



BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

Serving the communities of Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley

Darren Tilley – Chief Executive & Town Clerk

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TO ALL ELECTORS OF
BRAUNSTONE TOWN AND THORPE ASTLEY

ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

YOU are invited to take part. It will be held at
Braunstone Civic Centre, Kingsway, Braunstone Town on:

THURSDAY, 9th MAY 2024

at 7.30pm

You can also observe the meeting, ask questions and join the discussion
through Zoom Video and Audio Conferencing:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83177269942?pwd=fifZPp42CHEeFNppYlYryLIHV5ZbRw.1>

Meeting ID: 831 7726 9942

Passcode: 967388

**Chairperson:
Councillor T. Shepherd, Town Mayor**

**The Towns Meeting may by law discuss all town affairs
and pass resolutions about them**

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Towns Meeting 18th May 2023 (Enclosed)
3. Town Mayor's Report 2023/24 (Enclosed)
4. Town Council Accounts and Budgets (Enclosed)
5. Leader's Report – Achievements 2023/24 and Priorities for 2024/25 (Enclosed)

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Shepherd". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a dotted line.

Councillor T. Shepherd, Town Mayor

Dated: 30th April 2024

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 18th MAY 2023 to 7.30pm

In the Chair, Councillor Satindra Sangha, Town Mayor.
There were 27 persons present at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alex De-Winter, Marion Waterton and Robert Waterton.

2. Minutes of the Towns Meeting 12th May 2022

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 12th May 2022 were circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present, and were taken as read.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 12th May 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. Town Mayor's Report 2022/23

A report had been circulated with the agenda summarising the following:

- Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
- Community Activities
- Community Achievement
- Programme of Events
- Summer Fete
- Anniversaries/Civic Events
- Town Mayor's Charity – Rainbows

Councillor Satindra Sangha, Town Mayor for 2022/2023, reported on activities during her Mayoral year:

"It has been a privilege and an honour to have been chosen to serve as the Town's First Citizen and experience the hard work and dedication of many in our community who serve the needs of others and are committed to making our community a vibrant place in which to live.

I began my year as Town Mayor attending events in the community to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the sense of celebration at such an extraordinary achievement by a very special lady will remain in our hearts and minds for years to come. Therefore, it was with great sadness that we received the news on 8th September that Her Majesty had passed away. During the Platinum Jubilee year, the Town Council planted trees at Mossdale Meadows and Thorpe Astley Park as part of the national Queen's Canopy initiative. Not only does this initiative

recognise Her Majesty's extraordinary achievement, along with contributing to our objectives in our Climate Change & Environmental Strategy, but the project took on a new meaning acting as a permanent and lasting tribute in our community to our late Queen for the decades to come.

During the year I attended many events to celebrate, honour and recognise achievements of our residents and these are detailed in my report on the agenda.

On 19th June I opened the new Shakespeare Park Pavilion and hosted the open day. There was a good turnout from the community with many trying a game of bowls, having a go at the football penalty shoot out, and making use of our refurbished tennis courts. We had good feedback from the Clubs who reported that they had been able to sign up new members.

Thorpe Astley Community Centre Open Day on 17th September was similarly well supported. Many of the local clubs and organisations supported the event providing activities, performances, demonstrations and taster sessions.

Thank you to everyone who joined me supporting and putting on this year's Programme of Events, which raised funds for local groups, good causes and my charity.

Events included Craft Fairs a carol service, Christmas Panto and family Craft Day and a Community Quiz night.

Thank you all those who attended and helped to make the events a success.

My Award's Evening was an opportunity to recognise and thank the residents that contribute to the community and who really make a difference to other people's lives.

This year I was delighted to present Jack Haselgrove with an Outstanding Achievement Award in recognition of his contribution in recording the history of Braunstone Town and for his offer to assign the Copyrights to his two books, "Braunstone's Humble Past" and "When Life Was Transformed in Braunstone and the Role of the Parish Council in the 1920s/30s" to Town Council to support the Braunstone Community Library

I was able to recognise the work of 12 of our Library Volunteers for all their support, dedication and enthusiasm in making the Coffee Morning, Craft & Chatter and Children's Storytime groups in the Braunstone Community Library a success.

Finally I was able to recognise Raj Patel for over 10 years voluntary work running the karate school based at St Crispin's Church and providing a positive activity for children to participate in.

On a personal note, I am grateful that as Town Mayor I have been able to raise £4,430 for my Mayoral charity, Rainbows Children's Hospice to help them with their continued work with children and their families as they make the most of every precious moment.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to my son and consort Daniel who supported me in this important role every step of the way.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish the next Town Mayor a most enjoyable and successful year”.

4. Town Council Accounts and Budgets

Councillor Nick Brown, Leader of the Council, reported on the Town Council’s financial position. The Town Council’s Accounts and Budget Report was circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present, and were taken as read.

5. Leader’s Report – Achievements 2022/23 and Priorities for 2023/24

A report had been circulated with the agenda, which was made available to all persons present. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Nick Brown, reported on the Town Council’s achievements during 2022/2023. A copy of the draft Annual Report for 2022, due for consideration and adoption at the Annual Council, was also circulated.

“The Town Council’s Policy & Resources Committee on 27th April 2023 finalised the draft Annual Report for 2023, a copy of which is attached as an appendix. The Annual Report summarises our achievements during the Council Year May 2022 to May 2023 and sets out our plans for the forthcoming Council year (2023/2024). The report will be received by the Annual Meeting of the Town Council, which meets following the Annual Towns Meeting, for consideration and adoption”.

“Despite the current economic and financial pressures, the Town Council continues its work to protect, enhance and improve services for the residents of the Town and below is a summary of our work and achievements over the last year and our priorities for the coming year”.

Shakespeare Park – Improvement & Development

“The new Pavilion facility, site improvements and refurbished tennis courts at Shakespeare Park have been fully completed and delivered under budget by £32,735. The new facility includes modern changing facilities and a multi-function, multi-purpose club room providing a meeting room and a social facility”.

