



# BANBURY TOWN COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

### REVIEW OF THE YEAR BY TOWN MAYOR CLLR JAYNE STRANGWOOD



AT MY INAUGURATION

It was with great pride that I became Mayor of Banbury in May 2022.

The year has been extremely busy and time has gone very quickly. I have fulfilled as many engagements and supported as many local charities, voluntary organisations and Banbury-based groups as my schedule would allow.

I have made many new friends and acquaintances and I have seen at first hand the amazing work of many unsung heroes in the town.

Wherever I have gone, I've met people who work for the good of others and I acknowledge the importance of people who do voluntary work in the community.

I have raised £2,000 to be shared between three good causes – Frank Wise School, Katharine House Hospice and Helen & Douglas House Hospice.



DECORATING A CHRISTMAS TREE WITH FRANK WISE SCHOOL PUPILS

It has been an absolute privilege to be the Mayor of Banbury and I have many memories that I will treasure for the rest of my life. I thank everyone who has helped me during the year.

Thank you all. I've loved every minute of it, and if I've helped a good cause or two somewhere along the way, then it has all been worthwhile.



OPENING BANBURY FAIR

***Cllr Jayne Strangwood, Town Mayor 2022-2023***

## CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE

Banbury Town Council is the first tier of local government and is therefore closest to the people.

Banbury is one of the biggest town councils in the country with an annual budget of around two million pounds. The council strives to improve the quality of life for the people of Banbury and works to enhance the attractiveness of the town as a place in which to live, work, visit and invest. Its objectives are

- \* To provide a strong and independent voice for Banbury
- \* To provide high standard and cost-effective services
- \* To promote Banbury as a clean, safe, welcoming and prosperous town
- \* To preserve and enhance the traditions, character and identity of the town
- \* To work in partnership with others to achieve more for Banbury

Banbury Town Council was formed in 2000. It meant Banbury once again had its own voice after 26 years of being run by Cherwell District Council. The town had been without its own voice since 1974 when the former Banbury Borough Council was disbanded under Local Government Reform. The town council works with other councils and public agencies – including Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council which also provide services in Banbury.

The services and facilities provided by the town council include

- PARKS, PLAY AREAS, OPEN SPACES
- SPORTS PITCHES
- ANNUAL TOWN EVENTS
- CEMETERIES,
- GRADE II TOWN HALL
- ALLOTMENTS
- BUS SHELTERS
- DOG LITTER BINS
- GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
- PUBLIC MONUMENTS AND CLOCKS



BANBURY TOWN HALL - HOME TO THE TOWN COUNCIL

Banbury Town Council has 22 elected members and three main committees – the Resources Committee, the General Services Committee, and the Planning Committee.

**The Resources Committee** looks after money matters and the council's properties and landholdings. It controls the council's spending and oversees the annual budget. It works hard to keep council tax as low as possible.

The council is committed to conducting its business in accordance with the law, regulation and standards to ensure public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and spent efficiently and effectively.

**The General Services Committee** manages and maintains the town's 120 parks and open spaces. It oversees the maintenance of two cemeteries, six allotment sites, 70 play areas, recreation facilities and outdoor gyms, dog litter bins, senior and junior football pitches, cricket facilities and bowls greens.

The committee is responsible for the council's popular annual events, free at the point of entry – including the Banbury and District Show (became Jubilee Special in 2022, and Coronation Special in 2023), Food Fairs, Canal Festival, Christmas Lights Switch-On, Music Festival – which all attract extra visitors to the town centre. Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Day, and Remembrance Sunday are also well supported.

**The Planning Committee** meets every four weeks to consider planning and traffic-related issues in the town. The committee works in partnership with other organisations to achieve more for Banbury. Whilst Banbury Town Council remains a statutory consultee, the planning decision is made by Cherwell District Council.

