

**RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 02 January 2024 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Mallon (Chairman)  
Councillors: Ayers, Biegel, Colegrave, Hussain, Kilsby, Phillips, Strangwood, Tohill-Martin.

Alternate Members: None

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)  
Jackie Chacha (Marketing & Communications Manager)  
Martyn Surfleet (Executive Officer)

**R.30/23 Apologies for Absence**  
Cllr Reeves, Officer Paul Almond

**R.31/23 Declarations of Interest**  
None

**R.32/23 Minutes of the last Meeting**  
**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 October be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**R.33/23 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 27 November 2023.

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 November 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 and awaits invoice £6k.
- 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.
- 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 currently within budget parameters.
- 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 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.

Members expressed interest in the details of the Woodgreen Open Air Pool Subsidy, and Cherwell District Councils contribution as well as running costs of the facility. Several questions were asked regarding the running and maintenance of the facility and **IT WAS RECOMMENDED** that officers look to convene a meeting of the Woodgreen Pool Working Party to enable members and officers to further review the operations of the Woodgreen Open Air Pool.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to receive and note the Income and Expenditure report.

**R.34/23 Grants & Budget Sub-Committee**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Grants & Budget Sub-Committee held on the 28 November 2023.

Members were advised of the updated housing figures issued by Cherwell District Council since the issue of the agenda resulting in an increase of 3.4% of the tax base.

**It was AGREED** to receive and note the minutes of the Grants & Budget Sub-Committee and that the revised estimates be sent to the meeting of the Council on the 09 January 2024 for approval.

**R.35/23 Revised & Draft Revenue Estimates**

A Summary of the revised estimates for 2023/24 and draft estimates 2024/25 is attached in Appendix 1 together with a full copy of the Estimates (2024/25).

The estimates include income from fees and charges, which for 2024/25 currently remain unchanged from this year, subject to receipt of guidance from Members.

The estimates for 2024/25 have been set based on a 2% rise in precept, and a rise of 2% in households in the town due to general housing growth. A 5.0% inflation rise in salaries and contract costs has been assumed, or greater where specified.

The following comments on the estimates are materially relevant:

**GENERAL SERVICES**

**COST CENTRE 101 Litter Control & Cleansing**

Contractual costs linked to inflation have risen higher than anticipated in the 23/24 budget.

**Cost Centre 103 Southam & Hardwick Cemetery**

Increased capital costs associated with depot roof maintenance and insurance costs

**Cost Centre 110 Parks and Open Spaces**

Investment in wildflower meadow creation across Spiceball, PDP, Saffron Close and Hanwell View. Investment across the play estate maintenance as well as bridge, fence and bench repairs. Cleansing costs associated with expanded public toilet provision.

**Cost Centre 114 Park Rangers**

Salary increases, accompanied by investment in Southam Road depot alarm system and CCTV.

**Cost Centre 120 Football Pitches & Horton View**

Increased cricket maintenance equipment purchases if fixed two-year seasonal bookings are secured. Refurbishment of Horton View kitchen and alarm system.

**Cost Centre 160 Capital costs**

Planned delivery of earmarked landscaping projects in Hillview Play area refurbishment (earmark funding) in 23/24 alongside installation of PDP aerial runway, St Marys Churchyard landscaping, creation of Municipal Compost Bays at Spital Farm. Ongoing works in People's Park to improve the Warwick Road entrance, including wall works, and install of a café canopy and metal fencing. Provision of defibrillators throughout the pavilion parks are complemented by installation of link path works in Easington Park.

**RESOURCES**

**Cost Centre 305 Central Administration**

Salary costs reflect the expansion of marketing function in 23/24, accompanied by CRM marketing provision.

**Cost Centre 310 Town Council Events**

Planning town event in 214/25 to replace the Coronation event of 23/24. Specific resources reduced to match an anticipated fall in sponsorship income.

**Cost Centre 311 & 315 Town Hall & Other Services to the Public**

Utility costs changes following the expiry of the current fixed priced energy contract in 23/24. Roof repair costs at the Town Hall, with anticipated remedial repainting required in the spring on 2024. Ongoing support by Banbury Town Council following the removal of Christmas Lights funding by Cherwell District Council to revive and renew the Christmas Lights scheme across the town in 24/25. Further investment in an expanded lights projection scheme to cover Armistice, Christmas and the start of 2024. Ongoing subsidy of operation costs for Woodgreen Outdoor Pool, alongside full election costs in 2024.

**Cost Centre 320 Other Costs and Income**

Increased interest income in 23/24 projected to grow in 24/25, supported by increased precept income.

**FINANCIAL EFFECTS AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

The overall proposals are felt to reflect a satisfactory basis for the Council to discharge its commitments for the remainder of 2023/24 and for 2024/25. They include some key changes which will facilitate increased activity in certain service areas.

The revised estimates for the current year maintain expenditure within the bottom line precept level approved at Budget Council in January 2023.

Consideration of this report falls within the provision of Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Members affected by those provisions should declare accordingly and refrain from voting.

**It was RESOLVED** to receive and note the draft revenue estimates and refer them for approval at the meeting of the council on the 09 January 2024.

**R.36/23 Calendar of Events 2024/25 Update**

Members were invited to review the report of the Events Manager.

Several questions were asked of the Town Clerk regarding feedback from the Banbury Fair extension and the pending dates of events yet to be agreed.

**It was RESOLVED** to receive and note the Draft Calendar of Events 2024 as set out in **Appendix A** to the minutes, and that a meeting of the Events Working group convene to finalise remaining dates to be confirmed.

**R.37/23 Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25**

Members were invited to review the report of the Town Clerk & RFO.

Members requested and **it was AGREED** to amend the date of the meeting of the Council from the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 due to clashes with Cherwell District Council meetings.

**It was RESOLVED** to receive and note the Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 as set out in **Appendix B** to the minutes. And refer the amended calendar for approval at the next meeting of the Council on the 09 January 2024.

**R.38/23 Confidential Business Exclusion**

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that, in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**SUMMARY of items discussed during confidential session**

**R.39/23 Town Hall Usage**

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding the hire and lease of the upstairs facilities of the Town Hall for usage by Oxfordshire County Council Registrar.

**Background**

Over the past number of years hiring of the Town Hall has been declining, with internally and external users focused on the ground floor facilities.

Maintenance and repair costs continued to rise, whilst measures were taken to improve the efficiency of the heating and insulation downstairs, this will provide an opportunity towards maintenance and running costs of the upstairs.

Following the announcement of the move from Bodicote House to Castle Quay, elected members were keen to ensure access to the services of the registrar, run by the County Council as tenants at Bodicote House, were retained for the residents of Banbury, the north of Oxfordshire, West Northamptonshire and South Warwickshire.

Officers responded to several questions relating to the impact on officers working in the Town Hall as well as further details into the lease agreement and responsibilities of both parties such as equipment maintenance.

**IT WAS AGREED TO** receive and note the Town Hall Usage report outlined in the **Confidential Appendix**, and permit the Town Clerk in consultation with the leader of the Council to engage in negotiations with Oxfordshire County Council on a lease agreement for use of the Town Hall by the Registrar service.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm

