



FARNHAM PARISH MEETING · MINUTES

Tuesday 4 November 2025

Held at St Oswald's Church, Farnham — the Meeting was declared quorate.

Apologies. None received.

Declarations of interest. None.

Minutes of 28 May 2025. Unanimously approved as a true record.

Matters arising. Items covered in agenda below, except: the village defibrillator has now been supplied and set up in the telephone box. The Meeting thanked Richard Hall for all his work in arranging this.

Treasury Matters

1. Parish Precept for 2026 / 27. The Treasurer recommended an increase to £2,050 (from £1,870) — allowing for a 5% rise in recurring costs and providing margin for one-off bills, including the possibility of assisting the church.

Proposed by Phil Roebuck, seconded by Michael Taylor. Passed unanimously.

2. Renewal of contracts. Grass cutting: 2026 and 2027 quotes from Farm & Land not yet received. Insurance: Zurich's contract renews in April; the Meeting authorised acceptance of any quote within 10% of the present rate.

Proposed by Richard Hall, seconded by Stacey Adams. Passed unanimously.

Planning Matters

Reported by Michael Taylor.

Ford Cottage. Planning application for a large front extension. Because of the scale and location of the proposed extension, this would disrupt light to and closely overlook adjoining properties and would affect the character of the terrace of attractive Victorian cottages. It would also affect views from the Grade I-listed church. Deadline for responses: 23 November.

Farnham BESS and Scotton solar farm + BESS. Public consultations have now closed on the planning applications. A substantial period is expected before any response.

Harmony Energy Lingerfield BESS. Michael Taylor had just attended a pre-application public meeting in Scotton by Harmony Energy, supposedly to answer questions on their proposal for a huge BESS storage facility at Lingerfield, but none of the Harmony representatives there seemed to have the knowledge to respond to questions raised. The proposal would involve hundreds of huge vehicles travelling through Farnham throughout the day for a 20-month construction period. Harmony appears to have no proposal for how these vehicles will negotiate the three sharp blind bends in the village, beyond assuming traffic lights will be used. Application expected to be submitted in November or December.

Road Safety

Shaw Lane parking. A meeting had been held with an NYC manager to discuss action to stop vehicles blocking Shaw Lane. She later suggested trialling the use of white lines along most of the side of the road. A lengthy discussion ensued on the risk of displacing vehicles to other parts of the village if the lines were not shortened to include only the narrowest part. Greg Proctor agreed to follow this up with NYC.

Drainage & Public Transport

Drainage. Phil Roebuck reported no issues at present, though these tend to occur in the winter months.

Public transport. *Nothing to report.*

Church Matters

Church finances. Stacey Adams gave a presentation on the current state of church finances, which has caused the need to ask for gift aid donations or covenants from villagers. The building capital maintenance reserve of around £100,000 is already earmarked to cover identified works required over the next 4–5 years. In addition, there is a need to cover a projected £16,000 annual income deficit. She thanked those who had already made donations and asked everyone else to consider doing so, as the church is not just a historic religious building at the heart of the village but also its community hub. A suggestion was made that a measure of progress against target be circulated regularly to encourage contributions. *The fuller detail on church funds appears as an appendix at the end of this document.*

Church clock service. Claire Hall proposed that an annual service agreement be used for the church clock, as in Scotton. This would cost the Parish Meeting (which pays the clock maintenance) £316 per year plus the cost of some spare parts, compared with a recent average annual cost of £150 for ad-hoc servicing — though the present ad-hoc basis might not best preserve the working life of the clock. Agreed that when the clock is next serviced, the full cost of all work the engineer thought necessary be assessed and compared with the total cost under a service agreement.

Village Events

The Farnham carol service will be at 6 pm on 24 December. A full list of events will be circulated shortly.

Any Other Business

None.

The next Parish Meeting will be held in Spring, probably in April.

Appendix — Church Funds: fuller detail

Current position

- **Financial summary.** The church holds approximately £100,000 in cash reserves and requires £16,000–£17,000 per year to remain operational.
- **Reduction in regular giving.** Over the past two years, regular giving has declined by around 80%, largely due to parishioners moving away or passing on.
- **Maintenance costs and future risks.** The recent quinquennial inspection identified essential maintenance works required over the next three years. These are expected to significantly deplete the church's reserves, leaving it financially vulnerable and potentially at risk of closure.
- **Loss of investment income.** The Fabric Fund and cash reserves generated £3,200 in investment income last year. Depleting reserves would also lose this annual income.
- **Expenditure exceeding income.** 2024 was the first year in which expenditure exceeded income — even without any major maintenance or construction costs.
- **Recent positive developments.** Since letters were distributed to village households, there have been a number of encouraging responses and an increase in regular giving. A full update on donations will be circulated to the village by the end of the month.

Ways to help

- **Set up a regular donation.** Complete the donation form circulated with the recent letter to establish a standing order or regular gift to the church.
- **Corporate donations.** The church is a recognised UK charity, so UK-registered companies can donate and deduct the value from their taxable profits, reducing their Corporation Tax bill. Donations must be made to a UK-registered charity or Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) to qualify.
- **Join the 100 Club.** The Benefice 100 Club is the local lottery supporting all five churches in the benefice.
- **Attend church events.** Recent fundraising events have raised £2,500–£3,000 annually — a substantial increase on the previous average of £1,000 (2016–2021).
- **Join us for services.** A small but welcoming congregation, with tea, cake and biscuits after every service. Even if you simply wish to drop in for a chat afterwards, everyone is warmly welcome.

Potential impact of church closure

- **Loss of a community hub.** The church is the only public gathering space in the village — a vital centre for social interaction and community life.
- **Decline in worship attendance.** A recent survey found nearly one-third of local worshippers would cease attending church altogether if the local church closed — particularly affecting older residents.
- **Erosion of heritage and identity.** St Oswald's is both an architectural and historical cornerstone of the village; its closure would represent a loss of shared heritage and identity for residents of all faiths and none.
- **Loneliness and isolation.** The church provides an important social support network, particularly for older residents; loss could lead to greater isolation in the community.
- **Property and local environment.** Church closures can indirectly affect property values and the appearance of the village, particularly if the building falls into disrepair.

