

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 19 March 2024 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Phillips (Chairman)
Councillors: Ayers, Biegel, Bishop, Bunce, Cherry, Hussain and Mears

Alternate Members: None

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

GS.51/23 Apologies for Absence

GS.52/23 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.53/23 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.54/23 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 12 March 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, recruitment of a cleaner is 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 February invoicing across Parks, seasonality of football pitch works and Horton View. Timing of EzeeTrees software install into Q4 £10k. Electric lighting across parks (OCC £7k) and vehicle charging facilities at Southam Road timed for March (£10k).
- Play area equipment underspends are proposed to be earmarked for ongoing investment. Tree works orders have been placed and are currently being undertaken, balancing available resources with recommendations from scheduled independent arboriculture inspections over an ongoing three-year timeframe.
- Contract has been completed for a two-year lease of cricket pitch facilities at Hanwell Fields, and investment in machinery purchase will now be undertaken, and funds earmarked for release upon receipt of equipment.

- Timing of capital works at 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 currently within budget parameters.
- Town Hall – includes prepayment of wedding license (£3k), however overspend is principally driven by building maintenance costs.
- 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 in the new year.
- Other Costs & Income are anticipated to end the year in line with projected budget.

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.

GS.55/23 **IT WAS RESOLVED** to receive and note the Income and Expenditure report.

GS.56/23 **Parks and Cemeteries Monitoring Report**

The team are up to date with the scheduled work, mowing has started where the ground conditions allow.

The new machines, equipment and materials have been delivered for cricket maintenance, we are ready for the spring preparation works to be undertaken once ground conditions allow.

The team have been busy with burial duties.

GS.57/23 **4th Corner Landscape Contract Update**

No problems to report, as we head into the new season, the schedules for work are being reviewed to be agreed at the next contract meeting.

The last cut of grass areas for 23/24 has been delayed due wet weather, however, it is still hoped this can be completed by the end of March.

The aeration operations on sports pitches have not been undertaken, this is due to wet ground conditions.

There will be a change in local management of our contract as the Contract Supervisor has resigned. Details regarding 4th Corner's plans will be provided at the next contract meeting.

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

GS.58/23 Tree Works/Banbury Urban Orchard Update

The Landscape Officer has issued the final packages of tree works as identified from the survey for 23/24, these are due to be completed by the end of March.

The planting of the “Banbury Urban Orchard” is now complete. It has been a great success. Thanks to a team effort through the participation of the local volunteers, schools, residents and members of Banbury Rotary Club. All coordinated by the Landscape Officer and assistance with the planting by the Rangers.

GS.59/23 Wild Flower Meadow Creation Update

Work is still on hold regarding sowing the seed due to extremely wet ground conditions. Work will commence as soon as the land dries out.

GS.60/23 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.

Work has started on the repairs identified on the independent annual play inspection.

The new inspection software has been installed, this will go live from the first of April. The software will allow formal recording of all of our inspections to be held in one place. This will include Play Areas, Parks, Buildings, Allotments and Bus Shelters.

GS.61/23 Cleansing Service Update

We have successfully recruited to the vacant cleansing operative position. The new member of staff started with us at the beginning of March and he has the primary responsibility for cleaning the council’s sports pavilions. The employee was identified and put forward 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, no issues to report.

GS.62/23 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.”

All the dispensers and sanitary products are now installed in all facilities and are available free of charge for those need them.

Work Place EV Charging Point Installation

An order has been placed for the EV Charging Points to be installed at Southam Road depot, with completion due by the end of March.

Depot Roof Repairs

An order has been placed for the leaking roof at Southam Road depot to be replaced, with completion due by the end of March.

GS.63/23 Parks Lighting Update

We are still waiting for confirmation for an installation date for the six lighting columns to be replaced at People's Park. This should be any time now as the indicated 10-12 weeks to take delivery of the new columns is nearly up.

GS.64/23 Tennis Courts – People's Park Update

The two contracts are in place for the refurbishment of People's Park tennis courts and due to start:

- a) Gate entry system installation – Start date 18/03/2024.
- b) Court Refurbishment - Cleaning and Painting when weather improves.

GS.65/23 Good Code of Practice – Dogs in Our Parks

Following members approval for the introduction of a "Good Code of Practice" for dog owners using our Parks and Open Spaces, I can update members that this has been introduced.

Eye catching posters have been produced and displayed at the entrances to our parks, which have generally been well received by both dog and non-dog owners.

The Council's Marketing and Communication Manager has also run a press and social media awareness campaign.

GS.66/23 PlayZone Grant Application – Football Foundation

Officers have been working with colleagues from Cherwell District Council regarding pursuing the opportunity of applying to the Football Foundation for grant funding to provide two new PlayZone facilities at Princess Diana Park and Chandos Recreation Ground.

Following initial enquires with the Football Foundation, they believe we have a strong case to make an application for two PlayZone facilities to be located in Ruscote and Grimsbury.

The new PlayZones are artificial surfaced facilities that aim to provide users with the opportunity to participate in sports all year round on a formal and informal basis.

To qualify for the funding, any application needs to demonstrate that extensive community engagement has been undertaken with local groups and individuals in areas of deprivation targeting lower socio-economic groups, women and girls, users with disabilities and ethnically diverse communities.

Cherwell District Council have undertaken this extensive public consultation with all the stake holders in each area. The overwhelming feedback is that there is high demand for the use of this type of facility and that the preferred access is for playing football on a 3G synthetic surface.

The Football Foundation has carried out initial surveys of both sites to identify and agree the best locations, undertake utility searches and look at electricity supply options for suitability. They will also submit and seek \planning approval for each facility.

Each PlayZone costs £225,000, the Football Foundation will fund 75%, Cherwell District Council have agreed to fund the remaining 25%.

Banbury Town Council as landowner would adopt the facility following construction and be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and management of each of the PlayZone facilities. The budget estimate of

maintaining the two facilities is anticipated at 8K-10K per annum per PlayZone.

The Officer recommendation to Members of the Committee is to approve the next stage of legally signing the agreement with the Football Foundation, alongside the Town Clerk signing a funding agreement with Cherwell District Council. This will facilitate the joint submission of the formal application in April 2024, with hopefully, a successful outcome and delivery of two PlayZone facilities later this year at Princess Diana Park and Chandos Recreation Ground.

GS.67/23 Adoption and Transfer of Land

Public Open Space – The Greenway off Winchester Close.

Cherwell District Council have finally received the transfer documentation for the remaining Public Open Space parcels either side of Winchester Close from David Wilson Homes Ltd, these were not transferred at the same time as the rest of the open space within this estate.

As Banbury Town Council already maintain this land, and the commuted sum for this land was received from the developer when the other areas of land transferred, the recommendation is that members approve the Town Clerk to adopt the remaining parcels of land.

GS.68/23 Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

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

GS.69/23 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 Tree Works / Banbury Urban Orchard Update.
- (4) To note the Wild Flower Creation Scheme Update.
- (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 Tennis Courts – People’s Park Update
- (10) To note the “Good Code of Practice” for Responsible Dog Owners Update.

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

GS.70/23 **The Committee was also invited to RESOLVE** the following -

- (1) **It was RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation for the adoption of the Allotments, Car Park and Public Open Space at Warwick Road on the Miller Homes Development.

- (2) **It was RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation for the adoption of Public Open Space off Winchester Close from David Wilson Homes Ltd.

The meeting ended at 7.18pm