



**Bradford on Avon
Town Council**



**LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
QUALITY GOLD**

Minutes of the Bradford on Avon Town Council
Town Development Committee

Held at St. Margaret's Hall, Bradford on Avon on
21st September 2021 at 7.00pm

Present:

Cllr J Vittles (Chairman)
Cllr K Bessant (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr D Garwood
Cllr S Gibson
Cllr A Kay
Cllr S McNeill-Ritchie
Cllr A Potter
Cllr T Trimble
Cllr K Vigar
Ian Brown – Director of Operations
Sandra Bartlett – Town Clerk
Katie Ponsford – Tourism & Events Officer

Members of the Public: John Potter, Kate Nottage, Chris Spence, Alan Roland Price, Richard Anderson, John Wigham and Marsha Mars and 10 others.

Katie Ponsford the Town Council's new Tourism and Events Officer was introduced to the council. She had been in post since 9th September 2021.

12. Declarations of interest - none

13. Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr Trimble seconded by Cllr Vigar and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the last meeting held on the 13th July 2021 be accepted as a true record.

14. Matters arising – none

15. Chairman's Report

Chairman reported that he had attended two successful consultations on the weekend of 10/11 September. One on Poulton Park and the other on Culver Close.

He thanked Katie Ponsford and all the volunteers who helped with the Heritage Open Days held last weekend with 700 people and £165 in donations towards to the upkeep of the lockup on the town bridge.

He had also attended a Christmas lights Working Group with Cllr Garwood to make this year's display as good as ever.

16. Delegated decisions

Delegated decisions noted 21st July, 4th and 18th August, 1st and 15th September 2021. Cllr Kay requested to see a final list of any delegated decisions due to be sent to Wiltshire Council.

17. Poulton Park

Cllr Gibson thanked Chris Hogg for all his hard work on setting up the consultation boards. She said that on the Friday 168 people commented and 270 on the Saturday, with residents from the surrounding area and all opinions taken into account. Cllr Bessant asked about the fundraising for the skateboard park. Director of Operations said there was £115,500 in the account plus £50,000 from Colonel William Llewellyn Palmer Educational Charity, funds were due in from Wiltshire Council, plus £17,500 from the skateboard auction, totalling £183,000. Cllr Bessant asked for round of applause for Carl Jones who was instrumental in organising the Art Deco project with all the skateboard decks with artwork for auction. Carl managed to get all the artists involved in the project which resulted in a large amount of money being raised. Cllr Bessant asked for the timescales on this project. Director of Operations advised that we had no timescales at the moment and the lottery bid had not gone in yet because they had been dealing with pandemic bids only but that we were working with WASP (Wiltshire and Swindon Partnership) the Chief Executive was assisting and helping with the bid. Director of Operations advised that a national lottery representative was invited to the recent public consultation but was unable to attend due to holidays. Cllr Gibson thought that the construction of the skatepark will start in spring next year. She said that public consultation is expected as part of the national lottery application process. Cllr Vigar advised that the consultation process is ongoing until 24th September and should be extended for another week. This was agreed. Marsha Mars said that Mighty Girls were available for consultation on a Thursday in the youth club. She said that schools and youth also need to be consulted. She said that it was the young people who are going to use it and they need to be consulted with. Cllr Gibson said she did see skateboarders at the consultation in the Youth & Community Centre over the 2 days and they knew how a skatepark should be laid out. Mr Wigham said that the skateboard park will be built on a slope. He also questioned the ownership of the land. Cllr Gibson advised that the land will still be in public ownership and that permitted development had been given by Wiltshire Council. Mr Wigham pointed out that the houses flood in this area and that the skateboard park will exacerbate this problem. Cllr Trimble advised that he had found out about the drainage on the site. Wiltshire Council had put in French drains and two boreholes one of them is 80m deep. He said this was an expensive operation. Cllr Trimble said that any additional trees/hedges and planting will also help to soak up moisture.

18. Community Building Consultation at Culver Close

Cllr Gibson said that architects had drawn some plans to replace the existing pavilion possibly at another location on the site, as the existing pavilion was not fit for purpose. She said this will benefit the existing sporting groups who use it. Cllr Gibson explained and that consultation closes this Friday, which will be extended. Cllr Kay said that she would like to see the Victory Field pavilion regreened and the new pavilion to be a carbon neutral build eco pavilion. Alan Roland Price said he surprised no initial results were available yet. He was advised that we were still taking comments and collating results. Cllr Kay said that when the planning application is resubmitted for the cricket nets, consideration is given to materials and type of build. She said this should a council decision. Richard Anderson said he was disappointed with the drawings with 3 circles on it. He thought the pavilion should stay where it was. Chairman said that he had no fixed ideas and this was a first look for the whole town and make their opinions heard. He encouraged Mr Anderson to fill out the comment forms. Mr Anderson wanted to see more master planning stages. Cllr Gibson said this was a scoping options stage and more detail will come later in future consultations.

19. One Public Estate

Cllr Gibson explained that One Public Estate was centred on the station car park area. Back in 2014/15 when the Neighbourhood Plan was put together this area was listed as an area of opportunity. This area could be better used and give a doorway from the station into the town. We had an unsuccessful bid in June 2017 and Wiltshire Council had some funding to look at this again. Director of Operations had taken this matter up with the Chief Executive and Leader of Wiltshire Council. Cllr Gibson said that Wiltshire Council did not want any loss of car parking spaces. Wiltshire Council is due to come back to us at some point with a masterplan involving all the nearby stakeholders and some new ones.

20. Old Golf Club site

(i) Cllr Potter gave some history on the site. She said from 1926 the site was used as the town rubbish dump. It was closed in 1977 and West Wilts District Council sold the land to a Mr Montacute who developed it as a golf course. It had a Covenant which allowed for the land to be used for recreational and amenity purposes only.

Mr Montacute's intention was to buy the land across the river from the golf course and more land to the east to extend it to an 18-hole course, build a club house etc. Having failed to achieve this, he sold it to Mr John Hussey who continued to run it as a small golf course. In 2008 Mr Hussey applied for outline planning permission to build 197 houses on the site. Geotechnical Engineering Limited was commissioned to carry out a survey. They identified various potential sources of contamination and declared it a high risk to human health and soils, ground water, surface water and buildings. They gave it low risk to flora and fauna. Wiltshire Council refused permission on the grounds that these potential problems had not been dealt with thoroughly. Another reason for refusal was the access problems and the amount of traffic that would result from such a large development. The site closed as a golf course in 2019. In the current Covid crisis the space has proved even more valuable as a peace wildlife haven.

About 3 years ago, when the golf course was first closed, a group came together in the hope of saving the site as a green space. The owner was approached for a cost of the site at that time it was £2.2 million+. A daunting figure, but the group approached various bodies such as Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust to see if they were interested and researched ways of setting up a Community Interest Company or Community interest organisation to raise the money. Then Covid came along and they had to put a stop to their meetings. Even more people used the golf course for dog-walking etc. and offered their help in any way they could.

In March this year Wiltshire Council, in the Local Plan Review, designated the old golf course as one of 3 potential Development sites for housing, even though they had earlier ear-marked it as a potential part of the Blue-Green Corridor. We have to act quickly and the group "Keep it Green Bradford on Avon" was set up to contact everyone who wanted to save the golf course from development and ask them to write to Wiltshire Council to register their opposition. The original group grew, leaflets were printed and distributed through the town by volunteer. Wiltshire Council received over 6,400 responses to the Local Plan Review, 700 of which were from Bradford on Avon residents almost all of them in support of keeping the golf course as a green space. We are left now with what to do next. The main problem is the contamination. The owner is keen not to have any discussion. Any new owner could have huge costs dealing with any contamination into the river which could involve huge costs.

Beryl Turner asked if it could be built on with the contamination there. Cllr Potter advised that would cost a lot of money but we don't know.

Kate Nottage said that she agreed with John Potter's speech. She said it should be returned to the Covenant status that it could not be built on, as there is little risk to flora and fauna and that Wiltshire Council need to live up to their green statement about declaring a Climate Emergency.

Chris Spence agreed with John Potter and Kate Nottage, he would like to see it reopened as a green space. He wondered about the detail of the application that had been lodged for an Asset of Community Value would achieve, right to bid for the land not an automatic right to buy it. Who would take this on an existing body a new body and the risks involved managing the land, which has toxic waste, what is their appetite for this, how much will it cost, how will the cash be raised? He finds it hard to believe that an application should be supported without all these details. How will the Council progress these questions? Cllr Bessant said a nomination of Asset of Community Value is not an either or, have a Working Group that works to protect the golf course and decides about fundraising this is why she wanted it discussed at Full Council for those reasons, she put it in the nomination in just as a security measure, if the land goes up for sale, we then have 6 months and we are given first refusal. Chris Spence said this was not true, if the registration of the application succeeds, it gives you the right to bid with everybody else in a commercial sense, it does not give the right to buy or any

right to first refusal, there is no compulsion on the landowner to sell to you, which we why he was asking if the landowner had been engaged in this process which is material, if he has not, all you would do is put a registration on his title, which would annoy the landowner. There would be no good outcome then. Cllr McNeill-Ritchie said that at this moment in time we have no protection at all, registering as an asset of community value does not give a lot of protection, but if it is put up for sale, we have to be consulted and given a period of 6 weeks to indicate whether we bid for it and take part in the bidding. As is now we would not be consulted or involved that. He also understood that not a lot of discussion had gone on with the owner over the past two years. We need to weigh up the risk with someone who does not want to engage with us, versus having some sort of say should he wish to put it up for sale.

Cllr Kay read out a statement from Louise Weissel who gave her apologies for this meeting. She had discussed online with some of the members of our "Save BoA Golf Course" Facebook Group. She said that her members wished to support the town council in pushing forward with the nomination for Asset of Community Vale, as they don't see any problem with its submission and feel it all helps to stress to Wiltshire Council, the ecological and social importance of the site. If anything, she believes it helps us then to apply for the site to become an integral part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure (which Wiltshire Council is consulting on at the moment). Wiltshire Council says in its own GBI document ('Goal 3' of the GBI Executive Summary) that they will "Empower Local Communities to get more involved in the management and protection of local GBI taking ownership of local GBI asset and managing them for the benefit of the whole community where necessary. Cllr Gibson said it was already on the draft Green/Blue Infrastructure but had not been published yet. Cllr Kay her view is good if it helps then good essentially and then it has not done any harm either, which is why she wanted it discussed at Full Council to have some actions for it. Alan Roland Price asked whether there was an official valuation for the land before or after it was decontaminated. Cllr Gibson said that the land had not been decontaminated yet. She said its value is questionable because it had been a town dump and there were some unknowns like what is the level of contamination on the site and risk to leaking into the river.

Alan Roland Price said that 191 new houses would put a strain on the current infrastructure with medical facilities and educational facilities and traffic needs and these had to be a key aspect of any future decisions. Cllr Kay said the previous planning application had many reasons for refusal such as access problems for construction through the green belt. Wiltshire Council in the Local Plan said that 80 new houses for the whole town up to 2036. She thought the real intrinsic value of that land even with its contamination is that you can plant trees, walk through it. It has wellbeing that protects it, contamination is only a problem if it is dug up.

(ii) (a) To set up a Working Group to consider the issues for the site and the way forward

Cllr Vigar thought this a good proposal to have a Working Group with Councillors and different interest groups. Cllr McNeill-Ritchie is this a Working Group that goes beyond Councillors and this was agreed to ask interested stakeholders. Cllr Vigar proposed, Cllr Kay seconded and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED**: To set up a working group to consider the issues for the site and the way forward.

