

**WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**19 MARCH 2019**

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**Title:**

**PLACE-SHAPING WAVERLEY**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Julia Potts, Leader]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

The Corporate Strategy 2018-23 states that we will explore “the nature of ‘Place Shaping’ and the benefits it affords to our varied communities”. This report sets out our proposed approach to ‘place-shaping’ in the borough, drawing on the Council’s agreed strategies, and recommends that a Place-Shaping Reserve be established to fund place-shaping projects.

The Executive recommends to Council that up to £250,000 of the one-off financial gain from Waverley’s participation in the 2018/19 business rate pilot be earmarked to establish a new Place-Shaping Fund.

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**How this report relates to the Council’s Corporate Priorities:**

This report relates to the Council’s strategic priorities as set out in section 2.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

Equality and diversity implications have been considered as part of the approval process for the strategies that initiated this work. As any future changes to policy, services or practice is required, further assessments may be undertaken.

**Financial Implications:**

In October 2017, Waverley Borough Council agreed to be part of a bid by all Surrey councils to be in a business rates pilot in 2018/19. It was expected that this would generate a one-off financial gain for each Council from the levy on business rate growth that would otherwise have been paid to the Government. The bid was based on the fact that some of the gain to each council would be spent on projects and services that support the local economy. Officers have made it clear that we will not be certain about the value of any gain until the end of the financial year and, therefore, the Council did not budget for or allocate the potential funding. Quarter 3 monitoring of the pilot has identified that a gain of at least £100,000 is very likely and a higher amount is possible.

It is proposed that the Council agree to earmark up to £250,000 of the business rates pilot one-off gain to the place-shaping initiative set out in this report. If the pilot gain is insufficient to meet this cost, the shortfall will be met from reprioritising existing budgets. In the event that the overall gain exceeds £250,000, officers will assess the ongoing risks under the business rates funding mechanism and advise the Executive accordingly on whether any additional contributions can be made to the Place-Shaping Fund.

## **Legal Implications:**

Specific procurement implications are addressed in section 4.3.

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### **1 Place-shaping**

1.1 The term ‘place-shaping’ has gained currency since the 2007 [Lyons Inquiry](#) into Local Government. That inquiry argued that local government’s purpose was about more than service provision; in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its purpose ought to be promoting “the general well-being of a community and its citizens”. This includes community cohesion, building local identity, encouraging economic prosperity, and using influence as well as statutory power to achieve the best results for communities. Crucially, place-shaping recognises the diversity of local places and responds to the needs and concerns of citizens. Engagement is absolutely essential. Even when there are issues that are contentious, place-shaping has the voices of the community at its heart: the voices of the active and articulate, as well as the voices of the vulnerable or rarely-heard. As well as hearing those voices, a place-shaping approach emphasises the challenging community leadership role of elected councils, particularly when the stakes are high and consensus is difficult.

1.2 A place-shaping approach can:

- Define the specific needs of an area and prioritise them;
- Create a clear local vision for the future of a place;
- Identify the important coalitions (e.g. voluntary organisations and societies, businesses, government tiers, other public authorities) that will resolve local challenges;
- Enhance bids for investment by private companies and public agencies to create new employment and skills opportunities;
- Improve the chances of successfully bidding for the multi-million pound investments that will improve major transport routes;
- Lead to further supplementary planning documents and masterplans to influence the Planning process, if desired.

### **2. Strategic context**

2.1 Place-shaping principles are at the heart of Waverley Borough Council’s new Corporate Strategy, with its priority themes of people, place and prosperity. As well as that document, the Council last year approved three other key strategic policy documents that include many objectives that are specifically place-shaping. In summary, the strategies set out this focus as follows.

2.2 **Corporate Strategy 2018-23**, pp. 2, 6: “Our vision is that Waverley borough will continue to be an attractive and prosperous place to live, work and visit. A place where our residents can take pride in their communities and where there are opportunities for all to thrive and lead healthy lives. A place that is valued by its community and supported by quality public services. ... Throughout the life of this Strategy we will be exploring the nature of ‘Place Shaping’ and the benefits it affords to our varied communities. Through leadership, community engagement and partnership working – particularly with our 21 parish and town councils – we have

an opportunity to enhance our towns and villages by encouraging investment in infrastructure and facilities.”

- 2.3 The **Local Plan 2018-32 Part 1** includes a 14-point spatial vision for 2032 (p. 3-1). It speaks of the following place-shaping ideals: “The high quality environment of Waverley, its distinctive character and its economic prosperity. ... The best available access to jobs, services, housing, community facilities, leisure and recreation so as to minimise the need to travel and maximise the opportunities to travel by means other than the car. ... Improved infrastructure to support the increased population of Waverley, and, where needed, to mitigate the impact of major developments planned outside Waverley. ... The emphasis will be on sustainable economic development, of the right type and in the right place to meet employment needs both within the towns and in the rural areas. ... The unique and diverse character of Waverley’s towns, villages and countryside will be cherished and preserved.”
- 2.4 **Economic Development Strategy 2018-32**, pp. 2, 7: “To address Waverley’s challenges in the longer term, it will be essential to secure future investment in Waverley by nationally-based employers and local businesses. Developing the right business spaces backed by the necessary infrastructure will be a vital component in driving growth in the local economy and providing greater local employment opportunities. ... The Economic Development Vision is for Waverley to be: A successful place where local businesses can grow and flourish. Where all our rural and urban communities have access to sustainable, high quality employment. Where everyone living and working in Waverley can share in its beautiful natural environment and economic prosperity.”
- 2.5 **Housing Strategy 2018-23**, p. 10: “Place-shaping is a way in which we can promote and shape the wellbeing of the borough. It influences how we can provide homes that are affordable for all sections of our community. Our planning functions and role as a landowner make us uniquely positioned to assist with place-shaping on a borough wide and specific area basis.”
- 2.6 **Neighbourhood Plans** should be at the heart of place-shaping, as they articulate a local community’s priorities for sites, both for development and protection. Indeed, the creation of Neighbourhood Plans in the Localism Act 2011 was evidence of the Government’s and the local authority sector’s acknowledgement that place-shaping is a core part of a council’s *raison d’être*.
- 2.7 Neighbourhood Plans contain adopted Planning policies that have to be considered when determining applications for development. The borough has one adopted Neighbourhood Plan so far – Farnham – which is being reviewed in the light of the Local Plan. Other parishes and towns are rapidly developing their Neighbourhood Plans.
- 2.8 Farnham’s adopted 2017 Plan states (p. 16): “Our vision is for Farnham to continue to thrive, meeting the changing needs of the local community by ensuring new development of high quality design fits well with, and does not erode, the character of the distinctive areas of the town and is supported by improved infrastructure.” The Plan includes an important chapter describing the future of Farnham in terms of economic and cultural vibrancy, while preserving the surrounding landscape and countryside.

2.9 **It is essential that all future place-shaping activity in Waverley starts with and supports the Neighbourhood Plans, which will have been carefully prepared, widely consulted and tested in a democratic referendum.**

### **3. Taking forward place-shaping in Waverley**

3.1 A place-shaping approach, led by the local councils and with strong community involvement, could bring significant benefits to some of our settlements, especially those facing current and future economic and infrastructure challenges.

3.2 Initial informal conversations with various stakeholders in Farnham – the borough’s largest settlement and one of Surrey’s largest towns – have indicated that drawing together the various schemes and ambitions in one strategic project would be welcomed. These include the developments already underway, the critical traffic and air quality challenges, the role of the important education providers, and the town’s distinctive heritage and cultural assets.

3.3 An initial scoping workshop was held with officers of Farnham, Waverley and Surrey councils, to look at some of the technical challenges and share information about the various schemes that have been discussed in recent years. The brief for this and a broader master-planning project is at [Annexe 1](#). The workshop was facilitated by ‘RegenCo’, the in-house regeneration department of East Hampshire District Council, which was created as a consequence of the successful regeneration of Whitehill & Bordon and now offers its services to councils and government departments across England; East Hampshire is the only council on Homes England’s [multi-disciplinary procurement framework](#) 2019-23. The team has substantial experience and connections: [www.easthants.gov.uk/regenco](http://www.easthants.gov.uk/regenco). Recent clients have included the Ministry of Defence, the Cabinet Office/Office of Government Property, Rutland County Council, Borough of Poole and Rushmoor Borough Council.

3.4 Given the status of current Farnham schemes and ambitions, and the existence of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, it is proposed that our work in Farnham continue and serve as a ‘proof of concept’ for place-shaping in Waverley. The experiences we gain in this project may then be applied in other areas.

3.5 Settlements across the borough have challenges that could benefit from a place-shaping approach, particularly as Planning applications are received and implemented and as the Local Plan Part 2 develops in 2019. In Cranleigh, Waverley’s leisure centre project should be at the heart of such a process as the site occupies such an important location in the village. Cranleigh would benefit from a joined-up approach that takes account of rapid recent and upcoming development, significant infrastructure constraints and the Planning permission for Dunsfold Park.

3.6 Godalming and Haslemere Town Councils have recently suggested that they work with Waverley on further ‘visioning’ for their towns, particularly as both have significant sites coming forward for decisions. Current plans in Godalming include improvements to the leisure centre and the ongoing discussion among public service providers about how property and estate can work better to support services. In Haslemere, the discussions on some significant central sites would

benefit from a holistic place-shaping approach. The four larger settlements are also discussing the potential afforded by creating Business Improvement Districts to support businesses and generate new investment.

- 3.7 Godalming and Farncombe's Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be put to a referendum in June or July this year. Ten other parishes are in the process of preparing Neighbourhood Plans, which would provide a good springboard for future discussions on those places.

#### **4. Next steps**

- 4.1 It is proposed that a Place-Shaping Fund be established by Waverley Borough Council. This would be drawn from the expected one-off income from the Business Rates Retention Pilot, as described on the first page of this report. This requires Council approval.

- 4.2 Annexe 1 describes the proposed next steps for the Farnham Masterplanning project, which would be the first to draw from the Place-Shaping Fund. This project is intended to unlock substantial external funding to enable improvements to the local infrastructure and economy of the town and the north-east of the borough. East Hampshire District Council's experienced in-house regeneration team ('RegenCo') has submitted a proposal to undertake the next phase at a cost of £98,000. The outputs from this work would be:

- a) A report describing how a future masterplan will complement and support the key strategic and local spatial documents (especially the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan), and which presents a prioritised list of transport schemes, using the evidence bases described below and previous studies and achieving consensus as far as possible;
- b) A survey of users and service providers within Farnham in the form of a 'Town Centre Healthcheck' report;
- c) Stakeholder and public consultation, with the results summarised within the main report;
- d) Transport Study of the issues and opportunities of Farnham town centre and the wider Farnham area, including opportunities for improving air quality;
- e) A vision for Farnham 2045, which is fully signed up to by FTC, WBC, SCC and EM3 LEP;
- f) Identification of any early-win projects that could be implemented prior to the completion of the masterplan and investment framework, including submission of a stage 1 application to the Future High Streets Fund, opportunities from the One Public Estate project and potential options for early traffic flow adaptations;
- g) A governance structure for the delivery of the future masterplan and investment framework;
- h) Proposals on how existing developers and potential investors/funders can contribute to the masterplan process;
- i) Appointment of a project manager from within the East Hampshire regeneration team to oversee this work and coordinate relationships.

- 4.3 East Hampshire's team has local knowledge and experience of masterplanning in different parts of England and is the only council registered on Homes England's national procurement framework which enables greater transparency and comparability of costs. Waverley officers have studied East Hampshire's proposal

and consider that it represents good value for money and would provide the high quality standards required. On this basis it is proposed to make a direct award under section 9.2.4 of Waverley's Contract Procedure Rules.

- 4.4 The cost would be met from: (a) the Place-Shaping Fund referred to in the finance implications section of this report, and (b) any contributions from Farnham Town Council and Surrey County Council. Both councils have supported the initial discussions for this project and will need to undertake their own decision-making processes to release funds. Farnham Town Council will be discussing this at its Council meeting on 7 March. Surrey County Council has agreed in-principle a financial contribution. An update will be provided in the Waverley Executive meeting. Once the Place-Shaping Fund is established, releasing a sum to support the Farnham project does not require Executive or Council approval. It is intended to report back in September.

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### **Recommendation**

The Executive recommends to Council that up to £250,000 of the one-off financial gain from Waverley's participation in the 2018/19 business rate pilot be earmarked to establish a new Place-Shaping Fund.

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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

Relevant references to Council strategies and policies are made within the report.

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### **CONTACT OFFICER:**

**Name:** Tom Horwood, Chief Executive  
**Telephone:** 01483 523238  
**Email:** tom.horwood @ waverley.gov.uk

## Annexe 1: TOWARDS A FARNHAM MASTERPLAN

### ***Masterplanning***

1. A Masterplan, in strategic place-shaping, is a document that sets out a vision for a defined place over the long term. It is used to inform Planning (as a Supplementary Planning Document), attract investment and influence a settlement's future. Local examples are at [Whitehill & Bordon](#), [Guildford](#), [Aldershot](#) and the work underway in [Leatherhead](#). Masterplanning, when done well, is an exciting way of creating a shared vision and plan. It is absolutely vital in attracting funding and investment in infrastructure and business development.

### ***Farnham***

2. The development focus in Farnham in recent years has been on specific sites, such as Brightwells Yard, Woolmead and the Memorial Hall. Now that these schemes are essentially agreed and underway or completed, it is the right time to look at Farnham in a more joined-up way, to ensure that these sites work together sympathetically, with each other and with the wider town. In particular, as the local borough council, Waverley BC is in a prime position to facilitate a masterplanning project that recognises Farnham in its wider location and tackles its current infrastructure inadequacies. This must involve community engagement and cross-tier local government leadership.

### ***Objective***

3. A Farnham Masterplan would provide a 25-year vision for Farnham to help public and private stakeholders plan the phases of town development in a sustainable way. The Plan will be the basis of attracting the right investors and promoting the town as an attractive, vibrant, safe and sustainable location. It will unlock funding streams to revitalise the central Farnham space and make it a more attractive and safer place. It will enable infrastructure investors, such as the Government, Surrey County Council and the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership, to prioritise Farnham's strategic location and replace the current bottlenecks that are barriers to Farnham's economic and social future. The consistent message from potential investors is that economic growth is a condition of funding.

### ***Stage 1: Roadmap***

4. This is an initial piece of work to analyse current projects and developments, take account of the emerging shared vision and the proposals that various interests in community have proposed. It will include:

- a. Appreciating the scale, progress and commitments entailed in projects currently underway: Neighbourhood Plan (FTC); Brightwells Yard (Crest Nicholson, WBC, SCC); Woolmead (Berkeley Homes); Memorial Hall (WBC); Farnham Leisure Centre improvements (WBC). No delay to these committed projects is envisaged as a result of this project.
- b. Adopting the aims of the central Farnham street improvement project, i.e. pedestrianisation or shared space and air quality improvements, and working them into a practical phased plan within the overall Masterplan.
- c. An initial appraisal of the barriers presented by the strategic road network and the current (as yet unapproved) plans for improving the A31 and its junctions.

- d. Appreciating the heritage, arts and cultural offer of the town, including its feature buildings, design quality, notable history and environmental setting.
- e. Taking account of the growth ambitions of the University of the Creative Arts, as a major regional employer and skills-provider.
- f. An initial assessment of the opportunities and threats posed by developments in Guildford, Whitehill & Bordon, Aldershot and Farnborough.
- g. Taking account of the new Strategic Economic Plan of the EM3 LEP, so that funding opportunities are maximised.

5. The Roadmap outputs will be:

- a. A timetable for developing the full Masterplan.
- b. A stakeholder engagement plan that recognises the leading community role to be played by Farnham Town Council, as well as the multitude of interested groups and individuals.
- c. A description of the skill set required to undertake the Masterplan, which can be used by WBC, FTC and SCC to assemble a team, led by a Project Manager, comprising public sector resources and external specialist expertise.
- d. A resource plan for undertaking the exercise, including funding options.
- e. Proposals on how existing developers and potential investors/funders can contribute to the Masterplan process.

6. Stage 1 will need to include engagement with the general public and with the numerous and very passionate stakeholder groups that exist in Farnham. We will need to take account of publicity/consultation restrictions resulting from the election period prior to the local elections (22 March to 3 May 2019).

### ***Stage 2: Masterplan development***

7. This will require WBC, FTC and SCC assembling a core team, recruiting the right Project Manager and implementing the Roadmap.

8. The masterplanning process typically takes 2-3 years, but this can depend on the quality of pre-existing evidence and work.

### ***Next steps***

9. Informal conversations with Surrey County Council, Farnham Town Council, the local MP, the EM3 LEP and some local community organisations have indicated initial support in principle for the concept of Masterplanning Farnham. Progressing with Stage 1 above will require some initial funding and then more open engagement with the community and with groups in the community.