The committee oversees the work of the Town Centre Partnership, the Built Heritage Working Party, the Civic Society, CPRE, Chamber of Commerce, the Historical Society, and the Traffic Advisory Committee.

**The offices of the town council are in the town hall. To contact the council call 01295 250340, or email [info@banbury.gov.uk](mailto:info@banbury.gov.uk) or write to Mark Hassall, Town Clerk, Banbury Town Council, Town Hall, Bridge Street, Banbury, OX16 5QB or log on to the website: [www.banbury.gov.uk](http://www.banbury.gov.uk).**

**For corporate hire of the civic rooms, as well as for weddings, birthdays and family occasions, please contact our events team at [www.banburytownhall.co.uk](http://www.banburytownhall.co.uk)**

Residents can easily contact the council and monthly drop-in sessions at the town hall enable voters to speak to councillors off the record and without booking appointments. The drop-in sessions are on the first Saturday of each month (10am-midday) except in January and August.

## **HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE**

The council's committees make decisions on issues put before them or make recommendations that are discussed at full council meetings – where the recommendations can be approved, rejected, or sent back to the committees for a rethink.

Council officers – the men and women who work at the town hall – can advise councillors, but in practice they work with the decisions made by the elected members.

The mayor is elected by councillors, and he or she will be a councillor. The mayor is a civic figurehead – the public face of the council. He or she acts as chairman at council meetings but has no executive powers. He or she has no authority to organise, arrange, or promise anything for groups or individuals but can pass on requests which then have to go through the committee/council procedure.

All meetings of the council are held at the Town Hall, Bridge Street, Banbury. They take place on Tuesdays and commence at 6.30pm unless otherwise stated. Meetings are open to members of the public. All elected members at Banbury Town Council have chosen to act in a voluntary capacity, and are therefore unpaid democratic representatives.

**The 2024 Annual Town Meeting will take place on 4 March 2024. This is not a Banbury Town Council meeting but an annual meeting of Banbury's residents – specifically the local government electors registered in the town. It provides a valuable forum for residents to hear what the town council has been doing over the past year and its plans for the coming year.**

**The 2024 Annual Council Meeting and Mayoral Inauguration will be on 14 May 2024.**

#### **Grant Aid**

The town council assists a wide variety of local organisations with grants that enable them to function for the benefit of all sections of the Banbury community. Full details can be found on the council's website together with details of the Small Grants Scheme.

## **REPORT BY CLLR KIERON MALLON, CHAIRMAN, RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Banbury Town Council concentrates on making our town a better place in which to live, work, and visit.



CLLR MALLON

Let's have a look at what we do.

This committee deals with policy and finance – income, outgoings and council tax.

Financially, this council is in good health. Expenditure is within forecast and no major issues or concerns have been identified.

This council has an enviable record of low taxation while providing excellent services, Banbury Town Council tax has increased by only £4.93 for the average household since 2010. This means that the current figure for Band D properties is £127.05 a year.

For that, this council provides and maintains all of the town's parks and play areas, cemeteries, sports grounds, allotments, bus shelters, dog litter bins, and organises the full calendar of free annual events.

The parks' maintenance programme continues with new paths and play area revamps in the budget recently passed.

Something new in the 2022-2023 council year was the creation of the Warm Spaces scheme that helped people stay warm without running their home heating systems all day.

This council has offered and awarded grants to enable local communities, clubs and other organisations provide the warm spaces.

The council's grants scheme offers up to £500 to enable charities and other groups maintain warm spots in parts of the town where they are most needed.



At the last count we had 16 places offering warmth and good company at various times during each week.

This council is looking at alternative energy solutions at the town hall to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

The council has also invested in a simplified booking system for halls and sports facilities and details will be on our website in the near future.

I touched earlier on our annual events.

This council has, over more than 20 years, organised a wide range of annual events. They are family days out – free at the point of entry – and they include the Party in the Park, Food Fairs, music festival, canal festival, Christmas Lights switch-on, Town Mayor's Sunday, Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Day, and Remembrance Sunday.

