

Bicester Town Council



BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Finance Committee Meeting

Ref: FIN04/2425

**Wednesday, 4th December 2024 at 19:00hrs
Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Road,
OX26 6PS**

Members:

Cllr Alisa Russell – **Chair**, Cllr Tom Beckett – **Vice Chair**
Cllr Paul Wheatley Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Donna Ford, Cllr Dan Hallett, Cllr Sam
Holland, Cllr Rachel Mallows and Cllr Les Sibley.

Other Circulation, Substitute Members:

Cllr Harry Knight, Cllr Damien Maguire, Cllr Nick Mawer, Cllr Jim Webb and Cllr
John Willett.

Other Circulation:

Cllr John Broad (CDC), Cllr Frank Ideh (CDC), Cllr Simon Lytton (CDC), Cllr Calum
Miller (OCC), Cllr Rob Parkinson (CDC) and Cllr Michael Waine (OCC)



Council Offices, The Garth,
Launton Road,
Bicester,
Oxon. OX2 6PS
Telephone: 01869 252915
Email: enquiries@bicester.gov.uk
www.bicester.gov.uk

26th November 2024

To all members of the Finance Committee,

You are hereby Summoned to attend the meeting of the **Finance Committee** at the **Council Chamber, Garth House, Launton Road, OX26 6PS on Wednesday 4th December 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 the Town Clerk (phil.evans@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. Minutes of the Finance Committee

To **APPROVE** the **MINUTES** and **RESOLUTIONS** of the following Finance Committee Meeting held on: (Pages 5 to 7)

- **FIN03/2425** – Tuesday 24th September 2024 at 19:00hrs

4. 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 2 minutes.

5. Finance Report

As per Financial Regulation 4.8, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached Income, Expenditure and Variance Report to **Month 7, 31st October 2024**. (Pages 8 to 10)

- 6. Bank Balances** (Pages 11 to 12)
As per Financial Regulation 2.2, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached report detailing bank balances at the 19th November 2024 and **NOTE** that Cllr Russel has signed the monthly bank reconciliation for the year to 31 October 2024.
- 7. Aged Creditors** (Pages 13 to 14)
In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the aged creditors as of the 13 November.
- 8. Aged Debtors** (Page 15 to 17)
In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the aged debtors as of the 13th November 2024 as well as **APPROVE** Proposal i. for Oxford RTC.
- 9. Bad Debts Report** (Page 18)
Committee is recommended **APPROVE** the Bad Debt for Talent ID and Bicester Rugby Club and refer it to the Full Council for final **APPROVAL**.
- 10. Budget Report** (Pages 19 to 21)
The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the contents of this report and the 2025/2026 budget as set out in the appendix and the level of estimated precept to be set for the financial year 2025/2026. The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** the budget to Full Council on the 13th January 2025. The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** the precept with the understanding that the precept is subject to change once the Band D numbers are confirmed by Cherwell District Council.
- 11. Ear Marked Reserves** (Pages 22 to 23)
Councillors are asked to **APPROVE** the expenditure of £132,765 (exc.VAT) from Earmarked Reserves Green Infrastructure 901/9014.
- 12. Grant Aid Applications** (Pages 24 to 35)
The Committee is asked to **APPROVE** the Grant Aid Applications for £1000 for Cygnets Preschool; £1200 for Bicester Baby Bank and the deferred Ability application for £1000 from the previous Finance Committee meeting on 22nd September.
- 13. Outdoor Team Rest Room and Drying Area** (Pages 36 to 37)
Committee is requested to **APPROVE** supplier **A** and **APPROVE** Service and Infrastructure costs. Funding to be taken from **EMR 901/9020 BTC premises** with £913,995 available.
- 14. Obsolete Items on the Asset Register** (Pages 38)
The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the removal of the obsolete items over £1000 from the asset register and to recommend it to Council for approval.
- 15. Utilities Report** (Pages 39 - 40)
Councillors are asked to **NOTE** the information given in this report.
- 16. Notice of Conclusion of Audit & External Auditor's Report** (Pages 41 - 42)

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and the report of the External Auditor as well as future actions required and **RECOMMEND** it to Council for approval.

17. Independence & Competence of the Internal Auditor (Pages 43 to 44)

The Committee is asked to **REVIEW** the independence and competence of the Council's internal auditor in accordance with good practice guidance offered by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guidance published by NALC and to make recommendations to Full Council confirming the current appointment of the internal auditor.

18. Forward Plan (Page 45)

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the forward plan

19. Date of the Next Meeting

7th January 2024 at 19:00hrs

Minutes of the Finance Committee

A meeting of the **Finance Committee** was held on **Tuesday 24th September 2024** at **19:00hrs** at **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester Oxon, OX26 6PS.**

Present:

Cllr Alisa Russell (Chair)
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Nick Mawer (Substitute)
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:

Paul Canning, Office Manager
Jodi Clarke, Finance Assistant

41/2425 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies were received from the following Committee Members:

- Cllr Tom Beckett
- Cllr Nick Cotter
- Cllr Sam Holland, and sent Cllr Nick Mawer as a substitute.

42/2425 Declaration of Interest

RESOLVED that declarations were received from the following councillors:

- Cllr Sibley – Cherwell District Councillor
- Cllr Ford – Cherwell District Councillor & Oxfordshire County Councillor
- Cllr Russell – Cherwell District Councillor
- Cllr Mawer – Cherwell District Councillor

43/2425 Minutes of the Finance Committee

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

- **FIN02/2425** – Tuesday 9th July 2024 at 19:00hrs

Cllr Ford asked if there were any updates from queries raised in the previous meeting, due to the Responsible Finance Officer being absent the Committee have been informed that any queries/questions will be taken away and answered via email.

Cllr Wheatley then pointed out that these questions were answered within the Finance Report.

44/2425 Public Session

RESOLVED that no public were present.

45/2425 Finance Report

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED & REVIEWED** the Income, Expenditure and Variances Report to **Month 8.**

Responsible Finance Officer is to investigate & email updates to the Finance Committee on the following:

- **Budget 308/1027 (Whitelands Sports Village/Inc-OX RTC)** no income against the code, why?
- **Budget 308/1026 (Whitelands Sports Village/Inc-ACE Academy)** why is the income received so low?
- **Budget 308/1016 (Whitelands Sports Village/Inc Whitelands Café)** why expenditure has been put against it?

46/2425 Bank Balances

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED & REVIEWED** the bank balances at the end of **MAY 2024** and **NOTED** that Cllr Russell has signed the monthly bank reconciliation for the year to 31st August 2024.

48/2425 Age Creditors

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

49/2425 Age Debtors

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

Whitelands FC:

The office manager met with the treasurer of the club to investigate as the club claimed they never received the invoices, after the investigation was completed, it was clear that the council that if the club was requested to pay the money in full this would mean the club would be forced to close.

Whitelands FC would like to do an 18-month payment plan to help pay off the debt while keeping the club running.

RESOLVED that the committee **APPROVED** Option 2 with the following amendments:

Option 2: Agree to the payment plan of 18 months but if they miss a payment due date by 5 working days of the payment plan, they are put on Pay As You Go. They will be asked to create a standing order to ensure payment is made on time (proof to be sent to the Finance Officer). If no payment is made as per the above agreement, then the account will be put on stop & the remaining debt will be passed onto debt collectors.

50/2425 Bad Debt

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the debt written off for debts below £200 & **DEFERRED** the bad debt for Talent iD to a later meeting.

51/2425 Youth Engagement Project

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the BTC Sponsor a Youth Engagement Project.

52/2425 Proposal for the repair of the Garth Park Perimeter Wall & Building

RESOLVED that the Committee **DEFERRED** the report to the next finance meeting on the 2nd December 2024, to allow the Service Manager to look for new/more quotes.

Councillors mentioned that Cherwell District Council Procurement Officer may be able to offer help with tenders, and to contact Cllr Rob Parkinson & Other Parish Councils to see what advice/help they can give.

53/2425 Purchase of New Machinery

RESOLVED that the Committee **DEFERRED** the following report so that the new Service Manager can look at what equipment is needed, this can then go straight to Full Council for approval.

54/2425 Grounds Maintenance Service & Pool Vehicle

RESOLVED that the Committee **REJECTED** the report and requested that the Service Manager looks at a more appropriate vehicle for the Officers. The Committee would also like to see a like for like comparison in the report against 3 different quotes.

55/2425 Grant Aid Applications

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the Grant Aid Application of £500.00 for Five-Acres Primary School.

RESOLVED that the Committee **DEFERRED** the Grant Aid Application of £1,000.00 for Ability to the next meeting. Officers are asked to get more information as the application states that £300 would be for Staffing costs.

56/2425 Bank Mandates

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED & APPROVED** the report with an amendment to add Cllr Jim Webb to the mandates as well.

57/2425 Earmarked Reserves

RESOLVED that the Committee **DEFERRED** the expenditure of **£159,319.12** from Earmarked Reserves Green Infrastructure **901/9014** to the following Finance Meeting as the amount includes VAT.

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the expenditure of **£1,878.30** from Earmarked Reserves **901/9013** Equipment Replacement/Maintenance.

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the allocation of **£23,851** to **328/9011** Play Areas & Open Spaces.

58/2425 Payment Records

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the payment schedules since the last meeting held on **Tuesday 9th July 2024**, totalling £750,187.61 for 10/06/2024 to 30/08/2024.

Committee has asked that going forward officers use the wording note not approve.

Committee has asked officers to investigate the Gas & Electric at the Cemetery, is it a standing rate or are the buildings being used.

59/2425 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 2nd December 2024 at 19:00hrs

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:10hrs

AGENDA ITEM 5

**BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Finance Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This is a standing report of the monthly Income & Expenditure to inform the Councillors of any possible overspending within the budget. Previously, the report shows the variance explanation against actual expenditure and estimated year end expenditure.

2. Background

Please see **Appendix 1** attached to this agenda. This is a detailed finance report showing the Council's expenditure to the end of *Oct 2024 – the 7th month* of the current financial year. The report compares expenditure against the full year agreed budget. Key variances that are apparent are summarised in an additional column with a final column demonstrating further estimated expenditure for year end. Conservative account has been used for the estimated expenditure.

Structure and Interpretation of the Report

This is a "Cost Centre Report" and gives income and expenditure for each of the Council's cost centres (there are 15 in total). A cost centre is a separate service or area of expenditure, for example open spaces are one cost centre and the Garth House another. Each cost centre is given as a three-digit number with a narrative description beside it and they are:

102 Civic & Democratic
105 Central Services
106 Garth House
107 Garth Lodge
108 Corporate Finance
109 Community Support
110 Projects
300 Environmental Services
301 Open Spaces
305 Pingle Field
306 Sunderland Drive
501 Town Council Events
601 Cemetery

801 Street Scene

901 Earmarked Reserves (*allocations will be completed based on Council approval*)

There is a sub-total showing "Net Income over Expenditure" for each cost centre and at the end of the report a set of Grand Totals shows the total "Net Income over Expenditure" for the whole Town Council. On these totals a positive figure say **37,568** indicates that income was more than expenditure by that amount whereas a negative figure (in brackets) thus **(19,808)** indicates that expenditure exceeded income. Note that for all figures in this report a £ sign is assumed but not actually stated.

Within the costs centres the information is arranged in columns. Reading across the columns from left to right:

1. First column (no heading) is a four-figure digit which is the nominal code; a four-digit code that starts with 1 is an income code, if it starts with 4 it's an expenditure code Nominal codes describe the type of expenditure or income.
2. Second column (no heading) is a brief narrative description of each nominal code
3. Third column headed "Actual Last" (in a change to previous reports which had current month expenditure) is the figures for the previous financial year.
4. Fourth column headed "Actual Year To Date" is the part year figures for this year so for this particular report that's to the *end of October 2024*.
5. Fifth column headed "Current Annual Bud[get]" is the full year budget figures for the current financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 as agreed by Council.
6. Sixth column headed "Variance Annual Total" is the difference between the actual expenditure to date (Column 4) and the Annual Budget (Column 5) a figure with brackets around it in this column indicates that the budget has been exceeded or that there has been expenditure where there was no matching budget. Sometimes this indicates unanticipated expenditure.
7. The seventh column headed "Committed Expenditure" contains purchase orders raised.
8. The eighth column headed "Funds Available" shows figures mainly the same as those in column six against expenditure codes. As more "commitments" are entered then the information in this column will be different from the sixth column due to the anticipated spend.
9. Ninth column headed "% Spent" shows the percentage of the budget spent (or received). So, in this report and for regular payments or income it would be reasonable to expect the final column "% spent" to show something in the region of 80% (being ten twelfths). Of course not all expenditure or income is spread evenly across the year and Councillors will be reliant on a specific commentary (below) from the RFO to identify areas where the figures are not where she would expect them to be at this point in the year (and where, in accordance with Financial Regulation 4.8 items are likely to produce a material variance of either £1,000 or 15% of budget at or before the year-end).
10. The 10th column headed Transfer to/from EMR records income and expenditure against the appropriate reserve.
11. The eleventh column provides an explanation for the material variances illustrated in the ninth column.
12. The twelfth column is based on further expenditure expected before year end. However, this is only an estimated amount and is open to alteration.

2. Recommendation

As per Financial Regulation 4.8, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached Income, Expenditure and Variance Report to **Month 7**, 31st October 2024.

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024
Bank Balances Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.Gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

Appended to this report is a detailed report showing accurate recording of all the Council's bank balances as at 19th November 2024.

2. Background

Structure and Interpretation of the Report

The report generated by the accounting system is a consolidated bank reconciliation for each of the Council's bank accounts. At the top section of the report, it lists the bank statement balance for each account. The bottom section lists the cashbook balances for each account. Ideally the balances will duplicate each other demonstrating that each account has been reconciled to its bank statement.

There are some accounts shown that are no longer in use – these are the Santander Deposit Account, Petty Cash and the Barclays Base Rate Tracker - these accounts are shown with a nil balance. The accounting system holds historic transactions for each of these accounts and therefore will not permit them to be deleted.

Bank Accounts in use are:

Barclays Current Account – most the council's financial transactions pass through this account. A Bank – Cash and Investment Reconciliation Report was printed as of the 19th November 2024.

Wages Account (held at Barclays) – a transfer is made monthly to this account to cover the costs of payroll. Astral is our payroll provider (which operates as a BACS bureau – making salaries and wages and disbursements to HMRC and Oxfordshire pensions on behalf of the Town Council). Historically, the separate account was to facilitate the automation of this process and enable the provider to take a direct debit without access to the main current account, however, we now monthly make a BACS payment to Astral and do not have a direct debit.

Ticketsource Account – also known historically as the Carnival Account (and the means to change that description within the accounting system is proving elusive) this account receives event ticket receipts from the ticket sales provider (current Ticketsource).

CCLA Deposit – this is an investment account, and the balance remains constant at £2m. The return on this investment, which was £8,280.62 for September and £8,211.27 for October 2024, is paid into the Barclays Current Account.

Barclays Treasury Deposit – this is the deposit account linked to the main current account and surplus funds from the current account are moved here.

Santander Capital Account and Lloyds Treasury Account are both non-interest bearing accounts that are little used.

