



**Bradford on Avon
Town Council**



**LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
QUALITY GOLD**

Minutes of the Full Council meeting of
BRADFORD ON AVON TOWN COUNCIL held
on Tuesday 9th November 2021 at 7p.m in St. Margaret's Hall

Attendance – Town Council

Cllr S Blackwell
Cllr A Kay
Cllr S McNeill-Ritchie
Cllr A Potter
Cllr T Trimble
Cllr K Vigar (Acting Chairman)
Cllr J Vittles
Mrs S Bartlett (Town Clerk)
Mr I Brown (Director of Operations)

In the absence of the Chairman the Vice-Chairman took the Chair.

Apologies: Cllr Bessant, Cllr Franklin, Cllr Garwood, Cllr Gibson (Chairman) and Cllr Parker.

Members of the public: Geoff Farrer, Jeremy Wire, June Alexander, Joyce Shaw and 7 others.

46. Declarations of interest – none

47. Minutes

Cllr McNeill-Ritchie said that the previous minutes did not correctly show the conversation that went on before the decisions were made and accurately show a flavour of the meeting. He thought this had been going on for a while now. Acting Chairman said that verbatim minutes are not required but need to provide a summary. She said it was difficult to minute lots of conversations, which do not lead to resolutions. Clerk reported that minutes are intended to record decisions of the council. Cllr McNeill-Ritchie added that people reading the Minutes need to understand how a decision was reached. A recording of the meetings is available on YouTube. After some amendments were made, it was proposed by Cllr Blackwell seconded by Cllr Trimble and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED:** To accept the minutes of the last meeting held on the 7th September 2021 as a true record.

48. Matters arising (for information only)

Members of the Public 2 from the last meeting held on the 7th September 2021 – Acting Chairman read out the reply advising that the Environment Agency had not made any changes to their river management which could have contributed to low river levels in Bradford on Avon. They said it was possible that the condition of Avoncliff weir, and the operation of sluices within the weir, may be affecting upstream water levels. They were aware that some temporary repairs have been recently carried out to protect the weir during high winter flows. Even with the repairs, the operations of the sluices and the possibility of further water leakage through the weir may reduce water levels upstream. Whilst the Environment Agency would not repair this privately owned structure, they would provide advice on what permits may be required to undertake any remedial works. They understood that the river had returned to its usual autumn level now. If the Town Council was not satisfied with this response for information, you can contact the Environment Agency within two calendar months to ask for their decision to be reviewed. Cllr Kay said this is where a healthy river project will come into play, advice was given by the Environment Agency in September 2020 when the Avoncliff temporary repairs were made.

49. Chairman's Report

Chairman's Report was noted. Acting Chairman mentioned the public consultations on the 10th and 11th September for Poulton Park and Culver Close. She said that the Mayor and Cllr Parker had attended Age Friendly Melksham and various Civic Services at which she met Mayors from other towns. Acting Chairman also said the town had won a Gold Award and the Preece Cup for a town of our size for South West In Bloom. The Mayor had given out certificates to the Railway Station Volunteers for Level 3 'Advancing', Wiltshire Height Level 4 'Thriving'. Secret Gardens Level 4 'Thriving and The Three Horseshoes Public House received Level 5 'Outstanding' rating, the highest possible. Joyce Shaw asked why the Three Horseshoes had won 'Outstanding' and the Acting Chairman responded for their garden at the back of the building, which was very attractive. Cllr Kay said that they used eco methods and were child friendly, she thought it a well-deserved award. The Acting Chairman thanked everyone who took part and sent her congratulations. She said that other businesses in the town could enter the competition too if they contacted the office.

50. Minutes of Committees

The following minutes were noted:-

14.09.21 Community & Wellbeing Committee, 21.09.21 Town Development Committee,
28.09.21 Environment & Green Spaces Committee, 05.10.21 Sustainable Travel Committee and
19.10.21 Resources Committee.

51. Business Plan 2021 – 2025

Acting Chairman explained that a Business Plan was needed for the period 2021 to 2025 to ensure that we consistently make progress on our priorities, effectively deliver services, and manage our resources properly. Also, to make sure that the council remains committed to acknowledging Climate Emergency and Ecological Emergency and doing what we can to combat those and to support residents in doing so we will build on work of previous councils and develop new projects and initiatives. After discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Vittles, seconded by Cllr Trimble and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED**: To adopt the draft Business Plan 2021-2025.

52. Environment & Green Spaces Committee

Terms of Reference

Cllr Kay said that the old Environment and Planning Committee had £10,000 in their remit to approve community grants, which was a quicker process. As we are in the middle of a Climate and Ecological Emergency these grants need to be evaluated and approved by the Environment and Green Spaces Committee.

Cllr Trimble said that he was quite nervous about doing this and removing it from the existing framework of grants. He said that the Town Council works with the Area Board and quite often there is a 50:50 split between the Area Board and the Town Council. His Community Engagement Manager at Wiltshire Council can find pots of money for Health and Wellbeing, Community, Youth, Community Area Transport Group (CATG) and other Wiltshire Council funds and central government monies. He thought if we stayed with that system, we could make the budget go farther, as we are sharing the costs. He said that in an emergency, they could remotely approve a grant at a Teams meeting up to £5,000 on any individual project that has an environmental aspect to it.

Cllr Kay said that smaller grants were taking up to four months because it was forced through the grants process, which is possibly cumbersome and not frequent. She said she had received no extra funding from the Area Board for a small grant, as they did not have any meetings. She said this was not an enhancement. She said she was extremely ethical and sensible councillor and would always take a large grant to Full Council and always seek other avenues of funding. She thought Cllr Trimble was over egging how successful the Grant Board was and under egging the committees.

Cllr McNeill-Ritchie said we need to look at what we are trying to achieve here, and the important thing is that we have signed up to a Climate Emergency and it is important that we act quickly and support small local projects in the town. He was not looking to change the system where we work with the Area Board, but thought that the Environment and Green Spaces Committee members should be allowed to give small grants and not keep the community waiting for months and months.

Cllr Blackwell said he noted the need for expediency with environmental issues but questioned if we do this for the Environment and Green Spaces Committee, it would cause disparity with other

committees. They are all linked to Climate Emergency, with Sustainable Travel Committee, it could be talking about electric bikes, Town Development Committee discussing solar panels. He thought there should be a review on how the grants system could be improved.

Cllr Vittles thought that the speed at which councils work in general was not fast. He said we need to look at ways to speed this up. He has issues with Environment and Green Spaces being allowed to do this, as not open to all committees to do. He thought the existing grants system lacked transparency and that all committees should be able to give out smaller grants

Acting Chairman said that the grants process needs looking at and that she does not wish to approve Cllr Kay's proposed motion, as it will give disparity with the other committees. She suggested that it was discussed further at the grants panel meeting on the 23rd November 2021 with further discussion at the Resources Committee on the 14th December and bring any revisions to the Full Council on the 11th January 2022.

Cllr McNeill-Ritchie suggested an amendment to the substantive motion that the Environment and Green Spaces Committee be able to give grants up to £1,000 which are on the agenda with supporting papers until the review has been done, this was seconded by Cllr Kay and with a vote of 2 in favour, 4 against and 1 abstention the amendment was not carried.

Cllr Kay's original motion on the agenda:-

Recommendation from Environment and Green Spaces Committee on the 28th September 2021 to change their Terms of Reference: -

- under item 2. Aims the committee can also approve grants to support environmental projects.
- Under item 3. Delegated Business: Item 3.8 Encourage and assist in the development of climate projects from individuals, groups or small businesses in the Town which can include approving grants from the Climate & Ecological Emergency Community Fund Existing item 3.8 to be renumbered.

It was proposed by Cllr Kay seconded by Cllr McNeill-Ritchie and with 2 in favour and 3 against it was **RESOLVED**: This motion was not accepted.

53. Confidential business

It was proposed by Cllr Potter seconded by Cllr Trimble and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED**: To start confidential business.

Members of the public who spoke at the Full Council meeting

1. Geoff Farrer said he was in favour of the one-way system and would like it brought back with a wider loop. He thought that New Road should be one way. He thought that from Woolley Street vehicles should turn left into Leigh Road and turn right onto Holt Road. He said that would help stop pollution in the town centre and be better for cyclists. Acting Chairman asked Chairman of Sustainable Travel Committee to answer Mr Farrer.

Cllr Trimble said there will be a town wide consultation in two weeks' time and when the results are known Wiltshire Council Highways Department will have to come up with a solution acceptable to all. Acting Chairman said that views for this can be taken via an online portal.

Cllr McNeill-Ritchie said that the consultation on the town needs to concentrate on what it wants to see as a result of any traffic system not their own pet ideas on how things work which could fragment the town, he said there will be a lot of different views, he would like to see a centre of the town that is calmer with a friendly system towards pedestrians and cyclists but the town needs to all agree.

2. Jeremy Wire referred to the notice on the public seating, said the members of the public who attend this meeting should be allowed to speak when they want in an open and transparent way and not be limited to two minutes each at the beginning. Acting Chairman said it was the Chairman's discretion whether members of the public are allowed to speak when the council is in session. She said that he had been her experience that other Committee Chairman have allowed the public to speak when the council was in session when their input was relevant to the discussions. Cllr McNeill-Ritchie agreed that this was the correct standing order and said that the public have been allowed to speak in the past in this council and the previous one during in the meeting, although it can be difficult for the chair. The Clerk said it was also difficult to minute.

3. June Alexander asked how residents in the town can make contact with the town council. The Acting Chairman explained how councillors or the office could be contacted. June Alexander added that back in July she sent all councillors an email and only one of them responded. Acting Chairman apologised for this. June Alexander said she was disappointed that she had not even received an acknowledgement to her email from councillors.