



# **FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Report to the Annual Town Meeting**

**29 March 2012**

This report is a brief summary of the Council's main areas of activity during 2011/12.

### **Elections**

2011 saw a new council elected for a four year term half of whom were new councillors. The Council comprises:

- 16 conservatives
- 1 independent
- 1 Liberal Democrat

In the autumn, the new Council met to decide its key objectives for the next four years. The main aim is to be the influential and effective voice for Farnham in bringing together the views of all organisations working for the good of the Town.

Key priorities for this council term were agreed as being to:

- Fight for better infrastructure for the town including roads, transport, education, improved air quality and better access for pedestrians;
- Deliver improvements which make visible difference in the town, including a greener environment with more trees in the town centre and at other key locations;
- Progress the production of a Neighbourhood Plan which will meet the needs of Farnham residents now and in the future;
- Bring the Cemetery Chapels back into use, explore terms for bringing back assets bought by the people of Farnham into local management and ownership (eg Gostrey Meadow).

### **Freedom Parade – Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment**

Farnham was honoured to be the location for a Parade by 'The Tigers' following the grant of the Freedom of the Borough of Waverley Borough Council. The streets were lined with residents, schoolchildren and representatives of local businesses for this historic occasion as the battalion marched from the Memorial Hall to Gostrey Meadow where a short ceremony and an exchange of gifts took place.

## **Council Offices**

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, Farnham Town Council became the owner of the Council Offices in South Street after a transfer back to Farnham of the building by Waverley Borough Council. The Town Council flag is now flying and the Clock is now illuminated again after several years of being in darkness! During the year, a number of operational improvements have been made to improve the efficiency of plant and machinery and make the building meet current health and safety standards. It is hoped that a tenant can be found for part of the building in due course to help defray some of the costs of the building.

## **Services**

The Town Council provides a range of services for residents. Highlights from this last year include:

### **Farnham in Bloom**

Farnham in Bloom is an important year-round activity. The 2011 launch in May included over 50 sponsors attending an evening reception at which the Council was pleased to welcome Hamptons as corporate sponsor for the year.

Farnham entered the South and South East in Bloom competition. The Town Centre entry achieved a Gold Award and the first time entry into the Large Town category, which includes the villages around Farnham, achieved a High Silver Gilt award. The Town Council's own award ceremony, held in October, awarded prizes for allotments and for the secret gardens competitions' as well as all Farnham's own 'in bloom' awards.

Farnham in Bloom extends to the villages around Farnham where floral displays were maintained by volunteers.

The Farnham in Bloom community group is made up of local residents and business people. This is a very active group with events happening through the whole year. The Working Group continues to work very successfully with local schools. Fifteen schools made up hanging baskets, not only for their own school, but also a basket each to be hung in Castle Street with a name plaque beneath it.

One very successful event held in December for the first time was the launch of winter celebration for Farnham in Bloom. The event held in Gostrey Meadow with the Farnham Brass Band and Hale Male Voice Choir brought together a large number of people singing carols around the Christmas Tree.

The Community Enhancement Working Group, which includes Farnham In Bloom activity is also responsible for allotments, graffiti, noticeboards, seats, cycle racks, litter bins, public conveniences and parks and open spaces.

## **Tourism and Events**

During the year a wide range of events and activities were planned and co-ordinated. The purpose is to provide something for people of all ages to do and to also help generate footfall into the town to support local businesses.

### **Music in the Meadow, Gostrey Meadow, June – September 2011**

Music in the Meadow provided Farnham residents and visitors with a glorious summer programme of musical entertainment by local bands in Gostrey Meadow on lazy Sunday afternoons. Many

visitors and residents commented that the concerts were one of the things they most liked in Farnham. The attendance average was 500 but with some concerts attracting 700-800 people.

### **Picnic in the Park 26 June 2011**

This is the second year of running this popular event. People flocked into Gostrey Meadow with their picnics and blankets to enjoy an afternoon of music and fun. It was a friendly and relaxed atmosphere where family and friends were able to enjoy the fantastic bands playing light jazz melodies and classics. For those without a picnic there was a hog roast and burgers and drinks tent. The Mayor of Farnham's Charity, Farnham ASSIST was also able to raise funds and awareness for its work.

### **Farnham Grows July 2011**

Farnham Grows was a month long celebration of gardening in July. This was held in partnership with Farnham Maltings. It encompassed a variety of events and activities aimed at the green fingered in Farnham and beyond.

Farnham Maltings was transformed into a gardener's paradise for a day. Visitors to this ticketed event enjoyed browsing and buying from over 30 stalls, some of which encouraged 'Grow Your Own' initiatives. Adding to the attractions were interactive workshops on flower arranging and cooking, in addition to lectures and talks provided by well-known experts in the horticultural sector. Farnham Maltings also provided much needed space for Farnham Town Council's popular allotment show, which received the most entries since the show began in 2004. Around 1,200 people attended this event.

### **Food Festival, Castle Street, 1st October 2011**

The picturesque Castle Street was turned into a bustling market place as it again played host to the Farnham Food Festival. Over 50 traders from local food companies and producers offered a fantastic variety of treats and products to sample and buy in the heart of Farnham's town centre. There was entertainment provided by local musicians and a string of local head chefs, who "fed" the audience with culinary tips. More than half the stallholders who attended sold out of their produce before the end of the event, demonstrating that many visitors to the Festival were keen to buy locally-sourced products, and stallholders expressed their approval of the Festival and their intention to return in future years. The estimated attendance at the Food Festival was in excess of 5,000 visitors.

As part of the Food Festival, a Fun Fair and Market Place was held in Gostrey Meadow. The Meadow was packed with families and young people enjoying the heat wave on the day. Children had fun on the fairground rides whilst adults browsed and shopped from the stall holders, who were all part of a special "Keep Trade Local" Market run in conjunction with the Federation of Small Businesses. The partnership with Farnham Town Council was a great success and helped promote businesses and trade tradespeople. A local scouts group and the 229 Air Squadron cadets were able to raise funds by selling drinks and cakes.

### **Farnham Christmas Lights Switch-On, Gostrey Meadow, 26 November 2011**

Gostrey Meadow was packed with several thousand visitors for the Farnham Christmas Lights Switch-On. The intention was to make Farnham a festive and enjoyable place to be at Christmas time, particularly in the current economic climate, which would in turn encourage local residents and visitors to shop in Farnham, and help support increased viability for local businesses.

Some seventeen businesses took part in the Christmas market along with ten local charities, providing gifts games and refreshments to the public. In addition, ten local schools gave

performances on stage, as well as a superb musical duo, three local choirs and a brass band. Further entertainment was provided in the form of Santa's Grotto in the Bandstand, rides for the children and a live nativity scene.

The event was very well received by those who attended and despite the very cold weather the event was extremely successful.

## Planning ahead with Farnham events in 2012

Here are some of the events to look forward to in 2012:

Jubilee Picnic	Sunday 3rd June
Music In The Meadow 1:	Sunday 10 June
Music In The Meadow 2 :	Sunday 17 June
Farnham Carnival	Saturday 30 June
Picnic in The Park:	Sunday 1 July
Sunday 8 July	
Music In The Meadow 4:	Sunday 15 July
Farnham Grows:	Saturday 21 to 22 July
Music In The Meadow 5 :	Sunday 29 July
Music In The Meadow 6:	Sunday 5 August
Music In The Meadow 7:	Sunday 12 August
Music In The Meadow 8:	Sunday 19 August
Music In The Meadow 9:	Sunday 2 September
Heritage Open Days	Thursday to Sunday 6-9 September
Feast of Food	15 <sup>th</sup> to 29 <sup>th</sup> September
Food Festival:	Saturday 29 September
Christmas Light Switch-On	Saturday 24 November

**For more details and information on things to do in Farnham organised by the Town Council and other local groups see [www.farnham.gov.uk](http://www.farnham.gov.uk)**

## Farmers' Markets

The Farnham Farmers' Market celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2011. Despite the recession it has continued to be a successful and popular market. It is held in Central Car Park every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month and starts at 10.00 am. The Market is supported by a core of loyal customers, and there are usually about 45 stalls. The Market is an accredited market with FARMA meaning that it complies with strict standards.

