



Banbury Town Council

Annual Report 2014/15

(Distributed to every home in Banbury)

REVIEW OF THE YEAR BY TOWN MAYOR CLLR SEAN WOODCOCK

My year as mayor of Banbury has been extremely enjoyable and very educational.

During my term of office I have discovered many things about the town and its people that I was previously not aware of.

I have been particularly impressed by the number of people who take part in voluntary and charity work, and I have been inspired by the amount of good they do for those members of the community who are less fortunate than others.



Presenting prizes

It gave me great pleasure to pay tribute to the town's many volunteers at my awards evening in May.

The year has gone quickly and I have supported as many charities, voluntary organisations, and Banbury-based groups as my schedule would allow.

I have upheld the traditions and customs associated with Banbury and I hope I played a part in promoting the town and its heritage at many local events.



At my inauguration

I would like to thank everyone who helped me and welcomed me, and I hope my successor has a wonderful year.

It is a massive privilege to be appointed to such a prestigious office.

I have supported the annual events organised by Banbury Town Council – Town Mayor's Sunday and Hobby Horse Festival, Canal Day, Food Fair, and the Christmas Lights Switch On – and I hope they go from strength to strength. The Banbury and District Show was cancelled because of bad weather but everything else went according to plan.

I was also honoured to support Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Sunday, and Remembrance Day.

Other highlights of my year were the First World War 100th anniversary commemorations, and the 70th anniversary of VE Day.

I wish the town of Banbury and its people every success. It is such a great place in which to live – a town with a remarkable history, and I'm sure, a prosperous future.



Entering a competition at the Christmas Charity Bazaar

Cllr Sean Woodcock
Town Mayor 2014/2015

BANBURY TOWN COUNCIL'S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Banbury Town Council is a local council that listens to the people. As one of three councils that govern north Oxfordshire (Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council are the others) the town council is the one closest to the electorate and the only one that represents just Banbury people.

The town council looks after local services and works hard to improve the quality of life for people living in Banbury. It seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the town as a place to live, work, visit and invest.

The council

- Provides a strong and independent voice for Banbury
- Preserves and enhances the traditions, character and identity of the town.
- Promotes Banbury as a clean, safe, welcoming and prosperous town.
- Provides high standard and cost effective services.
- Works in partnership with others to achieve more for Banbury.

The services and facilities provided by the town council include

- Allotments
- Parks, open spaces and play areas
- Annual events
- Banbury in Bloom
- Bus shelters
- Cemeteries
- Civic events promoted by the town mayor
- Grants to voluntary organisations
- Provision of litter and dog litter bins
- Public clocks
- The Town Hall



Crowds flock to the charity stalls at Town Mayor's Sunday

WHAT THE COUNCIL DOES FOR YOU

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

The Resources Committee is responsible for Finance, Property, Policy, Personnel Matters, Civic Functions, Links with other Public bodies, Involvement in Crime Prevention and Community Safety, Communication with the local community

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

The Planning Committee concentrates on Town and County Planning and Development, Input into the Local Plan, The Built Heritage Working Party, Highways and Transport, Provision of Bus Shelters.

..... AND HOW IT WORKS

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.

In 2015, for the fifth year in succession, the council voted not to increase its share of the council tax bill. The average band D levy, therefore, stays at £122.12 which is just £2.35 per week per household.