“A central aim of this project is for Clubs to increase participation and therefore, membership. The brand new much improved and enhanced facility acts as a catalyst in this respect providing modern facilities and meeting/social space. More members should mean more money collected in membership fees. The pavilion and site are able to support lawn bowls, pétanque, football and tennis providing for both sustaining and encouraging growth in sport participation. The Council and the sports clubs hosted a successful community open day in June showcasing the new facilities and the sports on offer”.

“Residents are able to use tennis courts using our Tap4Tennis bookings service, which is also available at Thorpe Astley Park tennis courts. The use of a pre-booked court entry system will give certainty around court availability, as well as providing funds to invest in court facilities and provide training sessions, all with the aim of increasing participation in tennis and sport”.

“The new Pavilion building is a shared sports facility and a community association made up of representatives from the sports clubs and the Council has been formed to run the facility on a day to day basis. The first meeting of the Committee of the Shakespeare Park Management Association was held on Monday 27th March. The Committee appointed a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. The Committee also adopted a constitution and authorised the Treasurer to set up a Bank Account”.

“Since then, two further meetings have been held. The Licence to Occupy and Manage the Pavilion has now been issued and accepted by the Association, which will enable the new Pavilion facility to be available for hire and community use during the coming year. In addition, 10 year pitch licences have been issued to the Clubs, providing security of tenure, which should unlock funding opportunities and enable the Clubs to continue to grow”.

“Also, in the coming year we aim to deliver the final stage of our improvements: refurbishment of the playground, which includes the installation of sensory play equipment, providing for those children with special needs to play alongside their siblings”.

“A grant from the National Lottery of £45,000 was awarded on 27th April. Along with Section 106 funding, Tesco Bags of Help funding and underspends from phases 1 and 2 of the project, funding for the playground improvements has now been secured. A planning condition on the playground remains to be discharged and with lead in times, it is expected that works will commence at the end of the summer holidays meaning the new play facilities will be available for use in October 2023”.

Braunstone Civic Centre Improvements

“Having secured funding and appointed a contractor, works to improve the toilet and kitchen facilities at Braunstone Civic Centre began in January 2023. The building works were completed last month with some snagging and fitting works in the new Café kitchen to be completed this month”.

“The refurbished toilets included a new Changing Places toilet. I am delighted that the Council was successful in bidding to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities for £19,941 funding towards the cost of providing a Changing Places toilet. Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with a disability. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well people with other physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. Changing Places toilets meet these needs and it is right that we invest in these improvements to ensure that all in our community can access, enjoy and benefit from the services we provide at the Civic Centre site”.

“The internal reorganisation of the building provided an opportunity to improve the kitchen facilities. The new kitchen facility for the Civic Community Lounge will expand the bar service to include the provision of a café service offering lunches and meals, utilising the Lounge more effectively and providing a wider community social and meeting space”.

Supporting our Community

“Following the Covid-19 pandemic and with the current cost of living crisis, the Town Council has continued to support and facilitate initiatives to support our community groups and those in our community who are most in need.

“With the support of our Library volunteers, we ran a Warm Spaces Lunch throughout the winter period. The initiative provided a hot soup and an opportunity to socialise, meet others and seek support and advice through the Town’s Local Area Coordinator”.

“In addition, the Town Council continues to provide support to our voluntary organisations and groups, who are at the heart of our community, by offering discounted arrangements, including free use, when using our community centres, and with additional funds available through our community grants scheme. Furthermore, following a generous gift from the trustees of the former Braunstone Town Community minibus, a new community and social inclusion projects grant scheme has been established”.

Climate Change and the Environment

“In recent years the impact of climate change has become increasingly visible and, therefore, in 2021 the Town Council adopted a Climate Change & Environmental Strategy. The Strategy sets out a roadmap for the activities of the Town Council to become carbon neutral by 2030; for promoting and encouraging awareness and action on climate change; to move towards renewable energy sources; and to ensure the protection and enhancement of the town’s green spaces”.

“Following adoption of the Strategy, the Council has also developed and implemented an Environment & Biodiversity Strategy for the Town’s parks and green spaces in order to promote and encourage tree planting and seek to increase and enrich biodiversity”.

“To ensure that the Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030, we also commissioned a Carbon Audit of our activities, which made 11 recommendations for reducing the Council’s carbon footprint by approximately 40% by 2024. An Action Plan was developed and approved by Policy & Resources Committee in June last year. Since then, work began a pace to deliver the recommendations and address the impact of our own activities on the climate”.

“Following a procurement process, this month work is due to commence on installing Solar PV Panels and Electric Vehicle Charging Points at our Community Facilities. In addition, an Air Source Heat Pump will also be installed at Thorpe Astley Community Centre over the summer. These initiatives will not

only reduce our carbon emissions by around one-third but will also ensure the Council meets its budgeted £18,000 savings on utility costs”.

“Our climate and environmental commitments are not just about the Council’s carbon footprint, they are equally about supporting our community to respond. Therefore, the Town Council has been working closely with its partners to improve cycling and walking routes in order to provide sustainable transport connections between the various communities, facilities and services in our Town and also between the Town and the City Centre, Fosse Park, railway stations, bus stations and other surrounding retail and employment areas. Work began on phase 1 of these improvements in February with the enhancement of the pathway through Mossdale Meadows. Work on the lighting and CCTV is due to be complete by the end of this month. Shortly after the path will be linked through Meridian Leisure. Further works are due to be carried out in the autumn to improve the pathway and crossing points along Meridian Way. This is a significant development for our community providing better access to Meridian Leisure and Business Park for Braunstone Town residents and to the Civic Centre/Library and Mossdale Meadows for Thorpe Astley residents. Work to improve access to Aylestone Meadows from Kingsway is also due to take place this year”.

Strategic Aims and Delivery Objectives 2023/2024

“In 2021, the Council reviewed its ten key priorities refining and focussing them into four strategic aims for the medium term:

1. **Protect and Enhance our Parks and Open Spaces:** to invest in and maintain high quality urban green spaces for sport, recreation and play, while enriching the natural environment.
2. **Provide Vibrant Community Facilities:** to provide vibrant, accessible and cost effective community facilities, which continue to be used by and respond to the needs of our community.
3. **Support and Connect the Local Community:** to both nurture and enhance the Town’s community life and connect our communities to reduce isolation and build community cohesion.
4. **Respond to Climate Change and champion sustainable development:** to embed climate and environmental awareness in our decision making and actions and play our part in supporting the community to do the same”.

“Each Aim is supported by specific delivery objectives, which are reviewed and developed as part of the annual review of the Council’s Business Plan and Capital Plan and the annual setting of the budget and Council Tax precept. For 2023/2024 there are 17 specific delivery objectives”.

“A summary of the delivery objectives is contained in the Annual Report and full details are set out in the Council’s Business Plan, which is available on our website and from Customer Services at Braunstone Civic Centre”.

Capital Plan

“Alongside the Council’s Business Plan, the Council approves a Capital Plan, which sets out proposed improvements to our assets and infrastructure”.

“In the coming year, priority capital projects include:

- replacing the vehicle and pedestrian culvert bridges at Mosssdale Meadows given the existing culverts are not suitable for the flow of water which causes flooding on the park;
- Shakespeare Park playground improvements and provision of sensory play equipment;
- enhancements to Impey Close playground and Open Space;
- installation of Solar PV Panels at the Council’s Community Facilities, and an air source heat pump at Thorpe Astley Community Centre, in order to protect the public finances from the significant increase in energy costs and to address the impact of our operations on the environment by reducing our carbon footprint; and
- installation of Electric Vehicle Charging points and improvements to cycling facilities at our community facilities to support sustainable travel by our service users, hirers and staff”.

“A full list of the Council’s Capital Projects is available on our website and from Customer Services at Braunstone Civic Centre”.

Getting Involved

“The Council welcomes the input of the community in shaping our services and initiatives. Residents can have their say on a range of service improvements, initiatives and projects through consultations, which are notified in the Braunstone Life, on our website, social media and notices around the Town”.

“Residents can have their say at our Council and Committee meetings through the Public Participation item on each agenda”.

“The Council also has a Citizens’ Advisory Panel, which is open to all residents to join, which meets quarterly and discusses our Business Plan, Capital Plan, initiatives and projects and receives details of our consultations”.

Update Reports

“Updates on the above matters are published in a regular Leader’s report in the Braunstone Life and on the Council’s website”.

6. Termination of Meeting

The Town Mayor thanked those present for attending and with no further business the meeting closed at 7.50pm.

BRAUNSTONE TOWN AND THORPE ASTLEY
ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

9th MAY 2024

Item 3 – Town Mayor’s Report 2023/24

I (Councillor Tracey Shepherd) took up the role of Braunstone Town Mayor on 18th May 2023.

It has been a privilege and an honour to have been chosen to serve as first citizen and experience first-hand the hard work and dedication of many in our community who serve and support the needs of others.

During my term as Town Mayor I committed to making a difference in our community – right here – right now. My year saw the establishment of two Chatty Café’s in the Town and the opportunity to raise funds, in aid of my Mayoral Charity for the year, to tackle loneliness in our community.

We have a wide variety of activities and proactive community groups and it has been a real privilege to meet and see the vital work of our volunteers who are committed to reducing loneliness, building friendships and making our community a vibrant place to live.

I am certain that our community activities will continue to thrive and it has been my honour to meet and see these volunteers who put so much dedication into the groups which they support.

Community Activities

It has been a pleasure to host and be invited to many of our community events and activities:

- on 19th May, I was welcomed to The Friday Social Group and had a good chat with those in attendance;
- on 20th May, was the Vaisakhi celebrations at Braunstone Civic Centre;
- on 24th May, I attended the Coffee & Chat Session at Library and was able to chat with our hard-working volunteers;
- I attended the opening of a Community Garden at Ravenhurst School on 25th October;
- Thanksgiving Event at St Crispin’s Church on 28th October;
- Social Warm Space at St Crispin’s Church on 3rd November;
- Armistice Commemorations at the Civic Memorial Garden on 11th November; and
- Remembrance Sunday Service at St Crispin’s Church on 12th November.

Community Groups are at the forefront of activities, which reduce loneliness and isolation particularly among the most vulnerable. I welcome the support that the Town Council has offered through its Community Development grants and I hope that the Town Council will work to ensure that community groups continue to be supported.

Chatty Cafés

Last May I committed to making a difference in our community – right here – right now. On 27th June, I hosted the first launch of a Chatty Café at Gilly's Sandwich Shop and I would like to thank Carl and his staff for embracing this initiative and providing a warm welcome.

I opened our second Chatty Café on Thursday 7th March at the Civic Community Lounge at Braunstone Civic Centre. I particularly wish to thank Councillors Anthea Ambrose and Marion Waterton for hosting the Chatter and Natter table each Thursday lunchtime between 1pm and 2pm. I also wish to thank the operator, JAAAK Ltd, for their support.

Together, both Chatty Cafés are providing an informal space for people to meet and talk. Loneliness literally kills causing altered brain function and depression and suicide. So, it is vitally important that we provide opportunities for those who are lonely and isolated in our community to get out of the house and chat away.

Programme of Events

Thank you to everyone who joined me supporting and putting on this year's Programme of Events. These events provide an opportunity for us to share what is good about our community and our community spirit, as well as raising vital funds to help support our community groups.

I am personally grateful to the organisations who put on these events since the programme also enables funds to be raised for my Mayoral Charity to tackle loneliness in the community. Thank you to everyone who supported the events.

Community Achievement

During my term I attended events that have taken place to celebrate, honour and recognise achievements of our residents, many deserving unsung heroes of our community.

My Awards of Merit evening took place on Thursday 11th April at Braunstone Civic Centre. The event includes a celebratory hot supper, in order to raise funds for Chatty Café's and tackling loneliness where residents and Councillors could purchase tickets for the event and support those who were receiving awards. Groups receiving net proceeds from the Programme of Events and nominees for an Award of Merit were given complimentary tickets as my guests for the evening.

I was delighted to recognise the following:

1. Mark Jefferson, Anne Webster and Gordon Webster, for their work and commitment in taking on the management of Shakespeare Park Sports Pavilion and the hard work put in to make it a success; and
2. Carl Gilbert for his work and commitment in setting up the Chatty Café at Gilly's Café and making this a huge success.

I hope that the Town Council will continue to play a central role for many years to come in helping to reduce isolation by bringing people together by promoting the strong sense of community spirit that I have encountered.

Community Events

On 1st July, I opened the first Thorpe Astley On the Beach at Thorpe Astley Park and Community Centre. The weather was just right and that brought people out from the community and from further afield. It was great to see the children having so much fun and I very much hope the Council can organise similar successful events at Thorpe Astley Park in the coming years.

The annual Summer Fete was due to take place on 5th August at Mossdale Meadows; however, unfortunately this was cancelled due to the adverse weather.

Nevertheless, Apple Day was held on Saturday 23rd September at Franklin Park Community Orchard. I hosted a mini Chatty Café on the day and a lady called Margaret attended the Apple Day Chatty Café on her own. A family sitting on the next table heard this and invited her to go round the stalls and activities at the event with them. They swapped phone numbers. Weeks later I saw Margaret again while out shopping. Margaret thanked me for making her day and stated she now attends Bingo with the family every Friday.

Local Services

On 22nd June, with the Chair of the District I formally opened the new link for pedestrians and cyclists between Mossdale Meadows and Meridian Leisure; and we had people attend on their bikes and pass through while we were there – which was great to see.

On 19th June, I visited the DWP Help Desk at Blaby District Council's offices; this meeting was the beginning of discussions with the Town Council to explore whether the DWP could run an outreach JobShop at Braunstone Civic Centre, which commenced on 26th July.

I attended our first Jobs Fair at Braunstone Civic Centre on Thursday 12th October, also organised by the Department of Work and Pensions and hosted by ourselves. Over 150 residents attended the event and positive feedback was received from the exhibitors.

Coupled with the one to one weekly outreach services to residents, I'm delighted that our partnership work with the Department of Work and Pensions is making a real difference locally supporting our residents finding work which suits their circumstances.

Also during the year I formally opened the Civic Centre Changing Places toilet and Civic Community Lounge Café on 5th December; and on 14th December, I formally opened the refurbished Play Area at Shakespeare Park.

NALC Star Council, Council of the Year 2023

On 29th November I had both the privilege and the honour of accepting, on behalf of Braunstone Town Council and the community, the NALC Star Council, Council of the Year Award 2023, at a ceremony at the House of Lords.

On 18th January, I hosted a Civic Reception to thank our community, our partners, our stakeholders, staff and councillors for their part in helping make Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley a vibrant community and for helping us achieve national recognition for our work and achievements.

Braunstone Town Council is the first local council in Blaby District, Leicestershire and in the East Midlands to be awarded Star Council of the Year!

Tribute to my dear Mum and Consort

On 13th September, my dear Mum and Mayoral Consort for the year (Pauline Shepherd) passed away after a brave battle against stage 4 bladder cancer.

It was one of her proudest days seeing me elected as Town Mayor and being my consort. I was determined not to let her down nor the community and I carried on with my Mayoral duties on my own, as a tribute to my Mum, which was her wish.

Mum was born to Bob and Elsie who sadly died when she was four years old, so her grandma, Florence, brought her up as her daughter despite being in her 60s and having nine children of her own. She always said she felt loved and blessed that her grandma became her mother.

Her grandma had strong political views that she passed on to my mum, hence my entry into local politics.

Mum met my dad, and they married in 1963. In June she was so proud to receive a 60th anniversary card from the King!

Not long afterwards she became unwell and then the long journey began to discover just how seriously ill she was. The time to get CT scans is simply unacceptable, early detection saves lives!

She wouldn't talk about her cancer, she only wanted happy thoughts to surround her, and she cheered everyone up in every hospital ward she was on, in the last few months.

Mum was simply a magnificent lady! I would always say, "Love you" and she would always say, "More!" I so wish there could be more!!

Please watch out for symptoms of bladder cancer:

- Blood or blood clots in the urine.
- Pain or burning sensation during urination.
- Frequent urination.

- Feeling the need to urinate many times throughout the night.
- Feeling the need to urinate, but not being able to pass urine.
- Lower back pain on 1 side of the body.

Please go to the doctor – don't waste any time!

I would like to thank Councillors and the community for the love, support, messages and hugs following the passing of my Mum. It was a moment of deep personal loss for all the family and I greatly appreciated the support.

Town Mayor's Charity – Tackling Loneliness

On a personal note, I am grateful that my term as Town Mayor has given me the opportunity to raise money for tackling loneliness and isolation in our community.

I am pleased to report that I have been able to raise £2,240 during my term as Town Mayor from events in the Programme of Events and specific fundraising events and donations for tackling loneliness in the community.

Community Development Committee will consider the arrangement for how this money can be spent and further announcements will be made in the coming weeks.

Thank you very much for your support.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to everyone for their support over the year. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish the next Town Mayor a most enjoyable and successful year.

*Councillor Tracey Shepherd
Braunstone Town Mayor, 2023/24*

BRAUNSTONE TOWN AND THORPE ASTLEY
ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

9th MAY 2024

Item 4 – Town Council Accounts and Budgets

Statement of Accounts 2022/2023

The Accounting Statements for 31st March 2023, prepared in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, were approved by the Town Council on 29th June 2023. The Audit was completed on 14th August 2023.

The internal auditor noted that the generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of general reserve is 3 months of net revenue expenditure.....for the audit year 2022-23, that would suggest approximately £180,000 but the actual figure was considerably lower and less than 50% of the guideline figure. Whilst the Practitioners' Guide is just that i.e. guidance and whilst the calculation of reserves is not an exact science, it is appropriate and prudent that the council reviews its current position against the guidance to confirm or if necessary amend its plan in respect of the sums held".

The external auditor commented that "Reserves are considered to be low and could pose a risk to the Town Council's ability to function in the future".

A copy of the Statement of Accounts is available on the Council's website and can be obtained and inspected during the opening hours of the Customer Service Shop at Braunstone Civic Centre.

Unaudited Accounts 2023/2024

The Town Council has produced draft figures for the 2023/2024 financial year; these have been the subject of Internal Audit (8th May 2024) and will be considered by the Town Council's Corporate Governance Sub-Committee, Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council in June, prior to submission for external audit.

During the year, the Council faced significant cash flow pressures. Salary costs increased significantly with a larger than anticipated pay settlement, which is negotiated nationally. In addition, shipping delays meant that the installation of solar PV panels and an air source heat pump were delayed and consequently the associated income and savings on utility bills were significantly less.

Excluding income and expenditure for capital projects, and the associated reserve movements, total operational income in 2023/2024 (including the precept) was £991,474.91; total operational expenditure was £1,045,797.24. Therefore, there was a net overspend against operational budgets of £54,322.33.

Budgets for 2024/2025

The Town Council continues to work hard to improve the services it provides to people living and working in the area while ensuring that it invests in infrastructure for future generations.

Due to the ongoing economic situation, funding and inflationary pressures, it is no longer possible to draw on reserves or keep Council Tax increases below 10%. As a result, Councillors took the difficult and painful decision to increase the Town Council's share of the Council Tax by approximately one-quarter, along with increasing fees and charges, to protect services and ensure that the Council has sufficient cash and reserves to function. The Council is aware that residents are facing increased costs and has sought to keep the impact as low as possible. However, failure to act decisively risked significant cuts to services along with larger tax increases in the coming years.

For 2024/2025 the precept for band B, which includes over half the properties in Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley, has increased by £32.72 to £155.80 for the year.

Going forward, this decision will secure services and place the Council back on track to a stable financial footing. However, in the coming year and into 2025/2026, the Council will continue to face financial pressures and has therefore identified a series of one-off savings in 2024/2025 and a number of on-going savings, to ensure the Council is able to balance the books.

Further details on the 2024/2025 budget and council tax charge are available on the Council's website or from Customer Services.

Accounts & Budgets

The following table indicates:

- the year end audited position for the years ending 31st March 2022 and 2023;
- the draft year-end figures for the financial year ending 31st March 2024;
- the Town Council's intended income and expenditure for the current financial year (ending 31st March 2025).

	31st March 2022	31st March 2023	31st March 2024*	31st March 2025#
Balances Brought Forward	£618,175	£286,317	£214,440	£54,906
Annual Precept (+)	£681,961	£720,356	£776,035	£981,884
Receipts (+)	£172,030	£338,512	£458,846	£232,816
Staff Costs (-)	£434,301	£544,102	£604,238	£617,336
Loan Repayments (-)	£94,186	£82,433	£81,151	£94,268
Payments (-)	£657,362	£504,211	£709,027	£424,096
Balances Carried Forward	£286,317	£214,440	£54,906	£133,906
Cash & Short Term Investments	£243,221	£157,711	£29,524	-
Fixed Assets & Long Term Investments	£5,400,446	£5,429,228	£5,693,434	-
Total Borrowings	£1,061,862	£1,120,528	£1,264,791	£1,459,434

* the year-end accounts for 2023/2024 have not been considered for approval by the Council and have not been externally audited.

the year-end figures for 2024/2025 are based on the budget, adopted by Council on 25th January 2024.

NOTE: The variation in the balances carried forward, and the cash and short term investments, between 2023 and 2024 is due to the full Public Works Loan for the Civic Centre Improvements being drawn down in the financial year 2022/23, while nearly half of the contract payments made during the 2023/2024 financial year.

BRAUNSTONE TOWN AND THORPE ASTLEY
ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

9th MAY 2024

Item 5 – Leader’s Report – Achievements 2023/24 and Priorities for 2024/25

The Town Council’s Policy & Resources Committee on 25th April 2024 finalised the draft Annual Report for 2024, a copy of which is attached as an appendix. The Annual Report summarises our achievements during the Council Year May 2023 to May 2024 and sets out our plans for the forthcoming Council year (2024/2025). The report will be received by the Annual Meeting of the Town Council, which meets following the Annual Towns Meeting, for consideration and adoption.

On 29th November, Braunstone Town Council was crowned Council of the Year 2023 at the National Association of Local Councils' (NALC) Star Council Awards. This is a fantastic and well deserved achievement for the whole Council and the community. Working with our partners and the local community, we saved and enhanced our community Library, facilitated an expansion of GP services, supported our neighbours through Covid, delivered enhanced sporting, recreation and play facilities, created a vital walking and cycling link and reduced our carbon footprint by approximately 40% this year. We know that Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley is a vibrant community and I’m delighted that what we are achieving here has been recognised nationally.

Financial Position

Despite our achievements, the Town Council is not immune from the financial pressures affecting public bodies and local authorities at all levels up and down the country. Residents have faced increased costs particularly since Covid and therefore, over recent years, the Council has sought to keep the Town’s share of Council Tax bills as low as possible. Similarly, fees and charges have been frozen and, in some cases since Covid, have reduced to encourage hires and community activities.

As a result, each year the Council drew on its cash reserves with a view to replenishing these in subsequent years. Due to the ongoing economic situation, funding and inflationary pressures, it is no longer possible to draw on reserves or keep increases below 10% without running out of cash.

