

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 11 June 2024 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Hussain (Chairman)
Councillors: Beer, Biegel, Eaton, Mallon and Mears.

Alternate Members: Councillor Don Viatkus,

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

R.4/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Beer for Cllr Dom Viatkus

R.5/24 **Declarations of Interest**

None

R.6/24 **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 correct records and signed by the Chairman.

R.7/24 **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.
- To note the successful award of funding (£487k) 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 (CDC), subject to a further proposed £162k funding from CDC.

- To note the revised Christmas Lights scheme preview, and request officer to bring members a paper outlining projection options to the next meeting

Underspend 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.

IT WAS 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, and that the Director of Environment bring a future report to the committee regarding Remembrance Day and Christmas projection options to the next meeting.

R.8/24 Internal Audit Report 2023/24

The Committee considered a report prepared by the Town Clerk & RFO.

Background

The Town Council has an arrangement with Auditing Solutions Ltd. who provides Internal Audit Services to a number of Local Councils nationally. The Internal Auditor plans visits over a three-year cycle and examines different aspects of the Council's financial operations.

The Internal Auditor work was undertaken on 31st October 2023, 15th February 2024 and 26th April 2024. This report contains observations made.

Comments

The Auditor concluded that, on the basis of the programme of work undertaken, the Council has maintained adequate and effective internal control arrangements during the year. In the areas examined, no major issues or concerns have been identified and it is considered the Clerk and staff continue to operate generally effective control procedures in each relevant area.

The Internal Auditors have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the year's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, having concluded that, in all significant respects, the control objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

The areas of review included:

- Accounting records and bank reconciliations,
- Corporate Governance,
- Review of Expenditure,
- Assessment and Management of Risk,
- Precept Determination and Budgetary Control,
- Review of Income,
- Petty Cash,
- Staff Salaries,
- Fixed Asset Registers

- Investment & Loans
- Annual Governance and Accountability Return

Financial Effects and Risk Assessment

None arising from this report. The Council's use of an Internal Auditor provides an independent source of assurance as to the veracity of its financial systems and statements.

It was RESOLVED to receive and note the Internal Audit Report 2023/24

The meeting ended at 6.57pm