Invitation to tender
Website brief for Farnham Town Council

1. Background information

1.1 About Farnham Town Council

Farnham Town Council has 16 elected councillors who represent eight wards and a population of around 42,000 people.

The Council provides many services for its residents including:

- Allotments

- Annual Town Meeting of electors

- CCTV and community safety

- Christmas lights

- Civic events

- Cemeteries

- Community enhancement including:

  o Farnham in Bloom

  o Noticeboards

  o Street furniture

- Council meetings including the Annual Town Meeting of Electors

- Farmers' Markets

- Graffiti removal

- Grants for community organisations

- Planning – statutory consultee

- Managing the South Street Trust

- Managing bookings for street banners above the highway

- Toilets

- Tourism and events

- Town twinning with Andernach in Germany and other friendships

- War memorials

1.2 Farnham Town Council's Vision

Farnham Town Council strives to be the influential and effective voice for Farnham bringing together the views of all organisations working for the good of the town and enhancing the well-being of all the community.

Farnham Town Council aims to be an efficient and effective organisation providing high-quality, sustainable services and facilities for the residents and businesses of Farnham whilst addressing the climate challenge, with a strong and respected voice representing Farnham's best interests.

1.3 About Farnham

Farnham is a bustling market town in Surrey and is located around 35 miles from London.

In The Sunday Times Best Places to Live 2024 guide, Farnham was the only Surrey town to be named in the list of top ten best places to live in the south-east, and the best in Surrey.

The town is full of character and has a 12th century castle overlooking picturesque Georgian streets and attractive buildings. The streets are well-maintained and are dotted with colourful planters and hanging baskets which are part of the award-winning Farnham in Bloom.

With regular trains to Waterloo and excellent schools, Farnham is popular with young professionals and families and people moving out of London as well as local residents.

In Farnham, there is a strong sense of community spirit and many organisations flourish because of the commitment of a loyal army of volunteers who work tirelessly to make a positive impact on local projects and residents alike.

As a World Craft Town, Farnham has a vibrant cultural scene. The Farnham Maltings, New Ashgate Gallery, Crafts Study Centre, Museum and the University for the Creative Arts are located in the town centre and attract people from outside the area.

There is no shortage of places to eat and drink in Farnham with buzzing cafes, al fresco dining, quality chain restaurants and many independent options.

Farnham has earned a reputation for offering a great choice of independent shops. The town is proud of its one and only department store which has been serving the town for more than 140 years. A farmers' market is held once a month in the town centre.

Farnham has a popular town centre park which is the location for many community events. There are also a number of beautiful gardens and courtyards where people go to escape the hustle and bustle of the town.

1.4 Website history

Farnham Town Council's current website was launched in 2014. It is a large site with over 400 pages, nearly 900 news stories and hundreds of events and listings in the directory of Farnham services.

The structure of the site and its content was informed by the findings of focus groups which residents, representatives from local organisations and councillors were invited to attend.

The site provides official information about Farnham Town Council and its services as well as information aimed at people living, visiting or doing business in Farnham.

In the past year, around 152,500 users viewed an average of 2.53 pages each.

Since its launch, the website has undergone relatively minor changes. This has included design changes to comply with accessibility standards and most recently, development of the

directory so that it can be used for recording information about young people's services and activities.

Some micro sites have also been introduced such as the committee management system mod.gov. Separate sites have been set up for the Farnham Literary Festival and Farnham Craft Town.

Keeping content up to date is an ongoing task.

Farnham Town Council's website serves as a central source of information for both the community and councillors.

It aims to promote activities and organisations in Farnham as well as providing information about the Council and its work and information required by transparency legislation.

Below are examples of what website users can do and the information they can find on the current website:

Do:

- Report a problem such as graffiti

- Apply for an allotment

- Submit an entry to the events calendar

- Submit an entry to the directory of local services

- Apply to be a stallholder at Farnham Town Council events

- Book onto events such as the Bloomin' Kids Gardening Workshops

- Download guided walks

- Find out what's happening locally

- Subscribe to Farnham Town Council's enewsletter

- Make a donation to the Mayor's charity

- Take part in consultations

- Apply for a job

- Contact Farnham Town Council

Find:

- Contact details for councillors

- Agendas and minutes

- Declarations of interest from Town councillors

- Staff contact details

- Policies and procedures

- Information required by transparency legislation

- Information about services provided by all Councils in the area

- Details of the Neighbourhood Plan

- Dates and information about services such as Farnham in Bloom, burials and cemeteries and events.

