



FARNHAM TOWN COUNCIL

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Strategy and Finance Working Group

Time and date

9.00am Tuesday 4th June 2013

Place

Town Clerk's Office, South Street, Farnham

Attendees:

Members: Councillors David Beaman, Carole Cockburn, Pat Frost, Jeremy Ricketts, John Ward,

Officers present:

Iain Lynch (Town Clerk)- Part, Rachel Aves (Team Leader Corporate Governance), Alan Corcoran (Facilities and Contracts Officer) - Part

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Cllrs Jill Hargreaves, Roger Steel

2. Declarations of Interest:

Dual-hatted Councillors (Carole Cockburn, Pat Frost and John Ward) declared personal interests in relation to their role as Waverley Borough Councillors and Cllr Frost in relation to her role as a County Councillor.

3. Notes of Meeting held on April 23rd 2013

POINTS	ACTION
<p>1) The Notes were agreed.</p> <p>2) Public access to meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Town Clerk advised that although this matter had been discussed previously, it had not been formally discussed at full Council, although this had been expected in light of a statement made by a member of the public. Members discussed the benefits of the reduced bureaucracy from Working Groups investigating issues and making recommendations to full Council versus the perceived loss of transparency.• Members noted that there had been little interest in the experimental public meetings of the Tourism and Events Working Group.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members reviewed the benefits and dis-benefits of making the Planning and Licensing Consultative Group to the Public and were concerned about the extra staff resources required for fortnightly evening meetings when decisions were made by the Local Planning Authority. • Members agreed to endorse the earlier recommendation to Full Council that the Council revert to the previous practice of Working Group Meetings being informal light touch meetings that make recommendations to full council. 	<p>Recommendation to Council: That the Council reverts to its previous policy of not holding Working Group Meetings in Public, and that decisions continue to be made at Full Council.</p>
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4. Finance

POINTS	ACTION
<p>1) Members received the following documents (which had been circulated in hard copy to all councillors) in relation to the end of year accounts in preparation for Audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of variances against revised budget. • A copy of the Summary Outturn by Working Group showing the percentage variations against budget • The Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2013 • The Trial Balance 2012/13 • A list of reserves at 31st March 2013 • The revised Asset Register as at 31st March 2013 • The end of year Internal Audit letter 2012/13 and Officers' response • A copy of the External Auditor's Intermediate Audit Questionnaire for 2012/13 • A copy of the Draft Annual Return and Governance Statement for 2012/13 <p>2) The Town Clerk went through each of the appendices in detail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members noted the decimal point error that had been identified in relation to the 2011/12 financial year, and that although this made no difference to the total expenditure, there was a difference in relation to the amount split between staffing costs and other expenditure. • Members noted that this was clearly explained in the list of variances for submission to the External Auditor and that the Annual Return figures were not being restated. • Members noted that one of the anomalies identified as a result of the change to the RBS finance system had led to the restating of the surplus for 2011/12 from £22,770 to £27,808. • Members noted that the bank charges had increased again during 2012/13 and agreed that a retender should take place in 2013/14. • Members agreed that the overall outturn for 2013/14 at 95.4% of budget and 103.4% of income was an 	<p>Town Clerk to retender Banking contract in 2013/14</p>

<p>excellent result and that the surplus achieved would be very beneficial with the proposed capital expenditure on the Cemeteries, Council Offices and Wrecclesham Community Centre in 2013/14.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members noted that there was significant uncertainty over funding beyond 2013/14 with Waverley stating it would not pass on the Government's Localisation of Council Tax Support Funding in 2014/15, and the potential loss of income if a new Parish Council were created in Rowledge. • Members discussed Asset register, and the allocated reserves in detail, and it was noted that these are subject to an annual review. It was suggested that the Working groups review their earmarked reserves at revised budget stage. • Members noted the good progress made in dealing with outstanding debtors and noted that discussions were ongoing with Surrey County Council in relation to the Library Gardens. Members reiterated the Council's previous position that the Town Council should not be subsidising the County Council in the maintenance of its asset, and would prefer to hand back the Lease for the Library Gardens' and the maintenance responsibility to Surrey if costs were not covered. • Members welcomed the Internal Auditor's report and that an unqualified report was proposed • Members considered the advice on opting to tax the Cemetery Chapels (subject to further advice from HMRC) and the Wrecclesham Community Centre in view of the forthcoming works taking the Council beyond the Tax Exempt levels, and agreed to recommend to Council that the Council Opts to Tax. Members also agreed to recommend that the impact for the Wrecclesham Community Centre Trustees as a result (VAT on the rental due to the Council) should be offset in some way during the transition period of a new lease agreement. <p>3) The Strategy and Finance Working group recommended the Annual Return and associated papers in relation to the 2012/13 Outturn to Council for adoption and submission to the External Auditor.</p>	<p>Working groups to review earmarked reserves when considering the Revised Budget.</p> <p>Town Clerk to continue to seek full cost recovery in Lease for Library Gardens and report on progress to next Strategy and Finance Working Group</p> <p>Recommendation to Council: 1) to welcome Internal Auditor's Report; 2) that the Council Opts to Tax the Wrecclesham Community Centre and the Cemetery Chapels (subject to further advice from HMRC) in view of the financial benefit of so doing; and 3) the Council offsets the impact of the change for the Wrecclesham Community Centre Trustees during the transition to a new Lease.</p> <p>Recommendation to Council: To approve the Annual Return and associated papers for submission to the External Auditor.</p>
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5. Town Clerk Update

POINTS	ACTION
<p>1) The Town Clerk updated members on a number of matters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A cemetery matter. b. The decision of the Freedom of Information Commissioner to Uphold the Council's decision to withhold personal data under section 40 (2) of the FOI Act. 	

- c. **Issues arising from the Surrey ALC AGM** including the completion of the creation of the Surrey Association of Local Councils.
- d. **The Surrey Localism Officer**, which for the Waverley area was now awaiting a decision at the July meeting of the Local Committee.
- e. **Assets of Community Value.** Members noted 1) Waverley's decision in relation to the Redgrave submitted by the Farnham Theatre Association; 2) that an application was being submitted by the Farnham Buildings Preservation Trust in relation to Brightwells and associated land; 3) that an application had been received by the Council in relation to the Rowledge Village Hall; and 4) considered whether the Library Gardens should be listed as an asset of Community Value. Members agreed to recommend to Council that a submission should go to Waverley proposing that the Rowledge Village Hall and the Farnham Library Gardens should be listed as Assets of Community Value.
- f. **Consultations.** Members noted that responses had been submitted to Waverley in relation to the Rowledge Governance Review and to Surrey in relation to the Surrey Future – Infrastructure document. Members noted that a response were to be prepared in relation to the Surrey Future Rail Strategy and the Rushmoor Statement of Community Involvement
- g. **Alleged Public Footpath in Crondall.** A letter had been received by Surrey County Council over an alleged Public Footpath from Crandall Lane to the Field exit on Footpath 7 (CP554). Members agreed that a Public Footpath had existed in this area for decades and recommended the Council write to Surrey CC confirming that a footpath had existed.
- h. Members noted that a **non-partisan Petition Group** had been created as an off-shoot of the Farnham Society to petition the Queen for the separation of Farnham from Waverley. Members were concerned about the impact fragmentation would have on service provision and local residents, recognising that the existing Town Council was considered too small an area to be its own Unitary authority. Members considered that more efforts should be being made in creating better co-operation between different tiers of local government and with other partners such as GP Commissioning Groups. Members valued the contributions received from all sections of the community in developing the Neighbourhood Plan, and would wish to work with all sections of the community in future. Members felt that it was not sensible at this stage to pull away from what should be a working structure, and agreed to recommend to Council that Farnham Town Council did not support Farnham breaking away from Waverley in the same way as it did not support Rowledge, breaking away from Farnham.

Recommendation to Council: That the Rowledge Village Hall and Farnham Library Gardens be nominated to Waverley for listing as Assets of Community Value

Town Clerk to respond in association with Infrastructure Planning Group and Lead Member of the Planning and Licensing Consultative Group

Recommendation to Council: That the Town Clerk write to Surrey County Council confirming that a Public Footpath had existed for decades from Crondall Lane to the Field Exit on Footpath 7 (CP554)

Recommendation to Council:

1. **That the Town Council favours closer working at all levels and is against fragmentation;**
2. **Farnham Town Council is against Farnham**

location before the Council committed to any purchase.

3) Cemetery Chapels (Hale and Green Lane)

Members noted progress of the cemetery chapels' projects. AC advised that Green Lane was progressing, as reported to Cemeteries and Appeals Working Group on 23rd May; and that the Council's surveyors had been instructed to provide the Council with the costs associated with repairing both of the Chapel roofs at Hale Cemetery, further to a complaint of criminal damage and further deterioration of the structures. Members were advised that Hale Cemetery chapels are also being considered for possible storage, once Green Lane is no longer available as this is currently used for general storage.

8. Town Council Website

POINTS	ACTION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The report at appendix K was introduced. Members agreed that the website could be difficult to use and was in need of reorganisation and possibly redesign. 2) Members agreed that a Residents Focus Group would be beneficial and requested further reports as the project progressed. 	<p>Officers progress with the Website project, seeking views of local residents, and businesses reporting back to members through Strategy and Finance as appropriate.</p>

9. Grant Application

POINTS	ACTION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Members reviewed the email from the South West Surrey Voluntary Action, in relation to their grant application, further to a request by members for more information before deciding whether or not to grant funds for 2013/14. 2) Members discussed the work undertaken in Farnham by SWSVA and felt that benefit to the community and people of Farnham did not appear sufficient to justify the level of funding requested. 3) It was agreed to recommend that Council declines the application on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence of the benefit to the people of Farnham. 4) Members noted that SWSVA may wish to compile evidence of the work undertaken specifically in Farnham, for an application in 2014/15. 	<p>Recommendation to Council: That the application from South West Surrey Voluntary Action for Grant Support in 2013/14 be declined.</p>

Cllr Frost left at this point.

The Town Clerk returned at this point

10. Infrastructure Planning Group

POINTS	ACTION
<p>1) Cllr Cockburn provided an update on the latest work of the infrastructure planning Group and advised Members that she, Cllr Genziani, and Councillor Ward would be attending the Examination in Public of the Waverley Core Strategy.</p> <p>2) Cllr Cockburn was updating the Neighbourhood Plan documents following the most recent workshop in order to ensure that work can continue even if there is a further delay in the Waverley Core Strategy following the Inspector's consideration as seemed likely.</p>	

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

POINTS	ACTION
Members agreed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 16th July 2013 at 9am	Town Clerk to circulate agenda

Meeting ended at 12.46pm

Notes written by Iain Lynch