(b) To write to Michelle Donelan MP to establish support and clarification from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs the liabilities regarding the site and closed landfill.

It was proposed by Cllr Gibson, seconded by Cllr Trimble and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED**: To write to Michelle Donelan MP to establish support and clarification from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs the liabilities regarding the site and closed landfill.

(c) The Committee recommends to Full Town Council that the Town Council supports the nomination of the old Golf Course as an Asset of Community value.

Cllr Trimble said he does not know or understand what we are getting into.

Cllr Bessant said if the landowner puts it up for sale the Town Council could help to raise the money for a community trust which would take a lot of work and that we would be in the running, if we don't do it, we are nowhere.

Cllr McNeill-Ritchie said that Wiltshire Council had already asked for sites for development. The application for an Asset of Community Value had already gone into Wiltshire Council signed off by individual residents. The Town Council were now being asked to support it.

Cllr Kay said we should not be hung up on the amount of money for the land

Cllr Gibson said that the council would have a level of independence by not submitting the application. She was still uncertain about liabilities with the land and its contamination.

Cllr Vigar said that a lot more thought was needed, whenever the landowner puts the land up for sale 6 months was not long to raise the money. No report with this item to answer the issues she has with this site. This could be ill timed and a bit rushed.

Cllr McNeill-Ritchie you can't apply for an asset of community value once it is up for sale and cannot be consulted. He says it is a small insurance policy.

Cllr Bessant said the 6 months is triggered when it is put up for sale.

Cllr Kay wanted to do it give us an access to what is going on.

Magnus Macdonald said that the landowner could fail to sell the land. Magnus said that an asset of community value is a sop and does not have much legal standing.

After discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Bessant, Cllr McNeill-Ritchie and with 4 in favour, 5 against It was **RESOLVED**: Not to recommend to Full council to support the nomination of the old Golf Course as an Asset of Community value.

21. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be 23rd November 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Members of the public who spoke at the meeting on the 21st September 2021

John Potter said that he was here to ask a question about the golf course. Since it closed, he had been working with a small group of people to keep the golf course green for everybody. They held meetings at home then covid struck and all went on hold apart from a brief flurry with lots of people in the last days of the town plan review. The previous council were in the middle of their programme and were unable to take on such a large and difficult project, although both the Mayor and the Council Leader offered to help along with the Preservation Trust support if needed. The present Town Council seems prepared to find the time to discuss setting up a Working Group. This will allow the project to carry on in a structured and focused manner and be an easier way for people to express their opinions and ideas. This Working Group will have its work cut out, as it will be neither easy or quick and will make you go mad. The main problems to be solved are: -

1. How to integrate the golf course into the review of the town plan and Wiltshire's Environmental Strategy.
2. How to establish a working relationship with the owner.
3. how to retain access for everybody while the process unfolds, bearing in mind that trespass will become a criminal offence soon.
4. Looking to the environmental implications and come up with solutions.
5. Understand fully the legal standing and the reason for the covenant.
6. Plan for what type of body will own and manage the site.
7. Form a plan to manage the natural integrity of the 45 acres.
8. How to raise the money.

None of this is impossible. It is quite obvious that the vast majority of the town want the golf course to stay green and be open to everybody. There will be no shortage of help in many difficult areas, from fundraising to the dark arts of leases and covenants. This is a scheme which could bring the entire town and council together, the key will be consultation and communication. As to an asset of community value and looking at the list of things to be done, it seems rather early. It's a bit cart before the horse but the cart hasn't been built and nobody has a horse. I cannot see it help going to achieve access to the land or a good working relation with Mr Hussey based on mutual interest and goodwill. Nobody wants to get nicked walking in a field. So, it's a brilliant once in a lifetime opportunity for us all will the council, please now set up an inclusive Working Group? Thank you.