Last year the district show was replaced by a three-day platinum jubilee event and this year by a coronation special.

These events attract many thousands of people to our town, which boosts the local and town centre economy. We also offer support and work in partnership with the Business Improvement District, which represents the town centre businesses and traders.

We and they are concerned that policies to restrict car use, limit access and parking in the town could hinder our town's vibrancy and economy. We have sent a robust response to the County Council's proposals, see planning committee report.

We must remember that most of our rural hinterland does not have a bus service. This is not new, the decline in rural buses goes back over the last thirty years. We are lobbying the County Council to improve public transport to Banbury as an important and historic market town.

Town centres will evolve, and once again become a true mixed economy. Retail, office and – as is already happening – more residential. With more people living in the town centre, more people are likely to use the local shops and amenities.

We already witnessing a different type of retail, social and leisure use, as people who live in the town centre walk to shops and have a reduced need to drive to out-of-town retail parks.

Entrepreneurs are already moving in to empty units and the choice of food shopping is better than it has been for decades.

By encouraging town centre living – as this council has and will continue to do when consulted by the district planning authority – we will see a true mix, as in yesteryear.

So, we are a distinct voice against county council policies that could hinder access to our town and businesses, and we will be robust and scrutinise the proposals emanating from the district council on economy and regeneration and if they have merit we will support and work with them.

Our allegiance is to the town, its residents and businesses – not other tiers of local government.

In the meantime, Banbury Town Council works to make the town an attractive destination.

Going back to our events, we organise them to increase the footfall in our town to help local traders. That was the reason we started them 20 years ago – to combat the already declining town centre.

They are successful. They bring many thousands of people into the town – past Gateway, past the retail park, past the supermarkets.

The idea is that while people are at our events they will walk around town and use the shops, pubs and restaurants, in the daytime and in the evening.

We work in partnership with Banbury BID and CDC to promote the town.

We're doing all we can, and will continue to do so.

## **REPORT BY CLLR MARTIN PHILLIPS, CHAIRMAN, GENERAL SERVICES CTTEE**

The general services committee is the council's 'green' committee.

It oversees parks, open spaces, outdoor sports grounds, play areas, allotments and cemeteries covering the management and maintenance of more than 1000 acres of Banbury's green infrastructure.

The council is responsible for 14 neighbourhood parks spread across Banbury, including Spiceball Park and People's Park in the town centre, as well as 90 other open spaces.



CLLR PHILLIPS

Within these parks and open spaces, we look after 70 children's play areas and teenage multi-use games areas. The Park Ranger team has continued keep up to date with health and safety inspections of our children's play areas and has carried out any necessary repairs.

We look after five sports grounds at Horton View, Easington Recreation Ground, Moorfields Park, Hanwell Fields and Chandos Close.

We have six allotment sites. Four are managed by allotment associations and two are run directly by the town council.

The council operates a comprehensive bereavement service and maintains Southam Road and Hardwick Hill cemeteries as well as St Mary's Churchyard. They are maintained to high standards by our in-house team appropriate for reflective mourning by families of the deceased.

### **Achievements over the past 12 months included:**

One project that attracted a lot of attention was our contribution to the Queens Green Canopy.

We planted 50 trees at two sites to be part a project that is being supported nationwide.

We planted an avenue of oak trees at Hanwell View and a circle of maple trees at Crouch Hill and both have been formally adopted by canopy project organisers.

In addition, three trees were also planted at People's Park, Southam Road Cemetery, and Hardwick Hill Cemetery.

They are now on the project's official map which shows all trees planted for the canopy across the UK and we have received official plaques recognising our contributions.



More than a million trees have been planted around the country by councils, organisations, and individuals – and the finished 'national forest' will be a lasting reminder of the Queen's

outstanding service to her country and her people.

The café in People's Park was completed in November, and will be open with a new operator for summer 2023 so that park users can enjoy snacks and drinks.

Work has commenced on the design and refurbishment of the walled garden in People's Park. This will make an added attraction for community use and restore some history to the park.

Plans for the St Mary's Churchyard landscape refurbishment proposals have been prepared and are awaiting approval.

Six safety-first barbecues were installed at Spiceball Park which have given 'dining out' a new meaning. Families can enjoy alfresco meals cooked on disposable barbecue sets without the risk of fire – and with easy disposal of the hot embers. Town mayor Jayne Strangwood was first to use the BBQ units.



Each unit is a cooking station designed to hold disposable BBQ sets. When cooking is complete, the still-hot barbecue trays can be pushed through a flap into a metal storage container where they can cool down safely. Separate bins are provided for other rubbish so there's nothing to take home.

The play area at Lapsley Drive has been refurbished.

We have continued to work with partners on environmental community projects.

In a joint venture with the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust this council is involved in a wildlife makeover project that has transformed the River Cherwell in Spiceball Park.

The project began in October 2015 and has opened up the riverside and improved natural habitats for fish, birds and river plants.

That work has been extended to Hanwell Brook Wetland Area and the Mineral Railway. A new 100-yard hedge was planted in the Spring last year. It was a joint project with BBOWT and Banbury Trees. 450 native mixed hedgerow plants - with a lean towards fruit and flowers to help the birds and insects – were planted, strengthening this wildlife corridor through Banbury.



The council worked with members of the Rotary Club Banbury and Cherwell District Council as part of the Thames Valley 'water course clean-up' initiative to remove litter and debris from the river Cherwell through Bridge street Park.



Work has continued with community involvement from BBOWT and Banbury Community Action Group on the park and orchard at Browning Road.

The Salt Way Action Group volunteers have been busy undertaking landscape enhancement works to increase biodiversity along the Salt Way and Waller Drive open space.

### **Projects planned for 2023/2024 include:**

Installation of life-saving defibrillators at all our sports grounds so that athletes who suffer cardiac arrests can receive treatment during the crucial period before emergency services reach the scene. The defibrillators will be attached to the pavilions at the sports fields. Following the publicity of people with no history of heart problems suddenly collapsing during sports events, these defibs will not only be there to help users of the council's facilities, but will provide a valuable resource to help the wider community.

Landscape and layout plans are being developed for the land purchased to extend Hardwick Hill Cemetery.

Play areas at Princess Diana Park and Hill View Park will be refurbished

An accessible-for-all circular path is to be installed at Easington Recreation Ground.

Municipal green waste compost bays are being created at Spital Farm in Grimsbury. The green waste will be composted and then used by the council as mulch in its parks and open spaces. This will to reduce the need for green waste skips, aid moisture loss and so reduce watering, and help suppress weed growth.

The General Services Committee is committed to providing high quality services at the lowest possible cost to council tax payers while concentrating on truly green issues.

### **REPORT BY CLLR TONY ILOTT, CHAIRMAN, PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Planning Committee considers planning applications, traffic orders, and any statutory

consultations that may be ongoing.

More than 300 applications have been dealt with in the past year with just over 30 over those being the subject of reports to this committee.



CLLR ILOTT

Major applications for housing on the periphery of the town and for commercial development to the east of the M40 at Huscote Farm have been dealt with by responding to CDC consultations. The latter is now to be determined following a public local inquiry conducted by a government inspector commencing in April.

We have been consulted by Oxfordshire County Council on the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and most recently on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Banbury.

Regarding the latter, Banbury Town Council has responded that

- The town council understands the concept of improving the cycling and walking infrastructure in and around the town to try to increase the usage of these modes of transport but doubts if much of the detail is deliverable, affordable, or acceptable to residents and businesses. The specific cycling proposals often seem to include a reduction in carriageway or pavement width. The loss of carriageway for cars, buses and HGVs can only result in increased road congestion and impact upon safety. Increased congestion for cars will not result in modal shift but only add to frustration and annoyance for those road users and potential health impacts from increased queueing.
- The town council questions whether these proposals are truly deliverable with respect to cost, ownership of land and acceptability to residents. Local dissatisfaction at future detailed consultation points with modal filters, loss of on-street parking, etc will result in delay or abandonment of proposals.
- Many of the specific route proposals indicate that design solutions will emerge as a result of detailed design work. Whilst this is understood, the individual acceptability of these proposals is not known. Banbury Town Council insists that it be consulted on these later design solutions. Similarly, it is thought essential that affected residents and businesses are also consulted on these emerging schemes before go-ahead.
- We question why certain routes/locations are not included in this document but are said to be delayed for consideration to a future iteration, namely most of the length of Oxford Road (which is an obvious desire line and for much of its length has enough verge width to create a segregated cycle way), and the Hennef Way/Wildmere Road junction (which is almost impossible to safely cycle through due to traffic volumes and speed).

- We are concerned about the often-used 'solution' of loss of carriageway width and/or removal of turn lanes to provide a segregated cycle lane. This will increase queue lengths, increase congestion and air pollution and reduce safety. In addition, it may increase difficulty for the manoeuvring of HGVs and buses.
- We have concerns about loss of on-street parking where this is indicated.
- The town council believes that the concentration of this plan on cycling and walking will divert the county council from its essential role in promoting and protecting public transport. A high-quality public transport network is likely to be far more effective in achieving a modal shift.
- The document is misleading in hiding the potential introduction of modal filters and LTNs. We believe that modal filters are unlikely to be acceptable to local residents and businesses.

Another major issue this year has been the ongoing consultations on the emerging Cherwell Local Plan and we are awaiting the principal consultation on the draft plan that CDC will proceed with to inquiry.

The paper discusses a number of issues that affect the area including; climate change, new housing, retail and town centres, the natural environment, community facilities, design and the choices for the plan.

The plan shows areas and sites for development, such as for new homes, offices, shops, and community facilities. It sets out how valuable historic and natural environments would be protected.

The plan covers the location of employment land, the type of commercial use, and public transport.

We would like to see that start-up companies and other small unit users are catered for in new commercial development and that new development should provide a percentage of the new floor space in units under 100 sq. metres.

With regard to the current situation in the town centre and the number of shops that are closing, we agree there should be more flexibility within our town centres for different uses including residential development while protecting key shopping areas.

It is considered that additional affordable housing should be provided above current rates whenever it is financially possible to do so.

We want to ensure that the traffic issues of Banbury are dealt with by identifying the need for a new link road from the south of the town to the motorway and/or new junctions.

All new development must deal with M40 junction capacity and the need for a new link road.

The proposed development around Nethercote, east of the M40, is a major issue. We would like to limit development around Banbury to protect its landscape setting and

maintain separation between the town and surrounding villages.

This planning committee notes the work of the Banbury Traffic Advisory Committee which brings together members and officers from the county, district, and town councils with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, bus companies, rail users, and Civic Society, to discuss all transport issues in relation to the town.

The planning committee also provides representatives on the Town Centre Partnership. This is a partnership of organisations that deliver services in the town centre. The aim of the partnership is to improve Banbury Town Centre for the benefit of the people of Banbury and to create of a desirable, and attractive place to live, work, visit, and invest.

## **BANBURY TOWN HALL FOR WEDDINGS, PARTIES, MEETINGS, ETC**

Banbury Town Hall is a magnificent Grade 2 listed building with Gothic features. It can be hired for weddings, parties, business conferences, public meetings, society dinners, and commercial sales. It is fully licensed for marriages and civil ceremonies and also for music, dancing, and the sale and consumption of alcohol. The town hall is a superb venue with facilities that are unique in the area. Suitable for large or small occasions the building is furnished and decorated to provide days to remember. It can be hired by contacting the events team at the town hall by calling in, emailing [enquiries@banburytownhall.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@banburytownhall.co.uk) or by telephoning the events team on 01295 250340. For more information, google 'hire banbury town hall.'

## **QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

Banbury celebrated the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II with three fun events – and mourned her death with sincerity and respect.

The jubilee celebrations saw Banbury join more than 2,000 cities, towns and villages across the country in lighting civic bonfires – and the lighting of the town beacon in Spiceball Park came at the end of a fun evening that included a musical trip down memory lane. The second event, Banbury's big Party in the Park, featured live music, funfair, adventure attractions for children, and food galore. The party, which began at 1pm, carried on into the evening with a big-screen TV showing star-studded events in London.

The third event saw the Market Place packed with hundreds of children for the Big Lunch – a fabulous feast of royal proportions.

Banbury Town Council reacted to the news of Her Majesty's death by acknowledging her passing and by offering its sincerest condolences to all members of the Royal Family.

The council said that throughout the town there would be overwhelming grief

Town councillors, civic dignitaries and guests attended St Mary's Church for a Special Service of Commemoration that marked the Queen's death.

The service was led by the vicar of St Mary's, Rev Serena Tajima.

The local reading of the Proclamation of Accession – the official announcement that King Charles III was our new sovereign – took place at Banbury Town Hall.

The proclamation was read by Banbury's High Steward Sir Tony Baldry and

members of the public joined councillors and civic dignitaries at the event.



In his introduction, Sir Tony said: "Through the centuries, the British Crown has passed in an unbroken line of succession and this ceremony here today marks the formal proclamation to the people of Banbury of the beginning of the reign of our new king."

## FEATHERED FRIENDS

Two new additions to the aviary in People's Park received a grand welcome.



The baby bird pictured with park ranger Pete Holly, who looks after the aviary, is one of two cockatiel chicks that hatched out in 2022 – and both are doing well. They are the first cockatiels to be bred at the aviary for more than 10 years.

Pete said: "It's been interesting and really quite exciting to see the birds develop – especially as it's a relatively rare happening. They are a welcome addition to the park."

Cockatiels are prized worldwide as household pets and companion birds, and cockatiels are second in popularity only to budgerigars.

A cockatiel's life span is generally given as 16 to 25 years though there are reports of them living longer

with the oldest confirmed bird reported as being 36 years old. The People's Park aviary, owned by Banbury Town Council, has a cockatiel – nicknamed Elizabeth – who is 25.

## LOVE YOUR PARK

Banbury celebrated 'Love Parks Week' by encouraging residents to use the town's fantastic open spaces.

The national Love Parks Week campaign (29 July-5 Aug) was organised by the environment charity Keep Britain Tidy and gave people across the country the chance to appreciate their wonderful green areas.

Banbury has twelve neighbourhood parks, including People's Park and Spiceball Park, plus 90 open spaces and more than 50 play and teenage areas including two new play facilities on Hanwell Fields.

## CLEAN APPEAL SUCCESS

Around 40 volunteers responded to an appeal by Banbury Town Council for people to take part in a town centre litter-pick.

The clean-up was part of the council's campaign that asks people to be proud of where they live and to stop dropping litter. The initiative began after a complaint about the amount of waste dropped in the streets.



After the 'big pick' leader of the town council Kieron Mallon said: "This litter pick is just the start. We will be organising more clean-ups in the streets and in our parks. Everyone can play a part and we hope to persuade those who drop litter to use the bins instead."

Town mayor Jayne Strangwood also took part in the litter-pick. She said: "It attracted a lot of attention and lots of people became aware of what was going on. In addition, it was an enjoyable thing to do and it was good to be with like-minded people who wanted to make the town to look tidier."

**TOWN COUNCILLORS** also  member Cherwell District Council.  member Oxfordshire County Council



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