

BRACKNELL TOWN COUNCIL

Strategic Plan 2021-2024

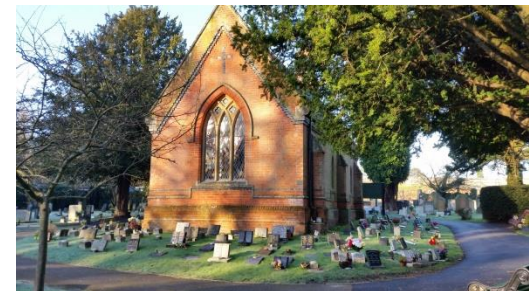


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Strategic Plan Bracknell Town Council

2021-2024

1.1 Introduction/Aim

The Three Year Strategy Plan is a statement of Bracknell Council's vision for the Bracknell area, its purpose, values, objectives and key priorities. The Strategy Plan is a document that sets out what Bracknell Town Council hopes to achieve over the next three years, both directly and by working with partners, such as Bracknell Forest Council, influencing them to enhance services and facilities for the residents. The aim of the Strategy Plan is to give Bracknell Town's residents an understanding of what the Town Council is working on and how it is going to achieve and deliver it. It is intended to become a 'live' document which the Town Council will update regularly, enabling it to track and monitor its progress against the key priorities. This document outlines what the Town Council intends to focus on over the next three years.

1.2 Corporate Vision and Objectives

The Town Council's vision for Bracknell is:

A successful, vibrant, attractive town, where people want to live, work, study and visit.

1.3 The Town Council's Mission Statement:

The Town Council aims to improve the quality of life for residents by ensuring that Bracknell is a desirable, thriving and sustainable place in which to live. It will do this in a number of ways:

- To maintain and enhance the character and identity of Bracknell Town and its green spaces ensuring that it remains a vibrant community.
- To provide a democratic and representational voice for the community.
- Where services are provided directly they are managed to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsive way, at an affordable cost.
- Where services are provided by others, the Town Council endeavours to ensure that they are dealt with effectively, and in accordance with the wishes of the community.

- To work with its residents, local authorities and other service providers, businesses and community organisations with the aim of achieving a safe, healthy, prosperous and sustainable community.

1.4 The Key Objectives of Bracknell Town Council are:

1. Strong financial management and value for money.
2. To effectively communicate with residents and all partners using the latest technology.
3. To promote and support local voluntary groups and clubs that actively assist residents and visitors to Bracknell.
4. To work collaboratively with partners to influence improvements for the community to ensure a high standard of services and facilities to meet the needs and expectations of Bracknell's residents.
5. To be a major presence in the centre of Bracknell Town and support the continuing regeneration of the Town Centre.
6. To enhance and promote the historic and cultural heritage of Bracknell and safeguard its unique identity and its natural and built environment.
7. To work to reduce Bracknell Town Council's carbon footprint.
8. To help create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents, irrespective of age, culture, income, race, sexual orientation or religion, and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and mutual cooperation.
9. To promote Bracknell Town as a destination of choice.

1.5 Monitoring the plan

A list of activities will make up an 'Action Plan' which will be monitored by Council with each Committee reviewing progress against its own objectives and targets. The Strategy Plan will be available on the Town Council website as a way of telling residents what the Council is doing to meet the needs of the community. Changes to the plan will be made where considered necessary and progress will be published.

2. Structure

Bracknell Town Council is the largest Parish council within the Unitary Authority of Bracknell Forest. It provides services to over half the population of the Borough located within 12 wards making up the central area of the Bracknell Forest Borough comprising of a total of 27 councillors. Find a full list of all elected Councillors on the Bracknell Town Council website.

<http://bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk/council/councillors/>

2.1 Map of Bracknell

2.2 Bracknell Town Council's main areas of responsibility

Bracknell Town: Population is 113,205 (est. 2021)

The Town Council has responsibility for:

- the management, maintenance and development of its parks, including play areas and sports pitches.
- the provision of allotments
- pavilions and halls for hire
- the organising and running of community events and activities in Bracknell
- the running of Bracknell in Bloom
- TV licensing grants – Full details of eligibility can be found: [» TV Licence Grant \(bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk\)](http://bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk)
- the provision of grants to local charities and organisations
- the monitoring of planning applications and submitting comments
- Bracknell Town Council bus shelters
- fishing permits via Bracknell Herons, or Braybrooke Nature and Fishing Club

3. Financial

Day-to-day management of the services delivered by the Town Council is the responsibility of the Town Clerk who works closely with Councillors to deliver the decisions made at the various committees. The work of the Town Council is funded through a precept on Council Tax payers within the Bracknell Town Parish area, and from income raised through letting out the Council's sports pitches, rooms and other facilities as well as from trading in the Pavilion coffee shops.

A budget for the forthcoming financial year (starting in April) is set in December when projects are identified for the coming year. These projects could include refurbishment and replacement of play equipment, improvements to Town Council facilities and the possible development of new initiatives for the benefit of local people, which the Town Council has the power to deliver. At the same time as setting the budget, an allocation is made in the form of grants to local organisations who have applied through the Annual Grant Scheme.

Bracknell Town Council also provides a grant to South Hill Park Trust (register charity no 256656) whose charitable objects are:- “to foster and promote the improvement, development and maintenance of artistic knowledge and understanding and appreciation of the arts among the

inhabitants of Bracknell and the surrounding locality by providing facilities for the education of the public in the fields of art, craft, music and drama provided that all objects of the charity shall be of a charitable nature”.

3.1 Income and Expenditure

The Town Council is mainly funded by the residents of Bracknell, through what is known as the ‘precept’. This is levied by the Town Council and collected on its behalf by Bracknell Forest Council as part of the Council Tax Bill. £97.35 per year per band D property of Bracknell resident’s council tax funds the Town Council precept (2023/24 financial year). The total budgeted expenditure for the Council is around £2.2m. Details of the Council’s budgets and of previous spending are provided on the Council’s website. The Town Council receives other sources of income from the letting of Council Facilities, CIL and miscellaneous grants. The reserves are increased each year by earmarked funds allocated within the budget.

3.2 Reserves and Balances

Bracknell Town Council adopts a risk-based approach to its levels of balances which is reviewed annually. Currently the minimum level of balances is set at approximately six months’ gross operating costs, within the former Audit Commission guidelines. Reserves are held above this for specific, earmarked purposes.

3.3 Internal and External Audits

Internal audit is a key component of the system of internal control and is carried out by a professional qualified accountant with experience in the sector. The purpose of an internal audit is to review and report to the council whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities are operating procedures are effective. An external audit is carried out annually by a firm of professionally qualified accountants who are appointed by Public Sector Audit Appointments LTD (PSAA). Bracknell Town Council’s current externally appointed Auditors are PKF Littlejohns LLP.

The Council completes an Annual Return form which is submitted for inspection and comment by the appointed auditors. The Town Clerk carries out a financial check each month and reports five times a year to the Budget Monitoring Working Group.

3.4 Assets

The Town Council is responsible for the maintenance of 250 acres of recreational land and 36 children’s play areas where children and young people can play and meet with their friends.

Each play area is inspected by trained Town Council staff once a week and litter is collected regularly. Any reports of problems at a play area are responded to within 24 hours of receiving the information. The play areas are subject to a regular program of maintenance, refurbishment and repainting.

The Town Council manages four Pavilion buildings, Braybrooke, Birch Hill, Jocks Lane and Great Hollands. The Town Council also manages 8 allotment sites at Anneforde Place, Crowthorne Road, Glenwood, Limerick Close, Ringmead, South Road, Wilders Close and Windlesham Road.

To search for our facilities see <http://bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk/recreation-facilities/council-sites/>

3.5 Allowances

All 28 Councillors provide their services on a voluntary basis and do not receive any salary or allowances, although they are entitled to claim for travel expenses where their duties require travel outside Bracknell Town. The Mayor receives a small allowance to assist with Mayoral duties.

3.6 Neighbourhood Plan

Bracknell Town Council decided to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Bracknell. A working Group, which includes representatives of both Bracknell Town Council and the community was formed. The proportion of CIL receipts passed to the Town Council is capped nationally at 15%, however with the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan this is increased to 25% on chargeable developments in the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan now forms part of the Development Plan and is used in determining planning applications for Bracknell Town. Following a Referendum on 9th September 2021, the Plan was “made” on the 27th of October 2021

3.7 Accounts

The audited annual return and the statement of accounts can be viewed on the Bracknell Town Council website.

<http://bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk/council/council-documents/>

3.8 Community Infrastructure Levy(CIL)

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), is a charge on development to address the demands that growth places on the Borough by funding some of the costs of local infrastructure, such as green space, schools, roads and other transport facilities needed to support growth. Regulations 59A and B of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2011 require Bracknell Forest Council, as the Charging Authority, to pass a proportion of CIL receipts collected from developments in its area directly to Bracknell Town Council to be spent on infrastructure or anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands the development places on the Parish. The proportion of CIL receipts passed to the Town

Council is capped nationally at 15%, however, with the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan this is increased to 25% on chargeable developments in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

The CIL returns for Bracknell Town Council can be found under Financial Documents/Annual CIL Return. Here is a list of approved expenditures, as well as what has already been funded by CIL monies:-

<http://bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk/council/council-documents/>

4. Governance

4.1 Management

Bracknell Town Council comprises 28 Councillors representing 13 Wards (their contact details are on the [Councillors'](#) page of the website). Councillors are elected every 4 years, the last elections having been in May 2019. The Council is served by a Town Clerk, the senior officer of the Town Council, and approximately 35 other staff, 19 of whom are full-time. The majority of the staff work to maintain the outdoor spaces, sports fields, play areas and pavilions for which the Town Council is responsible.

The Town Council employs Environment Wardens to deal with problems relating to dog fouling, litter, fly-tipping, graffiti and inconsiderate parking. The Wardens are also available to work with schools and community groups to educate and advise on responsible behaviour with regard to the environment. They can be contacted via Brooke House on 01344 420079.

4.2 Representation

The Town Council is chaired by the Town Mayor who is elected each year at the Annual Meeting in May. All Town Councillors meet at Full Council (held four or five times a year) to ratify the decisions made by the Town Council's delegated committees.

Also at the Annual Meeting, Town Councillors are voted in to serve on a number of committees which consider Planning, Environmental Services, Strategy and Finance, and Staffing. Other working groups will also be formed to make recommendations in relation to matters of local relevance and importance, and currently, there are Carbon Reduction Working Group, Budget Monitoring and Community Events.

5. Communication

Information about the Town Council and its activities, Councillors, meetings and services may be found on the Bracknell Town website. The website is regularly updated to give pricing information for room hire, tennis, mini-golf as well as Pavilion opening times.

Special events, news and openings are also advertised on the website, and you can follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

A newsletter, Bracknell Matters, is produced and delivered during the year.

The foyer of Brooke House in the High Street is a valuable source of information and provides an opportunity for local organisations to display posters and leaflets about their activities. The Town Council also maintains notice boards that are placed strategically at Bracknell Town Council sites.

6. Monitoring the Strategic Plan

The list of activities will make up an ‘Action Plan’ which will be monitored at future Council meetings, with each Committee reviewing progress against its own objectives and targets, and an annual report considered in November/December each year to understand the progress made, where further work is needed and if there are any blockages to progress. The Strategic Plan will be available on the Town Council’s website as a way of informing residents of what the Council is doing to meet the needs of the Community. It is the Council’s intention to review the Strategic Plan regularly, publish progress and make any changes considered necessary.

7. Action Plan

7.1 Key Planned Objectives

Strategy and Finance

- Maintain a strong financial position for the Council
- Maintain grants to Support Community Groups which benefit the community
- Maintain the support to South Hill Park Trust
- Monitor the Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2036
- Committees to uphold their responsibilities as per Terms of Reference.

-Environmental Services

- Be a part of Bracknell in Bloom
- Maintain buildings, play areas and other facilities to a high standard
- Continue to run and support a range of events and activities in our parks
- Maintain and enhance Larges Lane Cemetery
- Committees to uphold their responsibilities as per Terms of Reference

Staffing

- Maintain a motivated and productive team, recruiting as needed.
- Committees to uphold their responsibilities as per Terms of Reference

Planning

- To scrutinise and comment on planning applications within Bracknell Town area.
- To complete returns to Bracknell Forest Council about planning applications within Bracknell town area.

7.2 Targets for 2021-2024

Target	Information
Completion of Neighbourhood Plan	Completed October 2021
Post Covid-19 Recovery	To re-open all buildings and facilities as normal and to build bookings and income back up to pre-covid levels
To work with local colleges and training facilities to start an apprenticeship scheme at Bracknell Town Council.	Currently we offer work experience but we would like to employ apprentices so that we can train our own staff and support young residents of Bracknell Town. Recreational Facilities Manager to explore from 2023
This Council (a parish council) resolves to endeavour to reduce its carbon footprint	Carbon Reduction Working Group are continuing to monitor and implement new measures to reduce CO2 emissions and to ensure that BTC is becoming greener in everything it does. An energy audit of all buildings is currently underway which will instigate new actions
To take on responsibility for open areas/play areas from the Borough	3 new play areas transferred to BTC 2022/23



Council which will increase Bracknell Town Council's assets	
To achieve Quality Status	Work will continue from 2023
To invest in the arts in Bracknell either financially or through other means of support	<p>To continue supporting South Hill Park Arts Centre and encouraging arts in the community. Entertainment and Arts provision 27.4 Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration Twelfth edition. A local council may do anything necessary or expedient to provide an entertainment of any kind, or facilities for dancing, or to maintain a band or orchestra, and <u>there is a very general power to develop and improve the knowledge and practice of the arts,</u> and of the crafts which serve them. It may do these things itself, or arrange for them to be done or contribute to the expenses of so doing. it is under these powers that communities sponsor and organise eisteddfods; and by way of further example, local councils can back village choir festivals, and help local colonies of artists, potters, or sculptors by lending them premises in which to exhibit their works; it may even be possible to engage instructors or teachers of music or painting. Encouragement and advice can often be obtained from, or</p>

	through, the Arts Council.
Investing in staff	To provide training for all staff to improve on their skills. Various training undertaken in 2021 and will be continued over the duration of the plan
To assess and improve the parks and play areas in our wards	The Play Area Working Group (now closed) assessed and reviewed improvements to be made in other parks and play areas and the work has been scheduled and budgeted for over the course of this plan
To improve youth provision in our wards	From 2023 a focus on youth provision in BTC parks to encourage healthy engagement of young people and to help reduce the pull into anti-social behaviour and other criminal activities
To continue to engage with the community and to expand communications with diverse community groups that need a voice in Bracknell	To use events as an introductory method to engage with local community groups of diverse ages, religions, cultures, genders, disabilities and sexualities to encourage a variety of opinions and voices within the decisions made at BTC. Growing communication from there to expand BTC's relationship with these community groups.

8. Contacts

Brooke House, 54 High Street, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1LL Phone: 01344 420079 Fax: 01344 424015

Email addresses:

Enquiries: enquiries@bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk

Town Clerk: clerk@bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk

Town Mayor: mayor@bracknelltowncouncil.gov.uk