Bicester Town Council

Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation as at 19 November 2024

Confirmed Bank & Investment Balances

Bank Statement Balances

31/10/2024	Barclays Current Account	559,270.54	
31/10/2024	Wages Account	242,691.65	
31/10/2024	Ticketsource Account	117,386.79	
31/10/2024	CCLA Deposit	2,000,000.00	
31/10/2024	Barclays Treasury Deposit	1,105,831.56	
31/10/2024	Santander Capital Account	257,408.87	
31/10/2024	Lloyds Treasury Account	549,140.80	
			4,831,730.21

Receipts not on Bank Statement

0.00

Closing Balance

4,831,730.21

All Cash & Bank Accounts

1	Current Bank A/c	559,270.54
2	Wages Account	242,691.65
3	Carnival Account	117,386.79
4	CCLA Deposit	2,000,000.00
5	Barclays Treasury Deposit	1,105,831.56
6	Santander Capital Account	257,408.87
7	Santander Deposit	0.00
8	Lloyds Treasury Account	549,140.80
10	Petty Cash	0.00
11	Barclays Base Rate Tracker	0.00
	Other Cash & Bank Balances	0.00
	Total Cash & Bank Balances	4,831,730.21

3. Recommendation

As per Financial Regulation 2.2, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached report detailing bank balances at the 19th November 2024 and **NOTE** that Cllr Russel has signed the monthly bank reconciliation for the year to 31 October 2024.

AGENDA ITEM 7

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Aged Creditors

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Financial Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This report is a standing report to keep Councillors informed as to the Aged Creditors and the Officer will be available to answer any specific questions. The data shown is to 13th November 2024. The detailed report from the financial system will be tabled at the meeting.

2. Background

- i. To monitor debts owed by the Council, the Aged Creditors report tracks how old each debt is and the value that is outstanding. Note that the age of the debt is taken from the invoice date – this may be some days or weeks before the invoice is received for processing by finance.

Any debts over 1 month old are prioritised in the payment run unless there is a query regarding that invoice and this is chased regularly until the issue has been resolved and the invoice can either be paid or a credit note has been received.

- ii. It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee **APPROVED** the Responsible Finance Officer to Contest the Cherwell District Council Invoice if it appears on the statement relating to Sheep Street bollards in the Minutes of the Finance Committee held on Tuesday, 4th June 2024.

3. Illustration Graph

Date	Value (less VAT)	Supplier	Age (days)	Report
30/05/2018	£15,600	Cherwell	2365	5
30/09/2024	£1,450	Forte	51	2
31/10/2024	£1,450	Forte	20	0
30/07/2024	£51.30	O2	112	4
21/08/2024	150	Bicester Green	84	2
30/08/2024	£136.80	Pixel	75	2
30/09/2024	£26.79	JP&Services	32	2
27/09/2024	£783.36	Paragon	39	2
08/10/2024	£420	AP Topson	31	2

5	5
4	0
3	0
2	2
1	0

Greater than 12 months
Between 6 and 12 months
Between 3 and 6 months
Between 1 and 3 months
Less than 1 month



Available to pay in the next run.
In dispute

4. Duplicate Payments

Forte Entertainment Ltd: A duplicate payment was made on the 01/11/2023 for £10,800.

Action taken: We have been working with Forte and they refunded the first stage of the refund on the 16/05/2024 for the value of £5000.00. A further payment plan was negotiated with Officers and Forte whereby 4 payments would be made to the value of £1450.00 at the end of each month starting from the 31/07/2024. The payments remaining outstanding are:

30/09/2024 - £1450

31/10/2024 - £1450

Conclusion: We have been emailing and calling Forte Entertainment Ltd as at the time of this agenda creation.

5. Recommendation

In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** the Aged Creditors as at the 13th November 2024.

AGENDA ITEM 8

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Aged Debtors

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool – helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview
This report is a standing report to keep Councillors informed as to the Aged Debtors.
2. Background
In order to monitor debts due to the Council, the Aged Debtors report tracks how old each debt is and the value that is outstanding. Any debts over 1 month old are chased unless it is a quarterly or annual invoice that is being paid by instalments. All outstanding invoices have been chased and will continue to be a priority.

3. Illustration Graph

Date	Value (less Vat)	Who	Age	Report	Action Taken
Sales Ledger Invoices					
28/02/2024	200	NALAS COFFEE	266	4	No further contact details supplied, chase emails have been unanswered.
31/03/2024	21,000	RUFC	234	4	See Bad Debt Report
01/04/2024	1041.66	Ox RTC	233	4	No SLA. Request a payment plan
01/05/2024	1041.66	Ox RTC	203	4	No SLA. Request a payment plan
01/06/2024	1041.66	Ox RTC	172	4	No SLA. Request a payment plan
01/07/2024	1041.66	Ox RTC	142	3	No SLA. Request a payment plan
01/08/2024	1041.66	Ox RTC	111	3	No SLA. Request a payment plan
01/09/2024	1041.66	Ox RTC	80	3	No SLA. Request a payment plan
01/10/2024	1041.66	Ox RTC	50	2	No SLA. Request a payment plan

Pitchbooking Subscriptions					
09/07/2024	24.00	Talent ID	64	4	See Bad Debt Report
02/08/2024	90.00	Ace Academy	40	3	Chase emails sent and phone calls, in discussion
07/10/2024	168.00	Gloryfarm	44	2	Phone call, was in hospital, will be paying
07/10/2024	90	Ace Academy	44	2	Chase emails sent and phone calls, in discussion
07/10/2024	115.00	Highfields	44	2	Chase emails sent
09/10/2024	48	Highfields	42	2	Chase emails sent

5	2	Greater than 12 months
4	4	Between 6 and 12 months
3	2	Between 3 and 6 months
2	2	Between 1 and 3 months
1	2	Less than 1 month



Now paid or cleared
Qtr or Annual instal
Active chasing

4. Pitchbooking Debtors

Our Rialtas and Pitchbooking systems are not linked and transactions taking place through Pitchbookings do not appear on Rialtas. Unfortunately, on further investigation through the Pitchbooking records for 2023/2024, we discovered that some pitches booked had not been paid. The outstanding payments are listed below:

Talent ID: Total £ 230.00 - Please see Bad Debt Report

25/08/2023	535	£	20.00
21/09/2023	562	£	98.00
12/10/2023	600	£	40.00
12/01/2024	695	£	72.00

Whitelands FC: Total £2838.00

14/08/2023	518	£	1,260.00
12/10/2023	591	£	462.00
01/02/2024	747	£	440.00
12/04/2024	840	£	323.00
22/05/2024	880	£	353.00

Whitelands FC agreed to the payment plan of 18 months but if they miss a payment due date by 5 working days of the payment plan, they are put on Pay As You Go. They were asked to create a standing order to ensure payment is made on time. They have arranged for a standing order and their 1st standing order was received on 01/11/2024.

5. Oxford RTC

Oxfordshire RTC owed a large amount on Pitchbookings from 2023 and has paid this off within the deadlines specified. Due to paying off the amount, they stated they were behind on their Sales Invoices.

Actions: Oxfordshire RTC has been chased on various occasions and with a phone call. Pitches have been booked for November and December and have they have been notified that currently they will be put onto 'pay as you go' from January.

Proposal:

- i. They have asked to be able to have until the end of December to pay off the debt owing in two instalments, failure to do so will put them onto 'pay as you go' from January.
- ii. They are immediately put on stop until the amount owed is paid back and their pitch bookings will be removed.
- iii. They have asked to be able to have until the end of December to pay off the debt owing in two instalments, failure to do so will put them on stop and not allow them to book pitches.

6. Recommendation

In addition to Financial Regulation 5.2, the committee is asked to **NOTE** and **APPROVE** the aged debtors as of the 13th November 2024 as well as **APPROVE** Proposal i. for Oxford RTC.

AGENDA ITEM 9

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024
Bad Debt

Chair: Alisa Russell
Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Financial Officer: Helen Pool
Contact: 01869 252915 helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

- 1.1 The RFO has undertaken a review of aged debts. Financial Regulation 9.4 provides for irrecoverable debt to be written off.

9.4 Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts over £200 shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year. The RFO shall have the authority to write off debts below £200 subject to having taken appropriate steps to recover such debts.

Debtor	Amount	Date due	Action taken
Nalas Coffee	£200	29/02/2024	

- 1.2 The following debts are required to be written off:
Talent ID: They have yet to make a payment and are not using our facilities. after several recovery attempts only stopping short of taking legal action.
Bicester Rugby Club: Negotiations have taken place and payments have been made. The remaining amount will not be received for this year as agreed, following the new dawn of a great working relationship.

Debtor	Amount	Date due	Action taken
Talent ID	£230	31/08/2024	As Talent ID have been put on STOP, until the amount is paid, they will remain on STOP
Bicester Rugby Club	£4000	31/03/2025	No SLA, negotiations have taken place, agreed to two payments: £7300 and £9700, payments received.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Committee is recommended **APPROVE** the Bad Debt for Talent ID and Bicester Rugby Club and refer it to the Full Council for final **APPROVAL**.

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Budget Report

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

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

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

To give the Committee the opportunity to review the draft budget for the financial year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 before the full council approves the budget and agrees a precept. We have applied a 2% increase to the amount that Bicester Residents pay.

Detailed budget Figures are provided in Appendix 2 – this was created from the Detailed Income and Expenditure Report to 30/09/2024 from Rialtas. The following columns were added:

Draft Budget 25/26 – The Town Clerk's draft budget.

Total estimated expenditure for 24/25 – RFO's estimated figures subject to accruals at year end and further expenditure during the year.

Actuals for the previous 5 years and two years future predictions.

2. Alterations since the Environment and Policy Committee meetings:

Alterations have been made to the following ledger codes considering new information regarding NI increases and predicted growth in Band D households:

Ledger Code:	Original Budget figure	Altered figure
108/1076 Precept	£1,836,242.76	£1,872,967.62
105/4001 Central NI	£32,500	£33,973.70
300/4001 Environment NI	£30,750	£33,494.52
308/4001 Whitelands NI	£15,375	£20,297.28
110/4313 Play Area	£51,648.16	£79,232.52

Furthermore, after having gone through the Policy Committee meeting, the RFO suggests an increase in the Subscriptions budget 105/4024 to include OALC

membership to £15,000 from £12,500 and for the amount to be taken from 110/4313 Play area.

3. Background

Bicester Town Council is obliged to set a balanced budget and to agree a precept annually. This report covers the Financial Year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The precept is the amount of money that is collected on the council's behalf from the council taxpayers in the town area. The precept is expressed as a total cash sum and as an amount per Band D household.

4. Tax Base

Cherwell District Council (CDC) calculates the tax base figure for the district and for each town or parish within the district – the tax base figure is expressed as an averaged number Band D households.

As of the time of agenda creation for this meeting, the Band D tax base increase from last year to this year has not yet been provided by CDC. As such, an estimated 2% figure has been added to the tax Base figure from last year.

2024/2025 Tax Base = 13,219 x 2% = 264.38

Estimated 2025/2026 = 13,219 + 264.38 = 13,483.38

Broadly speaking, the tax base figure increases in line with the number of homes in the town.

The precept is calculated by dividing the total precept sum by the tax base. For Bicester Town Council, the estimated tax base figure for 2025/26 is 13,483.38 being a small increase on the 2024/25 figure of 13,219.

5. Council Tax Calculations

Precept request per year		Amount
2025/2026		£1,872,967.62
2024/2025		£1,800,238.00
Tax Base per year		Band D Equivalent Properties
2025/2026		13,483
2024/2025		13,219

Draft estimated Council tax bill for a Band D property:

Year 2025/2026: £1,872,967.62 / 13,483 = £138.91

Year 2024/2025: £1,800,238.00 / 13,219 = £136.18

An estimated 2% increase will show on the bill of each resident at Band D, it increases from £136.18 (2024/25) to £138.91 (2025/26):

£138.91 - £136.18 = £2.73

£2.73 / £136.19 x 100 = 2%

6. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the contents of this report and the 2025/2026 budget as set out in the appendix and the level of estimated precept to be set for the financial year 2025/2026.

The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** the budget to Full Council on the 13th January 2025.

The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** the precept with the understanding that the precept is subject to change once the Band D numbers are confirmed by Cherwell District Council.

AGENDA ITEM 11

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024
Earmarked Reserves

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Financial Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1 Overview

Below is the new Earmarked Reserves Report as Earmarked Reserves have now been added to Rialtas for reporting and transparency purposes.

14/11/2024
16:39

Bicester Town Council Earmarked Reserves

Page 1

Account	Opening Balance	Net Transfers	Closing Balance
325 Earmarked Reserves	3,301,630.73	-3,301,630.73	0.00
326 Restricted Reserves	59,600.00		59,600.00
327 EMR-Community & Elections	0.00	13,432.11	13,432.11
328 EMR - Play Areas & Open Space	0.00	559,730.02	559,730.02
329 EMR - Equipment Replace/Maint	0.00	234,400.00	234,400.00
330 EMR - Green Infrastructure	0.00	212,791.11	212,791.11
331 EMR - Town Centre	0.00	105,250.00	105,250.00
332 EMR - BTC Premises	0.00	926,546.00	926,546.00
333 EMR - Youth Initiatives	0.00	10,000.00	10,000.00
334 EMR - Burial Ground Provision	0.00	818,134.00	818,134.00
336 EMR - Sports Village Contribut	0.00	298,339.60	298,339.60
	<u>3,361,230.73</u>	<u>-123,007.89</u>	<u>3,238,222.84</u>

Cherwell District Council sent a late invoice dated 10/06/2024 for landscape recharges due from January to March 2024.

2 Background

The amount of £132,765.93 (exc. VAT) from CDC pertains to part of the green infrastructure and is from the last finance year budget 301/4190 Parks and Garden Contract. Ledger 4190 was overspent so we request to have the payment taken out of Earmarked Reserves 901/9014 Green Infrastructure.

3. Recommendation

Councillors are asked to **APPROVE** the expenditure of £132,765.93 (exc.VAT) from Earmarked Reserves Green Infrastructure 901/9014.

AGENDA ITEM 12

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Grant Aid Applications

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Financial Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1 Overview

There have been two further applications for Grant Aid for 2024/2025 for approval: £1000 for Cygnets Preschool and £1200 for Bicester Baby Bank and the deferred Ability application for £1000 from the previous Finance Committee meeting on 22nd September.

Background

The complete list of applications for the re-opening of 23/24 and 24/25 list is attached so that the total sum including the two new applications can be noted as well as the application forms.

Note: Ability have resubmitted their application removing staffing costs.

With the addition of the 3 grants, if all 3 are accepted this will result in an over-expenditure of the budget for this year. However, this was due to £1719 being spent from the reopening of the application process from 2023/2024 at the end of the finance year resulting in payments being made in the 2024/25. Left over from 23/24 funding was absorbed into the general reserves.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **APPROVE** the Grant Aid Applications for £1000 for Cygnets Preschool; £1200 for Bicester Baby Bank and the deferred Ability application for £1000 from the previous Finance Committee meeting on 22nd September.

Grant Aid Applications

Organisation	Amount Requested	Funding Applied For
--------------	------------------	---------------------

**REOPENING OF
APPLICATION PROCESS
2023/24: Amount to be
taken from 24/25
Budget as per Finance
Committee Minutes
26/03/2024**

1	Bicester Hindu Society	£519.00	Speakers and associated accessories for events in lue of hiring speakers and DJs for those events
2	Orchard Baptist Church	£200.00	Contribute to hall hire for Hong Kong English conversation group to support integration into society
3	Claypits Community Allotments	£1,000.00	Eco toilet for allotments for tenants and visitors

1	1 st Bicester Intrepid Scout Association	£750.00	Replacing the tyres on the minibus used to transport the scouts.
2	ARCh (assisted Reading for Children)	£1,100.00	To maintain book boxes, ensuring they are updated and supporting the interests of the children.
3	Bicester Athletic	£416.00	Purchase of electronic indoor starting system for inclusion of neurodivergent or hard of hearing
4	Bicester Autism	£1,000.00	Fund a Christmas party for the Autism Teen Social group to further socialisation and education.
5	Bicester Evergreens	£800.00	Senior's Club funding for Summer tea party and Xmas lunch
6	Bicester Food Bank	£1,000.00	Fund summer booster bags for families with children
7	Bicester Hindu Society	£1,000.00	Fund 2 educational and religious events - Dandiya Night and Diwali.
8	Bicester Pride	£1,000.00	To support the 2024 Bicester Pride Event to help grown the community
9	Bicester Widows/Widowers Group	£1,000.00	Subsidise trips and functions supporting all members, social needs are met and supported.
10	Bure Park Primary PTA	£500.00	To find 1 1/2 day workshop to introduce opera to children run by Oxford Opera Company.
11	Heyford Park Social Committee	-	Community Fun Day for families to enjoy and raise money for charities.
12	Launton Village Players	£1,000.00	To replace stage blocks for new ones to continue entertaining local community and raise money for others.
13	One-Eighty	£1,000.00	Support young people with profound and complex needs in Bicester, intensive 1 to 1 intervention per child
14	Trinity Camerata Orchestra	£750.00	Family concert of Beethoven's 9th symphony July 2024

15	Nai's House	£1,000.00	Youth mental health support, suicide and self harm prevention, intervention and postvention.
16	Home Start Biceter	£1,000.00	Funding for 2x Volunteer preparation courses
17	Oxfordshire Play Association	£500	Play and activity event for children and parents for the new Emsbrook Community and greater society
18	Life Education Wessex & Thames Valley / Glory Farm and Kings Meadow Primary	£620	Provision of 1 educator and resources for an annual visit to the schools to help children make their own healthy choices.
19	Bicester Green	£700	Production of printed and promotional material to publicise the Friends and work of Bicester Green who share skills and help with the community.
20	Bicester Choral & Operatic Society	£750	To assist with funding costs of presenting the stage musical Avenue Q (30/5 - 1/6/2024).
21	Graven Hill Residents Association	-	Purchase or a report and survey from CreateStreets to enhance the Graven Hill Village Development Compnays' proposed new plan.
22	The Wellness Space (Bicester) Ltd	-	Set up The Wellness Space to hold a variety of wellness practices to benefit the community.
23	Churches of Bicester Refugee Support Group	£1,000.00	To enable children and young adults to achieved independence through cycling by providing safety equipment.
24	3rd and 7th Bicester Brownies	£500.00	Weekend Camping trip to give the girls an opportunity to participate in a variety of adventurous and physcial activities.
25	1st Heyford Park Scout Group	£250.00	To help contribute to a mess tent for camping trips for indoor activities and meals.
26	Five-Acres Primary	£500.00	Funding to develop sensory garden
27	Ability	£1,000	Marketing costs to grow the number of Bicester residents using the on-demand bus services who need and would benefit from the services.
28	Cygnets Preschool	£1,000	To Renovate and enhance the outdoor learning environment in the preschool's garden
29	Bicester Baby Bank	£1,200	Funding for a safe sleep project that supplies families with new mattresses for children.
Total		£23,055.00	
24/25 Budget		£22,000	
Remaining		<u><u>-£1,055.00</u></u>	



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

APPLICATION FOR GRANT AID 2024 Closing date Sunday 10th March 2024

1. Name of Organisation.....Cygnets Prechool.....
2. Brief description of organisation.....Provides high quality childcare to 2-4 year olds.
.....
3. Number of regular participants in organisation50.....
4. Number of regular participants living in Bicester Town area 100.....
5. Do you have a constitution/set of rules?Attached.....

6. Details of **Specific Project** that funding is applied for (see **Grant Aid Awarding Policy 2.4**). **Only grants that comply with the criteria will be considered. NB applications for running costs will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances which you must evidence.**

"The grant will be used to renovate and enhance our outdoor learning environment in the preschool's garden. We have diligently raised funds through a craft fair and a Christmas party, which have contributed approximately £800. We are hopeful of doubling this amount this year to successfully support our garden project alongside obtaining a sponsorship or donations for extensive groundworks to complete our project. "This is an exceptional project that we are not able to cover with our running finances. it requires an extra investment that we hope we can make with the help of this grant.

7. How does your project meet the criteria set out in 2.6 of the Grant Aid Awarding Policy?

This project will create a more stimulating space for our children to explore, learn, and play. We believe in the importance of the outdoor experiences, and this enhanced space will allow for deeper learning rooted in the natural world. Spending time in nature has countless benefits for children's development, from boosting their creativity to improving their physical and mental health.

Imagine a magical space where our children aged between 2-4years, can have daily access to quality outdoor learning, explore nature, get their hands dirty, experience natural elements, like foliage, rocks, insects, and more.

Our children will learn how to view nature, the importance of caring for the environment and taking responsibility for our plant and the world around them. Through hands-on gardening/planting experiences, children will develop an early understanding of where their food comes from, caring for plants providing children with a sense of responsibility and accomplishment, promoting a lifelong appreciation for healthy eating habits. That's our vision for our garden.

8. What is the total cost of your project?£3,000 & £10k

9. Please provide a breakdown of these costs.

£3k – Raised beds, arbour arches, planting, soil, fence painting

£10k – Landscaper Sponsorship/Donations: Remove old deteriorated multi purpose flooring, level garden, build a retaining wall against fence, slabbed wheeled track around perimeter, artificial grassed area.

10. What is the grant amount applied for?£1000

.....

11. How will any shortfall be financed?By the funds collected in our craft fair and Christmas party and the funds collected in our Christmas party 2023 plus a sponsorship from a landscaper or donations

.....

12. Will the grant be spent before 31st March 2025?Yes

.....

Please enclose the following supporting paperwork:

Previous year's accounts

Documentation in support of project

Copy of rules/Constitution

GDPR form

APPLICATION FOR GRANT AID 2024

Closing date Sunday 10th March 2024

1. Name of Organisation....Bicester Bbay
Bank.....

2. Brief description of organisation... Supporting families with children aged 0-12 and pregnant women with essential items to support wellbeing and safety

.....

.....

3. Number of regular participants in organisation15.....

4. Number of regular participants living in Bicester Town area ...65% of our users live in the Bicester area.....

5. Do you have a constitution/set of rules?yes

6. Details of **Specific Project** that funding is applied for (see Grant Aid Awarding Policy 2.4). **Only grants that comply with the criteria will be considered. NB applications for running costs will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances which you must evidence.**

... We would like the funding to support a safe sleep project. We supply families with cots, cot beds, moses baskets and bedside cribs which can be second hand provided they are clean and in good condition, however we cannot supply families with donated second hand mattresses as these do not meet the guidelines for safe sleep as set out by the Lullaby Trust which recommends a new mattress for every child. In order to fully support families seeking our help with adherence to safe sleep guidelines we would like to fund a stock of brand new mattresses so we can supply these with beds to families who are in need and ensure no child is left in material poverty without a safe and secure place to sleep.

.....

7. How does your project meet the criteria set out in 2.6 of the Grant Aid Awarding Policy?

...

We will use the funding to provide appropriately sized mattresses for the beds/ Moses baskets/cot beds we supply, and these will be provided to families in need in the Bicester town and surrounding area. By providing beds and new mattresses we will promote social inclusion by ensuring that no child is left in sleep poverty, unable to develop effectively, or participate fully in education due to a lack of appropriate sleeping spaces. We have looked at the average costs of a basic new mattress for a range of bed sizes to calculate our costs. We engage effectively with the local community for the majority of the items we provide at the baby bank, receiving healthy donations of clothing, bedding, toiletries, and equipment, but mattresses are an item we cannot source second hand and have to purchase for the reasons outlined above. It has been estimated by charities such as Buttle UK that 30% of low income families in the UK are unable to afford a bed for their children - we will be supporting the reduction of that number in our local area and ensuring safety for the youngest children when sleeping.

8. What is the total cost of your project?

.....£1200.....

9. Please provide a breakdown of these costs.

Basic Cot Mattress - £36

Basic Cot Bed Mattress - £43

Basic Bedside Crib Mattress - £28

Basic Moses Basket Mattress - £16

We will source mattresses as needed by families for the cots/cot beds/cribs/baskets we have in stock. We will endeavour to get the maximum number of mattresses for the money by sourcing the cheapest safe mattresses we can.

10. What is the grant amount applied for?

....£1200.....

11. How will any shortfall be financed? If we received less funding we will purchase fewer mattresses and limit the amount of families we can help in this period. With any funding received we will aim to get the maximum number of mattresses possible so we can support as many families as possible.

12. Will the grant be spent before 31st March 2025?Yes

Please enclose the following supporting paperwork:

- ☐ Previous year's accounts
- ☐ Documentation in support of project
- ☐ Copy of rules/Constitution
- ☐ GDPR form



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

APPLICATION FOR GRANT AID 2024 Closing date Sunday 10th March 2024

1. Name of Organisation: ABILITY

2. Brief description of organisation:

ABILITY aims to provide a reliable and accessible on demand bus service for residents in the community who find it difficult to access public transport. Our aim is '*connecting people with places*'. ABILITY was created due to the significant government cuts to public transport. With a fleet of 9 minibuses, we take residents in the area to travel on a demand basis. Most of our members are elderly and over the age of 65 and our service assists people with mobility issues.

The service is open to all, and we aim to make it easier for the passengers to reach essential services such as food shopping, banking services, medical appointments, and local recreational events. We accept concessionary bus passes and charge a mileage fee for non-bus pass holders. Passengers can go and do their shopping at a variety of local supermarkets and our drivers some of which are volunteers then help members with their shopping to their door.

ABILITY also offers trips out to residents to places such as garden centres and shopping centres which encourages physical activity and making friends which helps to reduce social isolation.

We strive to give our members the freedom and confidence to get out and about on their own to keep physically active, meet new people, and make lasting friendships.

3. Number of regular participants in organisation 1343

4. Number of regular participants living in Bicester Town area: 55

5. Do you have a constitution/set of rules? Yes, please see the Memorandum of Association attached.

6. Details of **Specific Project** that funding is applied for (see **Grant Aid Awarding Policy 2.4**). **Only grants that comply with the criteria will be considered. NB applications for running costs will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances which you must evidence.**

We wish to grow the number of passengers from Bicester using the on-demand service. There are currently 55 members in Bicester, but we believe there are many more people in the Bicester community that need and would benefit hugely from using our service. To be able to grow the numbers of passengers in Bicester we need to market the on-demand service in Bicester and surrounding villages.

We will market the service in Bicester by placing leaflets, poster and banners in areas where there is a high footfall of the community. We will also host coffee mornings with

groups such as careers or go into retirement homes in Bicester to inform those who could most benefit from using the ABILITY buses.

We are currently connecting with key stakeholders in the community and are meeting with Tamsin Ireland the new Local Area Coordinator based in Bicester East to talk about our service so the details can be passed on to people within the Bicester community. We will continue connecting with key stakeholders to increase the awareness of the service and reach those in the community who will benefit from using the ABILITY service.

7. How does your project meet the criteria set out in 2.6 of the Grant Aid Awarding Policy?

The grant will be used solely for the marketing of the ABILITY Service in the community of Bicester. The marketing team will travel and attend in person events that vary from local parish groups, such as memory hubs, W.I. meetings and local coffee mornings with carers and Social Prescribers. These meetings will provide a great platform to promote the services and connect with those in the community who need the service the most. The use of marketing materials will be used for example leaflets and posters to be put out in places where there is a large footfall of the public i.e. doctors' surgeries.

Our experienced marketing team have marketed the service previously to different areas and communities with great success growing the number of people using the ABILITY service. Therefore, we are aware of what is required to be able to market and reach out to the community to increase numbers and believe the grant in which we are applying for is realistic and appropriate. The grant will enable us to grow the number of people in the Bicester community using the ABILITY bus to help with their travel needs.

Ability endeavours to provide a local transport service for residents living in more isolated areas. In delivering a regular shopper bus service to these areas, we make it easier for users to remain connected to the wider community, whilst maintaining some much-needed independence and freedom without having to rely on friends or family for lifts.

Through the company's activities, we aim to promote greater integration of communities across the areas we operate in. This provides great benefit to the community, particularly those currently reliant on public transport services, in offering an efficient and cost-effective transport service which provides access to essential services such as healthcare, shopping, education and employment. ABILITY will also support the economy by increasing access to local businesses, whilst promoting the development of a greener transport network with less congestion on busy roads, reducing harmful carbon emissions.

Users of the service can maintain their independence and attend doctor's appointments, hospital appointments, optical appointments, supermarkets, banking services, community groups and many more places in the community. Our service operates 5 days a week and we deliver an average of 30,000 passenger trips per annum, (i.e. to garden centres and shopping centres) at present and we have no doubt this will increase due to the need out in the community.

Our social mission is to help tackle loneliness and social isolation by providing a reliable, timely caring bus and car service open to all. People who are not able to access transport can lose their independence and this can have serious implications for

people's mental and physical health. Giving our members the confidence to get out on their own, meet new people and make lasting friendships is at the heart of what we do. Our mission is to ensure that we provide passengers with accessible, affordable transport, to a variety of locations. Our service is available to everyone and aimed at people who do not have a local bus service which gets them to where they need to go for example supermarkets and the doctor's surgery.

Our aim is to ensure anyone living in an isolated rural area has reliable access to essential services. We offer weekly buses into the main shopping areas of Banbury, Bicester, Brackley, Daventry, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Towcester. All services operate on a flexible route, meaning we can pick passengers up closer to home, and drop them off where they need to be – meeting individual needs.

The Bicester Town Council grant we feel is the most appropriate grant because our service directly aims to help some of the most isolated residents in Bicester with their transport needs.

ABILITY is managed with an experienced Board of Directors with relevant experience conducive to the requirements of the organisation, such as: project management, I.T., marketing, and previous Directorships held with a Blue Chip Company.

8. What is the total cost of your project? £1000

9. Please provide a breakdown of these costs.

1. Staff hourly rate for attending events and 'face to face' marketing in Bicester £300
2. Subsistence and travel £140
3. Roller banners £140
4. Printing £260
5. Giveaway gifts (pens etc) £200

10. What is the grant amount applied for? £1000

11. How will any shortfall be financed? Team fundraising events.

12. Will the grant be spent before 31st March 2025? Yes

Please enclose the following supporting paperwork:

- ☐ Previous year's accounts- attached to email
- ☐ Documentation in support of project- attached to email
- ☐ Copy of rules/Constitution – attached to email
- ☐ GDPR form – attached to email

**BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**
Wednesday, 4th December 2024
Outdoor Team Rest Room and Drying Area

Chair: Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Financial Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: 01869 252915 helen.pool@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

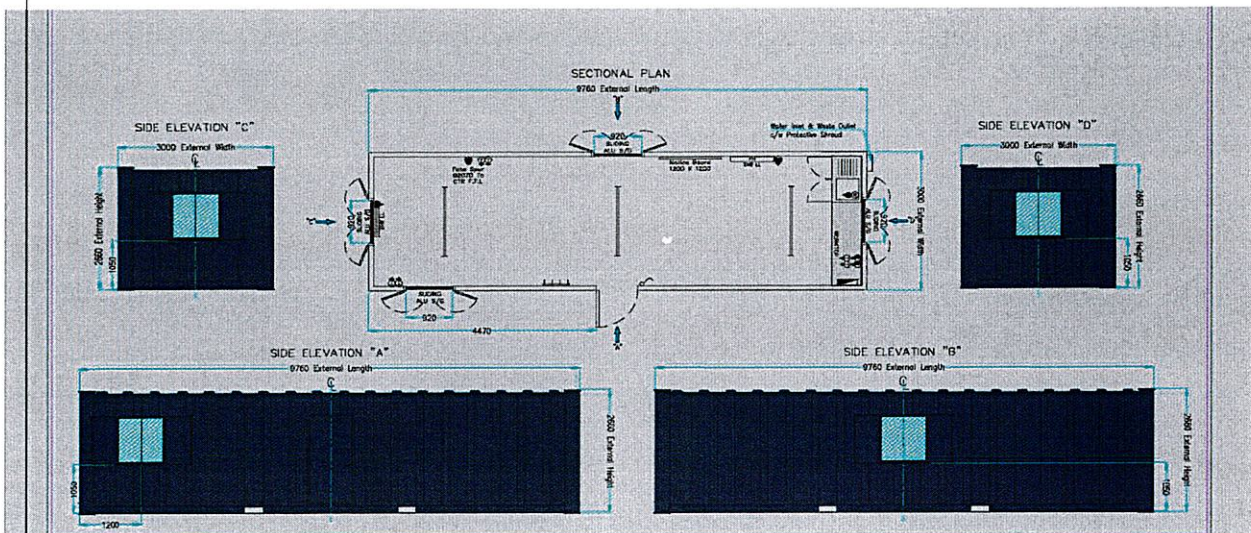
1. Overview

- 1.1. Currently the outdoor team are based in the stables yard. The current restroom facilities are now out of date, open to the elements and do not allow for a drying room, proper toilet facilities or kitchen.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. The existing condemned portacabin is removed from Claytons yard with electricity and water and drains disconnected.
- 2.2. A new anti-vandal portacabin is installed with restroom facilities, toilet and drying room.





2.3. Quotes below include delivery and installation from Supplier A.

Supplier A - £18,000 excluding VAT

Supplier A was approved by the Environment committee on the 18th November

2.4. **Service and Infrastructure** - Cut off and re-connect mains electricity, water, drainage, install CCTV and new chairs and tables - **£8,500**

3. Recommendation

3.1. Committee is requested to **APPROVE** supplier **A** and **APPROVE** Service and Infrastructure costs. Funding to be taken from **EMR 901/9020 BTC premises** with £913,995 available.

AGENDA ITEM 14

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Obsolete Items Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.gov.uk

1. Overview

The RFO is required to ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets is maintained.

2. Background

According to Financial Regulations:

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 or tangible movable property does not exceed £1000.

3. Obsolete Items

List below is a table illustrating obsolete items that will be removed from our Asset Register as they are beyond repair.

ASSET NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	AQUISITION	EST REPLACEMENT	AGE	EXPECTED LIFE	BOUGHT FOR	EXP DEPRECIATION YEARLY	Value lost
00004	POLE ATTACHMENT	01/01/2012	30/12/2016	12	5	£200	£40	-£480
00018	HEDGE CUTTER ATTACHEMNT	01/01/2016	30/12/2020	8	5	£250	£50	-£400
00022	Combi Engine	01/01/2017	31/12/2021	7	5	£490	£90	-£630
00029	Lawn Mower	01/01/2012	31/12/2014	12	2	£1,150	£200	£2,400
00030	Lawn Mower	01/01/2012	31/12/2014	12	2	£1,150	£200	£2,400
00034	Strimmer					£100		
00041	Lawn Mower	01/01/2016	30/12/2020	8	5	£900	£160	-£1,280
00045	Lawn Mower	01/01/2005	31/12/2014	19	10	£50	£5.00	-£95
00047	Lawn Mower	01/01/2017	31/12/2021	7	5	£370	£60	-£420
00051	Lawn Mower	01/01/2017	31/12/2021	7	5	£224	£40	-£280
00087	Sprayer	26/06/1905		119				
00088	Leaf Vac	01/05/2005		19	4			
10008	John Deere	01/01/2016	30/12/2022	8	7	£2,800	£300	-£2,400
10011	Tractor	06/05/2008	04/05/2018	16	10	£24,655	£2,250	-£36,000

4. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the removal of the obsolete items over £1000 from the asset register and to recommend it to Council for approval.

AGENDA ITEM 15

**BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Wednesday, 4th December 2024
UTILITIES REPORT**

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

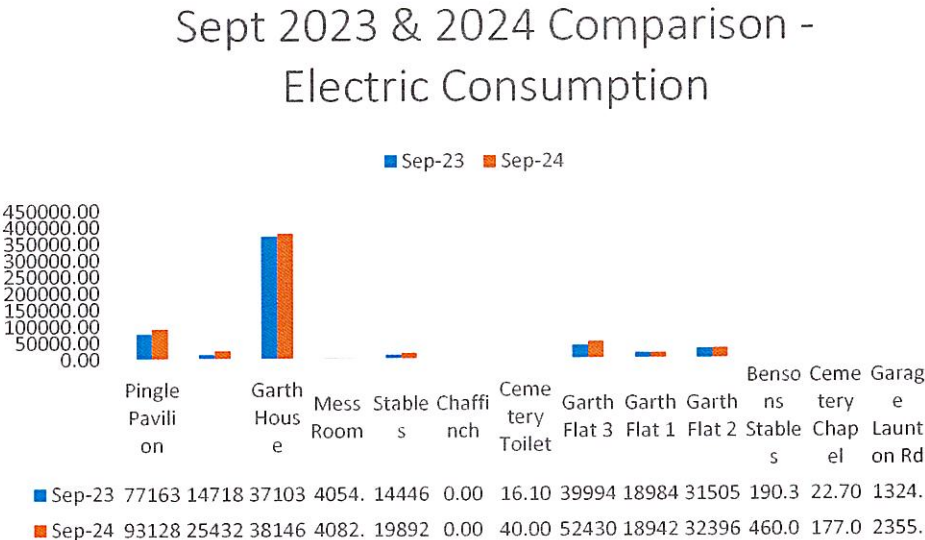
This is an updated report for the utility usage across all sites.

2. The Background

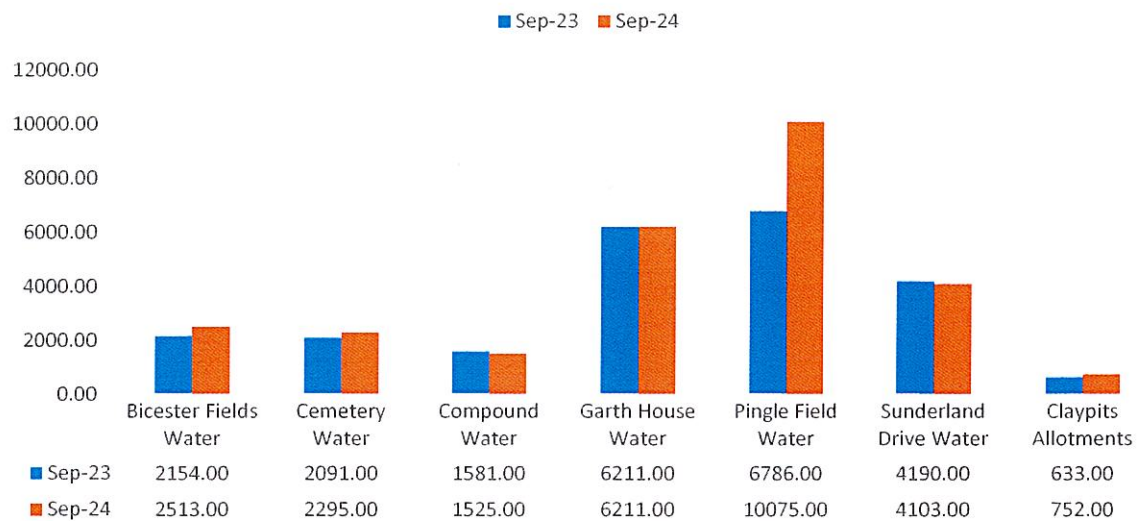
The report shows the usage comparison between September 2023 vs September 2024. Comparison was adjusted to the last known reading where data for reported period was not available or new meters installed (5 x new meters installed in the last 12 months).

3. Recommendation

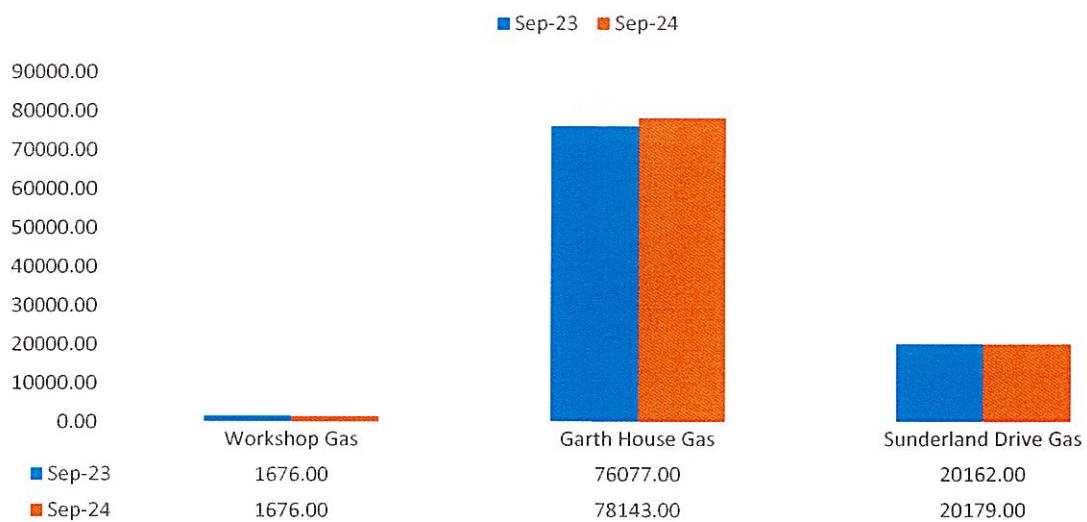
Councillors are asked to **NOTE** the information given in this report.



Sept 2023 & 2024 Comparison - Water Consumption



Sept 2023 & 2024 Comparison - Gas Consumption



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Notice of Conclusion of Audit & External Auditor's Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.gov.uk

1. Overview - External Audit Financial year 2023/2024

The Council has received Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2023/2024.

2. The Background

By law, Council must approve the conclusion of audit. This Committee is asked to note the audit and recommend it to Council for approval. Below is an excerpt - External Auditor Limited Assurance Opinion 2023/2024. The Full Report is Appendix 4.

2 External auditor 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 the 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.

Section 1 of the AGAR was completed as approved on 24/06/2024 with a minute reference 04/2425. Section 2 of the AGAR was dated on the same day and had the same minute reference. On investigation (due to the same minute references used), the minutes provided by the council clearly show both Sections 1 and 2 were approved at the meeting held on 24/06/2024 and recorded as minute items 19/2425 and 20/2425. As such, the minute references reflected on the AGAR are incorrect. We would expect this to be reflected in the council's response to Assertion 3 on the 2024-25 return and any future minute references to match back to the reference provided in those minutes.

The published Notice of Public Rights requires the name, position and contact details of the person to contact to exercise public rights, usually the RFO, to be entered at line 2(b) on the form to satisfy the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Paragraph 15(2)(b), suggesting that public rights have not been properly provided. The Council should ensure this is fully completed in the future. We would expect Assertion 4 to reflect this on 2024/25 AGAR.

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

Insufficient information was provided with the intermediate testing supporting data submitted for review with regards to minutes evidencing the review of the fraud and corruption policy. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their annual submission.

3. Future Actions required

- i. Greater attention is required by the RFO when reporting minute references and ensuring that references match those approved minutes.
- ii. The published Notice of Public Rights for 2024/2025 must contain the contact details so as to satisfy the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- iii. The Fraud and Corruption policy requires reviewing at the next Policy Committee meeting on the 10th February 2025.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and the report of the External Auditor as well as future actions required and **RECOMMEND** it to Council for approval.

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

Independence & Competence of the Internal Auditor

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

Contact: 01869 252915 alisa.russell@Bicester.gov.uk

Responsible Finance Officer: Helen Pool

Contact: Helen.Pool@Bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

The purpose of this report is to:

- confirm the current appointment of the internal auditor;
- review the independence and competence of the Council's internal auditor in accordance with good practice guidance offered by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guide published by NALC.

2. Background

It is a requirement that each local authority demonstrates annually that it has considered the independence of its internal auditor.

Best practice guidance for Internal Audit may be found in Section 4 the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guide published by NALC. That guidance is reproduced as an annexe to this report. The Practitioners' Guide is updated annually and the version annexed is the most recent published in March 2024.

The guide says the following about Independence (paras 4.9-4.11):

- "Independence requires the absence of any actual or perceived conflict of interest. It means that whoever carries out the internal audit role does not have any involvement in, or responsibility for, the financial decision making, management or control of the authority, or for the authority's financial controls and procedures.
- A current or recent authority member, who cannot demonstrate independence from decisions in the year to be audited, cannot be its internal auditor. Similarly, it would not be appropriate for any individual or firm with a personal connection to a member or officer of the authority to be appointed. Conflicts of interest must be avoided, such as in cases where an external provider of accounting software or services to the authority, also offers internal audit services through an associate company, firm or individual.
- There is no requirement to rotate auditors but the independence of the appointed person or firm should be reviewed every year with regard to; personal independence, financial independence, and professional independence."

Further the following guidance is offered on the subject of Competence:

- “Evidence as to competence might include letters of recommendation from other similar Authorities.”

3. Findings

The Council's current internal auditor – Mulberry & Co was first appointed in the 2017/18 financial year as an outcome of a tendering exercise that took place in October 2017. The initial contract covered the internal audit for the years ended 31 March 2018, 2019 and 2020 with an option to extend to cover the years ended 31 March 2021 and 2022. Full Council agreed to the appointment of Mulberry & Co for 2024/25 & 2025/26 (in addition to 2023/24) in the meeting BTC05/2324.

Mulberry & Co has an extensive practice across the south-east of England.

Mulberry & Co is a member of the internal Audit Forum which was set up in 2022 with the following aims:

- To promote the provision of high-quality Parish and Town Council internal audits.
- To promote the provision of high-quality internal auditors.
- To foster good working relationships between internal auditors, councils and external auditors.

Mulberry & Co passes the independence test, in that there is an absence of any actual or perceived conflict of interest and the size of the practice indicates that there is also financial and professional independence. The competence test is also passed in that the evidence demonstrates that Mulberry & Co has an established practice in local council audit.

4. Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to **REVIEW** the independence and competence of the Council's internal auditor in accordance with good practice guidance offered by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guidance published by NALC and to make recommendations to Full Council confirming the current appointment of the internal auditor.

Agenda Item 18

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

- 07/01/2025 Review of Finance Regulations
- 07/01/2025 Review of Effectiveness of Internal Control
- 07/01/2025 Payments Report from Page 1081 on 17/09/2024