

## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of Banbury Electors held on Monday, 04 March 2024 at 6.30 pm held at Banbury Town Hall.

Present: Fiaz Ahmed (Town Mayor and Chairman of the Meeting)  
The following Town Councillors: Ayers, Biegel, Bishop, Bunce, Cherry, Donaldson, Hussain, Ilott, Kilsby, Mallon, Mears, Phillips, Richards, Tohill-Martin.  
Two members of the public.

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk)  
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)  
Jackie Chacha (Marketing & Communications)  
Martyn Surfleet (Executive Officer)

### 1 **Notice to Convene the Meeting**

The Town Mayor welcomed the electors of Banbury to the Meeting. He noted that the Council was required by law to hold an Annual Town Meeting and it provided a forum for residents to hear what the Town Council had been doing and for Councillors to hear views of the town.

### 2 **Apologies for absence**

Councillor Beere, Councillor Hodgson, Councillor Strangwood.

### 3 **Minutes of the last Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 06 March 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

### 4 **Attendance Records**

The Town Mayor reported that the attendance record of individual Members of the Town Council had been circulated with the Agenda papers. Members asked several questions regarding the recording of attendance at meetings, officers agreed to amend the attendance records and an updated copy to be included as an appendix to the minutes.

### 5 **Committee Reports**

#### **a) Report of the Planning Committee presented by the Chairman, Councillor Tony Ilott.**

“Mr Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

As Chairman of the planning committee at the Banbury Town Council, it is both an honour and a responsibility to address you today, In the past year, our committee has been at the forefront of numerous crucial decisions, driven by a commitment to fostering a Banbury that is not only thriving but also sustainable and inclusive.

In the past year alone, our committee has been tasked with commenting upon a multitude of planning applications, each holding its own importance in shaping the landscape of Banbury. Among these, 50+ applications rose to prominence for their potential impact on our town's development. However, it's worth noting that the total number of applications, responded to (by our planning officer), standing at around 325, remains within the expected range, indicating a consistent level of interest and activity in the development industry and household desires.

We have also addressed consultations on the local cycling and walking infrastructure plan, known colloquially as the LC Whip. Through detailed analysis and debate our committee has recognised the critical importance of enhancing accessibility and promoting sustainable modes of transport within our town. This is especially relevant given that over 55% of respondents to the recent 2050 survey stated they drive to the town centre, highlighting the pressing need for alternative transport options.

Similarly, the inclusion of walking and cycling in the Oxfordshire County Council's local transport connectivity plan signifies a significant step towards creating a more integrated and inclusive transportation network. Our consideration and comments have revealed the urgent need to enhance accessibility and promote sustainable transportation modes. It is pertinent to note that over 55% of respondents to recent 2050 survey indicated they primarily rely on driving and parking when traveling to the town centre. This emphasises the imperative to explore alternative transport options to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance overall accessibility. Additionally, over 25% of respondents stated they walk to the town centre, underscoring the importance of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and pathways. While awaiting consultation on the precise strategy for Banbury, our committee remains steadfast in advocating for initiatives that prioritize safety, efficiency, and accessibility for all residents. The Cherwell 2040 Local Plan serves as a comprehensive roadmap for our district's development, reflecting the district council's commitment to fostering growth while preserving our environment. With active engagement from our planning committee, we've contributed to shaping a future where Banbury thrives as a vibrant community. This plan prioritises achieving climate action targets, promoting sustainable development, and stimulating economic growth throughout the Cherwell district. By focusing on well-designed homes, robust infrastructure investment, and environmental conservation, it aims to forge cohesive communities while tackling challenges like population growth and climate change. Moreover, it underscores the rejuvenation of urban centres like Banbury and the strategic development of areas like Heyford Park. In parallel, the commissioned town centre and retail strategy for Banbury Town Centre underscores vital recommendations to enhance its livability and economic vitality. Proposals include optimizing the town centre's layout, promoting residential development to invigorate the local economy, and improving the utilization of historic streets. Additionally, the planning committee is actively involved in reviewing and providing input on these initiatives, ensuring that they align with the community's needs and aspirations. According to survey data, over 20% of respondents agreed that Banbury town centre is a good place to live, while over 40% disagreed, and approximately 30% were unsure. Furthermore, 65% of respondents stated that Banbury town centre doesn't make the most of its historic streets. These insights, combined with ongoing community engagement and the efforts of the planning committee, inform our comprehensive approach to transform Banbury into a more attractive and prosperous destination for residents and visitors alike. The consultation is indeed live, and at the end of February, the planning officer convened a dynamic workshop with the district council. This collaborative session provided an opportunity for stakeholders to exchange ideas and insights, contributing to the ongoing planning process and fostering a shared vision for Banbury's future.

The planning committee has been consulting with Oxfordshire County Council regarding its proposal for a blanket 20mph zone covering the majority of Banbury's roads, including key routes such as Southam Road, Warwick Road, Horse Fair, Broughton Road, West Bar, South Bar, Oxford Road, Hightown Road, Cherwell Street, Bridge Street, and Middleton Road, which are crucial to the town's strategic road network. The town council have objected to this blanket approach. Banbury's existing road network faces significant pressures due to the absence of a strategic Ring Road, relying heavily on its north-south and east-west corridors. The county council piloted the scheme in 22 areas in 2021-2022, resulting in a reduction of traffic speeds by "up to 4mph." However, concerns have been raised by residents about the potential exacerbation of existing congestion and costs associated with the proposals. According to Oxfordshire County Council's guidance notes, a reduction from 30mph to 20mph requires explicit local support, and the scheme must be endorsed by the town council. The consultation on this matter closed in December, and the county council will review the responses received, preparing a report to be presented at a public meeting scheduled for early 2024. This meeting will provide an opportunity for members of the public to apply to speak. Throughout this process, the planning committee has played a pivotal role in representing the community's interests, liaising with relevant authorities, and ensuring that local concerns and perspectives are thoroughly considered.

The planning committee, along with officers and members, actively participated in Cherwell District Council's Banbury 2050 initiative through surveys, workshops, and presentations. This collaborative effort aims to develop a vision for Banbury town centre, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of residents, businesses, and visitors now and into the future, up to 2050. The goal is to make Banbury a desirable and attractive place to live, work, and visit. Insights from the consultation process shed light on various aspects of Banbury's current state and future

potential. For instance, findings reveal that over 40% of respondents do not consider Banbury a good place for young people, indicating a perceived need for improvements in amenities and opportunities tailored to this demographic. This insight underscores the importance of engaging with young people and understanding their perspectives to ensure that future developments cater to their needs and aspirations. By addressing these concerns and creating more youth-friendly spaces and activities, Banbury can enhance its appeal to younger residents and contribute to a more vibrant and inclusive community. Additionally, approximately 40% of respondents typically spend 1-2 hours in the town centre during their visits, reflecting a moderate level of engagement with local amenities and attractions. This highlights an opportunity to enhance the town centre's offerings and amenities, encouraging longer stays and increased foot traffic. Such improvements could potentially boost economic activity and cultivate a more vibrant community atmosphere. Notably, over 60% of respondents expressed a willingness to visit more frequently if there were better traders in the area, indicating the significant impact that diverse and high-quality retail options could have on attracting visitors to Banbury's town centre. These valuable insights serve as a cornerstone for making informed decisions and formulating strategic plans aimed at enriching the vitality and charm of Banbury for all stakeholders. The active engagement of the planning committee and other stakeholders demonstrates a dedication to collaborative governance and development driven by the community's needs and aspirations.

In recent news we are pleased to share that LGBCE (Local Government Boundary Commission for England) has been convinced to base the new draft recommendation for Banbury on the Town Council's original scheme which emphasised that historical hamlets still constitute the foundation of the town's communities today, with local amenities organised accordingly. However, a minor adjustment has been made to the boundary between Banbury Calthorpe and Banbury Grimsbury & Castle. This adjustment has been considered necessary due to the wards having an electoral variance of 17%. To mitigate the forecasted variance between Banbury Grimsbury & Castle and Banbury Calthorpe, the committee has opted to extend the boundary of Banbury Calthorpe northwards. This adjustment is anticipated to reduce the forecasted variance for Banbury Grimsbury & Castle to 8% and for Banbury Calthorpe to 9%, respectively.

Lastly the head of the council and the planning officer serve as representatives of the town council in the Banbury quays consortium. This consortium comprises key stakeholders such as the Museum, Mill Arts Centre, Chamber of Trade, and the BID. As a result of this collaboration, there has been an emergence of a cultural strategy aimed at fostering community engagement and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Banbury.

In conclusion, as Chairman of the planning committee at the Banbury Town Council, I am deeply encouraged by the progress we have made. From reviewing planning applications to actively participating in strategic initiatives like the Cherwell 2040 Local Plan and the Banbury 2050 initiative, we have demonstrated our unwavering commitment to fostering a Banbury that is not only thriving but also sustainable, inclusive, and culturally vibrant. By laying the groundwork for transformative change, we aim to benefit all residents, businesses, and visitors.”

**b) Report of the General Services Committee presented by the Chairman, Councillor Martin Phillips.**

“Mr Mayor, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am pleased to present the annual report of the General Services Committee which manages the day-to-day services and facilities provided by the town council.

The General Services Committee is the council's 'green' committee, responsible for delivering a comprehensive range of environmental services to the public.

These include the management and maintenance of:  
A network of over 100 Parks and Open Spaces across the Town.  
53 Equipped children's play areas.  
12 Multi Use Games Areas  
2 BMX/Skate Park Facilities

Over 11,000 trees and five and a half miles of hedgerows.  
Sports Facilities - at Horton View, Easington, Moorfields Park, Hanwell Fields and Chandos Close.

We have 6 allotment sites, 2 run directly by the Town Council, and 4 managed by allotment associations.

2 Cemeteries, at Southam Road and Hardwick Hill as well as St Mary's Churchyard.

Let's look at what we've achieved in the past 12 months.

PDP PLAY Area Refurbishment

New accessible Roundabouts installed at Spiceball and Moorefield's Park play areas

Weekly Inspections and repairs to children's play equipment

Adoption of new Play and MUGA area Hanwell Fields

Installations of Defibrillators at all Sports facilities

Secured a new operator for Peoples Park Café

Secured a grant from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish the Tennis Courts People's Park.

Installation of new and the refurbishment of park furniture across our parks, seats, solar benches, litter and dog bins.

Community Initiatives:

Planting Summer Bedding with schools "planting day in the Park

32,000 bulbs planted in People's Park by Banbury College and Banbury Rotary Club

Delivered a new Urban Orchard for Banbury, with community volunteers.

Agreed a new 2-year licence for a cricket academy to be based at Hanwell Fields Sports Ground.

Procured and placed orders for new sports machinery and equipment.

In-sourced the responsibility for street lighting in our parks

Installed an improved CCTV and intruder alarm system at Southam Road Depot.

Create new wild flower meadows at Spiceball Park, Princess Diana Park and Safron Close.

The restoration of the aviary roof at People's Park

Secured a grant from DVLA to install work Place Electric Charging Points at the Depot.

Our investment in playground equipment underscore our commitment to providing safe recreational spaces for all children.

The development of the sports/facilities contributes to the health and wellbeing of our users, providing the opportunity for our community to get active by participating in sport.

As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance green spaces and promote sustainability within our town, the completed Urban Orchard Initiative will provide residents with access to fresh, locally grown fruits. This initiative was achieved through collaborative partnerships with local schools, community groups, and volunteers, planting a variety of fruit trees, in designated areas across Banbury to enhance biodiversity and improving the overall aesthetic appeal of our town.

The creation of wildflower meadows within the town will not only beautify our town but also provide crucial habitats for pollinators such as bees and butterflies, contributing to environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

It's truly commendable to witness the dedication and hard work of the volunteers from Wild Banbury, who are making such a significant impact on the preservation and enhancement of our green spaces. Their efforts in Spiceball Park, Princess Diana Park and Hanwell Brook Wetlands are invaluable in protecting and enhancing our local green spaces, enriching our communities and providing vital habitats for wildlife to thrive.

The Banbury 2050 survey results shed light on the recreational preferences of our community. Notably, over 35% of respondents highlighted Spiceball Park as a preferred destination for cultural and leisure activities. Furthermore, a significant majority, exceeding 55%, affirmed the quality of parks and green spaces in Banbury. Among these respondents, 62% specifically praised Spiceball Country Park and People's Park.

The installation of Electric Charging Points at the depot will contribute to the Council's sustainability goals by putting the infrastructure in place to move to the use of electric vehicles as the fleet comes up for replacements.

In conclusion, as Chairman of the General Services Committee, I am proud to reflect on our collective achievements over the last twelve months and this Council's continued development of its parks and open spaces across the Town."

**c) Report of the Resources Committee presented by the Chairman Councillor Kieron Mallon**

"Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Chairman of the Resources Committee, it gives me great pleasure to present this report. The committee is responsible for:

Finance  
Property  
Policy  
Personnel matters

Banbury Town Council is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in our town, making it a better place to live, work, and visit. Let's explore our achievements and continued initiatives. This committee oversees financial matters, including income, expenditures, and council tax. I am pleased to report that financially, our council is in excellent health. Our expenditures are within forecast, and no major issues or concerns have been identified. Despite the current economic challenges affecting businesses and households, our council has maintained its enviable record of low taxation while providing excellent services. Although we've needed to adjust the town's proportion of the overall council tax bill for 2023/24 to address rising costs, our increase is the lowest among all authorities in the area and we remain committed to delivering exceptional services with a minimal increase.

Unlike upper-tier district and county councils, Town Councils do not receive financial subsidies from the government. Despite this, we have consistently delivered more for less, with our annual rise in council tax limited to 2%, for the third year compared to nearly 18% inflation rate over the same period. This achievement underscores our commitment to good financial management whilst delivering high value to our residents.

One of our initiatives, the Warm Spaces scheme, aims to help people stay warm without relying heavily on home heating systems. Through this scheme, we have awarded 15 grants to local communities, clubs, and organisations, including enabling preservation of warm spaces where they are most needed. This demonstrates our committee's dedication to improving the quality of life for Banbury residents by collaborating with the voluntary sector and supporting initiatives that benefit the community.

Another significant project undertaken by the committee is the launch of the 'My Banbury' App. This will serve as a direct communication channel between Banbury residents and council officers, allowing residents to report concerns promptly and efficiently. Whether it's litter in parks, damaged play equipment, or general inquiries, the 'My Banbury' App facilitates seamless communication and enhances civic engagement. And I thank Councillor Bunce and Mr Surfleet for their invaluable input into the project.

In the fiscal year 2023-2024, we prioritised the preservation of our historic Grade II\* listed town hall by investing in refurbishing the roof. This essential maintenance work reflects our commitment to safeguarding the architectural and historical significance of this landmark. Moving forward, we will explore opportunities to further utilize the town hall for the benefit of the community while preserving its rich heritage.

In a forward-thinking move we took steps to decarbonise heating elements at the Town Hall demonstrating our commitment to environmental sustainability. By replacing outdated gas radiators with energy-efficient electric heating panels, we're reducing our carbon footprint and contributing to a greener future for Banbury. This initiative not only aligns with our

environmental objectives but also positions us as leaders in sustainable municipal management.

Expanding upon the success of last year's Christmas projections at the Town Hall and Corn Exchange, along with the notable increase in attendance at the Christmas lights switch-on event in 2023-2024, the resources committee is determined to enhance the visual charm and innovation of our Christmas lighting arrangements this year. Our objective is to draw an even larger crowd of residents and visitors to the heart of our town during the festive season. For over two decades, our council has been organising a diverse array of annual events. These occasions are designed as family-friendly experiences, providing free admission and encompassing activities such as the Banbury show, food fairs, music festival, canal festival, and more. Noteworthy among these is the cherished tradition of the Christmas Lights switch-on, alongside other significant civic dates such as Town Mayor's Sunday, Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Day, and Remembrance Sunday.

In the wake of last year's national celebrations for the coronation, we are excited to announce that Spiceball Park will be transformed into a vibrant centre of excitement for the Banbury Show this year. Our aim is to present residents and their families with an event that is not only family-friendly but also guarantees excellent value for money while capturing the interest and enthusiasm of our entire community.

We organise our events to increase the footfall in our town to help local traders. That was the reason we started the events 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 improving the evening economy.

To advance the objective of enhancing Banbury as a diverse, clean, and accessible destination, the committee decided to expand the town council's in-house marketing function. This decision aimed to maintain a robust, independent voice for Banbury. Our focus remained on improving the overall attractiveness of the town, making it an appealing destination for living, working, visiting, and investing.

