



Bradford on Avon Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Council meeting of
BRADFORD ON AVON TOWN COUNCIL held
on Tuesday 18th May 2021 at 7p.m in St. Margaret's Hall

Attendance – Town Council

Cllr K Bessant
Cllr S Blackwell
Cllr E Franklin
Cllr S Gibson
Cllr A Kay
Cllr S McNeill-Ritchie
Cllr J Parker
Cllr A Potter
Cllr T Trimble
Cllr K Vigar
Cllr J Vittles
Mrs S Bartlett (Town Clerk)
Mr I Brown (Director of Operations)
Ms S Hawkins (Accountant)

Members of the public: Mike Roberts, James Sullivan-Tailyour, Patrick Douglas, Pam Hyde, Tom Lomax, Stephanie Edwards and 18 others.

Apologies: Cllr D Garwood

1. Election of Council Chairman and Town Mayor

Cllr Parker proposed Cllr Sarah Gibson, seconded by Cllr Trimble and with no further nominations Cllr Sarah Gibson was elected Chairman and Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year. Cllr McNeill-Ritchie (Out-going Mayor and Chairman) handed the chain of office to Cllr Sarah Gibson.

2. Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr Gibson signed her declaration of acceptance of office for the role of Chairman and Mayor in the meeting signed by the Town Clerk.

3. Declarations of interest – none

4. Election of Vice Chairman and Deputy Town Mayor

Cllr Gibson nominated Cllr Katie Vigar, seconded by Cllr Potter and with no further nominations and all in favour it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Katie Vigar be Vice-Chairman and Deputy Mayor.

5. Leader of the Council

It was decided to not have a Leader this year but leave this in abeyance for now.

6. Declarations of Acceptance office for members

Town Clerk confirmed that all members had signed their declarations of acceptance of office. All members introduced themselves and advised why they had stood as a town councillor and where their interests lay.

7. Register of Members' Interest

Town Clerk confirmed that she had been filing these on Wiltshire Council's website. She had a few more to do.

8. Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr Franklin, seconded by Cllr Kay and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED:** to accept the minutes of the last meeting held on the 13th April 2021.

9. Matters arising - none

10. Outgoing Chairman's Report

The outgoing Chairman's Report is attached to these minutes.

11. Selection of Committees

Selection of committees attached to these minutes.

12. Youth Service Contract

Director of Operations explained the details of this contract for the next four years with a more flexible provision. Proposed by Cllr Gibson, seconded by Cllr Kay and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED:** to award this contract to Community Family Care for a further four years.

13. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020-21

(i) Members answered questions 'yes' in Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21. This was approved by all members and signed in the meeting by the Chairman and the Town Clerk.

(ii) Section 2 Accounting Statements 2020/21 were noted and signed by the Chairman

It was proposed by Cllr Gibson seconded by Cllr Kay and with all in favour, it was **RESOLVED:** To accept the signed Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

14. Cheque signatories/Internal Audit by Councillor

(i) Cllrs Gibson, Vigar, Bessant, Trimble, Kay, Franklin and McNeill-Ritchie agreed to be cheque signatories on the Town Council account.

(ii) Cllr Parker agreed to carry out the monthly internal audit. She is a not a signatory councillor as required.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm

Appendix 1

Members of the public who spoke at the Annual Council meeting 18th May 2021

1. Mike Roberts welcomed the new councillors to the council. It said it was good to be a member of the public now. He said he had eight years of documentation to dispose of. He mentioned outstanding issues on the Covid highways project and the Chairman asked him to put his points in writing to the Clerk, so that they could be considered by the Unitary/Town Councillors. Chairman advised nothing could be removed until 21st June 2021.

2. James Sullivan-Tailyour welcomed the new council and said that the business community would like a meeting as soon as possible to benefit residents and businesses and to discuss the future and traffic issues. Chairman said that the new Leader of the Council at Wiltshire Council said that the high street was top of his agenda. Chairman advised that it was still to be agreed which Councillor from the Town Council who would be taking the lead on that. She would know more after the Town Council Conference.

3. Patrick Douglas congratulated the new council on their election. He said he lived in Lower Woolley Street/Silver Street with his young family. He said that the traffic starts at 4.30am until 2300 hours and that cracks had started appearing in his house from the vibration of the traffic. He asked that councillors think carefully before extending the social distancing project as the traffic would never settle. Cllr Trimble said that he is painfully aware of the situation and knows the anxiety caused.

4. Pam Hyde reported that a number of residents had asked her what has happened to the money that had been raised for specific projects that the previous council said they would undertake and failed to do so. Can the council confirm that the money has been ring fenced in the town council accounts? That the money will only be spent on the specific project that the money was given for. That if the Town Council does not proceed with either the green wall or the bulb planting projects then the money will be returned. The other project is the skate park. Tee shirts are being sold and other events planned. Who is organising these? She wanted to know will the money be returned if the skatepark does not go ahead. She wanted to know who was responsible for the funds received so far if it is not the Town Council. Cllr Bessant advised that she was involved with the fundraising and that there had been a Go Fund Me Page. Chairman advised that funds received for a specific project had been ring-fenced in the Town Council's accounts and will only be issued for that purpose. Monies would be returned if the projects did not go ahead.

5. Tom Lomax congratulated the new council on their election. He asked that remote meetings be carried on rather than face to face meetings so that can be more participatory by the public. Chairman advised that the legislation had run out on this on the 7th May 2021. Cllr Vigar said that she would like to see live streaming of meetings in the future.

6. Stephanie Edwards said that she had seen a lot of new faces to support us in this great place to live and work, she hoped that previous animosity could be set aside and work together to channel your energies and move forward.

Mayor's End of Term Speech

My congratulations again to the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor. To have been elected Mayor of Bradford on Avon is a great honour and privilege, and I feel that keenly all the more for having been so not once, but twice. The two years I have been Mayor have been about as contrasting as any two could be – during the first I appeared at no fewer than 100 events both in the town and around Wiltshire, supporting local groups and initiatives and representing Bradford on Avon between Bath and Salisbury. The latter was spent behind the scenes, working with the senior leadership team to provide advice and support during the present pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the key features of the Council's performance over this time.

Firstly, Council became ever more proactive and ambitious in tackling the issues that face the town and beyond. Several of these quite rightly relate to the environment – a critical issue both here and elsewhere. For example, we were the first Wiltshire town to declare a Climate Emergency. It's true that Wiltshire Council narrowly beat us to it, but the difference is that we have taken repeated steps to protect our local environment – in contrast to the threat to our green spaces posed by Wiltshire Council's proposed Local Plan, which we have resisted vigorously, and which I trust this new council will continue to do. We worked closely with the local community to secure the purchase of Becky Addy/Anny Wood, an ancient woodland bordering the town settlement much-loved and valued over many years by our residents. And as a welcome respite from lockdown, I was personally heavily involved last autumn in the extensive repairs to the weir at Avoncliff, which had it failed in the recent high-water events would have desolated the local eco-system as far back as the Town Bridge and Greenlands Mill. There are many other examples of our work to protect and improve our local environment, and I would like to pay particular tribute here to my deputy mayor, Cllr Kay, who has frequently led the way on these initiatives.

In total, the outgoing Town Council initiated more than 50 projects and supported many, many others. Some were less newsworthy than others, but are nevertheless significant, and I would like to mention a few on which I worked. The relocation of the waste bins at the entrance to Lamb Yard involved me in 170 emails and over 70 meetings over 18 months, but thanks in no small part to Stephanie Edwardes as well, resulted in the removal of an unsightly entrance to arguably the town's principal retail and restaurant area that had blighted the town centre for too many years. I look forward to seeing this further transformed in the very near future by the proposed Living Wall. And the recent replacement of the riverside railings in front of The Weaving Shed has further enhanced the attractiveness of the area just as these local businesses reopen.

One aspect of Bradford on Avon in which I have taken a personal interest both as an historian and as the town's former British Legion Poppy Appeal Organiser, is the Remembrance Day Service that takes place in November. One of my first duties as mayor in May 2019 was to present two service charities, the Royal British Legion and SSAFA with more than £3,000 each, these being the proceeds from the Countdown to Peace festival I organised with the help of many others to mark the

centenary of the Armistice at the end of WW1. And I am proud that we didn't give in to the government's initial blanket ban on last November's service and instead held a Covid-safe ceremony to mark the occasion as we always do. Next year will be the centenary of the unveiling of the War Memorial in Westbury Gardens, and I would like to take this opportunity to propose a fundraising campaign later this year to pay for it to be renovated in time for the Remembrance Day Service in 2022.

Also arising out of Countdown to Peace festival was the Women's 100 programme to mark the centenary of women's enfranchisement. This culminated on International Women's Day in March 2019 with a celebration involving the Lord Lieutenant, the High Sheriff, our MP and the Leader of Wiltshire Council – all women – who were joined our own councillors, Cllrs Franklin, Gibson, Kay and Parker. Cllr Vigar was also very much involved at the time, and I take it as another positive sign that today women represent a majority on this new Town Council.

I expected my involvement as Mayor with our twinning associations to be simply ceremonial, and I was indeed pleased to welcome a delegation from Sully-sur-Loire making their 28th visit, and then one from the Mayor and people of Norden on the 50th anniversary of our twinning relationship with them. Somewhat more adventurously, I bicycled the 500-mile length of the Loire Valley, calling in on Sully-sur-Loire en route. Then in mid-November 2019 I motorbiked 700 miles from BoA to Norden and back to celebrate the award of prestigious cultural award to our hosts. My motorbike also ferried me to many events around Wiltshire, where I was often found changing out of my leathers into a suit and chain, earning me the epithet 'the motorbiking mayor'. Given her own enthusiasm for two wheels, I am hopeful that our new Mayor will continue this tradition!

As I indicated above, this second year as Mayor has been a very different experience. I am proud that having convened a precautionary meeting of councillors even before we knew of the first lockdown, we were able to move quickly – noticeably quicker than other councils – to take measures to protect and support our residents and businesses. Information and notices were disseminated across the town, a crowdfunding campaign was launched on behalf of The Hub, and more recently the launch of the ShopLocal scheme to encourage customers back into our shops and hospitality venues. Our websites and social media became exemplars to other councils of online communication.

The Community Emergency Volunteers (CEV's) and street volunteers immediately organised food and prescription delivery services for those unable to leave their homes. Since the beginning of this year the CEV's have assisted as marshals at the vaccination centre in Melksham, and continued to deliver prescriptions as required. And West Wilts Radio, which Cllr Garwood and I set up in 2019, and which has been supported by Council, was one of only four local community radio stations in the country to be awarded a special Covid-19 licence by Ofcom to broadcast government guidance and Public Health advice throughout the pandemic

In all of this I want to thank our staff – and our Town Clerk, Director of Operations and Communications Manager in particular – for all their work over the past 14 months. Above all, I want to pay tribute to Cllr Dominic Newton who worked tirelessly

and conscientiously to ensure that we as a Town Council were doing everything possible to keep our residents safe and our local businesses supported. I know I am not the only one who will miss his industry, talent and courage.

This time four years' ago the Town Clerk informed us on our first day as councillors that the Town Council's statutory duties were limited to the maintenance of allotments and closed cemeteries. In practice, Wiltshire Council did the first, and Holy Trinity looked after the second. That is no longer the case. We immediately took back responsibility for the Sladesbrook Park, play area and allotments, followed shortly afterwards by Culver Close, home of the Bowls and Cricket Clubs and the tennis courts. Today, we are awaiting the legal transfer from Wiltshire Council of our so-called Community Assets, including more than 30 tracts of land such as Barton Farm Country Park and Poulton Field, and the Youth & Community Centre. Plans for a skatepark are well-advanced and those for a new pavilion in Culver Close underway. Feasibility studies for a new Health Centre in the Station area, paid for by the government's One Public Estate fund, are also moving forward.

To help manage all this, we appointed a Director of Operations two years ago and a Green Spaces Officer last year. The team of Town Wardens has also been strengthened. But the Town Council cannot do this on its own, so we have also encouraged and supported new volunteer projects, such as Clean up Bradford (CLuB) led by Derrick Hunt, which had two teams out tidying up the centre of town today. Our funding, too, no longer just relies on residents' taxes and the public purse, but on grants, corporate sponsorship and private donations. I know this from my own experience, having raised over £115,000 for Council projects.

Finally, I would like to thank those councillors who retired or who were unsuccessful in their bids for re-election, to welcome back former colleagues, and to welcome new ones. If I may offer three words of advice, they would be:

- 1) Initiate – be proactive and press forward with projects to improve the town and the lives of our residents;
- 2) Collaborate – not just with other councillors and officers, but with others in town. We are fortunate to have a great deal of expertise and experience among our fellow residents; and
- 3) Persist – to many good ideas and project run into the sand in the face of opposition and bureaucratic inertia. Keep going.

Much has been done, but there is more to do. Getting elected should not be an end in itself, but the start of four years' hard work.

I wish this new council every success and look forward to playing my part in it.

Simon McNeill-Ritchie

18 May 2021



**Bradford on Avon
Town Council**

Committee Structure and Membership for 2021/22

Environment & Planning Committee	Community & Recreation Committee
1 Cllr Sarah Gibson	1 Cllr Sarah Gibson
2 Cllr Katie Vigar	2 Cllr Katie Vigar
3 Cllr Alex Kay (Chairman)	3 Cllr Jennie Parker (Chairman)
4 Cllr Jennie Parker	4 Cllr Kate Bessant
5 Cllr Alison Potter	5 Cllr Emma Franklin
6 Cllr Tim Trimble	6 Cllr Sam Blackwell
7 Cllr Kate Bessant	7 Cllr Alison Potter
8 Cllr Jack Vittles	8 Cllr Jack Vittles
Town Development Committee	Resources Committee
1 Cllr Sarah Gibson	1 Cllr Sarah Gibson
2 Cllr Katie Vigar	2 Cllr Katie Vigar
3 Cllr Alison Potter	3 Cllr David Garwood
4 Cllr David Garwood	4 Cllr Sam Blackwell (Chairman)
5 Cllr Jack Vittles (Chairman)	5 Cllr Jennie Parker
6 Cllr Tim Trimble	6 Cllr Alex Kay
7	
8	
Highways & Transport Committee	
1 Cllr Sarah Gibson	
2 Cllr Katie Vigar	
3 Cllr Jack Vittles	
4 Cllr Tim Trimble (Chairman)	
5 Cllr Sam Blackwell	
6 Cllr Jennie Parker	
7 Cllr Alison Potter	
8	