

Focus on Farnworth
Plans for Neighbourhoods Board Meeting
Farnworth Family Hub
King Street, Farnworth BL4 7AP
Friday 13th June 2025

Minutes

Present: John Bradbury – Chair, Cllr Susan Haworth, Cllr Paul Sanders, Shauna Morton, Supt Steve Malone, Helen Clayton, Vanessa Barlow, Mary Devenish, Janet Pollard,

Observers

Karen Ingham, Clive Gibbon, Peter Bright, Cathy Palmer, Helen Bradbury

Apologies: Yasmin Qureshi MP, Carlene Kirton, Paul Whittingham

1. Welcome and Introductions

JB welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves

2. Minutes of Meeting held 12th July 2024

The minutes were agreed as a true record

3. Update on Programme

JB gave an update from his visit to Westminster for the Board Chairs Briefing. The programme is designed to be flexible and the guidance has been significantly amended from the previous iteration. It builds upon research showing that local, long-term programmes that are locally led and that get local people making decisions work. Key objectives Thriving places, sustainable communities and Taking Back Control have been added broadening the scope of projects eligible for support.

It was agreed that the portfolio of projects identified last year should remain at the core of the first phase regeneration plan. However consideration should be given to including skills and social value related projects in later phases.

It was noted that £2m per year was a relatively small amount and therefore the emphasis for all projects should be that of using the PfN funding to lever in funds from other streams. It should not be used to substitute for funds available from other sources. MHCLG expectations are for a number of smaller interventions with a multiplied impact rather than a small number of large projects.

The management of the programme from MHCLG will be light touch and they want to see this enabling a wide range of interventions at local level.

The plan must be supported by extensive public consultation to ensure local buy in. It is expected that consultation would be done using local groups rather than external consultants. The Pol.is website has proven useful for some boards in these local consultations.

Zen City have completed some polling via social media and the datapack of the results will be sent to us by the end of June. This will be a statistically representative sample of our community. A datapack

was also given out of the Local Data Profile. Coalfields Regeneration Trust have offered to support us with models for sustainable development.

Discussion took place about the financial procedural requirements of the Council. Although MHCLG have called for flexibility, the Council is still required to follow its own finance and procurement processes.

Retained aspects from the Long term Plan for Towns programme include: £20m over ten years, community led board, Farnworth based, Council to be accountable body, flexible funding (ability to roll forward and plan ahead)

There is a wider list of pre-approved interventions including skills and housing, delivery funding to start April 2026 and £600k capacity funding to develop the plan and capacity of the community to become stronger.

The regeneration plan will have three investment phases

- Years 1-4 (April 26 – March 30)
- Years 5-7 (April 30 – March 33)
- Years 8 -10 (April 33 – March 36)

Further guidance was published 9 June 2025

- [Plan for Neighbourhoods - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-neighbourhoods)
- [Plan for Neighbourhoods: prospectus and tools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-neighbourhoods-prospectus-and-tools)
- [Plan for Neighbourhoods: Regeneration Plan guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-neighbourhoods-regeneration-plan-guidance)

Plan submission by **28th November 2025**, MHCLG approval by end of March 2026 for April 2026 release of funds

The final plan will require approval from the Council's Cabinet on 10 November 2025. To meet the Council's reporting processes the Board will be required to approve the plan by 3rd October 2025.

Boundary change request – informally agreed but confirmation required and expected by end of June.

The Vision Statement was confirmed as:

" Farnworth as a place, is vibrant, accessible and safe with a focus on inclusivity and strong communities, enabled through sustainable partnerships which enable all to thrive.

We have built on the existing strong community foundations to create a welcoming, trusting and aspirational place where people choose to live, study, work and invest. The new Farnworth has been moulded by its residents, community groups, businesses and wider stakeholders.

It is a place where people feel safe, prosperous and happy."

Design/Brand guidance has been requested and we have been told that this is a local decision subject to light touch requirements (to be provided by MHCLG) to acknowledge the source of funding.

Action: JB and JP to meet to discuss processes for release of funds

Discussion took place regarding what success looks like and how we measure it. Further work will be needed on this and a baseline established.

4. Governance arrangements

The Council will provide a fulltime Project Manager (Karen Ingham) who will be in post from 1st August 2025. Procurement will be through the Council systems. Funds will be held by the Council.

The Terms of Reference and Board Membership were discussed. We have some vacancies on the board and some people who have never attended. We need to recruit for the board but will need a role descriptor and an open process of recruitment. The mean age of people in Farnworth is 35 so we need more younger people on the board. The possibility of sub-groups was discussed for residents and young people.

We want to be transparent and so board member personal profiles will be published on the website, along with agendas, papers, and minutes of our meetings.

A draft code of conduct will be recirculated to Members, this will include setting out how conflicts of interest are to be treated. The version will be circulated via email and Members asked to respond within 14 days. It was agreed that a nil response will be taken as assent.

Action: PB to circulate role descriptor and board recruitment process to board members for approval

PB to update Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct and circulate to Board Members for approval.

5. Capacity Budget

£600,000 total: £250,000 - 24/25; £200,000 - 25/26 – on approval of Boundary and Board return; £150,000 – 26/27 – on approval of Regeneration Plan

We are encouraged to spend by March 2030 to develop local community capacity and consultation but may be used through whole 10 year period. Must not be used to fund early delivery of projects. Boards are encouraged to limit use of procured support.

JB has proposed the Board secretariat be provided by Farnworth Baptist Church as a support service rather than employing a staff member to reduce risks to FBC such as redundancy. This was agreed in principle. Arrangements for funding are to be agreed to comply with BC regulations.

Discussion took place regarding the use of capacity funds for the development of the Farnworth Fund prior to April 2026.

Action: PB/JP/JB to review procurement process in relation to Farnworth Fund and board secretariat. Revised/amended budget to be circulated to members for approval.

6. Consultation and Communications

Importance of community engagement and consultation, building confidence in community to 'take back control'. Build local capacity to reduce reliance on external consultants. Further consultation needed on the Investment Plan and individual projects.

Our brand identity – Focus on Farnworth. Some work has been done on how the website and social media pages might look.

It was agreed that a communications plan is needed.

Action: Secretariat/PB to draft a communications plan and circulate for comment.

PB to circulate initial images relating to website and social media for comment.

7. Project Portfolio

Eight projects have been put forward:

- Farnworth Fund
- CCTV, Lighting, Wayfinding
- Play Areas in Parks
- Community Hub review
- Harper Green Playing Fields
- Rock Hall Revival
- Bus Connectivity
- Walking, Wheeling, Cycling

It was suggested that a project around community involvement be added. Further projects that emerge from consultation can be added accordingly across the 10 year programme.

8. Budget

Budget proposals are taken from draft LTP plan – July 2024. Further work is needed to cover the four-year period of first Investment Plan. This will reflect outcome of feasibility work and cost variations. Council agreement is essential.

Action: Revised budget to be brought to the next meeting

9. Any other business

PB recommended that AOB items be raised at the start of the meeting so that adequate time can be left for these and that they should be limited to urgent items. This was agreed.

CP requested Board agreement to progress with an exercise to seek expressions of interest on the regeneration of Harper Green Playing Fields for community led sports activities. The Board agreed .

JB asked if board members were willing to set time aside for board development. This was agreed. Dates to be confirmed,

10. Date of Next meeting

Friday 5 September (Venue to be confirmed)