

Treasurer's Report – VS:

Overview:

2025 has been another quiet year for FOBP with no fundraising activities and minimal payments debited from the account. The Charity Commission annual return will be filed in the coming weeks. Jagruti Amin stood down as Treasurer and Trustee of FOBP and Vicky Stante was appointed as a Trustee and Treasurer with effect from December 2024.

Accounts for year 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025										
Starting Balance							CR	DR		4017.84CR
11-Nov-24	Royal British Legion (wreath for remembrance day)							£ 25.00		3992.84CR
14-Aug-24	Community Action (Hire of hall for AGM)							£ 25.00		3967.84CR
29-Aug-25	Woodbank Nurseries (Gift for JAG)							£ 63.45		3904.39CR
31-Oct-25	Closing Balance									3904.39CR

Income – NIL

Outgoings - £113.45

Financial Audit:

Our Co-Operative Bank Account is secure. Signatories on the account are Vicky Stante (Treasurer), Jeremy Thackray (Chair) and Maureen Carney (Secretary). Fiona Dunne who recently resigned as Joint Chair and Trustee has been removed from the accounts' signatories. The previous Treasurer (Jagruti Amin) has been removed as a signatory.

Chair's Annual Report: JT

2025 in Review

2025 has had a strong sense of déjà vu for the Friends of Bingley Pool. We began the year with confirmation that a £14m Levelling Up Fund grant towards the pool had been withdrawn following the new Government's first budget. Since then, we have been fighting to stop the inappropriate disposal of the pool and to prepare for a community buyout.

This mirrors similar situations in 2015-2019, when Bradford Council steadily withdrew funding for the pool, leading to the creation of our group, and in 2022-23, when the initial Levelling Up Fund application for the pool was denied. Over the last decade, FOBP has had firsthand experience of the grinding pace of local and national government bureaucracy.

We met with Bradford Council staff in March 2025 to press the case for the pool. Staff gave strong indications that the pool would soon go back on the Council's asset disposal list. This contradicted the previous assurances given that, if Levelling Up were to fail, Bradford would investigate other measures to bring the pool back into use.

We sent further messages to Bradford following this meeting that were met with silence. We have received every indication that the Council considers the pool's closure as a done deal and saw no need to make its case to the community. It's defensive and dismissive posture has been a steady source of frustration.

We were determined to prove that this issue was not closed, and that there was still great demand in Bingley for the pool to be brought back into use. Our 2025 petition has proven that case. As of now, we have secured over 8,500 signatures, both online and in person. This success has been the high point of 2025 and has helped to secure increased pressure from our Councillors and local MP, who are now pressing Bradford Council more closely on the issue.

Another success is the formation of the Bingley Pool Project Working Group, hosted by Bingley Town Council. This forum has been a useful place for the Friends, Town and District Councillors, and representatives of our MP to meet together and approach a unified position.

The pressure resulting from the petition has led to three helpful outcomes:

- A position statement published by Bingley Ward Councillors proposing a model by which the pool could be handed to the community.
- Early warning, received in September 2025, that the pool had indeed been recommended for disposal by Bradford Council.
- Statements from David Shepherd, Bradford's Director of Place, that have enabled us to scrutinise the Council's decision making more closely.

Our most recent actions of note this year focus on that statement from David Shepherd. He referred to Sport England reports produced for the Council in 2024 on swimming space in the district, using them to state that 'there is no current or future need for a pool in Bingley'. We have obtained this report via a Freedom of Information request and found that it states no such thing. The report does question demand in Bingley, but it explicitly states that a functional Bingley Pool would be beneficial for the district, and it contains several flaws, such as the inclusion of private school swimming facilities that are hardly accessible to the public.

The discovery of this information confirms our case that Bradford Council is not disposing of Bingley Pool for strategic swimming reasons and is being disingenuous at best in claiming such. The issue is entirely one of capital funding. This is a valid, genuine issue: Bradford Council would do better to look the people it serves in the eye, admit that the problem is money, not demand, and look to find a solution, rather than pursuing a selloff.

Thanks to the trustees who have stepped down this year - Jag Amin and Fiona Dunne - for their work and support for FOBP for several years. Also thanks to all past and present trustees for their ongoing support in keeping this project alive.

Looking Ahead to 2026 (addressed by JT before Public Q & A section)

Right now, we are in the following position:

- Bingley Pool has officially been marked as surplus from Bradford Council. The recommendation is to mark it as surplus.
- When Bradford Council officially puts it on sale, Bingley Town Council will activate the building's Asset of Community Value status. This pauses the sale for six months to allow for the community to put together a bid.

We will be pursuing two avenues in 2026.

First, we will argue the case that Bradford Council should retain ownership of the pool. We believe the disposal is based on flawed evidence. Further, Council elections are due in May 2026, which will change the balance of power and offer the possibility of a reprieve. Nonetheless, we are realistic that once the pool proceeds down the sale route, it will be very difficult to persuade Bradford Council to reverse this decision.

Secondly, we will prepare a community bid to take on the pool. We will propose a five-year initial lease period, during which Bradford Council will continue to pay the building's holding cost (such as insurance and energy costs for the few remaining functions in the building). In the meantime, the Friends, Town Council, and other interested parties will drive fundraising, with a view to taking full ownership at the end of the initial lease. There is potential for swimming to return to the building in the medium-term, potentially through the installation of a modular, semi-permanent pool, but the process of bringing a truly permanent facility back to Bingley will be a long-term project. In the meantime, the pool building has tremendous potential for office leases, studio space, and general community use.

Our bid will also contain a second scenario, where either we or a new ownership vehicle will seek to buy the facility outright. This would require Bingley Town Council to become more closely involved, as it has access to finance through the Public Works Loans Board that we as a charity do not. This is the more financially challenging option, but one worth exploring. The first step in creating this bid will be to gain access to the pool, so we can assess the condition of the building. We are pursuing this right now in conjunction with the MPs office. In the meantime, we will launch a community effort to draw in expertise in business planning, leisure management, and fundraising. This is a major challenge, and one that FOBP will only achieve if it expands its membership and communications to truly reach the whole community.