

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 17 January 2022 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

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

Alternate Members: Cllr Biegel for Cllr Richards

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

GS.29/22 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Ayers.

GS.30/22 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.31/22 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.32/22 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 11 January 2023.

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 are principally

- Staffing vacancies contributing £12k, recruitment of cleaners has been completed, with the supervisor role within the grounds maintenance team ongoing. Current long term sick is currently being backfilled with agency staff which is offset against savings to-date.
- Planned cemetery works include arboriculture and memorial stability testing.
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by timing of December invoicing across Parks, seasonality of football pitch works and Horton View, however are broadly considered to be in line with full year projected expenditure.
- Expenditure is planned on computer software to support staff monitoring of play equipment and tree stock across the estate.
- Ongoing play area equipment being refurbished across the estate awaiting completion. Following an external ROSPA inspection, a programme of works has been identified, which officers will work through in the final quarter.
- Prior and current year utility charges for MUGA's from OCC £11k.

- Café build in People's Park opened, with Earmarked Reserves to be released (£179k)

Underspends on Resources Committee also principally

- Corporate, Central Administration and Civic continue to be well controlled, with cost under budget.
- Town Council Events are currently within budget parameters.
- Town Hall utility costs are reduced whilst heating solutions are sourced, with provision for associated costs included within the projected budget.
- Other services to the Public include timing of small grants (including a Warm Welcome grant scheme), and invoicing of Christmas Lighting scheme (£5k saving). Woodgreen Open Air Pool operating subsidy has been provided for, subject to a review meeting between CDC officers and BTC Councillors.
- Other Costs & Income includes increased interest income (projected £18k) in line with changes to Bank of England base rate.

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.33/22 Parks and Cemeteries Monitoring Report

The team have been undertaking planting of trees. The team continue to over mark the football pitches and are carrying out condition inspections each week. The team are up to date with the scheduled work, and have been undertaking leaf clearance throughout November. Staff have been busy with burial duties and grave topping up. All machinery and equipment servicing has been booked in preparation for the new season. We have started the recruitment process for a replacement Parks Supervisor. The operative who was on long term sick, has returned to work on a phased basis for the next four weeks. We have received the resignation of another Parks & Cemeteries Operative, which we will need to go out to recruitment for.

4th Corner Landscape Contract Update

The contractor is delivering the programmed work to schedule. Sports pitch aeration operations have not been undertaken yet this playing season due to the adverse weather conditions. Winter shrub border maintenance, weeding and pruning operations, are nearly complete. The Contract Supervisor is still off work long term sick. The area manager continues to cover the role and oversee operations until the supervisor returns. The Councils Landscape Officer continues work closely with the contractor along with site inspections to monitor their performance.

Tree Works & Planting Update

The Councils Landscape Officer went out to tender for a number of packages of tree works, identified in the last tree survey, these have now been evaluated and issued to external contractors, these works will be completed by the end of March 2023.

The Tree Planting for the Queens Green Canopy is now complete:

- a) Crouch Hill - The circle of 24 trees, Acer Campestre "Queen Elizabeth".
- b) Hanwell View Park – The avenue of 20 trees, Quercus Robur.
- c) Peoples Park – Acer Campestre 'Queen Elizabeth'.
- d) Southam Road Cemetery – Acer Campestre 'Queen Elizabeth'.
- e) Hardwick Hill Cemetery – Acer Campestre 'Queen Elizabeth'.

The only outstanding items to complete the schemes are to install the tree cages and the memorial plaques, which we have now taken delivery of.

The Park Ranger Service Update

Inspections

- a) The Senior Ranger is analysing the annual H & S Inspection report for our play areas. The works will be prioritised and undertaken based on the risk rating.
- b) Bus Shelters - Monthly Inspections ongoing.

Play Area refurbishment update is:

- a) Lapsley Drive – Replacement Multi-play unit, round-about, benches and safety surfacing has now been completed.
- b) Princess Diana Park – Large climbing frame and net structure had to be removed on Health & Safety grounds, we are out to tender a replacement unit, we are still confident despite the predicted lead-in time, that the new unit will be installed by April/May 2023.
- c) Spiceball Park – Maintenance works identified and planned for March.
- d) Moorfields Roundabout – Supplier has inspected; we are awaiting a quote for repair.

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

Fencing Repairs Update

Bridge Street Park – New galvanised metal knee rail fence has been manufactured, due to ground conditions, we are still waiting an installation date from the supplier.

Peoples Park – Timber fencing refurbishment, the Probation Service are still working with the Town Council to continue with further sanding and painting works identified throughout the park.

Chandos Close – 18m of the timber post and rail fence around the attenuation pond had to be repaired following vandalism.

Cleansing Service Update

Unfortunately, the newly appointed cleaner fell seriously ill with Covid in December, and has only recently returned to work.

Christmas Light Contract Update

Following a performance review meeting with Blachere Illuminations Ltd, the issues which resulted in the delay of some of the lights not coming on at 5:00pm on the switch-on night have been identified. A plan has been put into place to ensure that the mistakes are not repeated for 2023/24. A meeting will take place in February with Officers to start the process of planning the required programme of requirements detailing the actions along with time scales and sign off at each stage process. As a result of the performance failures, liquidated damages were deducted from the payments due to the supplier for 2022/23. Officers have made it clear that the performance needs to improve for this year's Christmas light switch-on, for the Town Council to continue with the contract for years 4, 5 and 6.

Peoples Park Café – Update

The only outstanding item from the construction contract is the installation of the outside canopy, although it arrived in the UK from France, additional support brackets were identified to support the weight and these were recommended to be fitted inside the roof space, these have now been ordered and the canopy will be fitted within the next two weeks.

The signage for the front the café above the new canopy will be fitted at the same time.

It was then **RESOLVED** to:

- a) To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.
- b) To note the 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update.
- c) To note the tree works and planting Update.
- d) To note the Park Ranger Service Update.
- e) To note the Fencing Repairs Update.
- f) To note the Cleansing Service Update.
- g) To note the Christmas Light Contract Update.
- h) To note the Peoples Park Café Update.

GS.34/22 CRM & Booking Software update

The Committee considered a verbal update presented by the Executive Officer detailing updates regarding the contracting of a Customer Relationship Management system as well as a facilities booking system.

The update covered the following:

Contracts for both the CRM software and Booking software had been requested and the details due to be finalised by the Town Clerk and Executive Officer.

Timelines were as follows –

Booking system phased roll out:

- Events - end of Jan 2023
- Town Hall - end of Feb 2023
- Sports pitches and facilities - beginning of April 2023 in time for new football season.

CRM system roll out:

- Due to go live for beginning of April 2023, with staff training booked for end of Feb.

Officers responded to a several questions from members regarding the details of the contracts and the time frames for the launch of the software.

It was then **RESOLVED** receive and note the verbal update of the Executive Officer.

The meeting ended at 7.08pm