



Bracknell Town Council

Strategy & Finance Tuesday 17th September 2024

Date	Tuesday 17 th September 2024
Time	19:35 – 20.33
Location	Council Chamber, Brooke House
Present	Councillors: Kathryn Neil, Anna Keen, Mary Temperton (co-opted), Graham Firth, Megan Wright, Jodie Watts (Sub)
Apologies	Councillors: Roy Bailey, Guy Gillbe
Absent	Councillor Kwabena Adutwum-Quaye
Officers	Jackie Burgess, Rachel Gordge

Minutes

SF82/24 ATTENDANCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Guy Gillbe and Roy Bailey. A request for co-option of Councillor Mary Temperton was proposed by Councillor Graham Firth and seconded by Councillor Megan Wright.

SF83/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SF84/24 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 11th June 2024 were reviewed. The minutes were proposed as an accurate record by Councillor Anna Keen and seconded by Councillor Jodie Watts. The minutes were thus approved as a correct record.

SF85/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Several follow-up items from the previous minutes were discussed:

- **Bracknell Matters:** This item has not been completed due to time constraints but is expected to be addressed in the autumn.
- **Biodiversity Audit Reports:** The final report from the company that visited four sites is still pending but expected soon. It will be reviewed by Officers and the Environmental Services Committee and will then be shared with Full Council.
- **Financial Regulations and Standing Orders:** These will be reviewed and completed in the 2024-25 period after the external auditors finalise their audit.
- **Great Hollands Till Upgrade:** The new point-of-sale till is operational, featuring simplified stock management and much improved data recording.
- **Pump Track - Planning Update:** A full planning application is required, including ecology and biodiversity net gain offset reports. These are in process, and the pre-application is expected to be completed soon.

- **Play Equipment - Lead Times:** Work on the Mill Park boat has started. Funding confirmation is awaited for the Ennerdale works and the Jock's Lane consultation has finished and the play equipment will be ordered.
- **Website:** A presentation from a company experienced with council websites is scheduled for the next full council meeting and then a job specification will be sent out for 3 quotes which will be brought back to the Committee.
- **Brooke House Leases:** The reassignment of the Solicitors lease is in process. An item on the Full Council agenda to discuss the Brooke House office lease was requested.
- **LCAS Quality Award:** Updates to policies are in progress and will link in with the review of the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders. If a new HR app is approved at Full Council, all BTC policies will be reviews as part of their onboarding process.
- **Birch Hill Lease:** The lease with the Hockey club has been terminated, and the new lease is with the solicitors.
- **TV Grants Working Group:** The TV Grant leaflets are being distributed, and a meeting is scheduled for 13th November at 5.30pm to review the responses.

TASK: To add Brooke House Office Lease to the next Full Council Agenda

SF86/24 FINANCE REPORTS

The finance reports up to 31st July 2024 were reviewed. The Town Clerk confirmed that the financial position is on track for the year, with income appearing higher due to the precept being received in two large chunks. The interest from the CCLA investment was noted as performing well. Members had no significant questions or concerns. It was requested that South Hill Park present their annual report to Full Council in December.

SF87/24 MAYORAL CHAIN

The discussion focused on whether to repair the existing mayoral chain or fund a new one for the 70th anniversary of Bracknell Town Council in 2025. The current chain requires repairs and updates to include up to date wards. The cost of refurbishment is estimated at around £700, while a new chain could cost a minimum of £900. Members debated the ethical implications of spending taxpayers' money on this and considered alternative funding options, such as sponsorship from local businesses. It was agreed to explore both refurbishment and new chain options, with a preference for a recycled material if a new chain is chosen. Officers will research this and bring details back to the Committee for discussion.

TASK: To research sponsorship of refurbishment or replacement of the Mayoral Chain

SF88/24 RISK REGISTER

The updated risk register was presented, it was noted that COVID-related risks have been removed as they are no longer considered significant. The register continues to include the potential noise risk from the deck building project as the progression of the project is uncertain. Members were asked to review and ensure all relevant risks are captured and mitigated. There were no additional risks suggested by the members. The risk register was approved and will be recommended to Full Council for approval.

TASK: The Risk Register is recommended for approval to Full Council

SF89/24 KIOSK AT BRAYBROOKE

The proposal to reopen the small kiosk at Braybrooke, which had previously been used by football teams for fundraising, was discussed. The caretaker has expressed interest in running the kiosk to sell drinks and snacks after school and during weekends. Members debated whether to rent the space or to employ a staff member so that BTC can manage it directly. The consensus was to explore the option of employment to ensure better control over operations and product offerings. The Town Clerk will gather refurbishment costs and present them at a future meeting.

TASK: Town Clerk to research refurbishment costs for the Braybrooke Kiosk with a view to employing a member of staff to run it

SF90/24 BUDGET MONITORING WORKING GROUP

The format for the Budget Monitoring Working Group meetings was discussed. It was agreed that the group would meet four times a year, with the first meeting proposed for early November 2024. Members requested to hold the meetings via Teams to facilitate attendance and ensure thorough review and discussion of the financial documents. Officers will proceed with setting up a Teams meetings and send out reminders to the group members.

TASK: Officers to set up a Teams Meeting for the Budget Monitoring Working Group in November to feed into the next Strategy and Finance Committee Meeting

SF91/24 BRACKNELL HISTORY WORKING GROUP

Committee received an update on the first Bracknell History Working Group meeting. The group has planned another meeting for 2nd October at 12 noon and requested a £50 budget for photocopying at archives. Members approved this request. There was some confusion about the group's focus and its alignment with the Bracknell Forest Society, which has already done significant work in this area. The importance of coordinating with the Bracknell Forest Society and bringing any proposals to Strategy and Finance for approval was emphasised.

SF92/24 BUDGET 2025-26

It was noted that the budget setting process for 2025-26 will begin shortly. Councillors were invited to submit significant items for consideration so that estimates can be prepared. The importance of aligning budget decisions with the Council's mission statement and key objectives was discussed. Members were encouraged to think about potential events for the 70th anniversary of Bracknell Town Council, with a Working Group possibly being created to focus on this event and other projects that might require funding.

Items to be considered for the budget

- Celebration of 70 years of Bracknell Town Council
- Brooke House lease
- Biodiversity fund

- Survey of all buildings to include the chapel

TASK: To set up a 70th Anniversary Working Group to plan a celebratory event

SF93/24 CIL

The CIL report was reviewed. It was noted that the last property surveys were done in 2019, and they are due for another round next year. The committee discussed the bird boxes at The Elms and the possibility of installing cameras inside them to live stream the wildlife. However, technical challenges like the lack of Wi-Fi in the park were noted. The idea of using wildlife cameras was proposed as an alternative. The committee also discussed the possibility of installing solar panels in the depot area. There was a mention of the swift boxes and the need to consult the biodiversity report for recommendations when it is received. The committee agreed to include bird, bat, owl and swift boxes in the budget as part of biodiversity enhancement. The discussion concluded with an acknowledgment of the remaining CIL funds and the need to look at how these funds could benefit the residents, particularly in light of limited new building projects in Bracknell. Councillors were reminded to send new ideas to the Town Clerk.

SF94/24 FUNDING REQUEST

Confidential Item:

The funding request from The Lexicon to support six weeks of Christmas activities was discussed. The request was for £10,000. They questioned whether this expenditure aligned with the BTC mission and whether it would benefit all residents. The consensus was that the proposed activities, such as Santa's Grotto, would likely be expensive and not accessible to all residents. The committee expressed a preference for using funds to provide free activities, similar to the free summer of fun events. It was proposed by Councillor Jodie Watts not to provide the £10,000 requested by The Lexicon, citing concerns about the commercial nature of the proposal and its alignment with their mission. This was seconded by Councillor Megan Wright.

Decision: The committee decided not to provide the £10,000 requested by The Lexicon for Christmas activities.

TASK: Send confirmation to the Lexicon that BTC will not be contributing to the Christmas Activities

SF95/24 EVENT MANAGER ROLE

Confidential Item:

The Event Manager Role was discussed, the staffing committee had already reviewed this proposal and felt it was not appropriate. The main concerns were that it would blur the lines between the responsibilities of Bracknell Town Council and Bracknell Forest Council. The committee agreed that if they were to consider a salary position, it should be for someone employed directly by the Town Council to manage their events and projects. It was unanimously agreed to decline the proposal for a joint event manager role.

Decision: The committee decided to decline the proposal for a joint event manager role with Bracknell Forest Council.

TASK: The Town Clerk to contact BFC to decline the proposal for a joint event manager role.

Date of the next Meeting: 26th November 2024 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber at Brooke House

Sign:

Date: