

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 02 November 2021 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Mallon (Chairman)
Councillors: Colegrave, Dalton, Garrett, Hussain, Kilsby, Phillips, Richards and Strangwood.

Alternate Members: none.

Officers: Mark Recchia (Town Clerk)
Mark Hassall (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO)
Paul Almond (Operations Manager)
Toby Russell (Events Manager)

R.29/21 Apologies for Absence
Councillor Reeves.

R.30/21 Declarations of Interest
The Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Operations Manager all declared pecuniary interests in respect of the Staffing report (Minute R.37/21 refers), and left the meeting during the discussion and voting thereon.

R.31/21 Minutes of the last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 07 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

R.32/21 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. The report showed all expenditure incurred up to 08 October 2021.

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that overall the Committee's expenditure was within forecast. This recognised the timing of completion of capital works and improved grant income. The main causes of variations on the Committee's estimates were as follows:

- ◆ Reduced professional fees and legal support costs.
- ◆ Reduced Central Admin salary costs due to headcount reduction.
- ◆ Town Council Events and Town Hall expenditure continued to remain muted in line with a gradual opening up agenda, and Other services to the Public included timing of invoicing for contributions to CDC for CCTV scheme in 19/20 & 20/21, alongside lower election charges and uptake of small grant applications.
- ◆ Other Costs & Income included COMF grant income which had been received to facilitate measures to enhance safe return to post pandemic activity

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

R.33/21 Revised Estimates for 2021/22 & Draft Estimates for 2022/23
Members were asked to approve the revised estimates for 2021/22 and give initial consideration to the draft estimates for 2022/23. A Summary of the revised estimates was attached to the report together with a full copy of the Estimates.

The estimates included income from fees and charges, which for 2022/23 currently remained unchanged from this year, subject to receipt of guidance from the Grants & Budget Sub Committee.

The estimates for 2022/23 had been set based on a 2% rise in precept and 0.5% in households in the town due to general housing growth. A 2.5% inflation rise in salaries and specific contract costs had also been assumed.

The following comments on the estimates were materially relevant:

GENERAL SERVICES

Cost Centre 103 & 104 Southam & Hardwick Cemetery

Increased salary and cleansing costs offset by reduced GM costs.

Cost Centre 110 Parks and Open Spaces

Increased salary costs relating to making a seasonal role full time. Investment in tree management software £20k. Installation of BBQ units in Spiceball and bike racks associated with healthy routes, funded by grant. Investment across the play estate maintenance, £200k over two years. Cleansing costs associated with expanded public toilet provision. Platinum Jubilee planting schemes.

Cost Centre 114 Park Rangers

Equipment purchase investment replaced with PPE, communication equipment and training.

Cost Centre 120 & 121 Football Pitches & Horton View

Additional ongoing cleaning costs. Repair of bowls green sprinkler system.

Cost Centre 160 Capital costs

Planned delivery of earmarked landscaping projects in St Marys, Peoples Park in 2021/22, ongoing footpath repair programme and Hillview Play area refurbishment (earmark funding) in 2022/23.

RESOURCES

Cost Centre 310 Town Council Events

Following hiatus, planning addition to recommencement of town events with funding of lights projection in the town centre in 2021/22, investment diverted and increased to fund renewed Christmas lights scheme across the town.

Cost Centre 311 & 315 Town Hall & Other Services to the Public

Election costs in 2021/22 and increased ongoing support by Banbury Town Council following the removal of Christmas Lights funding by Cherwell District Council to revive and renew the Christmas Lights scheme across the town (21/22 £98k and 22/23 £53k).

Cost Centre 320 Other Costs and Income

Covid grant funding completed in 2021/22, offset by increased precept income.

Members asked questions on a number of budget code, and in particular relating to:

- Woodgreen Open Air Swimming Pool – and asked officers to bring a more detailed report on subsidy levels from both councils, along with future plans and ambitions; and also to press for the reinstatement of 24 hour defibrillator access on the site; and
- Increased investment in play provision – and sought assurances that accessible play, including the need for a disabled swing, would be incorporated.

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the revised estimates for 2020/21 as now submitted; and to refer the draft estimates for 2020/21 as submitted to the Grants and Budget Sub-Committee for further consideration.

R.34/21 Events Update

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk outlining progress with recruitment of a new Events Manager; and events that had taken place since the last meeting or were planned to take place this year.

Events Manager

Interviews for the role were held on Thursday 23 September. There was a strong field of candidates to choose from and the post was offered to and accepted by Toby Russell. Toby started on Monday 25 October and would be picking up the Designated Premises Supervisor role for the Town Hall venue. In his spare time he was heavily involved in the Scouting movement in Warwickshire and had a good deal of events experience, including St George's Day parades.

September/October Events

This had been a particularly busy period for events in the town, particularly after a very quiet summer. On 4 September Spiceball Park was the venue for a well-attended Emergency Services Day, led by Thames Valley Police. This was followed by a Church Service at St Marys involving Civic Dignitaries from a number of local towns and RAF cadets, to mark Battle of Britain Day on 19 September. On Monday 4 October the town also played host to a Stage Finish of the Women's Cycling Tour and the Michaelmas Fair also made a welcome return to the town between Wednesday 13th and Friday 15th October, having been cancelled last year.

Upcoming Events

Remembrance Sunday – 14 November 2021

Planning was now well underway towards offering a full range of Remembrance Sunday activity. The intention was to hold a parade, leaving from the Town Hall; a Church service at St Mary's Church and a wreath laying ceremony at the War Memorial in People's Park and a small reception for invited guests at the Town Hall afterwards. Some restrictions, both on numbers attending and Covid safe practices, would remain in place. This year was also the Centenary year for the Royal British Legion, including the local branch, and to assist with the Poppy Appeal fundraising once again the Light Projection was to be beamed onto the façade of the Town Hall and the building lit up red.

Xmas Lights and Xmas Projections Switch Ons

A completely new Xmas Lighting Scheme for both the town centre and the shopping centre had been procured this year. The footprint had also been extended. A new bespoke Light Projection had also been made which would be beamed onto the Cornhill Façade of Castle Quay. The latter project had been undertaken jointly with the Banbury BID team. The BID team have led on Switch On arrangements for the Light Projection, and there would be an event taking place to mark the switch on between 4.30pm – 6.30pm in Cornhill on Saturday 20 November. The Town Council would be co-ordinating the switch on of the Town Lights with those of the Castle Quay Shopping Centre on the following weekend (Sunday 28 November). Planning for a small switch on event was to be one of the first tasks for the new Events Manager.

Queen's Platinum Jubilee

An initial meeting had taken place with the Leader, High Steward, Town Clerk, Operations Manager and BID Manager to scope out some potential "green" projects, under the Queen's Green Canopy scheme. Further meetings involving the Town Mayor and Deputy TM would take place and a bid for funding had been included as part of the 6+6 budget setting process.

In response to a Member's question the Town Clerk confirmed that it was intended to convene a further meeting of the Events Working Group now that the Events Manager was in post, to look in detail at next year's programme.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

R.35/21 Confidential Business Exclusion

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 items 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

R.36/21 Acceptance of Tenders

A joint tendering exercise between Banbury Town Council and Castle Quay/Cherwell District Council for a new Christmas Light Scheme for the Towns on-street displays and the Castle Quay Shopping Centre displays had been completed. This followed an extensive joint procurement exercise utilising nationwide and European tendering platforms (Contract Finder and Find a Tender). Following evaluation by a joint panel of both organisations the decision was taken to appoint Blachere Illuminations Ltd. This was to be based upon a 6 year leasing arrangement rather than a capital purchase, with the lights fully renewed in the 4th year of the contract.

RESOLVED that the report on tenders submitted for the Christmas Lighting Schemes be noted and the Town Clerk be authorised to enter into a contract with Blachere Illuminations Ltd.

R.37/21 Staffing Issues

A proposed new staffing structure split across two phases was discussed at the last meeting (Minute R.28/21 refers). Phase One related to the Parks & Cemeteries teams where high staff turnover was being experienced. It was agreed that the necessary consultation and implementation processes were to be commenced as soon as possible, with a view to implementation of the changes, if there were no objections raised by staff, with effect from 1 October 2021.

The staff consultation for the Parks and Cemeteries teams was undertaken during September and the changes had been implemented. All existing staff had signed new contracts of employment. Recruitment was underway to fill the last two vacant positions, the Parks Supervisor and a Parks and Cemeteries Lead Operative.

Phase Two (the proposed changes to the senior management roles and the creation of a new role of Executive Officer to support senior management) was agreed in principle at the September meeting, subject to further investigation, consultation and consideration of a further report at the November meeting. The Business Case for Phase Two was the focus of the current report before Members. The outcome of the proposed changes would be an improvement of efficiency and effectiveness through reducing the Council's annual cost base, whilst also providing career progression for key staff.

Following a lengthy debate, it was

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the report (a copy of which is filed in the Minute Book) be agreed.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm