



Bingley Town Council:

New Community Council Created

**How a new Town Council was created in the previously un-Parished area
of Bingley, City of Bradford, West Yorkshire**

Headlines:

- Bingley is a market town in the metropolitan borough of the City of Bradford, in West Yorkshire, England. It is situated on the River Aire and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.
- Local travel links include Bingley railway station in the town centre and Leeds Bradford International Airport, which is located 10 miles from the city centre. The B6265 (Main Street), connecting Bingley to Keighley, runs through the town centre.
- Historically a part of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Bingley appears in the *Domesday Book* of 1086 as "Bingheleia".
- Residents clearly wanted their own local identity and felt that the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (CBMDC, the principal local authority) was becoming unresponsive to the needs of Bingley residents on key service and asset matters.
- The campaign to create a new Bingley Town Council has been one of the best run and well managed in the country, being delivered at astonishing speed.

Ros Dawson, Bingley Campaign Champion, said *“The campaign for a Town Council for Bingley was started because it was apparent that thousands of residents needed a “voice”. It felt like no one was “batting” for us when it came to cuts in public services and issues surrounding planning and development – and there was no clear plan for regeneration and investment. Without a regular forum for our communities to discuss issues that matter to us, there was little opportunity to be pro-active, not just react to events such as the closure of our public toilets and plans to close our swimming pool. After research, thought and consultation, it was clear that a Town Council will provide a basic and essential piece of “civic infrastructure” that will underpin and support our communities; provide a communications hub; enable local people to engage with national policies and address some challenges facing our area.”*

What is the theme? - Why a Council is wanted:

The theme of this case study is the creation of a new town council in the locale of Bingley, Bradford. Using the NALC/ DCLG campaign pyramid - this is the phase at the summit of the journey a campaign group travels to after the principal local authority has given the green light to the creation of the new Parish Council during the relevant Community Governance Review phase.

The Bingley Community Council Group, comprising 15 local residents, campaigned for two years to create the new Town Council in Bingley in the belief that it would give residents a voice and the opportunity to deliver some services, after consultation with residents and if no longer provided by CBMDC. Residents will benefit from a Parish precept and their Town Councillors on their behalf will determine how it is best spent in Bingley.

Contextual issues related to the theme:

Since 1974 (when the old Bingley Urban District Council was abolished with its civil Parish of Bingley) residents of Bingley have wanted a better deal on issues like planning, housing and town planning. Whilst the campaign group have recognised that though the General Power of Competence (GPC) is a power of first resort for Parish Councils – campaigners also know that Parish Councils are not planning authorities or highways authorities. However, the creation of one of the largest town Councils in Bradford District will do much to give residents a bigger say on these key policy issues.

Other recently formed Parish Councils have been achieved in areas such as Kidderminster, Finham, Pannal and Westgate. Elections for the new Town Council will take place on 5 May, 2016. There has been historic interest before in parishing the centre of Bradford – but other campaigns in Yorkshire are taking their lead from Bingley in areas such as Thornton and Stainland. Pannal and Burn Bridge Parish Council has also just been formed in Harrogate.

Who are the key partners / stakeholders involved?

The key individuals involved in the campaign from the campaign group perspective were: Ros Dawson (Chairwoman), Edwina Simpson (Treasurer and Secretary) Terry Brown, John Findlay, Maureen Carney, John Burrill, Claire Holt, Norman Roper, James Hinchliffe, Alan Josephs, Gordon Hodgson, Philippa Gibbons, Helen Owen and Jackie Church (former Secretary). Securing support from some district ward councillors in the area to be parished and other CBMDC councillors proved a challenge. However, over 2000 signatures (meeting the requirement of 10% of the population of the area to be parished) were gathered in just two months.



The launch of the petition for a new Bingley Town Council, November 2014

The petition was on paper as CBMDC would not accept an online petition. Despite this, on the whole officers at CBMDC were, whilst impartial, generous with advice. The Deputy City Solicitor, Dermot Pearson, had been contacted in the early stages of the campaign in order to give plenty of notice. In addition, other helpful staff included Kathryn Jones, Strategy & Engagement Officer (Policy, Programmes and Change) and Susan Saunders, Electoral Services Manager, and her team.

The campaign group was grant funded with £17, 000 over three financial years to help stimulate and sustain resident interest through producing leaflets, organise public meetings, etc. . Such funding was provided by DCLG and accessed from the Yorkshire Local Councils' Associations via the National Association of Local Councils. This funding was regarded to have been crucial in the delivery of this – the largest new Town Council in Bradford.

What are the key issues / challenges? Progress with campaign to date:

It took approximately two months to gather the relevant signatures required to trigger the Community Governance Review for the creation of the new Bingley Town Council. Apart from the large logistical challenge of gathering such signatures, only one of six district councillors serving the area covered by the proposed Bingley Town Council was in favour of the plan.



Throughout the campaign, there was no support the remaining five councillors (although one did eventually vote in favour) - and no support for the proposal from any political party. The local Conservative MP did not openly support or oppose the proposal but was willing to engage in discussion and took part in a public meeting.



2 Throughout the campaign there was support from Jackie Church, pictured here with the petition of over 2,000 signatures at City Hall, Bradford, January 2015.

After the Community Governance Review, the proposal managed to get through CBMDC's Audit and Governance Committee as it had been recommended for approval by officers. The final vote, by CBMDC's full council in October 2015, was a free vote. For some minutes, as the councillors' raised hands were counted it looked as though the campaign would fail. Thankfully, the final tally showed more councillors in favour than opposed, although some including two of the Bingley councillors abstained.

Chris Pilkington, of YLCA, said, *“Full marks are owed to Ros Dawson and the excellent support she has continuously received from her colleagues in the Bingley Community Council Group. Gathering the petitionary signatures proved to be the easy part of this process.*

Getting through the Community Governance Review phase nearly dealt the campaign a fatal blow, but the campaign won out brilliantly.”

How Have These Issues / Challenges Been Overcome?

The £17,000 of DCLG funding since September, 2013 has helped the campaign group to massively overcome difficulties which may have proved insurmountable otherwise.



3The campaign brand expressed as a logo and sticker

The three main challenges were firstly, the campaign's group lack of experience of the process of creating a council and, secondly, communicating the proposal to residents in order to gather support, signatures on the petition and to encourage them to engage with and input into the Community Governance Review. Winning support from sufficient Bradford Councillors was also a challenge. The main solutions paid for by these monies were as below;

- Creating a strong brand for the campaign.
- Printing of newsletters, briefing leaflets and other informative and promotional literature.
- Hire of community halls for briefing events to gain support from voluntary and community organisations.
- Advice and support from experts at YLCA and NALC throughout the campaign. In particular, once the council had been created, access to NALC legal advice ensured allotments were not transferred to the new Town Council before it had elected representatives.
- Writing to every CBMDC councillor ahead of the final vote to lobby and explain why they should back the proposal for Bingley Town Council.
- Creating a survey, in early 2016, to establish local opinion on priority issues in the area – this also had the effect of raising awareness of the new Town Council.
- Holding public awareness events in early 2016, after the creation of Bingley Town Council had been agreed, to encourage residents to stand for council.



Ros Dawson outlines how she and her team overcame the challenges Bingley Council faced throughout the process:

“It was nearly two years from the start of our campaign in 2013 to Bradford Metropolitan District Council’s decision to create a new Bingley Town Council. During that time we faced many challenges. As volunteers with no previous experience of Councils or how to form one we had to learn as we went along. We also had to find a lot of time in our busy lives to devote to the campaign. A first hurdle was Bradford Council’s insistence that the 1,843 signatures we needed to trigger a Community Governance Review were collected on a paper petition, rather than digitally online. Thanks to determined volunteers who staffed market stalls and local traders and churches hosting petitions we were able to meet our target in record time.

The mixed level of support from district Councillors connected to our area was a concern but this was overcome by gaining backing from two of them and from the many local societies and voluntary organisations in our area. They all saw the benefits of a local Council with democratically elected representatives, a range of discretionary powers and a budget, raised through the precept, with which to fund useful initiatives. In particular, the campaign initially got underway when Bingley Civic Trust and the town’s two Rotary clubs got behind it.

Councillors from Town and Parish Councils in Bradford district were also very generous with their time and advice. They helped to answer residents’ questions at public meetings and their experience informed our decisions. We are so grateful to them and also to support from NALC and Yorkshire Local Councils Associations. We were very fortunate that our campaign coincided with the #CreateACouncil initiative. There is no doubt that the funding from DCLG was vital to success. Our grant was spent on high quality information and publicity material, including a website, as well as holding public meetings and taking part in local events.

To sum up, we overcame difficulties by having a wide network of determined and enthusiastic supporters with different skillsets who were all prepared to roll up their sleeves and work hard. Funding and endorsement from central government was also crucial.”

VOTE Bingley!

Sign the petition **HERE**
for a **NEW**
Bingley Town Council

to benefit
Bingley
Cottingley
Crossflatts Eldwick
Gilstead and Micklethwaite



Together we can get a voice

More information at:
www.bingleyccg.org.uk

 Bingley Council Group  @BingleyCCG

4 The poster at locations hosting the petition

Outcomes - Learning from the campaign



5 The Bingley Coat of Arms

The main initial campaigning achievement was the securing of the relevant signatures required to trigger the Community Governance Review into the proposal to create a council. The second main achievement was to encourage sufficient numbers of residents to respond positively to the Community Governance Review. The third achievement was to secure majority support for the creation of the new town Council amongst Bradford Metropolitan District Councillors. Though the final full Council vote late in 2015 delivered a narrow victory for the campaign, it was all that the BCCG had hoped for.

The sharing of the learning has been both local – in the form of sharing campaign ideas with other local groups, often via the online hub – and national, through presentations by NALC and Bingley Community Council Group at events.

What have been the key elements of success?

The vital element of success on a project of this scale was to persuade enough Bradford Councillors to support the creation of the new Town Council in the final Full Council vote late in 2015. Ultimately, no matter how many local residents backed the plan, the power to create the new parish – or not – lay with the principal authority. However, this was tackled with superb lobbying from BCCG and YLCA in the final weeks before the vote.

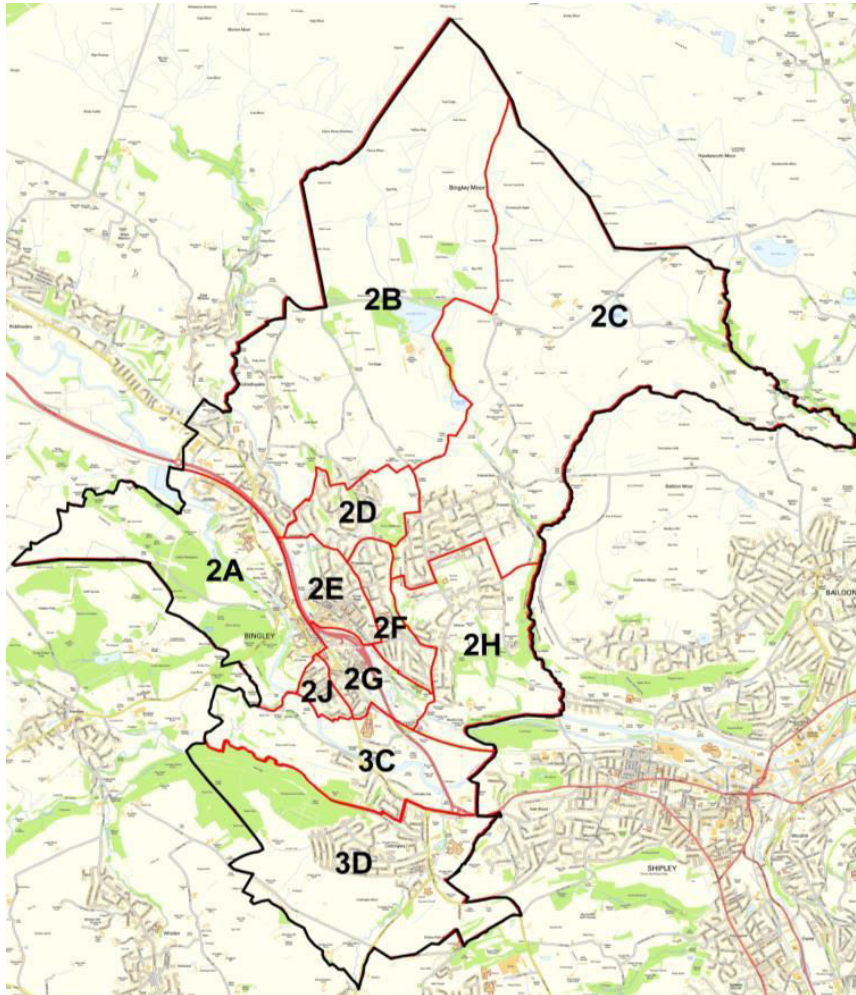
The second main achievement was to have gathered so many petitionary signatures in the first place (2,000) – in two months – an astonishing achievement.

What has been learnt? Campaign lessons to share with others

Bingley residents will benefit from a strong and permanent voice on several strategic policy issues such as housing, planning and town planning through the new Town Council – and through relationships with Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

As mentioned, residents will benefit in year one from revenue from a local precept which can be spent on services in Bingley. However, this precept has been set by CBMDC and is below the average for parish and town councils in the district.

The campaign group also recognises that sharing lessons on gathering petition signatures and how to lobby principal authority Councillors are critical. Engaging continuously also with residents throughout the campaign and particularly once a Community Governance Review has been triggered is also critical.



OA new parish: Bingley Town Council

The campaign group also recognise that once a re-organisation order has been issued by the principal authority – the entirely new set of challenges of creating the new Town Council (i.e. budget setting, vesting etc.) emerges – including the need for sufficient residents to stand for election to the new Town Council.

Who Can I Contact?

Campaign Champion: Ros Dawson - chairman@bingleyccg.org.uk / 07720 882512.

Yorkshire Local Councils' Association: Chris Pilkington – chris.pilkington@yorkshirelca.gov.uk / 01904 436622

Other information

More information on how to create a new council: The NALC's 'Create a Council' page:

<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/create-a-council>

The NALC's 'Power to the people' resource:

<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications>

Bingley Community Council Campaign:

<http://bingleyccg.org.uk> .

Yorkshire Local Councils' Associations:

<http://www.yorkshirelca.gov.uk> .