

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 03 September 2019 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Clarke (Chairman)
Councillors: Beverly, Cherry, Colegrave, Harrison, Illott, Kilsby, Richards.

Alternate Members: Councillors Beere and Ross.

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

GS.12/19 Apologies for Absence
Councillors Banfield and Dhesi.

GS.13/19 Declarations of Interest
Councillor Kilsby declared a personal interest in Banbury Shed, as an employee of RVS, but remained in the meeting during the discussion and voting thereon.

GS.14/19 Minutes of the Last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 4 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.15/19 Income & Expenditure Report

The Committee considered a report prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO outlining year-to-date income and expenditure with the projected annual budget to 22 August 2019. Members were advised that overall the Committees were within forecast. Underspends versus the Phased Annual Budget were £61k, made up of General Services overspends of £6k and Resources underspends of £67k.

Principal items of note for General Services Committee were:

- Potential claim for water costs associated with Bowls Club building Peoples Park £6k;
- GM Contract costs had been conservatively fully accrued subject to ongoing discussions regarding the extent of works completed;
- Arboriculture underspends (£19k) were seasonal timing related.
- Horton View radiator replacement programme and Horton View car park repair £5k, offset by water meter reading correction credit.
- Professional fees associated with capital works at People's Park Café (£32k), and Community Garden toilets (£13k), installation costs of footpath refurbishment in People's Park (£47k), capital costs incurred on Spiceball skate ramps in 2019 (£20k).

Members asked a number of questions on the Income and Expenditure report, to which the Deputy Town Clerk & RFO responded. It was noted in particular that

provision of around £20K would need to be made during the revised estimate process to meet the Council's share of highway verge grass maintenance costs.

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

GS.16/19 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 that this report referred to there had been 109 (compared to 56 received over the similar period in 2018) queries, comments and complaints from members of the public. An explanation of the comments and complaints was provided. Members were advised that the greatest increase in complaints had been with regard to grass cuttings this year on all sites. Officers had been aware of this and had expressed their displeasure that this was the case to the GM contractor id Verde Ltd (IDV). An update of the issues including complaints about the cemeteries, toilets, hedges and pitches had been discussed in the GM Contract.

There had been an increased number of complaints regarding Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Moorfields Park. As a result of these, officers met with TVP and CDC officers on site to discuss possible actions to prevent this. Members were also aware of the public's unwillingness at times to report ASB.

The Town Council had received a number of queries over the provision of dog bins on the Hanwell View estate off Southam Road. Officers had been in touch with the developers Bellway Homes Ltd who had indicated that these would be provided by them in due course.

Park Ranger Service

The Ranger team was now up to full strength. The team had been undertaking playground repairs and installing signage around the 72 play areas.

The team had been extremely busy over the last few months with various events being held. The team had been working with volunteers and school children on a number of different projects including sunflower workshops, National Citizens Scheme and the volunteers in the Community Garden.

With the long days the Rangers had been patrolling on evenings up to 9.00pm starting with their summer hours at 1.00pm. The Rangers had also been patrolling sites following comments by members of the public of drug dealing and anti-social behaviour.

People's Park and Community Garden

Capital works for the Café and Toilet Block were both progressing through planning, it was mentioned that planning permission for the Café was expected by the 6th September.

The requested brown information signs had been erected identifying the location of the park. In addition to this 4 new notice boards had been installed. Further works were proposed for later in September with metal edging to be installed around the seasonal beds in the Rose Garden. To facilitate this the summer bedding plants would be removed earlier than normal with the plant giveaway

date being brought forward to allow local residents to take some of the plants rather than turning them into compost. Due to the damage to the "Ribbon Tree" a replacement would be planted over the winter period.

A group of young students undertook a week's NCS work in the Community Garden, they rubbed down and painted a number of benches as well as completing landscape work in preparation for the re-development of parts of the site.

The Banbury Shed organisation were working from the Community Garden Long Shed, they had occupied the site from the end of July.

BBOWT & Wild Banbury Project

Following Judith Verdon going on maternity leave Tara Higgs had been appointed as cover to lead the Wild Banbury project in her absence. BBOWT had asked if the Council could assist in providing an office base for her. There was desk space available in the Town Hall.

The Bug Hotel mentioned in Tara's report had been installed in the Community Garden in People's Park.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded project, finished at the end of June, the end of project report was submitted to HLF and is available if requested from officers.

Hardwick Hill Cemetery Extension

The site has been let to a local farmer to graze the land until the winter but this may be extended if requested as long as the grazing did not interfere with the site development. The delay in putting animals onto the site was due to the water supply being turned off and the fact that the location of the stop tap to turn it on was unknown.

Following the submission of the Planning Application to Cherwell DC this had been granted subject to a number of conditions being met, which Banbury TC were working through.

Howard Road Play Area Refurbishment Contract

The preferred choice based on the drawings and information submitted was the design submitted by Kompan Ltd. The Chairman's Concurrence was sought and obtained to enable the programme to start for this redevelopment, as the budget provision was already approved. A Member's question on whether the site had a guarantee were answered. There were further questions on the lighting of the area. It was agreed that there would be further contact with the neighbouring school.

Kompan have a six week lead in period and hope to be on site during week commencing 23rd September with a pre-start meeting arranged for the 2nd September 2019.

Banbury Tennis Project

Cherwell DC was seeking quotes from companies to undertake a feasibility study to investigate the 3 sites that have been suggested, North Oxfordshire Academy and 2 sites owned by Banbury TC at Spital Farm and Hanwell Fields. The work should be completed at the end of October/early November as it is understood that the LTA wish to make a decision by the end of December for construction to start and be completed in 2020, if a site is approved. Member's agreed on the success of indoor tennis facilities and were reminded that BTC's involvement was just ownership of Spital Farm and Hanwell Fields.

Land Adoptions

Cherwell DC Sites

There was no time line for the transfer of the 3 play areas on Hanwell Fields estate.

Cattle Market Adoptions

These areas were included in the maintenance schedules with a football pitch marked out on the playing field along with mini goals. In addition the vegetation and ditch clearance had been undertaken including that from the allotment site, which has been outstanding for some time.

The transfer of the changing rooms had been delayed however agreement had been reached with BYHP and an interim Licence to Occupy them for the football season was being progressed. It was hoped that a Lease will be drawn up by CDC, to confirm the long term use of these facilities. Members were advised that following from a meeting with CDC the site should be ready for the beginning of the football season. Members did vocalise their concerns over delays in this site coming on stream.

Longford Park Estate

No further developments had taken place regarding the transfer of facilities since this was last reported.

Other Sites

The land transfer included within the Linear Way Open Space, by David Wilson Homes Ltd (DWH) had slowed due to a hole appearing on the land. DWH were talking to officers at CDC to identify the sudden collapse and ensure that the problem will not arise in the future when the transfer takes place.

On the Hanwell View estate off Southam Road, officers had been told by the developers that they were seeking the transfer of the play areas and open spaces to the local authority in early August however having spoken to CDC officers this would not happen due to significant amounts of snagging works required. This was identified by the developers to be the precursor to the dog and litter bins being installed.

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 updates as reported; and
- (3) To approve the request for BBOWT's project officer to use a hot desk in the Town Hall.

GS.17/19 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.18/19 Grounds Maintenance Contracts

The report provided the Committee with an update on the issues with the cleaning contract for the toilets and the changing rooms. It informed members regarding the revisions to the programme timetable for the Sports and Grounds Maintenance Contracts. As well as this, it updated members on the tendering of the new contracts following receipt of Expressions of interest.

The report included information on current GM contract issues, the cleaning contract, the tendering timetable, invitations to tender and OJEU notification procedures.

It was noted that the guiding principle of this re-tendering exercise was that the externalised contracts were to be retained within the current budget envelope. However, it was recognised with the Cleaning Contract works that if the service was brought in-house additional funding would be needed.

IT WAS RESOLVED to:

- (1) To note the report.
- (2) To agree the proposals for the Cleaning Contract works to be offered to the potential Sport Ground tenderers.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm