



## Full Council meeting

### Minutes

From the meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday 7 January 2025

At: Youth and Community Centre, Frome Road, Bradford on Avon

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### Decision making

The **decisions** made by the Full Council at this meeting are at minutes [43](#), [46](#), [49](#), [50](#), [51](#) & [52](#).

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### Present

Councillors:

- Kate Bessant
- Sam Blackwell
- Dave Garwood
- Alex Kay
- Jennie Parker
- Alison Potter
- 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

Meeting clerk:

- Sarah Howe – Committee Clerk
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### Apologies

From Councillors unable to attend the meeting:

- Emma Franklin
  - Sarah Gibson
  - Simon McNeil-Ritchie
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42. Agenda item 5 - Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

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

Proposed by Councillor Jack Vittles

Seconded by Councillor Tim Trimble

and with all in favour it was **resolved** to accept the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 5 November 2024.

44. Agenda item 5 - Matters arising

None.

45. Agenda item 6 – Chair’s Update

The Chair gave a verbal update as follows:

The Chair attended a meeting about the traffic management scheme with Wiltshire Council (WC) along with Cllr's Trimble & Garwood and the Town Clerk of the council on 18 November - more under agenda item

November 25 saw catastrophic flooding in BOA and the Chair thanked all the town wardens, other council staff and flood wardens for all their help during the floods.

November 29 was supposed to be the Christmas lights switch on event, which sadly got cancelled. However, many people were out and about that evening and many shops were still able to go ahead and open late.

A flooding meeting with Brian Mathew MP, the Environment Agency, Leader of Wiltshire Council and council staff took place on the 5 December. This was a productive meeting with further updates under the agenda item.

Also, on the December 5 the Chair had lunch cooked by Year Six pupils at Christchurch school. It was delicious, so a huge thanks to them!

January 15th is the date of the costs hearing in the Becky Addy Woods case. The public will be updated as soon as there is news.



#### 46. Agenda item 7 – Budget 2025/26.

The Chair asked Councillor Blackwell, who is Chair of Resources committee, to introduce the item. Councillor Blackwell began by thanking the diverse range of town council staff for all their collective efforts during the flooding episode in November.

Staff numbers have been increasing since the asset transfer in 2022, but numbers are now steadying. Operational costs such as energy bills and waste disposal continue to mount. The town council wishes to continue with a portfolio of events and entertainment for the residents with revenue and expenditure targets in place. Play area upgrades are underway starting with Poulton Park. St Aldhelm will be the next to be considered.

The Becky Addy Wood court case has impacted the council budget. The council will push for the best cost settlement and pursue costs awarded to recover public money spent on the case.

Finally Councillor Blackwell added that going forward the council's finances will allow the next administration to pursue their plans and activities and in summary the budget has been calculated as £1,556,910 for 2025/26, 80% from the precept, which is an increase of 9% and therefore for a Council Tax Band D property the cost will be £297.74 per annum which equates to an increase of 47p per week.

Proposed by Councillor Blackwell

Seconded by Councillor Vigar

And with all in favour **resolved**: to approve the budget for 2025/26 as stipulated in the report set at £1,556,910, 80% from the precept, which is an increase of 9%. A Council Tax Band D property will be charged £297.74 per annum which equates to an increase of 47p per week.

#### 47. Agenda item 8 – Flooding Update

The local MP, Dr Brain Mathew, set up a meeting in the wake of the November floods with Councillors Vittles and Kay, the Wiltshire Council leader, 3 members of the Environment Agency (EA) and the Town Clerk. It was reported that residents and businesses had felt let down by Wiltshire Council and the Environment Agency (and are still disgruntled about the removal of barriers by the EA). WC now appears to understand that they need to improve



flood planning and communication with the town. Currently the Police alone are responsible for road closures, but it was suggested Town Wardens should also have Chapter 8 training too to be able to close the town bridge. Wiltshire Council are considering this.

Meanwhile the 'new' EA flood management scheme for the town, following on from the removal of flood barriers some years ago, was paused in 2019 due to a funding gap. Dr Mathews asked whether the scheme could be feasible or deliverable and has asked the EA to report back. It is likely the funding gap will be even more acute, so an argument would be for available funding to go into resilience measures for those affected instead.

The EA are also planning a public engagement session for local businesses and residents to attend. Information will be published when available. Both Councillors Kay and Trimble believe resilience measures are the best course of action going forward as part of a proper flooding strategy.

It was also confirmed that St Margaret's Hall is still drying out under the instructions of the insurance company. Once complete assessments will be made regarding the refurbishment of the building.

#### 48. Agenda item 9 – Traffic Update

The Chair provided a verbal update having previously circulated a briefing note to councillors. Following the Full Council meeting of the 24 September 2024 where councillors agreed a proposal for the new traffic management scheme, Councillors Vittles, Trimble and Garwood met with Wiltshire Council representatives on the 18 November 2024 to discuss. Present from Wiltshire Council were:

- Councillor Nick Holder – Cabinet member for Highways and Flooding
- Dave Thomas – Head of Highways, Asset management and Commissioning
- Sam Howell – Director for Highways and Transport.

The Chair felt that the meeting had been positive but the subsequent briefing note, as a summary of the meeting, was more circumspect. In the briefing note Wiltshire Council have flagged up that

- the bus route via Silver Street cannot be rerouted and so a contraflow bus lane will be needed if Silver Street becomes one-way. WC are prepared to do the work to prove if such a concept would work



- the proposal to introduce 20mph across the whole town will be restricted as 'A' roads in Wiltshire are often exempt from qualifying criteria.

Various councillors expressed their extreme frustration at WC's changing stance regarding the need to accommodate buses on Silver Street, variability around the introduction of 20mph speed limits around Wiltshire's roads, variability around which proposals will be considered, too many changes in WC personnel and variable understanding that pedestrian safety is the town council's top priority. This has combined to make progress slow and difficult.

The Chair suggested that he would write back to Wiltshire Council particularly to cover:

- taking up the offer of testing for the accommodation of buses on Silver Street if it were one-way
- requesting Wiltshire Council's expert opinion regarding priority shuttle at the top of Market Street

and summed up that, having come this far, the town council will have to continue to work with Wiltshire Council, even with shifting parameters and personnel, in order to achieve some traffic management improvements.

The Wiltshire Council briefing note will be published very shortly.

49. Agenda item 10 – Update on pedestrian river crossing

At the traffic management scheme meeting on the 18 November Wiltshire Council also discussed the introduction of a new pedestrian river crossing with the town council as pedestrian movements are an area of concern. WC have made an offer to provide engineering and bid support to the town council. The Chair sees this as a massive opportunity to progress that particular project.

Councillor Vigar was pleased with the offer which could help improve choice and help minimise the cutting off of the north and south sides of the town during flooding episodes.

The Chair confirmed he would send a separate letter/email to accept the offer.

Proposed by Councillor Vittles

Seconded by Councillor Trimble



And with all in favour **resolved**: following the submission of the Town Council's Strategic Outline Case for a safer river crossing the Town Council are pleased to accept Wiltshire Council's offer to provide engineering and bid support for a new pedestrian bridge.

50. Agenda item 11 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Vittles

Seconded by Councillor Blackwell

And with all in favour **resolved**: to go into confidential business.

54. Next meeting

The next Full Council meeting is planned for Tuesday 11 March 2025.

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End of the meeting

The meeting finished at 9.10 pm.

Appendix A: There were 3 questions asked and around 10 members of the public present.

(Q1& 2) – Questions clarifying Agenda item 10. The Chair confirmed that any queries regarding the item would be clarified during the agenda item.

(Q3) – A question asking which councillors are discussing the traffic management scheme with Wiltshire Council. The Chair confirmed that all councillors were invited to attend the meeting of the 18 November 2024 with Wiltshire Council. The councillors present at the meeting are listed in the minutes.