

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 04 June 2024 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Biegel (Chairman)
Councillors: Crighton, Eaton, Strangwood, Tohill-Martin, Urwick.

Alternate
Members: Cllr Biegel for Cllr Richards, Cllr Crighton for Cllr Hodgson, Cllr Eaton for Cllr Elugwu

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)
James Smith (Media & Communications Officer)

GS.4/24 Appointment of Chairman

IT WAS RESOLVED by unanimous vote for Cllr Biegel to chair the meeting.

GS.5/24 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Elugwu, Cllr Hodgson, Cllr Richards.

GS.6/24 Declarations of Interest

None.

GS.7/24 Minutes of the Last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 March and 14 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.8/24 Parks and Cemeteries Monitoring Report

The team are up to date with the scheduled work.

The start to the mowing season has gone well, with the Park, Cemeteries and St Marys Churchyard have been maintained to high standard.

Staff continue to be busy with burial duties.

The Spring Bedding has now been removed in preparation for the Summer planting. Members of the public benefitted from the plant giveaway this year. Future plans to undertake successional planting in Peoples Park, in partnership with occupants of the Victorian Walled Garden.

Planting in the park days with local school children is organised for the 12th and 13th of June.

The football season has now finished, and staff are now engaged with the weekly operations for bowling green maintenance.

4th Corner Landscape Contract Update

The contractor has confirmed successful installation of a new contract supervisor.

Road channel weed treatment spraying has been completed on schedule. It is confirmed that an additional third spray is planned during the height of the

summer, to enable improved weed management, subject to environmentally conscientious chemical application.

Following football post removal, sports pitch post season renovation works are underway, aeration operations, dressing and seeding of goal mouths.

Shrub border maintenance is on schedule.

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

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 team is working through works identified in the annual inspection report.

The Rangers have played a valuable role in supporting the Council's event programme so far this year.

Lighting at MUGA in

Cleansing Service Update

The In-house team are performing well, keeping our facilities clean for public use and have assisted with cleaning at our events. The successful retention of a contract members of the cleaning team and engagement on permanent terms.

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

Christmas Lights Update

Within the six-year contract, the Council has received the proposals to refresh the scheme in Christmas 2024 for the remaining three years of the contract. Highlights include the 100% LED lighting, incorporating the recycling of 14,000 plastic bottles to create the revised scheme.

Tree decoration remains focused on Bridge Street, with North Bar and Horsefair benefiting from banner style lighting between the tree line.

Overall the star and diamond theming of street strings, alongside the animation of various installations, aims to improve the impact across the town, and contained within the tendered price and footprint of the original tendered contract.

Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

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

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to **RESOLVE:**

- To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.
- To note the installation and upgrade of the new cricket facilities at Hanwell Fields open space, alongside a two-year lease to a local cricket team - Al Medina 313.
- To note the Burial Services Update
- To note the 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update
- To note the Wildflower Update, following recent floods, to progress in September
- To note the Ranger Service / Play Area Update.
- To note the Wildflower Update, following recent floods, to progress in September.
- To note the Cleansing Service Update, confirming recent recruitment, and the reorganisation of the Cherwell District Council cleansing service.
- To note the completion of roofing and workforce electric charging points at Southam Road Cemetery.
- To note the successful engagement in the street lighting management framework agreement with Volker.
- To note the successful award of funding (£0.5m) from the Football Foundation to create two bookable, floodlit, all-weather Playzone facilities, one at Chandos Play area and another at Princess Diana Park. To be delivered in partnership following consultation undertaken by Cherwell District Council.
- To note the revised Christmas Lights scheme preview, and request officer to bring members a paper outlining projection options to the next meeting

It was also **RESOLVED** by the chairmen and agreed by the committee that the Director of Environment bring a future report to the committee regarding Remembrance Day and Christmas projection options to the next meeting.

GS.9/24

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 24 May 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 costs remain within budget, subject to central government annual salary increases agreed with trade unions.
- Planned roof repairs at Southam Road depot completed (£3k) and fibreglass burial chambers purchased (£3k). Offset by timing of headstone beam installation £13k and annual BACS software license £3k.
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by timing of May invoice across Parks, including the first weed spray application to street edging.
- Tree works orders have largely been completed and with the final few days currently being undertaken, balancing available resources with recommendations from scheduled independent arboriculture inspections over an ongoing three-year timeframe.
- Hanwell View MUGA and Public Open Space (POS) has been transferred, along with S106 contribution, to be recognised over the next 15 years of maintenance.
- Contract has been completed for a two-year lease of cricket pitch facilities at Hanwell Fields, and associated investment in machinery has been undertaken, with the first games having been played in May following improved weather.

Underspends on Resources Committee also principally

- Corporate, Central Administration and Civic continue to be well controlled, with vacancies in central administration contributing £14k underspend.
- Town Council Events are currently within acceptable budget parameters.
- Town Hall – includes prepayment of wedding license (£3k) offset by seasonality of utility costs.
- Other services to the Public include timing of small grants (including Warm Welcome grant scheme), and invoicing of election costs.
- Other Costs & Income are in line with projected budget, with election costs reserve to be released from Earmark reserves.

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.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and note the Income and Expenditure report, and agreed by the committee that the Director of Environment bring a future report to the committee regarding refurbishment of Play Areas and Play Equipment to the next meeting, using residual play value and life expectancy.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm