

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 30 August 2022 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Phillips (Chairman)
Councillors: Bunce, Cherry, Colegrave, Donaldson, Hussain, Mears
Powell, Richards.

Alternate
Members: None

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

GS.9/22 Apologies for Absence

None

GS.10/22 Declarations of Interest

None.

GS.11/22 Minutes of the Last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 07 June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.12/22 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 19 August 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.

General Services variances were principally

- Staffing vacancies contributing £19k, all vacancies have now been filled within the grounds maintenance team.
- Increase in insurance costs (£17k)
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works were impacted by seasonality and awaiting August invoicing, across Parks, Football pitches and Horton View £20k.
- Ongoing play area equipment being refurbished across the estate awaiting completion £39k.
- Prior year utility charges for MUGA's from OCC £6k
- Timing of cleaning and wax of Fine Lady Statue
- Café build in People's Park due to be opening in late autumn, with Earmarked Reserves to be released following practical completion (£48k)

Underspend on Resources Committee also principally

- Reduced Central Admin costs including salaries and training £26k.
- Town Council Events are currently within budget parameters, with underspend due to the timing of Food & Drink Festival on 21st August.
- Increase in insurance costs (£14k)
- Other services to the Public include timing of small grants, and improved interest income.
- 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.13/22 Parks and Cemeteries Monitoring Report

Banbury Town Council have now recruited to all vacant posts.

The new Parks Supervisor started 18th August 2022.

We have one operative on long term sick, which we have been covering with an agency worker.

The team are up to date with the scheduled work, and have been busy gearing up for new the football season.

Although the volume of burials has been low so far this financial year, the team are noticing an increase in bookings over recent weeks.

4th Corner Landscape Contract Update

The contractor is delivering the programmed work as per the agreed scheduled, they have been able to catch up assisted by the suspension of grass cutting due the dry weather. This gave them an opportunity to focus on other areas of i.e. shrubs and hedges.

The Councils Landscape Officer continues work closely with the contract supervisor along with site inspections to monitor their performance.

The Park Ranger Service Update

New play area equipment has been procured for a number of play areas where the existing equipment is coming to the end of life expectancy and beyond economical repair.

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.

Knee Rail Fencing Repairs

We have a number of timber knee rail fences throughout our estate which are in need of repair/replacement.

Timber knee rail fences are increasing costly in terms of materials, labour for repairs and on-going maintenance. The life expectancy of timber is around 7 years.

A review of just replacing like for like, because they are there, has been undertaken.

Although there are some instances, where it is appropriate to repair/replace with the same product, there are other factors that have to be considered, i.e. is it still needed or should it be removed completely, are there other materials that provide a longer term solution.

Sites reviewed to date are:

- a) Peoples Park – the knee rail fencing in the main was serving no purpose and has been removed, with the exception of the section behind the tennis courts and MUGA which protects people from the drop behind the stone wall, which has been repaired.
- b) Bankside Park – the fence still has some residual life, prevents vehicle access and protects people/children from running onto the road, therefore, this has been repaired.
- c) Concord Avenue/Bridge Street Corner – this fence was rotten and needed replacing, it was installed originally to protect the plant material while it got established. As the shrubs are now established it was serving no purpose so has been removed.
- d) Chandos Close Open Space – this fence was rotten and needed replacing, it was installed originally to protect the plant material while it got established. As the shrubs are now established it was serving no purpose so has been removed.
- e) Alma Road Open Space – this fence was rotten and needed replacing, it was installed originally to protect the plant material while it got established. As the shrubs are now established it was serving no purpose so has been removed.
- f) Princess Diana Park – there was a number of fences around shrub borders, which was damaged rotten and needed replacing, it was installed originally to protect the plant material while it got established. As the shrubs are now established it was serving no purpose so has been removed.
- g) Stanbridge Park – this fence is in need of replacement completely, this is a site that prevents vehicle access and prevents people/children from running onto the road. Quotations have been received to remove and replace with timber at a cost of £8000, this would provide a short term solution and still require ongoing maintenance over its life. As an alternative quotes have been received for a galvanised metal solution at £16,000 which would have a life expectancy of 20-25 years and require little or no maintenance. It is recommended that this long term solution of installing a metal be actioned at this park.

Cleansing Service Update

We are currently advertising for the vacant position of the third part-time cleaner, the main duties of this role will be cleaning of sports pavilions.

Christmas Light Contract Update

Meetings have been held with Blachere Illumination Ltd to agree the scheme improvements for this year's display and approve the installation programme.

Peoples Park Café – Update

The refurbishment works are nearing completion. Officers continue to monitor progress and work with the Architects and contractors on the build out.

Work still to be completed are:

- Work tops, serving island and customer table.
- Fitting of outside canopy.
- Installation of outside lighting to patio & path.
- Fencing.
- Power for external defibrillator
- Installation of extractor fan

Project expected to be complete by first week of September.

Following the advertising for a café operator, three submissions were received, only two were suitable to be shortlisted for evaluation. Following evaluation and presentation/interviews with both companies the winning tender was Rosie Leigh Tea Rooms.

The Legal documents are being drawn up for a licence to start on 1st October 2022.

It was then **RESOLVED** to:

1. To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.
2. To note the 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update.
3. To note the Park Ranger Service Update.
4. To approve the recommendations regarding fencing repairs/replacements.
5. To note the Cleansing Service Update.
6. To note the Christmas Light Contract Update.
7. To note the Peoples Park Café Update.

GS.14/22 Bus Shelters

A complaint from a local resident with regards to a redundant bus shelter being used as a meeting place for youths. This is one of a number of bus shelters across the town that are provided by the Town Council where bus routes have been withdrawn by the County Council. However, it is understood some of these unused shelters are being used by voluntary community bus services.

Contact with the Police has been attempted to establish any wider reports of anti-social behaviour at the bus shelter in question, however this has not been confirmed.

Suggestion for a resolution

Removal of certain “redundant” shelters from these changed routes would not be within Council’s policy, which is to provide bus shelters to facilitate all bus services that may be subject to route changes.

The shelter provision with Clear Channel expires in October 2023, with a 12-month notice period required from Oct 2022. During this period, Banbury Town Council will need to consider future design of shelters and service provision, which is a matter of a report that will be taken to the Resources Committee on 6th September 2022.

As the current contract for bus shelter provision is due to expire/renewal, it is proposed the shelters in question will remain in their locations, and ongoing provision to be subject to the review undertaken when considering ongoing contractual provision.

It was then **RESOLVED** to:

1. To receive and note the above report.
2. To request officers to undertake a review a bus shelter viability prior to the Clear Channel contract on October 2023.

The meeting ended at 7.50pm