

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 05 September 2023 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Mallon (Chairman)
Councillors: Ayers, Colegrave, Hussain, Kilsby, Reeves, Richards, Strangwood and Tohill-Martin.

Alternate Members: Cllr Ahmed for Cllr Strangwood, Cllr Bunce for Cllr Reeves

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)
Chris Green (Events Manager)
Simon Lewthwaite (Civic & Events Officer)
Martyn Surfleet (Executive Officer)

R.11/23 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Stangwood, Cllr Reeves

R.12/23 Declarations of Interest

None

R.13/23 Minutes of the last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 March and 16 May 2023 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

R.14/23 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 23 August 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

- Income across cemeteries contains seasonal impact, along with outstanding settlement of rental terms of buildings at Hardwick Hill.
- Whilst staffing costs are currently below budget (£10k) across the committee, mainly due to vacancies, when including the impact of YTD anticipated nationally agreed pay rises, they are estimated as £4k over budget.
- Computer software to support play equipment and grounds maintenance monitoring.
- In partnership with CDC, landscaping and install of round benches at Moorfields and Hill View parks.
- Overspend in arboriculture is anticipated to be timing related only.
- Timing of playground and landscape software monitoring programmes offset by unspent earmark reserve release.
- Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by seasonality.

Underspends on Resources Committee also principally

- Reduced Central Admin costs including salaries.
- Staffing costs are currently over budget £2k across the committee, mainly due to recruitment, when including the impact of YTD anticipated nationally agreed pay rises, they estimated as £10k over budget.

- Town Council Events income includes sponsorship across events and are ahead of budget, with costs incurred in advance but managed within planned budgets. The coronation celebration increased expenditure (net of income) of (£3k) was mainly caused by a £2k overspend incurred on litter disposal. Marginal net overspend on Town Mayors Sunday and Food Fairs are anticipated to be contained within overall event budgets.
- Other Costs & Income includes increased interest income, timing of which is delayed due to transfer from Santander of interest earned to-date (£25k). Costs associated with improvements the heating efficiency at the town hall will be met from earmarked reserves.

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.15/23 Events Update Report

Past Events

A Taste of Spring – 16 April 2023

This was a very successful event with 60 food and drink traders taking part, selling a good cross section of products, including hot/cold food and drinks, as well as a small number of charity/information stalls. The music stage was repositioned for this event to sit alongside (outside Leport & Co. Solicitors), rather than at the far end, and this worked very well being opposite the set-out tables/chairs and bar traders. Positive feedback was received from traders, and the general public. Weather: Good

Party in the Park – Coronation Celebrations – Sunday 7th May 2023

This was a highly anticipated event, and was structured along similar lines to the Jubilee event in 2022. The layout of the event was based on a live music stage at the far end of Spiceball Park, with food/drink traders along either side, and with fairground attractions and other activities, including Go Karts, Climbing Wall and Face Painting to the rear of the park. Music was performed throughout the event, with the last band to perform being 'The Scaletrics' who have a strong local following, with the lighting of a beacon, a fire performance display and a firework display in the second field bringing the day to a close. There was an excellent response to this event from the general public and traders, with several selling out of stock. Weather: Excellent, we were extremely lucky with this as poor weather on the Saturday/Monday either side of this event.

Inauguration – Tuesday 17th May 2023

The outgoing Mayor Cllr. Jayne Strangwood formally handed over to Cllr. Fiaz Ahmed at the annual Inauguration. This Civil Events Officer, who has co-ordinated the whole process of the mayoral handover, and also managed the Mayoral diary.

Armed Forces Day – Saturday 17th June 2023

This year's event included a tour of the Cold War bunker in the basement of the Town Hall, a performance by the Brize Norton Military Wives Choir, and a display of military vehicles/stands. The event was well publicised via both social media, and also with signage around the town. Event running times: 10:00-16:00

Town Mayor's Sunday – Sunday 9th July 2023

This fun event took place in People's Park, and will include a wide range of activities, including a dog show, go karting, ferret racing, rock climbing, fairground rides – with food and drink also being available to purchase. Event running times: 11:30-16:30

Banbury Music Mix – Friday 21st July 2023

This year's event was a great success with performances from five singers/bands, all with connections to Banbury and the local area. We had 12 food and drink traders located to the rear of the event on the pedestrian area to the rear of Market Place, and going into Cornhill offering a range of products to purchase. The branded reusable cup deposit scheme was used again this year for bar traders, which worked well and was popular with people attending the event. Footfall data provided by Banbury BID showed that 21st was the busiest day for the town centre during the month of January. Weather: Very good / no rain.

Banbury Food & Drink Festival – Sunday 20th August 2023

Following on from the Taste of Spring event in April, our larger Food & Drink Festival was a great success. We ended up with 78 traders on the day of the event, with a good spread of food and drink produce throughout. The traders were spread from Cornhill at the top end, through Market Place, and around the roundabout at the far end of the event. There were 3 Cookery Theatre demonstrations during the day from celebrity chef Paul Da Costa Greaves, which were well attended, and the positioning of this on the turning circle opposite Nat West Bank and Café Nero worked well to draw people in from the main event area in Market Place. Live music was performed, again by local artists, from a stage in front of the main Town Hall entrance with tables/chairs set out on the roundabout, which was very popular. We were not adversely affected by the Football World Cup Final, and some traders reported a lift in business after this. A wide demographic range attended which was very pleasing to see. Weather: Excellent / Some very hot spells.

Upcoming Events

Emergency Services Day – Saturday 2nd September

This popular event will be taking place again in Spiceball Park, to educate the general public in how to use the emergency services, and basic life-saving skills. Emergency Services vehicles will also be available for the public to view close up – this will be especially popular with the younger members of our community.

Banbury Canal Festival – Saturday 30th September & Sunday 1st October 2023

Plans for this two-day weekend event are coming together well, with many of the same elements as last year returning. As well as the towpath itself, we will again make use of the car parking areas around The Mill Arts Centre, North Car Park 2 and Bridge Street Park for food/drink traders, and also Local Charities and Organisations. This will very much be themed as a family event, with attractions and interest for all age groups. As last year, there will be performances from the Mill Arts Centre taking place in Chamberlaine Court car park. We have also been working with the Sealed Knot re-enactment society and are looking forward to their participation in the event at Bridge Street Park with a Living History display. Event running times: 10:30-16:30 on both days.

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 – Sunday 26th November

This event will once again follow on from the Victorian Christmas Market, and we will have a Santa's grotto, music stage, and fireworks to bring this year's events season to a close. It worked very well last year to move the stage further down Bridge Street, in order to maximise the view for all and so we will be looking to repeat this, although we will be looking to reposition one of the larger fairground rides. Event running times: 11:00-18:00

Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

For 2023-2024 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 2023-2024.

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

R.16/23 Bus Shelter Update

Due to the previous Clear Channel Lease Contract expiring in October 2023, it was suggested that, by way of mutual approval between Banbury Town Council and Clear Channel before the end of October 2022, the contract can only be extended after that time by Deed of Variation.

Clear Channel agreed to the installation of Green Roofs on arterial route bus shelters.

As part of a wider Oxfordshire County Council incentive funding has been made available for the installation of real time information boards to be fitted in and in proximity to our shelters.

A further £10,000 will be invested by Clear Channel in the repainting and refurbishment of the remaining shelter stock to retain and enhance the current provision.

Suggestions for resolution

Clear Channel agreed to the installation of 7 Green Roofs on arterial route bus shelters in spring 2024 with the final location to be proposed by Clear Channel for future installation.

Oxfordshire County Council have agreed to install real time information on near to 20 shelters across the estate, with major interchange boards proposed for Bridge Street, and potentially Banbury station pending additional funding from Chiltern Railways. Installation due for September 2024 pending electrical works commencing W/C 21st August.