To further this objective, the marketing and communications function will be tasked with developing comprehensive campaigns to highlight Banbury's unique features and attractions. By utilising various communication channels such as social media, local publications, and community events, the council aims to effectively reach both residents and potential visitors. By collaborating closely with Banbury Business Improvement District (BID) and Cherwell District Council, our primary focus is on advancing the town's interests and fostering its development. Additionally, partnerships with local businesses and organisations will amplify the town's message and promote collaborative initiatives that will benefit the community as a whole.

In conclusion, I am proud to report on the accomplishments of the Resources Committee in our efforts to enhance Banbury's vibrancy and appeal. Throughout this report, we've highlighted our commitment to responsible financial management, community welfare, and the preservation of our town's heritage. From our diligent oversight of finances to the successful implementation of initiatives such as the Warm Spaces scheme and the 'My Banbury' App, we have strived to improve the quality of life for all residents. Additionally, our focus on preserving historic landmarks and transitioning to sustainable practices underscores our dedication to environmental stewardship.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue our work in promoting Banbury's unique character and fostering its prosperity. Through strategic communication and collaboration with local partners, we aim to solidify Banbury's position as a vibrant destination for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. It just remains for me to thank all committee members for their time, application and ideas."

**6 Questions from Electors**

Mr Neil Wallis asked a question relating to the differed proposals for the roll out of 20mph speed limits within Banbury town, and wished to enquire further as to Banbury Town Councils involvement with the consultation.

Councillor Mallon responded by stating that the deferral by the County Council was taken in response to challenges from members regarding the feedback to the public consultation and that the County Council agreed to re-evaluate the responses and review the proposals in a future scheme.

Mr Paul Bonsor asked a follow up question relating to the delays caused to traffic should road speeds be reduced from 30mph to 20mph. And stated that a reduction in speed on key routes would significantly reduce risk of road traffic accidents.

Councillor Mallon responded that delays would vary depending on the route taken, and stated that the Council have yet to receive updated plans for the 20mph schemes, and so cannot comment on potential delays to routes. But ensured that when updated proposals are presented to the Council that safety considerations will be a priority.

Councillor Mark Cherry and Councillor Biegel also asked supplementary questions regarding the 20mph proposals at which Councillor Mallon reiterated his previous comments regarding awaiting further updates from the County Council.

Councillor Richards asked a question regarding when the initial consultation proposals were brought before the council for comment. Councillor Mallon responded by stating that proposals for introducing 20mph limits within Banbury were taken to both the Planning Committee as well as the Banbury Traffic Advisory Committee for comment.

The Meeting ended at 7.26pm.



Return of Attendance of Members, 2023/2024

07/03/2024 10:26

Council	Council		General		Resources		Planning		Grants & Budget Sub-Committee		Total		
	Actual	Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual	Possible	%
AHMED	5	6	1	0	1	0	9	11	0	0	16	17	94%
AYRES	6	6	4	4	4	5	9	10	0	0	23	25	92%
BEERE	6	6	1	1	1	1	11	11	0	0	19	19	100%
BIEGEL	6	6	4	5	4	5	0	0	1	1	15	17	88%
BISHOP	5	6	1	5	0	0	6	11	0	0	12	22	55%
BUNCE	6	6	4	5	1	0	8	11	0	0	19	22	86%
CHERRY	6	6	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	11	100%
COLEGRAVE	6	6	3	5	3	5	4	11	1	1	17	28	61%
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
DONALDSON	5	6	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	11	55%
GARRETT	6	6	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	6	11	55%
HODGSON	6	6	0	0	0	0	5	11	0	0	11	17	65%
HUSSAIN	5	6	3	5	4	5	3	0	1	1	16	17	94%
ILOTT	5	6	1	0	0	0	6	11	1	1	13	18	72%
KILSBY	6	6	0	0	5	5	11	11	0	0	22	22	100%
MALLON	6	6	0	0	5	5	0	0	1	1	12	12	100%
MEARS	6	6	4	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	11	11	100%
PHILLIPS	6	6	4	5	4	5	0	0	1	1	15	17	88%
REEVES	4	6	1	0	1	5	9	11	0	0	15	22	68%
RICHARDS	5	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	100%
STRANGWOOD	5	6	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	0	8	12	67%
TOHILL-MARTIN	5	6	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	0	8	12	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>81%</b>

Note