

Bicester Town Council



Bicester Town Council Meeting

Ref: 04/2425

Monday 24th June 2024

at 19:00hrs

**The Council Chamber, Bicester Town Council, The
Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**

Members:

Cllr Damien Maguire – **Chairman**, Cllr Jim Webb – **Vice-Chairman**
Cllr Harry Knight, Cllr Tom Beckett, Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Donna Ford, Cllr
Dan Hallett, Cllr Sam Holland, Cllr Rachel Mallows, Cllr Nicholas Mawer, Cllr
Christopher Pruden, Cllr Alisa Russell, Cllr Les Sibley, Cllr Paul Wheatley, Cllr
John Broad, Cllr Simon Lytton, Cllr Calum Miller, Cllr Michael Waine, Parkinson, Ideh
and Cllr John Willett

Other Circulation:

Cllr John Broad, Cllr Simon Lytton, Cllr Calum Miller,
Cllr Michael Waine, Cllr Rob Parkinson and Cllr Frank Ideh



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21 June 2024

To all Members of the Bicester Town Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** at **The Council Chamber, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS** on **Monday 24th June 2024** to commence at **19:00hrs** for the transaction of the following business.

Phil Evans
Town Clerk

Agenda

All Council Meetings are open to the public and press, unless otherwise stated.

1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence. Committee members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify Bicester Town Council (enquiries@bicester.gov.uk) prior to the meeting, stating the reason for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors are reminded to declare any interests on any item on this Agenda in accordance with Bicester Town Council's Code of Conduct.

3. Public Session

In accordance with Standing Orders 1 d-f, members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda.
Time allocated shall not exceed 10 minutes. No member shall speak for more than 2minutes.

4. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting

To confirm the minutes and **RESOLUTIONS** contained in the minutes of the following
Town Council meeting:

(Pages 6 -
18)

- **BTC06/2324 – Monday 15th January 2024**
- **BTC07/2324 – Monday 11th March 2024**
- **BTC7A/2324 Special – Tuesday 26th March 2024**
- **BTC02/2425 – Monday 20th May 2024**

5. Minutes of the Environment Committee Meeting

(Pages 19 - 28)

To confirm the minutes and **RESOLUTIONS** contained in the minutes of the following Environment Committee meeting:

- **ENV03A/2324 Special – Monday 30th October 2024**
- **ENV04/2324 – Tuesday 21st November 2024**
- **ENV05/2324 – Tuesday 16th January 2024**
- **ENV06/2324 – Tuesday 19th March 2024**

6. Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

(Pages 29 - 38)

To confirm the minutes and **RESOLUTIONS** contained in the minutes of the following Finance Committee meeting:

- **FIN04/2324 – Tuesday 19th December 2023**
- **FIN05/2324 – Tuesday 13th February 2024**
- **FIN06/2324 – Tuesday 26th March 2024**

7. Minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings

(Pages 39 - 45)

To confirm the minutes and **RESOLUTIONS** contained in the minutes of the following Planning Committee meeting:

- **PL11/2324 – Tuesday 27th February 2024**
- **PL12/2324 – Tuesday 16th April 2024**

8. Minutes of the Policy Committee Meeting

(Pages 46 - 47)

To confirm the minutes and **RESOLUTIONS** contained in the minutes of the following Policy Committee meeting:

- **POL05/2324 – Monday 19th February 2024**

9. Minutes of Working Parties

(Pages 48 - 69)

To confirm the minutes and **RESOLUTIONS** contained in the minutes of the following Working Party Group:

- AWP03/2324 – Wednesday 6th December 2023
- EWP04/2324 – Wednesday 8th November 2023
- EWP05/2324 – Wednesday 14th February 2024
- BTAG05/2324 – Thursday 25th January 2024
- BTAG06/2324 – Thursday 28th March 2024
- CSWG04/2324 – Thursday 4th January 2024
- CSWG052324 – Thursday 14th March 2024
- CSWG062324 – Thursday 2nd May 2024

- 10. Motion** (Page 70)
Councillor Ford bring forward a motion to full council, seconded by Councillor Mawer
- 11. Mayor's Report** (Pages 71 - 72)
Council is asked to **NOTE** the Mayor's Report and **CONSIDER** and **APPROVE** the appointment of more than one future cadet starting in the next Mayoral term 2025.
- 12. Market Square Update**
Presentation to be given by Cherwell Officers.
- 13. Annual Governance Statement (AGAR 1)** (Pages 73 - 120)
The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the accompanying documents and **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** the contents of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024.
- 14. Annual Governance Report (AGAR 2)** (Page 121)
The Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** the contents of Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt2).
- 15. Internal Audit Report** (Page 122)
Council is asked to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the contents of the audit and Statement of Accounts.
- 16. Exercise of Public Rights Report** (Pages 123 - 125)
Council is asked to **AGREE** the dates.
- 17. Earmarked Reserves Report** (Pages 126 - 127)
Committee is asked to:
- **AGREE** that the General Reserve be maintained at a level of £810,110 for this purpose;
 - **AGREE** that £307,921 be added to earmarked reserves and allocated as outlined in the attachment to this report.
 - **AGREE** that £30,100 for 9044 Partnership be moved and included under 9011 Play Areas and Open Space Investment.

18. Bank Mandate

(Page 128)

Council is asked to **APPROVE** the request for the Responsible Finance Officer to be included on the Bank Mandate.

19. Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 14th October 2024, 7pm, The Chamber Room, Garth House

Minutes of the Bicester Town Council

A meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** was held on **Monday 15th January 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Council Chamber, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Vice-Chairman)
 Cllr Tom Beckett
 Cllr Nick Cotter
 Cllr Donna Ford
 Cllr Dan Hallett
 Cllr Sam Holland
 Cllr Rachel Mallows
 Cllr Nicholas Mawer
 Cllr Rich Oliver
 Cllr Christopher Pruden
 Cllr Alisa Russell
 Cllr Les Sibley
 Cllr Jim Webb
 Cllr Paul Wheatley
 Cllr M Waine (County Councillor)

In Attendance:

Phil Evans – Town Clerk
 Julie Trinder – Administration Officer – Civic & Democratic

44/ Apologies for Absence

2324 RESOLVED that apologies of absence were received from Cllr Harry Knight.

45/ Declarations of Interest

2324 RESOLVED that declarations of interest were received from Cllr Donna Ford and Cllr Nicholas Mawer, regarding Agenda item number 11 Grounds Maintenance Contract, as members of Cherwell District Council's Executive committee.

46/ Public Session

2324 RESOLVED that no members of the public were present.

47/ Minutes of the Town Council Meeting

2324 RESOLVED that minutes of **BTC05/2324 – 20th November 2023** to be accepted and amended to read that Cllr Alisa Russell was in attendance.

Officers to check Cllr Russell's Mod.Gov access and attendance.

48/ Minutes of the Environment Committee Meeting

2324 RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of:

ENV04/2324 – 21st November 2023

Officers to check Cllr Russell's Mod.Gov access and attendance.

49/ Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

2324 RESOLVED that the Chairman of Finance Committee requested minutes **FIN04/2324 – 19th December 2023**, be deferred to the next Town Council Meeting to take place 11th March 2024.

Officers to check Cllr Russell's Mod.Gov access and attendance.

50/ Minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings

2324 RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of:

PL03/2324 – 4th July 2023

PL06/2324 – 3rd October 2023

51/ Minutes of the Policy Committee Meeting

2324 RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of :

POL03/2324 – 30th October 2023

52/ Report from Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District
2324 Councillors

RESOLVED that:

- Cllr Michael Waine reported an update on:
 - Market Square proposal to approve a request for 2-Way traffic and free parking
 - 20 mph consultation to appear in the next edition of the Garth Gazette
 - Oxfordshire County Council Highways – still received no answers from issues raised
 - Education Scrutiny Committee unhappy with fall in competence and how Oxfordshire is going
- Cllr Donna Ford provided an update and progress report on the proposals for the Bicester Market Square project. Cllr Ford to distribute report to Council.
- Cllr Nicholas Mawer reported that £1.6m of government money to be spent on bringing social housing properties back into use. Phase I of the project will house refugees.

53/ The Mayors Report

2324 RESOLVED that the Town Mayors report was **NOTED**.

54/ Grounds Maintenance Contract

2324 RESOLVED that Councillors **APPROVED** the letter of Engagement and the premium rate with a retrospective report detailing this.

Cllr Paul Wheatley requested a report of the premium rates (once understood).

Donna Ford and Cllr Nicholas Mawer abstained their vote due to being members of Cherwell District Council's Executive committee.

55/ Committee List

2324 RESOLVED that Councillors requested:

- To set up a Standing Orders committee meeting with 5 Councillors to discuss and agree the format of the 2024/2025 committee list.
- The potential to hold Webcast meetings. Town Clerk to take a proposal to the next Policy Committee meeting to be held on 29th January 2024
- That no meetings are held in the month of August

56/ Delegation of Authority

2324 RESOLVED that Councillors **AGREED** to no change and **NOTED** the content on the listed delegation of authority.

Challenges of Councillor understanding were raised for Town Clerk.

57/ Budget Sign-Off

2324 RESOLVED to **APPROVE** the budget for the following year 2024/2025 and to set a precept for the financial year 2024/2025 of £1,800,238.16 being a 2% increase on the precept set for 2023/24.

58/ Date of Next Meeting

2324 Monday 11th March 2024 – 7pm, The Chamber Room, Garth House

Close of meeting: 8.21pm.

Minutes of the Bicester Town Council

A meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** was held on **Monday 11th March 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Council Chamber, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Harry Knight (Chairman)
Cllr Damien Maguire (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Nick Cotter
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Christopher Pruden
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Jim Webb
Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:

Phil Evans - Town Clerk
Maria Galic - Administration Officer – Civic & Democratic

1/23 Apologies for Absence

24 RESOLVED that apologies of absence were received from Cllr Sam Holland.

2/23 Declarations of Interest

24 RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

3/23 Public Session

24 RESOLVED that no members of the public were present.

4/23 Bicester Foodbank Presentation

24 A presentation was held by Bicester Foodbank.
The following were **DISCUSSED** and **NOTED** by the Committee:

- Reach of the foodbank to local areas – in particular West Bicester
- Number of voluntary support
- Number of referrals
- Significance of monetary donations
- Supermarket donation points

In order to improve the Foodbank the following were suggested:

- Funding
- Achieve a vision of no Foodbank
- Increase local community awareness

5/23 Minutes of the Town Council Meeting**24 RESOLVED** that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of:

- **BTC06/2324 – 15th January 2024**

To be signed at the next meeting on **Monday 13th May 2024**.

Cllr Ford questioned the rate of increase applied which was confirmed as 2%. Members also asked officers to confirm it this was based on Dec-23 housing numbers.

6/23 Minutes of the Environment Committee Meeting**24 RESOLVED** that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of:

- **ENV02/2324 – 18th July 2023**
- **ENV03/2324 – 21st November 2023**

7/23 Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting**24 RESOLVED** that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions to be accepted as amended:

- **FIN03/2324 – 10th October 2023** - including the correct spelling of Alisa Russell and correction of the date Tuesday 19th December.

8/23 Minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings**24 RESOLVED** that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of:

- **PL07/2324 – 7th November 2023**
- **PL09/2324 – 9th January 2024**
- **PL10/2324 – 6th February 2024**

9/23 Minutes of the Policy Committee Meeting**24 RESOLVED** that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of:

- **POL04/2324 – 29th January 2024**

10/2 Minutes of Work Parties**324 RESOLVED** that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions of:

- **AWP01/2324 – 14th June 2023**
- **AWP02/2324 – 9th August 2023**
- **BTAG04/2324 – 30th November 2023**
- **CSWG03/2324 – 26th October 2023**
- **EWP03/2324 – 13th September 2023**

11/2 Mayors Report**324 RESOLVED** that the Town Mayors report was **NOTED**.**12/2 Reports from Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District
324 Councillors servicing Bicester Wards**

- Cllr Calum Miller reported an update on:
 - London Road Crossing
 - EWR
 - Banbury Road Roundabout
 - Budget Council agreed funding for:
 - Social care
 - Highway maintenance
 - Clearance of gulleys

- Cllr Alisa Russell reported an update on:
 - SEND funding for local schools

- Cllr Donna Ford reported an update on:
 - Banbury Road Roundabout Project

- Cllr Nick Mawer reported an update on:
 - Balanced Budget
 - Housing portfolio and rise of homelessness
 - Refugees
 - Improvement of signage for Banbury Road Roundabout

- Cllr Les Sibley reported an update on:
 - Improvement of signage for Banbury Road Roundabout

- Cllr Nick Cotter reported an update on:
 - Resolution of budget
 - Meeting with Chief Executive Officer of Cherwell District Council

- Cllr Rachel Mallows reported an update on:
 - Traffic on Bucknell Road
- Cllr Christopher Pruden reported an update on:
 - Pioneer Square

13/2 Southwold Play Area Report

324 RESOLVED that Councillors **APPROVED** the proposed expenditure of £90,000 on the Southwold Play Area.

14/2 Review of Financial Regulations

324 RESOLVED that Councillors **NOTED** the Financial Regulations Report and the amendments.

15/2 Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Control

324 RESOLVED that Councillors **APPROVED** the Effectiveness of Internal Control.

16/2 Standing Orders

324 RESOLVED that Councillors **APPROVED** the Standing Orders Review for 2024/25 along with the following amendment:

- *Removal of Chief Officer title and replacing with Town Clerk.*

17/2 RFO Appointment

324 RESOLVED that Councillors **APPROVED** the appointment of the new Responsible Finance Officer.

18/2 Councillor Committee Re-assignment

324 RESOLVED that Councillors have **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the Committee Reassignment.

19/2 Councillor Motion

324 RESOLVED that Councillors **APPROVED** the Councillor motion – Regeneration of the Market Square and have requested that:

- Town Clerk to invite Cherwell District Council to discuss the Market Square Project
- *Oversight Board* to be capitalised

Cllr Donna Ford has requested that the Councillor appointments be made Mayor Making.

Date of next Meeting: Monday 13th May 2024

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:35 hrs

Minutes of the Bicester Town Council

A meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** was held on **Tuesday 26th March 2024** at **20:30 hrs** at the **Council Chamber, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Harry Knight (Chairman)
 Cllr Damien Maguire (Vice-Chairman)
 Cllr Tom Beckett
 Cllr Donna Ford
 Cllr Dan Hallett
 Cllr Nicholas Mawer
 Cllr Christopher Pruden
 Cllr Alisa Russell
 Cllr Les Sibley
 Cllr Jim Webb
 Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:

Phil Evans, Town Clerk
 Jodi Clarke, Office Administrator

1/23 Apologies for Absence

24 RESOLVED that apologies were received from the following members:

- Cllr Cotter
- Cllr Mallows
- Cllr Holland

2/23 Declarations of Interest

24 RESOLVED that declarations were received from:

- Cllr Ford – Cherwell District Council Executive
- Cllr Mawer – Cherwell District Council Executive

3/23 Public Session

24 RESOLVED that no public were present.

4/23 Calendar and Committees 2024.2025

24 Cllr Wheatley proposed that an amendment is made to the Committee membership on the following meetings:

- Planning Committee – Change from 13 members to 11.
- Environment Committee – Change from 10 members to 9.
- Finance Committee - Change from 10 members to 9.
- Policy Committee - Change from 10 members to 9.

Cllr Mawer seconded the amendment, with an overall vote from councillors. 6 voted for the motion & 4 voted against.

Minutes: BTC7A/Special/2324: Bicester Town Council Meeting
 Tuesday 26th March 2024

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Signed

Dated

The Committee **APPROVED** the above proposal for the 2024/2025 meeting calendar.

5/23 Changes to Format of Civic Service and Parade

24 The Town Clerk explained to the Committee why changes to the Civic Service & Parade has been requested by the Garrison Sergeant Major.

Councillor Beckett left the meeting at 20:57.

Councillor Maguire proposed that the Committee **APPROVED** option 2, Councillor Pruden seconded.

6/23 Exclusion of Press and Public

24 **RESOLVED** that no press or public were present.

7/23 Bicester Public Realm Framework

24 The Committee **APPROVED** the following to be sent on the Councillors behalf to Cherwell District Council:

Dear James,

In Phil's absence, please see the below comments from Councillors after the presentation they were given.

- Design codes for the Town Centre should be drawn up by Cherwell District Council in conjunction with Bicester Town Council
- "Enhance" Face lift for the walk from Bicester Village to Bicester Town Centre in compassing signage through the new park.
- Encourage people to live in the flats above the shops.
- Rest stops on the route into town at Picturesque locations.
- Do not close the Causeway to cars – **or previous suggestion of counter-one way for cycles is not welcome. The road is not wide enough for safety.**
- Causeway pathway widened. -
- Signage improved. **Signage and pedestrian route development from BV/Pingle Field to Town Centre.**
- Accessibility to shops.
- Maintain two way traffic (vehicles) in **Market Square. We do not welcome full pedestrianization of Market Square.**
- Level crossing development, critical to future. **Impact on access to Town Centre.**
- More trees.
- Free Parking.
- Cycling on Sheep Street should be subject to Public Consultation
- Claremont Carpark to stay as parking.

8/23 Garth Park Garages

24 **RESOLVED** that the Committee **APPROVED** the request for the purchase of the Garth Park Garages from the earmarked reserve 90/9020 BTC premises for the provisional value maximum.

CLOSE OF MEETING: 21:49 hrs

Minutes of the Bicester Town Council

A meeting of the **Annual Town** was held on **Monday, 20th May 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire
Cllr Jim Webb
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Christopher Pruden
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Paul Wheatley
Cllr John Willett

In Attendance:

Phil Evans, Town Clerk
Helen Pool, Responsible Finance Officer

1/2425 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies were received for: Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Tom Beckett and Cllr Dan Hallett.

2/2425 Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

3/2425 Appointment of committees

RESOLVED that the committee **AGREED** the following recommendations:

- i. **AGREE** that the nine members are **APPOINTED** to the Environment Committee, Councillors: R. Mallows; C.Pruden; A.Russell; J.Willett; H.Knight; L.Sibley; D.Ford; N.Mawer and D.Maguire.
APPROVED the **APPOINTMENT** of Cllr R.Mallows as Chair of the Environment Committee, seconded by Cllr Paul Wheatley.
- ii. **AGREE** that the nine members are **APPOINTED** to the Policy Committee, Councillors: R. Mallows; P.Wheatley; A.Russell; N.Cotter; H.Knight; J. Webb; S.Holland; N.Mawer and Tom Beckett.
APPROVED the **APPOINTMENT** of Cllr P. Wheatley as Chair of the Policy Committee, seconded by Cllr C.Pruden.
- iii. **AGREE** that the nine members are **APPOINTED** to the Finance Committee, Councillors: R. Mallows; P.Wheatley; A.Russell; N.Cotter; L.Sibley; D.Hallett; S.Holland; D.Ford and T.Beckett.
APPROVED the **APPOINTMENT** of Cllr A.Russell as Chair of the Finance Committee, seconded by Cllr Paul Wheatley.
- iv. **AGREE** that the 11 members are **APPOINTED** to the Planning Committee, Councillors: R. Mallows; C. Pruden; N.Cotter; J.Willett; H.Knight D.Hallett; J.Webb; S.Holland; N.Mawer; D.Maguire and T.Beckett.

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Minutes: BTC02/2425, Committee Appointment: Bicester Town Council Meeting
Monday 20th May 2024

Signed

Dated

APPROVED the **APPOINTMENT** of Cllr N.Nawer as Chair of the Planning Committee, seconded by Cllr Paul Wheatley.

Working Parties and Task and Finish Groups

RESOLVED that the committee **AGREED** the following recommendations

- i. **APPROVED** the **APPOINTMENT** to the Personnel Committee, of Councillors: R.Wallows; C. Pruden; D.Hallett; N.Mawer and N.Maguire. Chair to be approved in next Personnel Meeting.
- ii. **APPROVED** the **APPOINTMENT** to the Events Working Group, Councillors: A.Russell; C.Pruden; J.Webb; D.Ford and N.Maguire. Chair to be approved in next Events Meeting.
- iii. **APPROVED** the **APPOINTMENT** to the Community Sports Working Group, Councillors: N.Cotter; C.Pruden; J.Webb; N.Mawer and D. Maguire. Chair to be approved in next Sports Meeting.
- iv. **APPROVED** the **APPOINTMENT** to the Allotments Working Party, Councillors: P.Wheatley; A.Russell; J.Webb; S.Holland and D.Maguira. Chair to be approved in next Allotments Meeting.
- v. **APPROVED** the **APPOINTMENT** to the Assets Working Party, Councillors: C.Pruden; P.Wheatley; H.Knight; N.Mawer and T.Beckett. Chair to be approved in next Assets Meeting.
- vi. Councillors raised the concern that not all Officers from other Councils attend the Traffic Advisory Group. Attendance by non-Bicester Town Councillors has waned.
A motion was passed to retain 3 members for the Traffic Advisory Group. The Committee **AGREED** to the reduction of members and **APPOINTED** to the Traffic Advisory Group, Councillors: J.Willett; D.Hallett and D.Ford. Chair to be approved in next Traffic Meeting.
The Councillors **ASKED** the Town Clerk to review the Terms of Reference regarding non-attendance by other Officers and to ensure that the Officers are made aware that the Group will be disbanded due to lack of attendance, if necessary.
- vii. **APPROVED** the **APPOINTMENT** to the Standing Orders Committee, Councillors: N.Cotter; P.Wheatley; L.Sbiley; N.Mawer and T.Beckett. Chair to be approved in next Standing Orders Meeting.
- viii. **APPROVED** the **APPOINTMENT** to Appeals, Councillors: N.Cotter; P.Wheatley; L.Sbiley; S.Holland and D.Maguire. Chair to be approved in next Standing Appeals Meeting.

Representatives to Outside Bodies

RESOLVED that the Council **AGREED** the following recommendation:

1. **APPROVE** the arrangements and reporting back on representation on outside bodies in accordance with Council Policy:
2. **APPROVE** the **APPOINTMENT** to outside bodies for 2024/25 as follows:
 - Bicester Vision – Chair of Policy
 - Bicester Food Bank – Chairman of Policy
 - Bicester and District Twinning Association – Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair of Policy

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Minutes: BTC02/2425, Committee Appointment: Bicester Town Council Meeting
Monday 20th May 2024

Signed

Dated

- Strategic Oversight Partnership – Cllr Mallows
- Lady Jersey Trust – N Mawer
- Citizen’s Advice Bureau – P Wheatley

4/2425 Calendar of Meetings.

The Councillors **REQUESTED** that they be consulted 3 days before a meeting is due to be held of changes to the date and a reason needs to be provided.

RESOLVED the calendar of meetings for 2024/2025 is **NOTED**.

5/2425 Meeting the Attendance Register

Cllr. Pruden asked for his attendance to be checked and Cllr L.Sibley asked for all attendances for 2023/2024 to be reviewed as did Cllr Wheatley.

The Town Clerk will **REVIEW** all attendances.

6/2425 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 24th June 2024

Close of meeting: 7.40pm

Minutes of the Environment Committee

A meeting of the **Environment Committee** was held on **Monday 30th October 2023** at **20:00 hrs** at **The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 2PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Les Sibley

In Attendance:

Jodi Clarke, Office Administrator
Phil Evans, Town Clerk

1/23 Apologies for Absence

24 RESOLVED that apologies were received from:

- Cllr Chris Pruden
- Cllr Jim Webb
- Cllr Nick Mawer
- Cllr Harry Knight

2/23 Declarations of Interest

24 RESOLVED that declarations were received by Cllr Donna Ford & Cllr Les Sibley as they are Councillors at Cherwell District Council.

3/23 Minutes of the Environment Committee

24 RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the minutes for the following meeting:

- **ENV03/2324** – 12th September 2023 at 19:00hrs

Councillors **NOTED** that the Allotment Working Party minutes from the 14th June be put into the next Environment meeting on the 21st November 2023 as it was missed off the last agenda.

4/23 Public Session

24 No public were present.

5/23 Whitelands Cafe Dishwasher

24 RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** to look at alternative Supplier no higher the Supplier B.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 21 November 2023 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:58 hrs

Minutes of the Environment Committee

A meeting of the **Environment Committee** was held on **Tuesday 21st November 2023** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 2PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)

Cllr Donna Ford

Cllr Harry Knight

Cllr Rachel Mallows

Cllr Nicholas Mawer

Cllr Les Sibley

In Attendance:

Paul Canning, Service Manager

Shannon O'Connor, Events & Marketing

1/23 Apologies for Absence

24 RESOLVED that apologies have been received for Cllr Christopher Pruden and Cllr Alisa Russell

2/23 Declarations of Interest

24 RESOLVED that no declarations were received.

3/23 Public Session

24 RESOLVED that the committee received presence

- Eco environmental advocate
- Bicester Green Gym
- Linda Burn

4/23 Minutes of the Environment Committee

24 RESOLVED to confirm the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting ENV03/2324 ENV03A/2324 were **NOTED** and **APPROVED**

5/23 Minutes of the Events Working Party

24 RESOLVED to confirm the minutes of the Events Working Party meeting EWP02/2324 ENP03/2324 were **NOTED** and **APPROVED**

6/23 Community Football Working Group Minutes

24 RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** community sport working group

Committee requested the agenda headings align with minute titles 'Community Sports Working Group'

7/23 Budget

24 RESOLVED that the budget proposal for 2023/2024 is referred back to Town Clerk to:

- Check rates with CDC regarding Whiteland's
- Confirm the split between Whiteland's café and Whiteland's sports centre
- Meter readings need to be placed onto Finance/budget agendas

Minutes: ENV04/2324: Environment Committee Meeting
Tuesday 21st November 2023

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Signed

Dated

- Breakdown of one off payments to be visible – capital budget / revenue budget

Service manager to gather quotes for a new ride on mower

Cllr Mallows suggested a conversation around solar panels

8/23 Refund

24 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** the refund request for Glory Farm on 3 bookings during September 2023 and October 2023.

9/23 Sports Facilities

24 RESOLVED that committee support the recommendation.

- Officers to look into section 106 clause around pitches
- Whiteland's cricket pitch to be looked at with CDC agreement
- Officers to advertise the cricket pitch as a mixed sports facility.

10/2 Fun Fair 2024

324 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVE** the requests of locations and dates set out in the report.

11/2 Southwold Play Area Location

324 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVE** option 3 under the basis that the footprint of the park is increased.

12/2 Whitelands Function Room Partition

324 RESOLVED that officers must re-submit report with a clear plan and understand the below

- Terms of the lease
- Clarity on who asked for the partition

13/2 Garth Park Splash Pad

324 RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report.

Public consultation to start on social media in FEB 2024.

14/2 Approved Projects

324 RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the work schedule for approved projects

Officers to include tiny forests to schedule

15/2 Section 6 Motion

324 RESOLVED that committee referred item back to officers for the following investigations

- Garth Court residents – they need to be consulted
- Staff costings matrix for opening and closing times
- How many complaints collated

- Staff safety

16/2 Forward Plan
324 RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report

2024 Events budget to be added.

Date of next Meeting: Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:37 hrs

Minutes of the Environment Committee

A meeting of the **Environment Committee** was held on **Tuesday 16th January 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 2PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)

Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Jim Webb

In Attendance:

1/23 Apologies for Absence

24 RESOLVED that apologies were received from
Cllr Pruden
Cllr Knight

2/23 Declarations of Interest

24 RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

3/23 Minutes of the Environment Committee

24 RESOLVED that committee **CONFIRMED** minutes and resolutions from the following meetings:

- ENV02/2324 held on the 18th July 2023
- ENV03/2324 held on the 21st November 2023

4/23 Minutes of the Allotment Working Party

24 RESOLVED that committee **CONFIRMED** minutes and resolutions from the following meeting:

- AWP01/2324 held on 14th June 2023

5/23 Minutes of the Events Working Party

24 RESOLVED that committee **CONFIRMED** minutes and resolutions from the following meetings:

- BE03/2324 held on the 13th September 2023.

6/23 Public Session

24 RESOLVED that public were present and had 2 minutes to communicate with the committee

Minutes: ENV05/2324: Environment Committee Meeting
Tuesday 16th January 2024

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Signed

Dated

- Brian Welters – Tiny forests/Global warming
- John Broad – Langford park – replanting of hedge on mallards way
- Angela from Langford community Orchard

7/23 Allotment Report

24 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** the report on the basis that all tenants had been given notice via Allotment officer and not previous RFO.

8/23 Southwold Play Area

24 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** the Southwold play area design for Phase 1 and **APPROVED** the spend to be taken from :
Projects Play Area/Open Space Investment

9/23 Wessex Mower

24 RESOLVED that committee approved **Supplier C**

- Service manager to provide clarity via email to the committee as to why it was not part of budget sign off meeting (timing of meetings)

10/2 Garth Park Summer Bedding

324 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVE** the designs in the report.

11/2 Allotment Noticeboards

324 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVE** AF30/A2 for Coln Close, Evenlode House & Anson Way.
RESOLVED that committee **APPROVE** AF30/6A4 for Leach Road & Claypits

12/2 Allotment Privacy Notice Report

324 RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report and **APPROVE** the Privacy notice goes to the Policy committee.

13/2 Tenancy Agreement Report

324 RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the highlighted tenancy agreement to move onto the Policy committee.

14/2 Bicester Pride Event 2024

324 RESOLVED that the committee **APPROVED** the Bicester Pride 2024 event.

15/2 Nais House Event 2024

324 RESOLVED that the committee **APPROVE** the Nai's House #BeNice event 2024.

16/2 Approved Projects

324 RESOLVED that the committee **NOTED** the approved projects report

- Cllr Mawer recommended projects to be prioritised when present on the list for too long
- Cllr's questioned if the Grounds maintenance contract change would delay any projects

- 17/2 **Forward Plan**
- 324 **RESOLVED** that the committee **REVIEWED** and **COMMENTED** on the forward plan.

Cllr Mallows requested Wild Flower beds in Garth Park to be added for discussion.

- 18/2 **Exclusion of Press and Public**
- 324 **RESOLVED** that the **EXCLUSION** of Press and Public was executed.

- 19/2 **Bowls Club Asbestos Survey Report**
- 324 **RESOLVED** that committee **APPROVED** the report for Bowls Club Asbestos with costs retrospectively approved in the next environment meeting – 19th March 2024

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 19 March 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:02 hrs

Minutes of the Environment Committee

A meeting of the **Environment Committee** was held on **Tuesday 19th March 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 2PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)
Cllr Christopher Pruden (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Dan Hallett (Substitute)

In Attendance:

Paul Canning – Service Manager
Shannon O'Connor – Events & Marketing Administrator

1/23 Apologies for Absence

24 RESOLVED that apologies were received from:

- Cllr Harry Knight
- Cllr Dan Hallett substituted for Cllr Jim Webb

2/23 Declarations of Interest

24 RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

3/23 Minutes of the Environment Committee

24 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** the **MINUTES** and **RESOLUTIONS** of the following Environment Committee meeting:

- **ENV/05/2324 – 16th January 2024**

4/23 Community Football Working Group Minutes

24 RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** the **MINUTES** and **RESOLUTIONS** of the following Community Sports Working Group meeting:

- **CSWG04/2324 – 4th January 2024**

Committee requested the name is changed for the above group to ensure all communication states Community Sports Working Group.

5/23 Presentation by BBOWT

24 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** and thanked BBOWT for the presentation and the hard work within the community.

6/23 Public Session

24 RESOLVED that members of the public were present.

- Brian Walters – Bio diversity/Climate resolution/Tiny Forests

- Angela from Langford community orchid

7/23 **Lions Club D-Day**

24 **RESOLVED** that committee **APPROVED** the memorial bench including the proposed installation location.

Proposed by Cllr Maguire
Second by Cllr Mawer

8/23 **Garth Park**

24 **UN-RESOLVED** by committee and requested to be deferred back to officers

Committee would like to see more of the following for a Splash Park

- Chemicals that would be used
- Detailed running cost
- External funding figures

Cllr Ford has shared a number of grant and funding options for officers to investigate and highlighted local businesses such as BRITA to support.

Cllr Hallett supports a destination splash pad

Cllr Mawer highlighted this would need to go to full council due to the costing

Committee suggested look at Didcot minutes for their Splash Park

Committee would like a special meeting to be held or take the report to full council to approval

Committee **AGREE** option 2 on the basis that extra funding is available

9/23 **Play Areas**

24 **UN-RESOLVED** as committee want to know the responsibility of the new grounds maintenance contract

Committee agrees in principle to do the inspections

Committee suggested a doodle poll consultation

10/2 **Winter Bedding**

324 Committee **REQUESTED** and **APPROVED** that the following amendments are made to the recommendation, as per the following

The committee is requested to **APPROVE** offices make no further purchase of winter bedding for 2024, and review for 2025.

Proposed by Cllr Maguire
Second by Cllr Pruden

11/2 **Approved Projects**

324 **RESOLVED** that committee **NOTE** the scheduled for approved projects.

Minutes: ENV06/2324: Environment Committee Meeting
Tuesday 19th March 2024

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Signed

Dated

Cllr Mawer and Cllr Ford questioned officers on the Whiteland’s lease with BTC, officers updated cllrs that the lease from CDC has not yet been signed but stands with solicitors.

12/2 Forward Plan
324 RESOLVED that committee **REVIEWED** and **COMMENTED** on the Forward plan.

13/2 Exclusion of Press and Public
324

14/2 Bicester Bowls Club Survey
324 RESOLVED that committee requested to **retrospectively APPROVE** the costs for urgent asbestos removal from the identified budget Projects/Asset maintenance

Date of next Meeting: TBC

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:45

Minutes of the Finance Committee

A meeting of the **Finance Committee** was held on **Tuesday 19th December 2023** at **19:00 hrs** at the **Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Rd, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Paul Wheatley (Chairman)
Cllr Tom Beckett (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Les Sibley

In Attendance:

Louise Steele – Locum RFO

63/2324 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Sam Holland and Harry Knight.

64/2324 Declarations of Interest

Councillors made no declarations of interest.

65/2324 Minutes of the Finance Committee

Upon the proposal of Cllr Wheatley, seconded by Cllr Sibley the minutes of the extraordinary Finance Committee meeting held on 8 August 2023 (**FIN02A/2324**) were **NOTED** and **APPROVED**. Upon the proposal of Cllr Wheatley, seconded by Cllr Mallows and those of the ordinary meeting held on 10th October 2023 (**FIN03/2324**) were also **NOTED** and **APPROVED**.

66/2324 Public Session

The Committee received no representations there being no members of the public present.

67/2324 Finance Report

The Committee **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the Income, Expenditure and Variances Report to Month 8 (the end of November 2023).

Questions were asked in relation to the following:

- Whether the rates expenditure for Whitelands Sports Village is split into two and one part charged to the tenant
- Is the Town Council claiming leisure relief in respect of the Whitelands rates
- What code 4099 108 represents

The Locum RFO undertook to answer those questions in due course.

68/2324 Bank Balances

The Committee **RECEIVED** the consolidated bank reconciliation for the period ending 30 November 2023 and **APPROVED** the bank balances noting that Cllr Wheatley had signed the bank reconciliations up to the end of November 2023.

69/2324 Payments

The Committee **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the schedule of payments, totalling £807,842.86, made since those reported to Finance Committee on 10th October 2023. Councillors noted that they had not had the opportunity to approve the payments before they were made.

The Committee **NOTED** and **APPROVED** that the credit card should in future be paid in full by variable direct debit on or around the 18th of each month.

70/2324 Aged Debtors

The Committee **NOTED** the Aged Creditors as at 30th November 2023.

71/2324 Aged Creditors

The Committee **NOTED** the Aged Debtors as at 30th November 2023.

72/2324 Internal Auditor's Report

The Committee **CONSIDERED** the report of the interim internal audit conducted on 14 November 2023 and **AGREED** that the recommendations therein should be added to the Action Plan to enable the Committee to keep progress under review.

73/2324 Action Plan

The Committee **REVIEWED** progress against the action plan.

74/2324 Additional Matters on the Agenda

The Committee consider a tabled report addressing the three matters listed on the agenda that the locum RFO had not been able to progress prior to dispatch of the agenda.

The Committee:

- a) **NOTED** the information given in the report on utility usage;
- b) **APPROVED** up to £250 expenditure on trophies for a Best Kept Allotment Award, the funds to be taken from the EMR Play Areas/Open Space Investment; and
- c) **APPROVED** £1,400 expenditure on goal posts at Manston Park, the funds to be taken from the EMR Play Areas/Open Space Investment.

75/2324 Budget

The Committee considered the presentation and detail of the budget for the financial year 2024/25. The locum RFO undertook to include a statement of variation with the budget papers to be circulated to Full Council. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council that it receive and consider the budget.

76/2324 Appointments of RFO

The Committee **NOTED** the appointment of Helen Pool as RFO effective Monday 15th January 2024.

77/2324 Date of Next Meeting

- Wednesday 13th February 2024 – 7pm, The Chamber Room, Garth House.

Minutes of the Finance Committee

A meeting of the **Finance Committee** was held on **Tuesday 13th February 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Rd, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Paul Wheatley (Chairman)

Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Les Sibley

In Attendance:

Helen Pool – Responsible Finance Officer
Louise Steel – Locum Responsible Finance Officer

1/23 Apologies for Absence

- 24 RESOLVED** that apologies be received from the following:
- Cllr Harry Knight
 - Cllr Dan Hallett
 - Cllr Tom Beckett

2/23 Declarations of Interest

- 24 RESOLVED** that no declarations were received.

3/23 Minutes of the Finance Committee

- 24** The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on **19th December 2023** (FIN04/2324) were **DEFERRED** to the following Finance Committee meeting.

4/23 Public Session

- 24 RESOLVED** that the Committee received no representations.

5/23 Finance Report

- 24** The Committee **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the Income, Expenditure and Variances Report to Month 9 (the end of December 2023).

1. Further Clarification Required.

The Committee asked the RFO to provide further information on the answers to questions raised on the 19th December 2023:

- i. Why was the Cherwell Lease regarding Whitelands, not yet signed?
- ii. Provide an explanation as to why the Town Council is not claiming Leisure Relief in respect of Whitelands rates.

2. Other Information

- i. The Committee **REQUESTED** that the two BACS payments suspended on Code 4099 Misc Expenses be investigated and promptly reported back to the Committee.
- ii. The RFO is to complete journal transfers for correction of code 4216 Litter/Dog

Minutes: FIN05/2324: Finance Committee Meeting
Tuesday 13th February 2024

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Signed

Dated

Bin Emptying and 4030 Waste Removal.

6/23 Bank Balances

24 The Committee **NOTED** the report detailing bank balances at the end of December 2023 and **APPROVED** the bank balances noting that Cllr Wheatley had signed the bank reconciliations up to the end of December 2023.

7/23 Payments

24 The Committee **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the schedule of payments, totalling £270,879.60, made since those reported to Finance Committee on 19th December 2023.

8/23 Aged Debtors

24 The Committee **NOTED** the Aged Debtors as of 31st December 2023. Councillors requested that the wording 'Wedding' to describe a Debtor needs to be changed to 'Registrar' for clarification purposes.

9/23 Aged Creditors

24 The Committee asked the **RFO** to conduct one final investigation into the Cherwell District Council Aged Creditors dating between 2018 and 2021 and depending on the outcome of the investigation, to either record the cost as a creditor on the Balance Sheet for 7 years per date of debt or write off the consolidated creditor. The Committee **NOTED** the Aged Creditors as at 31st December 2023.

10/2 Review of Financial Regulations

324 The Committee **REVIEWED** the report and the amendments to Financial Regulations and **AGREED** that the recommendations therein be passed through the Policy Committee and from thence to Full Council.

11/2 Precept

324 The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and the impact of the increase in the number of usable households (the taxbase) in the town on the 2024/25 Precept and the Band D council tax bill.

12/2 Environment Committee Proposals

324 The Committee reviewed the request from the Environment Committee for an allocation of spend of £90,000 to be taken from Projects Play Area/Open Space Investment (4313 / 110). The Committee considered the recommendation from the RFO that the project instead be funded from earmarked reserves as there were insufficient funds in the Investment. The Committee **AGREED** to use remaining funds from Projects Play Area and for the balance to be taken from earmarked reserves.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the remaining reports and **APPROVED** the allocation of funds from earmarked reserves.

13/2 Review of Effectiveness of Internal Controls

324 The Committee **NOTED** progress against the action plan arising from the review and to agree to **REPORT** to Full Council to inform Full Council's conduct of the review of the effectiveness of internal control.

14/2 BT Direct Debit

324 The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and **APPROVED** payment of invoices from BT by direct debit.

15/2 Grant Aid
324 The Committee reviewed the Grant Aid application for Claypits Community Allotments. The Committee **APPROVES** the application subject to risk mitigation for any ongoing costs (Claypits Community Allotments to be responsible for all future costs) and insurances.

16/2 Additional Matters Raised
324 The Committee **REQUEST** that there be a report on utility usage at each Finance Committee meeting going forward.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 26 March 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:45

Minutes of the Finance Committee

A meeting of the **Finance Committee** was held on **Tuesday 26th March 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Rd, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Paul Wheatley (Chairman)
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Harry Knight
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Damien Maguire (Substitute)
Cllr Nicholas Mawer (Substitute)
Cllr Christopher Pruden (Substitute)

In Attendance:

Helen Pool – Responsible Finance Officer
Jodi Clarke – Finance Assistant

17/2 Apologies for Absence

324 RESOLVED that apologies be received from the following Committee members alongside their substitutes:

- Cllr Tom Beckett – Cllr Damien Maguire substituted.
- Cllr Rachel Mallows – Cllr Chris Pruden substituted.
- Cllr Nick Cotter
- Cllr Sam Holland

18/2 Declarations of Interest

324 RESOLVED that no declarations were received.

19/2 Minutes of the Finance Committee

324 RESOLVED to **CONFIRM** the minutes of the Finance Committee meetings:

- **FIN04/2324** held on 19th December 2023 at 19:00hrs
- **FIN05/2324** held on 13th February 2024 at 19:00hrs

20/2 Public Session

324 RESOLVED that the Committee received no representations.

21/2 Finance Report

324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED & REVIEWED** the Income, Expenditure and Variances Report to the **First 10 months of the current financial year**.

Councillors asked what the cost of the next by-election is going to be, the Responsible Finance Officer informed the Committee that the cost would be £5,500.44.

Cllr Ford stated that the report should finish with a surplus, the Responsible Finance Officer confirmed there was £23,000 to £24,000 in commitments. She explained that journals had been completed in March that do not reflect on this report and that the 'Movement to General Reserves' at year end will be different to that stated in the detailed report.

Cllr Donna Ford expressed concerns regarding the cost of Temporary Staff (4003/105 pg.16) for a Locum Responsible Finance Officer compared to the current condition of the accounts.

Councillors **REQUEST** the Responsible Finance Officer to send them the Period 12 variance summary once it is completed.

Cllr. Alisa Russell **REQUESTED** a further report showing the key performance indicators (KPI) illustrating the percentage of the expenditure over income per cost centre.

19:08 – Cllr Mawer arrived as a substitute for Cllr Holland.

5.3 . Other Information

i. Why was the Cherwell Lease regarding Whitelands, not yet signed?

We are waiting for it to be resubmitted by Cherwell District Council, they have passed it to a committee within Cherwell for approval.

Cllr Donna Ford stated that she had seen the completed lease and that it would have been sent to the Town Council.

The Town Clerk is **REQUESTED** to investigate where the lease is.

22/2 Bank Balances

324 RESOLVED that Committee **APPROVED** the bank balances.

Cllr Ford questioned the Barclays Treasury Deposit as the previous meetings report showed the balance as £0 but this report shows £1.3m. The Responsible Finance Officer responded and informed Cllr Ford that they hadn't yet received the bank statement for this account. Cllr Ford **REQUESTED** that going forward instead of putting £0 into the report it should state that the statement hasn't been received.

The committee **NOTED** the bank balances for the year to 31st January 2024.

23/2 Payments

324 RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the payment schedules, totalling £376,679.91 since those reported to Finance Committee on 13th February 2024.

24/2 Aged Debtors

324 RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the payment schedules, totalling £376,679.91 since those reported to Finance Committee on 13th February 2024.

Cllr Ford asked whether invoices have been sent for CAB, the Town Clerk informed the Committee that normally they apply for Grant Aid to cover their rent but have not applied this year.

25/2 Aged Creditors

324 Councillors **REQUESTED** the Responsible Finance Officer ask Cherwell District Council for a Statement of any outstanding invoices. Based on the outcome of the statement, Councillors will be asked to **APPROVE** one of the following three options:

i. Record the cost as a creditor on the Balance Sheet for 7 years per date of the

debt.

- ii. Write off the consolidated creditor.
- iii. Pay the invoices if they appear on the statement.

Cllr Mawer stated that if Sheep Street bollards are on this statement then they need to contested as these bollards do not work.

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTE & APPROVED** option 3.

26/2 Bank Mandates

324 RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the following to go to Full Council on the 20th May 2024:

- The request for the Responsible Finance Officer to be included on the Bank Mandates.

27/2 Grant Aid Applications

324 Grant Aid 23/24

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** that the remaining Grant Aid for 23/24 be used on the basis that there will be no impediment for approving for the following applicants:

- Orchard Baptist Church.
- Claypits Community Allotments.

Grant Aid 24/25

Committee **REQUESTED** that the following applications for both 23/24 & 24/25 Grant Aid be investigated and brought back to the next Finance meeting:

- i. Hindu Society – 23/24 Grant Aid.
- ii. Bicester Hindu Society – 24/25 Grant Aid.
- iii. Bicester Pride – 24/25 Grant Aid.
- iv. Launton Village – 24/25 Grant Aid.
- v. Nai's House – 24/25 Grant Aid.

RESOLVED that Nai's House is to be deferred to the Policy Committee.

The Councillors **APPROVE** the expenditure of the Grant Aid applications received with the Reopening of Grant Aid Applications 2023/24 be taken from the 2024/2025 budget as there will be insufficient time for the funds to be spent, as per the Grant Policy, within the year they pertain to.

The Committee **REJECTED** the following application for Grant Aid 24/25:

- Heyford Park Social Committee – Unanimous vote from Councillors

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** that the following applicants for Grant Aid for 24/25 with ARCh being reduced to £1,000:

- 1st Bicester Intrepid Scout Association.
- ARCh (Assisted reading for Children)
- Bicester Athletic
- Bicester Autism
- Bicester Evergreens
- Bicester Food Bank
- Bicester Widows/Widowers
- Bure Park Primary PTA
- One-Eighty
- Trinity Camera Orchestra
- Home Start Bicester
- Hanover Gardens

28/2 Utilities

324 Cllr Wheatley asked what would be better monthly comparison or Annual comparison on utilities.

Cllr Ford & Russell proposed starting with monthly as it is easier to compare each month rather than annually, the Committee **AGREED** to start with monthly comparisons.

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the report.

29/2 Insurances

324 Cllr Ford expressed that they cannot approve something with out seeing other competitors in the market. The Responsible Finance Officer explained that it is too late in the year to be able to go out and tender different insurance companies.

Cllr Hallett asked whether this was a 12month Contact. The Responsible Finance Officer expressed that until they see the contract they are unsure but will ask for this from them.

Cllr Ford suggested asking for a 1 month extension and go to a broker due to the insurer not sending the renewal quote in due course.

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** that the Responsible Finance Officer agree a minimal contract & get a broker to search for alternative options.

The Responsible Finance Officer is to call & email the insurer following this meeting.

30/2 Nai's House

324 **RESOLVED** that the Committee **DEFERRED** this item of utility costs to the following Finance meeting after it has gone to the Policy Committee.

31/2 Fee's and Charges Review

324 Cllr Wheatley expressed that the Discount Policy shouldn't be put as retired which is an ill-defined term.

The Committee **APPROVED** the increase for the Allotments with an increase for adults to pay £25.00 per annum and the OAP concession rate to remain at £22.00 per annum.

RESOLVED that the Chairman **DEFFERED** changes to fees for sports facilities to the following Finance meeting.

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:26 hrs

Minutes of the Planning Committee

A meeting of the **Planning Committee** was held on **Tuesday 27th February 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Nick Cotter (Chairman)
Cllr Tom Beckett
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Damien Maguire
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:

Paul Canning – Service Manager
Julie Trinder – Administrator
Maria Galic – Administrator

139/ Apologies for Absence

2324 RESOLVED that apologies for absence were received from Cllr Christopher Pruden and Cllr Jim Webb.

140/ Councillors are reminded to declare any interests on any item on this
2324 agenda in accordance with Bicester Town Council's Code of Conduct.
RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

141/ Declarations of Interest for District & County Councillors

2324 RESOLVED that declarations of interest were received Cllr Tom Beckett, Nick Cotter, Cllr Donna Ford and Cllr Les Sibley as District Councillors and Cllr Donna Ford and Cllr Les Sibley as Oxfordshire County Councillor on the Planning Committee will make their comments and decisions based upon information available at the time of the meeting. It is accepted that District and County Councillors may come to different decisions in the light of more information being made available at District or County Planning meetings.

142/ Minutes of the Planning Meeting

2324 RESOLVED that **MINUTES** and **RESOLUTIONS** of the following Planning Committee Meetings were **APPROVED** as amended:

- PL07/2324 – 7th November 2023
- PL09/2324 – 9th January 2024
- PL10/2324 – 6th February 2024

143/ Public Session

2324 RESOLVED that no members of the public were present.

144/ Updates on large developments and associated issues
2324

145/ North West Bicester
2324 No reports were received.

- 146/ Graven Hill**
2324
- Outlining planning permission had elapsed and has now been resubmitted.
 - Esquires Coffee Shop opened on Wednesday 31st January 2024.
 - Service Manager to invite a representative from Graven Hill to attend a future Planning Committee Meeting.

- 147/ Other Business Strategic Sites**
2324 The Chairman of the Planning Committee reported that a meeting had been held at Cherwell District Council regarding:
- The poor state of Sainsbury's in Bicester
 - London Road Crossing
 - Banbury Road roundabout

- 148/ Planning applications from Cherwell District Council**
2324 **23/01226/OBL - Axis J9 Phase 1, OS Parcel 4200 Adj Middleton Stoney Road**
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objection to this planning application.

24/00108/F – 3 Foundation Square, Ambrosden
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objection to this planning application.

24/00208/F – 18 Windmill Avenue
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objection to this planning application.

24/00214/F – 12-14 Sheep Street
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has strong concerns regarding this planning application:

- Overdevelopment of Backway Road
- Backway Road is a private service road which needs to be adopted
- There are no street lights
- Footpath will need to be enhanced
- It should be noted that the address for this development should be regarded as Backway Road and not Sheep Street
- Balconies at the rear of the site will impact on neighbouring residents privacy
- Limited parking for residents
- Limited space for bins

- Poor quality housing may result in a reduction in natural light for residents
- Close proximity to the White Hart may result in noise pollution

Chairman of the Planning Committee has requested that these comments be distributed directly to Committee.

24/00251/CDC – Unit 14 Expeditionary Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objection to this planning application.

24/00273/F – 42 Goodwood Close

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objection to this planning application.

24/00382/F – 8 Shannon Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council **WELCOME** this planning application.

24/00223/F – Bicester Park Unit 1, Charbridge Lane

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objection to this planning application.

149/ Notification of planning decisions from Cherwell District Council

2324 RESOLVED that the planning decision from Cherwell District Council were **NOTED**.

150/ Withdrawn plan

2324 RESOLVED that the Withdrawn plan was **NOTED**.

151/ Refused plan

2324 RESOLVED that the Refused plan was **NOTED**.

152/ Forward Plan

2324 RESOLVED that:

- the Forward Plan was **REVIEWED**
- Future large developments to be requested for S106 (Planning Obligations, Town and Country Planning Act 1990) funding for the cemetery

153/ Date of Next Meeting

2324

Tuesday 16th April 2024 at 19:00, The Chamber Room, Garth House

CLOSE OF MEETING: 19:38 hrs

Minutes of the Planning Committee

A meeting of the **Planning Committee** was held on **Tuesday 16th April 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS.**

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Vice - Chairman)
Cllr Tom Beckett
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Christopher Pruden
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Jim Webb

In Attendance:

Paul Canning – Office Manager
Maria Galic – Administrator

154/ Apologies for Absence

2324 RESOLVED that apologies for absence were received from Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Dan Hallett and Cllr Rachel Mallows.

155/ Declarations of Interest

2324 RESOLVED that declarations of interest were received from Cllr Damien Maguire due to him being a resident at Graven Hill. Cllr Paul Wheatley and Jim Webb due to knowing an applicant. Tom Beckett and Cllr Christopher Pruden also declared an interest.

156/ Councillors are reminded to declare any interests on any item on this agenda in accordance with Bicester Town Council's Code of Conduct.

157/ Declarations of Interest for District & County Councillors

2324 RESOLVED that declarations of interest were received Cllr Tom Beckett, Nick Cotter, Cllr Donna Ford, Cllr Nick Mawer (Portfolio Holder for Housing) and Cllr Les Sibley and as District Councillors and Cllr Donna Ford and Cllr Les Sibley as Oxfordshire County Councillors on the Planning Committee. Councillors will make their comments and decisions based upon information available at the time of the meeting. It is accepted that District and County Councillors may come to different decisions in the light of more information being made available at District or County Planning meetings.

158/ Minutes of the Planning Meeting

2324 Cllr Donna Ford expressed concerns that the previous minutes were not a true reflection of the meeting.
RESOLVED that **MINUTES** of the Planning Meeting **PL11/2324** have now been resolved and will be signed at the next Planning Meeting on the **11th June 2024**.

159/ Public Session

2324 24/0067/OUT – Land to South of Isis Avenue Middleton Stoney Road
RESOLVED that members of the public were present and expressed a **STONG OBJECTION** regarding the planning application **24/0067/OUT**:

- It is the last available green space in that location
- The land is regularly maintained
- It has been utilised by the public continuously as recreational land

160/ 2324 Updates on large developments and associated issues

161/ 2324 North West Bicester
No updates were received.

162/ 2324 Graven Hill
No updates were received.

163/ 2324 Other Business Strategic Sites
No updates were received.

164/ 2324 Planning applications from Cherwell District Council
23/03073/HYBRID – Properties (Bicester) Ltd, Phase 2 SW Bicester Kingsmere
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00251/CDC – Unit 14 Expeditionary Road
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00323/F – 77 Kingsclere Road
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00401/F – 20 Almond Road
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this planning application due to:

- Overdevelopment of the site
- Out of character with the street scene

24/00420/F – 90 Pingle Drive
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00468/F – Flat 5 Dove Court
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00479/F – 12 Sage Street
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00496/F – 32 Lincoln Close
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00542/F – Land Adj to No 1 St Peters Crescent
RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council **OBJECT** this planning application due to:

- Overdevelopment of the site
- Location on the corner of a busy road

- Concerns over vehicle access

24/00544/F, 24/00546/F, 24/00602/ADV, 24/00618/F – Iceland Foods Unit 3 Launton Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objections to this planning application. However, does raise concerns over the future of the store on Sheep Street.

24/00574/F – 23 Launton Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00575/F – 99 Lucerne Avenue

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00578/F – 18 Windmill Avenue

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council **OBJECT** to this planning application due to the change of use of amenity land and enclosure of this land is out of keeping with the street scene.

24/00594/F – 14 Crimson Gardens

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00604/F – Ursuline Convent Kings End

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00620/F – 7 Launton Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council **OBJECT** to this planning application due to overdevelopment of the site.

24/00630/F – 2 Lime Crescent

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00637/F – 13 Corncrake Way

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00648/REM – Site D,A,E Circular Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/0067/OUT – Land to South of Isis Avenue Middleton Stoney Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this planning application due to:

- It is amenity land
- There has been a high level of interest and objections by members of the public
- The land is a local green space utilised for recreational and outdoor activities
- There are a number of TPO trees in the area
- The land has been regularly maintained by Cherwell District Council, Bicester Town Council and other contractors
- It would result in a loss of green space

- The right to acquire the land by means of a Compulsory Purchase Order was also put forward to the Committee

24/00688/LB – 15-16 Market Square

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objections to this planning application. Councillors highlighted the positive impact of businesses investing in the upkeep of their appearance.

24/00697/F – 10 Hawksmead

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00702/F – 1 Eaves Road

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council **OBJECT** to this planning application due to:

- The increased height of the dwelling. The self-build property was bought with the knowledge that the maximum roof height was 8.1m and this new height will exceed this
- The height of the flat roof will overshadow the light on the neighbours significantly

24/00703/F – 22 Turnstone Green

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council **OBJECT** to this planning application due to overdevelopment of the site.

24/00707/F – 64 Lucerne Avenue

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council made no comment on this planning application.

24/00712/LB – The Old Priory Priory Lane

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council have **NOTED** this planning application as it is a listed building.

24/00716/F – 42 Windmill Avenue

RESOLVED that Bicester Town Council has no objections to this planning application.

165/ Withdrawn Plan

2324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the Withdrawn planning application.

166/ Refused Plans

2324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the Refused planning applications.

167/ Notification of planning decisions from Cherwell District Council

2324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the planning decisions.

168/ Forward Plan

2324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the Forward Plan.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 11th June at 7pm, The Chamber Room, Garth House

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:04 hrs

Minutes of the Policy Committee

A meeting of the **Policy Committee** was held on **Monday 19th February 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Rachel Mallows (Chairman)
Cllr Paul Wheatley (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Harry Knight
Cllr Damien Maguire
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Christopher Pruden (Substitute)

In Attendance:

Phil Evans – Town Clerk
Julie Trinder – Administration Officer – Civic & Democratic

52/2 Apologies for Absence

324 RESOLVED that apologies were received from Cllr Nick Cotter and Cllr Alisa Russell.

Cllr Christopher Pruden Substituted for Cllr Alisa Russell.

53/2 Declarations of Interest

324 RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

54/2 Minutes of Policy Committee

324 RESOLVED that Committee **APPROVED** the following minutes:

POL04/2324 – 29th January 2024

55/2 Public Session

324 RESOLVED that no members of the public were present.

56/2 Major Town Initiatives

324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the following:

- **Bicester Vision CIC Executive Board Meeting – 2nd November 2023**
- **Bicester Vision CIC Partnership Meeting – 7th December 2023**

The Chairman of the Committee took particular attention to:

- Market Town Square tender
- East West Rail – London Road Level Crossing
- Chiltern Railways – Bicester North Car Park closing
- Bicester Garrison HQ will be in situ for at least the next years

- Housing on site of Bicester Garrison HQ will be rebuilt/refurbished over the next 5-10 years
- The current Chairman of Bicester Vision CIC is standing down, recruitment to fill this role is underway

57/2 Policy Review

324 RESOLVED that Committee:

- **REVIEWED** the policies set out in Appendix 2 and 3
- **REVIEWED** and **NOTED** the Risk Management Schedule

And that with minor amendments, it be passed to Full Council.

58/2 GP8 Financial Regulations

324 RESOLVED that Committee **REVIEWED** the GP8 Financial Regulations. Amended document to go to Full Council for approval.

59/2 Ground Maintenance Contract

324 RESOLVED that Committee **APPROVED** the documentation as set out in item 2. The tender document can now be published.

60/2 Forward Plan

324 RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** the Forward Plan.

61/2 Date of the Next Meeting

324 Monday 22nd April 2024 – 7pm, The Chamber Room, Garth House

CLOSE OF MEETING: 8.23PM

Minutes of the Allotments Working Party

A meeting of the **Allotments Working Party** was held on **Wednesday 29th November 2023** at **19:00 hrs** at **The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)
Cllr Jim Webb
Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:

Jodi Clarke, Office Administrator
Conor Pattison, Outdoor Supervisor

Angela Leach, Leach Road Rep
Michael Slaymaker, Leach Road Tenant
Graham Pickup, Claypits Rep

20 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies were received from:

- John Lappin, Claypits Rep.
- Rennie Buxton, Colne Rep.
- Jim Henderson, Evenlode Rep.

Graham Pickup substituted for John Lappin.

21 Declaration of Interest

RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

22 Minutes of the Allotment Working Party

RESOLVED that the Working Party **CONFIRMED** the following minutes to go to the Environment Committee for approval:

- **AW02/2324** – Wednesday 9th August, 19:00pm.

23 Community Tool Shed

RESOLVED that the working party **NOTED & COMMENTED** on the report.

The Claypit Rep informed the group that they already have something like this that works really well, they have the same lock on the shed as the entry gate along with a sign in and out book.

RESOLVED that the working party **APPROVED** the report to go to the Environment Committee.

24 Best Kept Allotment Award

RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** the report.

Officers are to add a Junior section to the awards as the allotments are getting younger participants.

25 Garden Waste Bins

RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** the report.

Reps were concerned that tenants on a lower income may not be able to afford this.

Officer will look into whether Cherwell District Council will allow discount for the lower income tenants.

26 Forward Plan

RESOLVE that the working party **NOTED** the report.

Claypits rep is concerned about the tree's bordering the allotment, they were due to be done back in September 2023. Officers explained that this is with the Tree Officer at Cherwell District Council along with the tree's at Anson Way allotments. Officers will chase Cherwell District Council for an update/completion date.

The blackberry bushes to the left hand side as you drive down to Claypits need cutting back. Officers are to add this to the work plan to be completed.

An update was requested on the concrete bays to which the officer informed them that this was with the Service Manager and at this current time could not update. Concerns were raised as the crack in the bays has now got bigger (around 2 inches).

Service Manager is to provide an update to the relevant rep in regards to the concrete bays.

27 Date of the Next Meeting

To be Confirmed.

CLOSE OF MEETING: 19:43 hrs

Minutes of the Events Working Party

A meeting of the **Events Working Party** was held on **Wednesday 8th November 2023** at **19:00 hrs** at the **Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Road, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Christopher Pruden (Chairman)
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Damien Maguire

In Attendance:

Paul Canning – Service Manager
Shannon O'Connor – Administration Officer, Events and Marketing

29 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies were received from Cllr Chris Pruden.

30 Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED that no declarations of interest were received.

31 Confirmed Minutes

UN-RESOLVED as the below minutes were not part of the BE04/2324 agenda

- EWP02/2324
- EWP03/2324

32 Events Progression Report

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report.

33 Budget Report

RESOLVED that committee **RECOMMENDED** the proposals within the report

- Music event budget increase
- Special event budget reduction

Committee suggested a 'Culture festival' for 2025

34 Christmas Light Switch On

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report.

35 Illuminated Light Trail

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report and some committee members provided personal volunteered time to this event.

36 Bicester Pride Event Plan 2024

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report and Bicester Pride CIC were present to answer any questions.

- Time change TBC and presented in next EWP
- Officers to notify BPCIC once grant applications open

37 Nai's House Event 2024

RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** the Nai's House 2024 event on 6th July.

- Officers to look at charge for the 3 point electric phase for the event.

38 Forward Plan

- EWP02/2324
- EWP03/2324
- 2023 Events report

Meeting finished at: 20:32

Date of next Meeting: Wednesday 14 February 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:32 hrs

Minutes of the Events Working Party

A meeting of the **Events Working Party** was held on **Wednesday 14th February 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at the **Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Road, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Christopher Pruden (Chairman)

Cllr Alisa Russell

Cllr Donna Ford

Cllr Damien Maguire

Cllr Jim Webb

In Attendance:

39 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies were received from Cllr Harry Knight

40 Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED that no declarations were received.

41 Confirmed Minutes

UN-RESOLVED as minutes from Wednesday 8th November 2023 were not part of the agenda pack.

42 Markets Update

No update provided from Cherwell District Council

43 2023 Events Review

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report

Committee discussed the Light trail opening hours during the week and agreed with the reduction

44 December Figures

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the report

Cllr Ford highlighted the Christmas tree within the town centre needs to be improved and officers are to think about how to involve the community more

Cllr Ford highlighted that an increase on the Santa's grotto pricing for the Illuminated Light Trail

Cllr Russell asked if there is a plan for 2024 to increase the revenue

45 Bicester Town Council Community Events

RESOLVED that committee **AGREE** and **COMMENTED** on the report.

46 Other Events

REOLVED that committee **NOTED** and **COMMENTED** on verbal updates from the below

Minutes: BE05/2324: Events Working Party Meeting
Wednesday 14th February 2024

Page 1 of 2

Signed

Dated

groups

- Bicester Pride CIC

Committee **COMMENTED** that the fee hire must go through environment committee for approval

Bicester CIC would like officers to confirm if the flag could be raised for the event (flag raising policy)

Cllr Ford highlighted that the Pride flag needs to be updated to the 2024 version

47 **Forward Plan**

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** the forward plan

Date of next Meeting: Wednesday 3 April 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 19:59

Minutes of the Bicester Traffic Advisory Group

A meeting of the **Bicester Traffic Advisory Group** was held on **Thursday 25th January 2024** at **14:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Rachel Mallows

In Attendance:

Mike Wasley
Chris Hulme
Miranda Markham

35 Apologies

RESOLVED that **APOLOGIES** were received from Cllr Sibley, Cllr Waine, Cllr Pratt, Michael Hewitt and Jacqui Cox.

36 Minutes of the Bicester Traffic Advisory Group

RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** minutes of the Traffic Advisory Group's meeting:

- **BTAG04/2324 – Thursday 30th November 2023**

37 Update of items outstanding not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

Cllr Ford **RECOMMENDED** invites and agendas are sent to **ALL** members and Substitute members via email
Proposed by Cllr Mallows
Second by Cllr Hallett

Committee requested OCC provide an update regarding the pathway by Starbucks

Cllr Wasley provided committee with logistical update regarding LTM120 and telecoms infrastructure.

Cllr Mallows suggested a temporary fix for safety with the view to update and expand at a later date.

Committee recommend a safety review of complete area with pedestrians in mind particularly the crossing at the entrance and exit of the service station.

38 Report from Oxfordshire County Council Officer

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** and **COMMENTED** on the report.

1. LCWIP

London Road

Cllr Ford highlighted that pedestrians need to be thought of.

Cllr Mallows updated the committee that rail work is now complete.

Middleton Stoney Road

Committee requested further clarity and update on this.

Bicester North Station to Bicester Village Station

Committee requested further clarity on area of report and would like details on when the discussion is going to happen.

Sheep Street

Cllr Ford highlighted the concern of market traders insurance and validity.

EWK/London Road crossing

Cllr Hallett requested officers to invite EWR to future meeting

Market Square

Cllr Ford updated committee that a BTC update meeting is in progress.

39 Report from Cherwell District Council Officer

RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** update from Cherwell District Council Officer.

Rodney House Roundabout road markings **ONLY** to begin February 2024.

Committee suggested new signage on the roundabout.

Cllr Ford asked for an update on 20mph speed consultation

40 Matters raised by Group Members/Residents

RESOLVED that committee **NOTED** and **COMMENTED** on update provided by Bicester village across their peak holiday period.

Bicester Village received a small number of complaints from residents regarding village visitors and parking during Boxing day 2023, Bicester Village shared their coning process and highlighted areas of improvement..

Cllr Mallows highlighted the need to re-paint yellow lines on King's End for peak time parking issues.

Cllr Mallows highlighted issues regarding traffic enforcement.

Committee members highlighted the need for traffic enforcement at Longfield's school.

Cllr Hallett highlighted the Zebra crossing outside the police station needs its lighting to be reviewed for safety concerns particularly during wet weather.

Cllr Hallett highlighted a concern over lights and traffic flow of crossing

- Officers to contact OCC regarding the potential of moving the crossing and to update committee in the next meeting

41 Forward Plan

Customer Parking – Lambourne Crescent

Air Pollution report – CDC

Starbucks Pathway

Zebra crossing lighting – Street lighting team at (CDC)

- Outside the police station
- St John's Street crossing – OCC to provide logistical details

Traffic calming across Bicester

42 Date of Next Meeting

28th March 2024 @ 14:00hrs

CLOSE OF MEETING: 15:07 hrs

Minutes of the Bicester Traffic Advisory Group

A meeting of the **Bicester Traffic Advisory Group** was held on **Thursday 28th March 2024** at **14:00 hrs** at the **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Donna Ford (Chairman)
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Paul Wheatley
Cllr Dan Sames
Cllr Michael Waine
Miranda Markham
Peter Cox

In Attendance:

Helen Pool – Responsible Finance Officer
Maria Galic – Civic & Democratic Administrator

43 Apologies

RESOLVED that **APOLOGIES** were received from Cllr Mallows.

44 Minutes of the Bicester Traffic Advisory Group

Cllr Hallett raised a query regarding **40 Matters raised by Group Members/Residents**:

- Officers were asked to chase OCC regarding the crossing and to update the committee in the next meeting

RESOLVED that committee **APPROVED** minutes of the Traffic Advisory Group's meeting:

- **BTAG05/2324 – Thursday 25th January 2024**

45 Update of items outstanding not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

No updates were received.

46 Report from Oxfordshire County Council Officer

1a. London Road

No updates were received.

b. A41 Cycle Route (options and feasibility)

Cllrs reviewed the Active Travel Scheme Cllr would like to know how this links up with the other side of Siemens site.

a. Middleton Stoney Road (design and delivery)

Councillors noted that the junction from Middleton Stoney Road and Villiers Road is very busy and dangerous.

b. Bicester North Station to Bicester Village Station (options/concept)

- No requirement for travel between the two stations

- Committee reported there were pedestrian complaints regarding cyclists on Buckingham Road
- The road is not wide enough to increase cyclist presence
- Officers to request OCC to provide a presentation and ask if there will be a public consultation for this.
- Cllrs asked Have Chiltern Railways been consulted? What is the rationale for this project? How many Cyclists currently use this route of travel.

c. Sheep Street (ETRO)

- Committee strongly **OBJECT** to this proposal without public consultation
- An informal consultation was not provided
- Councillors had concerns raised by the public due to the risk of accidents with cyclists. Councillors were also concerned about what the effect would be on Market Days and Events held in Sheep Street

d. ESSO footpath, Oxford Road

- Reported by Cllr Sibley there has been positive progress with inclusion of a cycle lane and a footpath
- Cllr have asked that a rail be installed to stop being crossing the busy multi lane road.
- Cllr asked for warning signs for pedestrians regarding the services entrance

e. Cattle Creep

- Reported that OCC own the land and are waiting for a formal registration of ownership
- A presentation from OCC on this proposal was requested.
- Cllr Sames proposed it would be a simpler to create a footpath from this location to link up to Bicester Village, creating a connection
- Councillors raised concerns over the size, lighting and safety of the Cattle Creep

2. A4095 realignment (strategic link)

- Reported that there is progress
- Committee have asked for the South East Link Road to be place on the next Agenda as they need to know that OCC are supportive moving forward.
- Miranda Markam stated that OCC have safeguarded land for the ring road.
- Cllr Waine reported that Bicester will have a growth of 25% which will lead to future gridlock if solution is not soon
- Miranda Markam has raised concern as to what the plan would be if there is no ring road

47 Report from Cherwell District Council Officer

No reports were received.

48 Matters raised by Group Members/Residents

No reports were received.

49 20mph

Committee have requested that OCC provide an official statutory consultation only on:

- Outside schools: Committee proposed timed speed limit zones as well as permanent ones
- Estate roads
- Outside shops

50 Forward Plan

Ongoing: Holistic approach to parking outside Perch:

- The approach to parking outside the Perch is private land so park restrictions do not apply
- Committee reported that Cherwell are considering to ticket this area
- Concerns were raised over the use and access of this area in town

Ongoing: Enforcement in Market Square and Sheep Street:

- Committee reported that this is a police matter and obstructing vehicles must be reported

Councillors have requested:

- Officers to seek an update on items on the Forward Plan from both OCC and CDC
- Officers to update all diaries with all future meeting dates

51 Date of Next Meeting

Date of next Meeting: TBC

CLOSE OF MEETING: 14:56 hrs

Minutes of the Community Sports Working Group

A meeting of the **Community Sports Working Group** was held on **Thursday 4th January 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at **The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Christopher Pruden – **Acting Chair**
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Christopher Pruden
Cllr Jim Webb

In Attendance:

Paul Canning, Service Manager
Jodi Clarke, Office Administrator
Conor Pattison, Outdoor Supervisor

Claire Finn, Launton Ladies
Kevin Hook, Bure Park FC
Ben Hillier, Bure Park FC
Brian Leach, Ivy FC
Granville Williams, RUFC
Chris Cassidy, KEA Club

3323 Apologies for Absence

/24 Cllr Pruden stood as Chair in Cllr Beckett's absence.

RESOLVED that apologies were received from the following:

- Cllr Tom Beckett
- Barry Hiles – Kidlington FC
- Paul Davis – ACE Academy
- Steve & Ally Payne – Bicester Fossils Walking Football
- Chris Wales – Bicester Town Colts

3423 Declarations of Interest

/24 **RESOLVED** that declarations were received from Cllr Webb as he is a member of the Bicester Fossils Walking Football.

3523 Minutes of the Community Sports Working Group

/24 **RESOLVED** that the Community Sports Working Group **CONFIRMED** the following minutes to be taken to the next Environment Committee for approval:

- **CSWG03/2324** - 26th October 2023 at 19:00hrs

3623 3 Strike System

/24 Due to an admin error the correct sheet was not attached. A correct copy was handed out to all attendees who were asked to take all no-show dates away and look into as to

Minutes: 04/2324: Community Sports Working Group Meeting
Thursday 4th January 2024

Page 1 of 3

Signed

Dated

why no one was informed prior to the booking taking place. All teams are asked to update the Facilities Administrator.

RESOLVED that the Working Party **COMMENTED** & **NOTED** the report.

3723 Questions

124 The Chair asked for another item to be added so that teams could ask any questions needed.

7v7 at Pingle Field:

Bure Park FC has requested that another 7v7 pitch be put at Pingle Field. The Service Manager explained that they need the data to show that an extra 7v7 is needed as currently it shows there is no demand for another 7v7, once the data is provided the Service Manager will review this.

The service Manager is to arrange a meeting with the Town Clerk, Bure Park.

The line marking process was questioned to which the Outdoor Supervisor explained the time and effort it takes to mark a pitch and the impact of changing a layout mid-season as it isn't as straightforward as marking the pitch, the pitches have certain run-off space, respect area etc.

Bure Park FC is to send up-to-date data showing that they have the demand for another 7v7.

Lucerne Avenue Land:

A discussion was had about the non-used land at Lucerne Avenue. This was used as a pitch with teams being able to use the school's facilities. Officers were made aware by Cllr Mawer that there was an agreement in place between the Council and the School.

Officers are to look into the school facilities.

Whitelands:

- Flood Light Update:

The Service Manager confirmed that Cherwell District Council have chosen a supplier, but still hasn't been given a time on installation. Liam Didcot is due to speak with them next week. The Service Manager will go back to RUFC directly with dates.

RUFC commented on the ongoing maintenance throughout winter. The Service Manager let RUFC know that the maintenance is still under Cherwell District Councils control but, both the Service Manager & Outdoor Supervisor have looked at the pitches and agree improvements can be made.

- Cricket Pitch:

The Service Manager informed everyone that there will be no change of use. The group discussed the area of non-used grass and how it could help teams.

Service Manager & Outdoor Supervisor to investigate to see if there is an opportunity to use some of the area.

Officer is to look into the Planning Permission on the recreational area.

- Lift:

The Service Manager has confirmed that the Lift is being fixed.

Football Cancellations:

Bure Park FC asked how Rugby were allowed to play matches on the same weekends that Football was cancelled.

It was explained that Rugby and Football are two different sports that have different requirements, it was also mentioned that there were weekends that Rugby couldn't play but Football went ahead.

The outdoor Supervisor explained the process of cancellation and how it works.

FA Funding:

Bure Park FC asked whether the environmental budget had been signed off, to which they were informed it must go to Full Council first. They raised that they are concerned that they can't see the FA Funding on this.

Ben Hillier requested Councillors investigate where the 100k FA funding is located.

Cllr Mawer informed the group that the funding would not show on the budget sheet as it goes into the account rather than the budgets.

3823 Forward

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** Forward plan.

Service Manager to call a Special Finance meeting to get the approval of the Whiteland 9v9 goals.

3923 Date of next meeting

/24 4th March 2024 at 19:00hrs.

Date of next Meeting: Thursday 14 March 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: Time Not Specified hrs

Minutes of the Community Sports Working Group

A meeting of the **Community Sports Working Group** was held on **Thursday 14th March 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at **The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Jim Webb
Cllr Nick Cotter (Substitute)

In Attendance:

Jodi Clarke, Office Administrator
Paul Canning, Service Manager
Conor Pattison, Outdoor Supervisor

Clubs:

Paul Davis, ACE Academy
Claire Finn, Launton Ladies
Maz Heslop, Chersterton FC
Matt Korn, Bure Park
Brian Leach, Ivy FC
Neil Mckechnie, Whitelands FC
Nail Riley, Whitelands FC
Sue Watts, Bicester Fossils Walking Football

4023 Apologies for Absence

/24 Cllr Beckett has stepped down as Chairman for the Community Sports Working Group.

The Service Manager asked for the Working Party to nominate to elect a new Chairman before the meeting could proceed.

The Working Party **ELECTED** Cllr Maguire as the new Chairman.

RESOLVED that apologies were received from the following:

- Cllr Beckett
- Cllr Pruden to which Cllr Cotter substituted.
- Steve & Ally Payne – Bicester Fossils Walking Football
Sue Watts substituted on behalf of Steve & Ally.
- Barry Hiles – Kidlington FC
- Granville Williams – Bicester Rugby Club
- Chris Wales – Bicester Town Colts

4123 Declarations of Interest

/24 **RESOLVED** that a declaration was received from Cllr Webb as he is a member of the Bicester Fossils Walking Football.

Minutes: 05/2324: Community Sports Working Group Meeting
Thursday 14th March 2024

Page 1 of 4

Signed

Dated

4223 Minutes of the Community Sports Working Group

/24 RESOLVED that the following minutes were **CONFIRMED** with the following amendments:

- **CSWG04/2324** – 4th January 2024 at 19:00hrs.

Add Maz Heslop to the attendance as this was missed.

19:03 – Cllr Mawer arrived.

4323 3 - Strike System

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED & COMMENTED** the report.

Officers explained that the teams could go away and discuss this with the coaches and come back to the Council.

The Service Manager agrees that the 3-Strike system isn't as effective as it could be, and needs to be improved which they are currently working on. It has been agreed that bringing the 3-strike system into the meeting is not beneficial as there is a long period between each one but should also be managed by the Team Leader at Whitelands Farm Sports Grounds.

4423 Whitelands Staff

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** the report.

The Service Manager explained the situations that the staff at Whitelands are having to face on a daily basis which is unacceptable. The Service Manager asked all of the users to support the staff if they see any of this behaviour while they are on site.

Cllr Webb asked about Body Cameras.

The service Manager explained that this is being looked into but currently, the Team Leader at Whitelands is giving training to the staff on how to deal with these situations. Cllr Mawer also added that training from the Police may be better.

Claire Finn made a reminder to all credited clubs that they have to follow the FA code of conduct. Claire also offered help to find contact for community officers in the area.

4523 Whitelands Facilities

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED & COMMENTED** the report.

4623 Whitelands Public Defibrillator

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **APPROVED** the report to go to the next Environment Meeting.

Bicester Town Council will keep the defibrillator up to date but the staff/Café onsite are not responsible for demonstrating how to use the equipment but will allow access to it if needed.

The Defibrillator is located outside and free for the public to use, the access code can be retrieved from the Staff or Café. The staff are First aid trained but are not confident with

this.

4723 Pitch Closures

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** the report.

The Service Manager also mentioned that teams are using the pitches even though Bicester Town Council have cancelled the bookings.

It was confirmed that each pitch would be individually inspected and only the pitches affected would be cancelled.

19:20 – Naill Riley (Whitelands FC) arrived.

Officers explained the pitch allocations to the Chair and what they do if matches are cancelled due to bad weather.

Neil Mckechnie from Whitelands FC asked whether the price of the 3G could be the same as the Grass pitches only when their pitch is waterlogged.

The Service Manager informed them that he could not make that decision but would take it away to discuss with the Town Clerk. Cllr Mawer stated that this needs a wider discussion, it should be taken to Environment Committee.

4823 Forward Plan

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** the report.

Brian Leach informed the officers that some leagues do not get their fixtures all at once.

The Service Manager appreciated this and asked clubs to send their fixtures as they receive them as it helps the council with allocations.

Cllr Mawer asked about the FA funding.

The Service Manager & Outdoor Supervisor informed the group that the FA had posted on Social Media about how good the condition of Pingle Field was since they began working on it. The Outdoor Supervisor then went on to explain all of the processes that the FA have to follow while doing the work and which sites were up next.

Paul Davis from ACE Academy stated that the 3G pitch has more traffic on it than ever before and wanted to know what the maintenance plan and end-of-life plan for the pitch.

The Service Manager stated that the 3G could be maintained better, The Outdoor Supervisor is organising training for the team to assist with this. The Pitch is maintained by an outside company that visits quarterly. Line Marking is done once every 3 months depending on the weather.

Paul Davis raised about having the lines stitched into the Astro rather than painting them. The Service Manager is considering all options.

Paul Davis also went on to ask about Grants that could benefit the clubs, to which the Service Manager will look into.

Matt Korn from Bure Park asked about the cut off time for Summer maintenance as some

teams still have a few matches to play. Both the Service Manager & Outdoor Supervisor informed the teams that they try to get all teams played before a closure date is given. The council is to work with the teams to assist getting the games played in a timely order.

4923 Date of next meeting

/24 Thursday 2nd May 2024 at 19:00hrs
Location to be confirmed due to local elections taking place.

Date of next Meeting: Thursday 2 May 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 19:34 hrs

Minutes of the Community Sports Working Group

A meeting of the **Community Sports Working Group** was held on **Thursday 2nd May 2024 at 19:00 hrs at The Function Room, Whitelands Farm Sports Ground, Whitelands Way, Bicester, OX26 1AJ.**

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)

Cllr Jim Webb

Cllr Paul Wheatley (Substitute)

In Attendance:

Jodi Clarke, Finance Assistant

Paul Canning, Office Manager

Viktorija Kovale, Office Administrator

Conor Pattison, Outdoor Supervisor

Sahra Bloomfield, Whitelands Team Leader

Shane Davidson, Whitelands Operative

Chris Wales, Bicester Town Colts

Paul Davis, ACE Academy

Ryan Gurts, ACE Academy & Oxfordshire RTC

Sue Watts, Bicester Fossils Walking Football

Marilyn Heslop, Chesterton FC

Judith Williams, Highfield FC

Claire Finn, Launton Ladies

Granville Williams, RUFC

Brain Leach, Elmsbrook Jacks

Matt Korn, Bure Park

5023 Apologies for Absence

/24 RESOLVED that apologies were received from the following members alongside any substitution's:

- Cllr Chris Pruden – Cllr Wheatly substituted.
- Barry Hiles, Kidlington FC
- Chris Cassidy, KEA Club
- Phil Munn, Whitelands FC

The Office Manager passed Bicester Town Council's condolences to Whitelands FC after the passing of Colin Jessop who was a beloved coach for the team.

5123 Declarations of Interest

/24 RESOLVED that a declaration of interest was received from:

- Cllr Jim Webb – Member of Bicester Fossils Walking Football.

5223 Minutes of the Community Sports Working Group

/24 RESOLVED that the following minutes were **CONFIRMED**:

Minutes: 06/2324: Community Sports Working Group Meeting
Thursday 2nd May 2024

Page 1 of 3

Signed

Dated

- **CSWG05/2324** – held on the 14th March 2024 at 19:00hrs

Cllr Maguire Proposed and Cllr Webb seconded.

5323 3 - Strike System

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **COMMENTED & NOTED** the 3-Strike System.

The Office Manager informed the working party that after trialling the 3-strike system, no improvements to cancel bookings were made. The Office Manager believes this is because the 3-Strike system was included in meeting that had lengthy time period between each one making the system ineffective.

The Team Leader at Whitelands will take control on the 3-strike system in house at Whitelands.

5423 Whitelands Facilities Update

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** the Whitelands Facilities Report.

The Outdoor Supervisor is to provide a maintenance schedule to the teams as soon as they can.

The Office Manager explained The installation of floodlights is due to take place on the following dates:

- Tues 7th May – Fri 10th May - Civils works.
- Mon 20th May – Fri 24th May – Installation of columns and testing.

Cllr Webb asked about the flooding on the pitches. The Office Manager explained that Grounds Maintenance Contract Team deal with this but they will look into this.

5523 Team Fixtures List

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **APPROVED** the report.

Cllr Maguire proposed and Cllr Webb seconded.

5623 Forward Plan

/24 RESOLVED that the Working Party **NOTED** the Forward plan.

Pitch Maintenance:

- Dead Grass on Pitches – Office Manager agreed that this was an issue at the beginning of last season due to the Trimax being out of action, but has confirmed this has been resolved and a second piece of kit has been purchased as a backup for any repairs needed in the future.
- Launton Ladies mentioned that it would be better if the grass was taken down in increments rather than leaving the grass to grow long and then cut.

Line Marking:

- Incorrect Line Marking – Office Manager informed them that Line Marking Training has been given to the Groundsman and they will continue to go through training alongside other members of the team.

Housing Developer:

Launton Ladies raised that there needs to be more support from housing developers in regards to pitch provisions, open spaces etc.

- Talk with Cherwell District Council about local developers.
 - New Facilities
 - Improve current grounds
- Bring Cherwell District Council football representative to the next football meeting.
- Oxfordshire Football Association developers are based at bodicote, Office Manager to get in contact with them to see if they can assist with developers at Cherwell District Council.

Rugby & Football Pitches:

The maintenance on the rugby pitch is different to the football pitches, this is due to the different sports played.

- Maintenance, timing windows Outdoor Supervisor to share to users.

3G Maintenance:

- Paint – The 3G paint will be completed quarterly but this is dependent on weather. Hot weather can make the lines fade quicker then wet weather so the Outdoor Supervisor will monitor the paint throughout each quarter of the year.
- Brushing – Weekly brushing of the 3G pitch is needed alongside the replenishment of the astro crumb. Brushing should be done 3 to 4 times before replenishing the crumb. Office Manager is to look into a professional company to supply training to the staff at Garth & Whitelands.

Date of next Meeting: Thursday 20 June 2024 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 19:17 hrs

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

Monday 24th June 2024

Motion Brought Before Council

Chairman: Councillor Damien Maguire

Contact: damien.maguire@bicester.gov.uk

Phil Evans – Town Clerk

Contact: 01869 252915 or phil.evans@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

Under Item 6 of the Standing Orders

Motions for a meeting that require written notice to be given to the proper officer.

Councillor Ford , Seconded by Councillor Mawer proposed the following.

2. Motion

This council is proud of its links to the military community and to be a Garrison Town.

We are therefore shocked and embarrassed that the military community were not invited to the D-Day Flag raising on 6th June 2024.

These events are of such monumental importance to this town that this council resolves to ensure they are included in our annual event plan and as such resolves to:

- Draw up a calendar at the beginning of each year of all military dates/events for the year to be brought to the events committee. Which should include the 80th Anniversary of VE Day in 2025.
- Ensure plans for each military related event are presented to the events committee and both the military and RBL are also asked for comment.
- Request officers investigate the cost of installing a beacon.
- Request officers investigate the possibility of holding homecoming events for local regiments.

BTC06/2324
Monday 15th January 2024

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

Monday 24th June 2024

Mayors Report

Chairman: Councillor Damien Maguire

Contact: damien.maguire@bicester.gov.uk

Phil Evans – Town Clerk

Contact: 01869 252915 phil.evans@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

During the period of 13th May 2024 – 17th June 2024 the following visits were made:

The Mayor, Cllr Damien Maguire attended the following functions:

May

- 15th – Abingdon Town Council, Mayor Making
- 16th – Bicester Vision, Bicester Hotel Golf and Spa
- 18th – Victory Party, Graven Hill Residents Association
- 22nd – Cherwell District Council, Annual Full Council Meeting
- 22nd – JP&S Londis Grand Opening, Launton Road

June

- 1st – 100th Anniversary of Faringdon & District Branch Royal British Legion
- 3rd – Pride Flag Raising, Garth Park
- 5th – St Edburges Primary School visit, Kingsmere
- 6th – Banbury Town Council, D-Day 80th Anniversary
- 6th – Witney Town Council, D-Day 80th Anniversary
- 7th – Buckingham Town Council, Mayor Making
- 10th – Assumption of Command, RAF Croughton
- 11th – An Evening at Dorchester Abbey

The Mayor Cllr Damien Maguire and Consort Amanda Maguire attended the following functions:

May

- 17th – Aylesbury Town Council, Mayor Making

June

- 14th - 17th – Twinning, France

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Jim Webb and Consort Deb Webb attended the following function:

June

- 1st – Avenue Q Performance, The Cooper School

**BTC04/2425
Monday 24th June 2024**

Mayor's Cadet Badge

1. Overview

Cllr Damien Maguire has kindly donated the Mayors Cadet badge.

The Mayor has suggested that the cadet wear a badge in order to represent their position as the Mayor's Cadet. This has also been noticed in other Town Councils.

The badge will be worn at all events the cadet attends.

The cost of the badge is £8.



The Mayor would also like to suggest to Council the opportunity of having more than one Cadet.

This recommendation would positively impact future Mayor's by:

- Improving attendance at all Civic events
- Providing Cadets with opportunities to work together as a team
- Improve Cadet Leaders interest in attending future Civic events and Mayoral Fundraisers

2. Recommendation

- Council is asked to **APPROVE** the cadet badge.
- Council is asked to **CONSIDER** and **APPROVE** the appointment of more than one future cadet starting in the next Mayoral term 2025.

BTC04/2425
Monday 24th June 2024

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL REPORT

24th June 2024

Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Section 1) Report

Chairman: Councillor Paul Wheatley

Contact: 01869 252915 Paul.Wheatley@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

The Council is required by law to complete the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) at the end of each financial year in accordance with proper practices. This is comprised of the internal audit, governance and accounting statements.

For this Council, having an income or expenditure greater than £25,000 requires a Part 3 Return. The full return and accompanying documents will be submitted to the external auditor – Moore Smaller Authorities.

The Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Section 1) forms part of the AGAR. The full return and accompanying documents are attached as one appendix to this report.

2. Background

Section 1 is the confirmation by The Bicester Town Council that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements.

3. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the accompanying documents and **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** the contents of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** must be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2024**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2024**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialised.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2024.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2024**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.	✓	

***Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

EN Bicester Town Council

<https://www.bicester.gov.uk/> PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✓
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR <i>(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes)</i> .	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

14/11/2023

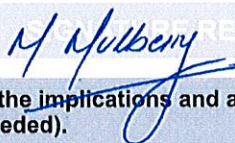
22/05/2024

DD/MM/YYYY

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Mark Mulberry BA(HONS) FCCA CTA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

22/05/2024

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

EN Bicester Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

<https://www.bicester.gov.uk/> PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

EN Bicester Town Council

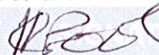
	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1. Balances brought forward	4,048,456	4,020,363	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,684,269	1,765,879	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	281,006	454,348	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	493,999	673,168	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	10,661	10,473	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	1,488,708	1,385,608	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	4,020,363	4,171,341	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).

8. Total value of cash and short term investments	4,274,698	4,166,939	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	3,782,021	3,801,959	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	146,250	141,375	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

 **SIGNATURE REQUIRED**

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

EN Bicester Town Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02 as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2023/24

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with *Proper Practices* and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

DD/MM/YYYY

Bank reconciliation template

This reconciliation should include all bank and building society accounts, including short term investments. It must agree to Box 8 on Section 2 of the AGAR and will also agree to Box 7 where the accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis. Please complete the highlighted boxes, remembering that outstanding payments should be entered as negative figures.

	£	£
Balance per bank statements at 31 March 2024:		
Account 1	127,619.59	
Account 2	46,946.43	
Account 3	101,608.63	
Account 4	2,000,000.00	
Account 5	1,096,187.54	
Account 6	245,401.67	
Account 7	549,174.65	
		4,166,938.51
Petty cash (if applicable)	N/A	
Add: outstanding receipts (enter these as positive numbers)		
	-	
		-
Less: outstanding payments (enter these as negative numbers)		
	-	
		-
Balance per cashbook at 31 March 2024		4,166,938.51
(should agree to Box 8 on Section 2)		

Outstanding receipts

This should include any amounts received which have been recorded in the cashbook as being received in the period to 31 March 2024 but which appear on the bank statement after 31 March 2024.

Outstanding payments

This should include any amounts paid which have been recorded in the cashbook as being paid in the period to 31 March 2024 but which appear on the bank statement after 31 March 2024.

Bicester Town Council**Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 31 March 2024**

Confirmed Bank & Investment Balances**Bank Statement Balances**

31/03/2024	Barclays Current Account	127,619.59
31/03/2024	Wages Account	46,946.43
31/03/2024	Ticketsource Account	101,608.63
31/03/2024	CCLA Deposit	2,000,000.00
31/03/2024	Barclays Treasury Deposit	1,096,187.54
31/03/2024	Santander Capital Account	245,401.67
31/03/2024	Lloyds Treasury Account	549,174.65

4,166,938.51**Receipts not on Bank Statement****0.00****Closing Balance****4,166,938.51****All Cash & Bank Accounts**

1	Current Bank A/c	127,619.59
2	Wages Account	46,946.43
3	Carnival Account	101,608.63
4	CCLA Deposit	2,000,000.00
5	Barclays Treasury Deposit	1,096,187.54
6	Santander Capital Account	245,401.67
7	Santander Deposit	0.00
8	Lloyds Treasury Account	549,174.65
10	Petty Cash	0.00
11	Barclays Base Rate Tracker	0.00
	Other Cash & Bank Balances	0.00
	Total Cash & Bank Balances	4,166,938.51

Explanation of variances 2023/24 – pro forma

Name of smaller authority:

Insert figures from Section 2 of the AGAR in all Blue highlighted boxes

Now, please provide full explanations, including numerical values, for the following that will be flagged in the green boxes where relevant:

- variances of more than 15% between totals for individual boxes (except variances of less than £500);
- variances of more than £100,000 must be explained even where this constitutes less than 15%;

Please ensure variance explanations are quantified to reduce the variance excluding stated items below the 15% / £500 / £100,000 threshold

	2024 £	2023 £	Variance £	Variance %	Explanation Required? Is > 15% Is > £100,000	DO NOT OVERWRITE THE BOXES HIGHLIGHTED IN RED/GREEN	Explanation (must include narrative and supporting figures)
1 Balances Brought Forward	4,020,363	4,048,456					
2 Precept or Rates and Levies	1,765,879	1,664,359	81,610	4.65%	NO		
3 Total Other Receipts	454,348	281,006	173,342	61.69%	YES		There has been an increase in income in three areas: 1) Additional interest and return on investments has improved by £88,071 from £40,492 to £128,563 in 2023/2024 illustrating an improvement in the return on the £2m invested with the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund; 2) £48,634 Additional Whitehalls Farm Sports Village pitches and pavilions income received due to an increase of £44,872 to £93,506 in 2023/2024; 3) There is also a further increase in the use of Pavilions for Rugby - £21,000 and other open spaces pavilions of £13,664; 4) Smaller minor variances form the balance of the variance £1,973.
4 Staff Costs	673,168	493,999	179,169	36.27%	YES		The total variance increase of £179,169 in staff salaries between 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 comprises of basic salaries cost of £110,694, Pensions of £26,183 and £9,659 NI for the Whitehalls Farm Sports Village that came into effect in September 2022 when the Town Council leased it from Cherwell District Council. It was understated and during 2023/2024 further staff were employed. A further increase was with our Environmental team of a basic salary of £19,236 plus pensions £4,045 that included a staff member stepping up for a period of time and a grade increase in another. This also includes annual incremental increases that were higher than in previous years across the board forming the balance of £3352.
5 Loan Interest/Capital Repayment	10,473	-10,661	-188	1.76%	NO		
6 All Other Payments	1,385,608	1,438,708	-103,100	6.93%	NO		The largest decrease in payments of £103,100 was: 1) Play Areas and Open Space Investments, from £299,505 to £71,474 in 2023/2024. Planned work for the value of £88,513.98 for 2023/2024 was conducted but the invoice was paid in May 2024 on completion. 2) There was a further decrease in grants provided to CAB, Voluntary Organisations and OYAP forming the balance of £14,386. 3) Further reductions were in subsidies relating to Whitehalls Sports Village SW that were paid to Cherwell District Council from £49,595 to £1,095 in 2023/24 when we took on Whitehalls. We did have an expenditure of £28,079 for Veridrain in 2023/2024 but this was offset by FA Grant income of £31,252.
7 Balances Carried Forward	4,171,341	4,020,363	150,978	3.76%	YES		The increase in investment income in box 2 and decrease in all other payments especially the accrued invoice for £88,513.98 has contributed greatly to the increase in the balances carried forward from £4,020,363 to £4,171,341 in 2023/2024. There was also a decrease in the expenditure of the earmarked reserves compared to 2022/2023.
8 Total Cash and Short Term Investments	4,166,939	4,274,698	-107,759	2.52%	NO		The variance of £107,759 is made up primarily of three elements: a decrease between £119,535.53 and £59,308.09 of £60,227.77 in the VAT Control Account with a decrease of creditors of £195,587.38. The third element was £48,622.79 prepayments for 2022/2023 with £0 for 2023/2024.
9 Total Fixed Assets plus Other Long Term Investments and Assets	3,801,960	3,782,021	19,939	0.53%	NO		
10 Total Borrowings	141,375	146,250	-4,875	3.33%	NO		



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& Chartered Tax Advisors

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t + 44(0)1483 423054

Our Ref: MARK/BIC001

Ms H Pool
Bicester Town Council
The Garth
Launton Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX26 6PS

06 February 2024

Dear Ms Pool,

Engagement Letter – Local Authority

We are pleased to accept the instruction to act as internal auditors for the Council and are writing to confirm the terms of our appointment outlined below. The purpose of this engagement letter is to set out the basis on which we are engaged to act as internal auditors and our respective areas of responsibility, it should be read in conjunction with our standard terms and conditions.

We are bound by the ethical requirements of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, and accept instructions to act for you on the basis that we will act in accordance with those ethical requirements. A copy of these requirements can be viewed at our offices on request or can be seen at www.accaglobal.com.

1. Period of engagement

- a. This letter is effective for accounting periods up to and including 31st March 2026. (The 2025/26 Council year)
- b. It replaces all previous engagement letters. The previously agreed commencement date for this engagement still applies.
- c. We will deal with matters arising in respect of periods prior to the above period as appropriate.

2. Responsibilities of the Council and Internal auditors

- a. The council is responsible for ensuring that the council maintains adequate accounting records and for preparing financial statements that have been prepared in accordance with current practices and guidelines.
- b. You are also responsible for making available to us, as and when required, all the council's accounting records and all other relevant records and related information, including minutes of all meetings. We are entitled to require from the council's officers and employees such other information and explanations as we think necessary for the performance of our duties as internal auditors.
- c. We have a statutory responsibility to report to the external auditors whether in our opinion the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with current practices and guidelines as outlined in JPAG Practitioners guide. In forming this opinion, we shall:
 - i. Review the accounting records and all other relevant records and related information, including minutes of all meetings.
 - ii. If deemed necessary, conduct two or more reviews per annum to verify both the procedural and financial aspects of the council.

- iii. Report to you in writing any such adjustments that we may consider necessary, or those areas where we think your systems may require improvement.
 - iv. Sign off the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) as internal auditors.
- d. We have a professional responsibility to report if the financial statements do not comply with applicable proper practices, unless in our opinion the non-compliance is justified in the circumstances. In determining whether or not the departure is justified we consider:
 - i. whether the departure is required in order for the financial statements to give a true and fair view; and
 - ii. whether adequate disclosure has been made concerning the departure
- e. As with other professional services firms, we are required to identify our clients for the purposes of the UK anti-money laundering legislation. We are likely to request from you, and retain, some information and documentation for these purposes and/or to make searches of appropriate databases. If we are not able to obtain satisfactory evidence of your identity within a reasonable time, there may be circumstances in which we are not able to proceed with the audit appointment.
- f. The provision of audit services is a business in the regulated sector under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and, as such, partners and staff in audit firms have to comply with this legislation which includes provisions that may require us to make a money laundering disclosure in relation to information we obtain as part of our normal audit work. It is not our practice to inform you when such a disclosure is made or the reasons for it because of the restrictions imposed by the 'tipping off' provisions of the legislation.

3. Scope of Audit

- a. Our audit will be conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines, and will include such tests of transactions and of the existence, ownership and valuation of assets and liabilities as we consider necessary.
- b. We shall obtain an understanding of the accounting and internal control systems in order to assess their adequacy as a basis for the preparation of the financial statements and to establish whether proper accounting records have been maintained by the council. We shall expect to obtain such appropriate evidence as we consider sufficient to enable us to draw reasonable conclusions there from.
- c. The nature and extent of our procedures will vary according to our assessment of the council's accounting system and, where we wish to place reliance on it, the internal control system, and may cover any aspect of the business's operations that we consider appropriate. Our audit is not designed to identify all significant weaknesses in the council's systems but, if such weaknesses come to our notice during the course of our audit which we think should be brought to your attention, we shall report them to you. We accept no duty or responsibility to any other third party as concerns our reports.
- d. As part of our normal audit procedures, we may request you to provide written confirmation of certain oral representations which we have received from you during the course of the audit on matters having a material effect on the financial statements. In particular, where we bring misstatements in the accounts to your attention that are not adjusted, we shall require written representation of your reasons.
- e. In order to assist us with the examination of your financial statements, we shall request sight of all documents or statements, including minutes and reports, which are due to be issued with the financial statements. We are also entitled to attend all general meetings of the council and to receive notice of all such meetings.
- f. The responsibility of safeguarding the assets of the council and for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and non-compliance with law or regulations rests with the council. However, we shall endeavour to plan our audit so that we have a reasonable expectation of detecting material misstatements in the financial statements or accounting records (including those resulting from fraud, error or non-compliance with law or regulations), but our examination should not be relied upon to disclose all such material misstatements or frauds, errors or instances of non-compliance as may exist.

- g. Once we have issued/uploaded our report we have no further direct responsibility in relation to the financial statements for that financial year. However, we expect that you will inform us of any changes occurring between the date of our report and submission to the external auditor.
- h. We appreciate that the present size of your council may render it uneconomic to create a system of internal control based on the segregation of duties for different functions within each area of the council. In planning and performing our audit work we shall take account of this.

4. Electronic Publication

- a. Where audited financial information is published on a website or by other electronic means, it is your responsibility to ensure that any such publication properly presents the financial information and auditor's report. We reserve the right to withhold consent to the electronic publication of our report or the financial statements if they are to be published in an inappropriate manner.
- b. It is your responsibility to ensure there are controls in place to prevent or detect quickly any changes to electronically published information. We are not required to carry out ongoing review of the information after it is first published. The maintenance and integrity of electronically published information is your responsibility and we accept no responsibility for changes made to audited information after it is first posted.

5. Communication

- a. In order to ensure that there is effective two-way communication between us we set out below the expected form and timing of such communications
 - i. We may arrange a meeting to discuss the forthcoming audit prior to the expected start date.
 - ii. We may arrange a meeting to discuss any matters arising from completing the on-site work.
 - iii. We shall of course contact you on a regular basis regarding both audit and other matters.
 - iv. Our report will be issued in .Pdf format via a secure server, which is password protected.

6. Other services

- a. You may request that we provide other services from time to time. We will issue a separate letter of engagement and scope of work to be performed accordingly. Because rules and regulations frequently change you must ask us to confirm any advice already given if a transaction is delayed or a similar transaction is to be undertaken.

7. Limitation of liability

- a. We specifically draw your attention to our standard terms and conditions which set out the basis on which we limit our liability to you and to others.
- b. There are no third Parties that we have agreed should be entitled to rely on the work done pursuant to this engagement letter other than the external auditors.

8. Fees

- a. Our fees are calculated using a stand rate per hour, plus disbursements and VAT at the standard applicable rate.
- b. Our fees for the period of your engagement letter are £65 per hour + VAT
- c. Where applicable we charge £0.45p per mile for travel from the auditors home address.
- d. Our fees are payable on presentation of invoice.

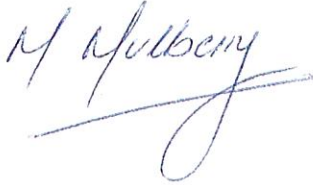
9. Cancellation of Services

- a. Services can be cancelled at any time in writing
- b. Cancellation will be effective from the end of the period to which this letter of engagement applies. (para 1a.)
- c. All outstanding fees become payable

10. Agreement of terms

- a. This letter supersedes any previous engagement letter. Once it has been agreed, this letter will remain effective until it is replaced.
- b. If this letter is not in accordance with your understanding of the scope of our engagement or your circumstances have changed, please let us know
- c. This letter should be read in conjunction with the firm's standard terms and conditions.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Mulberry', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mulberry & Co

We confirm that by electronically approving this document we are agreeing that we have read and understood the contents of this letter and related terms and conditions and further agree that it accurately reflects our fair understanding of the services that we require you to undertake.



MULBERRY & CO

Chartered Certified Accountants
& Chartered Tax Advisors

Eastgate House
Dogflud Way, Farnham
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w www.mulberryandco.co.uk

Our Ref: MARK/BIC001

Bicester Town Council
The Garth
Launton Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX26 6PS

14th November 2023

Dear Louise

Re: Bicester Town Council

Internal Audit Year Ended 31 March 2024 – Interim Audit Report.

Executive summary

Following completion of our interim internal audit on 14th November we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. The audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published AGAR. The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of this is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not at the interim audit. Where appropriate **recommendations for action are shown in bold text and are summarised in the table at the end of the report.**

The interim audit was conducted on site with the council's Interim Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The RFO had prepared the information advised in advance of the visit, and I have the impression that accounting records are neatly maintained and easily accessible. Other information was reviewed through discussion with the RFO and a review of the council website <https://www.bicester.gov.uk/>

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that are required to be reported to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

The councillors, clerk & RFO appear to be informed and council taking measured decisions using the reports and financial information provided by the clerk. There is also evidence of staff and councillor training taking place. It is therefore clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am therefore pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and for a council of this size a model of good practice.

Whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Bicester Town Council are fit for purpose and more importantly followed by councillors.

Regulation

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to “undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit’s function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all Members to support and inform them when they considering the authority’s approval of the annual governance statement.

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Mark Mulberry of Mulberry & Co. We confirm we are independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and neither the internal auditor or the firm have any conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

Your auditor has over 30 years’ experience in the financial sector with the last 20 years specialising in local government finance and internal audit.

Engagement Letter

An engagement letter was previously issued to the council covering the internal audit assignment. Copies of this document are available on request.

Planning and inherent risk assessment

The scope and plan of works including fee structure was issued to the council under separate cover. Copies of this document are available on request. In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR. As part of the inherent risk assessment, we have concluded that:

- There have been no reported instances of breaches of regulations in the past.
- The client uses an industry approved financial reporting package.
- The client regularly carries out reconciliations and documents these.
- There is regular reporting to council.
- The management team are experienced and informed.
- Records are neatly maintained and referenced.
- The client is aware of current regulations and practices.
- No High staff turnover

It is our opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be “walk through testing” on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

Table of contents –

		TEST AT INTERIM	TEST AT FINAL	PAGE
A	BOOKS OF ACCOUNT	✓		4
B	FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS	✓		4
C	RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE	✓		7
D	BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES	✓	✓	7
E	INCOME	✓	✓	8
F	PETTY CASH	✓	✓	8
G	PAYROLL	✓	✓	8
H	ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS	✓	✓	9
I	BANK AND CASH	✓	✓	9
J	YEAR END ACCOUNTS	✓	✓	10
K	LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW	✓		11
L	PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION	✓		12
M	EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS – INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS	✓	✓	13
N	PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS	✓		13
O	TRUSTEESHIP	n/a	n/a	13
	ACHIEVEMENT OF CONTROL ASSERTIONS AT INTERIM AUDIT DATE			14
	INTERIM AUDIT POINTS CARRIED FORWARD			15

A. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Internal audit requirement

Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.

Audit findings

The council continues to use RBS for recording the day-to-day financial transactions of the council. The RBS package is used regularly to record transactions and produce management information reports for review at council and committee meetings. There are six users,

- Clerk – access all areas.
- RFO – access all areas.
- Service Manager – Purchase Orders
- Assistant RFO – access all areas.
- Civic & Democratic Office – purchase orders and allotments, cemeteries
- Admin Officer - Access all areas

The PCs are currently backed up to a cloud drive. Not all passwords are automatically prompted to change. The back up has been tested in the past.

The financial records are usually stored in lever arch files stored in the finance office along with supplier invoices, bank statements and other financial records. Some items are kept in the clerks office under lock and key. However as at the audit date the council is behind on its filing and many items are stored in bundles in a box in the RFO's office. This is obviously not best practice nor indeed, as observed in prior years normal practice for Bicester. **I would recommend that at some point the filing system is brought up to date, before it becomes an overly large task.**

I reviewed the cashbook and performed a walk-through test on a supplier invoice drawn at random. The system is populated with sufficient narrative, such that a casual reader can garner an understating of the nature and scope of the transaction and the underlying documentation was located. I make no recommendation to change in the population and use of the RBS software.

I also reviewed the cashbook and performed a walk-through test on a sales receipt drawn at random. The Savoir rental invoices are showing as payments on account – **the invoices need to be raised for the rental.** We also chose a football club receipt drawn at random and again walked back to the physical invoice.

I tested the opening balances as at 1/4/23 by reviewing the balance brought forward on the cashbooks and the audited accounts for 2022/23. There were no errors.

The Council is not VAT registered and the last VAT reclaim was for the period ended 30th September 2023, which showed a refund position of £100,343.10. The refund was received on the 16th of October 2023 as evidenced to the bank statement.

Overall, I have the impression that the accounting systems are well ordered and routinely maintained and as such I make no recommendation to change. I believe the council keeps appropriate records and uses the systems for the purpose for which they are intended.

B. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Check the publication & minuting of the prior year audited AGAR and notice of conclusion of audit.

External auditors report was qualified in 2022/23 on the basis that the effectiveness of internal controls had not been carried out. This is published on the council website along with the notice of conclusion. This will be taken to full council on the 20th of November. The council has already made a note to carry out this task before the council year end.

It was noted the heading of the 2022/23 notice of electors rights website document varies to previous versions. **I would recommend continuance of previous headings for the purposes of consistency.**

Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms.

I confirmed in previous audits by sample testing that Councillors sign Acceptance of Office forms, declaration of interest and notice to receive information by electronic means, all in accordance with current regulations. **However, it was noted for the most recent councillor elected in September 2023, the relevant forms have not been all been finalised yet. I recommend this process is reviewed and statutory forms brought up to date as soon as possible.**

Confirm that the Council is compliant with the GDPR.

The council is fully aware of GDPR and accessibility regulations. It was noted the council has established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's Guide (March 2023) contains updated guidance on the matter as below:

The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK

- 5.205. All authorities except parish meetings must now have an official website. To comply with GDPR, councils should provide official email accounts for their councillors as well as for their clerk and other officers.
- 5.206. When choosing a domain name for the council's website and emails, many local council websites are appropriately making use of the official GOV.UK domain (for example, ourparishcouncil.gov.uk), with email addresses being linked to that domain.
- 5.207. Using a GOV.UK domain for your council website and email accounts demonstrates the council's official local government status. Members of the public are increasingly cyber security awareness, so a GOV.UK domain can also help to build trust, and credibility and visibly demonstrates authenticity. Many people will now reasonably expect a local council to have a GOV.UK domain name.
- 5.208. For the purposes of user management, councils should ensure that the proper officer can add and remove member and staff email accounts. Commercial 'dashboard' email and web systems offer centralised searching of all data contained within the system for effective compliance with GDPR Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests.

Confirm that the Council meets regularly throughout the year.

Full council meets circa six times per annum, including the annual meeting. **The council has committees, the schemes of delegation will need to be updated and readopted prior to the council year end.**

Confirm all section 137 expenditure meets the guidelines & does not exceed the annual per elector limit of £9.93 (2023: £8.82) per elector.

The council does not have the power of general competence, expenditure is with S.137 thresholds.

Check that agendas for meetings are published giving 3 clear days' notice.

The Clerk was able to demonstrate that at least 3 clear days' notice is given on agendas. Whilst we have not tested every single committee and council meeting there was no evidence of non-compliance. The agenda background information is provided in easily downloadable links.

Check the draft minutes of the last meeting(s) are on the council's website.

Minutes are uploaded to the council website., these are in accessible format.

Confirm that the Parish Council's Standing Orders have been reviewed within the last 12 months.

The standing orders are based on the NALC model. These are in the process of being reviewed and will be readopted by March 2024.

Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations.

Financial regulations are based on the NALC model. These were reviewed and readopted in the full council in August 2022. **There is evidence of typos and the document is due to be reformatted, council may want to attend to this before the next formal review date.**

The regulations being based on the NALC model contain provisions for the approval of spending, setting of budgets, reconciliation of the bank and reporting to council.

Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed.

Financial regulations 2.2 deals with bank reconciliation and reporting to committee. The reconciliations are being prepared and signed and reported to committee. **However, the regulation needs to be updated to allow rather than preclude the chair of finance to carry out this task.**

Financial Regulation 4 Deals with authority to spend. 4.1. Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:

- *the council for all items over £25,000;*
- *a duly delegated committee of the council for items over £10,000; or*
- *the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor or Chairman of the appropriate committee, for any items below £10,000 and above £2,500.*

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an email or authorisation slip duly signed by the Town Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman.

Contracts may not be disaggregated to avoid controls imposed by these regulations.

4.2. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the council, or duly delegated committee. During the budget year and with the approval of council having considered fully the implications for public services, unspent and available amounts may be moved to other budget headings or to an earmarked reserve as appropriate ('virement').

Financial Regulation 11.1.h deals with tenders, quotes and estimates. H. When it is to enter into a contract of less than £60,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Town Clerk or RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £12,500 and above £2,500 the Town Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10.3 above shall apply. For expenditure of £2,500 or less in value the Town Clerk or RFO shall have executive power.

I reviewed the RBS nominal ledger list for items over £2,500 and was able to verify the expenses to the physical invoice, with assistance from the RFO I was also able to verify that council had pre-approved the expenditure in accordance with regulation and that where applicable quotes and estimates had been obtained. **If I had one recommendation it would be to add a note or annotation to the financial transaction that denotes the minute references as this type of expenditure will always attract interest.**

Financial Regulation deals with purchase and sale of assets etc. 14.2. No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, or relevant committee, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed £1,000.

14.5. Subject only to the limit set in Regulation 14.2 above, no tangible moveable property shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the full council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to council with a full business case.

I confirm that business cases are written for fixed asset purchases in accordance with regulations.

Financial Regulation 5 deals with banking arrangements and authorisation of payments.

5.2. *The RFO shall prepare a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, this will be emailed to each councillor two days before payment allowing time for members to comment or otherwise influence the payment of specific invoices. This schedule counter-signed by the Town Clerk or in their absence the Service Manager/RFO, accompanied with the relevant invoices, will be presented to two councillors who are authorised bank signatories for signature. The approved schedule shall be presented to the next Finance Committee for endorsement. A summary list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting at which payment was endorsed.*

It was noted that payments lists are drawn up but not always necessarily endorsed by councillors. I recommend the text of this regulation is reviewed in the light of day-to-day practice. It was also noted the minute could be more robust in detailing what list of payments is approved.

Financial regulation 6 deals with making payments. The council makes payments by cheque, direct debit, SO and bacs. There is no doubt payments are properly reported to council, approved and the physical payment authorised. The bank system has a dual access requirement.

I was able to prove beyond doubt that payments lists are produced.

Confirm that checks of the accounts are made by a councillor.

The system noted above details internal review takes place and councillor, committee, and council level. I am under no doubt that council properly approves expenditure.

I am of the opinion the council is following its own regulations and that any changes to financial regulations are to be considered minor and not indicative of errors in the system. I am therefore of the opinion that the control assertion "This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for", has been met.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE

Internal audit requirement

This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

Audit findings

The council has a risk management policy which appears to have been most recently reviewed and approved by council in March 2022. This was scheduled for review in March 2023 but this has not taken place. **I recommend this is brought up to date as soon as possible and certainly before the year end.**

I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Zurich with the annual renewal date of March 2024. The council has public liability of £10,000,000 and fidelity guarantee of £250,000. **The money cover is very low, I suggest this is reviewed carefully with the insurance broker.**

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

Audit findings

I have reviewed the minutes of full council and note that council endorsed the finance committee approval of the 23/24 budget, but there was no formal recognition of the amount requested for the precept, in addition to this, there was no formal approval given by council to the officers to request a precept from the district. It is proper practice for council to formally approve a precept and give authority to request public funds. **I recommend a thorough review of the budget approval process to ensure proper practices are observed for the 24/25 budget.**

The draft 2024/25 budget is in progress and has been presented to committee – deadlines are achievable.

The council holds £3.2m in earmarked reserves (EMR). The reserves are clearly identifiable and show movement in the year.

The council holds c. £800k in the general reserve. The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's guide states 'the generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure' (para 5.33).

I estimate the net revenue expenditure to be in the region of £1.5m per annum. The general reserve balance is within the recommended range.

I have noted evidence in the minutes of budgets and forecasts being discussed in depth at committee.

E. INCOME

Internal audit requirement

Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded, and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

The council has multiple income sources to support the precept, including, grants, allotments, pitch hire, burials and other miscellaneous sources.

A review of the nominal ledger report and cashbooks shows income is clearly recorded with sufficient narrative description to identify the source. There was no evidence of netting off and the income item appears to be posted to the correct heading to which the expenditure related.

Bad & aged debts are monitored monthly, statements are issued using the finance package and a report is made to council/committee. Cash receipt and invoicing are in the main dealt with by separate individuals. There is segregation of duties in the system. Further testing on the event income audit trail will be undertaken at the year end.

A review of the aged debtors shows that the council is behind on its sales invoicing. **I recommend this is completed as soon as possible as this will impact the cashflow.**

I could find no evidence of annual fees and charges being reviewed in accordance with financial regulation 9.3.

F. PETTY CASH

Internal audit requirement

Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

The council does not have any petty cash.

G. PAYROLL

Internal audit requirement

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

Audit findings

The payroll is processed by external firm using third party software. Salary approvals are part of the general payments' approval process.

