



# Bracknell Town Council

## Council Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Date	<b>Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024</b>
Time	<b>19:00 - 21:02</b>
Location	<b>Council Chamber, Brooke House</b>
Present	Paul Bidwell (7.46pm), Ellen MacHale, Cherise Welch, Helen Purnell, Kathryn Neil (7.54pm) Anna Keen (7.40pm), Jeffrey Gillbe, Mary Temperton, Elizabeth Baker, Iskandar Jefferies (7.50pm), Roy Bailey (7.47pm), Cath Thompson (7.53pm), Jenny Penfold (7.22pm), Guy Gillbe (7.36pm), Donna Sidebotham, Gerry Webb, Kathleen Nugent, Simon Carter, Graham Firth, Janet Cochrane, Lucy Young, Jodie Watts (7.10pm), Donna Pressland
Apologies	Councillors: Kwabena Adu-Quaye, Caroline Egglestone, Ryan Frost, Megan Wright, Imara Wright (Dispensation)
Officers	Jackie Burgess, Rachel Gordge

## Minutes

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### **FC84/24 7PM PRESENTATION FROM SOUTH HILL PARK**

Craig Titley-Lawson, Chief Executive of South Hill Park, presented the annual report, noting that the Centre successfully delivered on its commitments from the previous year. Craig detailed the Centre's outreach efforts, such as working with local charities and mentioned plans for a new three-year strategic plan, potential involvement with the Arts Council's national portfolio, and efforts to increase commercial revenues.

### **FC85/24 ATTENDANCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors: Caroline Egglestone, Kwabena Adu-Quaye, Ryan Frost, and Megan Wright. Councillor Imara Wright has dispensation for absence until June 2025. This was followed by a welcome to Donna Pressland, attending her first full council meeting.

### **FC86/24 MINUTE OF SILENCE**

A minute of silence was observed in memory of ex-Councillor Roger Meakes, who passed away recently. Roger Meakes served as a member of Bracknell Town Council from 2015 to 2021.

### **FC87/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mary Temperton declared an interest in the Twinning Association Annual Grant application as she is the Chair of the committee.

### **FC88/24 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st October 2024 were reviewed. Councillor Elizabeth Mary Baker proposed the minutes as a correct record, this was seconded by Councillor Janet Cochrane. The minutes were approved as a correct record.

## **FC89/24 MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

The Town Clerk provided updates on the following matters arising from the previous meeting's minutes:

- **Biodiversity Audit Reports:** The reports were due at the end of November, but only a partially completed report was received. Officers have lodged a complaint and will bring a report to Council as soon as it is complete.
- **Financial Regulations and Standing Orders:** These are still under review and will be brought to the council once reviewed.
- **Website:** The new website is progressing well, and Officers working on finalising the content. A link to the website will be shared with councillors before it goes live.
- **Bus Stop Safety:** Councillor Guy Gillbe reported on discussions with Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) regarding the bus service improvement plan. BFC is awaiting confirmation of funding, which could lead to a consultation on measures to improve bus stop safety.
- **Bright HR:** The human resources company has been providing valuable advice and is conducting mediation following a grievance earlier in the year.
- **Mill Park Access Road Meeting:** A positive meeting was held with McDonald's representatives to discuss the access road issues. McDonald's has published a consultation for a period of four weeks to gain insight into their plan for accessing the restaurant. Councillors discussed the challenges of managing traffic and access around McDonald's and the importance of ensuring safety and accessibility for park users. Councillor Graham Firth, as the Leader of the Council will liaise with the Town Clerk to pull together the comments of the Councillors to allow a BTC submission for the consultation and a response to the Planning application should it get to that as it will be considered with more weight.

## **FC90/24 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Bracknell Town Mayor, Councillor Elizabeth Mary Baker began by summarising her participation in various events, including concerts and store openings. She highlighted her attendance at the Berkshire Judicial Service at Reading Minster on October 14th, describing it as a grand event that marked the start of the legal year. The Mayor noted the involvement of local children and the High Sheriff's address, which focused on opportunities for young people. The Mayor also spoke about the Remembrance Parade in the town centre on November 10th, praising its dignified and well-organised nature. She mentioned the participation of various groups, including political parties, guides, scouts, religious groups. The Mayor thanked the Officers for their efforts in organising the event.

Councillor Ellen Mac Hale, Bracknell Town Deputy Mayor shared her experience attending a Hindu festival, where she was amazed by the glamorous traditional attire and appreciated the friendliness of the attendees. She expressed her gratitude for the care and engagement she received.

She expressed her appreciation for the support and participation of the councillors in various community events.

**FC91/24 PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Councillor Janet Cochrane presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on October 15th, November 5th, and November 26<sup>th</sup> 2024. She detailed the extensive deliberations on various planning applications and the recommendations made by the committee. Additionally, the committee reviewed the draft Statement of Community Involvement document, which is currently in its consultation stage.

The minutes of the meetings were proposed for approval by Councillor Janet Cochrane, and after a brief discussion, they were second by Councillor Ellen Mac Hale and approved as a correct record.

**FC92/24 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Councillor Lucy Young presented the minutes of the Environmental Services Committee meeting held on November 19th, 2024. She thanked Officers and the team for their hard work in maintaining the town's green spaces. Councillor Young highlighted the progress on new play equipment installation, although it faced some delays due to weather issues. She also mentioned the approval of an emergency grant of £500 for the Southeast Berkshire Gang Show.

The minutes were proposed for approval by Councillor Lucy Young, and after addressing a few questions, they were seconded by Councillor Jodie Watts and approved unanimously.

**FC93/24 STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Councillor Guy Gillbe presented the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on November 26th, 2024. He thanked the Budget Monitoring and Bracknell History Working Groups for their contributions. Councillor Gillbe highlighted the recommendation to allocate £4,475 for five information panels, as well as the proposal to increase the TV License Grant from £30 to £57, maintaining it at one-third of the cost of a colour TV license from April 1st, 2025.

He also mentioned the approval of training costs for Councillor Watts and himself, and the recommendations for various community events to be funded, including £200 for a skate competition, £500 for VE Day, £500 for VJ Day, and £5,000 each for BFC Pride and Community and Culture Events.

The minutes and recommendations were proposed for approval by Councillor Guy Gillbe, seconded by Councillor Roy Bailey and approved unanimously.

**FC94/24 STAFFING COMMITTEE**

Councillor Anna Keen presented the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on November 19th, 2024. The Committee discussed various topics, including training, health and safety, absences, appraisals, and grievances, all supported by Bright HR. The minutes were proposed for approval by Councillor Anna Keen, seconded by Councillor Cath Thompson and were unanimously approved.

**FC95/24 BUDGET REPORT**

Councillor Guy Gillbe proposed the budget principles recommended by the Strategy and Finance Committee. He emphasised the importance of maintaining the council's services and proposed a 2% increase in facility and rent charges, along with an increase in allotment rents from September 2026. Additionally, a 5% increase in the

Council Tax precept was proposed to maintain the council's financial stability and service standards. The proposal by Councillor Guy Gillbe was discussed in depth. This was seconded by Councillor Graham Firth and was approved with unanimous support.

**Decision:** The budget principles and a 5% increase in the Council Tax precept were approved.

**FC96/24 COMMITTEE LIST 2024-25**

The council discussed the proposed changes to the Committees and Working Groups for 2024-25.

It was proposed by Councillor Elizabeth Baker that Cath Thompson was added to the Planning Committee, appointing Councillor Elizabeth Mary Baker as a replacement for Councillor Imara Wright on Carbon Reduction, and appointing Councillor Donna Pressland to the Environmental Services Committee, Carbon Reduction Working Group, Bracknell History Working Group and the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BTC Working group. The proposed changes were seconded by Councillor Janet Cochrane and approved unanimously.

Councillor Graham Firth then proposed the membership of the Headquarters Relocation Working Group and the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BTC Working Group. The nominations were seconded by Councillor Guy Gillbe and approved with unanimous support.

**Headquarters Relocation Working Group**

Guy Gillbe  
Paul Bidwell  
Elizabeth Mary Baker  
Jodie Watts  
Cherise Welch  
Mary Temperton  
Substitute: Donna Sidebotham

**70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BTC Working Group**

Ellen Mac Hale  
Donna Pressland  
Cherise Welch  
Jodie Watts  
Mary Temperton  
Substitute: Donna Sidebotham

**Decision:** The proposed changes to the Committees and Working Groups for 2024-25 were approved.

**FC97/24 BROOKE HOUSE LEASE**

Councillor Guy Gillbe presented the recommendation from the Strategy and Finance Committee for the Town Mayor and the Chair of the Strategy and Finance Committee to sign the reassignment of the Brooke House Lease for the Solicitors from Kite Griffin to Foster Harrington. The council's solicitors had thoroughly checked the lease. The

recommendation was seconded by Councillor Janet Cochrane and approved with unanimous support.

**Decision:** The reassignment of the Brooke House Lease for the Solicitors from Kite Griffin to Foster Harrington was approved and signed by Bracknell Town Mayor and the Chair of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

**FC98/24 BIRCH HILL LEASE**

Councillor Guy Gillbe presented the recommendation for the Town Mayor and Chair of the Strategy and Finance Committee to sign the Birch Hill Lease with Storyy. The Council's solicitors had thoroughly checked the lease. The recommendation was seconded by Councillor Jodie Watts and approved with unanimous support.

**Decision:** The Birch Hill Lease was approved and signed by Bracknell Town Mayor and the Chair of the Strategy and Finance Committee.

**FC99/24 LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME AND ASSOCIATED MEMBERSHIPS**

Councillor Guy Gillbe presented the recommendation to rejoin the Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC), the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), and the Local Government Association (LGA). He emphasised the importance of these memberships for accessing resources, training, and support for councillors. The council discussed the relevance of the LGA membership and it was decided not to re-join the LGA at this time but it will be re-evaluated in the future. The recommendation to rejoin BALC and NALC and to put Councillor Guy Gillbe forward for the BALC executive was proposed by Councillor Guy Gillbe, seconded by Councillor Mary Temperton and approved with unanimous support.

**Decision:** The recommendation to rejoin BALC and NALC and to put Councillor Guy Gillbe forward for the BALC executive was approved.

**FC100/24 REMOTE ATTENDANCE CONSULTATION**

The Council discussed the government consultation on enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings. The councillors were encouraged to participate individually in the consultation. The council agreed to compile a response based on individual submissions and to have a detailed discussion on adjusting standing orders once the government provides further guidance.

**FC101/24 SOCIAL MEDIA - X**

Councillor Guy Gillbe proposed ending the council's use of the social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter), citing its transformation into a platform for far-right movements and misinformation. The Council discussed the implications of this decision, with some members emphasising the importance of maintaining a presence on all communication platforms. The motion to end the use of X and explore alternatives was seconded and put to a vote. The motion was approved with a majority vote.

**Decision:** The motion to end the use of X and explore alternative social media services was approved.

**FC102/24 CIL REPORT**

The CIL report was noted. Councillors were reminded to send new CIL funding ideas to the Town Clerk.

**FC103/24 RECEIVED INCOME TRANSACTIONS**

The received income transactions for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024 were noted as reviewed by the Strategy and Finance Committee.

**FC104/24 PAID EXPENDITURE TRANSACTIONS**

It was proposed by Councillor Iskandar Jefferies to authorise the Town Mayor to sign the paid expenditure transactions as reviewed by the Strategy and Finance Committee for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024. This was seconded by Councillor Ellen Mac Hale and approved unanimously.

**FC105/24 CONFIDENTIAL - ANNUAL GRANT AWARDS**

The council moved to confidential business to review the Annual Grant recommendations from the Strategy and Finance Committee following detailed scrutinisation of the applications. The recommended grants were reviewed by the Council. It was proposed by Councillor Guy Gillbe to approve the recommendations en bloc. This was seconded by Councillor Ellen Mac Hale.

**Date of the next Meeting: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber at Brooke House**

Sign:

Date: