

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 03 January 2023 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

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

Alternate Members: None

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

R.26/22 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Dalton

R.27/22 Declarations of Interest
None

R.28/22 Minutes of the last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 01 November 2022 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

R.29/22 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 05 December 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 £11k, 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 November invoicing across Parks, seasonality of football pitch works and Horton View. Savings are offset by increased end of season grass cutting schedule for Peoples Park to mitigate impact of staff vacancies.
- 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 next 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 (£150k)

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. Woodgreen Open Air Pool operating subsidy has been provided for, subject to a review meeting between CDC officers and the Woodgreen Pool Working Party early in the new year.
- Other Costs & Income includes increased interest income 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.

R.30/22 Grants & Budget Sub-Committee

The Chairman thanked the sub-committee for their review of the budget.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and note the minutes of the Grants & Budget Sub-Committee held on the 01 December 2022 and approve the recommendations set out in Minute G&B.4/22.

R.31/22 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 have been set based on a 2% rise in precept, and a rise of less than 1% in households in the town due to 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 cleansing roles in-house, and are offset by reduced cleansing contract costs. This is coupled with a planned reduction of agency reliance for cemetery operatives. Alterations include roadworks at works compound and levelling of sections.

Cost Centre 110 Parks and Open Spaces

Investment in estate management, including management plan for Peoples Park, landscaping software, with the installation funded from reserves £10k. Ongoing subsidy of highways grass verge maintenance to OCC of £40k. Tree management Investment across the play estate maintenance, £290k over two years, with the second year of £155k, partially funded from an earmarked reserve. Cleansing costs associated with expanded public toilet provision, with additional signage in parks.

Cost Centre 120 Football Pitches & Horton View

Bring H&S, Legionella & Electrical testing into a contract system. Renovation works to Bowling Green. Purchase of backup pitch marking machine.

Cost Centre 160 Capital costs

Hillview Play area refurbishment (earmark funding) in 23/24 alongside St Marys Churchyard landscaping, creation of Municipal Compost Bays at Spital Farm, further access development in open space and defibrillator provision £128k.

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. Specific resourcing of staffing costs at events, alongside resource allocation to reinforce delivery of civic events.

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

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

IT WAS RESOLVED to endorse the 2023/24 fees and charges as submitted.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to the Council that:

- (1) the Estimates as recommended by the Grants & Budget Sub Committee on 01 December and the General Services Committee on 13 December 2022, be approved;
- (2) the Consolidated Budget be approved, and that it set the level of the precept for 2023/24 at £2,113,471 (following confirmation of the Council Tax base).
- (3) the Four Year Financial Forecast be approved.

R.32/22 Events Update

The Committee considered a report of the Events Manager outlining progress with Events that had taken place from April 22 to December 22.

A Taste of Spring – 10 April 2022

This event was the first 'normal' event following the end of pandemic COVID restrictions and the first 'big' event delivered by the new events manager. 55 food and drink traders filled the Market Place, with an updated layout to previous years. Feedback from traders involved was positive, and members of the public were pleased to see that the events schedule had been resurrected. Seating areas were created, with live music to keep attendees at the event.

Inauguration – 17 May 2022

The outgoing Mayor Cllr. Shaida Hussain formally handed over to Cllr. Jayne Strangwood, at the annual Inauguration.

Banbury's Jubilee Celebrations – 2, 4 & 5 June 2022

Beacon Lighting, Spiceball Park. This event proved very popular, with around 2,500 visitors descending on the Park for an evening of vintage singing, fire eating performances followed with the beacon lighting and a jubilee themed fireworks display. The bars & food vendors saw long queues - based upon 2012, the estimate was for around 500 visitors, not x5 that! Radio Horton hosted the entertainment with their PA and entertained the crowds.

Party in the Park, Spiceball Park. The park was transformed with a huge festival stage and live music entertained the crowds for the duration of the day, as well as fairground attractions and children's activities including crown making workshops. Crazy Golf, Climbing Wall, Laser Quest and Rodeo bull activities were free for families to enjoy. Afternoon Tea could be pre-booked and enjoyed within the 'Tea Tent', with other street food vendors, bars and a pop up 'Pub in the Park' also available - around 13 different food cuisines in total could be found across the park, meaning something for everyone. The evening saw 'Platinum Party at the Palace' streamed live from the BBC onto a large TV screen, and some residents made good use of the new BBQ stations in the park.

Street Party & Civic Service, Market Place & St Marys Church. Over 700 school children aged 4-11 sat down at Hogwarts style tables all set up in the Market Place and were served a packed lunch by civic dignitaries, councillors and volunteers. St Mary's Church hosted a special civic service as part of the celebrations.