The market consists of a variety of stalls selling fresh local seasonal produce

- ❖ Fresh and frozen meats, poultry and oven ready game
- ❖ Eggs, honey products, preserves and cheeses
- ❖ Home made speciality breads, rolls, freshly baked cakes, cupcakes and puddings
- ❖ Wines, beers, liqueurs and fruit juices
- ❖ Sweet and savory pies
- ❖ Fresh seasonable vegetables, salad leaves and watercress
- ❖ Shrubs, plants, roses and fresh herbs
- ❖ Fresh fish, lobster and crabs
- ❖ Hand crafted wood products such as bowls
- ❖ Sauces

Each month a different charity runs the Tea Tent, selling tea or coffee with a slice of home made cake or biscuits. If any local organisation would like to book for a future market please contact Ginny Gordon on 01483 523191.

## **Cemeteries**

Farnham Town Council is the burial authority for the four town cemeteries, West Street, Hale, Green Lane and Badshot Lea. During 2011/12, the Town Council continued in its commitment to provide the highest quality of care, support and assistance to all those in need of Cemeteries Services that the Council provides.

### **Burial, Memorial and Genealogical services**

The Town Council aims to offer prompt and efficient yet sensitive handling of all areas pertaining to burials, accommodating the wishes of the deceased and bereaved, especially regarding religious, cultural and personal beliefs and preferences. Between April 2011 and the beginning of March 2012, the Town Council carried out 28 burials and 24 ashes burials and issued sixty memorial permits.

The Town Council has a legal obligation to ensure that memorials in its cemeteries conform to documented guidelines in terms of appearance and condition. A rolling programme of inspections of existing and newly-erected memorials in all cemeteries are undertaken, with particular emphasis on safety issues. The inspection programme also includes documenting the inscriptions on older headstones, many of which are over 100 years old, to ensure there is a record of this information and history before it is lost irrevocably. There are approximately 5100 memorials in the Town Cemeteries.

The Town Council receives numerous genealogical requests, from people locally, nationally and internationally. During the past year, the Council has responded to around two dozen genealogical requests, from France and Germany, Switzerland and North America as well as from all around the UK. In the majority of cases, this service has resulted in visitors coming from far and wide to the town to visit their newly-discovered ancestors' graves.

### **The Garden of Reflection**

The Garden of Reflection in West Street cemetery is an area dedicated to the scattering of ashes, where anyone may sit in a tranquil environment within an all-white planting scheme. Plaques may be erected in a Memorial Book, and benches may be adopted in memory of any loved-one, whether a resident of Farnham or not.

### **Encouraging Biodiversity**

A few years ago, the Council designated an older section of West Street cemetery as a conservation area using its unique position as one of the few guaranteed green spaces remaining in the centre of Farnham. Working in partnership with the friends of the Cemeteries and the Surrey Wildlife Trust wild flower seeds were sown to provide the species of flowers most favoured by butterflies and bees, and the grass is allowed to grow longer in that area throughout the summer months to further encourage wildlife. Habitats in which insects may thrive, such as log-piles, have also been created, and butterfly counts take place each Sunday from May through to September. Benches have been provided in this section, giving the cemetery a tranquil, colourful and less-formal area in which people can rest and remember their loved-ones during the warmer weather.

## **Open Day**

The Cemeteries Open Day, hosted by the Friends of the Farnham Cemeteries, brought young children to the wildlife area of the cemetery to count butterflies. This confirmed the Council's view that its cemeteries should be places in which all members of the public, including children, may feel welcome and comfortable in their surroundings.

## **Christmas Memorial Tree**

In December 2011, Farnham Town Council teamed up with Farnham Funeral Services to create a different kind of Christmas Tree, whereby members of the public were invited to place memorial cards on one of the field maple trees sited near the entrance of West Street cemetery. Over thirty cards were hung during the 2011/12 Festive Season in memory of loved-ones, and the venture received much positive feedback. This service will be offered again in December 2012, with the aim of providing increased support and assistance to those bereaved who may find Christmas time especially difficult.

## **Maintenance of the Cemeteries**

The maintenance of the cemeteries is a large commitment for the Town Council, which as a burial authority has many obligations to ensure the safety of all who enter these public places. Therefore there are rolling maintenance programmes in place, for repairs to the paths in all cemeteries, tree surgery and cemetery chapels maintenance, as well as the Memorial inspection programme. Essential tree surgery work which took place in the summer was accompanied by the planting of an avenue of cherry trees in West Street cemetery. Hawthorns were also planted in all four cemeteries as part of National Tree Week in November.

Progress has been made this year regarding the restoration and use of the cemetery chapels, which have been falling into disrepair. A joint feasibility study into the future use of the cemetery chapels is being undertaken with the Farnham Building Preservation Trust. The Council will be considering a report for future action following the study, later in 2012.

The Council places a lot of importance on the ongoing maintenance of its cemeteries, with mowing throughout the summer, hedge-trimming throughout the year, and bulb-planting in conjunction with the Friends of the Cemeteries in the Autumn. This year, additional preparations were made to ensure that burials could take place in a safe and dignified manner during even the most wintry of conditions!

## **Allotments**

The Council manages 8 sites giving 263 plots. However demand is strong and even though new sites have been opened in recent years there are still 113 people on the waiting list anxious to have a go at growing their own. The Council organizes an annual allotment show and allotment competition both of which are enthusiastically supported, has regular meetings with representatives of each allotment site and produces a newsletter for allotment holders containing tips and advice for making the most of the allotment.

## **Street banners**

Local organisations can apply to Farnham Town Council to book the banner spaces in Downing Street and the Borough to promote local events. It is usual for the spaces to be used on about 60 occasions throughout the year and provides a good opportunity for local promotion. If any local

organisation is interested in promoting their event, contact customer services at Farnham Town Council on 01252 712667.

## Graffiti Management

The Town Council believes that tackling incidents of graffiti quickly will reduce the problem. It therefore retains the services of a specialist company who come to Farnham every month to keep the town looking as cared for as possible. During the year, discussions took place with both Surrey County Council and Waverley Borough Council to see if the work each organization undertakes in managing graffiti can be better co-ordinated. Members of the public can report graffiti to Farnham Town Council who will co-ordinate with other local authorities where necessary.

## Planning matters

Farnham Town Council has commented on a number of major developments locally over the past year as part of the fortnightly meetings of the Planning Consultative Group. The Council is given the opportunity to comment on the planning applications submitted to Waverley Borough Council for the Farnham area. The numbers of Planning Applications commented on in 2012 by the beginning of March was:

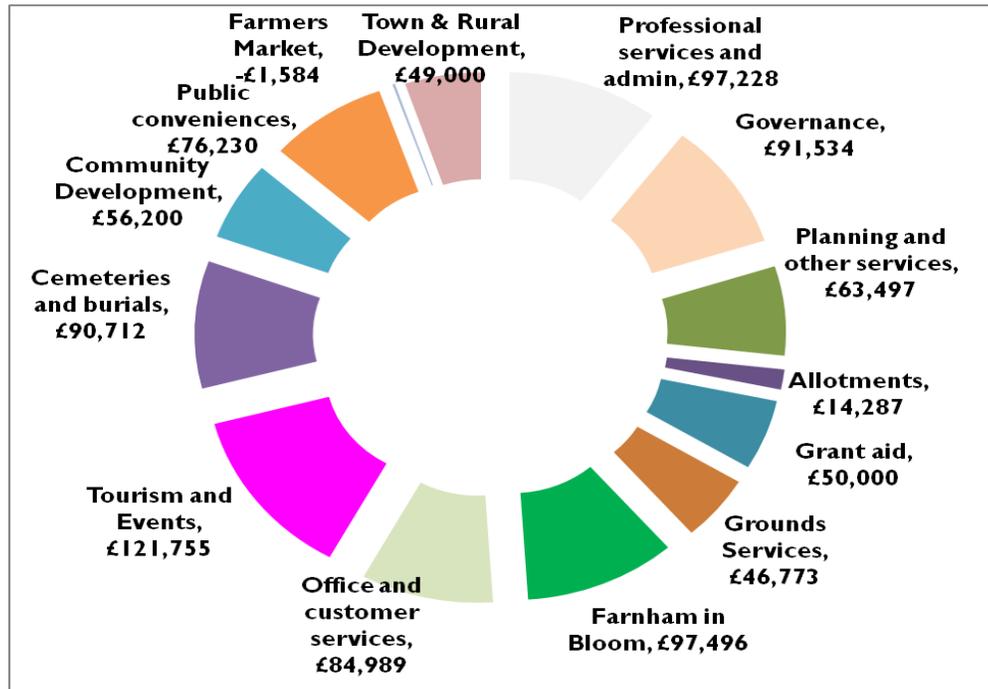
<i>Number of planning applications considered</i>	<i>620</i>
<i>Number of Listed Building applications considered</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Number of Conservation Area applications considered</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Number of applications considered for new and/or replacement dwellings</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Number of applications considered with regard to mineral extraction or recycling</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Number of applications for works to trees</i>	<i>50</i>

Working in consultation with the local community, Farnham Town Council also produced a document entitled: *Farnham: Developing our Community* and recently started work on a Neighbourhood Plan, which are both intended to influence future development of the town. This will supplement the Core Strategy currently out to consultation by Waverley Borough Council. Make sure your voice is heard in both Waverley's core strategy ([www.waverley.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.waverley.gov.uk/corestrategy)) and Farnham's Neighbourhood Plan by commenting on the proposals or attending consultation events.

Farnham Town Council is also a key partner in the Farnham Conservation Area Management Plan Review Group, which is devising a new management plan to protect and enhance the town centre conservation area. The Plan which will shape and direct the work of any authority in the conservation area to ensure it meets appropriate standards. It is going out to consultation from 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012. It should then be adopted by Waverley Borough Council.

## Finance

A copy of the audited accounts for 2010/11 is available at the meeting or on request from the Council Offices. During the year, the Council made changes to the way it allocates staff overheads. Previously these were allocated in one main central budget for office based staff and one for the outside workforce. Now costs have been allocated to each service area to get a better idea of the costs of each area of activity. A pie chart for the 2012/13 year is attached for information.



## Focusing on efficiencies

During the year a major review of contracts has been undertaken and will be ongoing. The intention is to optimize savings from the Council's spend and for 2012/13 new challenging income targets have been set for service areas with the intention of moving to cover costs wherever possible.

## Grant Funding

During 2011 Farnham supported wide range of local community groups with £50,000 of grant funding plus additional support for the town carnivals.

Beneficiaries in 2011/12 include:

40 Degreez, Farnham Maltings, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Homestart, 229 Air Squadron Air Cadets, St Polycarps School, Chantry's Community Centre, New Ashgate Gallery Trust, Hale Carnival, Farnham Carnival, Safer Waverley Partnership, Old Kiln Museum, Farnham Community Play Steering Committee, Wrecchesham Community Centre, University College for the Creative Arts, Sailability, Opportunities, Farnham Andernach Twinning Association, Residents' Association of Sandy Hill.

## Services to Farnham Awards

The third Services to Farnham Awards Ceremony took place in February celebrating those who have given outstanding service to the community. The awards are run by Farnham Town Council with the support of the Farnham Herald. This year fourteen awards were made across a wide range of organizations and communities .

## South Street Trust

The Council acts as Trustee for the South Street Trust which awards grants from an endowment set up in 1880 for “art and allied subjects”. During 2011, the Trust awarded grants totalling £18,265.

Beneficiaries were - The Farnham Maltings, Weybourne Infant School, St Pauls C/E Infant School, Frensham Heights School, The Rural Life Centre, Edgeborough School, William Cobbett School, St Polycarp’s School, Hale School, The Abbey School, Creative Response, Farnham Arts and Design Educational Group, Farnham Heath End School , The New Ashgate Gallery, Folly Hill Infant School, St Andrew’s School.

## Conclusion

Copies of the consolidated budget and associated pie chart are available upon request. The Audited accounts for 2011/12 will be available from September 2012.

Farnham Town Council is interested in your views and opinions so please keep in touch.

### ***Cllr John Ward***

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