

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at **6.30pm on Tuesday, 28 January 2025** at the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Richards (Chair)
Councillors: Elugwu, Strangwood, Tohill-Martin and Urwick

Alternate Members: Councillor Hussain (for Councillor Hodgson)

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

GS.1/25 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Hodgson

It was proposed that a recommendation be put to full council for a membership change, from Councillor Urwick to Councillor Okeke. This was agreed unanimously by all members present.

GS.2/25 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.3/25 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

GS.4/25 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 21 January 2025.
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 projected budget.

General Services variances were principally

- ◆ Cleansing charges to Cherwell District Council (CDC) are paid annually in full in March.
- ◆ Staffing costs remain within budget, in line with annual salary increases agreed with trade unions.
- ◆ Planned roof repairs at Southam Road depot completed and fibreglass burial chambers purchased.
- ◆ Replacement light columns have been installed in People Park, the beginning of a wider replacement programme across the estate, particularly PDP. Retaining wall works at Longelandes Way planned.
- ◆ All MUGAs and sports hardstanding have been assessed across the estate, with appraisal of refurbishment options to be funded from earmarked reserves to be subject of a separate report to elected members within the next couple of months.
- ◆ Assessment and purchase of mowers and fleet vehicles is currently underway.
- ◆ Eight new green roofed bus shelters will be installed by Clear Channel across a number of arterial entry roads into Banbury.

Underspends on Resources Committee, principally

- ◆ Corporate, Central Administration and Civic continue to be well controlled, with vacancies in central administration contributing £18k underspend, alongside timing of NALC subscription costs, offset by elevated legal costs.
- ◆ Town Council Events are likely to end the year marginally over budget parameters, however offset by savings within the Resources budget.
- ◆ Works to the Town Hall to host OCC Registrar service is nearing completion, including access control, with redecoration to the reception area completed. Upgrade of alarm systems to complement digital connectivity have been completed.
- ◆ Other services to the Public include timing of small grants (including Warm Welcome grant scheme). Costs for demounting Christmas Lights across the town are anticipated to remain within budget. The contribution to Woodgreen Open Air Pool costs are paid in March.
- ◆ Other Costs & Income are in line with treasury management of reserve funds are projected to slightly exceed budget guidance.

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

GS.5/25

Parks and Cemeteries Service

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment providing an update for Members on:

Parks & Cemeteries Team.
4th Corner Landscape Contract.
Ranger Service / Play Areas.
Sports Surface
Cleansing Service.
Parks Lighting.
PlayZone Schemes.

Parks & Cemeteries Team

- ◆ The team are up to date with all scheduled work.
- ◆ The weekly preparation of the football pitches continues to be undertaken by the team, new line markers and paint should help improve the quality and efficiency of the operation, all team members have received training on the new equipment.
- ◆ Burial duties in our Cemeteries has delivered in line with bookings.
- ◆ The team have started to undertake the winter prune of all shrubs.
- ◆ All servicing of plant and equipment has been undertaken readiness for the start of the season.
- ◆ The two new ride-on mowers have been ordered and will be delivered prior to the need to start mowing in March. The new machines will be fitted with mulching decks, reducing the amount of green waste produced from cut and collect mowing as well as making the operation more efficient.

4th Corner Landscape Contract

- ◆ The formal review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract with 4th Corner Landscapes Ltd has now been completed, information has now been provided covering:
 - Staffing Levels
 - Machinery & Equipment
 - Routes Programmes and Reporting
 - Training
 - Environmental Improvements
 - Green Waste Recycling (Composting/Mulching)
 - Community Social Value
 - Inflation costs and contract rates uplift
 - Contract Performance Meetings
- ◆ Working through this review Officers have confidence that 4th Corner Ltd have demonstrated that they can continue to providing the Grounds Maintenance Service as specified in the contract. They also outlined a commitment and willingness to work in partnership with Banbury Town Council in terms of service improvements and bringing added value to the Council's landscape development initiatives.
- ◆ The contract terms and conditions allow for an extension for a further period of up to five years.
- ◆ Officers recommend to the committee, that Banbury Town Council take up the option to extend the contract with 4th Corner Ltd for a further two years from the 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2027, with a further review of performance towards the end of this period.

Ranger Service / Play Area Update

- ◆ The Park Ranger Team continue to carry out weekly visual Health & Safety inspections formally recording utilising the new mobile PSS Live software package.
- ◆ The team continue to undertake work on the findings made in the independent annual Inspections report.
- ◆ Monthly inspections of Bus Shelters, Allotments, Parks and Building Facilities continue to be undertaken.
- ◆ The team have also been busy with the winter maintenance programme, topping up salt bins on street and equipping snow wardens with salt, PPE and shovels as required 4 new wardens have been recruited and trained.
- ◆ We will shortly need to advertise for the position of Senior Park Ranger as Steve Berry who will be retiring at the end of March after nearly 18 years' service for Banbury Town Council.

Sports Surface Update

- ◆ The independent assessment report has now been received for Horton View Tennis Courts and the Multi-Use Games Area surfaces.
- ◆ Once recommendations have been analysed, options and estimated costs will be provided to the next meeting of this committee.

Cleansing Service Update

- ◆ Cleaning of public toilets is ongoing, no problems to report.
- ◆ Weekly cleaning of all sports pavilions continues on a weekly basis following fixtures.
- ◆ Parks & Open Spaces Cleansing – The service provided by Cherwell District Council continues to be delivered in line with the Service Level agreement, no issues to report.

Parks Lighting Update

- ◆ Repairs to the timers at Moorfields Park MUGA have now been undertaken.
- ◆ MUGA Lighting at People's Park, Merton Street and bankside have been ordered.
- ◆ Quotations have now been received for the supply and installation of new lighting for Banbury Cross and the Fine Lady Statue, replacing the halogen bulbs with colour changing low energy LED's, orders will now be placed.

PlayZone Scheme Update

- ◆ The terms for the funding agreement with Cherwell District Council is now agreed, and the two planning applications have been submitted by the Football Foundations Consultants.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and to note;

The Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.

The Ranger Service / Play Area Update.

The Sports Services Update.

The Cleansing Service Update.

The Lighting in Parks Update.

The PlayZone Scheme Update.

And to **approve** the recommendation to extend the 4th Corner Landscape Contract.

The meeting ended at 6:54pm