Find out about other organisations:

- Places to stay

- Places to visit

- Information about the villages

- Clubs to join

- Events

- Details about organisations and businesses

- Halls for hire

- Community news

2. The new website

2.1 What's driving the vision

At a Members' strategy workshop in November 2023, it was noted that 'improvements could be made to the website'.

To understand these improvements, all Councillors were invited to complete a survey giving their views about the website. There was a 56% response rate with Members expanding on questions about the purpose of the website, who it is for, the types of information that should be included, likes and dislikes and how they find information.

To explore the answers in more detail, all Councillors were invited to take part in a focus group.

Staff have also been encouraged to complete a website survey, and a pop-up survey was installed on the website inviting website visitors to give their views on the current site.

In May, a website expert was invited to a workshop with the councillors who took part in the initial focus group. The purpose was to examine the findings of the additional research and to agree on the next stage of the review.

After considering the findings of the research and thinking about what's important to residents and the problems the website needs to seek to resolve, Members agreed that a new website should be commissioned. This would achieve long term value for money and ensure the website is fit for purpose.

The goal is to achieve a website that is modern and efficient, and that meets the needs of residents and visitors. It should adhere to the latest accessibility standards, and ensure a mobile-first, customer focused design.

The new website should aim to be the primary digital source of information about Farnham for residents, businesses and visitors. The website should be future-proof and an efficient one-stop shop that provides effective signposting and easy access to council services, information and community resources.

Through this tender process, Farnham Town Council wishes to identify suitably qualified suppliers that can rebuild and further develop the website by taking on board the specifications in this document and by providing solutions to the current challenges.

2.2 Objectives

Farnham Town Council's website has many users and a great deal of content. The information architecture will be key to the success of this project as we want people to find the information they came for quickly and easily, and ideally, to find something new and of interest along the way.

Key objectives include:

- The website experience should be improved to make it more accessible for all.
- Deliver an effective self-service website for Farnham Town Council activities and to signpost users to other councils and service providers in the most useful and easy way possible.
- With 70% of users accessing the website via a mobile device, the site should be designed to be mobile first.
- The navigation needs to be improved with a first-class search facility on the site so that users can find information quickly and efficiently.
- Allow Farnham Town Council to push its latest news and information.
- The design should appeal to a wider age group and ensure it is future-proof and remains technically relevant.
- By delivering a site that satisfies people's need to find information about the town, there is an opportunity to promote and encourage greater engagement in council business.
- Increase website traffic to events during the first year of launch.
- As easy to use content management system.
- Maintain and improve SEO so the site ranks high for agreed key words.

2.3 Target audience

The target audience includes people who are living, visiting or doing business in Farnham. The information they require may not belong to Farnham Town Council, but the website should signpost people in the right direction.

Residents

Examples of interests:

- Information on local services such as waste collection, recycling, and public transport.
- Updates on community events, festivals, and town meetings.
- Access to council decisions and minutes from recent meetings.
- Details on local planning applications and development projects.
- Services for younger people.
- Opportunities for community involvement and volunteering.
- Contact information for town council members and departments.

Businesses

Examples of interests:

- o Information on licensing and regulations.
- o A reliable source of information about council-related business that may affect their business.
- o Updates on commercial property developments and regeneration schemes.
- o Information about roadworks.
- o Opportunities for local business networking and community events.
- o Information on NNDR, business grants, funding opportunities, and support programmes.
- o Details about economic development plans and initiatives for the town.

NB There will be a separate website provided by Farnham Business Improvement District (BID) which will be aimed at businesses and satisfying the above.

Visitors

Examples of interests:

- o Information about tourist attractions, historical sites, and cultural events.
- o Maps and guides for exploring the town and surrounding areas including the Discover Farnham app.
- o Recommendations for eating out, shopping, and accommodation.
- o Upcoming events and activities in Farnham.
- o Transport options and parking information.

Councillors and staff

Examples of interests:

- o Dates of meetings and events.
- o Agendas and minutes.
- o Links to send to constituents.

New residents

Examples of interests:

- o Welcome information and resources for settling into life in Farnham.
- o Details about local schools, healthcare facilities, and community centres.
- o Information on housing, utilities, and essential services.
- o Community groups and clubs for social engagement and support.
- o How to get involved in local activities.

Community organisations and charities

Examples of interests:

- o Opportunities for partnerships and collaborations with the town council.
- o Information on grants, funding, and support for community projects.

- o Updates on local initiatives.

- o Networking opportunities with other community groups.

- o Details about venues and facilities available for events and meetings.

Students and educators

Examples of interests:

- o Educational programmes and workshops available in Farnham.

- o Opportunities for student internships, volunteering, and community service.

- o Resources for school projects on local history, government, and culture.

- o Information about local libraries, museums, and cultural institutions such as the Crafts Study Centre and UCA.

- o Details on grants, and funding opportunities for educational initiatives.

Event organisers

Examples of interests:

- o Information on venues and facilities for hosting events.

- o Details about licences and regulations for organising public events.

- o Calendar of events to avoid scheduling conflicts.

- o Contact information for local vendors, suppliers, and service providers.

- o Opportunities for promoting events on the town council's website and social media.

Environmental enthusiasts

Examples of interests:

- o Information on local environmental initiatives and sustainability projects.

- o Details about conservation areas, parks, and green spaces.

- o Opportunities to volunteer for clean-up efforts and environmental projects.

- o Updates on recycling programmes and waste management.

- o Educational resources on environmental protection and sustainability practices.

Health and wellness advocates

Examples of interests:

- o Information on local health services, clinics, and wellness programmes/initiatives.

- o Updates on fitness events, sports clubs, sports pitches and recreational activities.

- o Details about mental health resources and support groups.

- o Opportunities for participating in health-related workshops and seminars.

- o Information on public health and safety initiatives in Farnham.

3. Scope of work

3.1 Problems/challenges for which Farnham Town Council is seeking a solution

- Content which is not being discovered / seen by the end user.

- Content is 'buried' and it takes too many clicks to get to.

- Out of date content – not easy to manage time sensitive content. No scheduling facility to ensure content is regularly checked.

- Annual review of directory of Farnham services is very resource intensive. Need a more efficient and quicker way of requesting that organisations check their content and for the entry to be removed if there is no response.

- Removal of old events and images from the Events calendar so that only the most recent appear on Google search.

- Site does not automatically refresh so people do not always see the latest content.

- As a one-stop shop for all things Farnham, much of the content will signpost users to third party sites. A solution is needed for ensuring this is efficient and effective.

- Images do not automatically resize to fit frame.

- Difficult to cross reference content without recreating pages. For example, open spaces belong under council services but should also be seen under places to visit.

3.2 Pages and features required

Home page

- Quick links to popular services

- Latest news

- Events – what's on today and coming up

Council services

- Detailed info about services

- Online forms and applications

- A to Z of services

- Options for donations / payment (Mayor's charity / event tickets / sponsor / stallholders)

Egovernment and transparency

- Agendas, minutes and reports via modern.gov

- Financial info, policies etc via modern.gov

- Who's who at the council

Community engagement

- Events calendar with filters for different types of events

- Directory of Farnham services with filters to find specific types of business or organisations such as those that support young people

- Detailed consultations, surveys or informal polls to gather public opinion

- Feedback button

- 'Report It' facility for matters needing attention. To be linked to appropriate organisations (eg Surrey County Council for pot holes, Waverley Borough Council for refuse collection).

News and updates

- Regularly updated news section

- Breaking news feature

- Community news

- Social media feed

- Traffic camera feed showing East Street, South Street, West Street, Castle Steet and Longbridge.

- Enewsletters and other service specific council newsletters

Tourism and attractions

- Information on local attractions, places to visit, parks etc

- Annual events

- Accommodation (business directory)

- Downloadable guides and leaflets

3.3 Functional requirements

- Content Management System (CMS) for easy updates

- To be built for mobile first

- Search functionality

- Good on page SEO

- Link to social media platforms

- Display information stored on modern.gov

- Display traffic camera feeds

- Video

- For each page to include a 'Last updated...' stamp which is automatically populated when the page is updated

- A pop-up screen which can be turned on in an emergency

- An 'other content you may be interested in' feature

- A way for Farnham Town Council to push/feature content it wishes to highlight

- Transfer of all existing 'friendly urls'

- Any old pages should redirect to relevant new pages using 301 redirects
- All functions on existing website
- A backend system which provides a manageable content and media library so that images, articles and other assets can easily be found and re-used
- Google Analytics 4 and a dashboard so the council can easily track and measure agreed KPIs.

3.4 Technical requirements

- Ability to allocate various levels of admin rights to staff
- Webmaster to be able to edit any content that is visible to the user
- Hosting on a reliable, UK based server with regular backups and minimal down time should there be any problems or a cyber attack
- Compliant with latest accessibility and cyber security standards
- Compatibility with major browsers (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge)
- Compliance with GDPR and other relevant regulations
- Security measures, including SSL certificate
- The current domain name is to be used
- A digital copy of the old website for storage at Surrey History Centre.

4 Design and branding

4.1 Style preferences

A modern, friendly and vibrant design that evokes civic pride. To be professional to reflect the serious side of the Council. To incorporate Farnham Town Council's brand colours and font. To incorporate high-quality images on each page.

4.2 Managing the brand

Website administrators should only have access to templates which comply with the brand. There should be no flexibility regarding colours, typeface, position of images etc.

5 Content management

5.1 Content creation and migration

Farnham Town Council officers will be responsible for creating the content for the new website.

It is expected that most of the content will be uploaded to the new site by Farnham Town Council. However, it may consider outsourcing this task and requests a separate price for project managing the migration of content to the new site.

6 Training

Farnham Town Council requires training on the content management system for its staff and a User Guide. Provision should be made for refresher training and new staff training as part of an initial three-year maintenance and support agreement.

7 Timeline and budget

7.1 Timeline

We aim to launch the new website by no later than September 2025. Key milestones include:

- Initial design drafts: Month X
- Development start: Month X
- User testing: Month X
- Final revisions: Month X
- Final user testing: Month X
- Soft launch: Month X
- Iron out snags: Month X
- Launch: Month X

Supplier to complete the timeline and include details about how they would approach user testing.

7.2 Budget

£15-25,000

8 Questions to be answered in the proposal

1. How will the site be built?
2. How will the site be futureproofed?
3. What CMS system do you propose to use?
4. How will old content be stored and cleaned?
5. How will you archive legacy content so it can be retained by Farnham Town Council?
6. How and where will the site be hosted and supported?
7. What is your process for design?
8. Will there be any downtime between the switch from the old website to the new?
9. How will you prevent a drop in Farnham Town Council's Google rankings?
10. What is your process during the build? For example:
    a. Who will be Farnham Town Council's main point of contact?

b. Who will build the site?

c. How frequently will you meet with Farnham Town Council? Will this be face-to-face or video conferencing?

d. Do you intend to sub-contract any part of the project, if so what?

e. What is your business continuity plan for the project should a key member of your team become unavailable?

f. How do you manage the process of testing and sharing the site?

11. What maintenance plans do you offer and how much do they cost?

12. What is your process for managing requests for support both during and after the build?

13. What is the response time if the site goes down?

14. How often is the site backed up?

15. What timeline (7.1) is realistic and feasible?

9 The evaluation process

The steps include:

Validation of the bid – Verify that the information requested has been supplied and the sufficiency of the tender.

Shortlist the bids – a maximum of four will be invited for interview.

Canvassing of councillors, officers or contractors associated with the Council will lead to disqualification of the bid.

All submissions will be treated as confidential and will be viewed only by the evaluation panel.

10 The process for submitting a bid

Applicants should send one copy of their proposal to Iain McCready, Business and Facilities Manager by **12 noon** on **11 November 2024**. The proposal should demonstrate that you have read and understood the requirements and answered all questions.

Tenders should be posted to Farnham Town Council, Town Hall, South Street, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7RN. Envelopes should be marked '**Website Tender. Not to be opened until 11 November'**.

Shortlisted suppliers will be contacted within a fortnight, with interviews likely to take place w/c 25 November.

It is likely the contract will start the week commencing 6 January 2025. The successful applicant will be notified by email and telephone, and unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email thereafter. Any questions regarding this tender should be directed by email to iain.mccready@farnham.gov.uk. Any questions received will be circulated to all submitting companies to ensure fairness.