

Focus on Farnworth Board Meeting
The Well, Trafford Street, Farnworth, BL4 7PQ
9:30 am Friday 7 November 2025

MINUTES

Present: John Bradbury, Paul Sanders, Carrie Riley, Emma Robinson, Nicholas Bonson, Helen Clayton.

In attendance: Helen Bradbury, Karen Ingham, Cathy Palmer, Paul Whittingham.

Apologies: Yasmin Qureshi, Nicola Robinson, Stephen Malone, Vanessa Barlow, Nadeem Ayub, Janet Pollard, Bethan Dearden, Carlene Kirton, Wendy Greenwood.

JB welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the meeting of 3 October 2025

The minutes were agreed subject to a minor alteration suggested by Helen Clayton.

Matters arising

- a. Cabinet response – The council have approved the vision, plan and budget. It is for the board to give final approval before submission.
- b. MHCLG Update
Progress metrics have been issued in draft, but these do not provide a metric for all of the projects. They are capital focused. They are progress metrics not performance metrics and we are encouraged to develop our own success measures.
John and Karen have met with Letitia Gil to discuss the plan and submission.
We will be issued a Memorandum of Understanding covering the first four years, a second MOU for the subsequent 3-year period and a further MOU for the final 3-year period. The funding for the individual projects may need to be adjusted to fit within the MOU timeframe.
Purdah will not impact on the work of the Board, but the restrictions would apply to the work of elected members.
- c. It was confirmed that the grant agreement for the development of the Farnworth Fund is now in place. The board confirmed their agreement to pay £38,400 from the capacity funding to Bolton CVS for the Development Officer role.

Action: HC to provide value for second Grant agreement for the role to support the VCSE to apply to the Farnworth Fund.

10-year vision and 4-year plan acceptance and approval

CP presented the final versions of the 4-year plan and 10-year vision highlighting the changes that had been made following our last meeting and our meeting with Letitia Gil.

HC suggested that the wording in the Key Priorities section be changed to more positive language and not use the phrase “mismatch”, but “opportunities to strengthen”.

There are some changes needed so that the figures on management costs match the budget spreadsheet.

Subject to the above amendments the 10-year vision and 4-year plan were agreed and approved by the board.

Action: CP/KI to forward amended 4-year plan to JB for the website. KI to begin the submission to MHCLG.

Community Hubs evaluation outcome

CP gave a presentation to the board.

Work had been done to identify community buildings and the needs and opportunities. Many of the buildings do not require any capital investment, but the advertising of available space to rent is needed. This will eventually be part of the website. CR said she would task the community worker with this as well.

HC questioned how the buildings and groups had been selected for the report, as our work will be subject to public scrutiny. In part the report is dependent on the groups who have responded to enquires. Additional community buildings were identified which are not currently in the report. These included bowling clubs, scout hut, Age UK building, Trinity Church and Farnworth Little Theatre. These will be added to the report.

Further discussion took place

A need for space to deliver construction skills training has been identified. JB asked if the old Bolton College construction skills centre at the University building still empty or has the space been repurposed. **Action: Karen to investigate**

CP explained that there is a budget £25,000 of capacity building funds to be spent by April. Her suggestion was to use this to engage an architect to do further space planning.

We need to know the decision about whether the library will be moving into Farnworth Green as this will impact our decision making for the Community Hubs Project. A timescale for the decision on this would be helpful.

The report was agreed in principle, but board members asked for the scope to be widened to include the additional buildings. Also the opportunities identified in the report should indicate that VCSE groups would be invited to express their interest in taking up spaces that are available in the hubs.

Board members were reminded that our discussions and documentation are confidential.

Action: CP to amend the presentation which can then be circulated to board members for comment.

Website and social media

JB presented the draft of the website. The initial work will be completed in the next week for review by Council officers. It will be developed as the project progresses, and board members were invited to give feedback and suggestions once the site is live.

The website will be www.focusonfarnworth.org and there will be an email address of board@focusonfarnworth.org

Action: Board members to send photo and bio ASAP

Board recruitment and development

JB proposed that we advertise via website and social media for expressions of interest for people who wish to join the board. We currently have 3 vacancies for local residents, 1 vacancy for business and 2 vacancies for VCSE.

John proposed that the February meeting be given over to board development and that it be a full day if possible. This was agreed.

Next Meeting: Friday 5 December 9:30am at The Well