

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of Banbury Electors held on **Monday, 02 March 2026 at 6:30pm held at Banbury Town Hall.**

Present: Councillor Mallon (Town Mayor and Chairman of the Meeting)

Town Councillors: Beere, Biegel, Cherry, Clarke, Eaton, Hussain, Mears, Okeke, Richards, Strangwood, Stansfield, Tohill-Martin and Urwick.

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk)
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)
Helen Durkin (Executive Officer)

Other Attendees: None

ATM-1.26 Notice to Convene the Meeting

The Town Mayor welcomed the electors of Banbury to the Meeting. He noted that the Council was required by law to hold an Annual Town Meeting, and it provided a forum for residents to hear what the Town Council had been doing and for Councillors to hear views of the town.

ATM-2.26 Apologies for absence

Councillors Creed, Dhesi, Harwood, Thornhill, Vaitkus

ATM-3.26 Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 03 March 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

ATM-4.26 Attendance Records

The Town Mayor reported that the attendance record of individual Members of the Town Council had been circulated with the Agenda papers.

ATM-5.26 Committee Reports

a) Report of the Resources Committee presented by the Chair, Councillor Shaida Hussain.

The Resources Committee has overseen a vast array of projects and achievements from the last year, and it gives me great pleasure to present you with this report covering updates, projects and achievements from last year, as well as our goals looking forward towards the rest of 2026 and 2027.

The resources committee oversees finance, property, policy, and personal matters. I am pleased to report that, in continuation of last year's successful and strategic expenditures, our council continues to be in excellent financial health.

Banbury Town Council's responsibility to maintain its enviable record is incredibly important, especially this year, as individuals and organisations alike face a variety of financial challenges. We are determined to continue this delivery of exceptional services while staying in, or under, budget, with a key focus on areas that will benefit the town economically and socially.

It is important to note that, unlike upper-tier district and county councils, town councils do not receive financial subsidies from government. While this presents its own unique set of challenges, we have nevertheless managed to deliver more for less.

Several projects continue to thrive from previous years, including warm spaces scheme continued to provide Banbury residents with somewhere warm to stay without having to rely on heating their homes. We are incredibly grateful to the communities, clubs and other organisations that have agreed to take part in this scheme.

This highlights not only the committee's dedication to organising these spaces, but the generosity and community spirit exhibited by many local organisations. We have once again managed an underspend with our Civic and Ceremonial budget, while our central administration budget also remains within expectations. This is taking into account the considerable developments made with our systems in recent months, with improvements to public telecommunications systems and investment in more effective and efficient software.

In regards to the town hall, I am pleased to say that our contract with Oxfordshire County Council to host the wedding registrar on the upper floor of the building continues to gather pace. We have seen dozens of weddings take place over the last few months, and expect to see many more, with a busy schedule upholding the viewpoint that this venture has proven to be a great success.

The council has also overseen changes to the staff handbook to better reflect current procedures and national policies.

Banbury Town Council 2025 calendar of events were extremely popular and saw exceptional levels of attendance. We continue our commitment to striking a balance between events held in the centre of the town and within Banbury Town Council's green spaces such as Spiceball Park and People's Park.

It has been fantastic to see the community coming together to enjoy these celebrations of food, music, history and culture, and we're looking forward to seeing this year's events deliver further exciting opportunities for Banbury residents from all corners of the town.

In addition to the events, we oversaw the return of the enduringly popular Remembrance Sunday and Christmas projections, which were displayed on the northern face of Town Hall, as well as return to the Corn Exchange building.

Our Christmas Lights scheme also enjoyed another popular year, after coming into effect during 2024. 2026 will be the final year of this particular scheme, after which a new one will be developed for 2027.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, it is hoped that Banbury Town Council will be able to continue a fantastic track record of financial planning and spending.

We are actively growing our focus on events that continue to draw in sizeable audiences, while also looking at ways to more effectively embrace Banbury's diverse communities.

We will also be on hand to assist in the town's upcoming 'Town of Culture' bid, and look forward to seeing how this exciting opportunity evolves.

We are also in possession of a growing reserve in the name of crime prevention, which we hope will be utilised in the form of CCTV coverage.

Above all else, the council is dedicated to ensuring Banbury is a town that not only changes with the times, but evolves, expands and prospers. I am proud of the achievements of this committee over the last 12 months, and I look forward to another year of seeing this committee ensure Banbury benefits from outstanding financial management, dedicated community welfare, and preservation of heritage while embracing a future of diversity and development.

I would like to finish by thanking Vice-Chairman Councillor Andrew Eaton along with all committee members for their time, engagement and ideas.

Thank you.

b) Report of the General Services Committee presented by the Chair, Councillor Mark Cherry.

Banbury Town Council's General Services Committee has continued to build and develop on its successes from last year with the completion of several key projects and the initiation of a number of new ones, all with the aim of ensuring that Banbury residents have access to a comprehensive and ever-evolving range of outdoor services.

Also known as Banbury's 'Green Committee', the General Services Committee oversees the management and maintenance of more than 1,000 acres of green infrastructure across the town, comprising of:

- Over 100 parks and open spaces
- 70 children's play areas and youth facilities
- recreation grounds offering football, tennis, cricket and more
- Allotment sites
- 2 cemeteries and 1 historic churchyard

Two flagship sporting projects came to fruition this year, with the installation and opening of two 'PlayZones'. Funded by the Football Foundation and Cherwell District Council, the state-of-the-art facilities were built in Chandos Close Recreation Ground and Princess Diana Park, and as such will be maintained by Banbury Town Council.

Also installed in Chandos Close and Princess Diana Park this year was new LED park lighting, ensuring the area is now more brightly lit while also updating infrastructure with more environmentally-friendly lighting methods.

At the beginning of 2026, work started on a new play area for Princess Diana Park – a 'Space for Girls', incorporating play features based on some of the most highly requested equipment by girls in order to encourage enjoyment of Banbury Town Council parks across all genders. Meanwhile, the Horton View tennis facility will receive a refurbishment of hard surfaces.

The replacement of play equipment at People's Park was completed in time for the 2025 summer holidays, while in recent weeks a new operator lease was also awarded to ensure that the café there will be up and running again soon.

The Bloxham Vale allotment was adopted, bringing the total number overseen by Banbury Town Council to 7.

It is hoped that the future of Banbury's cemetery operations will be secured soon, with a planning application submitted for cemetery extension at Hardwick Hill's facility. This is to ensure that Banbury's residents will continue to be able to honour loved ones for decades to come.

Looking ahead, more play area refurbishments are expected to take place at Hill View, Windrush, and Griffith's Close. People's Park's Walled Garden will also be restored during the next year, while phase 2 archaeological investigation works at will also begin at the Cemetery Extension site. Moorfields Park will soon receive new LED lighting to make the area brighter and safer, while a landscape refurbishment project at St Mary's Churchyard is also expected to result in an impressive transformation.

c) Report of the Planning Committee presented by the Chair, Councillor Andrew Beere.

Thank you Councillor, and good evening.

Banbury Town Council's role in the planning process is to be the 'eyes and ears' – it is our experience and knowledge of the town that helps us to make informed decisions the Cherwell District Council – in its larger scope and scale – may be more likely to overlook. We are the voice of the town, and endeavour to protect its identity and character while looking at new ways for it to expand and develop.

We have responded to numerous applications for significant housing developments on the edge of Banbury. Most frequently we have objected to these schemes if they are not on site allocated in the existing Cherwell Local Plan.

We have considered that these applications are premature pending the completion of the Local Plan making process by CDC -examples such as 25/015454/OUT for 150 dwellings off Dukes Meadow Drive, 58 houses off Broughton Road and another 76 by Kier Group, also off Broughton Road.

Notwithstanding the above we have also responded in a positive and helpful way to the submission of reserved matter details on multiple applications for approved

housing schemes. This has always involved making sure that the appropriate level of affordable housing is being proposed and that good living conditions for new residents are achieved, and that good environmental outcomes are guaranteed. We have responded as a critical friend to the OCC proposal to form a bus/taxi link from Tramway Road to the railway station, and re-arrangement of access to west side railway car parking. We have also responded to consultations from OCC on bus route improvements on Lower Cherwell Street, and to their cycle/walking initiatives.

We raised objections to new commercial development proposed on land close to the railway (on the Grimsbury side) (25/02998/F) which we believed had an unacceptable impact upon the adjacent residential properties.

A feature of this year is the high number of applications that we have been consulted upon by CDC for conversion of upper floors in the town centre to residential use. In the vast majority of cases, we have been pleased to raise no objections as the quality of the conversion schemes has been high. Occasionally we have had to raise concerns to poor internal layouts, lack of private facilities or poor bin storage arrangements.

Anyone who would like to read at their own leisure the above motions and a complete archive of all applications overseen by the committee, please do visit the Banbury Town Council website, where all meeting minutes and more can be accessed with ease.

I would like to finish by thanking my Vice Chair Cllr Wendy Woodward, and indeed all members of the planning committee, and will now pass back to the Mayor.

It was resolved to receive and note the reports from Councillors.

ATM-6.26 Questions from Electors
None

The Meeting ended at 6:53pm.