The proposed list consists of –

- OXFORD RD O/S ST JOHNS CHURCH
- OXFORD RD O/S MEDICAL CENTRE
- OXFORD RD O/S HORTON HOSPITAL
- OXFORD RD OPP. HORTON HOSPITAL
- BEACONSFIELD RD O/S SHOPS
- BRETCH HILL OPP BRADLEY ARCADE
- CHATSWORTH DRIVE O/S PH
- CHATSWORTH DRIVE OPP. SHOPS
- BANKSIDE ADJ. FARMWAY
- BLOXHAM RD OPP. EASINGTON GARDENS
- MIDDLETON RD O/S TESCO'S DIRECT
- MIDDLETON RD OPP. TESCO'S DIRECT
- OXFORD RD ADJ. GRANGE RD
- BRIDGE STREET O/S DEBENHAMS BUILDING
- BRIDGE ST O/S WILKOS
- CASTLE ST O/S BOLTON RD CAR PARK
- HORTON VIEW O/S NO. 5

Further assessments for suitability of real time information installation on shelters within Horsefair and Bridge street to be conducted by OCC officers and representatives from Clear Channel, with bridge street shelters proposed to be served by a standalone information multi-exchange board outside the old Debenhams site when entering the bus station. This will be twinned with a similar provision in the train station.

Clear Channel in consultation with officers have identified 6 key shelters for refurbishment –

- OXFORD RD O/S MEDICAL CENTRE
- OXFORD RD O/S HORTON HOSPITAL
- BRETCH HILL OPP BRADLEY ARCADE
- CHATSWORTH DRIVE OPP. SHOPS
- MIDDLETON RD O/S TESCO'S DIRECT
- CASTLE ST O/S BOLTON RD CAR PARK

Once agreed a work schedule will be issued.

Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

Clear Channel proposes to invest in the region of a further £126,000 in 8 new 3-bay Living Roof shelters to replace 8 existing locations – across the advertising and non-advertising estate

In addition, Clear Channel will invest a further £10,000 in repainting and refurbishment of the remaining shelter stock.

Oxfordshire County Council to fund installation of Real Time Information on 20 existing arterial route shelters within Banbury.

It was RESOLVED to receive and note the Bus Shelter Realtime Information and Living Roofs Update.

R.17/23 Customer Relationship Management and Booking Software Update

Members requested that officers look into ways to implement much required modernisation to our systems, by way of tendering for a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software package, and events booking system that will begin to address the current issues faced by The Council and its Officers, in relation to the communication and promotion to residents, of events and facilities, in order to create ease of access.

Several software providers were contacted to advise and propose solutions with varying results. And after much consideration and consultation with both members and officers it was agreed to enlist the services of Abavus Ltd to provide a CRM software and Mobile App, and that Bookteq would handle the bookings of both the Town Hall and Sports Facilities.

My Banbury Customer Portal / App - Abavus

After seeking approval from committee members to implement a phased roll out / launch of the system and app the following milestones were achieved;

- 30th May – Silent launch. The Service Desk was made available to officers to begin logging requests and enquiries, allowing time to tweak forms and trouble shoot in a safe environment.
- 6th June – Soft “Go Live”. Officers began logging all service requests and enquiries on the system.
- 12th June – Silent Launch. The Customer Portal was listed on the Council’s website and a dedicated site page was created guiding residents on how to report issues / enquire about services.
- 21st July – Full Go Live – Co-ordinated press release / marketing schedule, and public launch of the App and Customer Portal.

Booking System - Bookteq

Alongside the customer relationship software and app, the timeline for the implementation of the facilities booking system was agreed the following milestones have been achieved;

- 19th June – Officers were given training on the new booking system ready for launch.
- 26th June – Officers began transferring over current confirmed bookings onto the new booking system, as part of a phased transition from current software.
- 21st July – Public launch of the booking system for the Town Hall went live, with dedicated ‘Venue Hire’ page created on BTC website, as well as linked to the ‘My Banbury’ app.

The final phase of roll out of the booking system relates to our sports facilities and pavilions. Access to the system will be given to select league teams for the start of the 2023/24 season as part of a phased roll out / testing period to allow teams to learn the new booking process, and allow officers to respond accordingly to any issues that might arise. Once testing has finished the intention is to slowly roll out the system to our other teams one by one.

Uptake and Statistics

Since the launch of the Customer Portal and App officers have been organically adding customers onto the reporting system as and when reports have come in, via the phone and email as well as in person. Now that the service is live with the public we are beginning to see a gradual growth in registered users, as well as a diversification of platforms in which the reports are generated (iPhone, Android and Web Browser). As time goes on we will start to see trends on which route reports are generated and officers will be able to respond in raising awareness for the service to fill any gaps in uptake.

Downloads of the My Banbury App currently stand at (as of 21st August 2023)

Apple – 77

Android – 68

Next Steps – Continued Marketing and Monitoring

As part of the ongoing promotion and monitoring of these new software's further marketing and advertising strategies are needed, to ensure the longevity and success of the App and Customer Portal. So far as part of the launch officers produced in house marketing materials for both social media and our noticeboards as well as a dedicated press release to local news outlets. Presence of promotional materials at Town Council Events will also take place, starting with Music Mix and the next event being the Food and Drink Festival. Advertising leaflets produced in house have also been provided to the Tourist information desk within Banbury Museum & Gallery as well as the Customer Service Desk within Castle Quay. Finally, a sustained and continuous approach to social media promotion is in place with weekly posts highlighting the App and its functionality.

Officers have also explored further ways to promote the services via other means. The following options have been highlighted as potential avenues;

- Radio advertisement / sponsorship – Via Banbury FM, several package options are available with varying price structures and target audiences.
- QR coded external vinyl stickers for our parks and open spaces leading residents to download the app. Priced between 0.92p and 1.03p per sticker.

Both of these options will provide additional far reaching advertisement for the new App and Booking software and will target audiences that are unreachable via the typical social media approach.

It was raised by members that further additional funds over and above the requested £5,000 may be required to ensure the success of the 'My Banbury' app, and that officers should investigate more avenues of marketing for the App and Customer Portal.

IT WAS RESOLVED:

- To Note the Booking, Customer Relationship Management, Reporting & Mobile Application Update.
- To Approve that officers, request additional marketing funds to the sum of £5,000, through the 6+6 budgeting exercise, to further promote and market the 'My Banbury' App and supporting software's

R.18/23 Mayoral Business Plan

The current policy and business plan have served as essential guidelines for advising the Mayor and their office over the years.

It has come to our attention that the existing business plan has not undergone any substantial revisions since 2009. While certain terminology and methodologies have undergone minor updates, a comprehensive overhaul is now imperative. Our primary objective with this updated business plan is to ensure that the Banbury Mayoral Office remains contemporary and aligned with the evolving national framework.

The landscape in which the Mayoral Office operates has experienced significant changes, especially in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic that emerged in 2020. One notable transformation has been the shift towards virtual meetings and digital interactions. Unfortunately, the previous business plan did not account for these new modes of engagement, underscoring the pressing need for strategic adjustments.

Lastly, it has been noted that the previous business plan's layout contributed to its being excessively text-heavy, making it a laborious read. Recognising the importance of clear and concise communication, our proposal includes a revised layout that enhances readability and accessibility, thereby enabling efficient comprehension of the document's contents.

Mayoral Business Plan – Proposals

This proposal seeks to address the following key points:

- i. Comprehensive Update: Revise and modernize the existing business plan, incorporating the latest terminologies, methodologies, and best practices.
- ii. Adaptation to Changing Circumstances: Incorporate strategies and guidelines that account for virtual meetings and digital interactions, which have become integral to our operational landscape.
- iii. Enhanced Layout: Restructure the business plan's layout to promote readability and ease of understanding.
- iv. Incorporation of an online booking system for the Mayor's office.

By undertaking these necessary updates, we aim to equip the Banbury Mayoral Office with a business plan that is not only relevant but also adaptable to the dynamic environment in which it functions.

A discussion was had between members regarding the wording surrounding the mayoral post and its separation from members roll as a councillor and it was **AGREED** to amend:

*'The post is strictly non-political.
The Mayor should not attend political or protest events.'*

To read as follows:

*'The post is strictly non-political.
The Mayor should not attend political or protest events in a Mayoral capacity.'*

It was also agreed that the wording regarding the choosing of a Mayoral Chaplain be changed from 'Should' to 'May'

IT WAS RESOLVED

- To note the Mayoral Policy Update
- To approve proposed changes to the Mayoral Business Plan, including the suggested amendments as agreed by members.

The meeting ended at 7.23pm