

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 26 March 2019 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Clarke (Chairman)
Councillors: Dhesi, Beverly, Harrison, Ilott, Kilsby, Richards

Alternate Members: Councillor Milne-Home for Councillor Mepham, Councillor Beere for Councillor Banfield and Councillor Ross for Councillor Cherry

Officers: Mark Recchia (Town Clerk)
Mark Hassall (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO)
Mike Hall (Recreation & Amenities Manager)
Glenn Speakman (Planning & Administration Officer)

GS.38/18 Apologies for Absence
Councillors Banfield, Cherry and Mepham.

GS.39/18 Declarations of Interest
Councillor Kilsby declared a personal interest in the Banbury shed project, as a member of the project and also as an employee of RVS who supported the project.

GS.40/18 Minutes of the Last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meetings held on the 29 January and 5 March 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.41/18 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 Services underspends were mainly caused by expected YTD underspends of timing of grounds maintenance charges and timing of capital works.

The primary items of note were:

- Timing of disabled ramp access installation and tree works at Southam Rd cemetery and grave digging costs at Hardwick Hill cemetery.
- Timing of MUGA power costs from OCC (£6k) and water charges under dispute (£6k), GM costs in Parks & Open Spaces accounts (£84k) for March offset by additional spend on bollards and bench installation at Spiceball Park.
- Timing of works to Bridge St and Oxford Rd planters (£15k).
- Timing of tree works ahead of the winter works programme contributed (£22k) of underspends and park noticeboards (£5k).

- Capital costs (£310k) included a contribution to earmarked reserves for the extension of cemetery land, Spiceball skate ramp replacement 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 also related to underspends in Park Refurbishment (4554) such as the funds received from license to cross Spiceball Park. Reserves for Southam Rd compound building works, Park Ranger replacement vehicle and Town Hall external works awaited release at year end.

The Deputy Town Clerk & RFO responded to various questions from Members.

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

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that the Resources Committee authorise:

(1) the creation of the following Earmarked reserves:

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| • Spital Farm Ditch works | £25k |
| • Spiceball Utility access and development | £120k |
| • Park works at Bridge St (£8k) & Oxford Rd (£4k) | £12k |

(2) the release of the following Earmarked reserves

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|-------------------------------------|-------|
| • Southam Rd Compound refurbishment | £37k |
| • Vehicle replacement | £20k |
| • Town Hall External works | £110k |
| • PDP Fire Damage replacement | £18k |
| • Spiceball benches & litter bins | £8k |
| • Wall repairs – St Marys | £17k |

GS.42/18 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 there were 32 (compared to 31 received over the similar period in 2018-2019) queries, comments and complaints from members of the public. An explanation of the comments and complaints was provided.

Park Ranger Service

The Rangers had undertaken further snow warden training and conducted repairs on play equipment following the results of the annual external supplied inspection of all sites.

The new Ranger had been and was undertaking additional training to enable him to drive the goods vehicle, undertake playground inspections and other duties expected of him. The Rangers had now completed their move to Southam Road Depot. Despite a mild winter with minimal snow and ice, the grit bins around the town needed filling which took longer than expected due to staff availability on the winter hour's schedule. This is now complete with all bins located within the town boundary having been filled. Snow wardens have been topped up with grit and equipment where necessary.

Spiceball Park Wheeled Sports Area

Contractors had confirmed that completion of the site was scheduled for April around Easter. The work was progressing and generating a lot of interest and enthusiasm within user groups and potential users (there were reports that interested enthusiasts from as far away as Manchester were looking to coming down once the site was opened). It was intended that an official opening would be undertaken however this was likely to be after the local government elections in early May.

People's Park, Community Garden & St Mary's Church yard

Banbury Town Council was approached by a coffee vendor to provide an outlet in the park. The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, had approved the application and it was hoped that the vendor would be operating in the park from the area close to where the new café was to be operated from on the front lawn, from Easter. The vendor was aware of the plans to open a café and the mobile use would be time limited accordingly. The vendor would also require a permit from Cherwell District Council.

The Banbury Shed organisation were hoping to occupy the Community Garden Long Shed as previously agreed. Outstanding issues included the Licence to Occupy and the fee to be charged. The organisers had agreed to pay for utilities but were hoping that the Town Council would agree a peppercorn rent. Members were generally agreeable to this request. Banbury Shed had expressed concern over access to the building when the development work started on site.

New tourism signage identifying access points to People's Park had been sought from Oxfordshire CC, the viability of this would be dependent upon the quote received from them.

Work at St Mary's Church had been delayed whilst Planning Approval was sought. The Town Council has been informed that a Faculty Application had to be submitted which would take time. All Faculty Applications were being delayed until a new vicar was installed for the Church. The Planning Application for tree works had been approved and officers were liaising with the Church regarding the work and whether they would apply for the Faculty to enable the work to be undertaken in the autumn.

Land Adoptions

The transfer of open spaces currently managed by Cherwell DC to BTC was progressing.

The Cattle Market football pitch transfer from CDC to BTC had been completed. Cherwell DC had agreed to maintain the Cattle Market estate until the end of March, Banbury TC would maintain these areas from the 1st April. This would allow access onto the Banbury TC land beyond the playing field to be built and also complete the ditch works on Spital Farm allotment site. The funding for the works originated from the sale of part of the allotment land. The transfer did not include the changing rooms in the Community Building which were still awaiting the splitting of facilities. As a result of this the Town Council would not be able to let the pitch for football use at this time.

In addition to the Cattle Market play areas, Banbury TC had been approached by Cherwell DC to adopt the play area on Marshall Road that they adopted in 2007. There was some funding available but the amount was not known at this time. Members were asked to agree in principle to this.

Play areas at Ashmead Road and Usher Drive had Commuted Sums attached to them of £26,714 for Ashmead but currently the one for Usher was unknown. These would be transferred at some time this year.

Cherwell DC were also intending to transfer imminently land at Whimbrel Way (St Louis Meadow Park and adjacent open space); land on the bridle path to Grange Road allotments; Hardwick Park open space and Warwick Road Gardens currently in their ownership.

Cherwell DC were investigating the transfer of the play area at Hart Close from Persimmon Homes direct to Banbury TC, the Commuted Sum for this site was £27,638.

There were outstanding transfers on the Hanwell Fields estate including the balancing pond behind Lord Grandison Way and Lord Fielding Close play area. The transfers of Orchard Fields and Hanwell Fields Parks were delayed due to land ownership issues.

There was land included in the Linear Way open space that was registered to David Wilson Homes Ltd (DWH). Solicitors working for the company had informed solicitors acting for Banbury Town Council that the land would be transferred but no movement had occurred. The company had been informed that the Town Council may stop maintaining the areas concerned if this was not completed.

Cherwell DC have confirmed that on the Hanwell View estate that there will be 4 play areas to transfer across to Banbury TC. RoSPA reports are to be forwarded to Banbury TC along with details of the Commuted Sums when they become available. Again Cherwell DC are seeking an agreement in principle for Banbury TC to adopt these upon completion and the transfer plus receipt of satisfactory Commuted Sums.

Oxford Road Garden and Bridge Street Park

A specification had been sent out to various local and national contractors seeking quotes for landscaping improvement works at Oxford Road Gardens. However due to the site being difficult to access the scheme was delayed and members were asked to earmark funds for the site. The current budget for the landscaping works was £4,000. The installation of an interpretation board for the medieval bridge in Bridge Street Park was also delayed due to the time required for artwork to be produced and liaison with outside bodies. The budget was £8,000 and within the same revenue budget line as the above item.

Football Pitch Charges

Concerns had been raised by the local football league and from the Oxfordshire FA regarding the increased pitch hire fees for the coming season. In light of these concerns members were asked to reconsider the removal of discounts for teams sharing pitches. Officers responded to the concerns by stating that the increase in fees would enable better maintenance of the pitches along with less wear and tear. However, on balance Members felt that the increase should be phased in over two seasons, thereby reinstating half of the discount in the coming year, and that the position should be reviewed thereafter.

BBOWT

The group had removed the cherry laurel from Spiceball Park. This was done as it was not the right plant for the area and would be replaced by a native planting of trees and bulbs.

Southam Road Cemetery Depot

This site was complete and a new security system had been installed to cover the perimeter of the site. The security system consisted of five security cameras and speakers to enable monitoring officers to warn potential burglars that they had been seen and Police would be notified.

Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning Contracts

The cleaning of changing rooms and toilets was currently part of the GM contract. As part of the preparations for re-tendering, the cleaning of existing changing/toilet and new additions were offered to Cherwell DC in addition to the Cleansing Service for litter picking and bin emptying. They had declined this offer, which left an unresolved issue with regards to the delivery of this service. The grounds maintenance contractor had not been able to meet the cleaning specification as a result of holidays, illness etc. The result had been grounds maintenance operatives taken off the maintenance of grounds to undertake cleaning.

Members were asked to approve the production and letting of a specific contract for cleaning operations. Officers recommended letting a contract initially for 1 year with the opportunity to roll over if successful. New changing rooms were expected to be transferred imminently to Banbury TC at Longford Park and the Cattle Market that will be covered by Commuted Sums. There would also be new facilities (toilets/mess room) built at the Community Garden that would require cleaning along with Southam Road Cemetery Depot.

Work was progressing to bring elements of the grounds maintenance work in-house and to let 2 separate grounds maintenance contracts, one for sports pitches and another for general open spaces. To help with this process Pengelly Consulting had been appointed with a first meeting held on 20 March. Following this meeting a draft tendering programme had been drawn up and it had been recommended that the Council should follow a competitive tender with negotiation as its procurement route.

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 works in People's Park and proposal to charge a peppercorn rent to Banbury Shed Project and allow the coffee vendor to trade in the park until the new café opens.
- (4) Note the update on land adoptions and agree the adoptions of the various open spaces and play areas referred to in the report on the estates proposed by Cherwell DC (including Whimbrel Way (St Louis Meadow Park and adjacent open space), on the bridle path to Grange Road allotments, Hardwick Park open space and Warwick Road Gardens) subject to them

meeting the standards required and the receipt/ transfer of appropriate Commuted Sums.

- (5) Note the request to Resources Committee to earmark funding for works as proposed for Oxford Road, Bridge Street Park and Spital Farm allotment ditch.
- (6) Respond to the concerns raised by the local football league and Oxfordshire FA about increased pitch fees by re-instating 50% of the discount for pitch sharing, and reviewing this again in light of wear and tear at the end of the season before deciding whether to apply a further discount reduction in the following season.
- (7) Note the update on work undertaken by BBOWT.
- (8) Note the update for Southam Road Cemetery Depot;
- (9) Approve a separate contract to cover the cleaning maintenance of toilets, changing rooms etc and note the Grounds Maintenance Contracts developments, including the draft tendering timetable and the intention to follow a Competitive Tender with Negotiation procurement route.

GS.43/18 Carillon Adoption

The item was withdrawn and would be considered at the Resources Committee.

GS.44/18 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.

SUMMARY of items discussed during confidential session

GS.45/18 Banbury Borough Bowling Club

Members were given an update on the ongoing dispute between BTC and Banbury Bowl's club following a water leak at the site.

RESOLVED that mediation or arbitration be suggested to the Club as a means of Alternative Dispute Resolution, but that if this approach is not agreed then the action proposed in the report be taken.

GS.46/18 People's Park Refurbishments

The Committee received an update on the evolving refurbishment proposals in People's Park which were planned as part of the People's Park 100 celebrations, subject to funding being available. Members were reminded that as part of recent surveys for the Grounds Maintenance Contract questionnaires were sent out to a random sample of 10% of residents in Banbury, using the electoral register from 2015 – 2017. This showed a majority of respondents wanted to see a café and toilets in the park as the most important facilities the park needed.

Members had already approved the development of the café to be built in the area that had more recently been used as a boathouse, with the former Edwardian toilet building being extended to accommodate this. A range of other park improvements were planned, most notably the clearance of the former Park Ranger base and Polytunnels within the Community Garden and their replacement with a purpose built toilet facility, mess room for GM operatives working in the park and a covered demonstration area. The latter could be used for school workshops but also as a stage area within the setting of landscaped gardens, for musical or other performances in the park.

Officers had sought quotes for site clearance and a separate modular toilet facility to be installed on the site of the former Rangers office and were investigating various recommendations. A proposal for a pre-fabricated structure to be installed in the Community Garden that would encompass an undercover demonstration area, 6 toilets (including disabled and baby changing facilities) and a room for onsite operatives/ volunteers had been put together. A design option for the new build on the site was discussed and Members were requested to approve this design proposal so that the Planning Application could be submitted to CDC to enable the project to move forward.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the proposals being put forward for People's Park, including the design proposals for a new Community Garden building and associated landscaping (as outlined in the report) be approved in principle; and
- (2) the Resources Committee be asked to consider the financial implications as set out in the report.

GS.47/18 Spital Farm/Cattlemarket Land

The Committee considered the current position and options for use of land at Spital Farm and Cattle Market Playing Fields. The sports pitch land on the Cattle Market estate had recently been transferred to the Town Council.

Members were reminded that they had previously agreed (Minute GS.8/18) to be guided by the recommendations of the Cherwell Playing Pitch Strategy in deciding the best sports use of the land, which was likely to support a development of a sports hub, incorporating both tennis and football if at all possible.

RESOLVED that consideration will be given to any proposal to develop a tennis centre in Banbury if deemed appropriate by the LTA, including to making land at either Spital Farm/Cattle Market or Hanwell Fields Recreation Ground available as part of a sports hub package.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm