



Environment and Green Spaces committee minutes

Minutes

From the committee meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 20 February 2024

At St. Margaret's Hall, Bradford on Avon

Decision making

The **decision** made by the committee at this meeting is at minute [60](#).

Present

Councillors:

- Kate Bessant
- Emma Franklin
- Alex Kay (Chair)
- Alison Potter
- Tim Trimble
- Katie Vigar
- Jack Vittles

Town Council Officers:

- Chris Stringer – Deputy Town Clerk
- Chris Hogg – Green Spaces Officer
- Matthew McLaughlin – Communications Officer

Meeting clerk:

- Sarah Howe – Committee Clerk
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Apologies

From Councillors unable to attend the meeting:

- Sarah Gibson (Vice-Chair)



The Chair began the meeting with a statement on the upcoming anniversary of the council's declaration of a climate emergency:

'March 2024 will be the fifth anniversary of Bradford on Avon Town Council's unanimous declaration of a Climate Emergency with a commitment to work to 2030 as a zero-carbon target. We included recognition of an ecological emergency a year later.

Over the years we have seen many actions, events and projects, including putting environmental commitment and least harm at the heart of all our town council business. Wiltshire Council has been busy too and declared its Climate Emergency 5 years ago and has made progress. Five years ago, we were armed with hope and ambition; it has been inspiring to work with so many people in and around BoA with passionate commitment to make positive changes. Have we done enough? Almost certainly not, but we are doing our best.'

59. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

60. Minutes from the previous meeting of the committee

Proposed by Councillor Kate Bessant

Seconded by Councillor Katie Vigar

And with all in favour it was **resolved**: that the Minutes of the last committee meeting held on 5 December 2024 be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

61. Matters arising

None.

62. Agenda item 12 – Youth and Community Centre Eco Hub

Amy Star from Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon (CFBoA) addressed the meeting reading out her proposal for refurbishing the Youth and Community Centre employing an eco-friendly retrofit process using appropriate grant funding with a view to developing the centre as an Eco Hub for the community. The full proposal can be found at Appendix B to the minutes.

The Chair and several councillors thanked Amy for her proposal and indicated they were interested by the overall aims of the project. It was made clear that any future development of the Youth and Community Centre would need to be with the support of the current stakeholders, particularly those delivering existing youth projects.



However, the councillors present were **all** keen for the council to explore the ideas and opportunities described by Amy on behalf of CFBoA.

63. Agenda item 6 – Chair’s Update

Before presenting a summary of her written update - which was supplied with the agenda – Councillor Alex Kay said she felt Atkins’ report hadn’t properly considered the environmental impacts of traffic in the town and that she was concerned that the town council had published the report and its recommendation.

Cllrs Vigar and Vittles both confirmed that the report is being published to open the engagement process ahead of events to hear the public’s views. Councillor Vigar also confirmed that the town council’s response to Atkins’ report would be discussed and voted on at a future council meeting before it is sent to Wiltshire Council.

64. Agenda item 7 – Wiltshire Digital Drive

The Communications Officer referred to his report which is supplied with the agenda. The recycling project has been running for about 1 year. Around 100 laptops, phones and desktop computers have been donated and repurposed by Wiltshire Digital Drive. The town council is now keeping a log of all the machines donated.

65. Agenda item 8 – River Detectives Project Update

The River Detectives Project organised by Bristol Avon River Trust (BART) is a river analysis project where monthly samples are taken at several points along a chosen stretch of river. 5 sites are currently being sampled in and around Bradford on Avon. The Chair referred to her report as supplied with the agenda and confirmed during the Chair’s Update that the most recent sampling has indicated the river is fairly clean despite heavy rainfall. The Wessex Water project to build a storm overflow tank in Victory field should reduce sewage spills from around 89 to around less than 8 a year and the regular sampling should help keep a track of any improvements as a result of the work.

66. Agenda item 9 – Green Spaces Officer Update

The Green Spaces Officer referred to his update as supplied with the agenda. Additionally,



- 3 tree wardens have been appointed who will help with the surveying and monitoring of trees around town and also the setting up of a tree nursery between the Bowls club and the railway bridge. Locally collected seeds and cuttings will be grown alongside varieties from elsewhere.
- After the flooding in Barton Country Park all the play equipment was disinfected and cleaned before re-opening.

67. Agenda item 10 – Community Electric Bike loan scheme

The Deputy Town Clerk referred to his report as supplied with the agenda. Councillor Tim Trimble confirmed that the electric bike is now with the town council, the Deputy Town Clerk is making all necessary preparations and the launch of the scheme is on track for the end of March.

It is a 'try before you buy' scheme. The bike can be hired for 1 or 2 weeks by residents of the town with a refundable £100 deposit to allow hirers to see if they might switch some of their journeys from car to bike.

Councillor Trimble added that a contra-flow cycle lane is set to be implemented on Wine Street very soon.

68. Agenda item 11 – Low Energy Cooking Appliance Loan Scheme

Uptake of scheme has been relatively slow of pace, with 11 signing up to borrow air fryers, slow cookers and pressure cookers at the launch event and a couple more since. In the end, to date, the air fryers have been lent out 5 times and the pressure cooker once. The Communications Officer confirmed that additional posters will go up around town and a new sign-up form is on the website:

<https://bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk/low-energy-cooking-appliance-scheme/>.

CFBoA are preparing more demo events including St Laurence School to bolster interest.

69. Next meeting

The next committee meeting is provisionally arranged for Tuesday 23 April 2024.

End of the meeting

The meeting finished at 7.45 pm



Appendix A: Comments and questions from the public

There were no questions from members of the public at the meeting. There were 7 members of the public in total.

