



Bradford on Avon Town Council

Annual Report: April 2023 to March 2024

Introduction

Reflecting on the past year's work of the town council and the life of our town, it's clear how much we all benefit from the spirit of volunteering that is so strong locally.

As a town council, we are very conscious that great things can be achieved when our team of councillors and officers and the town's volunteers work together in partnership.

A great example of this is the skatepark, built at the start of the last council year. It has been fantastic for the well-being of our younger residents, involved many local businesses and a wonderful community effort to raise the funds needed. With the trees we planted in early 2022 growing and plans for the play area now well advanced, we are seeing a real revitalisation of Poulton Park and meadow — in a way that is good for nature and the community.

Our events have continued to flourish — and for this too, we owe our appreciation to many generous volunteers who enable the town council to deliver fantastic events including the fireworks last autumn, Christmas Lights Switch On and our BoA Live Music Festival — a new event, which is getting bigger and better each year.

About the town we see volunteers at work in our parks and green spaces, tidying our pavements and footpaths, helping others at times of flood or snow, and in the clubs, schools, charities and other organisations that provide a wealth of opportunity locally.

It's been my pleasure as Mayor to talk with many of our volunteers, to see what it means to people to volunteer. Joining with others to make a difference brings its own rewards, as many of you can testify. Hence our plans for *BoA Join In* day in June — an upcoming event to celebrate the range of ways we can all get involved in our community.

Of course, our town council officers provide the steady, day to day effort that enables us to achieve all we do as a town council, and I thank them all.

Finally, I am grateful for the contribution of my fellow councillors — we too are volunteers — for all their work. I am sure that the coming year will see all of us continue to work together, the town council team and volunteers, to support a flourishing, thriving and sustainable community in the town we all love.

Outgoing Mayor, Councillor Katie Vigar

Play & Sports



Play area improvements

In 2023/24 we committed £400,000 to improving play areas in the town.

This year, we focused on improving the play area in Poulton Park.

In the summer we unveiled designs by play provider Wicksteed. And following extensive consultation — and design revisions — a new, more ambitious design was produced.

As the new design is more expensive, we're going to have to split this project into phases. The first phase is due to start in June. This means there'll be improvements and new play equipment in time for the summer holidays.

We're working hard to secure the additional funding to complete the project. Recently, we launched a crowdfunding campaign to complete the project — and we've been offered £25,000 in match funding.

We hope to complete this project in as few phases as possible. After which, we'll focus on other play areas in the town.

BoA Skatepark opens

In September we opened the long-awaited skatepark at Poulton Park.

This would not have been possible without help from so many groups, charities and individuals. Far too many to name!

On 9 September, hundreds of people turned out for the Skatejam officially opening the skatepark. The day featured music, competitions and everything between.

But most importantly, all of the young people — skaters or not — had a brilliant afternoon.

Going forward, we've also set up the Bradford on Avon Playing Field Association to help with fundraising for similar projects in parks and green spaces.



Travel & Transport

Future of Transport

Since last year, we've not stood still on the subject of traffic.

Following meetings with Wiltshire Council, we agreed to pay for the majority of a study which would recommend a possible future traffic model.

We received the report, by traffic consultants AtkinsRéalis, in early 2024. The report explains the result of a modelling study designed to find a suitable new traffic model.

In March 2024 we launched an engagement exercise so that residents could give us their views on the report's findings and recommendation.

The engagement survey closed on Sunday 12 May — and at the time of writing we've not yet fully analysed your responses. But, we hope publish those as soon as possible.

Safer river crossing

In November 2023, Sustrans and the town council launched a consultation on a new river crossing — which would aim to create a safe walking and cycling link across the river Avon.

Sustrans' team is currently looking at your responses and developing an outline business case for this project.

E-bike loan scheme

Did you know... the town council has an electric bike (or e-bike) that Bradford on Avon residents can borrow for 1 or 2 weeks to see if an e-bike might work for them.

E-bikes are becoming increasingly popular as a healthy and low-carbon alternative to cars. They can be expensive though, so if you're thinking about buying one but you're unsure for any reason, then why not try out ours?

We're currently asking people to register their interest in the scheme — and will announce a full launch sooner rather than later. Find out more on our website.



Events

Events in Bradford on Avon

There's no denying that Bradford on Avon is full of heritage, history and a love of music.

The town council is delighted to be able to organise plenty of events for the town and its community.

And we place a great deal of importance on well-planned and meaningful community events.

In 2023 and 2024 our events went from strength to strength — with plenty of learning in-between.



Thousands still attend our regular events such as the Christmas Lights Switch On and in the coming year we hope to continue this trend — with a far more ambitious music festival and much more up our sleeves.

Fireworks success

Thousands attended November's firework display on Poulton Park — and the atmosphere couldn't have been better.

There were lots of lessons learned from the previous year, and we're glad we could deliver a brilliant event for the community.

Thanks to everyone who was involved in organising the event — and especially the volunteers who help steward.

With those people who volunteer their time and skills — big events like these simply could not happen.



Community

Residents' Panel

It has been another successful year for the Residents' Panel — where we have asked for the panel's opinions on:

- play areas
- Community Fridge
- Town Vision
- our events
- our website
- our newsletter/ BoA Snippets
- town council meetings
- our priorities
- the king's Coronation
- how we consult.

We also commissioned an infographic about the Residents' Panel and what the responses have led to.



Low Energy Cooking

Working with Climate Friendly BoA we bought:

- 3 air fryers
- 3 slow cookers
- a pressure cooker.

These appliances are available for town residents to borrow for up to 3 weeks to see if they help meal time.

Although they cook in different ways, air fryers, slow cookers and pressure cookers can all help you to save energy, money and time when you cook meals.

People might be unsure about how to use these appliances. Or they might be uncertain about how much they would use them — or how much they could save.



Community



Business forum

We hosted a drop-in Business Forum in July 2023. The event was led by Cognisant Research.

Over 30 local businesses attended and shared their thoughts with business development in the town.

We are using the findings to help focus our support of local business.

Ticket office petition

Over 3,000 people backed our petition opposing the closure of local railway station ticket offices.

In July, a national consultation into the proposals was launched and was closed by the following September.

Ahead of the consultation's closure, Councillor Katie Vigar, the Mayor of Bradford on Avon at the time wrote to

Great Western Railway.

In her letter, Councillor Vigar expressed the strength of feeling in the town against the proposals and provided details of the petition to the railway company.

The plans to close railway station ticket offices have been shelved for the moment.

BoA Youth

BoA Youth is the youth service for Bradford on Avon.

In April 2024, we brought management of the youth service in house. This included the transfer of four part-time members of staff.

This will allow us to shape BoA Youth and offer a more directed service.

BoA Youth run 2 weekly clubs for young people in Bradford on Avon:

- Tuesdays – 5pm to 7pm – 8 to 12 years
- Thursdays – 6pm to 8.30pm – teens.

We also continued the Summer Holiday Club during summer 2023.



Planning & Twinning



Culver Close Pavilion

We're still working to develop a new community and sports pavilion for Culver Close (and Victory Field).

After revising the designs — based on pre-planning advice from Wiltshire Council — the town council unanimously voted to submit a planning application for a new pavilion in October.

A planning application for a new pavilion at Culver Close was submitted to Wiltshire Council in April 2024.

If approved the new design would be built on the footprint of the current pavilion with a much-needed upgrade to facilities.

At the time of writing, we are waiting to hear the outcome from Wiltshire Council's planning team.

Visit from Tubas

In February 2024, the town was visited by guests from Tubas, Palestine (West Bank).

During their visit, Hossam Daraghmeh, Mayor of Tubas and Councillor Katie Vigor, planted an olive tree near the Twinning Garden.

We also installed a plaque celebrating the long-standing friendship link between the 2 towns.



Twinning



Norden twinning visit

In October, the town council hosted a civic reception for guests from Norden — a German town Bradford on Avon has been twinned with for over half a century.

During the afternoon tea-style event, chairman of the Norden twinning group, Hans-Enno Schepker gifted the town with a photo taken during the last visit to the town in 2019 for the 50th anniversary of the link.

The photo is on display on the twinning wall in the town council offices.

We hope everyone visiting the town this year has a brilliant time and appreciate the work of all those involved in our twinning associations.

Town concert & Sully-sur-Loire visit

Civic guests, residents and French twinning guests packed Holy Trinity Church this weekend for a Town Concert.

Organised by the town council, the event was an opportunity to showcase some of Bradford on Avon's musical talent, welcome guests to our town and celebrate our link with our French town, Sully-sur-Loire.

Over £731.11 was raised for Alzheimer's Support Wiltshire and Oxfam.

Local choirs – Wiltshire Wailers, Tow Path Singers and West Wiltshire Young Singers — were joined by St Laurence School's Random Band and, celebrating the French twinning link, the band Société Musicale de Sully-sur-Loire performed while visiting.

Sully's band led the civic guests in a procession from the town council office to Holy Trinity Church.



Environment

Climate & Ecological Emergency Anniversary

2024 marked 5 years since the town council declared a Climate Emergency on behalf.

We believe that how we act and how we work is just as important as what we do — and our decisions and our actions at the town council are shaped by the climate crisis and the ecological emergency we are all facing.

New green spaces policies

We adopted 2 new policies in summer 2023 — to help conserve and protect our green spaces.

The first was a ban on metal detecting on our land.

This came after a spate of rogue detectorists dug up Victory Field and Culver Close.

The second was a ban on impromptu barbeques on our green spaces.

Barbeques in green spaces can be a fire risk — and disposable barbeques were linked to some of the wildfires that happened in neighbouring counties last year.

Both of these policies will also help to protect the grass, trees and habitats that make up our natural environment.



Former golf course petition

In November, we launched a petition urging Wiltshire Council to remove the former golf course as a reserved site from its draft Local Plan.

Passionate residents took up the call and amassed more than 2,000 signatures by the end of the month.

Every single signature helped to illustrate the strength of feeling about the site and how much of a loss it would be to the town if the site was developed.

We eagerly await the results of the consultation.

Environment

Flooding in the town

In January 2024 the river Avon breached its banks and flooded a lot of the town centre.

During this time our town warden team helped to direct traffic away from heavily impact roads. While officers spoke with affected businesses and started on plans to coordinate future flood responses.



We also published extreme weather advice pages on our website which we hope will sign post people to help where it is available — as well as links to other responsible authorities, public transport and available extreme weather relief funding.

Tree planting in 2023/24

Last year, we planted over 3,000 trees and whips thanks to grant funding from the Forestry Commission.

This year, we planted 28 trees in Barton Farm Country Park — thanks to a £14,500 grant from Swindon Borough Council.

Community Fridge

In June 2022, we launched the Bradford on Avon Community Fridge.

Throughout 2023 we not only increased collections to 7 days per week but also started collecting donations from Sainsbury's.

On average the Town Warden team collects 1 to 2 bags of food from the Co-op daily with an average weight of over 5kg.

This means that over a week, the Community Fridge is stocked with 35kg of food.

Over the course of the working year, this will mean that the Community Fridge is stocked with 1.7 tonnes of food.

At the time of writing the Town Wardens have collected from Sainsbury's twice collecting 4 crates on each visit. These crate weigh around 10kg each — which saves a further 40kg of food waste from going to landfills.

Green Spaces

South West in Bloom 2024

The town council is always proud to enter the South West in Bloom competition.

It helps showcase the environmental and horticultural work we do — as well as the work within the community.

This year we achieved a Silver Gilt following a visit from the judges.

The In Your Neighbourhood entries also achieved a lot this year — with many entrants such as The Three Horseshoes, Wiltshire Heights and the railway station garden achieving an Outstanding grade (best possible). The beloved Secret Gardens were awarded a Thriving status.

Judges from South West in Bloom also gave Holy Trinity Church an Outstanding award.

Pride in Parks award

We also entered Poulton Park and Barton Farm Country Park into the Pride in Parks award.

The judges awarded us top marks for our management of the green spaces.

Judging for Pride in Parks is based on community involvement, biodiversity, horticultural and general management of the spaces, as well as the scale and tidiness of the parks.

One judge praised our ambitious projects — such as the new plans for Poulton play area — and management of the “valuable green open space”.

At Barton Farm the judge praised our tree planting and noted the wonderful wildflower meadow.



Green Spaces

Bristol & Avon River Blitz

Councillors Alex Kay, Tim Trimble and Sarah Gibson, alongside fellow citizen scientists from Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon, Liz Stephen, Gill Brooks and Simon Kay, took part in the Bristol Avon River Trust RiverBlitz.



The RiverBlitz is a yearly event where volunteers across the country collect water samples during the same week in July from their local rivers to test nitrate and phosphate levels.

Observations about the sample sites are also recorded. This helps give a snapshot of the water quality.

We took samples at 8 different sites throughout Bradford on Avon from above the town weir to below Avoncliff Weir with some very interesting results.

The data collected is entered into

the Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust (BART) website, analysed and plotted on a regional map by the RiverBlitz team.

This regional approach enables us to better understand what is happening in our waterways and determine where we should focus efforts to improve the water quality for people and wildlife.

Running out of Time Relay

The Running out of Time Relay came to the town this year. The runners were greeted at the Tithe Barn by a reception of Morris Dancers. The reception was largely organised by Climate Friendly.

Becky Addy Wood

The high court trial concerning the litigation brought against the town council on Becky Addy Wood took place from Tuesday 30 April to Friday 3 May 2024.

We understand the judge will hand down his judgement in writing in due course — and has not at the time of writing.

The town council regrets the case was brought against it and the considerable amount of officer and councillor time and public money that the case has cost.

As the defendant the town council was not able to withdraw from the case although it made every effort to reach a pre-trial settlement with the claimants.

Your town council

Town council meetings

Meetings happen throughout the year. They usually take place on Tuesday evenings from 7pm. Across the year we have meetings from our committees including Full Council, Sustainable Travel, Environment & Greenspaces, Community & Wellbeing, Town Development and Resources.

A calendar of town council meetings can be found at: bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk/committees-and-meetings

Your officers

Officers ensure the day to day running of the town council.

They are responsible for providing advice, implementing the town council's direction and taking action on decisions made.

Who we are

Chief Executive & Town Clerk - Ian Brown

Deputy Town Clerk - Chris Stringer

Accountant - Sarah Hawkins

Communications Officer - Matthew McLaughlin

Green Spaces Officer - Chris Hogg

Tourism & Events Officer - Katie Ponsford

Senior Administration Assistant - Gill Murray

Community Engagement & Development Officer - George Tomlinson

Committee Clerk - Sarah Howe

Events Assistant - Charlotte Davidson

Venues Officer - Kelvin Purnell

Venues Assistance - Megan Taylor-McCaffery

Planning Assistant - Val Baker

Administrator - Lucia Sheppard

Town Warden Supervisor - Richard Snarr

Town Warden - Simon Sutton

Town Warden - Mark Jones

Town Warden - Matthew Powell

Town Warden - Andy Martin

Town Warden - Mike Hayward

Town Warden - Steve Grimes

BoA Youth Coordinator - David Lloyd

BoA Youth Support Worker - Dan McGauley

BoA Youth Support Worker - Amanda Wiffen

BoA Youth Support Worker - Sammi Slade

Caretaker - Roger Collett

Contacting us

We're open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm (excluding weekends and bank holidays).

You can contact us at 01225 864240 or pop into our office on Kingston Road.



Your councillors



Town councillors are volunteers elected by the people of Bradford on Avon. They attend meetings and make decisions about what the town council does.

Bradford on Avon is divided into 2 wards: South Ward and North Ward. Each ward is represented by 6 elected town councillors.

NORTH WARD

Councillor Tim Trimble* (Lib Dem)
Councillor Sam Blackwell (Lib Dem)
Councillor Alex Kay (Ideal Bradford)
Councillor Katie Vigar (Lib Dem)
Councillor Alison Potter (Lib Dem)
Councillor Simon McNeill-Ritchie (Ideal Bradford)

SOUTH WARD

Councillor Sarah Gibson* (Lib Dem)
Councillor Kate Bessant (Ideal Bradford)
Councillor Jack Vittles (Lib Dem)
Councillor Emma Franklin (Ideal Bradford)
Councillor Jennie Parker (Lib Dem)
Councillor Dave Garwood (Ideal Bradford)

*these councillors also represent Bradford on Avon at Wiltshire Council — the Unitary authority.





Bradford on Avon Town Council produced this document for the Annual Town Gathering 2024 on Tuesday 28 May.