

BANBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Banbury Town Council held on Tuesday, 10 January 2023 at 6.30pm at the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Strangwood (Town Mayor)
Councillors: Ayers, Beere, Bunce, Cherry, Colegrave, Donaldson, Hodgson, Hussain, Ilott, Kilsby, Mallon, Mears, Phillips, Powell and Reeves.

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk/RFO)
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)
Martyn Surfleet (Executive Officer)

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Biegel, Cllr Dalton, Cllr Garrett and Cllr Richards.

C.29/22 Declarations of Interest

None.

C.30/22 Minutes of the Last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

C.31/22 Communications

Members attention was drawn to the sad loss of Reverend Jeff West. The leader of the council accompanied by the Town Clerk attended the funeral service to pay their respects on behalf of Banbury Town Council.

Several members expressed their condolences and paid tribute to Reverend Jeff West and expressed that their thoughts are with his family and friends during this difficult time.

C.32/22 Questions - Elected Members and Members of the Public

Several verbal questions were asked of the Leader of the Council by Councillor Beere as follows –

“I refer to the Agenda and Minutes of the Resources Committee of Jan 3 2023

Agenda items 6 Estimates

- 1) Notwithstanding the details in the estimates including extra precept raising and expenditure for current and future years will Cllr Mallon confirm that the working balances for year ends 2021/24 to 2023/24 will fall from £294,399 to £867 in 2023/24. Does Cllr Mallon have plans for building up reserves in future years beyond 23/24?”*

The Leader of the Council responded by highlighting that the working balance figures that Cllr Beere draws attention to, the £294,399 to £867, refer to the in-year surplus that ends on 31/3/22 and not to actual reserves. And in fact, Banbury Town Council have a total of £4.5 million of reserves. That is £1.3m general reserves, 0.8m S106 reserves, and £2.4m earmarked reserves.

- 2) *Confirm in writing, later if needed, the final and overall cost of the Café in Peoples' Park, noting that earmarked reserves of 150k needed to be spent in the last 12 months, so as to explain the value and justification of this facility.*

The Leader of the Council responded by explaining that the earmarked reserve for the People's Park improvement project was £371,000 and the total build cost of the café was £277,000. The difference of £94,000 will be spent on ground refurbishment. I should remind members that the café was built as a response to a survey of park users which put toilets and a café at the top of the most wanted list.

- 3) *Please explain the phrase in par 6,2 that the councillors should refrain from voting on some items, Cllrs representing any ward will per example use any or all Council facilities. Does this mean that councillors who may play for one of the local soccer teams or use the Bowing Greens cannot vote on these estimates, as councillors require clarity on matters of personal interest affecting Council work.*

The Leader of the council highlighted that the voting issue referred to by Cllr Beere is a matter for the Monitoring Officer at CDC.

In this instance, I suggest that councillors take notice of section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act, and respond/act accordingly.

A question was asked of the Leader of the Council from Councillor Hussain as follows –

“Could the leader please outline the steps Banbury Town Council have undertaken to support local warm space initiatives?”

The Leader of the council outlined that the warm spaces project is a joint initiative that involves OCC, CDC and BTC plus a number of groups and associations that include places like the East Street Centre, Highmarket House Care Home, Cornhill RVS Centre, The Mill, Grimsbury Community Centre, Hanwell Fields Community Centre, Sunshine Centre and Castle Quay.

The town council has played – and is playing, a central role – an administrative role if you like.

We have offered and awarded grants for the setting up and running of warm spaces money is still available if you want to spread the word.

BTC is also the information hub that tells people where their nearest warm space is, when it is open, if it is free or if there is a charge.

The BTC website has been changed so that the warm space section is easy to find and easy to use – and in conjunction with CDC we have produced an interactive map that directs people to their nearest, next-nearest, and so on, warm space.

Warm space details are also on our notice boards in parks and other places.

I think you can say that BTC is the public face of the warm spaces project – the co-ordinator that brings together all aspects of the scheme.

We will continue doing this for as long as warm spaces are needed.

C.33/22 Planning Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Ilott, seconded by Councillor Bunce, and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 14 December 2022 be received.

C.34/22 General Services Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Phillips, seconded by Councillor Bunce, and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the General Services Committee meeting held on 13 December 2022 be received.

C.35/22 Resources Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Mallon, seconded by Councillor Colegrave, and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 03 January 2023 be received.

C.36/22 To set the Precept for 2023/24

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 2% increase in Banbury Town Council's share of the Council Tax bill, meaning the levy would increase from £124.56 to £127.05 for a D band home.

Following further discussion, it was moved by Councillor Mallon, seconded by Councillor Colegrave and **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Town Council set a precept of £2,113,471, being an increase of 2%.

C.37/22 Change of Committee Membership – General Services Committee

Members were made aware that due to personal circumstances Councillor Dalton would be resigning from his position on the General Services Committee. It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Ayers be appointed to the committee as replacement and that Councillor Dalton be appointed as an Alternate Member.

The Meeting ended at 6.48pm.