objection to development affecting woodland west of Gardeners Hill Road; objection to the proposed care home at Headway House because of the impact on the Bishop's Meadow Site of Nature Conservation Interest and poor design; objection to removal of permitted development restrictions at Hillbrow; and comments on licensing and pavement licence applications where pedestrian safety, residential amenity and highway obstruction were relevant. These comments were noted as the Council's consultation responses.

C103/26 Actions taken under the Scheme of Delegation

The Town Clerk reported that he had signed a letter of intent with the Gostrey Meadow contractor to allow them to commence ordering of materials.

C104/26 Reports from Other Councils

Cllr Martin reported that the Government had now published the Structural Change Order for the reorganization of Surrey into two unitary councils.

C105/26 Reports from Outside Bodies

- i) Cllr Beaman provide an update on the Wey Valley Community Railway partnership;
- ii) Cllr Jackman reported on his induction at the Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee;

iii) Council noted that preferences of representatives for external representatives would go to the next Council meeting.

C106/26

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on Wednesday 29 April 2026 at 6.00 pm.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 9.05pm

Chairman

Date