



Banbury Town Council

Annual Report 2017-2018

REVIEW OF THE YEAR BY TOWN MAYOR CLLR COLIN CLARKE

It was with great pride that I became Mayor of Banbury for the second time in 2017.

I learned much during my first year in office and the experience gained then proved invaluable this time around.

The year was extremely busy and time passed very quickly. I met many old friends and made a large number of new acquaintances.

I fulfilled many engagements and supported as many local charities, voluntary organisations, and Banbury-based groups as my schedule would allow.

I was impressed back in 2010/2011 by the number of people involved in charity work and this year I think even more people are giving up their time to help others.

It is truly amazing that so many people, of all ages, find the time to do charitable and voluntary work in the community. The dedication and perseverance shown by so many can be quite moving.



I would like to thank everyone who invited me to their events and made me feel welcome.

Being mayor enabled me to be part of the fun events organised by Banbury Town Council. Wonderful annual events include Canal Day, Banbury and District Show, Food Fair, the Christmas Lights Switch On and the Street Organ Festival. Being part of those is one of the perks of the mayoralty.

This year (2018) there will be two new events and an old favourite is being brought back. There will be a mini food fair and a music festival – both to be held in the Market Place. Making a welcome return will be Town Mayor's Sunday, the Party in People's Park.

The purpose of the events is two-fold. They provide free days out for residents of the town and surrounding area, and they attract people to the town centre generating additional trade for shops and other businesses.

Our servicemen and women are not forgotten. Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Sunday and Battle of Britain Day are always well supported.

I'm pleased to say that I'm ending my days as mayor on a positive note with my Civic Dinner in May, with proceeds going towards my fundraising for the year. I must thank everyone who has helped me during the year, particularly my wife Jenifer whose support has been unwavering.



Cllr Colin Clarke
Town Mayor 2017/2018

A close relationship

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 and a half 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 town council actively engages with its residents and continues to promote and raise the profile of the town. We will, where appropriate, ask residents for their views on the services we provide. We are building on the good communication links that have been developed over the years with the local press and other media. Liaison with other bodies and organisations will continue.

The council will continue to appoint representatives to serve on a wide range of outside organisations including local voluntary bodies. Much of the work of a town councillor takes place outside meetings of the town council, and much of that work is undertaken representing the town council on various bodies in the town. We appoint over 25 representatives each year to organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Banbury Air Training Corps, the Civic Society and the Sunshine Centre.

Services

The council provides a wide range of local services.

- **Allotments**

The council manages the Grange Road and Sinclair Avenue allotment sites and provides another four sites which are managed by allotment associations.

- **Parks, open spaces and play areas**

Banbury Town Council manages and maintains the town's parks and open spaces. This includes 5 senior football pitches, 2 cricket wickets, 1 bowls green, junior football pitches, and 4 sports pavilions, 66 play and teenager areas, two skate ramp sites, 111 open spaces and 12 neighbourhood parks, including People's Park and Spiceball Country Park.

Currently the town council looks after parks and open spaces totalling in excess of 90 hectares, more than 220 acres - equivalent to approximately 180 football pitches. We also look after 10,000 trees, and 8,662 linear metres of hedging – five and a half miles.

- **Mayoralty**

Banbury Town Council continues to uphold the civic ceremonial traditions of the town. The town mayor is an important link between the council and the people of Banbury and attends more than 200 engagements a year. The mayor supports as many local organisations as possible.

- **Bus shelters**

The council provides bus shelters in the town – with the majority maintained by Clear Channel Advertising at no cost to the town.

- **Annual events**

The town council puts on a vibrant programme of annual town and civic events, all of which are free to enter for both residents and visitors alike.

Events in Banbury 2018

- 8 May Inauguration of Town Mayor
- 10 June Banbury and District Show
- 30 June Armed Forces Day Tattoo
- 8 July Town Mayor's Sunday
- 27 July Banbury Music Mix
- 19 August Banbury Food Fair and Banbury Flower and Produce Show
- 1 September Street Organ Festival & Old Town Summer Party
- 16 September Battle of Britain Parade and Service
- 7 October Banbury Canal Day
- 11 November Remembrance Day and WWI Beacons of Light
- 24 November Charities' Christmas Bazaar
- 25 November Christmas Lights Festival

- **Cemeteries**

The council takes pride in its two cemeteries and works to maintain the Southam Road and Hardwick Hill sites in first class condition. Banbury Town Council is looking for a new cemetery site. The current Hardwick cemetery will be full in less than ten years, and the council is acting now to secure new land.

- **Grants to voluntary organisations**

The 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. Details of the 2017/18 grants are on our website with details of the small grants scheme.

- **Provision of litter and dog litter bins - 234 litter and dog bins**
- **Public clocks**
- **The town hall**

The Grade Two listed Banbury Town Hall is an extremely attractive venue for a variety of occasions. Recent refurbishments have provided a new medium-sized room on the ground floor, and a smaller room upstairs. Both are suitable for marriage ceremonies. The main hall is a superb place for celebrations including wedding receptions.

The town hall is fully licensed for weddings and civil marriages – and for music, dancing and the sale and consumption of alcohol. In addition to weddings the town hall is available for private parties, business conferences, society dinners, and commercial sales. The exterior of the town hall has also been cleaned as part of a continuing maintenance programme that preserves one of Banbury's important buildings.

Committee responsibilities

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 set a budget for 2017/2018 with a total net expenditure of £1,737,416 including earmarked funds for capital projects. This represented no council tax increase, with a Band D property remaining at £122.12, for the seventh year in succession. In addition to raising £1.7m from council tax, £400,000 income is raised from other sources (including interest on investment, burials, hiring of sports pitches/town hall etc).

The council's finances have been helped by the number of new houses that are contributing to the council tax but good housekeeping and forward planning in previous years has also kept the tax figure down.

Policy decisions we have taken in the past are paying off. Banbury Town Council saved 3% on its council tax bill on loan interest charges by repaying its loans to Cherwell District and continues to be a debt-free council, and investments in recent years continue to pay dividends, and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

This council will continue to manage the town's finances in a proper manner and carry on providing the essential services that townspeople need. In 2018, for the eighth year in succession, the council has voted not to increase its share of the council tax bill. The average band D levy, therefore, stays at £122.12 – the equivalent of £2.35 per week per household.

Leader of the council Kieron Mallon said: "We are a responsible council that spends money wisely. We will not be cutting or reducing services. We have undertaken a number of improvement projects during the year including to Easington and Moorfields Recreation Grounds, the town hall, Southam Road Cemetery Depot and have some interesting plans for the coming year."

The figures below shows the costs of the services to be provided by the council in the coming year, with the percentage of overall costs to the nearest whole percent.

<u>Budget</u>	<u>2018-19</u>	<u>% of total to nearest whole %</u>
Litter Control	£128,647	5%
Cemeteries	£330,846	13%
Allotments	£3,837	0%
Parks and Open Spaces	£764,216	31%
Play equipment & repairs	£177,200	7%
Football Pitches	£49,949	2%
Bus Shelters	£7,900	0%
Civic Traditions & Town Events	£94,340	4%
Central Administration	£385,567	16%
Open Air Pool	£67,295	3%
Grants	£35,000	1%
Town Hall	£56,067	2%
Public Clocks	£3,309	0%
Banbury Cross	£4,180	0%
Christmas Lights	£25,127	1%
Capital Fund	£325,504	13%
Total Expenditure:	£2,458,984	
Total Income:	(£675,556)	
Total Net Expenditure:	£1,783,428	

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 council receives no government funding and does not receive money from business rates. The council's income comes from charges made for services, investments, and council tax.

The committee is also responsible for the council's popular annual events – the Banbury and District Show, Food Fair, Canal Day, the Christmas Lights Switch-On, and the Old Town Summer Party/Street Organ Festival – which all attract extra visitors to the town centre. Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Day, and Remembrance Sunday are also well supported. New events for 2018 will include a mini food fair in April and a summer music festival in July. Making a comeback in 2018 will be Town Mayor's Sunday and Bark in the Park which will run together in July in People's Park.

The Planning Committee is responsible for commenting on planning applications, submissions to strategic public consultations, input into local development plans and conservation area appraisals. It meets every four weeks to review and comment on all planning applications pertaining to Banbury. 2017/18 was an interesting year for the Planning Committee, having submitted comments on over 400 planning applications comparing to 373 in the previous year. Submissions were made on a number of strategic planning documents:

- Partial Review of Local Plan Part 1: Oxford's Unmet Housing Need.
- Draft Cherwell Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
- Draft Development Contributions Supplementary Planning Document
- Draft Banbury Conservation Area Appraisal
- Canalside Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Other committees that support the work of the Planning Committee are: The Town Centre Partnership (organisations that deliver services in the town centre to improve Banbury as a place to live, work, visit and invest), The Built Heritage Working Party (members of this committee work to preserve the local heritage of Banbury for future generations), and The Traffic Advisory Committee (which has members and officers from the town, district, and county councils plus representatives of other local organisations to discuss highway and traffic issues).

The General Services Committee

The General Services Committee looks after cemeteries, parks, play areas, open spaces, allotments, sports pitches, in bloom, litter bins and dog litter bins, culture, entertainment and arts.

Decisions, meetings, and the mayoralty

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 have served as 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.

2018			
Council	General Services	Resources	Planning
Tuesday, 8 May Tuesday, 26 June Tuesday, 18 September Tuesday, 20 November	Tuesday, 5 June Tuesday, 4 September Tuesday, 30 October Tuesday, 11 December	Tuesday, 12 June Tuesday, 11 September Tuesday, 6 November	Wednesday, 2 May Wednesday, 30 May Wednesday, 27 June Wednesday, 25 July Wednesday, 22 August Wednesday, 19 September Wednesday, 17 October Wednesday, 15 November Wednesday, 12 December
2019			
Tuesday, 15 January Tuesday, 12 February Tuesday, 9 April	Tuesday, 29 January Tuesday, 26 March	Tuesday, 8 January Tuesday, 5 February Tuesday, 2 April	Wednesday, 9 January Wednesday, 6 February Wednesday, 6 March Wednesday, 3 April

The Annual Town Meeting will take place on Monday 11 March 2019. 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 of Banbury. 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 2019 Annual Council Meeting and Mayoral Inauguration will be on Tuesday 7 May.

Partnerships

The town council is one of many organisations working within the community. We actively encourage investment of both time and resources from the town council, Cherwell District and Oxfordshire County Council and external groups and agencies to further support and develop our community. We will continue to work with those partners and new partners from the local business community through to community groups for the betterment of the community. We also continue to be key partners in a range of other formal partnerships, including the Town Centre Partnership and have played an active role in bringing about a Business Improvement District (BID) for Banbury. We will now work with the BID to help deliver its action plan and continue to work with our partners to improve the quality of life in the town and to preserve the unique character of Banbury.

In addition to joining with other agencies in formal partnership meetings, we are also very proud of our good working relationships with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, which has seen the three authorities working together on important projects of benefit to the town – for instance the grass verge cutting.

We continue to encourage and support the crime prevention schemes in and around the town. The town council was a founder member of the Banbury, now Cherwell Crime Partnership, and remains both a funder and active participants in the scheme. The town council will continue to work with Thames Valley Police and other agencies to reduce vandalism and criminal activity within the town. The provision of CCTV cameras throughout the town centre is an invaluable aid to policing in the area, and the council remains a funding partner in this scheme whilst also building upon camera provision at its own sites.

What local government in Oxfordshire will look like in the future remains uncertain. Whatever happens in the unitary authority debate, Banbury Town Council will still be here looking after the interests of townspeople. The town council will strive to retain public services in the town whenever they are threatened. The campaign to retain services as the Horton Hospital is just one example, where the town council has joined with principal councils in instigating Judicial Review procedures to challenge the plans and processes being adopted by the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

New wording for War Memorial

A new inscription on Banbury's war memorial pays tribute to men and women who have lost their lives in conflicts since World War Two.

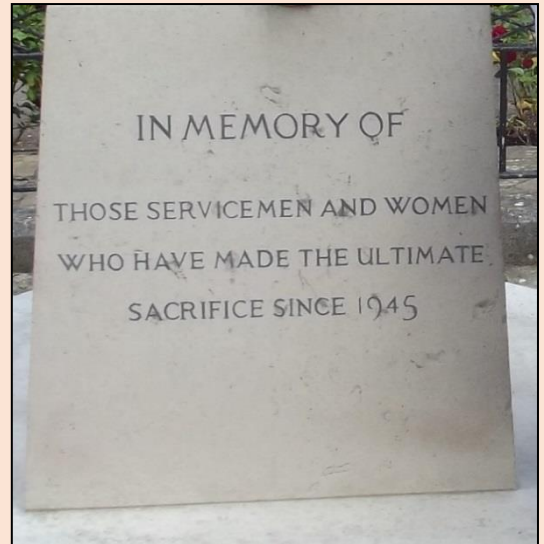
The memorial, in People's Park, is a Grade Two listed monument and was erected in 1922 after World War One.

A further inscription was added after the Second World War. Now, the new wording pays respect to the recent fallen.

The new lettering was added during a makeover of the monument. Crumbling stonework has been repaired and paving stones and fencing are being renewed. The work will be completed this summer.

The memorial is built of Portland Stone and consists of a wheel-head cross on a tapering shaft. The shaft rises from a square, tapering plinth. The monument is surrounded by paving and ornamental railings that form an octagonal enclosure.

The monument was awarded listed building status in 2015 by Historic England – and it was added to the list of Buildings of Special Historic Interest.



Rosemarie gets Honorary Burgess award

A former mayor, councillor and businesswoman has been awarded the town's highest honour.

Rosemarie Higham Stevens became an Honorary Burgess at a celebration in a packed Banbury Town Hall in August 2017. She is only the fourth person to be awarded the honour and joins Maurice Humphris, Jack Friswell and George Parish on the prestigious list.

Rosemarie got the fundraising bug at the age of seven when she raised fifteen shillings for the Horton Hospital. (15s in 1949 would be equivalent to around £30 today).

She said: "I learned from my grandma at an early age to always help those less fortunate than myself."

Rosemarie took over the family coal business at the age of 26 and was the first woman to receive a National Coal Board Diploma.

Rosemarie pioneered CCTV in Banbury. She raised the funds and Banbury became the first town in the country to have colour CCTV.



She was elected a CDC councillor in 1995

She joined Jack Friswell in campaigns to raise funds for a scanner at the Horton Hospital, for the hospital chapel, the Brodey Cancer Centre, Banbury Museum and the Lady on a White Horse statue.

She became a town councillor in 2000 and as mayor in 2003 she raised £20,000 for local charities – the highest amount ever raised by a mayor.

Rosemarie is still active in Banbury. Every year she sponsors the Banbury Flower and Produce Show. To celebrate her 70th birthday, she organised a concert in St Mary's Church that raised £17,500 for Help for Heroes.

Rosemarie said: "It has been a privilege to be part of the town I love. I've said before – Banbury is emblazoned on my heart."

Huge makeover for Easington Recreation Ground

Children in Easington are enjoying brand new play equipment after a £350,000 summer makeover at their local park.

The new play area in Easington Rec opened in October 2017 and with the addition of a multi-purpose ball court the rec is now one of the most up-to-date parks in the town.

Pupils from the nearby Harriers Academy were the first to explore the new playground and they gave the new equipment the thumbs-up.

Head boy Tise and head girl Amelia cut the ribbon to mark the opening. They said: "It looks great. We can't wait to start playing."

The full makeover of the recreation ground included the modernisation of the sports pavilion and improvements to the football pitches.

An avenue of beech trees along the main footpath has been planted to replace horse chestnut trees that were felled because of disease. Other trees have been planted near the play area to provide shade and colour.



Fairtrade status renewed

Banbury will continue to help farmers in poorer countries after the town's Fairtrade status was renewed by the British Fairtrade Foundation. The new membership certificate was presented in July 2017 to town mayor Cllr Colin Clarke.

Banbury became a Fairtrade town in 2006 after a year-long campaign that persuaded local people to help Third World producers. The award has been renewed every two years since. Enid Frost, acting secretary of FAB – Fairtrade Action Banbury – said: "More than 1.65 million farmers and workers in more than 74 countries are helped by Fairtrade."

"In Banbury we are proud to be part of that massive organisation and we are thrilled that our status has been renewed once again. I want to thank all the Banbury businesses and residents who support us by using Fairtrade products – particularly Banbury Town Council whose help has been invaluable."

FAB chairman Rev Chris Eddy added: "This certificate shows that Banbury cares about farmers and workers in developing countries. It is something the town should be proud of – and I urge everyone to keep buying and using Fairtrade products. Every Fairtrade item bought makes life better for some of the world's poorest communities."



Cllr Clarke said: "I am a great supporter of Fairtrade and it is good news that Banbury has retained its Fairtrade status. Members of FAB work hard to promote the cause and I'm delighted that their efforts have been rewarded."

Chrysi Dimaki, the foundation's Communities Campaigns Officer, said: "It is clear that a lot of time and energy has been put in to make Fairtrade part of the Banbury community. It is clear that Fairtrade is continuing to grow in the town and we were particularly impressed with the arrangement with the town council. It is great to see that FAB has engaged with primary schools and the strategies outlined for the future should attract more and more young members."

The offices of the town council are in the town hall. To contact the council call 01295 250340 or write to Mark Recchia, Town Clerk, Banbury Town Council, Town Hall, Bridge Street, Banbury, OX16 5QB or go to the website: www.banbury.gov.uk

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