Jalal, a teacher and guest, visiting Bradford on Avon from the Tubas (Palestinian) delegation asked to give a small talk about a playground project in Tubas:

He thanked the committee for allowing him to attend and speak at the meeting. He stated it has been a dream to come to Bradford on Avon and the twinning project now goes much deeper, having been here, as families and individuals can learn about different cultures.

Back in Tubas he is part of a committee of 6 people who are trying to build a playground. They have a piece of land around 3,000m² in size so finally they have some space to use. An engineer, with previous experience, is helping to design the playground. However it will cost a lot of money, but they are hoping to make a start on the project this year.

The Chair thanked the guest and agreed that children do need space to play.

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Appendix B: Agenda item 12

Community and Climate Hub Proposal

Below please find a summary of a proposal for a Community and Climate Hub to be based at the existing Youth and Community Centre on Frome Road:

This would entail:

The Retrofit and enhancement of the Youth and Community Centre to form a sustainability showcase and 'Community and Climate Hub'

The hub may incorporate:

- The full **retrofit** of the building, providing a demonstration project for the community and later a place offering energy efficiency advice.
- A **community space** for regular group hire, events, repair café and retrofit centre.
- A **community shop and/or café** to encourage daytime use and regular visits to the hub, to broaden the reach and awareness of community and climate initiatives being held and displayed there.
- **Biodiversity enrichment** of the outside space to include seating, to create an inviting space and further encourage use of the facilities.

We'd hope the Community and Climate Hub could be the first port of call for anyone requiring local support to reduce their climate impact, and a place for **collective, community-led climate action**.

The exact function and use of the building would benefit from **community engagement** to ensure it fulfils local need.

As well as making the building more **energy efficient**, we feel it is important to make the building a more comfortable and **appealing space**, for example by bringing natural light into the gym area.

There may also be potential to link through to the new facilities on **Poulton Field**.

We have been encouraged by a positive response from the Town Council regarding the idea, who were already thinking along similar lines for its future use and the potential upgrade to the building.

We have suggested the building would need a **survey** to confirm it is structural sound to make retrofitting the building a worthwhile investment.

Funding:

The idea stems from when Vicky, Chair of Climate Friendly Bradford, Becca, who is active within community involvement, and I met to brainstorm ideas for projects that could be eligible for funding through the Lottery's Climate Action Fund for Energy and Climate

The fund has £8.5 million available for 8 to 12 projects that show how communities can address climate change and is very focussed on community-led climate action to tackle energy challenges.



The fund offers grants of between **£500,000 and £1.5million** so we had to think about a much larger scale project than is typical for Climate Friendly Bradford.

Unfortunately, the terms and conditions of the lottery fund means we would need to look at other funding sources to install **renewable energy generation** such as solar PV on the site, and only part of the grant could go towards building refurbishment.

Our current position:

We are keen to develop this proposal further but last week we did have to report back to the town council that applying for the energy and climate fund may not be feasible, due to the amount of preparation required before the 'early 2024' deadline, which we learned yesterday is 1st March.

Yesterday we also learned there is however a further lottery fund being launched on March 27th. The strategy for this latest Climate Action Fund is **"it starts with community"**. This will fund projects that link "climate action to the everyday lives and interests of local communities" and inspire them to take action," so our proposal seems very suitable for an application. Again the minimum bid is £500,000 with most projects receiving between £1-1.5 million over 2-5 years.

We would like to continue developing a proposal that is properly researched, with the running of the project confirmed, to give greater confidence to our bid.

Organisational Structure:

It has become clear that it would be necessary to create a new community organisation rather than apply for large grants as Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon. The proposal was discussed at the latest CFB Coordinating Group meeting, and it was felt that the Climate Action Fund minimum grant of £500,000 would mean a huge scaling up from the usual grants secured by CFB since changing from a Community Interest Company into a Community Association 6 years ago.

We have been advised to set up a **new organisation** for the purpose of the Community and Climate Hub, which needs to be separate from CFB work and finances. We need time to research the type of organisation which would be most suitable, and the admin this involves.

Alex has sent through some information regarding **Charitable Incorporated Organisations**, which may be our best option. This however would mean identifying a group of trustees and an application to the Charity Commission, which would take at least 40 working days to approve.

The information regarding the new Climate Action Fund says it does not have to be a climate or environment-focussed organisation who applies, so perhaps we could apply as a partnership, but we can see how best to approach the application when more details are released at the funding launch.

Project delivery:

We also need to clarify how we can partner with the Town Council on the project delivery, in particular regarding **staffing and salaries**, as this will need to be confirmed to ensure a successful application and maintainable project.

We also need to refine the project, which may also determine potential sources for funding, depending on their criteria. We have talked about retrofitting the building but are not clear how this



marries with the end-uses as a hub or the other community activities and events being suggested. It may be necessary to look at different funding sources for each goal, possibly with different partnerships to achieve them, but the lottery fund does seem worth aiming for.

Next Steps:

Vicky, Becca and I have set dates to **visit other climate hubs** in the area, to find out how they are organised, and to learn of any partnerships they have formed with their councils and other organisations.

We also plan to find out about the **Christchurch** refurbishment project which secured a large lottery grant. The lottery fund was explicit about how the money could be spent, but we believe it did enable a staff member to manage the project. This could provide a model for the project we are proposing, as Christchurch is becoming a community hub, with biodiversity projects in the churchyard, and the churchyard being managed by the town council.

We have also booked to attend a **webinar** on the launch day of the lottery fund to find out more.

We are keen to see the youth and community centre revitalised to become a hub for community action on climate change. Further discussion with the Town Council and other possible partners will be key, so I do hope we can continue to develop our ideas together and work collectively on a funding application.

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