

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 28 January 2020 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Clarke (Chairman)
Councillors: Banfield, Beverly, Cherry, Colegrave, Harrison, Ilott, Kilsby and Mepham.

Alternate Members: Councillor Hussain (for Councillor Richards) and Councillor Ross (for Councillor Dhesi).

Officers: Mark Recchia (Town Clerk)
Mike Hall (Recreation & Amenities Manager)

GS.36/19 Apologies for Absence
Councillors Dhesi and Richards.

GS.37/19 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.38/19 Minutes of the Last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.39/19 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 Committee variances (excluding £212k costs related to future months GM service provision and salaries) were principally:

- Timing of litter cleansing contract payment £127k
- Timing of creation of new soil compound Hardwick Hill Cemetery (£20k) and undertaking tree works at Southam Rd Cemetery (£12k)
- Utility charges remained in dispute during changes in suppliers and OCC lighting charges for MUGAs were awaited (£15k). GM and Peoples Park capital work consultancy costs by year end (£14k). Tree works were planned across the estate (£41k) including at St Mary's churchyard, including replacements where appropriate.
- Park Rangers costs projected the purchase of equipment, including for low carbon weed management (£8k).
- Professional fees associated with Hardwick Hill Cemetery extension planning conditions, and purchase of GM contract machinery for new in-house operation (£112k).
- Capital cost of Howard Road play area (£106k) awaiting sign-off.

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

GS.40/19 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. The report covered the following areas:

Queries, Comments and Complaints (QCC) 30 November - 15 January 2020

Over the period that this report referred to 15 (compared to 20 received over the similar period in 2018 - 2019) queries, comments and complaints had been received from members of the public. Increases had been identified on cleaning of changing rooms for football pitches, bowling green maintenance, shrubs/hedges and dog bin emptying.

Park Ranger Service

The Park Rangers had been undertaking routine duties such as play area inspections and also doing more snow warden training and preparing for the expansion of the "Green Team" operation to bring in-house part of the grounds maintenance operation. The team had also been working through the list of issues raised through the external annual inspection of the play grounds in Town Council ownership. As the Rangers had been on their winter hours so had been undertaking a lot of auditing work, including identifying all benches and litter bins in BTC control.

Community Garden Project

The demolition of the current office building and groundworks clearance was due to start week commencing the 24th February 2020. This work was expected to take approximately up to 7 days and all neighbouring parties including Banbury Shed had been informed. Tenders for the construction of the new facility were received on the 20th January 2020 and a verbal update was given in the confidential session.

BBOWT/ Wild Banbury Project

Bad weather had required modification of the work programme with both Hanwell Brook Wetland and Spiceball Park both ending up under water following the very heavy rain that has fallen. Hanwell Brook Wetland area still remained extremely wet but Spiceball Park had recovered from its flooding although some areas remained boggy.

Banbury Tennis Project

Cherwell DC were expecting a final report on the project viability, but had yet to confirm details on the recommendations. This report was expected to be delivered to CDC in February following which it would be made available to the Town Council to discuss the proposals and make a formal decision. The preferred site was on land owned by Banbury Town Council.

New Grounds Maintenance Contract

The general grounds maintenance contract had been offered to and accepted by 4th Corner Landscaping. Unfortunately the contractor who provided the successful tender for the Sport Grounds Contract had declined to accept the work, so this was now being split between the in-house team and 4th Corner. Further investigation had also been undertaken to identify whether there was any outside interest in the cleaning of the toilets and pavilions. A further tendering exercise had been undertaken and a verbal update was given in the confidential session.

New land at Spital Farm

Following an on-site meeting with Thames Water (TW) the company had suggested a Section 138 application be made to divert their sewer as it cannot just be buried due to its importance to the town. The land agent currently working for Banbury Town Council had stated that any expense should be carried by Thames Water as they had inherited a sewer that did not conform to current installation standards. Discussions were ongoing.

Dame Sylvia Crowe

Dame Sylvia Crowe was a very prominent landscape architect who was born in Banbury and was buried in Hardwick Hill Cemetery. Sylvia Crowe was responsible for many landscape schemes in Banbury including a design for St Mary's Church yard and Banbury Borough Council's parks, recreation grounds and housing estates within the town between the mid-1940s and early 1950s. Sylvia Crowe was one of the leading lights in the landscape industry at the time and was involved in many other projects in London and around England. A request had been received to commemorate her achievements and links to the town.

In undertaking the re-landscaping of the churchyard officers were investigating whether some of Sylvia Crowe's ideas could be incorporated into the scheme. With the growth of many of the trees in the church yard it was unlikely that the Council could fully reinstate her scheme but was looking to do what it could within the revised project.

Land Adoptions

Hanwell View Estate

Banbury Town Council had been asked by Cherwell District Council (CDC) to adopt Local Equipped areas of play (LEAP's) that were located on the new estate off Southam Road. These were located on Bourton Road and Wardington Road/Hardwick Hill. CDC would like the adoptions to come direct to Banbury Town Council once the snagging work identified had been completed. Commuted Sums were expected for both sites. CDC had also confirmed that the large open space on which a wooden horse sculpture had been erected would transfer to BTC if agreed by Members. At present the site was not fit for purpose with CDC demanding that the developer reinstates large areas and the main paths across the site.

Play Areas at Marshall Road & Williams Close

CDC had also confirmed that they did wish to transfer these 2 sites and consequently had sent across Annual Inspection Reports, which identified that both sites were at the end of their anticipated life. Commuted Sums were due to be transferred with these 2 sites. Although both sites were at the end of their estimated life spans the adoption of these 2 play areas reinforced that Banbury Town Council was responsible for play provision within the town. The situation with regard to these sites was no different to those sites that BTC had also agreed to accept at Ashmead Road, Usher Drive, Lord Fielding Close and Hart Close on the Hanwell Fields estate.

IT WAS RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the report, including updates on the condition of the parks, recreation grounds and open spaces in Banbury, comments and complaints received, and the work of the Park Ranger Service.

- (2) note the reports on BBOWT, Banbury Tennis Project and Spital Farm.
- (3) agree to support a suitable commemoration of the life and works of Dame Sylvia Crowe in St Mary's Church yard; and
- (4) agree to the transfer of William Close, Marshall Road, Bourton Road and Wardington Road Play Areas to Banbury TC.

GS.41/19 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.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm

SUMMARY of items discussed during confidential session

GS.42/19 Acceptance of Tenders

The Committee considered a report outlining various tenders submitted for the following Council projects:

1. People's Park Toilets & Pavilion Construction Contract

RESOLVED that Tender No 2 as detailed in the report be accepted and that the Town Clerk be authorised to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer.

2. Pavilion and Changing Room Cleaning Contract

RESOLVED that Tender No 2 as detailed in the report be accepted and that the Town Clerk be authorised to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer.

3. Toilet Cleaning Contract

RESOLVED that Tender No 2 as detailed in the report be accepted and that the Town Clerk be authorised to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer.