



**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 10th January 2023 at 7p.m in St. Margaret's Hall

Attendance – Town Council

Cllr K Bessant
Cllr S Blackwell
Cllr E Franklin
Cllr D Garwood
Cllr S Gibson
Cllr S McNeil-Ritchie
Cllr J Parker (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr A Potter
Cllr T Trimble
Cllr K Vigar (Chairman)
Cllr J Vittles
Mr I Brown (Chief Executive & Town Clerk)
Ms S Howe (Committee Clerk)
Mr Matthew McLaughlin (Communications Officer)

Members of the public: Carol Aldridge, Jeremy Wire, Richard Smith, Joyce Shaw, Beryl Turner, John Box, Andrew Nicolson, Lisa Otter-Barry, Duncan Cameron and 2 others

Apologies: Cllr A Kay

53. Declarations of interest - none

54. Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr Gibson and seconded by Cllr Trimble and with 9 in favour and 2 abstentions it was **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 8th of November 2023 were accepted as a true record.

55. Matters arising – none

56. Chairman's report

The Chairman report is attached to these minutes. The Chair highlighted a couple of her engagements including the Remembrance Sunday service and gathering at the War Memorial and the St Laurence School A' Level presentation evening held in early January at the Wiltshire Music Centre. The Chair commented that it was wonderful to be commemorating and celebrating these events in person after the pandemic disruption. She went on to state that the town should be very proud of its young people for performing so highly having not had the opportunity to sit their GCSE examinations and periodically managing with online teaching during their 6th form experience. Awards were presented both for academic and also such attributes as character and leadership. The Chair thanked the school for inviting councillors along to the evening.

57. Minutes of Committees

The minutes of the following committees were noted: -

(i) 15.11.22 Town Development, (ii) 22.11.22 Community & Wellbeing, (iii) 29.11.22 Sustainable Travel, (iv) 13.12.22 Resources.

58. Budget 2023-24

Following on from the Resources committee meeting on 13.12.22 Cllr Blackwell (Chair of the Resources Committee) introduced the item stating that the current cost of living crisis was foremost in the committee's mind when considering the budget, to minimise any further burden. The key area of growth was the maintenance and refurbishment of the town's newly acquired play areas from Wiltshire Council. This factor had helped push the budget up by 8% on the previous year but due to savings being made and the use of reserves an increase of just 6% was proposed. He hoped this would be seen as a prudent settlement. Cllr McNeil Ritchie stated that he was pleased with the budget and impressed by all those involved who have displayed careful financial management. Cllr Bessant said that directly employing more people was a good thing considering increased staffing and subsequent staffing costs partly due to the recent asset transfer process with WC.

It was proposed by Cllr Gibson and seconded by Cllr Trimble and with all in favour.

RESOLVED: to accept the budget for 2023/24 totalling £1,283,020 and set the 2023/24 Precept at £1,038,600 which would require an increase in the council tax for Bradford on Avon of 6%. A band 'D' property will pay £250.61 per annum.

59. Events Working Group

The motion was presented and introduced by Cllr Garwood. The Town Council puts on a number of events each year for public information and enjoyment and whilst some are small and/or longstanding enough to require minimal supervision in the preparation, others such as Christmas lights, a proposed music festival and the fireworks display require more formal supervision in the preparation monitored by a working group. The motion is to bring together a standardised system where the working group will consist of any 2 councillors, appropriate officers and necessary experts to ensure controls are in place and will be overseen by the town development committee.

It was proposed by Cllr Garwood and seconded by Cllr Bessant and with all in favour.

RESOLVED: to agree the principle of working groups to oversee events organised by the town council.

60. Residents Panel

The end of year report which is attached to these minutes was introduced by the Chair. She thanked the residents who make up the residents panel for their diligent responses and tenacity. Pleasingly, there has been an increase in engagement over the course of the year. The Chair also wanted to thank the Communications Officer who took up the project very shortly after joining the town council and has worked diligently to provide both suitable/relevant questions and in providing the panel with enough notice to engage with the surveys resulting in a noticeable increased participation over time. The results of the various surveys have led to: a popular online newsletter, planned planting of community fruit trees and bushes and film afternoons as part of the warm spaces initiative with a proposal that these sessions continue into the spring and beyond.

61. Traffic Consultation

The item was introduced by Cllr Trimble who reiterated that the three primary concerns from the consultation: safety for cyclists and pedestrians, reduced traffic volumes and improved air quality are still at the heart of the town council's dealings with Wiltshire Council, the Highways Authority. At the meeting with the local MP, Michelle Donelan, Cllr McClelland (Cabinet member for Highways) and the town council on November 25th, it was made clear that WC would not proceed without a substantial contribution from the Town Council and

they asked for two thirds of the modelling costs. Marlborough Town Council was cited as an example of a council which has agreed to contribute 2/3rd for a similar modelling project. In the meantime, Cllr McClelland has resigned as Cabinet member for Highways and his replacement will be Unitary Cllr Caroline Thomas who is also a councillor on Marlborough town council. Cllr Trimble confirmed he is seeking a meeting with her ASAP. The first paragraph of the motion (attached to these minutes) was read out and the proposal that a 50% contribution towards modelling costs, £25,000, be set aside instead of the two thirds suggested, as WC's claim that a two thirds contribution (to fund traffic modelling costs) has been agreed by Marlborough Council is still unsubstantiated. A discussion followed; Cllr McNeil-Ritche sought confirmation that the motion was to reserve £25,000 not spend £25,000 as more commitment is needed from WC on project timings, quality and planning but accepted that making provision was necessary. Cllr Gibson stated that she suspects the Highways Authority doesn't really treat town and parish councils with sufficient respect particularly as they hold most of the cards with town and parish councils having less authority and input but lots of interest. However, for the project to be 'bid ready' for any central government funding the necessary modelling and subsequent public consultation and backing must be completed so the town council needed to engage. A framework for the decision-making process, should the council offer to pay towards modelling costs, was discussed and the following agreed: that the motion be accepted with the final decision on the commitment of the set aside sum coming back to a meeting of Full Council (extraordinary if necessary to speed the process up) once the project scope (time frame and confirmation that the town council recommends to WC the preferred scheme for implementation) is finalised.

It was proposed by Cllr Trimble and seconded by Cllr McNeil-Ritchie and with all in favour. **RESOLVED:** to set aside £25,000 as a 50% contribution towards the total cost (£50,000) of the traffic modelling proposed by Wiltshire Council Highways to aid identification of an optimal traffic management scheme for the town with a final decision on commitment of the set aside sum to come back to a meeting of the Full Council meeting once final details are established.

62. Next meeting

Next meeting arranged for 7th March 2023.

The meeting closed at 8.32 pm

Members of the public who spoke at the Council meeting on the 10th January 2023

1. Richard Smith

Question 1: Agenda Item 4 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 8th November 2022. The published minutes on the 8th November do not record any discussion, policy or decision under item 51 (Confidential Business). It is perfectly understandable that a Council may need to discuss issues in private; but the subjects in question, arguments presented, and any decisions in consequence, should be recorded and published. This is not the first such occasion that 'Confidential Business' has not been recorded in the minutes of the meeting. As a point of principle there is nothing that a local Council can do or discuss that should not be able to be published. Please can the Council rectify the public record for the meeting on the 8th November, review the minutes of previous meetings, and publish revised minutes of previous meetings.

The Chair confirmed that 'confidential business' is standard practice and some details must always remain private however the town council is consulting with WALC (Wiltshire Association of Local Councils) to see what could be made public.

Question 2: In the minutes of the meeting on the 8th November the Chair undertook to provide details on costs associated with the management of Becky Addy Woods. Would the Chair please confirm the total amounts and detail of spend on surveying, security, maintenance and other costs for Becky Addy Woods so far in 2022/23, and the level of budget provision for the ongoing management of Becky Addy Woods in 2023/24.

The Chair confirmed £5,507 spent on surveys, £3,736 on security, £1,995 on fencing and £14,290 on tree works totalling £25,528, and the budget for 2023/24 is £2,500 planned expenditure but that may change depending on the situation.

2. Barney Weston. Agenda Item 11, Traffic Consultation: 'The conclusion from the Future of Transportation consultation was clear – reduced traffic volume, improved air quality and better pedestrian and cyclist safety across the whole town, none to be achieved at the expense of another. The proposal on the table from Wiltshire Council does not seek to achieve any of these aims but attempts to resolve one of Wiltshire's significant traffic problems. Will the Town Council please consider carefully whether:

1. The mandate they claim to have from the consultation is still valid, given how little the current proposal relates to the three objectives.
2. Whether they are seeking unduly to influence the outcome of any modelling by requesting an 'input into the model' commensurate with their financial contribution to it.
3. Whether the significant funding they are seeking to approve for the modelling would be better spent elsewhere, or to be ring-fenced until the political and financial climate is better suited to discussions on a scheme which seeks to address all three objectives.

Cllr Trimble answered these questions stating that the traffic modelling will be run with the intention to achieve the 3 primary aims but there is no proposal for a traffic scheme yet. Options or recommendations for schemes will be modelled to see how effective they might be.

Cllr Gibson added that the town council *will* be involved so that the community is involved, not to manipulate WC but to ensure openness and that our 3 aims are in their minds at all times.

3. Carol Aldridge – Agenda Item 11, Traffic Consultation: 'The pack for this meeting includes reference to Wiltshire Council not wanting changes which would increase traffic for adjacent

areas such as Staverton. So why would WC or BoATC expect Bradford on Avon to tolerate changes that would increase our own traffic, as research confirms a one-way system would do or to use BoA's money to fund modelling for such a system as the only option being suggested despite it cutting directly across the clear mandate to reduce traffic?'

Cllr Trimble stated that the modelling was to find the balance by improving traffic flow but not encouraging extra traffic. Reduced transit times across town will increase traffic so it is necessary to do modelling to eliminate the possibility of either a racetrack or hold ups. Cllr Trimble agreed to have a look at references offered by Ms Aldridge.

4. Lisa Otter-Barry: Question to BOA Full Council 10/1/23

The Council received details last summer from the Friends of Becky Addy Wood about the Tree Risk Assessment system called VALID, (www.validtreerisk.com).

VALID uses the principles of QTRA Quantified Tree Risk Assessment, further developed and stress-tested by the Professor of Natural Hazards & Risk Science, University of Bristol. The system is aligned to the government's H&SE risk framework.

We would like to ask BOATC to adopt VALID as its methodology for tree risk assessment across all its green spaces.

Using VALID helps to ensure that the risk posed by trees is not accidentally over-estimated, and it would result in the minimum amount of tree-felling to maintain public safety. Reducing needless felling is even more vital since recent research reveals that mature trees lock away twice as much carbon as previously thought. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-64028694>

One example of how VALID could help reduce tree loss is Becky Addy Woods. The VALID assessment of Becky Addy last summer by a tree risk specialist advised that further tree-work is not needed for the maintenance of public safety at the present time - instead the trees need regular monitoring.

The biodiversity and climate benefits of around 50 ancient woodland trees currently at risk, can thus be saved using the VALID system.

Using VALID across all council land would also minimise:

unnecessary loss of trees and habitat of tree dependent species - unnecessary risks to tree-surgeons. A Wiltshire Council Tree Officer has stated that "the potential for a fatality at this site is considerably higher than your average woodland tree felling" (Email from David Wyatt 9/3/22)

unnecessary costs to the council and the taxpayer

Please will the council adopt the VALID system without delay.

The Chair confirmed that the town council undertakes surveys of trees aligned to the H&S exec risk framework, tree surveyors that we use have appropriate qualifications and experience. Surveys consider risks to humans who might be under trees or parts of trees. There are various systems in use but the one we use is in line with HSE framework and the town council are content with methodologies in place.

5. Jeremy Wire: Agenda Item 11. Does it not set a precedent that WC are asking for a contribution for a highways project and will it engage the town council in contributing to further highways projects in future.

The Chair confirmed that this is the difficulty we are in and will form part of the discussion later, despite the inaccuracy of the claim that a precedent has been set elsewhere. Cllr Trimble confirmed that the other town council who has been asked to contribute have not formally agreed to the request for a contribution for modelling either.

Modelling question: WC don't want traffic moved out of the town to clog up anywhere else how possible is it to do modelling which incorporates traffic reduction within the modelling should that occur?

