

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING

Held on THURSDAY 12th MAY 2022 to 7.30pm

In the Chair, Councillor Darshan Singh, Town Mayor.
There were 28 persons present at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Parminder Basra.

2. Minutes of the Towns Meeting 13th May 2021

The Minutes of the Annual Towns Meeting held on 13th May 2021 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 13th May 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

3. Town Mayor's Report 2021/22

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

- Community Activities
- Community Achievement
- Programme of Events
- Library Events
- Summer Fete
- Anniversaries/Civic Events
- Town Mayor's Charity – Macmillan

Councillor Darshan Singh, Town Mayor for 2021/2022, reported on activities during his 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 Town a vibrant place in which to live".

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

"Following the Covid pandemic, our summer fete was back. We had good weather, and the event was very well attended and supported by many local volunteers and groups".

"I would also like to thank Councillors for their support on the day with my stall, raising money for my chosen charity, Macmillan".

"Apple Day" was also back this year. Residents enjoyed the family orientated fun day with apple picking and juicing, animal displays, stalls and Birds of Prey".

"In October, I hosted a thank you event for the Covid Community Response volunteers for their work supporting out most vulnerable residents during those difficult times".

"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".

"At my Award's Evening I was delighted to give an Award of Merit to the Trustees of the Community Minibus in recognition of their work providing a community transport service for the elderly and vulnerable residents of Braunstone Town".

"Unfortunately, the mini bus was unable to continue following the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Trustees have been able to work with Commbus to ensure that most of the services continue".

"The trustees also made a generous donation to the Town, which has enabled a grant scheme to be provided for social inclusion initiatives supporting the older and more vulnerable people in our community".

"On behalf of myself and the residents of the Town, I would like to thank the trustees and all who were involved with the community minibus for the years of dedicated service they provided to our community".

"On a personal note, I am grateful that as Town Mayor I have been able to raise £3,207 for my Mayoral charity, Macmillan. Macmillan campaigns for real change and to help everyone with cancer to live their life as fully as possible".

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to my consort Sohan 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 2021/22 and Priorities for 2022/23

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 2021/2022. 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 28th April 2022 finalised the draft Annual Report for 2022, a copy of which is attached as an appendix. The Annual Report summarises our achievements during the Council Year May 2021 to May 2022 and sets out our plans for the forthcoming Council year (2022/2023). 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 recent pandemic and 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".

Braunstone Town Library

"In my report to the Towns Meeting last year, I announced that we were successful in obtaining a grant for £5,000 for activities to involve the community in our Library. This grant has enabled the library to encourage local residents to engage in the community, reduce isolation, volunteer to run projects and provide a vibrant, community-led library".

"Over the past year we have held art and nature workshops, children's music sessions and engagement events in the library. This culminated in our Spring Celebration Event held on Saturday 26th March where we brought together all the events held over the past year and shared them with the community. We are particularly pleased that as a result of these sessions we now have volunteers to run events in the library including the Coffee morning and Story Time".

"The workshops and events that took place over the year were filmed and the video is available on the Council's website and social media channels".

"I'm also delighted that the Town Council has entered into a partnership agreement with the Braunstone Heritage Archive Group to support and enhance services provided through the library. We will be working closely together in the coming year to further develop Library events, initiatives and continue our community engagement".

Shakespeare Park – Improvement & Development

"Phase 1 of our ambitious improvements to Shakespeare Park are now complete, with our brand-new Pavilion facility now being used by the sports clubs. The new facility includes modern changing facilities and a multi-function, multi-purpose club room providing a meeting room and a social facility. 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 Town Council continues to work with the existing clubs on the future management arrangements for the new Pavilion facility. Legal agreements have now been drafted and it is anticipated that these can be implemented in the autumn in order that the teams can take a lead in managing and running the facility for the benefit of sport and recreation”

“The first part of Phase 2, to improve the tennis court facilities is virtually complete with the final touches, including acrylics, line markings and installation of the nets to be completed this month”.

“Once the new courts are open, residents will be able to book a court 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”.

“Funding continues to be sought for the improvements to the playground facilities, including the installation of sensory play equipment. While part of the funding has been secured, securing all the funding needed to deliver the project is proving difficult in the current financial climate. This has resulted in delays to the timescales for delivery of this part of the project. However, the planning condition on the playground is being discharged this month and assuming funding can be secured, works can commence in the autumn and winter of 2022. The new play facilities will potentially be available for use early in 2023”.

Civic Centre Improvements

“During 2021/2022, the Council finalised its plans to improve the facilities at Braunstone Civic Centre and invited contractors to tender for the works”.

“The works include refurbishment of the toilets, including the provision of a brand-new Changing Places Toilet Facility”.

“I am delighted that the Council was successful in bidding to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities for funding to provide 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 also provides an opportunity to improve the kitchen facilities for the Civic Community Lounge to enable the provision of a café service, utilising the Bar Lounge more effectively and providing a wider community social space”.

“Funding for the wider toilets and kitchen improvements is also being finalised and assuming the Council is successful in attracting this funding, works are likely to commence in the autumn and be completed early in the new year”.

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; 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 reported in February of this year and sets out 11 recommendations for reducing the Council’s carbon footprint by approximately 40% by 2024. An Action Plan has also been developed setting out tangible actions the Council will take over the next couple of years to address the impact of our own activities on the climate”.

Strategic Aims and Delivery Objectives 2022/2023

“Following the pandemic and with a view to ensuring the Council is in a strong position to address the uncertainties and challenges we all face as a community in the coming years, the Council adopted its Medium-Term Priorities and Financial Planning Framework in November 2021”.

“Following this, 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 for the year and there are 21 specific delivery objectives for 2022/2023. These 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".

"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;
- refurbishment of both sets of toilets at Braunstone Civic Centre, including the provision of a Changing Places Toilet to make the Centre fully accessible to all;
- refurbishment of the Civic Community Lounge kitchen facilities to enable the expansion of the facility to provide a café service and provide a wider community social space;
- installation of Solar PV Panels on the Council's buildings 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
- investing in improvements to cycling facilities at our community facilities to encourage cycling and to ensure parked cycles are safe".

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

Community Governance Review

"Following a consultation by Blaby District Council on potentially splitting Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley into two separate parishes, the District Council concluded that no further action be taken given only 11 out of 42 responses to the consultation supported the idea".

"We never believed there was any evidence that supported splitting our parish and the detrimental impact on both the council tax and local services would have affected all our residents".

"As a result of the decision to end the process, the Town Council can now get on with ensuring that we respond to the challenges of our time and deliver high-quality, cost-effective improvements and investment to services in both Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley".

6. Braunstone Town Heritage Warden's Report 2021/22

The Heritage Warden's Report for 2021/2022 was circulated with the agenda:

"As the Covid restrictions are gradually lifted we can try and resume a "normal" life once again!"

"A very successful "Apple Day" was held in September 2021, a very fine warm day with quite a few apples to pick and turn into apple juice. Unfortunately, the dry weather had lowered the water level in the pond making it unsuitable for the proposed pond dipping, let's hope 2022 can make this a successful occasion for the school children who had looked forward to delving the depths of the pond!"

"The weather was kind to us when we had a couple of weekends in January/February 2022 to winter prune the apple trees, sadly we did find that someone had cut down the two plum trees which had always a bumper crop of plums. Why they were sawn down and by whom we will never know, a mindless act of vandalism".

"The wild flower meadow has had a makeover and hopefully will give us a fine display in June".

"The proposed conservation area on the south side of Braunstone Lane (Main St) has taken a step forward in its designation. Because of a lack of finances, neither the Town Council or Blaby District Council could afford to make the initial character appraisal, so I took up the cause and produced a draft appraisal. This has generally been accepted and the process of designation has slowly started with the Town Council approving the character appraisal and requesting Blaby District Council to commence their legal process of designating a conservation area".

"Hopefully after a 50-year gap both sides of Braunstone Lane (Main St) will be one conservation area".

"Unfortunately, we were unable to persuade Blaby District Council's planning processes to reject the proposed development of 13 houses on the farmyard area of the listed building, Manor Farm House in the centre of the original village".

"The partnership agreement between our community library and Braunstone Heritage Archive Group, for which I am Chair, has got underway with changing themes on the notice board displays and 3D displays in the recently acquired illuminated display cabinets. At last, there is some space in which to display some of the littlest seen heritage artifacts donated between 1974 and 2022".

7. Termination of Meeting

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