



PRESS RELEASE

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Banbury citizens invited to have their say to make the town a great place to grow older

Banbury needs you – to help ensure the town is doing the best it can for older people.

A special launch event takes place next Wednesday, June 20, open to everybody interested in helping Banbury become one of Britain's first age-friendly towns.

It was one of only 20 out of 176 applicants to win backing from the Big Lottery Fund and the government, meaning it is on track to be the first age-friendly town in Oxfordshire, joining 500 others around the world.

The partnership behind the successful bid now wants as many people as possible to go along to Banbury Town Hall for Wednesday's meeting – which starts at 1.30pm – to help turn the idea into reality.

While there are already some great groups and opportunities for older people in Banbury, for some, poor transport, unsuitable housing, fear of crime, lack of community cohesion, limited care and support, and difficulty finding or getting to social activities can get in the way of enjoying their later years.

At a time when an ageing population is a national trend, figures show 16% of older people in Banbury are income-deprived, compared with 9% across Oxfordshire, and in the Ruscote area of the town, this increases to 36% – more than double the England average.

Jayne Woodley, Chief Executive at Oxfordshire Community Foundation, which is one of the partners, says: "We want to put Banbury on the map, in the first initiative of its kind in Oxfordshire. Our vision for Banbury is of a town that ensures all its various services and structures are accessible and inclusive of all older people."

Tony Baldry, High Steward of Banbury and former Banbury MP, said: "We see Age Friendly Banbury as an opportunity for a town-wide strategy that enables our communities to co-design and co-produce their own 'social action' solutions. This approach invests in people as citizens rather than treating them as passive recipients of services."

An age friendly town encompasses both the built environment, such as housing, transport and outdoor spaces, and the social environment, such as health and information services, civic participation and social activities. In practice, age friendly social action could include anything from befriending and activity clubs, to 'men in sheds' or community-owned pubs. By offering a joined-up approach to social action specific to Banbury, it is hoped that older people will have more opportunities to flourish.

Penny Thewlis of partner Age UK Oxfordshire said: "Our initial focus is on older people, but when we are looking at the barriers that affect them, we are usually also looking at barriers that affect children and young people, people with dementia, people with disabilities or anyone else. We would ultimately like to create a 'Banbury for all ages' – a friendly and more accessible town for everyone."

The meeting is open to residents, community and faith leaders, councillors, business people, bar/café/shop staff, carers, teachers and volunteers to find out more, contribute views and get involved. The meeting will take place at Banbury Town Hall, 1.30–5pm on Wednesday June 20. To sign up, visit <https://tinyurl.com/y92qfvgx>.

Notes for editors

About Age Friendly Banbury

- Age Friendly Banbury is a cross-sector partnership that brings together: older people; community leaders, including former local MP Sir Tony Baldry; local charities, including Oxfordshire Community Foundation, Age UK Oxfordshire, Katharine House Hospice, Community First Oxfordshire, Citizen's Advice Banbury and the Royal Voluntary Service; businesses, including Sanctuary Housing, DCS and the Banbury Chamber of Commerce; the local media, including the Banbury Guardian and Banbury Sound; and local councils (Banbury Town, Cherwell and South Northants Districts and Oxfordshire County).
- The Age Friendly Banbury partnership has secured funding from The Big Lottery and the Department of Digital, Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) to carry out an initial consultation phase for the initiative. The Banbury partnership was one of 20 successful applications selected from a total of 176. With the support of an experienced Relationship Manager from community charity Locality, this phase involves bringing local people together to define and plan for an age friendly town, and if successful this could lead to further funding of around £240,000 to deliver the plans.
- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), by 2050 there will be more people over 60 than under 14 for the first time in human history. It is expected that the majority will live in urban areas, so the WHO is supporting age friendly initiatives in towns and cities across the world. The Age Friendly Banbury partnership is using the WHO model to join 500 places from Derry to Dallas, in 37 countries, forming the Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC). In the UK, there are [25 age-friendly cities](#), but Banbury hopes to be the first town to join their ranks.

Contact

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