

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 31 October 2023 in the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Mallon (Chairman)
Councillors: Beere, Biegel, Colegrave, Kilsby, Phillips.

Alternate Members: Cllr Beere for Cllr Hussain

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)
Chris Green (Events Manager)
Martyn Surfleet (Executive Officer)

R.20/23 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Ayers, Cllr Strangwood, Cllr Reeves, Cllr Hussain

R.21/23 Declarations of Interest

None

R.22/23 Minutes of the last Meeting

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 05 September be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

R.23/23 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 06 October 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, including a trend of reduced Exclusive Right of Burial uptake. Rental terms of buildings at Hardwick Hill remain outstanding.
- Whilst staffing costs are currently below budget across the committee, mainly due to timing and vacancies, when including the impact of YTD anticipated nationally agreed pay rises, they are estimated as £7k over budget YTD.
- 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.
- Underspend 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.
- Chemical application retreat is currently being finalised and accompanied by spot strimming as required.
- Floral sponsorship paid to CDC is awaiting invoice following retirement of displays.

Underspends on Resources Committee also principally

- Reduced Central Admin costs including salaries YTD.
- 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, excluding the impact of the expanded marketing role currently being advertised.
- Town Council Events income includes sponsorship across events and are ahead of budget, with costs managed within planned budgets.
- Other Costs & Income includes increased interest income, timing of which is delayed due to transfer from Santander of interest earned to-date (£40k). Costs associated with improvements the heating efficiency at the town hall will be met from earmarked reserves. Increased Town Hall maintenance costs relate to roof repairs undertaken ahead of the onset of winter.

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.24/23 Revised & Draft Revenue Estimates

A Summary of the revised estimates for 2023/24 and draft estimates 2024/25 is attached in Appendix 1 together with a full copy of the Estimates (2024/25).

The estimates include income from fees and charges, which for 2024/25 currently remain unchanged from this year, subject to receipt of guidance from Members.

The estimates for 2024/25 have been set based on a 2% rise in precept, and a rise of 2% 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 101 Litter Control & Cleansing**

Contractual costs linked to inflation have risen higher than anticipated in the 23/24 budget.

Cost Centre 103 Southam & Hardwick Cemetery

Increased capital costs associated with depot roof maintenance and insurance costs

Cost Centre 110 Parks and Open Spaces

Investment in wildflower meadow creation across Spiceball, PDP, Saffron Close and Hanwell View. Investment across the play estate maintenance as well as bridge, fence and bench repairs. Cleansing costs associated with expanded public toilet provision.

Cost Centre 114 Park Rangers

Salary increases, accompanied by investment in Southam Road depot alarm system and CCTV.

Cost Centre 120 Football Pitches & Horton View

Increased cricket maintenance equipment purchases if fixed two-year seasonal bookings are secured. Refurbishment of Horton View kitchen and alarm system.

Cost Centre 160 Capital costs

Planned delivery of earmarked landscaping projects in Hillview Play area refurbishment (earmark funding) in 23/24 alongside installation of PDP aerial runway, St Marys Churchyard landscaping, creation of Municipal Compost Bays at Spital Farm. Ongoing works in People's Park to improve the Warwick Road entrance, including wall works, and install of a café canopy and metal fencing. Provision of defibrillators throughout the pavilion parks are complemented by installation of link path works in Easington Park.

RESOURCES

Cost Centre 305 Central Administration

Salary costs reflect the expansion of marketing function in 23/24, accompanied by CRM marketing provision.

Cost Centre 310 Town Council Events

Planning town event in 214/25 to replace the Coronation event of 23/24. Specific resources reduced to match an anticipated fall in sponsorship income.

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

Utility costs changes following the expiry of the current fixed priced energy contract in 23/24. Roof repair costs at the Town Hall, with anticipated remedial repainting required in the spring on 2024. 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 in 24/25. Further investment in an expanded lights projection scheme to cover Armistice, Christmas and the start of 2024. Ongoing subsidy of operation costs for Woodgreen Outdoor Pool, alongside full election costs in 2024.

Cost Centre 320 Other Costs and Income

Increased interest income in 23/24 projected to grow in 24/25, supported by increased precept income.

FINANCIAL EFFECTS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

The overall proposals are felt to reflect a satisfactory basis for the Council to discharge its commitments for the remainder of 2023/24 and for 2024/25. They include some key changes which will facilitate increased activity in certain service areas.

The revised estimates for the current year maintain expenditure within the bottom line precept level approved at Budget Council in January 2023.

Consideration of this report falls within the provision of Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Members affected by those provisions should declare accordingly and refrain from voting.

It was RESOLVED to:

- Approve the revised estimates for 2023/24 as now submitted; and
- Refer the draft estimates for 2024/25, together with any comments, to the Grants and Budget Sub-Committee for further consideration.

R.25/23 External Audit Report

Members were invited to review the report of the external auditor.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive and note the External Audit report as set out in **Appendix A** to the minutes.

R.26/23 Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control Systems for the Financial Year 2023/24

Members considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO indicating that the Council was required, under the Accounts & Audit Regulations (England) 2015 as amended, to carry out an annual review of the effectiveness of its internal audit procedures.

The Committee was asked to review the Council's records and control systems. Members' attention was drawn in particular to the need to consider whether the various internal audit measures in place were commensurate with the risks involved.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to the Council that no changes be made to the Internal Controls programme (as set out in **Appendix B** to the Minutes).

R.27/23 Risk Management Policy

The Committee conducted an annual review of the Council's Risk Management Strategy/Policy on the recommendation of the Council's External Auditor.

The objectives of this strategy were reported as being the integration of risk management into the culture of the organisation.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that no changes be made to the Risk Management Policy (as set out at **Appendix C** to the Minutes).

R.28/23 Treasury Management Review

Members were advised that under the Local Government Act 2003 the Council was required to determine an Annual Investment Strategy. It was suggested that the Council be invited to adopt the existing policy without amendment.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED that the Council formally adopt the Treasury Management policy as set out in **Appendix D** to the Minutes.

R.29/23 Events Update

Members considered the report of the Events manager.

Updates

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 Scalectrics' 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 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 will take place in People's Park, and included 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.

Emergency Services Day – Saturday 2nd September

This event was successfully delivered again this year 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. This is not a Banbury Town Council event, but rather than just offering support to facilitate this, this is leaning more towards Event delivery. Weather: Good but cloudy / No rain.

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

This year's Canal Festival was run again as a two-day event for the second year in succession. The festival site was spread over the various locations of Canal side, Tooley's Boatyard, Chamberlain Court, The Mill car park, Castle Quay North 1 car park and Bridge Street Park. We brought in the Sealed Knot to participate at the event this year, which proved to be a great success - including accompanying the Town Mayor at the official Festival opening and demonstrations/Living History display in Bridge Street Park throughout the festival. This also had very relevant historical context due to the important role played by Banbury during the Civil War. There was also an increased number of Canal craft boat traders at the festival, with 14 boats this year compared to 9 in 2022. Live music acts (supplied by Bob Dainty) and dance performances (supplied by The Mill Arts Centre) took place throughout both days of the festival, to really add to the mix and contrast of the canal history and heritage events.

The event was well attended, particularly on the Saturday, which was a particularly good day for weather, with lesser numbers on the Sunday, although still a very busy day.

Upcoming Events:**Remembrance Sunday – Sunday 12th November 2023**

This event will comprise of a parade in the High Street followed by a church service in St. Mary's Church at 11:00am and a wreath laying ceremony in People's Park. Projections will be displayed on the Town Hall North Façade between Monday 6th – Sunday 19th November.

Christmas Lights Switch On – Sunday 26th November 2023

As in previous years, this event will be adjoining the LSD Victorian Christmas Market that will be taking place in Market Place over the two days prior to the switch on. We will be including funfair rides and attractions in the immediate vicinity around the Town Hall, with the music stage again being located at the bottom of Bridge Street before the junction into the bus station. There will also be roaming festive entertainment, an appearance by Santa at the Town Hall balcony, and a firework display to bring the event and the 2023 programme to a close.

Following on from their World Championship win, the School for Stars dance school have been chosen to switch on the Christmas Lights at 5:00pm.

In addition to the Armistice projections, seasonal projections will also be displayed as below, between 16:00-22:00 each day:

Christmas – Friday 24th November – Saturday 30th December (inclusive). Location – Castle Quay West Entrance façade.

New Year – Sunday 31st December – Friday 5th January (inclusive). Location – Castle Quay West Entrance façade.

Festival of Light – Friday 19th January – Sunday 25th February (inclusive).

Location 1 – Castle Quay West Entrance façade.

Location 2 – Town Hall, North façade

Location 3 – Odeon Cinema, Horsefair

Financial Effects & Risk Assessment

For 2022-2023 all events to date have been delivered within budget, with two events still outstanding before the end of the year.

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.

All events as well as the traders/suppliers taking are required to compile a risk assessment in advance, and we looking at how we could look to improve the safety officers working on events safe, this is a discussion point with the Events Working Group.

IT WAS RESOLVED TO receive and note the Events update.

The meeting ended at 7.49pm