The jubilee events received significant sponsorship and marketing support from Banbury BID.

Armed Forces Day – 25 June 2022

A parade around the old town, followed by drumhead service in the Market Place and a small reception at the Town Hall.

Town Mayor's Sunday – 10 July 2022

TMS grew in size for 2022, taking on elements of the district show including ferret racing, crazy golf and emergency service vehicles. Go Karts, Fun fair and street food filled the park too, alongside local organisations and charity stands. The hot weather deterred some visitors and the dog show element was poorly attended with many keeping their dogs at home in cooler spaces! For next year, we propose pushing back the official opening ceremony for this event, to allow for bigger crowds to gather.

Music Mix – 22 July 2022

5 hours of live performances from local bands, entertained thousands in the Market Place. Local pubs operated bars and street food vendors kept everyone well fed.

Food & Drink Festival – 20 August 2022

A variety of over 90 Food & Drink traders joined the festival with a new layout making use of the roundabout outside of the Town Hall, providing a large seating area with live musical performances to encourage visitors to stay longer, spending more at the festival. Live Cookery shows were moved outside with a mobile cookery theatre allowing more visitors to participate (previously this was offered in the Town Hall, but was restricted by capacity due to fire regulations).

Battle of Britain – 18 September 2022

This event was cancelled due to the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth II. Instead efforts were focused on Proclamation and Memorial activities. Operation London Bridge was delivered respectfully as per the plan.

Canal Festival – 1 & 2 October 2022

For 2022, not only was a well-loved 'Canal Day' revived, but instead was extended for an entire weekend. The Oxford Canal Towpath saw thousands visit the moored canal boat traders – who for some quoted it was their best trading event of the year! The CQ2 development, meant that new spaces needed to be utilised, one of which was the ground floor level of the North Car Park 2 (below LIDL). This provided the perfect covered and weatherproofed space, with rows of market traders selling craft, clothing and food items. Bridge St Park was established as a music venue, with lots of visitors remarking that they didn't previously know of its existence.

Remembrance Sunday – 13 November 2022

A successful event took place to mark Remembrance Sunday. All elements of the normal event took place, including a parade, leaving from the Town Hall; a Church service at St Mary's Church and a wreath laying ceremony at the War Memorial in People's Park; along with a reception for invited guests at the Town Hall afterwards. Feedback was received from the Military that they may prefer to be at the War Memorial for 11, rather than in the church, but this was later withdrawn at a review meeting.

Christmas Lights Switch On – 27 November 2022

The icing on the cake, closing out a successful 3-day festive market, the Christmas Lights Switch On saw the biggest crowd in over 20 years turn out to in anticipation for the updated and improved lighting scheme to illuminate for the first time of the festive season. Hatwell's Fairgrounds provided fairground rides for youngsters and a range of festive food vendors and a balloon artist were also on hand. A stage was erected to in a new location and well received entertainers, including a live music performance from pupils of NOA, dance performances from local groups, festive carol singing by the Rock Choir and a number of local band performances.

The event was capped off with Banbury United and the Town Mayor jointly switching on the lights, accompanied by a short firework finale.

Events Working Group meeting

Following on from a busy, successful year of events, consideration needed to be given to the draft programme for 2023. As such, the Events Working Group met on 10 November to review and discuss an outline programme taking into consideration the Coronation of King Charles III. The Working Group made a number of observations/suggestions on the draft programme for next year.

Financial Risk Assessment

For 2022-2023 the total budget within the events cost code of 310 (minus salaries) was £93,397. At present £89,692 has been spent, with no further events left to deliver. The remaining money will be used for updating and maintaining events equipment, as per the budget 2022-2023.

Financial effects for events to be delivered in 2023 were all outlined in proposed budgets for 2023-2024, as part of the budget setting process.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and note the Events Update Report.

R.33/22 Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24

Approval was sought from Members for the 2023/24 Calendar of Meetings.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that he had been asked to ensure that where possible the new Calendar sought to avoid any clashes with meetings of the principal councils. The draft Calendar as submitted had achieved this as far as possible.

Having considered the draft Calendar Members' felt that where clashes occurred, then the Members' concerned could make use of the Alternate Member scheme or choose not to serve on those committees. However, it was noted that every effort had been made to avoid clashes for the full Council, where the alternate member scheme was not available.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the Calendar of Meetings, as attached at Appendix A to these Minutes.

The meeting ended at 7.05pm

