

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 04 January 2022 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

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

Alternate Members: Councillor Powell (for Councillor Reeves).

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

R.38/21 Apologies for Absence
Councillor Reeves.

R.39/21 Declarations of Interest
None.

R.40/21 Minutes of the last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 02 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

R.41/21 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 03 December 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 reflected in the profiled budget.
- Other services to the Public included timing of Christmas Lighting scheme full completion, and receipt of Woodgreen Outdoor Pool operating costs from CDC, alongside timing of invoicing for contributions to CCTV scheme in 19/20 & 20/21.
- 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.42/21 Draft Estimates for 2022/23
The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Members that a full copy of the draft estimates for 2022/23 had been circulated to Members. The draft estimates had been set on the basis of a 2% rise in precept and a rise of 0.5% in households in the town due to general housing growth. An inflationary 2.5% increase in salaries was also budgeted, as well as pension and specific contract costs.

The following comments on the estimates were 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. 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.

Cost Centre 160 Capital costs
Planned delivery of earmarked landscaping projects in St Marys, Peoples Park in 21/22 completed in 22/23, ongoing footpath repair programme and Hillview Play area refurbishment (earmark funding) in 22/23.

RESOURCES

Cost Centre 310 Town Council Events
Following hiatus, recommencement of town events with funding of lights projection in the town centre in 21/22 diverted and increased to fund renewed Christmas Lights scheme across the town.

Cost Centre 311 & 315 Town Hall & Other Services to the Public
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 (22/23 £53k).

Members were also provided with a copy of the 4 Year Plan (Financial Forecast). This had incorporated the proposed 2022/23 budget as the base case, and projected forward using the current economic environment and Council's agreed plans to date. It was envisaged that this documents would evolve in line with the direction given by the Council in the future. The forecast had been prepared in line with the Councils current reserves policy that aimed to maintain general reserves (i.e. excluding earmarked reserves) at around 50% of net budgeted annual running costs. Housing projections were based upon the forecast provided by Cherwell District Council.

Members asked a number of questions relating to the budget and on funding that would be required for various projects. The Deputy Town Clerk/RFO advised Members and answered questions.

IT WAS RESOLVED to endorse the 2022/23 fees and charges as submitted.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to the Council that:

- (1) the Estimates as recommended by the Grants & Budget Sub Committee on 24 November and the General Services Committee on 14 December 2021, be approved;
- (2) the Consolidated Budget be approved, and that it set the level of the precept for 2022/23 at £2,017,911 (following confirmation of the Council Tax base).
- (3) the Four Year Financial Forecast be approved.

R.43/21 Grants & Budget Sub-Committee

The Chairman thanked the sub-committee for their review of the budget.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and note the minutes of the Grants & Budget Sub-Committee held on the 24 November 2021 and approve the recommendations set out in Minute G&B.4/21.

R.44/21 Events Update

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk outlining progress with Events that had taken place since the last meeting; and outlining recommendations from the Events Working Group meeting held on 7 December 2021.

Remembrance Sunday – 14 November 2021

A successful event took place to mark Remembrance Sunday. Despite continuing problems resulting from the Covid 19 situation all elements of the normal event took place, including 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; along with a small reception for invited guests at the Town Hall afterwards.

Xmas Lights and Xmas Projections

A completely new Xmas Lighting Scheme for both the town centre and the CQ shopping centre was procured this year. Although CDC had withdrawn from the joint funding arrangement last Christmas, they had continued to store and install the old scheme. However, this year the Town Council had assumed full responsibility for the town centre Christmas Lighting provision. A new bespoke Light Projection was also made which was beamed onto the Cornhill Façade of Castle Quay, to compliment the lighting scheme. The latter project was again undertaken jointly with the Banbury BID team.

Switch On Events

The BID team led on Switch On arrangements for the Light Projection, with a very well attended and colourful event taking place on Saturday 20 November. In addition to a lantern parade with Samba Band accompaniment, the Town Mayor also featured in the event, arriving in Cornhill on the back of a Hook Norton Brewery Dray complete with Shire Horse.

The Town Council's Events Manager co-ordinated the switch on of the Town Centre Lights on the following weekend. Although initially billed as a low key, small-scale switch on event, in actuality this became a full afternoon of attractions. Hatwell's Fairgrounds provided a Carousel and other fairground rides for youngsters and a range of festive food vendors and a balloon artist were also on hand. To have pulled such an extensive programme together from scratch within 4 weeks of joining the Town Council was a remarkable achievement, notwithstanding the installation issues with the lighting scheme itself.

Events Working Group meeting

The Working Group met on 7 December. It was recognised at the meeting that the BTC Events programme, as with events generally, had been very badly affected by Covid 19 restrictions both in Summer 2020 and again this year. It was now looking likely that there would be some ongoing Covid 19 restrictions into the New Year. The Working Group recommended that the Council should:

- Focus on fewer, larger events rather than a proliferation of smaller events, as this would be less labour intensive in terms of the number of weekends – so build on the main crowd-puller events of Banbury Show; Food Fair; Canal Day; and Xmas Lights;
- Be aware of extra activity from Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend 4-5 June and consider bringing forward the Banbury Show by one week to be a focus for the Jubilee weekend, with appropriately theming. This could include large screen to show both historic footage and current TV coverage as well as a children's garden party without disruption to the town centre;

- Explore the potential for greater member involvement on the ground, particularly from amongst the Working Group members, whilst bearing in mind that some members already volunteer to work on charity stalls etc within the event arenas;
- Continue to hold full scale “civic/military” events to mark Armed Forces Day and Remembrance Sunday but examine the scope for marking Battle of Britain through a church service and flypast rather than a parade and reception, particularly given the reduced capacity of the Air Cadet’s marching band;
- Consider charging for entry to events where appropriate, most likely evening “music mix” type events. Bicester TC has a successful programme of charged for music events operating from Garth Park;
- Examine the scope to convert the Food Fair into an all weekend event rather than a single day event. This might also allow for the smaller “Taste of Spring” event to be removed from the programme;
- Promote the programme mainly via Social media rather than paid for advertising. Also consider parish newsletter adverts in surrounding parishes.

Whilst generally supportive of the Working Group’s recommendations, the Committee was mindful of the other pressures upon elected members time and felt that their volunteer effort should not be seen as replacing the need for paid staff input on events. It was also stressed that any charging proposed for events would need to be carefully targeted and applied only where appropriate. Finally, it was felt that where changes were proposed to existing events such as Battle of Britain Sunday, these were carried out in consultation with other partners.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the recommendations arising from the Events Working Group meeting be supported, but where changes are proposed to existing events such as Battle of Britain Sunday, these be carried out in consultation with other partners.

R.45/21 Calendar of Meetings for 2022/23

Approval was sought from Members for the 2022/23 Calendar of Meetings.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that he had been asked to ensure that where possible the new Calendar sought to avoid any clashes with meetings of the principal councils. The draft Calendar as submitted had achieved this as far as possible.

Having considered the draft Calendar Members’ felt that where clashes occurred, then the Members’ concerned could make use of the Alternate Member scheme or choose not to serve on those committees. However, it was noted that every effort had been made to avoid clashes for the full Council, where the alternate member scheme was not available.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Calendar of Meetings, as attached at Appendix A to these Minutes.

R.46/21 Internal Audit Report 2021/22

The Council had appointed Auditing Solutions Ltd as its internal auditors. The Internal Auditor’s work was undertaken on 22nd October 2021. The Auditor had completed his review and concluded that, on the basis of the programme of work undertaken, the Council had maintained adequate and effective internal control arrangements during the year. In the areas examined, no major issues or concerns had been identified and it was considered that the Clerk and staff continued to operate generally effective control procedures in each relevant area.

The areas of review included:

- Accounting records and bank reconciliations,
- Corporate Governance,
- Review of Expenditure,

- Assessment and Management of Risk,
- Precept Determination and Budgetary Control,
- Review of Income,
- Petty Cash,
- Staff Salaries,
- Fixed Asset Registers
- Investment & Loans
- Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Internal Auditors had also completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the year's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, having concluded that, in all significant respects, the control objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Council receive and note the Internal Audit Report.

R.47/21 Cherwell Community Governance Review

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk asking Members to consider whether the Council wished to make any representations in respect of the Community Governance Review launched by Cherwell District Council (CDC).

Members noted that the main problem that needed to be addresses through this review was the recent expansion of the town out into adjoining rural parishes as a result of housing development. Government Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (March 2010 para 15) stated:

"For example, over time communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across the boundaries resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours. In such circumstances, the council should consider undertaking a community governance review, the terms of reference of which should include consideration of the boundaries of existing parishes."

One issue that now pertained was that the occupants of these new edge of town housing developments were only charged on the basis of rural parish precepts, whilst using the facilities of the urban area. Often these developments required upkeep of open space or sports facilities, once commuted sums were exhausted, which in effect would be unfunded unless the rural parishes, with traditionally low precepts, significantly increased their precept. An additional problem was that the new houses were more likely to skew the electoral equality of the rural parish than the adjacent town wards, given the lower electorate numbers in the villages.

It was therefore suggested that all of the of the current and planned housing growth flagged up in the consultation letters should be incorporated within the town boundary, in the interests of convenient and effective local government and to reflect the identities and interests of the community. Wherever possible existing field boundaries should be used as the new boundary lines. Furthermore, it was suggested that the sports pitch provision associated with the Banbury 17 housing development off Wykham Lane should also lie wholly within the Banbury parish.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to the Council that the response set out at paragraph 5.7 of the report, and summarised above, be made to the Community Governance review consultation.

The meeting ended at 7.11pm

APPENDIX A

Mark Recchia MA FCIS FSLCC
Town Clerk



Banbury Town Council

The Town Hall
Bridge Street
Banbury
OX16 5QB

Tel: 01295 250340

Fax: 01295 250820

Calendar of Meetings 2022 – 2023

	CYCLE 1	CYCLE 2	CYCLE 3	CYCLE (BUDGET) 4	CYCLE 5	CYCLE 6
COUNCIL	Tues 17 May Annual Meeting	21 June	20 Sept	15 Nov	10 Jan	7 Feb
PLANNING (Wednesday)	4 May	22 June	14 Sept	9 Nov	4 Jan	1 Mar
	25 May	20 July 17 Aug	12 Oct	14 Dec	1 Feb	29 Mar
GENERAL SERVICES	7 June	30 August	18 Oct	13 Dec	17 Jan	21 March
RESOURCES	14 June	6 Sept	1 Nov	3 Jan	31 Jan	28 March
TRAFFIC ADVISORY (Wednesday @ 2.00 p.m.)	25 May	31 August	-	30 Nov	22 Feb	-
COUNCIL	21 June	20 Sept	15 Nov	10 Jan	7 Feb	11 April

Commented [MR2]: Clash with CDC Parish Liaison – no members affected

Commented [MR1]: Clash with CDC Audit Cttee (Cllr Beere)

Commented [MR3]: Clash with CDC Budget Planning – Cllr Donaldson (also Cllr Hussain but not currently on GS Cttee)

Commented [MR4]: Clash with CDC Budget Planning – Cllr Donaldson (also Cllr Hussain but not currently on GS Cttee)

Commented [MR5]: Clash with CDC O/S Cttee – Cllrs Bishop & Hodgson (neither currently on Resources Cttee)

Notes:

1. All Meetings are held at the Town Hall, Bridge Street, Banbury and commence at 6.30pm unless otherwise stated.
2. The 2023 Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 16 May.
3. Annual Town Meeting – Monday, 6 March 2023.