

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 21 March 2023 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

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

Alternate
Members:

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)

GS.35/22 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Richards.

GS.36/22 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.37/22 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

GS.38/22 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 14 March 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 £10k. Applicant numbers for roles has increased, and recruitment within the grounds team has been completed, however ongoing long-term sick continues to stretch team resilience.
- Planned cemetery works include arboriculture and memorial stability testing is ongoing.
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by timing of February invoicing across Parks, seasonality of football pitch works and Horton View, overspends offset vacancy savings, and taken together are broadly 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 are working 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 an associated Earmarked Reserves of (£201k). The related Earmark reserve will be transferred to alternative earmarked projects to reflect increased inflationary pressures, thereby supporting delivery of planned Council objectives.

- The timing of the expenditure planned for the landscaping of the Walled Garden in Peoples Park is planned to be completed in 23/24.

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 costs associated with plant maintenance and building repair, however are offset by savings across the committee
- Other services to the Public include timing of small grants (including a Warm Welcome grant scheme), and invoicing of Christmas Lighting scheme (£5k saving following anticipated utility and repair costs). Woodgreen Open Air Pool operating subsidy has been provided for, following a review meeting between CDC and BTC Officers an improvement of public swim availability and membership accessibility is being progressed and will be reported to elected members as schemes come forward.
- Other Costs & Income includes increased interest income (projected £19k) in line with changes to Bank of England base rate.
- Following successful receipt of three competitive quotes, planned decarbonisation of the heating systems at the Town Hall are due to be implemented ahead of year end, and are contained within the associated earmark reserve to be released.

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.39/22 Parks and Cemeteries Monitoring Report

The team are up to date with the scheduled work.

The team continue to over mark the football pitches and are carrying out condition inspections each week.

Staff have been busy with burial duties and grave topping up.

All machinery and equipment have now been serviced in preparation for the new season.

We have successfully recruited to the vacant positions within the Parks and Cemeteries team, they should in post by the 1st of April.

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 now 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 Council's Landscape Officer continues to work closely with the contractor in addition to carrying out site inspections to monitor their performance.

Tree Works & Planting Update

The contractor engaged to undertake the tree work packages has been working through the programme and is on track to be completed by the end of March.

The Tree Planting for the Queen's 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 memorial plaques have now been installed and all five schemes are now registered on the official website.

Play Area Update

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.

Play Area refurbishment update is:

- a) Princess Diana Park – Tendering for the replacement of the large teenage item of play equipment is now complete. We had five schemes returned, following evaluation of tenders, the winning tenderer was Kompan UK Ltd. The new unit will significantly improve the play value at this park, providing interest, excitement and interactive play for teenage children.
 - The Contract has now been awarded.
 - Contract start-up meeting is set for 23/03/2023.
 - Installation will be complete by June, in time for the school Summer Holidays.
- b) Spiceball Park - A repair had to be undertaken to the skatepark on the 10/03/23 due to vandalism on a section of the ramp.

- c) Moorfields Park – Unfortunately, the roundabout cannot be repaired as it is now an obsolete design, we need to replace the whole unit. We are seeking three quotations to install a new roundabout at this park. The aim is to have this complete by the Summer School Holidays.
- d) Howard Road Play Area – The surfacing underneath the aerial runway needs replacing. We are currently seeking three quotations to undertake removal of the grass matting and to install a wet pour safer surface pad.

The Park Ranger Team continue to keep up to date with the weekly Health & Safety inspections and carrying out any repairs resulting from those inspections.

Winter Maintenance Update

Snow wardens were contacted on the 08/03/23 following the out of season snowfall.

The Rangers have continued to top up our on-street grit bins with salt as required.

Fencing Repairs Update

Bridge Street Park – New galvanised metal knee rail fence has now been installed. The rangers will be removing the old rotten wooden fence when ground conditions improve.

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

Stanbridge Park – The broken fence and gate post on the Mascord Road entrance has now all been repaired.

Cleansing Service Update

Facility Cleaning – In-house cleaning staff are performing well.

Parks & Open Spaces Cleansing – The service provided by Cherwell District Council is being delivered in line with the Service Level agreement.

Christmas Lights Contract Update

I have set up a project planning meeting for the Christmas lights installation and switch-on event 2023 on the 22nd March 2023 with Blachere Illuminations Ltd. Purpose of the meeting is to ensure that the previous performance failures are not repeated 2023/24.

Bus Shelter – Update

A brand new bus shelter has been installed on Woodgreen Avenue near to Penrose Drive, the old one was in a very poor condition and beyond economical repair.

An order has been placed for a panel repair to the other bus shelter on the other side of Woodgreen Avenue near to Broughton Road.

The Ranger Team continue to monitor our Bus Shelters through the monthly inspections.

Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

There are no risks arising from these items and all financial effects can be contained within existing budgets.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to **RESOLVE**

- To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.
- To note the 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update.
- To note the Tree Works and Planting Update.
- To note the Play Area Update.
- To note the Winter Maintenance Update.
- To note the Fencing Repairs Update.
- To note the Cleansing Service Update.
- To note the Christmas Lights Contract Update.
- To note the Bus Shelter Update.

The meeting ended at 7.08pm