

Mayors Address May 2023 – for Annual Report

I have the privilege of being elected as your Town Mayor for 2023.24

I live in the town and work with the other Councillors to try and improve life for all inhabitants of Faringdon.

I retired some 8 years ago after almost 50 years as an Environmental Health Officer working mainly in local authorities from the Vale of White Horse to Kensington and Chelsea. I moved to Faringdon to be close to my two daughters and their children. I undertake voluntary work with Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Service both as a referral panel member and acting as an appropriate adult at Abingdon Police station on a rota.

My focus is both on the environment in its broadest sense (including the climate change crisis) and on stimulating the town centre to be a vibrant hub not only of some retail shops and market but especially of places for eating and drinking and general social interaction which I believe is the way to proceed. I am also keenly interested in improving providing activities for the youth and families of Faringdon and will continue to support the Pump House Project and The Place.

Finance and Audit Committee Report 22/23

The Finance Committee is responsible for recommending and overseeing the annual budget together with all aspects of Staffing, Grants and the operation of the Information Centre. The committee works closely with the Town Clerk and Chief Financial Officer, Sally Thurston, who reports to the committee directly, and together we continue to review services and bear down on costs.

Finance:

The committee is responsible for the overall financial security of the Council, setting and monitoring the annual budget. For 2022.23 the budget was set at £455,612 giving a Band D council tax rate of £145.50.

We have been able to deliver all our commitments through the year and end the year with reserves at £637,403. This figure includes £236,373 in earmarked reserves and £168,545 in CIL.

An Asset Replacement fund is held as a ring-fenced reserve for the renewal or repair of assets. This is currently £41,642 held as part of the earmarked reserve.

No additional borrowing was required in the year and FTC continues to pay down PWLB loans which were taken out to refurbish the Pump Rooms and the Corn Exchange. Our debt currently stands at £61,000

During the year, the committee has also:

- Maintained financial records and received clean audits.
- Maintained sufficient reserves to meet possible contingencies.
- Maintained and reviewed the Council's asset register.
- Reviewed Council bank accounts and investments.

The budget for the forthcoming year. 2023.34, has now been set.at £480,260 giving a Band D council tax rate of £149.67. A rise of under 3%.

Staffing:

Finance is responsible for overseeing the terms and conditions of council staff. The council currently employ 16 members of staff both full and part time giving a full time equivalent of 8 staff. As a service provider, staffing accounts for 60% of the annual budget. FTC is a living wage employer with all staff currently on hourly rates on or above the living wage rate of £10.90/hr.

During the year the committee also oversaw

- Annual Staff appraisal recommendations.
- Staff training requirements
- The Information Centre operation
- Staff recruitment and redundancy.

The Committee also allocated monies for:

- Community Awards.
- Coronation celebrations

Grants:

The Grants subcommittee reports to the Finance and Audit committee and awarded grants to organisations providing benefit to Faringdon Residents.

GRANTS AWARDED 2022.23

Name of Organisation	Amount
Vale Community Impact	£ 2,000.00
Folly Fest	£ 3,500.00
Citizens Advice	£ 3,000.00
Faringdon Rotary Jubilee event	£ 1,000.00
Farcycles	£ 1,000.00
Far Runners	£ 1,060.00
Tuckers Recreation Ground Trust	
The Place	£ 25,000.00
The Pump House Project	£ 9,500.00
Total Grants Awarded 2022.23	£ 46,060.00

YOUTH Grants Awarded

Name of Organisation	Amount
Duke of Ed Award - FCC	£ 1,320.00
COGS Running costs	£ 1,788.00
Netball Club	£ 2,000.00
Total Grants Awarded 2022.23	£ 5,108.00

Painting and planting bursary Various town centre properties	£ 1,441.00
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Finally, I would like to thank staff, volunteers and councillors for their support and dedication, in maintaining services and planning future improvements.

Cllr. Steve Leniec, Chair of The Finance and Audit Committee

Cllr.leniec@faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk

Planning & Highways Committee

The Planning & Highways Committee met eleven times last year, these are a few of the highlights.

Stage two complaint: Rogers Concrete, Sandshill, Faringdon P20/V0855/O

A complaint about the District Council's procedure in granting planning permission for this site cannot be taken further by the Town Council as it is not permitted to refer the complaint to the ombudsman, only individuals can do this.

Fish Brothers' Garage

An early-stage proposal to create a community theatre / arts centre on the Fish Brothers' garage site in Faringdon did not come to fruition as the site was sold to Malvern Tyres. A complaint to the District Council about Malvern Tyre's signage (conservation area) is still ongoing.

Erection of retirement apartments (Category II type) with communal facilities and car parking 5 Lechlade Road Faringdon SN7 8AL (McCarthy & Stone)

This application was rejected by the District Council because of its scale, bulk and massing would fail to respect the special historic character of the adjacent conservation area and have an adverse effect on the settings of Faringdon Conservation Area and the Grade II Listed Chase House. It also was also in conflict with Policy 4.7c of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan which says that residential development should respond to its local context through appropriate use of scale, form, height detailing and materials. This site will now revert to the previous application, P17/V1310/O, that was granted for 14 dwellings with access from Canada Lane.

Land south of Park Road Faringdon, SN7 7PL P22/V2053/RM

Faringdon Town Council objected to the building of a three-unit four-storey Extra Care Home that would dominate the layout around Proctor Rd/Stepp Lane when the original, advisory layout showed six units of two storeys. Also, in the event of a power failure, evacuation from a two-storey building would be easier and safer; just one flight of stairs instead of three. This time the planning officer dismissed Policy 4.7c of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan despite it having been used to object to the application above.

Swan Lane Consultation

Members received and considered results of an informal consultation to ascertain the views of residents on making the London Street end one way. There were 98 responses:

68% yes; 28% No; 10% Maybe

This is now being pursued with the County Council with costs being shared.

New Faringdon School

Members received notification of delay to new school and agreed that FTC should write to the county council to inform them of FTC's disappointment that gas is being used for heating in these buildings and to ask for support for FTC's strong objection.

Faringdon Police Station

Members discussed the future sale of the Police Station and the BT OpenReach exchange building and their concerns about future redevelopment and the importance of any new buildings fitting sympathetically into the existing townscape. Members agreed to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner and to the relevant BT Openreach office reflecting the council's concerns about any potential schemes, sending them the Oxford Brookes student's plans and ideas as a starting point. The Police and Crime Commissioner came to the Council to explain the current situation.

A420 Crossing

Members discussed A420 safety and the need for a safe crossing at the Fernham Rd junction. Members concluded discussions by agreeing that they are looking forward to the first set of lights going in at the Great Coxwell turn and will continue to review the situation with regard to further proposals.

Land South of Steeds Farm Coxwell Road Faringdon P22/V0996/RM

Faringdon Town Council successfully objected to this layout by pointing out the Urban Design Officer's admission that 28 houses had gardens that did not conform with the minimum size stipulated in the Joint Design Guide and that several houses had inadequate back-to-back separation. 2.5 storey houses were also rejected as not conforming with the Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Plan.

Land at Fernham Road P22/V2382/FUL for eight new family dwelling

This has been granted planning permission whereas the adjacent site has been refused permission because of drainage constraints. Fernham Rd

Crossing at Henry Blake Way

This is still being pursued with the developer.

Contractor Parking Highworth Rd

Members discussed the situation with regard to contractors parking on the Highworth Road layby. Clerk to ask District and County Councillors to follow up with regard to stopping the contractors using the layby and request resurfacing when the development is complete.

Road and Pavement Surfaces

Members agreed that Cllr. Webb should research and present a report on the condition of pavements and roads in the centre of Faringdon to include proposals on ways of upgrading them (including reporting on Fix-My-Street). Members agreed to be vigilant in reporting any substandard work being carried out in the town to the highways authority to ensure pavements are resurfaced to an acceptable quality.

Cllr. Mike Wise

Facilities Committee has responsibility for the maintenance, upkeep and use of the Corn Exchange and Pump House. Other on street property such as: - Portwell pump and diver bench, 2 play parks, All Saints' Church churchyard, the Town Park, Clos Mêlois, benches in the Market Square, planters, Corn Exchange hanging baskets, some bus shelters, 2 red phone boxes and the work of the Tidy Team.

- Market Square planters repainted. Additional to be installed
- Eagles Park, with Twinning Association, developed to become Clos Mêlois. Boules and planting in place. Partnership agreement in place. Formal open in June.
- Trees in All Saints churchyard pruned. Yellow Rattle planted to encourage wildflowers
- Tidy Team worked on The Hobble and in Church St and bulb planting in Lechlade Rd.
- Elms public tennis court resurfaced.
- Tree work in Oakwood play park and Town Park
- Impact of vandalism in Tucker Park. Phone box rectified.
- Partnership agreement with The Wilderness team in place.
- Corn Exchange Notice Board replaced.
- Town Park regeneration put on hold until a working party is established
- PA system purchased for the Corn Exchange
- Live music in the Corn Exchange organised to promote the venue.
- Design code for street furniture produced.
- Welcome to Faringdon sign to be erected in Coxwell road
- Notice Boards to be installed in 3 bus shelters as a trial.

Cllr. Gene Webb
Facilities Chair 2023.24

Community & Partnerships Committee

Community & Partnerships is the committee related to our town's community endeavours and partnerships with other organisations to facilitate their appropriate utilisation and foster engagement within the community for all ages. Partners include the Record Fair, the Pump House Project, Play Days, Earth and Faith Tree Planting, Vale Community Impact, Faringdon Youth Club, Citizens Advice, the Food Bank, The Place, the Community Larder and the Cinema, among others. We receive quarterly updates and oversee operations generally by having town councillors serve as trustees to various organisations. Ultimately, we work in partnership as needed for the benefit of our residents. Our most recent involvement relates to the Coronation celebration for King Charles III held in early May wherein we supported and encouraged the decoration of the Market Place as well as the entertainment and picnic bags for the children. Over the past year, we supported the Pink Plaques initiative, oversaw the decoration of the bollards in town and promoted community awards for those that go above and beyond in making Faringdon an inclusive, thriving and supportive community.

Cllr. Kim Morgan

Community Infrastructure Projects Supported:

- Faringdon Rugby Club Lighting - £50,000
- Faringdon Cricket Club Solar Panels - £35,000
- Faringdon Football Club – Machinery £9,000
- Clos Melois Boules Park - £9,000

CIL Received in 2022.23 £173,229

CIL held at March 31st 2023 £177,497

S106 Monies held by Vale White Horse DC

Applied for, managed and delivered by FTC.

- Elms Tennis Court resurface.
- Town Centre improvements: Bollards, planters and notice board
- Old Town Hall Refurbishments

Projects to apply for in 2023.24.

- Multi Use Games Area
- Benches Art Project

- FTC declared a Climate emergency in September 2019
- A working party made up of town councillors was established in Spring of 2022
- A car sharing scheme was investigated. Following consultation with residents it was decided it was not viable for Faringdon at this time.
- The first Green Day event on 1 October 2022 was well attended.
- Plastic free policy covering hirers and council services agreed.
- Council agreed to fund an extra 1 day per week for a Climate Change officer from October 22 to March 23. Then for a further 6 months to October 23.
- Daffodil bulb planting along Lechlade Road and in Town Park in Autumn 2022 was funded by Mayor Kiera Bentley from her allowance.
- A statement in support of climate change initiatives was agreed; to be included in grant application forms, committee terms of references and venue hire terms and conditions.
- An agreed Climate change statement to be included in all planning application responses.
- Internal changes to reduce use of power instigated - shutters, closed doors, switch off tech.
- All employees encouraged to recycle and save energy
- Sustainable procurement where possible and where appropriate, in progress.
- Awarded £5000 grant by VWHDC to change all lighting in the Corn Exchange to low energy. Project underway.
- Draft Climate Action policy produced. To be considered at the next working party meeting
- [Greener Faringdon website](#) pages, and [Greener Faringdon facebook](#) pages created.

Cllr. Gene Webb

**Town Regeneration Working Party
Annual Report for Town Meeting**

May 2023

This working party was established to focus on encouraging use of the Town Centre following Covid. Some developer money from the Henry Blake retail park is being used to fund projects.

- Pink Plaques denoting people & events in the Town. Project managed by Rosalind Burns. Near installation. Leaflet to be produced.
- Decorative bollards Phase 2 underway.
- Pink Pigeon bin installed in Southampton St car park.
- Joint walks project with National Trust underway.
- Tunnels leaflet written & researched by Rosalind Burns. Produced and on sale in Tourist Information office.
- Planters to be installed in front of African Children's Fund, Marriotts and Pump House.
- Artweeks 2022 was moderately successful. Decision not to repeat in 2023.
- Promote Old Town Hall as exhibition space in progress.
- Decorative bench project underway. Likely completion during 2024.
- Museum installation under review.
- Water fountain installed.
- Encouraged use of painting & planting bursary.
- Town Centre events. in 2022/23:-
 - Green Day (Oct)
 - Remembrance Sunday (November)
 - Christmas lights on (December)
 - Death of the Queen (Sept 22)
 - Record Fairs (Al Cane)
 - Folly Fest (July)
 - Mayor's Summer Fair (Sept)
 - Coronation celebration (May23)
- Markets relaunch considered, but not progressed through lack of staff time.
- Encouragement for touring coaches to use designated coach park in progress.
- Tourist bus trips round local villages being researched.

Cllr. Gene Webb

Tuckers Recreation Ground Trust

Tuckers Park remains a vital asset and community space within our town to enable our residents unfettered, spacious access to the outdoors and fresh air. As such, there is a trust comprised of Faringdon town councillors that oversees its maintenance, upkeep and addresses any concerns brought to our attention so that the park can remain accessible to enjoy for years to come. In that vein, the trustees requested that a crime prevention officer from TVP give advice on lighting and crime prevention in February 2022.

Cllr. Kimberly Morgan