# GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 29 January 2019 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Clarke (Chairman)

Councillors: Banfield, Beverly, Cherry, Colegrave, Dhesi, Harrison, Ilott, Kilsby.

Alternate Members: Councillor Mallon (for Councillor Ilott) and Councillor Ross (for Councillor Richards).

Also in attendance: Councillor Beere.

Officers: Mark Recchia (Town Clerk)

Mark Hassall (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO)

Mike Hall (Recreation & Amenities Manager)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Ilott, Mepham, Richards.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

1. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 December 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1. **Income & Expenditure Report**

The Committee considered a report prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO comparing year-to-date income and expenditure with the projected annual budget for the financial year.

Officers responded to a range of questions from Members relating to various budget codes. Members’ attention was drawn to the fact that overall the Committee’s expenditure was within forecast.

General Service’s savings were principally due to timing. The primary items of note were:

* Timing of disabled ramp access installation and tree works at Southam Rd cemetery, hedgerow works at Hardwick Hill cemetery and headstone concrete beam installation
* Timing of GM costs in Parks & Open Spaces accounts for December were offset by additional spending on bollards and bench installations at Spiceball Park.
* Timing of works to Bridge St and Oxford Rd planters £15k and £14k associated with Play area repairs undertaken in the final quarter associated with the ROSPA inspection recently undertaken.
* Timing of tree works ahead of the winter works programme contributed £29k of underspends and park noticeboards £5k.
* Timing of Park Ranger relocation to Southam Road depot £15k.
* Capital costs include a contribution to earmarked reserves for the extension of cemetery land, Spiceball skate ramp replacement, retention associated with the Easington recreation refurbishment, and funds to clear the drainage ditch at Spital Farm allotments. Release of reserves associated with the creation of Spital Farm Football pitch awaited project implementation and related to underspends in Park Refurbishment (4554). Reserves for Southam Rd compound building works, Ranger replacement vehicle and Town Hall external works awaited release at year end.

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

1. **Parks and Open Spaces Monitoring 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.

**Comments & Complaints**

Over the period the report referred to 20 complaints were received (compared to 15 received over the same period in 2018). An explanation of the comments and complaints was provided.

**Park Ranger Service**

The Park Rangers team had been undertaking snow warden training and repairs to play equipment following the results of the annual independent inspection of all sites. In the build-up for winter maintenance the Rangers had also been completing the filling of grit bins that were the responsibility of the Town Council and ensuring all the necessary equipment was ready for use.

Following the purchase and refurbishment of the new depot at Southam Road Cemetery, the Rangers had also been moving in to their new premises, along with the GM contractor’s staff. Now that this had been done a site visit could be arranged for any Members who wished to see the new facility.

**Spiceball Park Wheeled Sports Area**

Contractors had confirmed that all existing equipment would be removed by early February. The completion date for installing the new ramps was still envisaged to be mid-March in time for spring and summer usage.

**Ironstones Park Youth Shelter**

At the September 2018 meeting (Minute GS.13/18 refers) it had been resolved that a replacement teen shelter at Ironstone Park be installed, subject to consultation with users on the final design. The Rangers had been seeking views of users at the Park on the style and location for a new youth shelter but there had been minimal use of the area so it had been hard to gauge opinions. However, Thames Valley Police had also been in correspondence with the Town Council regarding the shelter and had favoured the Autopa Wimbledon Shelter.

When asked about a preferred location, user responses were split with 50% stating they wanted the unit kept where it was and the remaining 50% agreeing with the Town Council’s (and TVP) choice for the unit to be moved to a more visible location. Whilst purchase of the new shelter could be achieved within existing budget estimates, there was however no provision for installation of a new base in the now favoured location within the revenue estimates. As such, this would need to be the subject of a funding request to Resources Committee.

**People’s Park**

Architects were developing the proposal for the café to be located in the preferred location around and including the old boathouse. They would be submitting a Pre-Planning Application in early February ready for a special meeting of the Committee on 5 March 2019 to get Member approval for the designs prior to submitting the Planning Application.

The contractors who have been appointed to undertake the rolling programme of footpath repairs were expected to start work early in the new financial year in time for completion before the People’s Park Centenary Celebration event on the 14 July 2019. As part of the works being undertaken to the footpaths £50,000 had been allocated with emphasis this year being to resurface the path that ran parallel to The Leys down to Warwick Road.

Members were reminded that new noticeboards would also be installed to replace the old ones in the park that were damaged and in a poor state of repair.

Officers were also seeking to get brown tourist street signage installed on the entrances to the park on Horse Fair, Warwick Road, Bath Road and West Bar Street.

**Community Garden**

As part of the centenary improvements to People’s Park and the relocation of the Rangers base to Southam Road Cemetery Depot, the future use of the Community Gardens needed to be considered and agreed by Members.

The proposal being put forward for the site was to let part of the existing buildings (the Long Shed) to the Banbury Shed scheme; demolish the office and garage area and remove the polythene tunnel with these 2 items being replaced with a facility that will include a covered working/ demonstration area, a mess room and storage facilities for grounds maintenance operatives working in the park and public toilets for use by the general public on a daily basis and whenever events are held in the park or gardens.

The garden area could be re-landscaped to enable continued use by the public, volunteers and other bodies/ organisations/ schools who occasionally attend the site for workshops, demonstrations and training.

The toilet facility proposal is to provide multiple toilets (available only for events in the park) and some accessible on a daily basis for park users (including future in-house staff) with disabled and changing facilities.

This facility will then be closed behind the gates when staff are not on site whether it is the weekend or weekdays.

The toilets usage should complement the new café and have been requested, as improvements for the park, by the general public in surveys undertaken in 2007 and regularly in the grounds maintenance surveys undertaken between 2015 and 2017.

**Land Adoptions**

Longford Park – CDC were still looking to transfer playing fields to BTC in 2019. Soft Landscaping around the pavilion was to be covered by a defects period managed by CDC as this work had not been undertaken yet and would have a 12 month maintenance period. CDC had also proposed a 6m high ball stop fence around perimeter, which posed a maintenance issue.

Cattle Market sites – a proposal to transfer areas in January had not occurred due to difficulty in identifying remaining Commuted Sums but it was hoped to have this in place in early February for transfer later in the month. The changing rooms within the ground floor of the BYHP building were also still not resolved.

Hanwell View Estate – the Council had received a request to adopt up to 5 play areas planned for the estate, 2 of which were completed at Broughton Road and Wardington Road end of the site. The Commuted Sums for these sites have not been identified yet and snagging work would be required if adoption was agreed by Councillors.

Play Areas - Hart Close snagging work had been completed and the site was awaiting transfer from Persimmon Homes, but again Commuted Sums had not been identified. Ashmead Road & Usher Drive Play Areas were with CDC Legal department awaiting completing of transfer documentation.

Other Land – parcels of land at Richman Gardens, Arbury Close, Ayrshire Drive & The Camellias had now been transferred to BTC from developers. Some remaining CDC Land to be transferred was also still with CDC Legal department, and Sanctuary land at Warwick Road Gardens no confirmation of transfer had been received.

**IT WAS RESOLVED** to:

1. note 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.
2. note the update regarding the wheeled sports area in Spiceball Park.
3. note the intention to replace the teen/youth shelter at Ironstones Park with a Autopa Wimbledon Shelter, on a new concrete base in a different location within the park, and request Resources Committee to consider the provision of funding;
4. note the progress report on works within People’s Park.
5. agree to the proposals for the Community Garden, and request Resources Committee to consider the provision of funding; and
6. note the progress of land adoptions.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm