

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at **6.30pm on Tuesday 18 March 2025** at the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Richards (Chair)
Councillors: Okeke and Tohill-Martin

Alternate Members: Councillor Hussain for Councillor Elugwu

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)

Members of Public: 2 members

GS.6/25 Apologies for Absence
Councillors Elugwu and Strangwood

GS.7/25 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.8/25 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

GS.9/25 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 10 March 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.
- ◆ Purchase of two new mowers (used within cemeteries & open spaces) has been undertaken and now operational, retaining two spares to support operational resilience.
- ◆ Replacement light columns have been installed in People Park, the beginning of a wider replacement programme across the estate, with trenchwork for electrical connections completed at PDP.
- ◆ 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. Underspends in Playground Equipment is available to earmark to fund this work to sports and play hardstanding improvements.
- ◆ Building M&R underspends provide an earmarked fund to enable seasonal infrastructure opportunities in People's Park/St Marys.
- ◆ Eight new green roofed bus shelters are currently being installed by Clear Channel across a number of arterial entry roads into Banbury, with the project finalising in April.

- ◆ Capital expenditure on preplanning works to facilitate PlayZones at PDP and Chandos (which have now received planning permission) will be met by funding partners (Football Foundation 75% and CDC 25%). Meanwhile funding towards lighting at PDP and Banbury Cross has been received via CDC from UKSPF capital fund.

Underspends on Resources Committee, principally

- ◆ Corporate, Central Administration and Civic continue to be well controlled, with vacancies in central administration contributing £15k 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.
- ◆ Underspends on Christmas Lights may be earmarked for future seasonal lighting events.
- ◆ 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.10/25 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.
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 now been delivered.

4th Corner Landscape Contract

- ◆ Following the committee decision, on 28th January 2025, the grounds maintenance contract extension has now been signed and sealed with 4th Corner Ltd for a further two years from the 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2027.
- ◆ All contract documentation has been updated and issued within the articles of agreement:
 - Contract Condition amendments
 - Technical Specification amendments
 - Inventory of Sites amendments
 - Updated Bill of Quantities and Schedule of Rates

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.
- ◆ Recruitment for the position of Senior Park Ranger is underway and interviews will take place on the 25th March 2025.

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

- ◆ Orders have been placed for the supply and installation of new lighting for Banbury Cross and the Fine Lady Statue for the colour changing low energy LED's, installation is expected by the end of March 2025.
- ◆ Orders have been placed for the replacement of the lighting columns in Princess Diana Park and the new run of lights to serve the PlayZone. Installation is expected to be complete by the end of March 2025.
- ◆ Cherwell District Council approached Banbury Town Council inviting applications for projects under the Governments UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Both of the above-mentioned schemes were put forward, and both were successful.

PlayZone Scheme Update

- ◆ Planning permission has been granted by Cherwell District Council for both PlayZones subject to the clearance of a condition, which requires a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan to be submitted and approved before work can start on either site.
- ◆ The Football Foundations Consultants and Installation Contractors are confident that the condition can be met quickly and work can commence in the next few weeks.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and to note;

The Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.

The 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update.

The Ranger Service / Play Area Update.

The Cleansing Service Update.

The Lighting Update.

The PlayZone Scheme Update.

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

The meeting ended at 7:15pm