

BANBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Banbury Town Council held as a virtual meeting on Tuesday, 12 January 2021 at 6.30pm.

Present: Councillor Colegrave (Town Mayor)
Councillors: Beere, Bell, Beverly, Bignell, Cherry, Clarke, Dhesi, Donaldson, Fatemian, Ilott, Kilsby, Mallon, Mepham, Milne Home, Richards, Ross.

Officers: Mark Recchia (Town Clerk)
Mark Hassall (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO)

C.35/20 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Banfield, Harrison, Hussain and Ross.

C.36/20 Declarations of Interest

None.

C.37/20 Minutes Silence

Members' attention was drawn to the sad loss of another prominent former Banbury Councillor and also a long serving member of staff, who had both passed away recently.

Margaret Ferriman

Margaret Ferriman was Banbury Town Mayor from 1981/82 and a Councillor on both Cherwell District and Oxfordshire County Councils (serving as Chairman and an Honorary Alderman of the latter). She formed the Banbury and District Racial Equality Council and chaired that organisation for many years, and was a member of the Thames Valley Police authority and Chairman of the Management Committee of The Mill Arts and Community Education Centre for many years.

Peter Samuel Lake

Pete Lake had worked as a Duty Manager at the Town Hall since the formation of the Town Council in 2000, having only recently retired from the role. He worked for many years at the Alcan factory and was actively involved in the Banbury Branch of the Royal British Legion and Banbury Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Several Members paid tribute to Margaret Ferriman and Pete Lake, following which a Minute's silence was held.

C.38/20 Minutes of the Last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

C.39/20 Communications

Despite the festive season it had been a quiet period for all Town Mayors due to the continuing Covid-19 pandemic. On Thursday 10 December the Town Mayor delivered a Christmas message to the listeners of Banbury Talking Newspaper. The 10 December had also seen the Town Mayor carry out the opening ceremony and ribbon cutting for Bretherton's Solicitors new offices on South Bar. The Town Mayor also announced plans to hold an online Charities Evening towards the end of January/early February. The list of charities to be invited would be circulated to Members.

C.40/20 Questions - Elected Members and Members of the Public

(1) A question was asked of the Leader of the Council by Councillor Bell as follows:

"In 2019 this Council joined OCC and CDC in recognising the impact and pace of climate change by declaring a climate emergency.

Could the Leader of the Council give us an update on actions taken, and planned, in and around Banbury to fulfil this commitment? Also how is the council working to engage and inform members of the public in the urgent work of tackling the destruction of our precious environment?

The Leader of the Council responded outlining Town Council initiatives, including establishing a £140k Vehicle Replacement Fund to aid the transition to electric vehicles; green initiatives being introduced in parks maintenance both by the in-house team and GM Contractor; and energy saving measures implemented at the Town Hall, which had a good energy efficiency rating for a listed, Victorian building. Over the past 10 years many energy efficiency improvements to the Town Hall had been undertaken, including replacing the heating system (radiators); window double glazing; and installing a heat recovery/air handling system and low energy/movement sensitive lighting.

Tackling climate change locally was however a team effort with Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council and Banbury Town Council working together on the project. The Leader then outlined some of the initiatives put in place by the Principal Authorities. These included similar initiatives to those in train at the town council (ensuring energy efficiency for its offices and other buildings and continuing to replace fossil fuelled vehicles with electric ones where possible) and planting 30,000 trees at the Banbury Country Park. Behind the scenes, a new team of specialist officers was working to integrate climate action into both authorities' everyday business operations, with the aim of achieving carbon neutrality for the Councils by 2030 and for Oxfordshire by 2050. Further projects underway included localised zero-carbon investment options; delivering digital connectivity, low-carbon transport and active travel schemes; free energy audits for businesses; and a roll out of EV charging points in public car parks. With regard to the latter point, the Leader advised Members that a presentation about the planned roll-out would be given to Town Councillors on 3 February 2021.

Banbury Town Council had also arranged an environment and climate change joint local government meeting to gauge work already undertaken by all tiers of Local Government in their partnership working with other organisations. This had been arranged for 23 March 2020 but had to be cancelled due to the on-set of the Covid 19 Pandemic in March 2020, and would be re-arranged once circumstances allowed.

(2) A question was also asked of the Leader of the Council by Councillor Woodcock about sensory gardens in parks.

The Leader reminded Members that under Minute Ref C.34/20 it had been noted that, whilst the idea of sensory gardens was generally supported, the motion had been un-costed and had been referred under Standing Order 4h to the General Services Committee for investigation. The Council was also between Parks Managers at present, following the retirement of Mike Hall, but this matter would be taken up by the new Operations Manager once in post.

C.41/20 Income and Expenditure

The Council considered a report prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO comparing year-to-date income and expenditure with the projected annual budget to 31 December 2020.

The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO drew attention to the fact that overall the Committees expenditure was within forecast versus the projected annual budget. This recognised 64% of annual expenditure to date versus 75% of the planned expenditure, being a phased underspend of £220k, reflecting muted ongoing building running costs and reduced activity across the estate due to public safety measures currently in place.

RESOLVED to receive and note the Income and Expenditure report.

C.42/20 To set the Precept for 2020/21

The Leader of the Council expressed thanks to Officers and Councillors that had been a part of the Budget process, particularly those that attended the Grants & Budgets Sub Committee. He then outlined the budget highlights, which included a 0% increase in Banbury Town Council's share of the Council Tax bill, meaning the levy would stay at £122.12 for a D band home – the figure first set in 2010. Coronavirus was something no-one could have foreseen but times had been difficult for many families because of lockdowns and other restrictions. Keeping the council tax down would help a lot of people.

In proposing the budget, the Leader explained that:

1. The Council was honouring its commitment on climate change and had taken steps to reduce its carbon footprint, introducing green projects and doing all it could to fight climate change in partnership with OCC and CDC. A new wood chipper would enable recycling to be carried out on site – and save money on green waste disposal, and investing in a vehicle replacement fund, which currently stands at £140,000, would help finance a move to electric vehicles over time.
2. The new grounds maintenance contractors had introduced carbon reduction initiatives and bio diversity enhancements into their maintenance programme.
3. The Council had launched a Covid-19 battle-grant scheme in March 2020 to help good causes in Banbury that were facing financial difficulties because of the virus. Since then it had given 24 grants worth nearly £12,000. Those grants were still available.
4. The Council would deliver on its pledge to provide toilets and café facilities in People's Park.
5. Spending for 2021/2022 also included the refurbishment of the Hill View and Timms Road play areas and the final phase of a three-year refurbishment of paths and roads in People's Park.
6. The coming year would see the completion of landscaping projects in St Mary's Churchyard and the walled garden in People's Park, plus fencing replacement in a number of other parks.
7. There would be an increased investment in the Woodgreen Outdoor Pool following a year of restricted opening and reduced income in 2020/2021.
8. The Council had taken over the full £50,000 pa running costs of the Christmas street lights after the partnership with Cherwell District Council came to an end – and was also budgeting to continue the successful light projections on to the town hall for Armistice commemorations and on to the Castle Quay façade for Christmas.
9. Last year, coronavirus forced the cancellation of all the town's annual events and prevented local elections from going ahead. Both were being budgeted for in the 2021/2022 figures.

In responding to the Budget proposals the Leader of the Opposition indicated his support, and was pleased to note that only an inflationary increase was proposed to fees and charges.

Following further discussion, it was moved by Councillor Mallon, seconded by Councillor Clarke and **RESOLVED** unanimously that:

- (1) the Town Council set a precept of £1,934,869 (or £122.12 per Band D property), being an increase of 0%; and
- (2) endorses the Fees and Charges and the Four Year Financial Forecast, as submitted.

C.43/20 Annual Return 2019/20

The Council considered the report of the External Auditor (Section 3 of the Annual Return) for the year ended 31 March 2020 and a copy of the full Annual Return. It was noted that, except for the period allowed in the Notice for Public Rights to Inspect Accounts having being given as 30 calendar days rather than 30 working days, the External Auditors had certified that in their opinion Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR was in accordance with proper practices and that no other matters had come to light giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council receive and note the report of the External Auditor for the year ended 31 March 2020 and a copy of the full Annual Return and noting in particular the requirement to advertise public rights for 30 working days not calendar days.

C.44/20 Calendar of Meetings for 2021/22

Approval was sought for the 2021/22 Calendar of Meetings.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that he had been asked to ensure that where possible the new Calendar sought to avoid any clashes with meetings of the principal councils. The draft Calendar as submitted had achieved this as far as possible.

Having considered the draft Calendar, Members felt that where clashes occurred then the Members concerned could make use of the Alternate Member scheme or choose not to serve on those committees. However, it was noted that particular effort had been made to avoid clashes for the full Council, where the alternate member scheme was not available.

It was also noted that Council meetings were currently being held virtually using the Zoom platform, with committees not meeting and their business being dealt with under officer delegations. Regulations currently allowed for virtual meetings to continue up until 7 May 2021. Members felt that if this was likely to continue into the next Municipal Year then consideration should be given to committee meetings also taking place virtually, particularly Planning meetings.

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Calendar of Meetings, as attached at Appendix A to these Minutes, be approved.

C.45/20 Confidential Business Exclusion

It was proposed by the Chairman and **WAS RESOLVED** that, in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

SUMMARY of items discussed during confidential session

C.46/20 Acceptance of Tenders

Members were asked to note the tenders submitted for Paving Works at the People's Park Community Garden and the decision taken in consultation with the Chairmen of General Services and Resources Committees to authorise the Town Clerk not to accept any of the tenders received and to enter into a negotiated contract with N C + J C Construction Ltd for a tarmacadam resurfacing of the area.

The meeting ended at 7:30pm

APPENDIX A

Calendar of Meetings 2021 – 2022

	CYCLE 1	CYCLE 2	CYCLE 3	CYCLE (BUDGET) 4	CYCLE 5	CYCLE 6
COUNCIL	Tues 18 May Annual Meeting	22 June	21 Sept	16 Nov	11 Jan	8 Feb
PLANNING (Wednesday)	5 May 26 May	23 June 21 July 18 Aug	15 Sept 13 Oct	10 Nov 15 Dec	5 Jan 2 Feb	2 Mar 30 Mar
GENERAL SERVICES	8 June	31 August	19 Oct	14 Dec	18 Jan	22 March
RESOURCES	15 June	7 Sept	2 Nov	4 Jan	1 Feb	29 March
TRAFFIC ADVISORY (Wednesday @ 2.00 p.m.)	26 May	1 Sept	-	1 Dec	23 Feb	-
COUNCIL	22 June	21 Sept	16 Nov	11 Jan	8 Feb	12 April

Notes:

1. All Meetings are held at the Town Hall, Bridge Street, Banbury and commence at 6.30pm unless otherwise stated.
2. The 2022 Annual Meeting will be held on **Tuesday**, 17 May.
3. Annual Town Meeting – Monday, 7 March 2022.