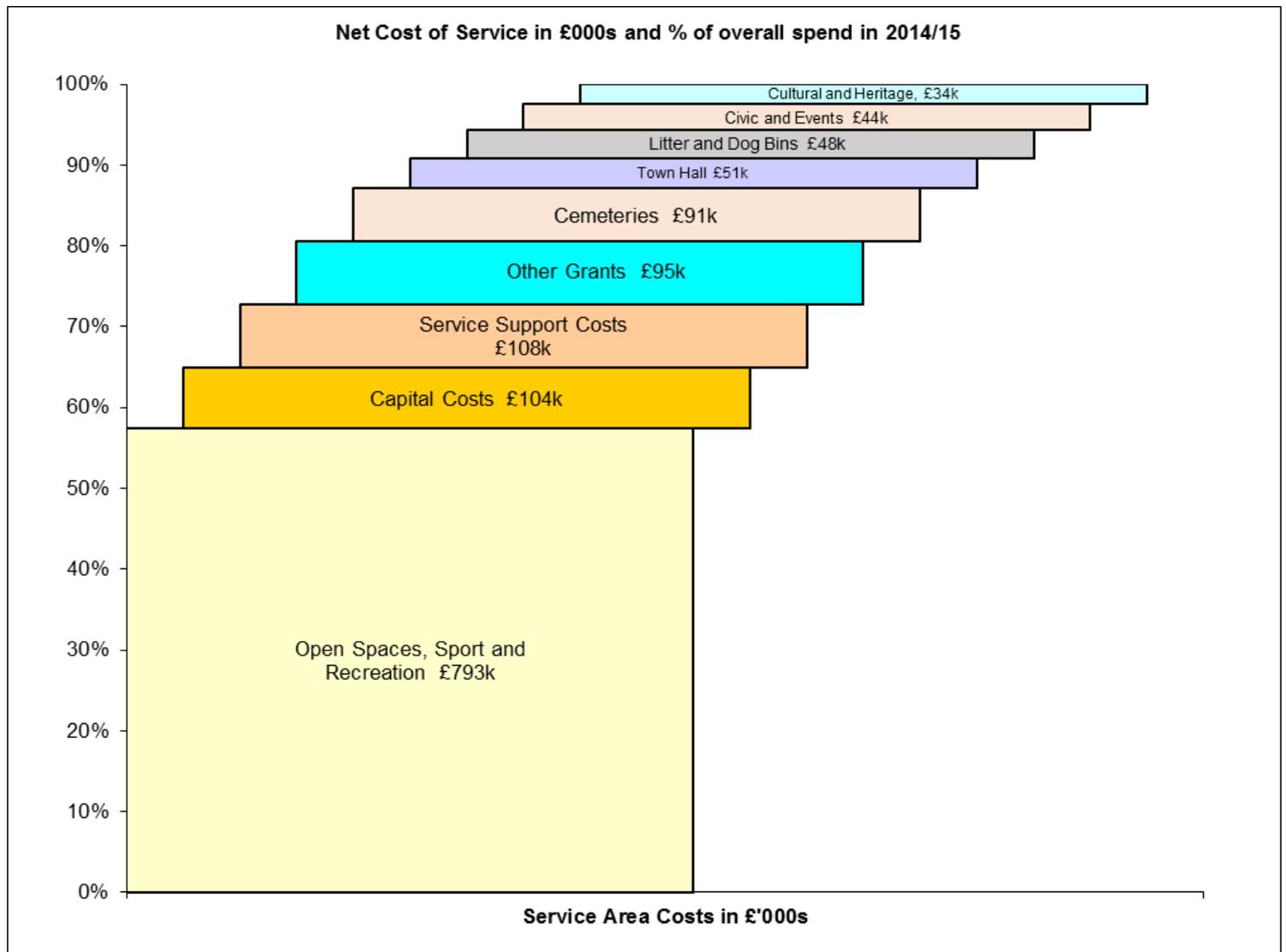
Leader of the council Kieron Mallon said: "Once again this council has proved it can be trusted with taxpayers' money.

"All our services are being maintained at a high standard and at the same time we are not burdening taxpayers with extra costs.

“The council is saving money by reorganising its grounds maintenance contracts and continued investment on the town hall has provided increased hire income by 30% from last year compared to next year’s forecast.

“We have also set funds aside for future cemetery provision and to bring other land into use for football pitches.”

The diagram below shows the costs of services provided by the council.



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 General Services Committee looks after the management and maintenance of the town’s 120 parks and open spaces. The council also looks after two cemeteries, six allotment sites, 66 play areas, recreation facilities and outdoor gyms, 234 litter and dog litter bins, five senior football pitches, two cricket squares, a bowls green, plus junior football pitches.

The council has negotiated a new grounds maintenance contract with national company The Landscape Group who replace former contractors Continental Landscapes.

A representative survey of residents told us that townspeople are generally satisfied with the town’s parks and open spaces.

The survey will be an annual event to enable the council to keep in touch with residents’ views and the council’s aim is to improve on satisfaction levels under its new contract.

The general services committee is also responsible for the council's popular annual events – the Banbury and District Show, Town Mayor's Sunday/Hobby Horse Festival, Food Fair, Canal Day, and the Christmas Lights Switch-On – which all attract extra visitors to the town centre. Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Day, and Remembrance Sunday are also well supported.

Banbury and District Show in June became the first town event to be cancelled because of bad weather. A wet spring and persistent and heavy rain in the week leading up to the event flooded Spiceball Park and made it impossible and unsafe for vehicles and members of the public to access the area.

Town Mayor's Sunday and the Hobby Horse Festival in July was a fun-filled afternoon in People's Park. A colourful parade from the town hall to the park saw representatives of Banbury clubs, community groups and other organisations join civic dignitaries. Many people 'rode' traditional hobby horses while others wore fancy dress.

