

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 16 January 2024 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Phillips (Chairman)
Councillors: Ayers, Beere, Bunce, Cherry, and Hussain

Alternate
Members: Councillor Beere for Councillor Biegel

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)
Martyn Surfleet (Executive Officer)

GS.33/23 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Biegel, Cllr Bishop, Cllr Donaldson, Cllr Mears

GS.34/23 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.35/23 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.36/23 Income & Expenditure Report
The Committee considered a report prepared by the Town Clerk & RFO comparing year-to-date income and expenditure with the projected annual budget for the financial year. The report showed all expenditure incurred up to 09 January 2024.

Officers responded to a range of questions from Members relating to various budget codes and financial procedures. Members' attention was drawn to the fact that overall the Committee's expenditure was within forecast versus the phased YTD budget.

General Services variances are principally

- Staffing remain within projected costs, at 75% YTD, recruitment of a cleaner remains underway.
- Planned cemetery works include roof repairs at Southam Road depot and tree works on poplars at Southam and driveway footpath repairs.
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by timing of December invoicing across Parks, seasonality of football pitch works and Horton View. Timing of Ezee Trees software install into Q4 £10k. Preparation works and seeding on the wildflower meadow in Spiceball has started £10k. Electric Vehicle charging at Southam Road timing for Q4 £8k. CCTV install has been completed.
- Contract has been completed for a two-year lease of cricket pitch facilities at Hanwell Fields, and machinery has been ordered.
- Timing of capital works at PDP aerial runway and Easington link path moved to Q4, with Hillview play area refurb, walled garden and municipal compost bay works earmarked for 2024 delivery.

Underspends on Resources Committee also principally

- Corporate, Central Administration and Civic continue to be well controlled, with cost under budget.
- Town Council Events are anticipated to finish broadly within acceptable budget tolerance.
- Other services to the Public include timing of small grants (including a Warm Welcome grant scheme), and invoicing of Christmas Lighting scheme. Woodgreen Open Air Pool operating subsidy has been provided for, subject to a review meeting between CDC officers and the Woodgreen Pool Working Party. The required operating information has been requested of Cherwell District Council.
- Other Costs & Income includes increased interest income in line with changes to Bank of England base rate.

Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

This is a monitoring report so there are no specific financial effects arising from it. Without effective budget monitoring there is a risk that budgets will not be adhered to, thereby weakening the Council's ability to demonstrate an effective use of resources. This risk is being mitigated by closer monitoring of spend using a phased budget.

Questions were raised regarding the funds allocated to marketing the 'My Banbury' app as agreed in the 6+6 Budgeting exercise, subsequently approved by both the Grants & Budget Sub-committee and recommended to the Council by the Chairman of the Resources committee. Concerns were raised as to the sufficiency of the funds allocated to successfully promote the App and the council's services. Officers noted the points raised and reminded members of the newly appointed Marketing & Communications officer role and how its impact will positively affect the marketing of the Council's services.

GS.37/23 **IT WAS RESOLVED** to receive and note the Income and Expenditure report.

GS.38/23 **Parks and Cemeteries Monitoring Report**

The team are up to date with the scheduled work, currently completing winter works programme.

Leaf collection and removal is now finally completed.

Machinery and equipment have now been serviced in readiness for next season.

New machines, equipment and materials have been ordered for cricket maintenance starting in May 2024.

We saw an increase in burial duties over the Christmas period.

Due to the incessant rain, the team has been carrying out additional aeration and sanding operations on football pitches in an effort to alleviate surface water and keep pitches playable.

The team has been busy, during the recent storms, tidying up damage caused to trees in our parks.

GS.39/23 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update

The winter maintenance programme continues, with work being undertaken on our shrub areas and hedges, pruning, weeding, litter clearance and mulching.

Monthly aeration operations using mechanical methods has not been undertaken are scheduled in for sports pitches, as conditions allow.

Green waste material in allotment bays has been turned.

Leaf clearance in parks is now completed.

Play bark areas have been forked over and de-compacted.

The contractor's machinery and equipment has also been serviced in readiness for next season.

The Council's Landscape Officer continues to work closely with the contractor in addition to carrying out site inspections to monitor their performance.

GS.40/23 Banbury Urban Orchard - Update

The planting, being carried out by local volunteers from local schools, residents and members of Banbury Rotary Club, is well underway and will be completed by the end of the planting season.

GS.41/23 Wild Flower Meadow Creation

Work has had to be delayed, to avoid damage, due to extremely wet ground conditions, Work will commence as soon as the land dries out.

GS.42/23 Ranger Service / Play Area Update

The Park Ranger Team continue to keep up to date with the weekly Health & Safety inspections and carrying out any repairs resulting from those inspections.

The independent annual play inspections report has now been received, the Ranger team are analysing the findings and be repairs will be programmed prioritised by risk.

The team has now provided salt and equipment to all snow wardens who requested them.

The Rangers have been assisting, with flood and tidying up tree damage as a result of the recent storms in our parks.

GS.43/23 Cleansing Service Update

Facility Cleaning – Unfortunately, we still have a vacancy for a cleaner to cover our sports pavilions.

Despite advertising the position on our website and indeed, we have widened the search by advertising through a recruitment agency.

Parks & Open Spaces Cleansing – The service provided by Cherwell District Council is being delivered in line with the Service Level agreement.

GS.44/23 Facility Management Update

Following the motion on Period Poverty, approved at full Council:

“To combat period poverty, this Council resolves to provide free sanitary products in Banbury Town Council owned or managed female and gender-neutral toilet rooms or cubicles.”

I am pleased to inform members the dispensers and sanitary products have been ordered and will be installed in our facilities by February.

GS.45/23 Parks Lighting Update

Following the approval of the recommendations at the General Services Committee 06th December 2023, I can confirm that the six lighting columns requiring immediate replacement at People's Park have been ordered. The Contractor has indicated 10-12 weeks to take delivery of the new columns.

GS.46/23 Sports Facility Update

Tennis – Agreements have been signed with the Lawn Tennis Association and their suppliers, pre-contract meetings have been undertaken, with the refurbishment works due to be undertaken in the spring.

GS.47/23 Good Code of Practice – Dogs in Our Parks

The council has received a number of complaints and comments from members of the public regarding incidents dogs out of control, dogs attacking people, and dog fouling of sports pitches.

Our staff have also experienced dogs out of control running through annual flower beds and digging up plants.

The bylaws covering our Parks and Open Spaces do not have any reference to dogs or reference to the behaviour expected of dog owners using our facilities.

The Cemetery Regulations in place for Southam Road and Hardwick Hill do require dogs to be on leads at all times.

The law helps with the control of dogs in extreme cases only, through the Dangerous Dogs Act 1992. The act states that dogs must not be allowed to be 'dangerously out of control', which means injuring someone or making someone fear they may be injured. There is no blanket law requiring dogs to be kept on a lead in all public spaces.

Officers recommend that the Town Council adopts a Good Code of Practice (see Appendix 1) helping to educate and inform responsible behaviour by visitors with dogs to our Parks and Open Spaces.

If approved, it is proposed that a campaign be launched in February publicising the new code of practice for responsible owners alongside a push promoting "clean up after your dog".

For staff working in the field witnessing inappropriate activity by dogs and their owners, it will provide an opportunity for them to refer customers to what is reasonable behaviour and expected of dog owners when visiting the Councils Parks and Open spaces.

GS.48/23 Adoption and Transfer of Land

Warwick Road – Miller Homes Development

Cherwell District Council have approached the Town Council regarding a new Allotment site, Car Park and associated Public Open Space stating that it has reached Practical Completion stage. The land is being offered for transfer to the Town Council.

Subject to Final Completion being achieved, the legal transfer of the land, and the appropriate Commuted Sums, the recommendation is that members approve the Town Clerk to adopt the facilities as detailed in Appendix 2 to this report.

GS.49/23 Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

There are no risks arising from these items and all financial effects can be contained within existing budgets.

GS.50/23 Recommendations

The Committee is invited to **RESOLVE**

- (1) To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.
- (2) To note the 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update.
- (3) To note the Banbury Urban Orchard Update.
- (4) To note the Wild Flower Creation Scheme.
- (5) To note the Ranger Service / Play Area Update.
- (6) To note the Cleansing Service Update.
- (7) To note the Facility Management Update.
- (8) To note the Lighting in Parks Update.
- (9) To note the Sports Facility Update.

It was AGREED to note the Parks and Open Spaces Monitoring Report

The Committee was also invited to **RESOLVE**

- (10) **To APPROVE** the recommendation for the introduction of a "Good Code of Practice" for responsible dog owners visiting the Town Councils Parks and Open Spaces.
- (11) **To APPROVE** the recommendation for the adoption of the Allotments, Car Park and Public Open Space at Warwick Road on the Miller Homes Development.

It was AGREED unanimously to approve the recommendations for the "Good Code of Practice" for dogs in our parks and Adoption of the Allotment site off Warwick Road as set out in **GS 47/23** and **GS 48/23** of the Parks and Open Spaces Report.

The meeting ended at 7.10pm