The Chair confirmed that as she is not an engineer it is not really possible to answer that question however Cllr Gibson stated that previously those who looked at the town's traffic problem saw that 65% of the traffic moving through BoA was through traffic and WC quite rightly do not want this pushed through nearby towns and villages such as Staverton because of a new scheme in BoA, modelling should explore schemes which will reduce traffic for BoA by pushing that traffic onto the A350 instead.

6. Duncan Cameron. Agenda item 11. WC seem to be in dire financial straits and the correspondence between the town council and WC appears to indicate a lack of real interest by WC to find a solution to BoA's traffic problems, so will WC try and cut corners financially which will not be in the town's best interests, so is it a good time to pursue this project, will the town council be asked to finance future phases and are the council planning for this?

(i) are we confident WC will give it their best shot?

(ii) in the midst of a financial crisis is this the best use of our £40K to spend on a modelling project?

(iii) should we put the thing on ice until funds become more readily available?

The Chair confirmed that WC do not have funding for the implementation of a scheme from their usual budgets, but this type of scheme once fully formed and with the backing of the public can be 'bid' for should an opportunity arise from outside the normal budgetary process. So the council may well need to help out with modelling costs to push the project along so WC are 'bid ready'.

Cllr Trimble added that (i) he has worked with the town's traffic engineer for some time and finds her diligent and thorough. (ii) He sees our contribution as an investment as traffic has been the major gripe of this town for years, ultimately, he would like to see more car sharing, including the use of electric vehicles, more walking and cycling, deliveries on cargo bikes which an improved traffic management scheme can assist with, and echoed the Chair's response that we need to get the preparatory work done so we are bid ready. (iii) if things get worse rather than better then why wait.

7. Joyce Shaw. Agenda Item 11. She is concerned that the modelling will not provide answers to the three main aims of the traffic consultation and stated that from the Minutes of the 8th November 2022 some councillors were not positive about the use of modelling.

Cllr Trimble, stated that a one-way system was in the frame because the streets are so narrow so to ensure pedestrian safety a one-way system is an obvious candidate for the modelling process. There are serious dangers walking and cycling around the town's streets thus improvements are needed before a fatal accident but one which does not attract more traffic. Exploring options could be achieved using trials but modelling gives the best shot at resolving some of this.

8. Beryl Turner. Agenda Item 11. Ms Turner stated that the MP's newsletter had notes suggesting modelling was a good idea to inform the town's improved traffic scheme and the MP believes a one-way system is the best solution to increase pedestrian safety. The newsletter also stated that Marlborough town council are to pay two thirds of the modelling costs for their traffic scheme.

The Chair confirmed that Marlborough has not agreed to pay two thirds yet. Cllr Mc-Neil-Ritchie asked if the MP's government will provide some funding if the council produces a bid to which Cllr Gibson answered that that question was asked of the MP at the meeting with the council and the MP stated it was WC who would sort out the funding. Cllr Trimble agreed that the MP was not forthcoming with money, and Active Travel England have also been approached and have not responded so far.

9. John Box. Agenda Item 11. (i) can anyone justify the costs of the modelling which seem very expensive? (ii) is there evidence that when the one-way system was in place Staverton did have a lot of extra traffic?

The Chair confirmed that £50K was the least it could be done for according to WC. These are standard fees for a complex level of work. Different scenarios will be explored, and the work will take between 3 and 6 months. Cllr Gibson confirmed that any modelling will check that traffic is not pushed through other small local towns, but the council has not seen data providing evidence that extra traffic was pushed through Staverton during the social distancing one-way arrangements.

10. Andrew Nicolson. Agenda Item 11. Why does Item 11 say discuss and approve the motion, isn't that unconventional and gives the appearance of predetermination, why not just discuss?

The Chair stated that it reflects the motion as it is set out as that item on the agenda.

How many main options are going to be modelled and what are they?

Cllr Trimble said he could think of at least a few options but as the options are Cllr Trimble's suggestions for modelling probably best not mentioned here as do not want to predetermine the work of the experts.

Does the motion commit town council to spending the money and only to WC not anyone else?

Cllrs McNeil-Ritchie, Cllr Trimble and The Chair all confirmed that the motion only commits the council to reserving the money at this stage.