

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at **6.30pm on Tuesday 07 October 2025** at the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Cherry (Chair),
Councillors: Elugwu, Okeke, Strangwood and Tohill-Martin.

Alternate Members: Councillor Stansfield (for Councillor Biegel).

Also in attendance: Councillors Mallon.

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

GS.27/25 Apologies for Absence
Councillor Biegel (Vice Chair).

GS.28/25 Declarations of Interest
None.

GS.29/25 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 26 August 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

GS.30/25 Parks and Cemeteries Service
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment providing an update for Members on:

Parks & Cemeteries Team.
4th Corner Landscape Contract.
Arboricultural Works and Tree Survey.
Park Ranger Service / Play Areas.
Cleansing Service.
Parks Lighting / CCTV.
PlayZone Schemes.
Sports Facility – Hard Surfaces.
People's Park Café.

Parks & Cemeteries Team

- ◆ The grounds team have undertaken post season renovation works to the cricket square at Hanwell Fields and the bowling green at Horton View. Operations included spiking, topdressing and seeding.
- ◆ The annual beds in People's Park and the two Cemeteries are being stripped in preparation for the bedding delivery due later this month.
- ◆ The cemetery team are still busy undertaking burial duties in our cemeteries and continue to deliver the service in line with funeral bookings.
- ◆ The weekly marking out of football pitches started prior the start of the season and will continue through to May next year.
- ◆ Due to the mild weather the mowing of grass is still ongoing.

- ◆ Vacant allotment plots have recently been cleared and prepared ready for reletting.

4th Corner Landscape Contract

- ◆ The contractor performance against the works schedule is all on track.
- ◆ The third street weed control treatment is well underway and due to be completed by 10th October.
- ◆ The goal mouths on the football pitches were top-dressed and seeded prior to the start of the football season, aeration, brushing and rolling was also undertaken. Insecticide treatment and the application of autumn fertiliser has been ordered.
- ◆ Due to the mild weather the mowing of grass is still ongoing on all sites by 4th Corner.

Arboricultural Works and Tree Survey

- ◆ As identified in the income and expenditure report, the year-end prediction for undertaking programmed tree works is expected to be over budget by £10,000. This is in due to receiving an insurance company request to carry out tree removal works adjacent to the railway line behind properties in Hamilton Close.
- ◆ Following the Tree Surveying Contract coming to an end in 2024, the Council approved the investment in new tree management software. This system holds a detailed inventory of all trees owned by the Town Council, the ability to record health and safety inspections, identify work recommendations providing any high medium and low risk ratings, this provides a good guide for annual budget setting.
- ◆ In line with the Council's Policy of engaging an independent professional arboriculturist to carry out the health and safety inspections of all our tree stock every three years, Officers recommend that members approve the letting of a tender to undertake a full surveying of our tree stock, utilising the Councils new software, to be completed by the end of this financial year. The estimated cost of this tender is an additional £30,000 to the initial 25/26 budget.

Park Ranger Service / Play Area Update

- ◆ The Park Rangers continue to carry out weekly visual Health & Safety inspections formally recording utilising the new mobile PSS Live software package.
- ◆ The team continue to undertake repair work on the findings made as a result of the inspection reports.
- ◆ The tender has been advertised for the new "Space for Girls" play facility at Princess Diana Park.
- ◆ The Rangers continue to provide support and assistance in the delivery of the Council's Event programme.

Cleansing Service Update

- ◆ Cleaning of public toilets is ongoing, no problems to report.
- ◆ The weekly cleaning of all sports pavilions is now underway in-line with fixtures.
- ◆ Parks & Open Spaces Cleansing – The service provided by Cherwell District Council continues to be delivered in line with the Service Level agreement, no issues to report.

Lighting / CCTV Update

- ◆ Following the installation of new lighting, at Banbury Cross and the Fine Lady Statue, a press release was issued by the Media and Communications Officer.
- ◆ The problem with the CCTV camera that was not working in centre of People's Park is being repaired by Cherwell District Council.

PlayZone Scheme Update

- ◆ Following the opening of the new Play Zone at Chandos Sports Ground on the 5th of September by the Mayor, a press release was issued by the Media and Communications Officer.
- ◆ The construction of the Princess Diana Park PlayZone is almost complete and the official opening is set for 17th October.

Sports Facility - Hard Surfaces Update

- ◆ We are currently inviting tenders for:
 - a. The resurfacing and painting of the MUGA facilities at Moorfields and Bankside Parks.
 - b. The cleaning and repainting of all the other MUGA facilities within the other parks across Banbury.
 - c. The resurfacing and painting of courts 5 and 6 at Horton View Sports Ground.
 - d. The cleaning, surface repairs and repainting of courts 1-4 at Horton View Sports Ground.

People's Park Café Update

- ◆ Following the end of the lease to operate the Café in People's Park, I can confirm that the café has been fully cleared of equipment and materials by the previous tenant.
- ◆ The Council has requested a quotation to undertake minor decoration repairs and carryout a deep clean.
- ◆ Once preparations for reletting are planned the Council will be advertising the facility for a new Café Operator to take the lease.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and;

To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.

To note the 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update.

To approve a recommendation to Resources Committee for an increase in the budget for the Arboricultural Works and Tree Survey.

To note the Ranger Service / Play Area Update.

To note the Cleansing Service Update.

To note the Parks Lighting / CCTV Update.

To note the PlayZone Scheme Update.

To note the Sports Facility – Hard Surfaces Update.

To note the People's Park Café Update.

GS.31/25

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 29 September 2025. 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 projected budget.

General Services variances were principally:

- ◆ Staffing costs across the committee remains within budget, whilst insurance costs across the services have been renegotiated with a reduction of circa 15%.
- ◆ Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by timing of September invoice across Parks.
- ◆ Tree works are highlighted during the 6+6 rephasing of budget requirements, and will be supplemented by an officer report to address the appointment of an independent arboriculture inspections to undertake ongoing inspections over the three-year timeframe.
- ◆ NNDR council tax adjustment backdated to reflect increased income at Hanwell Fields relating to increased sports use.
- ◆ Additional expenditure has been incurred to complete the upgrade of the lighting at the Banbury Cross and Fine Lady statues ahead of the darker evenings.
- ◆ Completion of Chandos PlayZone is followed by the installation of a PlayZone at Princess Diana park, with grant funding for the full costs incurred due to be received from CDC (25%) and Football Foundation (75%).

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and note the Income and Expenditure report.

GS.32/25

Revised & Draft Revenue Estimates

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk & RFO seeking approval of the revised estimates for 2025/26. The following comments on the estimates as they related to this committee were materially relevant:

Cost Centre 110 Parks and Open Spaces

Availability of independent tree inspectors has delayed the ongoing three year cycle of inspections, and funding is requested to bring this up to date (£40k). Earmarked reserves are proposed for release to fund work on Longlandes retaining wall (£25k) and fencing at Grimsbury Square (£18k).

Timing for purchase of fleet vehicle replacement is proposed to move to future years.

Cost Centre 113 Allotments

Work to improve the driveway to Woodgreen Allotment is proposed from earmarked reserves (£25k).

Cost Centre 114 Park Rangers

Timing for purchase of fleet vehicle replacement is proposed to move to future years.

Cost Centre 120 Football Pitches & Horton View

Purchase of Sports mower is proposed from earmarked reserves (£16k), allowance for increased prior year NNDR costs associated with cricket use at Hanwell Fields (£10k), investment in Horton View pavilion garage roof and palisade fencing (£4k), as well as ongoing use of contractor staff for cleaning of facilities.

Cost Centre 160 Capital costs

New PlayZones at Chandos and Princess Diana Park (PDP) are fully partner funded (£582k), the creation of Space for Girls at PDP requires £10k addition to CDC grant funding of £30k, in a similar way to an additional £5k towards CDC funding of lighting improvements to PDP and the Banbury Cross £45k. Stonework in St Marys churchyard (£5k).

Release of reserves enable ongoing consultant work to progress planning permission for the Hardwick Hill cemetery extension, and fund the refurbishment of sports sites across MUGAs, including resurfacing at Moorfields and Bankside, and tennis courts at Horton View.

A Member enquired as to the process for feeding into the budget setting process and the Town Clerk outlined the Council's 6+6 review, of which this report formed part, and the detailed perusal of the coming year's budget by party groups, service committees and the Grants & Budget Sub Committee, prior to its adoption at budget Council.

RESOLVED that the Revised Estimates for 2025/26, as submitted, be approved.

GS.33/25 Committee Changes

The Committee was asked to consider a change to its membership, whereby Councillor Richards would replace Councillor Okeke, following his recent decision to join the Conservative Group. Cllr Mallon (Leader of the Conservative Group) asked the Town Clerk to clarify whether this was in line with the Council's political proportionality practices and this was confirmed accordingly.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to Council to approve a change to the Committee's membership, whereby Councillor Okeke is removed and replaced by Councillor Richards.

The meeting ended at 7:17pm