

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the General Services Committee held at **6.30pm on Tuesday 25 August 2026** at the Town Hall, Banbury.

Present: Councillor Cherry (Chair), Councillor Biegel (Vice Chair)
Councillors: Elugwu and Mears

Alternate: Councillor Creed for Councillor Richards

Officers: Mark Hassall (Town Clerk & RFO)
Paul Almond (Director of Environment)
Helen Durkin (Executive Officer)

BTC.21/26 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Richards

BTC.22/26 Declarations of Interest
None.

BTC.23/26 Minutes of the Last Meeting
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 02 June 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Biegel.

BTC.24/26 Parks and Cemeteries Service
The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment providing an update for Members on:

Parks & Cemeteries Team.
Park Ranger Service / Play Areas.
4th Corner Landscape Contract.
Tree Survey / Arboricultural Works.
Cleansing Service.
Bus Shelters.
The Café - People's Park.
Hard Surface Contract - Sports Facilities.
Play Area Refurbishment Contract.
Walled Garden Hard Landscaping Contract – People's Park.
Cemetery Extension – Hardwick Hill.

Parks & Cemeteries Team

- ◆ Grass cutting in the Cemeteries and People's Park has slowed up due to the hot weather.
- ◆ The planting of the summer floral bedding in People's Park and the Cemeteries was undertaken following the delivery from the nursery in June, watering has needed to increase to keep plants alive.
- ◆ Planting day in the Park on the 17th June was a great success again. The schools really embraced this year's theme celebrating the 100th anniversary of Winnie the Pooh. The children enjoyed a great day of planting the beds and they created amazing creative centre pieces. One of the highlights of the day was a visit to the rose garden by Winnie the Pooh and Tigger (thanks to staff Simon and Scott for being good sports).

- ◆ The cemetery team continue to undertake burial duties in our cemeteries delivering a high standard of service in line with funeral bookings.
- ◆ The work, although challenging due to the hot dry weather, has continued on the maintenance of the fine turf facilities, bowls and cricket, ensuring they are in good condition for club fixtures

Park Ranger Service / Play Area Update

- ◆ They 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 PlayZone inspections and maintenance continues weekly to be undertaken by the ranger team at both sites.
- ◆ The ranger team have also been supporting the Events Manager with the setup and running of the Council's summer events programme.

4th Corner Landscape Contract

- ◆ The Contractors performance against the work schedule is on track.
- ◆ The second weed treatment of roadside kerbs was completed in July.
- ◆ Discussions are still on-going with 4th Corner Landscaping Ltd regarding the available 3 year extension to the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

Arboricultural Works and Tree Survey

- ◆ The contract awarded to Keystone Environmental Ltd for the surveying of all the Council's tree stock has now been completed and fully recorded on the EzyTreev tree management software package.
- ◆ Officers are now analysing the work recommendations in preparation for issuing packages of tree works for pricing.
- ◆ Young tree maintenance of the newly planted trees continues, with watering never being more important than it has been this year.

Cleansing Service Update

- ◆ Cleaning of public toilets is ongoing, no problems to report.
- ◆ The weekly cleaning of all sports pavilions continues in-line with fixtures.
- ◆ The advert was placed for the Cleansing Operative vacancies, we will be undertaking interviews of the shortlisted candidates with a view to recruiting as soon as possible.
- ◆ 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.

Bus Shelters Update

- ◆ The new bus shelter on Highlands, damaged by a vehicle, has now been installed.
- ◆ The costs for the replacement will be recovered from the Council's insurance.

People's Park Café Update

- ◆ The Café continues to go from strength to strength in terms of attracting People to the Park.
- ◆ "The Café" is well promoted and has been very busy during summer, the Operator is pleased to see a regular repeat customer base developing.

Sports Facility - Hard Surfaces Update

- ◆ The contract for the refurbishment of sports surfaces by Sovereign Sports Ltd is now complete.
- ◆ The improvements to the Tennis Courts and MUGA's ensured that users have been enjoying the refurbished facilities over the summer.

Play Area Refurbishment Contract – Update

- ◆ The Play Area Tender opportunity was advertised for the refurbishment of:
 - Hill View Play Area – Combined LEAP/LAP.
 - Windrush Play Area – Combined LEAP/LAP.
 - Griffith Road Play Area – LAP.
- ◆ Tender return date is 28th August 2026, following evaluation and award, the planned installation to start in October 2026.

Walled Garden Hard Landscaping Contract – People's Park Update

- ◆ Following tender returns and evaluation the Hard Landscape Contract was awarded to Fergal Contracting Ltd.
- ◆ They took over the site on Monday 3rd of August and aim to complete the works complete by October 2026.

Hardwick Hill Cemetery Extension Update

- ◆ The additional information was submitted to Cherwell District Council's Planning Department, in connection with the Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan, Tree Planting Proposals and Cycle Parking, satisfying the queries raised by consultees.
- ◆ We are awaiting the draft S106 Agreement for signing from Cherwell District Council's Legal team followed by the decision notice. They have indicated this will be complete and determined by the end of August.

The Committee is invited to **RESOLVE**

To note the Parks and Cemeteries Service Update.

To note the Ranger Service / Play Area Update.

To note the 4th Corner Landscape Contract Update.

To note the Tree Survey / Arboricultural Works Update.

To note the Cleansing Service Update.

To note the Bus Shelter Update.

To note the People's Park Café Update.

To note the Sports Facility – Hard Surfaces Update.

To note the Play Area Refurbishment Contract Update.

To note the Walled Garden Hard Landscaping Contract – People's Park Update.

To note the Cemetery Extension Update – Hardwick Hill.

IT WAS RESOLVED to receive and note the parks and cemeteries report and all updates.

BTC.25/26 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 21 August 2026. 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. The main causes are addressed as follows:

General Services variances were principally:

- ◆ Staffing costs remain within budget, and are subject to central government annual salary increases agreed with trade unions which will be backdated to 1st April. This underspend is compounded by a vacancy in the Operations team, with recruitment underway.
- ◆ Expenditure on ClearSkies software license to manage burial space records will be accommodated within the annual budget process.
- ◆ Water charges are subject to a credit due to leaks following a replacement meter by water authorities at Peoples Park.
- ◆ Timing of invoicing for grounds maintenance works impacted by timing of August invoice.
- ◆ Landscaping costs include new extended seating area hardstanding outside the café in People's Park.
- ◆ Tree works orders have been scheduled from recommendations of the independent arboriculture inspections over an ongoing three-year timeframe.
- ◆ The second of three weed spraying sessions was completed in July as programmed, with snagging currently being completed and invoicing to follow.
- ◆ Vehicle fleet charges for annual servicing has been completed
- ◆ Cricket continue to be well used over the season, as well as wider sports facilities. Hire of PlayZones continues to increase, and provision of tennis camps aim to further support engagement in healthy activities across parks.
- ◆ Replacement of the boiler at Hanwell Fields pavilion is planned to be completed before the football season commences, as is works on Legionella prevention and risk management measures.
- ◆ The final invoice for Space for Girls at Princess Diana Park is anticipated following completion of snagging issues raised with the contractor.
- ◆ Replacement bus shelter costs is subject to insurance claim from the insured driver of the vehicle involved in the RTA.

The Committee is invited to **receive and note** the Income & Expenditure report.

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

Date of next meeting – **Tuesday 06 October 2026 at 18:30pm**

The meeting ended at 7:08pm