Banbury Food Fair in August was hugely popular with local people. An estimated 15,000 food and drink fans packed the Market Place to watch cooking competitions and demonstrations. They also sampled and bought goods from more than 100 stalls. TV chef Brian Turner was the star attraction. The Flower and Produce Show ran in conjunction with the Food Fair and attracted more than 600 entries in 93 classes.



TV chef Brian Turner smiles his way through a demonstration at the Food Fair

Canal Day in October never fails to catch the imagination of the public – and 2014 was no exception. Around 12,000 visitors crowded the towpaths and other waterside areas. The event celebrates Banbury's canal history and re-creates the days when the waterway was an important route for industry – bringing coal and goods from the West Midlands further south.

Christmas Lights Switch-On in November saw Corrie character Peter Barlow as the celebrity guest. Thousands of fans turned up in Bridge Street for the switch-on and many more gathered throughout the afternoon to watch the programme of stage entertainment.



Primary school children enjoy Planting in the Park (pic by Four Shires Magazine)

Banbury in Bloom - Banbury's floral displays in the town centre and in its parks are designed to make Banbury an attractive place in which to live, work, visit and shop. The council continues to work with schools and the local community on a range of horticultural and environmental projects. Planting Day in People's Park attracts hundreds of pupils from the town's primary schools and sees the youngsters designing and laying out their own flower beds.

The Planning Committee meets every four weeks to consider planning and traffic-related issues in the town. In 2014/2015 the committee considered 410 planning applications compared to 370 in the previous year.

The committee works in partnership with other organisations to achieve more for Banbury.

The committee oversees the work of 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 town, district and county councils, the Civic Society, CPRE, Chamber of Commerce, and the Historical Society who work to preserve Banbury's heritage for future generations), and the Traffic Advisory Committee (which brings together members and officers of the town, district and county councils and representatives of other local organisations to deal with highway and traffic issues).

BANBURY TOWN HALL – A VENUE FOR ALL OCCASIONS

A programme of renovation and updating over a number of years has made Banbury Town Hall a magnificent building which 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.

In conjunction with New Folium Catering, the town hall is now a superb wedding venue, conference centre, and party location - with facilities that are unique in the area. Suitable for large or small occasions the building, with its town centre position, is ideally situated, furnished and decorated to provide a day to remember.

Anyone with a wedding or any other event in mind is invited to call at the town hall and ask to be shown around.

The town hall is a Grade 2 listed building with Gothic features.

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

Grant Aid

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

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 committee 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.

2015			
Council	General Services	Resources	Planning
Tuesday, 12 May Tuesday, 23 June Tuesday, 22 September Tuesday, 17 November	Tuesday, 02 June Tuesday, 01 September Tuesday, 27 October Tuesday, 08 December	Tuesday, 09 June Tuesday, 08 September Tuesday, 03 November	Wednesday, 06 May Wednesday, 03 June Wednesday, 01 July Wednesday, 29 July Wednesday, 26 August Wednesday, 23 September Wednesday, 21 October Wednesday, 18 November Wednesday, 16 December
2016			
Tuesday, 19 January Tuesday, 01 March Tuesday, 19 April	Tuesday, 02 February Tuesday, 29 March	Tuesday, 05 January Tuesday, 09 February Tuesday, 05 April	Wednesday, 13 January Wednesday, 10 February Wednesday, 09 March Wednesday, 06 April

The Annual Town Meeting will take place on Thursday 17 March 2016. 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 2016 Annual Council Meeting and Mayoral Inauguration will be on Tuesday 10 May.

BANBURY AND WORLD WAR ONE

A book commemorating Banbury's role in the First World War was published in August 2014 thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Banbury Town Council applied for and received £10,000 from the HLF's *First World War: Then and Now* programme, and the book *Banbury – the history and the heritage of World War One* was given to libraries and schools, and to the first 1,000 people who requested a copy.

The 100-page book was launched at a public exhibition in the town hall on August 4 – the 100th anniversary of Britain declaring war on Germany in 1914. The exhibition, organised by the Red Cross, included photographs and memorabilia of the war years.

Banbury played a massive role in WW1 but many people in the town today are unaware of what happened here between 1914 and 1918.

The book examines what went on in Banbury during the war years, what has happened since, and what remains to this day.

For example, a massive munitions factory in Grimsbury employed around 1,500 people, a Red Cross Hospital in West Street treated hundreds of wounded soldiers, a Red Cross refreshment centre at Banbury Railway Station helped soldiers travelling to and from the battlefields, and German prisoners of war who were held in Banbury built the former Ironstone Railway which is now a footpath in the north of the town. There is also a chapter on Banbury men who went away to fight.

