



Full Council meeting

Minutes

From the meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 24 September 2024

At: St Margaret's Hall, St Margaret's Street, Bradford on Avon

Decision making

The **decisions** made by the Full Council at this meeting are at minutes 29 & 32.

Present

Councillors:

- Kate Bessant
- Sam Blackwell
- Emma Franklin
- Dave Garwood
- Sarah Gibson
- Alex Kay
- Simon McNeil-Ritchie
- Jennie Parker * arrived 7.15pm
- Tim Trimble
- Katie Vigar
- Jack Vittles

Town Council Officers:

- Ian Brown - Chief Executive & Town Clerk
- Chris Stringer – Deputy Town Clerk
- Matthew McLaughlin – Communications Officer
- Sarah Hawkins – Accountant
- Chris Hogg – Green Spaces Officer
- Kelvin Purnell – Venues Officer

Meeting clerk:

- Sarah Howe – Committee Clerk
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Apologies

From Councillors unable to attend the meeting:

- Alison Potter
-



28. Agenda item 3 - Declarations of interest

Councillor Dave Garwood confirmed that he lives on Market Street in the centre of town, likely to be directly affected by any new traffic scheme.

29. Agenda item 4 - Minutes from the previous meeting of the Full Council

Proposed by Councillor Tim Trimble

Seconded by Councillor Katie Vigar

and with all in favour it was **resolved** to accept the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 9 July 2024.

30. Agenda item 5 - Matters arising

The Chair confirmed that the case against the town council regarding Becky Addy Wood has recently been resolved and the Chair read out the statement at Appendix B.

The Chair also went on to say:

This court case has taken up a considerable amount of councillors and officers time over the last two years and has been particularly stressful for those involved. I would like to thank all town councillors and officers, especially Ian Brown, Chief Executive & Town Clerk, Chris Hogg, Green Spaces Officer, Councillor Alex Kay, Chair of our Environment and Green Spaces Committee and Mrs Kate Nottage, local resident, all of whom gave evidence at the trial and, along with Cllr Katie Vigar, Mayor at the time, worked tirelessly on trying to bring this to a resolution.

The next stage will be a hearing where it is hoped that the injunction will be lifted (to allow for responsible management of the woodland). The council will receive a costs award and will seek to recover as much taxpayer's money as possible.



31. Agenda item 6 – Chair’s Update

The Chair provided a verbal update of his recent activities and engagements

- The Chair met with Dr Brian Mathew M.P. in August, newly elected for Melksham and Devizes. They discussed traffic, the old golf course site, flooding and local businesses. The Chair confirmed he is looking forward to an excellent working relationship with Dr Mathew.
- The Chair opened the new Poulton play area at the Playday event on the 7 August. The Playday is likely to become an annual event for Poulton playarea and is celebrated nationwide. The Chair thanked all the officers involved with the organising, with completion of Phase 1 of the play area and with ongoing fundraising for Phase 2.
- A communi-Tea afternoon was held in St Margaret’s Hall on 1 September organised through Alzheimer’s Dementia support. Funds were also raised, and the Chair thanked Councillor Parker for all her support.
- The annual Walking Festival took place on the first weekend in September amid awful weather, and despite that was quite well attended.
- Over the same weekend there was a climate change service at Holy Trinity Church which considered the topic both around the world and in Bradford on Avon.
- Again, over the same weekend was the Annual Flower and Produce Show. Despite a mediocre summer weather-wise, the Chair was impressed by the range, quality and size of some of the produce!
- The Chair met with the manager of the Hub and reminded everyone what a useful resource it is to anyone who might need it. They have recently introduced a grief support service.
- FairTrade fortnight has recently taken place organised by the Bradford on Avon FairTrade group. The Chair thanked the group for organising events over the fortnight especially a talk from a Kenyan tea farmer, Patrick, which was most entertaining.



32. Agenda item 7 - Traffic – Decision on a new traffic management scheme for the town centre

The Chair began by reading out the rules for the rest of the evening, made a statement and invited the public to ask any traffic related questions. Questions forwarded to the town council ahead of the meeting were also read out in full. All questions can be found in summary form at Appendix A.

A vote was taken at 9.30pm to continue the debate beyond 2 hours 30 minutes as stipulated in the standing orders.