The council has fulfilled its obligations in respect of auto-enrolment and uses LGPS.

I tested the tax deduction and pay scales there were no errors. I am of the opinion salaries are correctly calculated and paid.

All council employees are paid through the payroll for all council work undertaken. No employees are paid separately for any other council work undertaken.

There are no councillor allowances.

I was unable to verify the PAYE payments to government gateway account, I will check this at the year end.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Internal audit requirement

Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

Audit findings

The council has a detailed excel fixed asset register in place, broken down into sections containing land and buildings, street furniture, equipment, etc.

The register contains insurance values, additions, disposals, and current value. This form of recording is entirely appropriate for a council of this size. **However, it is equally clear the register needs to be updated prior to the year end for in year fixed asset purchases as evidenced from the nominal ledger.**

The council has PWLB borrowing which at the year-end date was verified to third party statements.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.

Audit findings

2.2. *On a regular basis, following a meeting of the Finance Committee, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chairman of the Finance Committee shall be appointed by the Finance Committee to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification. Any exceptions shall on conclusion be reported to and noted by the Finance Committee.*

Bank reconciliations are completed on a regular basis, independently checked, and presented to committee meetings for review. I reviewed the reconciliation as at 30/09/2023 presented for the interim audit. I was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and found no errors. I am also able to confirm that the reconciliations are signed.

The council has an investment strategy, which will be published on the council website.

As the council's budget exceeds €500,000, it does not benefit from protection from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Internal audit requirement

Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

Audit findings

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

	Annual Governance Statement	'Yes', means that this authority	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	YES – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	YES – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.
3	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	YES – the Clerk is experienced and advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
4	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	YES – the requirements and timescales for 2022/23 year-end were followed.
5	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	YES – the council has a risk management scheme and appropriate external insurance.
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	YES – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor has completed two audits during the year.
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	YES – where matters are raised, action taken by council is recorded
8	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	YES – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole</i>	N/A

	responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<i>managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>	
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Section 2 – Accounting Statements

AGAR box number		2021/22	2022/23	Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	3,891,908	4,048,456	Agrees to 2021/22 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	1,582,488	1,684,269	Figure confirmed to central records
3	Total other receipts	236,889	281,006	Agrees to underlying records
4	Staff costs	417,765	493,499	Agrees to underlying records
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	10,850	10,661	Verified against PWLB records
6	All other payments	1,234,214	1,488,708	Agrees to underlying records
7	Balances carried forward	4,048,456	4,020,363	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet

8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	4,154,256	4,274,698	Agrees to bank reconciliation
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	3,751,923	3,782,021	Matches asset register - 2022 restated To remove insurance values and replace with £1
10	Total borrowings	151,125	146,250	Verified against PWLB records

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)		✓	<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)		✓	<i>The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on an income and expenditure basis with a box 7 and 8 reconciliation.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2021/22.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW

Internal audit requirement

If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")

Audit findings

The council did not certify itself exempt in 2022/23 due to exceeding the income and expenditure limits and this test does not apply.

L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION**Internal audit requirement**

The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation

Audit findings

The council has income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 and as such is required to follow the "Local Government Transparency Code 2015" which is recommended practice not a statutory requirement.

The Code requires local authorities in England to publish the following information quarterly:

Expenditure exceeding £500	On the web site up to July 2023 – these need updating
Government Procurement Card transactions	On the web site
Procurement information	On the web site up to November 2020 - – these need updating

Additionally, local authorities are required to publish the following information annually:

Local Authority Land	On the web site
Social Housing Assets	On the web site
Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations	On the web site
Organisational Chart	On the web site
Trade union facility time	On the web site
Parking account	On the web site
Parking spaces	On the web site
Senior salaries	On the web site
Constitution	On the web site
Pay multiple	On the web site
Fraud	On the web site

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

13(1) An authority must publish (which must include publication on that authority's website)

- (a) the Statement of Accounts together with any certificate or opinion entered by the local auditor in accordance with section 20(2) of the Act; and
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(3)

13(2) Where documents are published under paragraph (1), the authority must

- (a) keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and
- (b) ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

I was able to confirm that pages 4 (Annual Governance Statement), 5 (Accounting Statements) and 6 (External Auditor's Report and Certificate) of the AGAR are available for review on the council website for the last five years.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority, during the previous year (2022-23) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2022/23 Actual
Date AGAR signed by council	19 June 2023
Date inspection notice issued	20 June 2023
Inspection period begins	21 June 2023
Inspection period ends	1 st August 2023
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2022/23, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement can therefore be signed off by the council.

N: PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23. Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website / webpage.

Before 1 July 2023 authorities must publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited
- Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2022/23, approved and signed, page 4
- Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2022/23, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2023 authorities must publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate
- Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

Audit findings

I was able to confirm that the publication requirements for 2022/23 have been met and the Notice of Public Rights is published on the council website.

O. TRUSTEESHIP**Internal audit requirement**

Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.

Audit findings

The council has no trusts. This test does not apply.

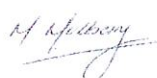
Achievement of control assertions at interim audit date

Based on the tests conducted during the interim audit, our conclusions on the achievement of the internal control objectives are summarised in the table below. A further review and update of this opinion will be conducted at the final audit.

	INTERNAL CONTROL OBJECTIVE	YES	NO	NOT COVERED
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year	✓		
B	This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for			✓
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓
L	The authority publishes information on a free to access website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant transparency code requirements	✓		
M	The authority, during the previous year (2022-23) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N	The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Mark Mulberry
For Mulberry & Co

Interim audit 2024 – audit points

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
Books of Account	The financial records are usually stored in lever arch files stored in the finance office along with supplier invoices, bank statements and other financial records. Some items are kept in the clerks office under lock and key. However as at the audit date the council is behind on its filing and many items are stored in bundles in a box in the RFO's office. This is obviously not best practice nor indeed, as observed in prior years normal practice for Bicester. I would recommend that at some point the filing system is brought up to date, before it becomes an overly large task. I also reviewed the cashbook and performed a walk-through test on a sales receipt drawn at random. The Savoir rental invoices are showing as payments on account – the invoices need to be raised for the rental. We also chose a football club receipt drawn at random and again walked back to the physical invoice.	
Financial Regulations & Governance	It was noted the heading of the 2022/23 notice of electors rights website document varies to previous versions. I would recommend continuance of previous headings for the purposes of consistency. <i>Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms.</i> I confirmed in previous audits by sample testing that Councillors sign Acceptance of Office forms, declaration of interest and notice to receive information by electronic means, all in accordance with current regulations. However, it was noted for the most recent councillor elected in September 2023, the relevant forms have not been all been finalised yet. I recommend this process is reviewed and statutory forms brought up to date as soon as possible. <i>Confirm that the Council meets regularly throughout the year.</i> Full council meets circa six times per annum, including the annual meeting. The council has committees, the schemes of delegation will need to be updated and readopted prior to the council year end. <i>Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations.</i> Financial regulations are based on the NALC model. These were reviewed and readopted in the full council in August 2022. There is evidence of typos and the document is due to be reformatted, council may want to attend to this before the next formal review date. <i>Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed.</i> Financial regulations 2.2 deals with bank reconciliation and reporting to committee. The reconciliations are being prepared and signed and reported to committee. However, the regulation needs to be updated to allow rather than preclude the chair of finance to carry out this task. I reviewed the RBS nominal ledger list for items over £2,500 and was able to verify the expenses to the physical invoice, with assistance from the RFO I was also able to verify that council had pre-approved the expenditure in accordance with regulation and that where applicable quotes and estimates had been obtained. If I had one recommendation it would be to add a note or annotation to the financial	

	transaction that denotes the minute references as this type of expenditure will always attract interest. It was noted that payments lists are drawn up but not always necessarily endorsed by councillors. I recommend the text of this regulation is reviewed in the light of day-to-day practice. It was also noted the minute could be more robust in detailing what list of payments is approved.	
RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE	The council has a risk management policy which appears to have been most recently reviewed and approved by council in March 2022. This was scheduled for review in March 2023 but this has not taken place. I recommend this is brought up to date as soon as possible and certainly before the year end. I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Zurich with the annual renewal date of March 2024. The council has public liability of £10,000,000 and fidelity guarantee of £250,000. The money cover is very low, I suggest this is reviewed carefully with the insurance broker.	
BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES	I have reviewed the minutes of full council and note that council endorsed the finance committee approval of the 23/24 budget, but there was no formal recognition of the amount requested for the precept, in addition to this, there was no formal approval given by council to the officers to request a precept from the district. It is proper practice for council to formally approve a precept and give authority to request public funds. I recommend a thorough review of the budget approval process to ensure proper practices are observed for the 24/25 budget.	
INCOME	A review of the aged debtors shows that the council is behind on its sales invoicing. I recommend this is completed as soon as possible as this will impact the cashflow. I could find no evidence of annual fees and charges being reviewed in accordance with financial regulation 9.3.	
PAYROLL	I was unable to verify the PAYE payments to government gateway account, I will check this at the year end.	
ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS	The register contains insurance values, additions, disposals, and current value. This form of recording is entirely appropriate for a council of this size. However, it is equally clear the register needs to be updated prior to the year end for in year fixed asset purchases as evidenced from the nominal ledger.	
Transparency	Expenditure exceeding £500 - On the web site up to July 2023 – these need updating	
Transparency	Procurement information - On the web site up to November 2020 - – these need updating	



Our Ref: MARK/BIC001

Bicester Town Council
The Garth
Launton Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX26 6PS

22nd May 2024

Dear Helen,

Re: Bicester Town Council
Internal Audit Year Ended 31 March 2024 – Year-End Audit report

Executive summary

Following completion of our year-end internal audit on the 22nd of May 2024 we enclose our report for your kind attention and presentation to the council. This report contains details of the additional testing conducted at year-end and should be considered alongside the interim audit reports issued following our interim audit on the 14th of November. The audits were conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines and testing was risk based. Whilst we have not tested all transactions, our samples have where appropriate covered the entire year to date.

Our report is presented in the same order as the assertions on the internal auditor report within the published AGAR. The start of each section details the nature of the assertion to be verified. Testing requirements follow those detailed in the audit plan previously sent to the council, a copy of this is available on request. The report concludes with an opinion as to whether each assertion has been met or not. Where appropriate **recommendations for action are shown in bold text and are summarised in the table at the end of the report.**

Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk.

It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system.

It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Bicester Town Council are well established and followed.

Regulation

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts. In addition to this, a smaller authority is required by Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to “undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the authority on whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective.

Internal audit's function is to test and report to the authority on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports should therefore be made available to all Members to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement.

Independence and competence

Your audit was conducted by Mark Mulberry of Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd, who has over 30 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 13 years specialising in local government.

Your auditor is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

Engagement Letter

An engagement letter was previously issued to the council covering the 2023/24 internal audit assignment. Copies of this document are available on request.

Planning and inherent risk assessment

The scope and plan of works including fee structure was issued to the council under separate cover. Copies of this document are available on request. In summary, our work will address each of the internal control objectives as stated on the Annual Internal Audit Report of the AGAR.

It is our opinion that the inherent risk of error or misstatement is low, and the controls of the council can be relied upon and as such substantive testing of individual transactions is not required. Testing to be carried out will be "walk through testing" on sample data to encompass the period of the council year under review.

Year-End Audit

The year-end audit was conducted on site. Information was requested from the council in advance of the audit taking place, and this was reviewed along with other information published on the council's website <https://www.bicester.gov.uk/>

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C	RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE	✓	✓	5
D	BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES	✓	✓	5
G	PAYROLL	✓	✓	6
H	ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS	✓	✓	6
I	BANK AND CASH	✓	✓	6
J	YEAR END ACCOUNTS	✓	✓	7
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Interim Audit - Points Carried Forward

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
Books of Account	The financial records are usually stored in lever arch files stored in the finance office along with supplier invoices, bank statements and other financial records. Some items are kept in the clerks office under lock and key. However as at the audit date the council is behind on its filing and many items are stored in bundles in a box in the RFO's office. This is obviously not best practice nor indeed, as observed in prior years normal practice for Bicester. I would recommend that at some point the filing system is brought up to date, before it becomes an overly large task.	Completed
	I also reviewed the cashbook and performed a walk-through test on a sales receipt drawn at random. The Savoir rental invoices are showing as payments on account – the invoices need to be raised for the rental. We also chose a football club receipt drawn at random and again walked back to the physical invoice.	Completed
Financial Regulations & Governance	It was noted the heading of the 2022/23 notice of electors rights website document varies to previous versions. I would recommend continuance of previous headings for the purposes of consistency.	Noted
	<i>Confirm by sample testing that councillors sign statutory office forms.</i> I confirmed in previous audits by sample testing that Councillors sign Acceptance of Office forms, declaration of interest and notice to receive information by electronic means, all in accordance with current regulations. However, it was noted for the most recent councillor elected in September 2023, the relevant forms have not been all been finalised yet. I recommend this process is reviewed and statutory forms brought up to date as soon as possible.	Completed
	<i>Confirm that the Council meets regularly throughout the year.</i> Full council meets circa six times per annum, including the annual meeting. The council has committees, the schemes of delegation will need to be updated and readopted prior to the council year end.	Completed
	<i>Confirm that the Parish Council has adopted and recently reviewed Financial Regulations.</i> Financial regulations are based on the NALC model. These were reviewed and readopted in the full council in August 2022. There is evidence of typos and the document is due to be reformatted, council may want to attend to this before the next formal review date.	Completed
	<i>Check that the council's Financial Regulations are being routinely followed.</i> Financial regulations 2.2 deals with bank reconciliation and reporting to committee. The reconciliations are being prepared and signed and reported to committee. However, the regulation needs to be updated to allow rather than preclude the chair of finance to carry out this task. I reviewed the RBS nominal ledger list for items over £2,500 and was able to verify the expenses to the physical invoice, with assistance from the RFO I was also able to verify that council had pre-approved the expenditure in accordance with regulation and that where applicable quotes and estimates had been obtained. If I had one recommendation it would be to add a note or annotation to the financial transaction that denotes the minute references as this type of expenditure will always attract interest.	completed On-going

	It was noted that payments lists are drawn up but not always necessarily endorsed by councillors. I recommend the text of this regulation is reviewed in the light of day-to-day practice. It was also noted the minute could be more robust in detailing what list of payments is approved.	completed
RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE	The council has a risk management policy which appears to have been most recently reviewed and approved by council in March 2022. This was scheduled for review in March 2023 but this has not taken place. I recommend this is brought up to date as soon as possible and certainly before the year end. I confirmed that the council has a valid insurance policy in place with Zurich with the annual renewal date of March 2024. The council has public liability of £10,000,000 and fidelity guarantee of £250,000. The money cover is very low, I suggest this is reviewed carefully with the insurance broker.	Completed On-going
BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES	I have reviewed the minutes of full council and note that council endorsed the finance committee approval of the 23/24 budget, but there was no formal recognition of the amount requested for the precept, in addition to this, there was no formal approval given by council to the officers to request a precept from the district. It is proper practice for council to formally approve a precept and give authority to request public funds. I recommend a thorough review of the budget approval process to ensure proper practices are observed for the 24/25 budget.	On-going
INCOME	A review of the aged debtors shows that the council is behind on its sales invoicing. I recommend this is completed as soon as possible as this will impact the cashflow. I could find no evidence of annual fees and charges being reviewed in accordance with financial regulation 9.3.	Completed
PAYROLL	I was unable to verify the PAYE payments to government gateway account, I will check this at the year end.	Completed
ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS	The register contains insurance values, additions, disposals, and current value. This form of recording is entirely appropriate for a council of this size. However, it is equally clear the register needs to be updated prior to the year end for in year fixed asset purchases as evidenced from the nominal ledger.	On-going
Transparency	Expenditure exceeding £500 - On the web site up to July 2023 – these need updating	On-going
Transparency	Procurement information - On the web site up to November 2020 - – these need updating	On-going

B. FINANCE REGULATIONS, GOVERNANCE AND PAYMENTS

Internal audit requirement

This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

Audit findings

Check that the council's Finance Regulations are being routinely followed.

Further to the testing conducted at the interim audit, I reviewed the March council minutes and noted the approval of February income and expenditure, bank reconciliations, reserves and other financial matters. I am under no doubt council has the proper opportunity to review and understand financial matters and continues to approve payments in accordance with financial regulations.

We note the council has rescinded its use of the General Power of Competence and as such is reminded that it may continue such activities that have already commenced, **but MAY NOT start any further projects unless it has the power to do so.**

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE

Internal audit requirement

This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

Audit findings

"We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements."

The Clerk confirmed that they were not aware of any event having a financial impact that was not included in the accounting statements.

D. BUDGET, PRECEPT AND RESERVES

Internal audit requirement

The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.

Audit findings

Comprehensive financial management information is presented to council, including income & expenditure against budget, bank statements and invoices for payment lists, providing councillors with sufficient opportunity to scrutinise the council's overall financial position.

I am under no doubt council properly prepares budgets and financial reports and that councillors can make informed decisions based on these.

Analysis of the council's year-end income and expenditure report shows total income for the year reported as 112.3% and total expenditure as 103.3%. This has resulted in a surplus of £150,977. This is due in the main to un-budgeted grant and interest.

At the end of the financial year, the council held circa £3,337,380 in earmarked reserves (EMR) and a further £833,961 in the general reserve. I was able to compare reserve information across the management accounts and the AGAR working documents and found the totals to be consistent. **I would recommend the council use the Rialtas earmarked reserves functionality to record income and expenditure against the appropriate reserve.**

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's guide states 'the generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure' (para 5.33).

The general reserve balance is within the recommended range.

G. PAYROLL

Internal audit requirement

Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

Audit findings

I reviewed the total figure being included within box 4 (staff costs) on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and was able to confirm from the accounting software that this includes only salary payments, HMRC payments and pension contributions.

I verified the March payroll to the underlying nominal ledger and can confirm there were no errors.

H. ASSETS AND INVESTMENTS

Internal audit requirement

Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.

Audit findings

I confirmed the asset register total matches that included in box 9 (total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets) on the AGAR. Assets are correctly stated at historic cost or proxy cost.

I am under no doubt the register is up to date and correct as at 31st March 2024. **I recommend a reconciliation is shown each year to detail the movement from one year to the next.**

The council has a Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) loan, and I confirmed the year-end balance and in year payments against the PWLB documents.

I. BANK AND CASH

Internal audit requirement

Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.

Audit findings

I reviewed the March 2024 bank reconciliation for all accounts and was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and cashbooks. The balances agreed to the end of year AGAR.

Due to the size of the council's annual budget, it does not benefit from the £85,000 protection limit offered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). The council has mitigated this risk and opened accounts with different providers in accordance with its adopted Investment Strategy.

J. YEAR END ACCOUNTS**Internal audit requirement**

Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.

Audit findings

The council, at its meeting to sign off the year-end accounts, must discuss Section 1 of the AGAR (Annual Governance Statement) and record this activity in the minutes of the meeting. **COUNCIL IS REMINDED THAT THIS MUST BE A SEPARATE AGENDA ITEM PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF SECTION 2 OF THE AGAR (ANNUAL ACCOUNTS).**

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

Based on the internal audit finding I recommend using the table below as the basis for that discussion.

	Annual Governance Statement	'Yes', means that this authority	Suggested response based on evidence
1	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>	YES – accounts follow latest Accounts and Audit Regulations and practitioners guide recommendations.
2	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>	YES – there is regular reporting of financial transactions and accounting summaries, offering the opportunity for scrutiny.
3	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>	YES – the Clerk advises the council in respect of its legal powers.
4	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>	YES – the requirements and timescales for 2022/23 year-end were met
5	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>	YES – the council has a risk management scheme and appropriate external insurance.
6	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>	YES – the council has appointed an independent and competent internal auditor.
7	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>	YES – matters raised in internal and external audit reports have been addressed.
8	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this	<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>	YES – no matters were raised during the internal audit visits.

	authority and. Where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.		
9	Trust funds including charitable – In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/asset(s), including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<i>has met all its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>	N/A

Section 2 – Accounting Statements

AGAR box number		2022/23	2023/24	Internal Auditor notes
1	Balances brought forward	4,048,456	4,020,363	Agrees to 2022/23 carry forward (box 7)
2	Precept or rates and levies	1,684,269	1,765,879	Figure confirmed to central precept record
3	Total other receipts	281,006	454,348	Agrees to underlying accounting records
4	Staff costs	493,999	673,168	Agrees to underlying accounting records. Includes only expenditure allowed as staff costs (see section G)
5	Loan interest/capital repayments	10,661	10,473	Confirmed to PWLB documents
6	All other payments	1,488,708	1,385,608	Agrees to underlying accounting records
7	Balances carried forward	4,020,363	4,171,341	Casts correctly and agrees to balance sheet

8	Total value of cash and short-term investments	4,274,698	4,166,939	Agrees to bank reconciliation for all accounts
9	Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	3,782,021	3,677,958	Matches asset register total and changes from previous year have been traced
10	Total borrowings	146,250	141,375	Confirmed to PWLB documents

For Local Councils Only		Yes	No	N/A	
11a	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)		✓		<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b	Disclosure note re Trust Funds (including charitable)			✓	<i>The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

Audit findings

The year-end accounts have been correctly prepared on an income and expenditure basis with the box 7 and 8 reconciliation explained due to year-end debtors, creditors, accruals, VAT. Amounts for each of these are similar to those for the previous year and appropriate for a council of this size and financial activity level. I have verified these to underlying schedules and third party evidence, on e adjustment was made to reverse accruals remaining from 2022.

The AGAR correctly casts and cross casts and last year's comparatives match the figures submitted for 2022/23 and published on the council website.

The variance analysis has been completed to explain the variances exceeding 15% where required, and in my opinion, contains sufficient narrative and quantitative information for the External Auditor.

K. LIMITED ASSURANCE REVIEW**Internal audit requirement**

If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")

Audit findings

The council did not certify itself exempt in 2022/23 due to exceeding the income and expenditure limits and this test does not apply.

L: PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION**Internal audit requirement**

The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Audit findings

At present no specific guidance has been provided to set out what the 'relevant legislation' is in respect of Control Objective L. We have therefore considered the requirements of Statutory Instruments 2015/480 The Local Government (Transparency Requirements) Regulations 2015 [<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/480/made/data.pdf>] and, 2015/494 The Smaller Authorities (Transparency Requirements). https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/494/pdfs/uksem_20150494_en.pdf

In addition to this, we have considered the additional publication requirements as set out in the ICO Model Publication Scheme for Parish Councils. <https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1153/model-publication-scheme.pdf> & https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1266/parish_council_information_guide.doc

All councils are required to follow The Accounts and Audit Regulations which include the following requirements:

13(1) An authority must publish (which must include publication on that authority's website)

- (a) the Statement of Accounts together with any certificate or opinion entered by the local auditor in accordance with section 20(2) of the Act; and
- (b) the Annual Governance Statement approved in accordance with regulation 6(3)

13(2) Where documents are published under paragraph (1), the authority must

- (a) keep copies of those documents for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum; and
- (b) ensure that those documents remain available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which those documents were first published in accordance with that paragraph.

For councils with a turnover over £25,000, it is recommended best practice to follow the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, but not a statutory requirement.

The council has model publication scheme documentation this is dated 2022 and published on the website.

I was able to confirm that pages 4 (Annual Governance Statement), 5 (Accounting Statements) and 6 (External Auditor's Report and Certificate) of the AGAR are available for review on the council website for financial years 2018/19 to 2022/23 inclusive.

M: EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS - INSPECTION OF ACCOUNTS**Internal audit requirement**

The authority has demonstrated that during summer 2023 it correctly provided for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Audit findings

Inspection – key dates	2022/23	2023/24 Proposed
Date AGAR signed by council	19 June 2023	24 th June
Date inspection notice issued	20 June 2023	25 th June
Inspection period begins	21 June 2023	26 th June
Inspection period ends	1 st August 2023	6 th August
Correct length (30 working days)	Yes	Yes
Common period included (first 10 working days of July)	Yes	Yes

I am satisfied the requirements of this control objective were met for 2022/23, and assertion 4 on the Annual Governance Statement can therefore be signed off by the council.

I was able to confirm that the proposed dates for 2023/24 meet the statutory requirements.

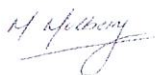
Achievement of control assertions at year-end audit date

Based on the tests conducted during the year-end audit, our conclusions on the achievement of the internal control objectives are summarised in the table below and are reflected in the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report within the AGAR.

	INTERNAL CONTROL OBJECTIVE	YES	NO	NOT COVERED
A	Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year	✓		
B	This authority complied with its Finance Regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved, and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
C	This authority assesses the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these	✓		
D	The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E	Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for	✓		
F	Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved, and VAT appropriately accounted for			✓
G	Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H	Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I	Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J	Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K	If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. <i>(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")</i>			✓N/a
L	The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation	✓		
M	The authority, during the previous year (2022/23) correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations <i>(evidenced by the notice published on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set)</i> .	✓		
N	The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR.	✓		
O	Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Mark Mulberry
Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd

Year-End Audit - Points Carried Forward**None**

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
Earmarked Reserves	I would recommend the council use the Rialtas earmarked reserves functionality to record income and expenditure against the appropriate reserve.	
Fixed assets	I recommend a reconciliation is shown each year to detail the movement from one year to the next.	

Bicester Town Council

Supporting Reserves Reconciliation for ANNUAL RETURN 31 March 2024

Explains the difference between boxes 7 & 8 on the Annual Return

<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Last Year £</u>	<u>This Year £</u>
	Total Reserves	4,020,363.28	4,171,340.77
101	Accrued Income	0.00	5,164.23
102	Debtors Control	32,479.53	43,683.00
105	VAT Control A/c	119,535.53	59,308.09
110	Prepayments	48,622.79	0.00
507	Mayors Contra Account	2,613.86	443.06
	Less Total Debtors	203,251.71	108,598.38
500	Creditors	295,189.04	99,601.62
502	Other Creditors	0.00	4,594.50
510	Accruals	156,924.24	0.00
560	Receipts in Advance	5,473.00	0.00
	Plus Total Creditors	457,586.28	104,196.12
	Equals Total Cash and Bank Accounts	4,274,697.85	4,166,938.51
201	Current Bank A/c	223,956.27	127,619.59
202	Wages Account	121,234.82	46,946.43
203	Carnival Account	36,290.32	101,608.63
204	CCLA Deposit	2,000,000.00	2,000,000.00
205	Barclays Treasury Deposit	1,103,451.92	1,096,187.54
206	Santander Capital Account	240,589.87	245,401.67
208	Lloyds Treasury Account	549,174.65	549,174.65
	Total Cash and Bank Accounts	4,274,697.85	4,166,938.51

Breakdown of reserves held

Please complete or update the highlighted boxes to help provide a breakdown of the types of reserves held

	£	£	£
Earmarked reserves*:			
Communities and Elections	18,977		
Play Areas and Open Space Investment	624,393		
Equipment Replacement and Maintenance	257,000		
Green Infrastructure	212,791		
Town Centre	105,250		
BTC Premises	928,039		
Youth Initiatives	10,000		
Burial Ground Provision	818,134		
Sports Village Contribution	303,196		
Sports Village Sinking Fund	59,600		
		3,337,380	
Restricted (ring-fenced) reserves:			
Reserve 1			
Reserve 2			
Reserve 3			
Reserve 4			
Reserve 5			
		0	
General reserves	810,110	810,110	
Total reserves			4,171,341
Box 7 per Annual Return			4,171,341
Difference			0
Explanation of difference (if applicable):			

Column B - Reserves should be renamed to show the specific purpose / name given by this authority.

Column D - Earmarked items - a value for the amount earmarked for each specific reserve should be entered

Column D - Ring-fenced items - a value for the amount restricted (ring-fenced) for each specific reserve should be entered

Column D - General reserves - this should relate to normal operating funds and should be the difference between the total reserves and the earmarked and ring-fenced reserves

Bicester Town Council
Earmarked Reserves 31st March 2024

1st April 2023	Used to Fund Expenditure	From General Fund	Reserve Transfer	31st March 2024	
£31,776	£12,799			£18,977	May 2023 Town Council elections
9007 Community and Elections					Play area refurbishments for summer '24 including £90,000 Holm/Southwold, further play area inspections being scheduled.
9011 Play Areas And Open Space Investment	£465,767	£230,100		£624,393	Original allocation £594,293 + £30,100 from 9004
9013 Equipment Replacement and Maintenance	£257,000	£0		£257,000	
9014 Green Infrastructure	£233,659	£20,868		£212,791	£32,000 Wessex Mower
9016 Town Centre	£105,250	£0		£105,250	District Council regeneration scheme
9020 BTC Premises	£996,972	£68,933		£928,039	Garth Park cost options study quoted between £1.8m and £2.4m for redevelopment
9021 Youth Initiatives	£10,000	£0		£10,000	Youth council community programme
9039 Burial Ground Provision	£734,064	£0		£818,134	New cemetery estimated in excess of £1m
9042 Sports Village Contribution	£306,167	£2,971		£303,196	Capital programme new asset gained in September '22
9044 Partnership	£30,100	£0			Community organisations and twin town refugee support
9046 Sports Village Sinking Fund	£49,600	£10,000		£59,600	3G pitch 10 year maintenance schedule
£3,220,355	£177,045	£294,070	£0	£3,337,380	

Smaller authority name: _____ **The Bicester Town Council** _____

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION
OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE &
ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN**

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

**Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)**

NOTICE	NOTES
1. Date of announcement _____ Tuesday 25 June 2024 _____ (a) 2. Each year the smaller authority's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The unaudited AGAR has been published with this notice. As it has yet to be reviewed by the appointed auditor, it is subject to change as a result of that review. Any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested. For the year ended 31 March 2024, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to: (b) _____ _____ _____ commencing on (c) _____ Wednesday 26 June 2024 _____ and ending on (d) _____ Tuesday 06 August 2024 _____ 3. Local government electors and their representatives also have: • The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and • The right to make an objection which concerns a matter in respect of which the appointed auditor could either make a public interest report or apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the smaller authority. The appointed auditor can be contacted at the address in paragraph 4 below for this purpose between the above dates only. 4. The smaller authority's AGAR is subject to review by the appointed auditor under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the NAO's Code of Audit Practice 2015. The appointed auditor is:  MOORE Moore (Ref AP/HD) Rutland House Minerva Business Park Lynch Wood Peterborough PE2 6PZ 5. This announcement is made by (e) _Helen Pool_____	(a) Insert date of placing of the notice which must be not less than 1 day before the date in (c) below (b) Insert name, position and address/telephone number/ email address, as appropriate, of the Clerk or other person to which any person may apply to inspect the accounts (c) Insert date, which must be at least 1 day after the date of announcement in (a) above and extends for a single period of 30 working days (inclusive) ending on the date appointed in (d) below (d) The inspection period between (c) and (d) must also include the first 10 working days of July. (e) Insert name and position of person placing the notice – this person must be the responsible financial officer for the smaller authority

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTS: A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

Please note that this summary applies to all relevant smaller authorities, including local councils, internal drainage boards and 'other' smaller authorities.

The basic position

By law, any interested person has the right to inspect the accounting records of smaller authorities. If you are a local government elector or registered to vote in the local councils' elections, then you are able to ask questions about the accounts and object to them.

The right to inspect the accounting records

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The right to make objections

Should you view something as unlawful or believe there are matters of wider concern in the accounts, you may wish to object. If you are a local government elector, you have the right to ask the external auditor to apply to the courts for a declaration that an item is contrary to the law and should be reported as a matter of public interest. This must be done by telling the appointed auditor which specific item in the accounts you object to and why you believe it to be unlawful or think a public interest report should be made about it. You must provide clear evidence to support your objection, and this should be done in writing and the copied to the council.

You should not use the 'right to object' to make a personal complaint or claim against your smaller authority. Complaints of this nature should be taken to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, local Law Centre or to your solicitor.

A final word

Smaller authorities, and so local taxpayers, meet the costs of dealing with questions and objections. In deciding whether to take your objection forward, the auditor must consider the cost that will be involved. They will only continue with the objection if it is in the public interest to do so. If you appeal to the courts against an auditor's decision, you may have to pay for the action yourself.

Additional information to be submitted with Part 3 AGAR

Basic and Intermediate levels

Item required.	
1. State the basis of accounts – Income and Expenditure (I&E) <u>or</u> Receipts and Payments (R&P).	I&E
2. Bank reconciliation (N.B. a pro-forma document is available online). <i>Where you have income or expenditure of £2m or above then we will also require copy bank statements supporting the reconciliations.</i>	Y
3. Explanations of significant variances – <u>with numerical support</u> : For boxes 2 – 10 in the Accounting Statements, where the 2024 figure is 15% greater than, or 15% less than, the 2023 figure unless the variance is less than £500. Please also provide an explanation if the variance is greater than £100,000 regardless of whether this is less than 15%. (N.B. a pro-forma document is available online).	Y
4. <i>Where you have income or expenditure of £2m or above then we will also require a copy of the full independent report of your internal auditor(IA). Supporting evidence of the council's assessment that the IA is:</i> a. <i>independent of the council.</i> b. <i>competent to undertake the role.</i> c. <i>has a current and appropriate letter of engagement</i> d. <i>the authority has considered and agreed the IA programme of work against its identified risks.</i> e. <i>Copies of the minutes of the meetings considering the IA's findings together with evidence that any recommendations have been addressed.</i>	Y
5. A reconciliation between boxes 7 and 8 – this must be quantified (N.B. a pro-forma document is available online).	Y
6. An explanation of any 'No' answers in Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement).	N/A
7. An explanation of any 'No' answers in the Annual Internal Audit Report.	N/A
8. A breakdown of the types of reserves held between general reserves, earmarked reserves and restricted (ring-fenced) reserves (N.B. a pro-forma document is available online).	Y
9. Where any investments are included as part of the Box 9 figure, please provide a summary of these amounts.	N/A
10. Whether you use the general power of competence.	No
11. The dates for the period for the exercise of public rights (N.B. a pro-forma document is available online).	Y
12. Explanation for any delay between approval of Section 2 (accounts) and the commencement of the period for the exercise of public rights, other than to satisfy Regulation 12 of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.	N/A
13. This sheet must be completed and a copy provided with your AGAR submission.	Y

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL REPORT

24th June 2024

Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt2) Report

Chairman: Councillor Paul Wheatley

Contact: 01869 252915 Paul.Wheatley@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

The Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt2) will be submitted to the external auditor – Moore Smaller Authorities as part of the AGAR forms required for 2023/2024.

2. Background

i. Section 2 is certified by Responsible Finance Officer. The Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on an income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities and present fairly the financial position of this authority. Section 2 can be viewed in the full return and accompanying documents are attached as one appendix to the AGAR (Pt1) report.

ii. The Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt2) was presented to the Finance Committee on the 4th June 2024, there has been an alteration to figure 9. for the total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets in this Final document, due to a formulae error. The amount in the draft was £3,677,958 but the final figure approved by the internal auditor Mark Mulberry is £3,801,959.

3. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** the contents of Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt2).

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL REPORT

24th June 2024

Internal Auditor Report

Chairman: Councillor Paul Wheatley

Contact: 01869 252915 Paul.Wheatley@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

We have received the Final Audit for 23/24 from Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd.

2. Background

- i. The Internal Auditor has completed the Final Internal Audit. The report contains details of additional testing conducted at year-end and the audit was conducted in accordance with current practices and guidelines.
- ii. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3, demonstrates completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24 part of the form. The full return and accompanying documents are attached as one appendix to the AGAR (PT1) report.
- iii. Finance Committee examined and scrutinised the Accounting Statement, the detail of which is pulled from the accounts package.

3. Recommendation

The Full Council is asked to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the contents of the audit and Statement of Accounts.

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL REPORT

24th June 2024

Exercise of Public Rights Report

Chairman: Councillor Paul Wheatley

Contact: 01869 252915 Paul.Wheatley@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

The Exercise of Public Rights requires publication.

2. Background

The Earliest date of publication is the 25th June and this must be completed before the 30th June 2024. External inspection commences on the 26th June (with the publication date of the 25th) and finishes on the 6th August 2024. The public notification is attached with this report.

3. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **AGREE** the dates.

Smaller authority name: The Bicester Town Council

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION
OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE &
ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN**

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

**Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27
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BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT

24th June 2024

General & Earmarked Reserves

Chair: Paul Wheatley

Contact: 01869 252915 paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Helen Pool – Responsible Financial Officer

Contact: 01869 252915 helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council needs to have regard to the need to put in place a General Reserve Policy and have reviewed the level and purpose of all Earmarked Reserves¹ annually.
- 1.2 General Reserves may be used as working capital or to meet known expenditure and risk mitigation; Earmarked Reserves are maintained to meet the costs of planned future projects and activities.
- 1.3 As a matter of policy the Town Council has, in recent years aimed to maintain its General Reserve at a level of 40-50% of precept. Currently the General Reserve for 2023/24 is 45.88% of the 2023/24 precept and maintaining this level would imply a General Reserve of £810,110 for the financial year 2024/25.
- 1.4 The Finance Committee requested in the Finance Committee Meeting on the 4th June 2024 that the Earmarked Reserves £30,100 for 9044 Partnership for community organisations and twin town refugee support would be moved and included under 9011 Play Areas and Open Space Investment.

2. Recommendation

2.1 Committee is asked to:

- **AGREE** that the General Reserve be maintained at a level of £810,110 for this purpose;
- **AGREE** that £307,921 be added to earmarked reserves and allocated as outlined in the attachment to this report.
- **AGREE** that £30,100 for 9044 Partnership be moved and included under 9011 Play Areas and Open Space Investment.

¹ Page 9 Para 1.13 Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide March 2024 pub NALC

Bicester Town Council
Earmarked Reserves 31st March 2024

	1st April 2023	Used to Fund Expenditure	From General Fund	Reserve Transfer	31st March 2024	
9007 Community and Elections	£31,776	£12,799			£18,977	May 2023 Town Council elections
						Play area refurbishments for summer '24 including £90,000 Holm/Southwold, further play area inspections being scheduled. Original allocation
9011 Play Areas And Open Space Investment	£465,767	£71,474	£230,100		£624,393	£594,293 + £30,100 from 9004
9013 Equipment Replacement and Maintenance	£257,000	£0			£257,000	£32,000 Wessex Mower
9014 Green Infrastructure	£233,659	£20,868			£212,791	
						District Council regeneration
9016 Town Centre	£105,250	£0			£105,250	scheme
						Garth Park cost options study quoted between £1.8m and
9020 BTC Premises	£996,972	£68,933			£928,039	£2.4m for redevelopment
						Youth council community
9021 Youth Initiatives	£10,000	£0			£10,000	programme
						New cemetery estimated in
9039 Burial Ground Provision	£734,064	£0	£84,070		£818,134	excess of £1m
						Capital programme new asset
9042 Sports Village Contribution	£306,167	£2,971			£303,196	gained in September '22
						Community organisations and
9044 Partnership	£30,100	£0	-£30,100			twin town refugee support
						3G pitch 10 year maintenance
9046 Sports Village Sinking Fund	£49,600		£10,000		£59,600	schedule
	£3,220,355	£177,045	£294,070	£0	£3,337,380	

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL REPORT

24th June 2024

Bank Mandate Report

Chairman: Councillor Paul Wheatley

Contact: 01869 252915 Paul.Wheatley@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

The RFO requests to be included on the bank mandate as per Finance Regulations – March 2024, 5.1. ‘The council’s banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and approved by the council; banking arrangements may not be delegated to a committee’.

The Finance Committee approved the bank mandate and requested the report to go to Full Council.

2. Recommendation

The Full Council is asked to **APPROVE** the request for the Responsible Finance Officer to be included on the Bank Mandate.