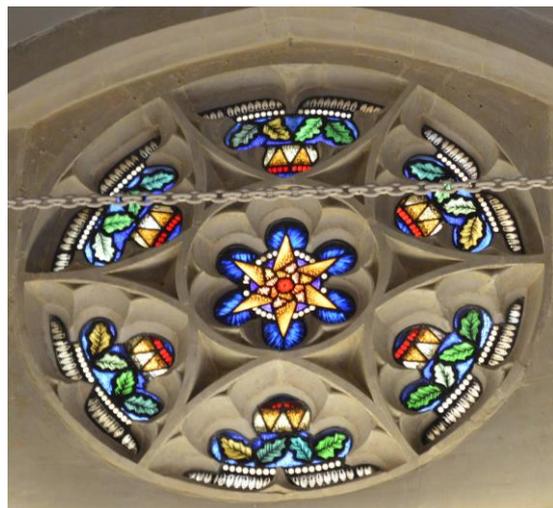


Red Cross nurses and doctor as they would have been during WW1 at the book launch and exhibition

NEW STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Two new stained glass windows at Banbury Town Hall commemorate the past and look forward to the future.

The new windows were suggested by 2013/14 town mayor Cllr Nicholas Turner.



One window looks back 100 years and commemorates the start of the First World War in 1914, and the other celebrates the birth of Prince George, the future king of England.

The cost of the windows was met by public donations.



Cllr Turner said: "The town hall is an iconic building and is part of Banbury's heritage. The new windows are an attractive addition and feature two events that are of national importance."

The WW1 window (above right) has a poppy theme, and the Prince George window (above left) is designed around an oak leaf to symbolise England, growth and strength.

The stained windows replaced two clear glass windows in the main hall.

MAKING THE TOWN A GREENER, CLEANER PLACE

Banbury residents are to have more say on the upkeep of the town's parks and open spaces.

The results of a town-wide survey on Banbury's green areas have been analysed and passed to Banbury Town Council's new grounds maintenance contractors – The Landscape Group – who took over in April 2015 from previous contractors Continental Landscapes.

A representative sample of around 4,000 residents received survey forms early in 2015 and the completed forms will help shape future service provision.

Chairman of Banbury Town Council's general services committee Cllr Colin Clarke, said: "We have had a fresh look at how the parks are managed and maintained. We decided it made sense to consult the people who use them and find out what they want.

"We will carry out similar surveys every year and build up an overall picture of residents' views."

Leader of the council and resources committee chairman Kieron Mallon said: "This new contract, worth £355k a year, brings a saving of around £50,000 on our former grounds maintenance costs, and will ensure a quality service.

The new contract runs alongside a better deal on keeping parks clean and tidy.

Cleaning the town's parks, cemeteries and open spaces is now being done by Cherwell District Council's cleansing team in a five-year contract that covers emptying litter and dog waste bins, litter picking, clearing away fly-tipping, and removing graffiti on land owned by the town council.



Right to left are: Leader of Banbury Town Council Kieron Mallon, town mayor Tony Mephram, CDC's cleansing services manager Brendan Bodger, Banbury Town Council's recreation and amenities manager Mike Hall, and, far left, CDC's Andrew Coles.

The contract also allows for extra help with snow clearance in parks and cemeteries when weather conditions prevent normal cleansing work. The arrangement, worth £120,000 a year, is a better deal for taxpayers. It will also provide a weekend service during the summer months.

Cllr Mallon said: "Street cleansing in Banbury is already done by CDC's team. The new arrangement means all cleansing will be done by one contractor.

"When we looked at the competition, CDC's in-house team clearly provided the best deal financially. They have the tools to do the job and they are based in Banbury. It was an obvious choice."

IMPROVING THE RIVER CHERWELL

Work to make the riverside in Banbury's Spiceball Park more attractive for park users and wildlife will begin in October 2015. The improvements will be funded by a £31,000 grant from the Environment Agency and Defra.

The work, overseen by BBOWT, the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, will tackle water pollution and include the repair of river banks damaged by dredging over several decades. It will create new habitats for fish and other wildlife. Spiceball Park, owned by Banbury Town Council, is a well-used public amenity - but the river is little appreciated by park users. Trees and steep banks hide the water from public view, and access to the waterside is difficult - even from fishing platforms.

The first phase of the project will make the river more visible and address the lack of habitat for freshwater fish and other species.

MEMBERS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL



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