

## **BANBURY TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of Banbury Town Council held on Tuesday, 07 February 2023 at 6.30pm at the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Strangwood (Town Mayor)  
Councillors: Ahmed, Ayers, Beere, Biegel, Bishop, Bunce, Cherry, Colegrave, Garrett, Hodgson, Hussain, Illott, Kilsby, Mallon, Mears, Powell, Reeves, and Richards.

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

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Dalton, Cllr Donaldson and Cllr Phillips.

### **C.38/22 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **C.39/22 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

### **C.40/22 Communications**

None

### **C.41/22 Questions - Elected Members and Members of the Public**

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

*How do you feel the warm spaces initiative is working across Banbury?*

The Leader of the Council responded by highlighting that this is a scheme that probably hasn't achieved its full potential. It is still a new project. The first press release on this went out on 7 December. That's when it was launched. Here we are on February 7 – just two months on. That's not long for something like this.

*Do you have feedback on the take up by residents?*

The Leader of the Council responded to say that one of our grant recipients, the Methodist Church has indicated that the take up is low, though they have only been open for a few weeks when the weather has been milder. They average two per session. But the Sunshine Centre has told us it is very busy and averages 35 per session and the majority of its sessions are packed to capacity. We are waiting for information from other warm spaces.

*Do you feel it had been sufficiently promoted to residents who are not online?*

The big problem is telling people about the scheme. We recognise the problem and we acknowledge the problem. Our third press release on warm spaces that went out on 21 January dealt with this.

It asked on-line people to spread the word to those not on-line. In my comment I said that not everyone has broadband or reads the local newspaper – and that those most in need of warm spaces probably come in that category.

The Methodist Church also recognises the problem. Its response said ‘getting the word around is going to be one of the biggest challenges and we have asked local groups (e.g. local Rotary clubs) to help.’

*Have posters advertising the warm spaces been sufficiently specific about where and when venues are open rather than just signposting residents to a website or Facebook page for the information?*

The Leader of the Council responded by pointing out that posters are difficult because the warm space situation changes and we’d have to scrap existing posters and get new ones whenever a change occurred. The way forward might be to use other agencies – such as carers, Age Concern, social services, citizen’s advice, and charities such as HomeStart – to help spread the word. Members, too, could spread the word in their wards using their knowledge of the most vulnerable members of their areas.

**C.42/22 Planning Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Ilott, seconded by Councillor Bunce, and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 11 January and 01 February 2023 be received.

**C.43/22 General Services Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Colegrave, seconded by Councillor Bunce, and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the General Services Committee meeting held on 17 January 2023 be received.

**C.44/22 Resources Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Mallon, seconded by Councillor Powell, and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 31 January 2023 be received.

**C.45/22 Banbury Business Improvement District (Bid) Update**

A BID is a business-led and business funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area. Most are governed by a board made up of BID levy payers who represent the BID area. This means that businesses have a genuine voice to decide and direct what they want for the area. There are more than 330 BIDs already operating across the UK, with the majority focusing on town or city centres. Businesses say the benefits they have brought about include:

- Businesses deciding and directing major projects that they want for their area
- Improved promotion & marketing of the town
- Increased footfall, which leads to increased business turnover
- Added vibrancy & vitality
- Additional networking opportunities within the local business community
- Improved relations with Councils, Police and other public bodies

A BID is funded by businesses paying a small proportion (typically of between 1% and 1.5%) of their business rateable value towards the BID. This money is then ring-fenced for use only in the BID area – unlike Business Rates which are re-distributed by Government. A BID can only be formed following consultation and a ballot in which businesses vote on a Business Plan which they have developed. The attached documents BID Business Plan 2023-28 outlines the proposals to be put to ballot. The levy would apply to businesses with a rateable value above £10k. This would generate approximately £164,000 per year across

390 business entities within the Banbury BID catchment. This could also be supplemented by voluntary contributions from local businesses outside the town centre. BIDs are also often successful in gaining additional funding, because they are attractive to public sector bodies who are encouraged to match-fund money raised by the private sector through the BID. Even without pulling in additional funding the BID could generate £0.8m over its 5-year lifespan.

The timetable for the BID re-election process is as follows:

- Oct 2022: Notification of intention to ballot sent to Secretary of State and Cherwell District Council
- January 2023: Notice of ballot sent to levy payers
- February 2023: Return of ballot papers

The Town Council has a vote, as it is a Business Rate payer within the BID area, through the Town Hall. It would be helpful to secure agreement at this stage as to how the Council would wish to vote in the ballot and for the Town Clerk to be authorised to cast the Council's vote accordingly.

### **Financial Effects & Risk Assessment**

If the BID is approved, then all Business Ratepayers within the BID area will be required to pay an additional levy of 1.5% where their rateable value is above £10k. The RV of the Town Hall is £27,250 and the basement area is separately rated at £5,600. So the cost would be £408 for the Town Hall (£84 per annum for the basement now falling below the revised threshold of RV, the BID levy, this element will no longer apply).

There are no risks identified from a positive ballot outcome, which is likely to see additional spending on town centre initiatives that would far outweigh the Council's direct financial input. However, an unsuccessful ballot could see a further decline of the town centre and an inability to compete with other local town centres and out of town shopping experiences.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to note progress with the Banbury BID and to authorise the Town Clerk to cast the Council's vote in favour of the BID.

### **C.46/22**

#### **Change of Committee Membership – Planning Committee**

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

The Meeting ended at 6.55pm.