Bicester Town Council

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Finance Committee Meeting

Ref: FIN05a 2025-26
Tuesday 17th February 2026 at 19:00 hrs
Council Chamber, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester OX26 6PS

Members:

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

Substitute Members:
Cllr Harry Knight, Cllr Damien Maguire, Cllr Nick Mawer, Cllr Dan Hallett,
Cllr John Willett and Cllr Chris Pruden.

Other Circulation:

CDC
Cllr John Broad, Cllr Frank Ideh, Cllr Simon Lytton and Cllr Rob Parkinson

OCC
Cllr Sean Gaul, Cllr John Shiri and Cllr Matt Webb

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

The Garth,
Launton Road,
Bicester,
OX26 6PS
Telephone: 01869 252915
Email: enquiries@bicester.gov.uk
www.bicester.gov.uk

Wednesday 11th February 2026

To all members of the Finance Committee,

You are hereby Summoned to attend the meeting of the **Finance Committee** at the **Council Chamber, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 6PS on Tuesday 17th February 2026** to commence at **19:00hrs** for the transaction of the following business.

Trevor Longfield

Responsible Finance Officer

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 (trevor.longfield@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 **(Pages 4 - 6)**

To **APPROVE** the **MINUTES** and **RESOLUTIONS** of the following Finance Committee Meeting held on:

FIN04/2025/2026 – Monday 1st December 2025 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 Financial Performance Report

(Pages 7 - 8) and Appendix 1

As per Financial Regulation 4.8, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached Income & Expenditure plus Variance Report to **JANUARY 2026**.

6 Bank and Cash Balances

(Page 9)

As per Financial Regulation 2.2, the committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached report detailing bank balances at the end of **JANUARY 2026**

7 Standing Orders and Direct Debits

(Page 10)

The committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **APPROVE** the recommended actions.

8 Reserves Report

(Pages 11 - 12) and Appendix 2

The Committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the earmarked reserve balances at the end of **JANUARY 2026**.

9 Payments

(Page 13) and Appendix 3

The Committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the report.

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 17th March 2026

Minutes of the Finance Committee

A meeting of the **Finance Committee** was held on **Monday 1st December 2025** at **19:00 hrs** at the **Council Chamber, The Garth, Launton Rd, OX26 6PS**.

Present:

Cllr Alisa Russell (Chairperson)
Cllr Tom Beckett
Cllr Nick Cotter
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:

Trevor Longfield – Town Clerk

Chloe Challinger – Civic and Democratic Administrator

17 / 2526 **Apologies for Absence**

RESOLVED that apologies be received from:

- Cllr Jim Webb

18 / 2526 **Declarations of Interest**

RESOLVED that no declarations were received.

19 / 2526 **Minutes of the Finance Committee**

RESOLVED to **CONFIRM** the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting **FIN01/2526** held on Thursday 5th June 2025 at 19:00hrs.

20 / 2526 **Public Session**

RESOLVED that no members of the public were present.

21 / 2526 **Financial Performance Report**

RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** and **REVIEWED** the Income, Expenditure and Variances Report to **Month 7** October 2025**.**

A concern was raised about the £47,000 spend on Open Spaces (TL was this £471K budget?)

Review of same contract at year end to understand cost incurred during change of contract

Biggest item spend - £415,000 The Garth for play park

Long-term loan – paid to public works board every six months

Confirmation of employee costs

Whitelands café – no income generated – need to review for claiming.

22 / 2526 **Bank Balances**

RESOLVED that Committee **NOTED** and **REVIEWED** the bank balances.

Committee questioned whether access was available to Bank Accounts. RFO advised that recovery of the Lloyds account (£550,000) is in progress but not yet received. Other accounts should be accessible when officers are present.

Councillors requested a review of interest generated, the return on CCLA fund is significantly higher than Barclays, but concern raised that CCLA is share-based and that might not be suitable. Council should maximise returns on funds but require good day-to-day operational service, should follow best advice for best outcome. Council would prefer more ethically-minded/Greener banks but risks of impact on customer operationally. Suggestion made of Nationwide – Mayor to explore this.

23 / 2526 **Standing Orders and Direct Debits**

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the RFO stopping Direct Debits and Standing Orders that are no longer appropriate.

Concerns raised over contract with new energy provider signed for three years from April 2026. Supplier was selected with the advice of Utility Aid but more environmentally friendly options should have been considered. RFO advised that contract did not include Whitelands which is still under Cherwell District Council who re-charge the costs to Bicester Town Council.

All future new or stopped Standing Orders and Direct Debits to be reported regularly.

24 / 2526 **Reserves Report**

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

Noted that £58,000 insurance recoveries for play area added back to the Earmarked Reserves (“EMR”) that that the spend came from. Queries raised over EMRs: Town Centre as money spend on bollards, Open Spaces as suggestion of leasing vehicles and/or staggering purchases (Town Clerk to be consulted).

RFO to review the EMRs to produce clearer explanation of intended uses and reasonableness of the level of reserves.

25 / 2526 **Charitable Grants**

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the progress and **APPROVED** one of the two recommendations.

The Committee agreed to **REJECT** the Grant to Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Committee **DELEGATED** the **APPROVAL** of the small grant to Howe Trust (Wheatley) to the Mayor subject to review of the documents.

RFO advised that Bicester Green were taking action to register as a Charity. Concerns were raised that the grant criteria were being restricted to registered charities and that this was not the definition nor past practice.

RFO to provide analysis of Grants, paid and provisionally agreed but still not paid, with a view or re-visiting applications previously rejected due to timing of applications.

26 / 2526 **Budget and Precept 2026-27**

RESOLVED that the Committee **REVIEWED** and **APPROVED** the Budget and Precept for 2026-27.

Budget and Precept recommended for approval by the Full Council at their next meeting.

Concerns raised on the lack of income from Whitelands Café, the precise nature of the legal position between the Café, Bicester Town and Cherwell District Councils.

Concerns raised over salary increase assumptions and training access including apprenticeships.

Concerns also raised over cemetery space – whether it should be provided without additional costs to taxpayers, new cemetery being ashes-only interment and issues around religious requirements and burials.

28 / 2526 **Internal Audit**

RESOLVED that the committee **NOTED** the interim internal audit report.

Councillors expressed concern that Report states that there had been no expenditure over £10,000 when there had been some payments over £100,000 by the time of the audit.

Date of next Meeting: 6th January 2026 at 19:00

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:34hrs

Note: FIN02 was cancelled and FIN03 was adjourned as non-quorate

AGENDA ITEM 5

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 17th February 2026

Financial Performance Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

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

Responsible Finance Officer: Trevor Longfield
Contact: trevor.longfield@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This is a standing report of the year-to-date Income & Expenditure to inform the Councillors of the Financial performance of the Council and the latest predicted financial outcome.

2. Summary Income and Expenditure

This is summary of the financial performance for the ten months to January.

	Actual to January	Whole Year Budget	%age Year Budget	Latest Forecast (TL)	FC Variance Fav / (Adv)	
Net to/(from) General Reservess	434,778	32,580		209,993	177,413	
Income	2,275,018	2,281,767	100%	2,354,022	72,255	
Precept	1,872,968	1,872,967	100%	1,872,968	1	Received for year in April
Sports Income	144,841	129,000	112%	173,809	44,809	
Rental Income	47,515	66,848	71%	57,018	(9,830)	Deficit mostly Whitelands Café
Events Income	66,422	89,500	74%	66,422	(23,078)	Compensating savings in costs
Grant Income	-	31,252	0%	31,252	-	Should still be claimable
Other Income	14,543	7,200	202%	14,543	7,343	Allotments and Cemetery
Income - Mayor's	7,668	-	N/a	-	-	Net paid or Balance Sheet at year end
Interest Earned	121,061	85,000	142%	138,009	53,009	
Costs	1,840,240	2,249,187	82%	2,144,028	105,159	
Payroll	790,725	968,641	82%	952,267	16,375	
Staff Related	28,775	16,600	173%	36,088	(19,488)	Recruitment Fee and HR 2k per mth
Parks and Gardens	396,198	460,000	86%	459,000	1,000	Actual includes £47k 2024-25 see rec
Maintenance	168,912	271,014	62%	201,223	69,791	Grounds, Buildings, Pitches inc verti
Events	135,273	160,000	85%	135,273	24,727	Compensates adverse income
Utilities	90,860	89,478	102%	109,032	(19,554)	Mostly Whitelands
ICT	41,633	39,300	106%	44,215	(4,915)	Mostly paid for year
Civic	34,046	39,250	87%	34,046	5,204	Paid for year tbc
Rates	27,421	42,639	64%	27,421	15,218	Paid for year
Other Costs	33,950	36,021	94%	36,950	(929)	Insurance £24k for year, valuations due
Grants	19,926	22,000	91%	22,000	-	Mostly paid for year
Office and Facilities	26,104	45,544	57%	31,325	14,219	
Publicity	17,079	22,600	76%	22,635	(35)	Actual two of four Magazines
Legal and Professional	11,706	27,500	43%	14,048	13,452	
Sponsorship	8,600	8,600	100%	8,600	-	Paid for year
Mayor's	875	-	N/a	1,750	(1,750)	Net paid or Balance Sheet at year end
Mayor's - Last year	8,157	-	N/a	8,157	(8,157)	Should have accrued/paid in 2025-25
Reserves Items						
Earmarked Reserves	370,964	-		370,964	(370,964)	
Garth Play area (Kompan)	415,999					
Southwold Insurance recovery	(58,000)					
Mess Room (LKT)	1,675					
Various Trees (Krinkels)	11,290					

The more detailed excel based Management Accounts have been circulated to members of the Finance Committee and Appendix 1 to this Agenda is the Income and Expenditure Report from Rialtas

The accounts are not prepared on a full accruals and prepayment basis, although some of these transactions have now been raised. The above 2025-26 results include net costs of £27k which should have been accrued within last year’s results (£47k of costs and £20k Income both being omitted).

The Parks and Gardens is mostly from the Krinkels contract but also amounts from Cherwell District Council (“CDC”). Utilities include re-charges from CDC for Whitelands as the contracts with the Supplier is still in their name.

3. Recommendation

The committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** this report and appended income and expenditure to **31st January 2026**.

AGENDA ITEM 6

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 17th February 2026

Bank and Cash Balances

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

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

Responsible Finance Officer: Trevor Longfield

Contact: trevor.longfield@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This is a standing report of the bank balances as at the end of **JANUARY 2026**, and includes a reconciliation to the Bank and cash lines of the Balance Sheet

Bank Statement Balances	Date of latest Statement	£
01 Barclays Current '0017	02-Feb-26	14,680.94
02 Barclays Wages '0068	02-Feb-26	100.00
03 Barclays Carnival '3822	02-Feb-26	100.00
04 CCLA Deposit	TBA	2,000,000.00
05 Barclays Deposit '5974	02-Feb-26	1,600,000.00
06 Santander '3467	02-Feb-26	270,023.67
12 Petty Cash - The Garth	03-Feb-26	165.50
Barclays Mayor Two '8471	02-Feb-26	100.00
		3,885,170.11

Balance Sheet Accounts	Nominal	£
01 Barclays Current '0017	201	14,680.94
02 Barclays Wages '0068	202	100.00
03 Barclays Carnival '3822	203	100.00
04 CCLA Deposit	204	2,000,000.00
05 Barclays Deposit '5974	205	1,600,000.00
06 Santander '3467	206	270,023.67
13 Barclays Mayor2 '8471	211	100.00
Petty Cash - The Garth	220	165.50
		3,885,170.11

Memo Closed Accounts

Lloyds '4968 - Balance £549,174.65 was transferred to Barclays

Recommendation

The committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** this report as of **31 JANUARY (Month 10).**

AGENDA ITEM 7

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 17th February 2026

Direct Debits and Standing Orders

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

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

Responsible Finance Officer: Trevor Longfield
Contact: trevor.longfield@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Standing Orders

The only Standing Order, which was between Bicester Town Council Bank Accounts, has now been stopped

The Committee is asked to **APPROVE** the stopping of this Standing Order.

2. Direct Debits

No new Direct Debits have created since the 1st December meeting of the Finance Committee.

No existing Direct Debits have been stopped.

3. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** this report.

AGENDA ITEM 8

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 17th February 2026

Reserves Report

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

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

Responsible Finance Officer: Trevor Longfield
Contact: trevor.longfield@bicester.gov.uk

(with credit to Andy Beams for the background SAPPP extracts)

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This report relates to the Reserve Balances held by the council as of **31 January 2026**.

2. Background

Town and Parish Councils have no power to hold reserves other than for cashflow shortfalls and contingency requirements (general reserves) or for specific future purposes (earmarked reserves). The Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's Guide 2025 provides guidance on the appropriate levels of general reserves and states *'the generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate level of an authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure.* (para 5.34)*'* The Practitioner's Guide (para 5.39) further states *'there is, in practice, no upper or lower limit to earmarked reserves save only that they must be held for genuine and identifiable purposes and projects, their level should be subject to regular review and justification (at least annually and at budget setting) and should be separately identified and enumerated.'*

Nominal	Account	01-Apr-25	Net Transfers	31-Jan-26	
326	Restricted Reserves	59,600.00	(59,600.00)	-	Moved to 336 Whitelands
327	EMR - Community & Elections	13,432.11		13,432.11	
328	EMR - Play Areas & Open Space	559,730.02	(359,674.00)	200,056.02	Kompan, Garth Park
329	EMR - Equipment Replace/Maint	231,591.41		231,591.41	
330	EMR - Green Infrastructure	80,025.18	(11,290.00)	68,735.18	
331	EMR - Town Centre	105,250.00		105,250.00	
332	EMR - BTC Premises	688,890.28		688,890.28	
333	EMR - Youth Initiatives	10,000.00		10,000.00	
334	EMR - Burial Ground Provision	818,134.00		818,134.00	
336	EMR - Sports Village Contribut	297,995.60	59,600.00	357,595.60	Now includes above
		2,864,648.60	**(370,964.00)**	**2,493,684.60**	

Analysis of Changes

Garth Park (Kompan)	Ground works	9,999.00
Garth Park (Kompan)	Part of Play area	246,337.50
Garth Park (Kompan)	Part of Play area	159,662.50
Southwold Insurance	Came form EMR	(58,000.00)
Mess Room (KLT Electrics)		1,675.00
Play Area net release		**359,674.00**
Cemetery Pine (Krinkels)		5,850.00
Various Trees (Krinkels)		5,440.00
Green Infrastructure net release		**11,290.00**

The General Reserve was **£901,427,** Current Year Fund **£434,778**, hence the Total Reserves were **£3,829,889** which is equivalent to more than two years' precept.

The Current Year Fund equates to the difference this financial year between the council's income and expenditure, this is forecast to be a £210,000 surplus at Year-End. Which will be added to either General or Earmarked Reserves once they have been individually re-assessed for their continued suitability.

3. Recommendation

The committee is asked to **REVIEW** this report and to **NOTE** the contents.

AGENDA ITEM 9

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Tuesday 17th February 2026

Payments

Chair: Councillor Alisa Russell

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

Responsible Finance Officer: Trevor Longfield
Contact: trevor.longfield@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All Wards

1. Overview

This report is a standing report to keep Councillors informed of payments made. The appended report includes all payments over £500 to external suppliers, excluding outsourced payroll, covering the period **November 2025 to January 2026.**

2. Recommendation

The committee is asked to **REVIEW** and **NOTE** the attached appendix 3.