



# Bracknell Town Council

## Strategy & Finance Tuesday 26th November 2024

Date	Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
Time	19:30 - 21:52
Location	Council Chamber, Brooke House
Present	Councillors: Kathryn Neil, Anna Keen, Iskandar Jefferies (Sub), Roy Bailey, Guy Gillbe, Donna Sidebotham (Sub), Kwabena Adu-Quaye
Apologies	Councillors: Graham Firth, Megan Wright
Co-Opted	Councillor Jodie Watts
Officers	Rachel Gordge

## Minutes

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### SF96/24 ATTENDANCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Megan Wright and Councillor Graham Firth. Substitutions included Councillor Donna Sidebotham and Councillor Iskandar Jefferies. It was proposed by Councillor Donna Sidebotham and seconded by Councillor Anna Keen to co-opt Councillor Jodie Watts for the whole meeting.

### SF97/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked if there were any declarations of interest. The Chair declared two interests: one related to the CIL funding report, suggesting the Vice Chair take over that item, and another regarding involvement with an autism organisation, but not Autism Berkshire. Councillor Jodie Watts declared an interest in the BFC Pride Event and Councillor Iskandar Jefferies declared an interest in South Hill Park. No other declarations of interest were made by the members present.

### SF98/24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were reviewed for accuracy. The minutes were proposed as a correct record by Councillor Anna Keen and seconded by Councillor Roy Bailey. The Minutes were then approved as an accurate record by the members present APPROVED

**Decision:** The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

### SF99/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Deputy Town Clerk provided updates on various matters arising from the previous minutes:

- A meeting has been arranged with the jeweller from South Hill Park to discuss the refurbishment or replacement of the Mayoral Chain.

- The biodiversity audit reports were delayed and are now expected in early December.
- Financial regulations and standing orders are scheduled for review in early 2025.
- The pre-application for the pump track planning has been submitted, and the Mill Park play equipment project was completed with some landscaping still pending.
- The new website by Aubergine is nearly finished and Committees will be shown the design of the website when logins are handed over to Officers.
- The Birch Hill lease is pending final receipt for signing.
- The Braybrooke kiosk investigation has not started due to high workloads, with a focus on improving Great Hollands' winter business.
- The delay in the Bracknell Matters newsletter was discussed, the last issue was in July 2023. The need for an additional staff member to handle the workload was mentioned.

**Task:** Review financial regulations and standing orders in early 2025. @Rachel Gordge @Jackie Burgess 31/03/2025

**Task:** Sign the Birch Hill lease upon final receipt. @Jackie Burgess

**Task:** Investigate refurbishment of the Braybrooke kiosk. @Rachel Gordge

#### **SF100/24 BUDGET MONITORING WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Guy Gillbe gave a verbal report following Budget Monitoring Working Group report was reviewed. The Committee noted that the review at the meeting showed a strong financial position, with income targets already met for the financial year. The report was NOTED.

#### **SF101/24 BRACKNELL HISTORY WORKING GROUP**

The Working Group has had three meetings and is working towards creating information panels for five historical sites in Bracknell. The panels, costing £895 each, would be made of recycled plastic and guaranteed for 25 years. The total cost would be £4475, and Bracknell Town Council staff would install the panels once authorisation has been received from the land owners. The group sought approval for CIL funding, it was proposed by Councillor Anna Keen and seconded by Councillor Donna Sidebotham to approve the request which was granted by the Committee. Councillor Guy Gillbe abstained from the vote due to his involvement in the project.

**Decision:** Approval was granted for funding information panels for five historical sites in Bracknell, with a total cost of £4475.

#### **SF102/24 BUDGET 2025-26**

The Deputy Town Clerk introduced the budget principles for 2025-26. Key points included the option to consider increasing the precept by 5% to cover all requirements, including:

- To include youth work provided by The Wayz
- A 2% increase in facilities and rent charges
- National Insurance increases and staffing budget adjustments were discussed
- The need for an additional part-time Environment Warden and an additional member of office staff was highlighted

- To increase allotment rent from £46 to £50 for a full plot and from £23 to £25 for a half plot in September 2026
- To vire £130,000 from GH car park reserves to be used for additional play area upgrades
- Re-joining BALC, NALC and the LGA to ensure Councillors have the support they require
- Annual Grant awards of £192,502.70
- Members discussed the implications of the precept increase, with a consensus leaning towards a 4.99% increase to avoid falling behind and to maintain service standards
- The need for clear communication to residents about the reasons for the increase was emphasised

The budget principles were reviewed and proposed en bloc by Councillor Guy Gillbe to be recommended for approval at Full Council of the 10<sup>th</sup> December. This was seconded by Councillor Donna Sidebotham and unanimously APPROVED.

**Task:** Officers to bring allotment rent changes to a meeting before September 2026 ready for a September 2027 increase if Officers are recommending a change.

**Task:** Officers were requested to send details of precept increase increments with details of how much of the reserves would need to be used for each.

**Decision:** To recommend the budget principles above to Full Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024

#### **SF103/24 LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME QUALIFICATION**

The discussion on the Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) Qualification centered around the new criteria and the council's previous decision to leave BALC due to inadequate support. The importance of rejoining BALC to maintain access to NALC and the Local Government Association (LGA) resources, which are crucial for the council's operations and compliance with legislation was noted. The group debated the high cost of the BALC subscription and the previous support issues faced. Despite these concerns, they acknowledged the necessity of rejoining to retain access to model policies, financial regulations, training opportunities and support for Councillors. The group agreed to rejoin BALC with a commitment to review the support received and push for improvements. The proposal to rejoin BALC and NALC was proposed by Councillor Guy Gillbe and seconded by Councillor Anna Keen. The proposal was passed with one abstention by Councillor Jodie Watts as she felt this was a monopolisation of Local Council business APPROVED

**Decision:** The proposal to rejoin BALC and NALC was seconded and passed with one abstention.

**SF104/24 BROOKE HOUSE LEASE**

The reassignment of the Brooke House Lease to the new sub tenant has been, reviewed and approved by the solicitor, and is ready for signing by the Bracknell Town Mayor and the Chair of the Strategy and Finance Committee at the Full Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024. The Town Clerk will ensure the BTC Seal is available at the meeting. It was proposed by Councillor Guy Gillbe and seconded by Councillor Jodie Watts that Committee recommends that Full Council approve the signing of the Brooke House Lease by the Mayor and the Chair of the S&F Committee. The proposal passed without any objections APPROVED

**Decision:** The group recommended that Full Council approve the signing of the Brooke House Lease by the Mayor and the Chair.

**SF105/24 TV GRANTS WORKING GROUP**

The TV Grants Working Group reviewed responses from the 22,000 delivered leaflets. The group recommended increasing the grant award from £30 to £57 starting from 1st April 2025, and to maintain it at a third of the cost of a colour TV License moving forward. No changes were recommended to the approval criteria for the grant.

**Decision:** The grant award was increased from £30 to £57 starting from 1st April 2025, and it will remain at a third of the cost of a colour TV License moving forward.

**SF106/24 STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW**

It was proposed by Councillor Guy Gillbe to defer this agenda item to the Strategy and Finance Meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025. This was seconded by Councillor Iskandar Jefferies and unanimously approved. It was agreed that this document will be discussed by the Committee Chairs at the meeting they have planned and they will bring a supporting report to the Committee.

**SF107/24 COUNCILLOR TRAINING REQUEST**

It was proposed by Councillor Iskandar Jefferies to approve the following training courses:

- 13<sup>th</sup> December Empowering the young councillors of tomorrow for Councillor Jodie Watts
- 26<sup>th</sup> February Is the fight for standards a losing battle? For Councillor Guy Gillbe
- 26<sup>th</sup> March Breaking the mould of local councils for Councillor Guy Gillbe

This was seconded by Councillor Jodie Watts and approved unanimously

**Task:** Officers to sign Councillors up for this training @Rachel Gordge

**SF108/24 TOWN CENTRE MASTER PLAN**

It was proposed by Councillor Guy Gillbe to defer this item to the Full Council meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025. This was seconded by Councillor Anna Keen and unanimously approved.

## SF109/24 EVENTS

The following event recommendations from the Environmental Services Committee were discussed:

- The April Holidays Skate Competition at Mill Park was confirmed to go ahead, requiring a small budget up to £200 for prizes
- The 70th Anniversary of Bracknell Town Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025, would be discussed by the working group and confirmed at the Full Council meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> December
- VE Day 80 on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025, and VJ Day 80 on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025, the officers have not received any information and would research the expectations for Town Councils. The likely cost for each event would be around £500 for a beacon.
- The Community and Culture Day in June 2025 and the Pride Event in July 2025, both organised by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC), requested a contribution of £5,000 or slightly more if possible. The group discussed the ambiguous request for "slightly more" and decided to maintain the contribution at £5,000 for each event, emphasising the need for BFC to seek additional sponsorships. This was proposed by Councillor Anna Keen, seconded by Councillor Donna Sidebotham and approved. Councillor Jodie Watts abstained from the vote due to her declaration of interest in this event.

**Decision:** The proposal to allocate £5,000 for each event (Community and Culture Day and Pride Event) was seconded and passed.

**Task:** Research expectations for Town Councils regarding VE Day 80 and VJ Day 80 events. @Rachel Gordge

## SF110/24 CIL

The group reviewed the CIL report and it was NOTED. The following new ideas for CIL funding were discussed:

- To organise a Chinese New Year event, leveraging the large Asian population in the area. The Committee recommended that partnering with BFC to enhance the event would be a good idea.
- The request earlier in the meeting from the Bracknell History Working Group will be added to the CIL report.

The group agreed to explore the feasibility of the Chinese New Year event and other new ideas for CIL funding, ensuring that the projects align with the community's needs and priorities.

**Decision:** The group agreed to explore the feasibility of the Chinese New Year event and other new ideas for CIL funding.

**Task:** Explore the feasibility of organising a Chinese New Year event and other new ideas for CIL funding. @Rachel Gordge

**SF111/24 CONFIDENTIAL - GRANT AWARDS**

The group moved into a confidential session to review the Annual Grant Award recommendations. The recommendations and each application were discussed in detail. The Committee emphasised the importance of ensuring that the grants benefit the community and align with the council's priorities and Annual Grant criteria.

The group approved the grant recommendations, ensuring that the allocated funds would support various community projects and organisations effectively. The proposal to approve the grant awards was seconded and passed, with the group committed to monitoring the impact of the grants and making adjustments as needed in future budget cycles.

The committee concluded by formally approving that the final Grant Awards will be recommended to Full Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**Decision:** The group approved the grant awards and will recommend approval of the figures at Full Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**Date of the next Meeting: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber at Brooke House**

Sign:

Date: