

Farnham Board Minutes

Date & Time:	11 June 2021, 9:30-11:30
Venue:	Video Conferencing - Zoom
Chair:	Cllr Tim Oliver
In attendance:	Cllr Michaela Martin, Cllr Catherine Powell, Cllr Andy MacLeod, Cllr Paul Follows, Cllr Peter Clark, Cllr John Neale, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP.
Observers	Tom Horwood, Zac Ellwood, Iain Lynch, Katie Stewart, Lee Parker, Yasmin Ahmed, Paula Gough, Jonathan Foster-Clark, Richard Mothersdale
Apologies	Cllr Matt Furniss, Veronica Moore

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1	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone and went through general housekeeping for the meeting. He also drew attention to the vision statement and its importance for the Board as a reminder of what they are to achieve.</p> <p>For interest, Simon Duke flagged that the island on Castle Street is being reinstalled on the evening of the 12th June.</p>
2	<p>Minutes of the Meeting and Matters Arising from Last Board</p> <p>No amendments were suggested, minutes approved.</p>
3	<p>Questions and Queries</p> <p>There were no questions or queries for this Board.</p>
4	<p>Optimised Infrastructure Plan Consultation Report</p> <p>Ben Funning introduced himself to the Board as part of the Communications Team in Surrey County Council and then introduced the item. He gave a summary of the activity going on Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP) consultation, stating that the consultation was open from 15 February to 14 March where people in and around the town could comment in a variety of ways including via the Commonplace platform, paper questionnaires, three Local Liaison Forums and a Facebook Live.</p> <p>Ben Funning gave a summary of the responses. There were 729 respondents to the questionnaire, of those who gave demographic information, 46% were over 65s which is an over representation of the town's population and only 4% were under 35 which is an under representation of the town's population. Ben Funning noted that this was a disappointing result after identifying this issue in the last round of consultation and taking actions to increase engagement by using Commonplace and social media to target younger groups. He noted that the team would need to do something completely different to ensure they captured the voice of young people.</p>

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Ben Funning gave feedback on a question that came in from a board member on how the analysis was done and detailed emails that came in from key stakeholders. He gave reassurance that all emails have been read and considered by the programme team. This information was shared with the insights team and all comments were compared to those made on Common Place to ensure that no comments were double counted and could be considered in the consultation analysis.

Not everyone who responded completed the whole questionnaire which is why there is a variation in the number of responses. In the wider context section, 56% of people were positive towards the objectives and short-listing priorities. 55% were positive on the Farnham-wide improvements and 23% responded negatively. People were particularly keen on the walking, cycling, electric vehicles, ultra-low emission buses and across all areas said they'd be happy to use greener options of travel if they were there. There is a perception there that the buses are quite high emissions. The town centre interventions section had a 54/20% split with most respondents saying they were walking. There was particular support for a 20mph speed limit and HGV restriction and polarising views around pedestrianisation.

North Farnham received 339 responses that were 42% positive and 33% negative. South Farnham was 53% positive and 20% negative. Again, there were polarising views for and against bypasses. For the possible A31 corridor, there was a 52% positive and 25% negative split.

The recommendations for the Board are to note the outcome of this report and to consider the feedback provided for this version and the next of the Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP).

Jeremy Hunt MP expressed that he thought this was excellent and thanked the team for making the effort to include young people although he appreciates that the result wasn't what was wanted. He asked about the timeframe in which the Board's recommended solutions will be published formally and will it include what will happen to pollution levels in the three pollution hotspots. Jonathan Foster-Clark responded that they're looking to finalise the technical work to complete the OIP including the traffic studies by September. There are no plans to explicitly model the pollution levels, but an overview can be given for the implication in traffic flows and congestion which are the two key components that drive the air quality. **Jeremy Hunt MP requested that an estimate of the impact on pollution is included in the September concluding report.**

Cllr Catherine Powell asked if the traffic modelling will take account of all the impact on all the areas and include the existing housing developments proposed in Surrey, including the 8,000 or so houses to the north of Farnham to be built in the next 5 to 10 years. She would also be keen to see the impact of the proposed changes to the Upper Hale Road, another area of high pollution. Jonathan Foster-Clark responded the implication of the changes in the road layout and the air quality problems in North Farnham will be considered in the road traffic interrogation. In terms of the impact of new housing, this isn't currently incorporated in the model which is viewed as a major challenge. The proposal is to look in detail using the traffic model to take an overview of the potential forecast implications of the new housing. A new strategic model of the area will be done next year to incorporate these changes.

Cllr Powell expressed alarm that the report is coming in September and yet the modelling won't have been completed until next year. She also raised that a large Amazon Depot has been approved and asked if the impact of that will also be looked at. Jonathan said that they are in conversations with Hampshire County Council and other adjacent authorities to ensure that the emerging proposals are taken into account.

Cllr Paul Follows asked if additional measuring sites will be put in place around Farnham to measure the impact of the changes. Jonathan confirmed that they will be put in place where they are needed.

Jonathan made a point that there will need to be trade-offs made in terms of balance of impacts to improve air quality. He said that to reduce congestion and improve quality of

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	<p>space, the best thing that could be done is to understand how to better provide greener travel choices.</p> <p>The Chair mentioned that Surrey is about to establish its Greener Future Board, a county-wide board involving all partners, which will oversee the delivery strategy of the greener agenda. A key part of that will be delivering a reduction of carbon emissions which means that a holistic view will need to be taken to ensure that emissions are reducing instead of moving to different parts of the county.</p> <p>Cllr John Neale raised a concern on the lack of visibility regarding the thinking on the Hickleys Station area and questioned how that work would be ready in time for September. Jonathon responded that the team has been looking into this and developing the objectives for a scheme in Hickleys. They have developed a set of key principles in the area as well as identified impacts of potential changes; the team will be working up options in time for a submission for the Department of Transport (DFT) in September. The team will hold a workshop with local stakeholders to work through the evidence and options before the DFT submission.</p> <p>Paula Gough raised the point that the September deadline is to ensure that Surrey has a robust strategic case to apply for funding from DFT.</p> <p>Cllr Peter Clarke if the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan and the East Hants Local Plan are being used for the traffic modelling as they give estimates for housing development in those areas. Jonathan Foster-Clark responded that the new strategic modelling on the County will take these plans into account and the OIP will be informed from this work.</p>
5	<p>Optimised Infrastructure Plan Feedback Technical Response</p> <p>Jonathan Foster-Clark introduced this item and provided an overview of the key comments that have been raised and how they are going to respond to them.</p> <p>He spoke on the Town Council response as it capture critical issues raised by stakeholders. The Western Link Road was raised and the view of the team was that a Wrecclesham Bypass could be delivered more rapidly. Atkins is examining the case for both schemes.</p> <p>Many salient points have been raised in the consultations feedback which the team agree with. The team recognises that certain points need to be made clearer within the plan. This includes that Farnham needs a pedestrian focus as an important destination town, the impacts on congestion and air quality need to be addressed in the modelling and that there needs to be a transport hub around the station, however investment at Hickleys is still required to manage traffic.</p> <p>Jonathan spoke about feedback received about the Town Centre; there is an ambition for a wide-ranging pedestrian zone across the town centre. The team have generated a wide range of options with the key principle being to improve greener transport methods.</p> <p>The feedback also identified a need to strengthen the connectivity between Brightwells and the town centre. The team will pull together a stronger narrative for this and address how to better integrate Brightwells into the town centre.</p> <p>Careful consideration will need to give on which vehicles are permitted access to the town centre as this has been raised in the consultation. Buses will be the key challenge here as they will require good access to the town centre. The OIP has also proposed a freight consolidation centre and recommends that it operates 24/7. A suitable site would need to be identified.</p> <p>The access road between Castle Hill and West Street to the Hart carpark was also raised. Jonathan spoke about a number of challenges around this including the concern ensuring</p>

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	<p>that the town centre proposals aren't dependent on building a new road. Creating a new road will also create a significant change to the historical town centre and there also needs to be some thought around what the road would achieve; would it just be to provide access to the car park, if so, how would traffic be prevented. If it instead provided a through connection to West Street, the treatment and design of the road would need to be considered for higher traffic.</p> <p>Jonathan spoke about the ambition for car park accesses being retained in their current form. The response to this was that there will inevitable be changes to the carpark due to the changes to the town centre including the plans to increase walking and cycling. Jonathan also mentioned that Waverley are developing their parking strategy and that this needs to tie into the ambitions for the town centre. Visitors will also be considered as well as residents as Farnham is a destination town.</p> <p>Jonathan spoke about the responses received regarding neighbourhoods that mostly focussed on the bus service, park and ride and creating a transport hub around the station. As mentioned previously, the team agrees with these concerns and are working on options around this. He then spoke on the major road network feedback, specifically focussed on Hickleys Corner and the Western Bypass and the responses for both.</p> <p>Cllr John Neale thanked Jonathan for a comprehensive response. He suggested a visualisation of the place potentials in the next version of the OIP to help encourage those with concerns about the programme.</p> <p>Cllr Andy Macleod commented that the Hickleys project as the A31 project as it includes more than just Hickleys Corner. He also said that the Brightwells project should be integrated into this scheme as opposed to its own project.</p>
6	<p>Quick Wins</p> <p>Richard Mothersdale introduced himself as a project manager for Arcadis and the Quick Wins manager after Chris Tunstall's retirement. He then introduced the item and gave an update on HGV restrictions, noting that the consultation has been completed with no objections, a site visit has been undertaken and the sign drawings have been issued to Surrey County Council (SCC) for review. Once this has been done, the commissioning for installation can begin with Kier.</p> <p>Richard has met with Waverley Council to look at various measures regarding speed restrictions. The restrictions will need to be ratified by the local committee. This will be developed in Autumn and will be onsite in 2022. The Chair mentioned that an extraordinary meeting could be scheduled if the report could be ready in advance in the November meeting. Richard will come back to the Chair with a programme.</p> <p>On wayfinding, Atkins are currently doing the feasibility study and strategy. This should be completed by June after which consultation can be done with stakeholders. This should allow an Autumn start.</p> <p>Regarding road reclassification, Simon Duke has circulated a paper to board members on the recommendations to the A325. Feedback has been limited but responses are broadly in support of the A325. Simon encouraged members to comment if they had feedback. The team are ready to proceed to the next stage with Kier.</p> <p>Richard Mothersdale then gave an update on the quick wins pipeline saying that the 100 schemes have gone through the first stage of the sifting process and been cut down to 68. The second stage is set to commence. The sift and RAG assessment is to ensure that the projects are that have a maximum impact and to ensure that abortive projects aren't undertaken.</p>

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	<p>The board is recommended to note that the Quick Wins 18month Project 1 and the development of the programme of works has been allocated £2.6m.</p> <p>Jeremy Hunt MP commended the team on the progress of the quick wins.</p> <p>Cllr Michaela Martin expressed her disappointment that the HGV restrictions weren't coming in earlier than September. She also expressed her support for the reclassification of the A325. Simon Duke mentioned that the HGV signage is expected go up in August over the school holidays.</p> <p>Cllr Catherine Powell welcomed the reclassification of the A325 but strongly supported that it doesn't recommend reclassifying the A287. Simon Duke commented that the impacts on North Farnham, including the A287, has been noted and will be including in the study.</p>
7	<p>Programme Update</p> <p>Paula Gough introduced the item and gave a brief overview of the activity since the last board meeting. She touched on the coming completion of the OIP and the completed town centre study. The team started new strands of work around Farnham North & South and the Western Bypass which are being considered as feasibility studies before possibly being adopted as a project into the programme's vision. This will be brought to the board for approval.</p> <p>She also spoke about the focus on the business case strategy to ensure that the funding from DFT isn't lost. The team is also considering what elements of the town centre can be included in the infrastructure improvements and will be coming to the board with some thoughts on this. Cost planning has now been completed and an extract of this will be coming to the board.</p> <p>Paula said the team have produced a critical path for the programme around how the various key milestones will be met in the next 5-10 years and noted that some assumptions have been made. She said the programme was attached to the annex of the paper submitted with the programmes.</p> <p>Simon Duke made the point that various studies being completed that bus improvements schemes have been identified as the most effective project. The Chair concurred that we need to find funding to support bus improvements.</p>
8	<p>AOB</p> <p>Jeremy Hunt MP thanked the team for the detailed presentations and Cllr Wyatt and Cllr Steven who contributed greatly to this board. He stressed the need for honesty around the disruptions ahead around these proposals when they are being presented in September. He thinks there needs to be a firm distinction on which are firm proposals Surrey can fund and go ahead with and those that are aspirations that are still being considered. He also mentioned that the programme should be presented with measurable statistics to show the benefits for the whole town all feel they are part of this change.</p> <p>When presenting in September, Jeremy questioned whether it would be beneficial to hold a referendum to ask the town for their support for implementing this programme.</p> <p>Cllr John Neale commented that although much work has gone into communications, he thinks further work needs to be undertaken here.</p>

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	<p>Cllr Paul Follows commented that while he is not keen on referendums, he is interested in the potential and will speak to Tom Horwood, as Returning Officer, about the mechanics of how it would work as it would be Waverley that would need to run the referendum. The Chair mentioned that the cost may fall to Surrey. The practicalities will be picked up offline.</p> <p>As a Farnham councillor, Cllr Peter Clark said that he thinks that a referendum would be a good way to get the residents in Farnham involved in the programme. Cllr Andy Macleod expressed concern that a referendum in September would be too early. The Chair responded that it's essential that what we do has the broad support of residents and that the referendum would not be another consultation but a way to get their endorsement.</p> <p>Paula Gough noted that part of the funding process for DFT needs to include evidence of public consultation and engagement.</p> <p>Jeremy Hunt MP said that the referendum would need to be explicit on what the people are being asked. Cllr Follows recommended that the referendum is run from the public authority as opposed to a political party.</p> <p>Next meeting date: The next meeting will take place on 24th September 2021.</p>