Proposed by Councillor Jack Vittles

Seconded by Councillor Simon McNeil-Ritchie

And with all in favour **resolved** to continue with the meeting beyond 9.30pm.

The Chair's statement began by addressing Bradford on Avon's (BOA's) centuries long issue with traffic. Even in medieval times there was congestion on the town bridge which led to a widening programme.

Today, Wiltshire Council (WC) are engaged with the town to alleviate the worst of the traffic congestion and improve conditions for the town's residents. He thanked Councillors Trimble and Gibson for their work as Wiltshire Councillors in reaching this point. He indicated that the debate needed to generate a proposal, in the hope of designing a scheme to put forward to WC which should convey an overall level of support from residents. He believed areas of consensus exist and can be found amongst councillors and the public and using all the evidence presented through expert reports, consultations and engagement with local residents over several years there is an opportunity to make some progress and break the deadlock.

The Chair invited Councillor Trimble to open the debate who began by referring those present to the AtkinsRealis Modelling Report prepared for both the town and Wiltshire Councils. He read a section of the report which stated that Option C better fulfils the aims of the study and by extension the aims of the town council and therefore Option C would be the report's recommended Option to progress to the next stage of the process.



Councillor McNeil-Ritchie had previously stated, during the public questions, that Option A (although discounted in the report as the recommended option) nevertheless fits the town's 3 main priorities (to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, reduce traffic volumes and improve air quality) best of the three options. There is also much support for Option A amongst the residents.

However, he continued, that perhaps councillors should move on from picking an Option (A or C), devise something the residents recognise as a suitable scheme and bear in mind that there are some projections of an additional 2,500 more car journeys through the town over the next few years so doing something will be better than nothing. Perhaps Option A would get the process started?

Councillor Bessant queried the report's focus on traffic journey times through town. Improving journey times would surely lead to an increase in traffic?

Councillor Gibson provided the first proposal; a range of measures to form a traffic scheme. She began by pointing out that WC have already stated they are not prepared to reduce traffic volumes through BoA by merely diverting traffic elsewhere so improvements for the other two aims will have to be sought. Pedestrian safety needs to be a priority because of the intimidation pedestrians experience from traffic levels walking into and around the town. This impacts businesses, tourists and particularly elderly residents (a view shared by Councillor Parker).

Councillor Gibson's proposals included: town wide 20mph speed limit, wider pavements on lower Silver Street and upper Market Street as a minimum leading to one-way or alternate priorities for traffic in those areas, any parts of town negatively affected by a new scheme need serious consultative mitigations (such as pedestrian crossings and chicanes) and finally introduce these measures as an experimental traffic order (ETO) to allow for tweaking down the line.

Councillor Kay fully supported the introduction of 20mph limit across the whole settlement area of the town and would like to see enforcement of any reduced speed limit. A townwide 20mph zone would also beneficially lead to a reduction in street furniture. She also supported the maximisation of pavements as far as possible.

Councillor Vigar agreed with the Chair's statement adding she also believed that safety of pedestrians and cyclists is critical particularly around the schools



in the town so is seeking slower speeds which will also help cut noise pollution. Flexibility for the roads subject to pavement widening must be considered for emergency vehicles access and the bus service should not be so affected that it ends up eliminated from some areas of town.

Councillors Vigar, Kay and Trimble all supported the idea of reducing the weight restriction on the town bridge to reduce through traffic and heavy goods vehicles.

Councillor Garwood felt trialling a scheme would be a good idea and there was general support amongst councillors for the ETO if the wording indicates that if a trial was successful it could be made permanent.

Councillor Blackwell began by thanking Councillor Trimble for all his hard work tirelessly bringing the town and councillors to this point in the process.

As well as agreeing with much of what had been said he added any scheme must consider all the residents of the town and if any are losing out (because altered priorities might affect traffic moving past their front doors) the councillors have a duty of care to make sure the gains out way the losses across the town, ensuring it is worth it for the greater good. He referred to the AtkinsRealis report stating cherry picking points to make a case should be viewed with caution, AtkinsRealis are experts in their field, so the report deserves due respect, Option A is forecast to increase journey times across town and does not take into account the impact of mitigations introduced. Both Options A & C consider pavement widening. He also approved of the ETO, and some flexibility around altered priorities for traffic. Councillor Bessant also supported 20mph speed limits and trialling any schemes but is that possible with pavement widening ideas? Apparently: yes.

Councillor Gibson counselled against remembering the covid scheme with rose tinted spectacles when 'everyone' worked from home. That particular one-way scheme was a covid/social distancing scheme, which at the time had greatly reduced traffic flows passing through town and caused enormous amount of work for Councillor Gibson with WC Cllr Wayman due to endless email complaints about it. Such a scheme, which some residents are suggesting is essentially Option A, would not work the same, post pandemic, as it did back then particularly as no mitigations were in place.

Councillor Trimble thanks Councillor Blackwell for his kind words and added that following on from the pandemic times an extra 5,000 vehicles are passing



through town each day at least. He also confirmed that due to human behaviour a priority scheme on Market Street/Masons Lane would lead to one way at busy times and not at quiet times.

There then followed discussion around shuttle or one-way schemes at pinch points in areas of pavement widening, how flexible trial schemes might be, whether timed access to some roads may or may not work.

The Chair then proposed the following which ran through several drafts to provide the final recommendation:

Proposed by Councillor Simon McNeil-Ritchie

Seconded by Councillor Sarah Gibson

And with **all in favour resolved:**

BOA town council recommends WC to design a scheme on an experimental traffic order (ETO) with the ability to be made permanent, and which will be assessed continually against our top priority of pedestrian safety, which has:

- 20mph speed limits throughout the town
- Wider pavements being prioritised and maximised throughout the scheme, particularly at the bottom of Silver Street and the top of Market Street
- One-way traffic east to west on Silver Street.
- Two-way traffic on Masons Lane
- Serious consultative mitigation measures put in place from the start in any areas negatively impacted
- Transparent consultation with emergency services, local bus services and local schools on the impacts of any scheme

We are open to exploring both one-way and priority shuttle working at the top of Market street, and would welcome guidance from expert WC highway engineers as to which system it would be most beneficial to our priorities to put in place first on a trial basis.

The Chair thanked all involved.



34. Next meeting

The next Full Council meeting is planned for Tuesday 5 November 2024.

End of the meeting

The meeting finished at 10.25 pm.

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Appendix A:

There were 140 members of the public present and 30 questions were asked.

(Q1) Isn't Option A the only solution to allow the expansion of pavements?

Councillors Trimble and McNeil-Ritchie confirmed both A and C will allow for pavement widening although A more so than C, with additional widening at the lower end of Market Street.

(Q2) From the Extract of the AtkinsRealis report, resident believes traffic volume is the key issue but this is beyond the scope of the study or any scheme. Resident would like a one-way system but not without a reduction in traffic volume.

It was confirmed traffic volumes diverted away from the town centre will not be considered by Wiltshire Highways. However, the town council has a chance to get things started with issues within town.

(Q3) A resident indicated their support for the covid one-way system as the best of a mediocre bunch of options. The town needs to futureproof itself against a rise in traffic particularly with an increase in house building likely across the town with the Labour government in power.

Councillors Trimble and Kay asked residents to consider that there were no mitigations in place with the covid one-way system so no pedestrian crossings, chicanes, extra roundabouts or speed limit reductions which would impact the free flowing covid system.

(Q4) Resident queried the statement published that 58% of responders to the consultation preferred Option A. Feels it's misleading. Therefore, Option A not the most approved by residents and council should move to approve Option C as guided by modellers. Asked council not to succumb to whim of those in favour of Option A.

There was discussion about the merits of C over A and vice versa from report findings, whether the bus service had to be taken into consideration, the merits of the modelling and the time frame considered and anecdotal reports of residents all preferring Option A.

(Q5) A question challenging the town council on not implementing the one-way system in order to reduce pollution by easing congestion. The resident felt



those living on the proposed one-way system may have undue influence to stop it.

The Chair confirmed the case for the one-way system would be covered during the debate.

(Q6) A resident referred to the AtkinsRealis Modelling report which states a slow steady flow of traffic is the ideal scenario. Therefore, why not 20mph though town enforced by the Police?

This question was covered by the debate

(Q7) There was a comment that the situation now rather than in the future is what needs attention, again a slow steady flow of traffic through town is required, stationary traffic causes pollution.

(Q8) There was a query regarding the town council asking for final comments. The resident wondered if there were a lot of comments from out of town.

The Chair confirmed that postcodes were not requested so there is no way of knowing who sent in final comments.

(Q9) A resident asked when a second pedestrian bridge will be built as they considered it to be much needed. The current town bridge is too congested and unsafe for pedestrians.

The Chair confirmed that a project to build a second pedestrian bridge is underway with an outline business case given to Wiltshire Council for their consideration.

(Q10) A resident said they would like Option A and want the process to start tomorrow.

(Q11) A resident reminded those present that sweeping statements like 'all residents agree' or 'all residents want...' are not accurate. Not everyone wants the one-way system for example. Lay people do not know better than experts, AtkinsRealis are expert modellers and do a lot of it. Some hybrid between Option A & C would need analysis and the outcome without it would be very unclear. 'Common sense' will not make the outcome clear.

The Chair agreed that for any scheme the impacts positive and negative need to be considered carefully. Wiltshire Highway engineers will be involved and statutory consultations with emergency services and bus companies etc will



take place. Councillor McNeil-Ritchie reminded those present that the one-way system implemented during covid was covid specific with no mitigations in place, any new one-way system will have mitigations and other parts of town may need help too. Councillors may not be experts but can help with local knowledge.

(Q12) A resident sent in a paper to the town council last week regarding pinch points around town. The one-way system removes several pinch points.

The Chair reiterated that any new scheme is looking for a steady flow of traffic not a faster flow of traffic, which should help protect residents safely in town.

(Q13) There is a lot of walking to school in Bradford on Avon although this does statistically drop off when heavy levels of traffic are forced along primary pedestrian routes such as Mount Pleasant and Sladesbrook causing concern as well as problems with pollution. Why would councillors introduce traffic systems to increase risk to vulnerable pedestrians who should be top of the list of protection.

The Chair confirmed the scheme will want to engage with schools and protect pupils.

(Q14) There was a question regarding the impact of any one-way system on the bus service and what is a bus gate?

Councillor Trimble confirmed a bus gate is traffic lights controlled by oncoming buses. WC are now prepared to consider a scheme without bus gates. The covid one-way bus route will not be suitable for any permanent scheme.

(Q15) There was a question about traffic bumping up onto pavements, bollards are needed for pedestrians.

The Chair confirmed pedestrian safety is paramount. Councillor Trimble stated if the resident has a specific area in mind, bollards can be requested and to get in touch with him.

(Q16) Are there contingency plans for residents living on any one-way system for emergency vehicles, flooding, road works etc

The Chair confirmed that any scheme will need to have flexibility built into it to accommodate such issues.



(Q17) A comment that individuals need to be responsible for their actions too when walking around town.

(Q18) A resident thanked councillors for making these hard decisions. Also is there any security for leaving the meeting, and will the final comments be published?

The Chair confirmed that the comments will be published and Councillor Kay was horrified that security might be needed when leaving a public meeting in Bradford on Avon. The town is a pleasant, civilised place and everyone deserves to be treated with respect. (She offered to phone the police if there are any problems).

(Q19) Comment from a resident: The town council passed a motion to recognise the climate emergency, the Neighbourhood Plan, Town Vision, and Wiltshire Council's Climate Strategy suggest a need for less carbon intensive forms of transport eg walk/cycle rather than use cars. So good moment for 20mph throughout town, cycle lanes, wider pavements etc. Resident promotes Option C over Option A as a way of reducing further traffic build up and management measures around pinch points.

(Q20) 30mph on New Road is already dangerous, If one-way system introduced will the limit be dropped to 20mph?

Chair confirmed would like to see 20mph across town.

(Q21) The whole Future of Transport process seems to have been a mixture of referendum, consultation and expert guidance, surely the councillors should go with the expert view? Option A - a good idea during the pandemic when people not going to work, Option C holds opportunities.

(Q22) A resident living on Mason's Lane prefers the one-way scheme as when in place previously there was no congestion which was great.

The AtkinsRealis report assumes a bus gate with Option C, surely the model should be run again for Option C without the bus gate as this has been dropped as an idea.

(Q23) Most facilities such as shops and doctor's surgery are on the south side of town, surely more facilities on the north side of town for those residents living there would be a good idea.



(Q24) So far only a version of Option A has been trialled not B or C. Surely councillors need to agree on one of the options? Resident would like to see: pinch points sorted out, 20mph through town, mitigations where needed and remove heavy traffic.

Councillor Gibson reminded residents that the covid one-way system was also very unpopular at the time and the intention of it was only to widen pavements. Don't recall it too romantically. Option A has not been trialled.

(Q25) A resident suggested reclassifying the main road through town from an A to a B road.

Councillor Gibson commented that town councillors have no influence with that, and Councillor Trimble suggested SatNavs don't really distinguish between A and B roads for the fastest route.

(Q26) As Wiltshire has mandatory housing targets Bradford on Avon will have to grow. A by-pass could help with congestion if house building increases.

Chair confirmed that currently a by-pass is not an option available.

(Q27) How do the councillors know they have a reflection of what the town wants?

The Chair confirmed that BOA has a very high response rate to consultations if considered nationally, councillors will be looking at all the evidence base over the last few years from all the public engagements. We also live in a representative democracy not a direct democracy so councillors have been elected to take the decision on that basis. He also confirmed that the councillors have all been thinking about the matter very deeply.

(Q28) A residents asked why the town council will not just accept the recommended option from the AtkinsRealis Report? As it meets the objectives set and provides better traffic flow than other options tested.

The Chair confirmed this would be considered in the debate

(Q29) Option A has serious weaknesses as admitted by Atkins analysis and experienced during the covid one-way system period. Channelling north to south traffic along Mount Pleasant/New Road was dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists and now pupils walking to school will be affected should a one-way system be reinstated. Why would councillors even consider this given the



Aktins analysis and direct experience of problems, damage to cars and hazardous conditions?

(Q30) The AtkinsRealis report says all the Options have flaws.

Will there be a chance to reverse anything that doesn't work out?

Should we wait until the A36 is fixed?

What about a traffic light option at peak times?

The Chair confirmed that the council will be asking for ongoing monitoring for any scheme introduced. No need to wait for the A36 to be fixed the problem is bad enough at the best of times and the traffic light option may come up in the debate.

(Q31) There was a question about the use of risk assessments so far in the process and going forward.

The Chair confirmed that the traffic engineers will be dealing with risk once they are involved.

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Appendix B: Statement regarding Becky Addy Wood

The Town Council is pleased that the High Court case brought against the Council regarding Becky Addy Wood has been dismissed.

The judge, His Honour Judge Blohm KC, has ruled in favour of the Town Council, confirming that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), between the Friends of Becky Addy Wood (FROBAW) and the Town Council is binding, that the council has complied with its duty to consult with FROBAW in the production of the management plan for the woodland and that the claimants, Lisa Otter-Barry and Christopher Humphries do not have any trust claim over the woods, nor does FROBAW.

The judge concluded that “The Council’s attitude to negotiations appears to be clear and open [Para 193 of the judgement],” and that “Mr Hogg’s report to committee is the Management Plan; it did not need to be agreed [Para 169 of the judgement]” that “I [HHJ Blohm KC] consider that it satisfies the agreement requirement [Para 164 of the judgement].”

The Town Council is particularly pleased that the judge recognised that the officers and councillors involved in the case have undertaken their roles in good faith. “I have no doubt that, having heard the evidence, the Council has not negotiated the acquisition of the woods in bad faith, and has sought to apply the Memorandum of Understanding as they understood it [Para 192 of the judgement].”

The Town Council deeply regrets that it was obliged to spend considerable officer and councillor time and £463,025.05 in legal fees and disbursements fighting this case. It was not possible to withdraw from the case as it was brought against us. Despite undertaking two rounds of mediation and offering a number of opportunities to settle and stop this legal case, the claimants pursued the case to trial.

The next step is to seek a costs award from the court and the Town Council will be working rigorously to recover as much taxpayers’ money as possible.

The Town Council plans to continue to undertake its duties under the MoU and hopes that the council and FROBAW can move forward with a positive working relationship.



We stand by the fact that we have engaged with those individuals in good faith throughout this process, attempting to avoid this expensive and time-consuming case.

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