

## GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 30 January 2018 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Clarke (Chairman)  
Councillors: Dhesi, J Donaldson, Harrison, Kilsby.

Alternate Members: Councillor Bell for Councillor Richards and Councillor Milne-Home for Councillor Colegrave.

Officers: Mark Recchia (Town Clerk)  
Mark Hassall (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO)  
Mike Hall (Recreation & Amenities Manager)  
Audrey O'Mahony (Planning & Administration)

**GS.30.17 Apologies for Absence**  
Councillors Richards, Banfield, Colegrave,

**GS.31.17 Declarations of Interest**  
None.

**GS.32.17 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 December 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**GS.33.17 Income & Expenditure Report**  
The Committee considered a report prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO demonstrating current income and expenditure compared with full year projected income and expenditure. The report outlined summary income and expenditure against each cost centre and showed all expenditure incurred up to 22 January 2018.

Officers responded to a range of questions from Members relating to various budget codes. In particular reference was made to child interment charges and a request was made for these to be shown separately in the reporting lines. Members' attention was drawn to the fact that overall the Committee's expenditure was within forecast.

The report noted that General Services' savings were due to timing, principally:

- ◆ Across the Cemeteries activity was in line with budget, underspends (excluding GM contract) related to timing of tree works (£4k), footpath/road repairs (£9k) and toilet refurbishment (£4k).
- ◆ Timing of Grounds Maintenance costs in Parks & Open Spaces accounted for £50k, and, £18k is associated with play area repairs undertaken in November associated with the ROSPA inspection. Timing of tree works ahead of the winter works programme contributed £25k of underspends.
- ◆ Timing of Park Ranger relocation to Southam Road depot accounted for £15k.
- ◆ Timing of S106 release (£77k), and the contribution from reserves to the funding of capital projects (£227k). This was offset by £100k destined for town centre initiatives, £30k related to provision of additional burial space and £25k related to Spittal Farm drainage works.

- ◆ Timing of any required bus shelter expenditure was linked to finalising of revised bus routes (£23k).

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

**GS.34.17 Parks and Open Spaces Report**

The Committee considered a report on the condition of the parks, recreation grounds and open spaces in Banbury, including comments and complaints received, and on the work of the Park Ranger Service.

**Queries, Comments and Complaints (QCC) 25 November 2017 – 18 January 2018**

Over the period that this report referred to Banbury Town Council had received 15 (compared to 15 received over the similar period in 2016/17) queries, comments and complaints from members of the public.

**Park Ranger Service**

The report noted that the vacant Park Ranger post was re-advertised with a good number of applications received. Interviews were held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January with an offer made to one candidate that is subject to suitable references and a satisfactory medical health questionnaire. There was a quiet period over Christmas and the New Year, after the winter snows of mid-December. There was a delay with the filling of the grit bins around the town due to the possibility of OCC filling them but this was taken on by the Park Rangers and 12 tonnes of grit was distributed.

**Wild Banbury**

Judith Verdon identified that the electrofishing draft results had been received and an improved environment along the river in Spiceball Park had been created through her work. Judith also offered Councillors a guided walk around Spiceball Park in the spring.

**St Mary's Church – Boundary Wall Repairs**

A final start date was agreed for the 29<sup>th</sup> of January and work was expected to last for four weeks.

**Banbury Power Limited**

This proposal was progressing with draft Heads of Terms passed to Banbury Town Council's Solicitors. The Power Company had initially agreed to the terms that the Land Agent acting on behalf of Banbury Town Council had put to them.

**Southam Road Cemetery Depot Offices and Garages**

Following the identification of Asbestos in December, contractors were requested to quote for its removal prior to the occupation of the building by the Park Ranger Service. Following the appointment of a contractor, work was to commence on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January for a period of two weeks.

**Banbury Football Partnership**

Following the efforts of the Oxfordshire Football Association it was agreed that a partnership would be formed and they were looking to get the Town Council on board to help solve some of the identified issues.

A list of proposals was drawn up by the clubs and their main concern being the provision of training on grass areas in the parks around Banbury.

The following requests were made:

- To allow training on grass areas the equivalent size of a senior football pitch for 2 junior sized pitches.
- To avoid wear and tear the clubs would like to rotate around a number of sites if possible.
- The Partnership stated that it was not looking for changing room access or areas to be marked out.
- To allow the clubs to install steel containers on some sites in which they can store football training equipment and demountable goals.
- To seek the Town Council to supply demountable goals in order to allow the rotation of pitches to reduce wear and tear on junior pitches.
- To seek funding for the purchase of demountable flood lighting that can be erected on training sites over the winter period.
- To seek improvements on areas such as Ironstones Park to provide flat training areas.
- To seek approval from the Town Council for the Partnership to allocate pitches around the town for the various clubs.

The Committee were informed that the partnership was not looking to use Easington Recreation Ground. It was suggested by a member of the Committee that the field at North Oxfordshire Academy be considered going forward.

#### **Land Adoptions**

The local searches had come back regarding the adoption of the Cattle Market estate open spaces. These had indicated that there may be some utility services under sites. These did not appear to be under play areas and Officers were seeking approval for taking on the land and areas without further information on services. It had been made clear by the Planning Authority that whilst they always sought to avoid having services run beneath open space areas it was not always possible. The town council could not however pick and choose which part of the development it wished to adopt but rather had to take on the whole of the infrastructure (sports pitches, changing rooms, balancing pond, play areas and small seating areas) as a full package.

#### **IT WAS RESOLVED:**

- (1) to receive and note the Parks and Open Spaces report, noting the condition of the parks, recreation grounds and open spaces in Banbury, the various projects underway and the work of the Park Ranger Service.
- (2) to note the update from BBOWT regarding their "Wild Banbury" project works and approve a site visit and guided tour for members in the spring.
- (3) to note the update regarding the Banbury Power Limited request to drill across Spiceball Park.
- (4) to note the works at St Mary's Church yard and Southam Road Cemetery depot offices and garages.
- (5) to note the proposals by Banbury Football Partnership and seek a meeting with them to discuss their suggestion and report back to Members.

- (6) to formally approve the adoption of the open spaces on the Cattle Market estate from Cherwell DC, notwithstanding the potential presence of services under some of the sites.

**GS.35.17 Confidential Business Exclusion**

It was proposed by the Chairman and **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 item 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

The meeting ended at 7:55pm

**SUMMARY of items discussed during confidential session**

**GS.36.17 Grounds Maintenance Contract**

The current Grounds Maintenance Contract was awarded to the Landscape Group in 2015. At the time of tendering in 2014 certain legislation to improve the conditions of employment such as the minimum wage, auto-enrolment in pension schemes and other circumstances (i.e fuel price increases) which were not identifiable at the time of tender. In October 2016 The Landscape Group was taken over by Id Verde Ltd.

There had been ongoing issues with the contractor and throughout the year the work had been monitored. Id Verde had now identified a funding deficit and had asked Banbury Town Council to assist them in covering this shortfall. Members were receptive to the idea of assisting where appropriate, so long as the costs remained within the overall financial envelope for the contract. A number of potential options were outlined in the report which would require further discussion with the contractor, most notably removal of the bonus mechanism by mutual agreement, including dispensing with the annual customer satisfaction survey, and reallocation of any savings to, amongst other things, fund some of the areas of increased cost.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to

(1) Dispense with the annual customer satisfaction survey and the professional audit elements of the bonus incentive scheme, with immediate effect, subject to an exchange of letters with the contractor setting out how any savings might be reinvested or otherwise utilised; and

(2) Authorise the Recreation and Amenities Manager to explore the other options in the report with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor and report back at the next General Services Committee.