

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 01 November 2022 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

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

Alternate Members: Cllr Ayers for Cllr Dalton

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

R.20/22 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Dalton

R.21/22 Declarations of Interest
None

R.22/22 Minutes of the last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 06 September 2022 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

R.23/22 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 are principally

- Staffing vacancies contributing £21k, recruitment of both a supervisor and cleaner within the grounds maintenance team is ongoing, and current long term sick is currently being backfilled with agency staff.
- Increase in insurance costs (£17k)
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by timing of October invoicing across Parks, Football pitches and Horton View, and offset by increased grass cutting schedule for Peoples Park to mitigate impact of staff vacancies.
- Ongoing play area equipment being refurbished across the estate awaiting completion £39k.
- Prior year utility charges for MUGA's from OCC £6k
- Timing of Banbury in Bloom invoices, cleaning and wax of Fine Lady Statue moved to bi-annual frequency.
- Café build in People's Park due to be opening in late autumn, with Earmarked Reserves to be released following practical completion (£87k)

Underspends on Resources Committee also principally

- Reduced Central Admin costs including salaries and training £36k.
- Town Council Events are currently within budget parameters, with underspends due to staffing costs.
- Increase in insurance costs (£14k) are offset by reduced legal costs £6k.
- Other services to the Public include timing of small grants, 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.

R.24/22 REVISED ESTIMATES FOR 2022/23 & DRAFT ESTIMATES 2023/24

A Summary of the revised estimates for 2022/23 and draft estimates 2023/24 was attached together with a full copy of the Estimates (2023/24).

The estimates included income from fees and charges, which for 2023/24 current remained unchanged from this year, subject to receipt of guidance from Members.

The estimates for 2023/24 were based on a 2% rise in precept, and a rise of 1% in households in the town due to general housing growth. A 5.0% inflation rise in salaries and contract costs has been assumed, or greater where specified.

The following comments on the estimates are materially relevant:

GENERAL SERVICES

Cost Centre 103 Southam & Hardwick Cemetery

Increased salary costs relate to making a seasonal role full time across a flexible workforce, and are offset by reduced cleansing contract costs.

Cost Centre 110 Parks and Open Spaces

Investment in estate management software, with the installation funded from reserves £19k. Investment across the play estate maintenance, £200k over two years, with the second year funded from an earmarked reserve. Cleansing costs associated with expanded public toilet provision.

Cost Centre 120 Football Pitches & Horton View

Bring H&S, Legionella & Electrical testing into a contract system. Renovation works to Bowling Green.

Cost Centre 160 Capital costs

Planned delivery of earmarked landscaping projects in People's Park in 22/23 and finalisation of Café build. Hillview Play area refurbishment (earmark funding) in 23/24 alongside St Marys Churchyard landscaping, creation of Municipal Compost Bays at Spital Farm, further play area development £124k.

RESOURCES

Cost Centre 305 Central Administration

Reduced salary costs following reduction of senior roles in 22/23, offset by increases in insurance costs from 22/23 and inflation and contractual incremental progression in 23/24.

Cost Centre 310 Town Council Events

Planning addition to town events with funding of Coronation event in 23/24, and specific resourcing of staffing costs at events.

Cost Centre 311 & 315 Town Hall & Other Services to the Public

Increased insurance from 22/23 and utility costs increases following the expiry of the current fixed priced energy contract in 23/24. Funding of alternative energy solutions funded through earmarked reserves to support energy efficiency at the Town Hall. 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, and subsidy of operation costs for Woodgreen Outdoor Pool.

Cost Centre 320 Other Costs and Income

Increased interest income in 22/23 projected to grow in 23/24, supported by increased precept income.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to approve the revised estimates for 2022/23 as now submitted; and to refer the draft estimates for 2023/24 as submitted to the Grants and Budget Sub-Committee for further consideration.

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Town Clerk along with the Planning officer assess the need for dedicated software and propose budget requirements if needed.

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Town Clerk along with the Director of Environment open a dialogue with CDC with regards to the running and utilisation of Woodgreen Outdoor Pool, and bring a future report back to the Resources committee for member scrutiny.

R.25/22 Internal Audit Report

The Town Council had an arrangement with Auditing Solutions Ltd. who provided Internal Audit Services to a number of Local Councils nationally. The Internal Auditor planned visits over a three-year cycle and examines different aspects of the Council's financial operations.

The Internal Auditor work was undertaken on 5th October 2022. The report contained observations made. R

IT WAS RESOLVED to review, receive and note the Internal Audit report.

IT WAS RESOLVED to request that officers implement the recommendations of the Auditor and include annual reviews of financial regulations, standing orders, code of conduct and annual governance statement in the 2nd cycle of the annual meeting calendar for The Council going forward.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm

