

## GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 07 June 2022 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Phillips (Chairman)  
Councillors: Ahmed, Bunce, Cherry, Colegrave, Dalton, Donaldson, Hussain, Kilsby, Mears.

Alternate Members: Councillor Ahmed (for Councillor Powell)

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)  
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)  
Martyn Surfleet (Executive Officer)

**GS.1/22 Apologies for Absence**  
Cllr Powell, Cllr Richards

**GS.2/22 Declarations of Interest**  
None.

**GS.3/22 Minutes of the Last Meeting**  
**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**GS.4/22 Income & Expenditure Report**  
The Committee considered a report prepared by the 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 26 May 2022.

Officers responded to a range of questions from Members relating to various budget codes and financial procedures. Members' attention was drawn to the fact that overall the Committee's expenditure was within forecast versus the phased YTD budget.

It was raised by a member of the committee regarding the utilisation and upkeep of the Councils noticeboards due to regular vandalism. Councillors discussed whether council notice boards remained viable, due to regular damage causing them to become unreadable. Options included moving towards a Council app along the lines of councils in France as described by Councillor Colegrave, or whether this should form part of a blended communication solution.

### **General Services variances were principally**

- Staffing vacancies contributing £13k
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by seasonality and awaiting May invoicing, across Parks, Football pitches and Horton View £8k.
- Prior year utility charges for MUGA's from OCC £6k Timing of cleaning and wax of Fine Lady Statue

### **Underspend on Resources Committee also principally**

- Reduced Central Admin costs including salaries, training and computer software.
- Town Council Events income for Jubilee (Grant) and Food Fair are both ahead of budget, with costs below budget, including Mayoral Inauguration.
- Town Hall expenditure continues to remain muted in line with a gradual opening up agenda, and Other services to the Public including timing of small grants (currently being processed in line with budget expectations).
- Other Costs & Income includes increased interest income.

### **Financial Effects & Risk Assessment**

This is a monitoring report so there are no specific financial effects arising from it. Without effective budget monitoring there is a risk that budgets will not be adhered to, thereby weakening the Council's ability to demonstrate an effective use of resources. This risk is being mitigated by closer monitoring of spend using a phased budget.

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

### **GS.5/22**

### **Parks and Cemeteries Monitoring Report**

We are still having problems with recruitment and retention, currently we are operating with four members of staff out of seven.

Current position:

- Cemetery Supervisor – Anton Visagie
- Parks & Cemeteries Operative – Andrew Glenister
- Parks & Cemeteries Operative – Gareth Needham
- Parks & Cemeteries Operative – Peter Bloxham
- Parks Supervisor – Appointment made (Start Date August)
- Parks & Cemeteries Operative – Vacant
- Parks & Cemeteries Operative – Vacant
- Parks & Cemeteries Operative – Vacant

Adding to the operational problems we currently have two members of staff off work due to sickness.

Despite wider advertising, the volume and quality of candidates has been low. Although we thought we had successfully appointed two new employees they only remained in post for two weeks before leaving.

The Council, as with most employers at the moment, is experiencing difficulty in recruitment which has been highlighted recently in the news, that there are more employment vacancies than there are people to fill them.

As a result of carrying the vacancies and the staff sickness, we have had to prioritise the cemetery service delivery and have had to engage contractors to carry out some of the other operations on a temporary basis.

Members are asked to note that Officers are working hard to recruit to the vacant positions, however, while we are operating with below 50% staff capacity not all work schedules can be delivered to the high standards that we would like them to be.

#### **4th Corner Landscape Contract Update**

The contractor has also been experiencing staffing difficulties, and are approximately one week behind on the scheduled work, this is being addressed by the contractor by working additional hours at weekends to carry out specialist operations such as pitch renovation works and road spraying, this allows the teams to concentrate on the basic scheduled work during the week. The Councils Landscape Officer is monitoring the progress to ensure they get back on track.

#### **The Park Ranger Service Update**

The team continue to keep up to date with Health & Safety inspections and the resulting repairs to our children's play areas.

The Ranger Service is also engaged and provide valuable assistance in running the Council's outdoor events programme.

#### **Spiceball Park BBQ Area**

The new BBQ area has now been installed in Spiceball Park, the Mayor attended a press meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May to officially open the facility to the public. The new Safe to BBQ units were in and ready for use for the Jubilee week and have been well received by the public.

The Council receives lots of requests from users asking to BBQ in Parks, which for safety reasons has in the past been refused, it is great to be able to direct customers to this purposed made facility which offers a great opportunity for families to dine out safely in the park.

#### **Cleansing Service Update**

The Town Council has successfully recruited two cleaners to run the in-house facility cleaning service which started at the beginning of May.

New equipment and cleansing materials have also been purchased.

Bringing this service in-house should deliver better standards of cleansing within our community buildings and give greater efficiencies and flexibility across our sites.

Negotiations with Cherwell District Council to renew the Service Level Agreement to continue to provide cleansing of open spaces and bin emptying is well underway.

#### **Peoples Park Car Park – Bath Road**

Following previous reports of antisocial behaviour, illegal activity and problems of the car park facility being abused by non-park users.

I can confirm the Police have been informed, are actively investigating illegal activity and have engaged with local residents.

The CCTV camera at the location is working and linked to the Police station monitoring system.

Work has started on the review of Bath Road Car Park and recommendations will be brought back to a future meeting.

### **Peoples Park Café – Update**

The refurbishment works are going well, Officers continue to monitor progress and work with the Architects and contractors on the build out.

Since the last update progress items are:

- Doors and windows are fitted
- Facia boards prepared/repaired ready for painting
- Electrics are installed
- Outside patio and landscaping well underway

Project expected to be complete by the predicted deadline of July.

Officers shortlisted two commercial property letting agents to provide proposals on marketing the Café inviting operators to bid for the opportunity to run a catering service for the public in the new facility.

The Council received two proposals one from White Commercial Chartered Surveyors Ltd and one from Wild Property Consultancy Ltd, following evaluation and consultation with the Leader of the Council the Town Clerk has placed an order with Wild Property Consultancy to market the new café opportunity.

It was then RESOLVED to:

1. To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.
2. To note the 4<sup>th</sup> Corner Landscape Contract Update.
3. To note the Park Ranger Service Update.
4. To note the completion of the BBQ facility at Spiceball Park.
5. To note the Cleansing Service Update.
6. To note Peoples Park Bath Road Car Park Update.
7. To note the Peoples Park Café Update.

The meeting ended at 7.21pm