Therefore, in the first quarter of 2024, short term immediate action had to be taken to avoid services being adversely affected and the Council not being able to function. In order to replenish reserves and address the predicted cash deficit by 31st March 2024, Councillors agreed to raise £50,000 on the precept to cover the predicted cash deficit and £29,000 to replenish half the balance of funds used from the Council’s savings account. As a result, a net precept requirement of £981,884 was approved. In total, this resulted in a percentage increase on the precept of 26.59% (26.53% increase to the 2023/2024 base budget); £155.80 per annum (a cash increase of £32.72 on 2023/2024) on a typical Band B and £200.31 per annum (a cash increase of £42.07 on 2023/2024) on Band D. Fees and charges rose by approximately 5% on 1st April 2024.

The following measures have also been implemented:

1. Reserves Policy amended to set out that the Council will maintain a revenue reserve of at least one-quarter of net expenditure; where revenue reserves fall below this level proposals will be submitted to replenish them;
2. separating capital and operational income and expenditure budgets;
3. public engagement concerning the financial position;
4. setting aside sufficient funds (into a savings account) to meet the payroll costs prior to receipt of the next tranche of the precept;
5. adjusting the monthly staff pay date;
6. identifying £30,990 of one-off savings in 2024/2025;
7. identification of on-going savings between £5,738 and £6,038 per annum; and
8. Budget Comparisons Report to be the first substantive item on each Policy & Resources Committee agenda.

Going forward, these decisions will secure services and place the Council back on track to a stable financial footing.

Despite the current economic and financial pressures, the Town Council continues its work to protect, enhance and improve services for the residents of the Town and below is a summary of our work and achievements over the last year and our priorities for the coming year.

Shakespeare Park – Improvement & Development

In December 2023, the Council completed the final phase of the £1.2 million investment to improve sporting, recreation and play facilities at Shakespeare Park.

The refurbishment and installation of new equipment in the play area included installing Sensory Play Equipment, replacing worn equipment and installing additional equipment, an Astroturf fitness trail, and replacing the safety surfaces.

The improvements were provided using National Lottery Funding, other grant funding, and part of the underspend from the construction of the new Pavilion.

The new Pavilion and Car Park was delivered under budget by £65,443. This was part funded through borrowing and grant funding. To ensure the best deal for taxpayers, a Joint Management Association made up of Sports Clubs operating on the site and the Town Council was established a year ago. This arrangement allows for the sports clubs, with the support of the Town Council, to be fully involved in making a success of this community sporting facility and enabled the Council to access £100,000 of funding from Sport England and to reclaim 20% VAT on the build cost (over £200,000). The arrangements also mean that hirers don't have to pay VAT on top of the hire costs.

Residents are able to hire the Clubroom at the Pavilion through the Town Council, who are administering the bookings on behalf of the Management Association. Initial feedback from hirers is positive and the Management Association will be happy to look at ways to make improvements as the facility settles down into regular use. The Management Association are also in discussions with a couple of potential regular hirers, to ensure the financial stability of the Pavilion facility going forward.

Prior to 2021 Shakespeare Park had a dilapidated Clubhouse which was not fit either for purpose or for wider use by the community, a car park which was too small for the use of the site, tennis courts with a decaying surface and play equipment over 40 years old. Our Town now has modern accessible facilities for sport, recreation, play and community use, all delivered under budget.

Braunstone Civic Centre Improvements

Following completion of the improvements to the Civic Centre toilets, including the installation of the brand new Changing Places facility, the internal reorganisation of the building provided an opportunity to improve the kitchen facilities.

A new kitchen facility was provided for the Civic Community Lounge to enable the existing bar service to be expanded to include the provision of a café service. The café opened in December offering lunches and meals, utilising the Lounge more effectively and providing a wider community social and meeting space.

This year the Civic Community Lounge will be operating as a Café on weekday mornings and lunchtimes and providing meals in the evenings and at weekends.

Climate Change and the Environment

In recent years the impact of climate change has become increasingly visible and, therefore, in 2021 the Town Council adopted a Climate Change & Environmental Strategy. The Strategy sets out a roadmap for the activities of the Town Council to become carbon neutral by 2030; for promoting and encouraging awareness and action on climate change; to move towards renewable energy sources; and to ensure the protection and enhancement of the town's green spaces.

To ensure that the Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030, a Carbon Audit of the Council's activities was commissioned, which made 11 recommendations for reducing the Council's carbon footprint by approximately 40% by 2024. An Action Plan was developed and approved by Policy & Resources Committee in June 2022. Since then, work began apace to deliver the recommendations and address the impact of our own activities on the climate.

2023 saw the completion of some of the major initiatives in the first Climate Change & Environmental Action Plan:

- **Solar Panels:** have been installed at Braunstone Civic Centre, Braunstone Town Library and Thorpe Astley Community Centre;
- an **Air Source Heat Pump** has been installed at Thorpe Astley Community Centre; and
- **Electric Vehicle Charging Points** are fully operational at both Community Centres.

Together these initiatives are estimated to reduce the Council's Carbon Footprint by approximately 40%. At Thorpe Astley Community Centre, the solar panels and air source heat pump reduce the carbon footprint of the building by approximately 90%, with the electric vehicle charging points contributing towards offsetting the remaining 10%.

Our climate and environmental commitments are not just about the Council's carbon footprint, they are equally about supporting our community to respond. Therefore, the Town Council has been working closely with its partners to improve cycling and walking routes in order to provide sustainable transport connections between the various communities, facilities and services in our Town and also between the Town and the City Centre, Fosse Park, railway stations, bus stations and other surrounding retail and employment areas.

Phase 1 of the Improvements to Cycling and Walking Routes was delivered last summer with the widening of the footpath and installation of lighting and CCTV through Mossdale Meadows, and the connection through to Meridian Leisure. This is a significant development for the community providing better access to Meridian Leisure and Business Park for Braunstone Town residents and to the Civic Centre, Library and Mossdale Meadows for Thorpe Astley residents.

Phase 2 of the project, improvements to the footpath through Aylestone Meadows were completed in the autumn with works due to begin later this year on improving the boardwalk access from Kingsway to the new pathway.

Further phases of the project, to be delivered early in 2025, include improvements to the pathway and crossing points along Meridian Way and across Kingsway.

Strategic Aims and Delivery Objectives 2024/2025

In 2021, the Council reviewed its ten key priorities refining and focussing them into four strategic aims for the medium term:

1. **Protect and Enhance our Parks and Open Spaces:** to invest in and maintain high quality urban green spaces for sport, recreation and play, while enriching the natural environment.
2. **Provide Vibrant Community Facilities:** to provide vibrant, accessible and cost effective community facilities, which continue to be used by and respond to the needs of our community.
3. **Support and Connect the Local Community:** to both nurture and enhance the Town's community life and connect our communities to reduce isolation and build community cohesion.
4. **Respond to Climate Change and champion sustainable development:** to embed climate and environmental awareness in our decision making and actions and play our part in supporting the community to do the same.

Each Aim is supported by specific delivery objectives, which are reviewed and developed as part of the annual review of the Council's Business Plan and Capital Plan and the annual setting of the budget and Council Tax precept. For 2024/2025 there are 16 specific delivery objectives.

A summary of the delivery objectives is contained in the Annual Report and full details are set out in the Council's Business Plan, which is available on our website and from Customer Services at Braunstone Civic Centre.

Capital Plan

Alongside the Council's Business Plan, the Council approves a Capital Plan, which sets out proposed improvements to both assets and infrastructure.

In the coming year, priority capital projects include:

- Replacement of the glass skylight in the foyer at Braunstone Civic Centre;
- Mossdale Meadows Flood Alleviation and Drainage Improvements – works to the banks on Lubbesthorpe Brook, replacement of the culvert bridge, drainage improvements along Lubbesthorpe Bridle Path, and installation of drainage and surfacing of the car park;
- Installation of battery storage for the Solar PV Panels; and
- enhancements to Impey Close playground and Open Space.

A full list of the Council's Capital Projects is available on the website and from Customer Services at Braunstone Civic Centre.

Getting Involved

The Council welcomes the input of the community in shaping services and initiatives. Residents can have their say on a range of service improvements, initiatives, savings and projects through consultations, which are notified in the Braunstone Life, on the Council's website, social media and notices around the Town.

Residents can have their say at Council and Committee meetings through the Public Participation item on each agenda.

The Council also has a Citizens' Advisory Panel, which is open to all residents to join, which meets quarterly and discusses the Business Plan, Capital Plan, initiatives and projects and receives details of consultations.

Update Reports

Updates on the above matters are published in a regular Leader's report in the Braunstone Life and on the Council's website.

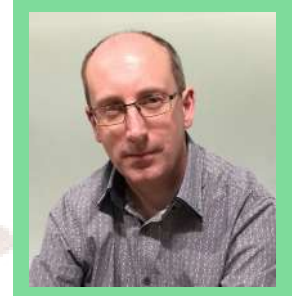
*Councillor Nick Brown
Leader of Braunstone Town Council*



BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

WELCOME TO OUR ANNUAL REPORT 2024

By Councillor Nick Brown, Leader of Braunstone Town Council



Despite these challenging times, the Town Council continues to provide important services to the community, this Annual Report provides a summary of our achievements during 2023/2024 and looks ahead to our aspirations for the next 12 months.

On 29th November, Braunstone Town Council was crowned Council of the Year 2023 at the National Association of Local Councils' (NALC) Star Council Awards. This is a fantastic and well deserved achievement for the whole Council and the community. Working with our partners and the local community, we saved and enhanced our community Library, facilitated an expansion of GP services, supported our neighbours through Covid, delivered enhanced sporting, recreation and play facilities, created a vital walking and cycling link and reduced our carbon footprint by approximately 40% this year. We know that Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley is a vibrant community and I'm delighted that what we are achieving here has been recognised nationally.

The widening of the footpath through Mossdale Meadows and the connection to Meridian Leisure was completed in time for the summer. This is a significant development for our community providing better access to Meridian Leisure and Business Park for Braunstone Town residents and to the Civic Centre, Library and Mossdale Meadows for Thorpe Astley residents. Further phases of the project, are now being delivered and this will continue into 2025, including improvements to the pathway and crossing points along Meridian Way and work to improve access to Aylestone Meadows from Kingsway.

By installing solar panels, electric vehicle charging points and an air source heat pump, we have reduced our carbon footprint by 40% this year. At Thorpe Astley Community Centre the initiatives reduce the carbon footprint of the building by approximately 90%. There is still much more to do with only 6 years to go. The Council chose to deal with the big initiatives first, which means the next stages of our plans will be more challenging.

Nevertheless, the Council is not immune from the financial pressures affecting public bodies and local authorities at all levels up and down the country. We know that residents have faced increased costs and therefore, over recent years we have sought to keep council tax as low as possible. As a result, each year the Council drew on its cash reserves with a view to replenishing these in subsequent years. Due to the ongoing economic situation, funding and inflationary pressures, it is no longer possible to draw on our reserves without running out of cash. Therefore, Councillors this year had to take the difficult decision to increase Council Tax to secure services and place the Council back on track to a stable financial footing.

A full list of the Council's Capital Projects and Delivery Objectives for the coming year, along with information on our services can be found on our website at www.braunstonetowncouncil.org.uk or by contacting Customer Services.

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023		YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024
£		£
286,317.22	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	884,211.88
720,356.00	(+) Annual Precept	++* 25')'\$\$
338,512.47	(+) Total other receipts	() , ž (*"(9
544,101.77	(-) Staff costs	604,237.64
82,433.06	(-) Loan interest / capital repayments	81,151.39
504,210.64	(-) Total other payments	709,026.68
214,440.22	(=) Balances carried forward	54,906.00
157,711.05	Total cash and short term investments	29,523.76
5,429,227.79	Total fixed assets and long term assets	5,693,433.54
1,120,527.97	Total borrowings	1,264,790.58

Mission Statement

We exist:

- To ensure that local services and the environment reach the highest possible standards within the resources available for citizens, visitors and those who work in Braunstone Town;
- To provide a focus for civic pride;
- To listen, identify and respond to agreed local needs;
- To help develop a strong, secure, self-reliant, self-confident community, free from unlawful discrimination.



BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

Achievements (2023/2024)



The Council provides a wide range of services together with social and recreational facilities. The Council also promotes the interests of the town in its representation to other bodies. It works in partnership with the larger District Council and County Council to provide and supplement local government services within the town area.



BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS 2023/2024

1. Protect and Enhance our Parks and Open Spaces

This year we have completed the third and final phase of the Shakespeare Park refurbishment - Improvements to the Playground. The refurbished and improved play area includes both new and refurbished equipment, new sensory play garden and new safety surfaces.

The Council also agreed a Licence to a new Management Association, made up of the Sports Clubs and Council, to manage the Shakespeare Pavilion, which has also enabled it to be opened for use by the community.

Worked with Blaby District Council and the developer, Persimmon Homes, to deliver essential safety improvements to the culvert bridge at Thorpe Astley Park.



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BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

Achievements (2023/2024)



2. Provide Vibrant Community Facilities

This year we have expanded the Civic Centre Bar Service to include a café service, including a weekly Chatty Café. This provides an informal social meeting place for both the community and users of the Civic Centre and Library.



3. Support and Connect the Local Community

- Supported new and existing community activities and initiatives through our Community Grants Schemes and Programme of Events.
- Co-ordinated community events, such as Apple Day, Coronation of King Charles III, and a Thorpe Astley Summer Event - Thorpe Astley on the Beach.
- Facilitated Library events, initiatives and community engagement; including children's reading, heritage displays and arts & craft events.
- Supported the Local Area Coordination Project, tackling loneliness and isolation.
- Worked with the Department of Work & Pensions to establish a Job Shop on Wednesday and Friday afternoons at Braunstone Civic Centre, where residents can get advice from a Job Centre work coach on employment, support, training opportunities, money advice and more.



4. Respond to Climate Change and champion sustainable development

Delivered actions identified in the Carbon Audit with a view to the Council becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030.

During the year we have reduced our overall Carbon Footprint by approximately 40% through the installation of solar panels, an air source heat pump and Electric Vehicle Charging Points. The installations at Thorpe Astley Community Centre reduce the carbon footprint of the building by approximately 90%.

Supported and facilitated the improvement of cycling and walking routes within the Town with the completion of the first phase of the Lubbethorpe to Great Central Way route, with the widening of the footpath through Mossdale Meadows and the connection to Meridian Leisure.



Your Views

Throughout the year we undertake a range of consultations and surveys to ascertain the views of residents on major projects, such as our improvement proposals, other priorities and services and also to help us to articulate the needs and aspirations of the community.

We have a dedicated Consultation page on our website (found under Town Council).

www.braunstonetowncouncil.org.uk/index.php/town-council/town-consultations

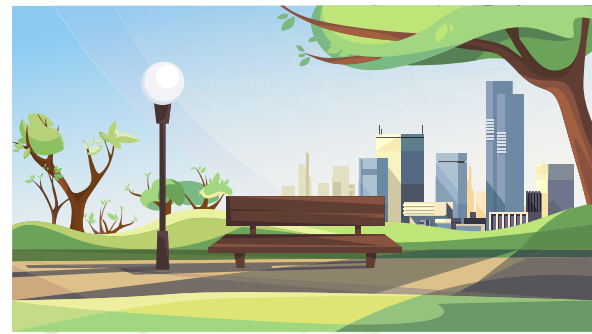


STRATEGIC AIMS AND DELIVERY OBJECTIVES (2024/2025)

Aim: To invest in and maintain high quality urban green spaces for sport, recreation and play, while enriching the natural environment.

1. Protect and Enhance our Parks and Open Spaces

- (a) Support existing Clubs at Shakespeare Park to grow while supporting new sporting activities, such as Tennis and Petanque.
- (b) deliver tennis initiatives to enhance participation.
- (c) continue to work with Blaby District Council and the developer to ensure improvements are made to the culvert at Thorpe Astley Park.
- (d) carry out Flood Alleviation and Drainage Improvements at Mossdale Meadows.
- (e) refurbish & enhance Impey Close Play Area & surrounding open space.



2. Provide Vibrant Community Facilities

Aim: To provide vibrant, accessible and cost effective community facilities, which continue to be used by and respond to the needs of our community.

- (a) Deliver essential works on the Civic Centre building fabric.
- (b) support the expansion of the Civic Centre Café Service, including at Thorpe Astley on event days.



3. Support and Connect the Local Community

Aim: To both nurture and enhance the Town's community life and connect our communities to reduce isolation and build community cohesion.

- (a) Support community activities and initiatives through our Community Grants Schemes and Programme of Events.
- (b) co-ordinate community events, such as Apple Day, 80th Anniversary of D-Day, Shakespeare Park Open Day and Thorpe Astley on the Beach.
- (c) develop outreach Children's reading and activities at Thorpe Astley Community Centre.
- (d) support the Local Area Coordination Project.

4. Respond to Climate Change and champion sustainable development

Aim: To embed climate and environmental awareness in our decision making and actions and play our part in supporting the community to do the same.

- (a) Deliver actions identified in the Carbon Audit with a view to the Council becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030.
- (b) undertake surveys and produce Management Plans to enhance the biodiversity of our parks and open spaces.
- (c) support and facilitate initiatives to improve cycling and walking routes within the Town and to the City Centre, Fosse Park and Meridian.
- (d) work to ensure that development meets present needs, minimises air pollution and car journeys, while protecting the needs of future generations.
- (e) recommission a carbon audit of our activities to ensure that all possible actions are being taken and that new and emerging technologies and approaches are utilised to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

