Public Document Pack

Bicester Town Council

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Bicester Town Council Meeting

Ref: BTC04/2627

Monday 22nd June 2026 7pm

Council Chamber, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 6PS

Members:
Cllr Paul Wheatley – **Chair**, – Cllr Dan Hallett **Vice - Chair**
Cllr Tom Beckett, Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Donna Ford,
Cllr Sam Holland, Cllr Harry Knight, Cllr Damien Maguire,
Cllr Rachel Mallows, Cllr Nicholas Mawer, Cllr Christopher Pruden, Cllr Alisa Russell,
Cllr Les Sibley, Cllr Jim Webb and Cllr John Willett

Other Circulation:

CDC
Cllr Bryonie Wells, Cllr Robert Parkinson, Cllr Julius Parker, Cllr Simon Lytton, Cllr Frank Ideh, Cllr G.A. Popescu. Cllr Michael Wilson

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

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

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

Wednesday 17th June 2026,

To all Members of The Bicester Town Council,

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** in **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS** on **Monday 22nd June 2026** to commence for the transaction of the following business.

Paul Canning
Deputy 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. Council members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify Bicester Town Council (enquiries@bicester.gov.uk) and the Town Clerk (clerk@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. Update from Oxfordshire County Council

To **NOTE** reports from Oxfordshire County Councillors serving Bicester Divisions.

4. Update from Cherwell District Council

To **NOTE** reports from Cherwell District Councillors serving Bicester Divisions.

5. 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.

6. Presentation about Whitelands Sports Ground

To **NOTE** update from Cherwell District Council regarding Whitelands Sports upgrades.

7. Elmsbrook Local Centre – Section 106 (Page 5-6)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **RESOLVE** the deputy Town clerk constructs and issues letters to the CE of Cherwell District Council and to district Councillors requesting the proposed information in section 2 of this agenda.

8. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting (Page 7-11)

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

- BTC08/2526 – Monday 27th April 2026
- BTC03/2627 – Monday 1st June 2026 Committee Appointment for 2026-2027
- BTC03Bb/2627 – Thursday 21st May 2026 EGM

9. External Audit Report 2024 – 2025 (Page 12-13)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** the findings from the External Audit for 2024-2025.

10. Internal Audit Report 2025-2026 (Page 14-15)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** the findings from the Internal Audit for 2025-2026.

11. Internal Audit Quotation 2026-2027 (Page 16-18)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** the report and **APPROVE** the quote for internal auditing 2026-2027.

12. Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Section 1) (Page 19-22)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** and **AGREE to** the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3 AND the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.

13. Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt2) Report (Page 23-24)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** and **AGREE** to the Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.

14. Sport Pitch Changes (Page 25)

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the change of use of an additional grass rugby pitch.

15. Cemetery (Page 26-27)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** the report and **APPROVE** Officers proceed to obtain 3 quotes for a professional 3rd party survey.

16. Mayors Report (Page 28)

The Council is asked to **NOTE** the Mayors report.

17. Exclusion of Press and Public

RECOMMENDED That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

18. Recruitment for vacant positions

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the recruitment process.

19. Lease Agreement

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** the report and **APPROVE** Officers request.

20. Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 12th October 2026, 7pm – The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL
Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

RESOLOUTION ELMSBROOK LOCAL CENTRE

1. Purpose of Report

To seek Council approval for a formal Town Council response to Cherwell District Council regarding the delivery of the Elmsbrook Local Centre.

2. Proposal

Issues For Consideration

This Council Resolves that it shall require the Deputy Town Clerk to write to the Chief Executive and leader of Cherwell District Council as follows, the letter will convey:

The Town Council supports the provision of the consented local centre pursuant to planning application 19/01036/HYBRID. It calls on the District Council to recognise that the reasons for scaling back the centre given in 2021 are no longer applicable and holds up the example of the Council's own development at Graven Hill, where a thriving local centre has taken root; and therefore, as a reason for facilitating the development of the local centre at Elmsbrook.

The Town Council supports the Residents Association in their campaign

- The letter will request;

Whether the Section 106 offer of the land for the sum of £1.00 was made, and what was decided by whom and when.

Will Cherwell District Council confirm a plan to bring the centre forward after 12th July 2026 and will it oppose any landscaping of the site, holding of the site for a future sale, or indefinite delay in bringing forward the site.

This Council further requires the Deputy Town Clerk to write to the District Councillors for Bicester North urging them to request that they ask for any planning application for the site of the local centre to be brought to the Bicester Town Council Planning Committee.

3. Recommendation

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **RESOLVE** that the deputy Town clerk constructs and issues letters to the CE of Cherwell District Council and to district Councillors, requesting the proposed information in section 2 of this agenda**.**

Minutes of the Bicester Town Council

A meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** was held on **Monday 1st June 2026 at 19:00 hrs** at **The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 2PS**.

Present:
Cllr Dr Paul Wheatley – **(Chair)**
Cllr Dan Hallett – **(Vice Chair)**
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Harry Knight
Cllr Damien Maguire
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Nicholas Mawer
Cllr Christopher Pruden
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Jim Webb
Cllr John Willett

In Attendance:
Paul Canning, Officer
Isobel May, Events and Marketing Administrator
Cllr George Popescu (CDC)
Cllr Michael Wilson (CDC)
Cllr Sean Gaul (OCC)

29/ 2627	**Apologies for Absence** **RESOLVED** that apologises were received from Cllr Tom Beckett and Cllr Nick Cotter.
30/ 2627	**Declarations of Interest** **RESOLVED** that no declarations of interests were received.
31/ 2627	**Public Session** **RESOLVED** that no members of the public were present.
32/ 2627	**Update from Oxfordshire County Council** **RESOVLED** that an update was provided. OCC Cllr provided an update on the following: • **Leadership & Cabinet:** New County leader and cabinet appointed. Transport responsibilities split between policy/implementation and highways repair. Former leader Liz Leffman now oversees highways construction and repair. • **Budget:** Council tax increased by 4.99%. Oxfordshire faces a £24m government funding shortfall, requiring savings across services. • **Parking & Enforcement:** Ongoing parking issues in Bicester East. Resident permit schemes remain the most effective enforcement

option but may lack local support. Interim measures and further discussions are being explored for affected areas.

- **Quiet Ways Pilot:** Limited rural traffic-reduction pilot scheme planned, requiring strong local backing. Demand is expected to exceed available pilot places.
- **Roads & Highways:** Concerns raised about resurfacing quality, roadworks coordination, and incomplete works. Residents were asked to report specific issues for investigation. Funding design work for a Launton Road pedestrian crossing was suggested as a potential next step.

Cllrs raised the following:

- Parking enforcement is often not present during restrictions.
- Concerns that motorists may not be properly consulted on Quietway proposals.
- Increased traffic congestion in Bicester due to Oxford Road roundabout works and single-lane operation on Vendee Drive; request to review roadworks scheduling.
- Middleton Stoney Road resurfaced but lacks lane markings, making speed humps hard to see.

33/2627 **Update from Cherwell District Council**

RESOVLED that no update was provided due to CDC Cllrs waiting for their handovers.

34/2627 **Minutes of the Bicester Town Council**

RESOLVED that incorrect minutes were included in the agenda; officers apologised for the error and any inconvenience caused.

35/2627 **Appointment of Committees**

RESOLVED that Committee **AGREED** and **APPROVED** the Appointment of Committees and Working Parties.

Cllrs requested that the Officer review when the Committee Structure meeting occurs, suggested that should happen before Mayor Making.

RESOLVED that the following chairs of committee meetings were **APPOINTED** and committee membership confirmed:

Finance Committee
Cllr Russell was appointed as Chair of the Finance Committee.
This was Proposed by Cllr Russell and Seconded by Cllr Wheatley.
Members of this committee are Cllr Beckett, Cllr Cotter, Cllr Ford, Cllr Holland, Cllr Mallows, Cllr Sibley, Cllr Webb and Cllr Wheatley.

Environment Committee
Cllr Sibley was appointed as Chair of the Environment Committee.
This was Proposed by Cllr Ford and Seconded by Cllr Knight.
Members of this committee are Cllr Ford, Cllr Hallett, Cllr Maguire, Cllr Mallows, Cllr Mawer, Cllr Pruden, Cllr Russell and Cllr Willett.

Signed ………………………………………… Dated …………………………………………

Policy Committee
Cllr Hallett was appointed as Chair of the Policy Committee.
This was Proposed by Cllr Sibley and Seconded by Cllr Ford.
Members of this committee are Cllr Beckett, Cllr Cotter, Cllr Ford, Cllr Knight, Cllr Mallows, Cllr Mawer, Cllr Pruden and Cllr Wheatley.

Planning Committee
Cllr Mawer was appointed as Chair of the Planning Committee.
This was Proposed by Cllr Willett and Seconded by Cllr Maguire.
Members of this committee are Cllr Beckett, Cllr Cotter, Cllr Hallett, Cllr Holland, Cllr Knight, Cllr Maguire, Cllr Mallows, Cllr Pruden, Cllr Webb and Cllr Willett.

RESOLVED that the chairs of Working Parties is to be confirmed at their first meeting.
Membership of the Working Parties was confirmed as follows:

Personnel
Cllr Hallett, Cllr Maguire, Cllr Mawer, Cllr Russell and Cllr Wheatley.

Events
Cllr Holland, Cllr Maguire, Cllr Pruden, Cllr Webb and Cllr Wheatley.

Sports
Cllr Cotter, Cllr Maguire, Cllr Mawer, Cllr Pruden and Cllr Webb.

Traffic
Cllrs have requested the Officer contacts OCC to invite them to the next full council meeting for an update of what is happening with the traffic meeting and what is required of BTC. This was a unanimous decision.

Assets
Cllr Ford, Cllr Maguire, Cllr Mawer, Cllr Pruden and Cllr Wheatley.

Standing Orders
Cllr Beckett, Cllr Mallows, Cllr Mawer, Cllr Sibley and Cllr Wheatley.

Representatives to Outside Bodies
RESOLVED that Committee **APPOINTED** the following Councillors to represent at Outside Bodies:

Bicester and District Twinning Association
Cllr Hallett, Cllr Russell and Cllr Wheatley

Bicester Area Oversight Group
Cllr Mallows

Bicester Foodbank
Cllr Wheatley

Bicester Town Centre Task Force
No Cllr appointed as they have requested for Officers to find further information of requirements.

Signed ………………………………………… Dated …………………………………………

Bicester Vision
Cllr Hallett

Feeoffee
Cllr Wheatley

Lady Jersey Trust
Cllr Mawer

36/ 2627 **Meeting Attendance Register**
RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the attendance register.

37/ 2627 **Date of Next Meeting:**
Monday 22nd June 2026, at 7pm, The Council Chamber, Garth House

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:23

Minutes of the Extra – Ordinary Town Council Meeting

A meeting of the Town Council was held on **Thursday 21st May 2026 at 19:00 hrs at The Chamber Room, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 2PS**.

Present:
Cllr Dr Paul Wheatley - **(Chair)**
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Harry Knight
Cllr Damien Maguire
Cllr Rachel Mallows
Cllr Nick Mawer
Cllr Alisa Russell
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Jim Webb
Cllr John Willet

In Attendance:
Paul Canning, Deputy Town Clerk

22/ 2627 **Apologies for Absence**
RESOLVED that apologises were received from Cllr Hallet, Cllr Pruden and Cllr Cotter

23/ 2627 **Declarations of Interest**
RESOLVED that no declarations of interests were received.

24/ 2627 **No Minutes were presented**

25/ 2627 **Public Session**
RESOLVED that no members of the public were present.

26/ 2627 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

27/ 2627 **Confidential Staffing Issue**
RESOLVED that the Town Council approved option 1.

28/ 2627 **Date of Next Meeting:**
Monday 1st June 2026, at 7pm, The Council Chamber, Garth House

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:15

Signed ……………………………………………. Dated ……………………………………………

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL
Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Deputy Town Clerk: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

External Auditor Interim Certificate 2024-2025

1. Background

1.1 It is customary for the Council to have internal and external audits carried out every year.

1.2 Internal Audits are typically carried out twice a year. One being after March alongside another within the annual year, typically October. Bicester Town Council has appointed Mulberry LAS to carry out these.

1.3 External Audits are carried out once a year, typically after June. Bicester Town Council has appointed Moore Smaller Authorities to carry out these.

2. Overview

The external auditor interim certificate details the respective responsibilities of the auditor alongside the authority and provides the external auditors limited assurance opinion for 2024-2025, detailed in Appendix 9a.

3. Recommendation

The Council is requested to **NOTE** the report.

Appendix 9a.

Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2024/25 - INTERIM

In respect of **Bicester Town Council**

16 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 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors

17 External auditor limited assurance opinion 2024/25

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.

We have not yet completed our review work on the AGAR and supporting documentation. A final report detailing any qualifications and other maters will be provided with the certificate of completion, following finalisation of the review.

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

We have not yet completed our review work on the AGAR and supporting documentation. A final report detailing any qualifications and other maters will be provided with the certificate of completion, following finalisation of the review.

18 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We **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 2025.

We have not yet completed our review work on the AGAR and supporting documentation. A final report detailing any qualifications and other maters will be provided with the certificate of completion, following finalisation of the review.

External Auditor Name	External Auditor Signature	Date
MOORE	Moore	24/09/2025

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Agenda Item 10

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL
Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Deputy Town Clerk: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Internal Audit Report 2025-2026

1. Background

1.1 It is customary for the Council to have internal and external audits carried out every year.

1.2 Internal Audits are typically carried out twice a year. Bicester Town Council has appointed Mulberry LAS to carry these out in accordance with current practices and guidelines.

1.3 External Audits are carried out once a year. Bicester Town Council has appointed Moore Smaller Authorities to carry these out in accordance with current practices and guidelines.

2. Overview

Appendix 10a (attached separately) provides the full internal audit report for 2025-2026.

Page 3 from the Annual Internal Audit report 2025-2026 is included below, referencing the internal control objective.

3. Recommendation

The Council is requested to **NOTE** the report.

Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Bicester Town Council

www.bicester.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2026, 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 2025/26 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. Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all 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 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✔
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 *(during the 2025/26 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2024-25 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*		✔	
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024/25 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*		✔	
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.		✔	
	Yes	**No**	**Not applicable**
P. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✔

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: 17/10/2025 12/05/2026

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: Mark Mulberry

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Date: 12/05/2026

***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).

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Agenda Item 11

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL
Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Deputy Town Clerk: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Bicester Town Council Internal Audit Quotation 2026-2027

1. Background

1.1 It is customary for the Council to have internal and external audits carried out every year.

1.2 Internal Audits are typically carried out twice a year. One being after March alongside another within the annual year, typically October. Bicester Town Council has appointed Mulberry LAS to carry out these.

1.3 External Audits are carried out once a year, typically after June. Bicester Town Council has appointed Moore Smaller Authorities to carry out these.

2. Overview

2.1 As internal audits are customary in being carried out twice a year and having previously used Mulberry LAS for these, it is suggested that we continue to use their services to remain compliant with local authority processes. Please see Appendix 11a for further details.

3. Recommendation

The Council is requested to **APPROVE** the quotation provided.

MULBERRY
LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES LTD
Eastgate House
Dogflud Way, Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7UD
t 07724 545689
e office@mulberrylas.co.uk
w www.mulberrylas.co.uk

Internal Audit Services for Town and Parish Councils

Overview of Services

As part of our comprehensive support for town and parish councils, **Mulberry Local Authority Services (LAS) Ltd** provides a professional **internal audit service**. This is delivered in full compliance with the **Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioner's Guide**, reflecting current guidelines and accounting standards.

Audit Schedule

We generally carry out **two audits per year** as standard:

- **Interim Audit**: Focuses on **governance and accountability**, including procedural aspects such as Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, risk assessments, internal control systems, and policies.
- **Final Audit**: Concentrates on **financial matters**, including verification of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and all supporting documentation for submission to external auditors.

This two-stage approach allows councils to **identify and address weaknesses** before the final internal audit report is completed.

Flexible and Responsive Service

We understand that each council has unique needs, so we're happy to offer **customised audit visit schedules** and respond to queries throughout the year. Our flexible service ensures your council receives the support it requires when it's needed most.

Sector Expertise and Independence

Mulberry LAS are founder members of the **Internal Audit Forum**, who work in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) to promote continuous internal audit improvement in the local council sector.

One of our directors, Mark Mulberry, is the internal audit representative on the SAPPP, which is responsible for issuing proper practices about governance and accounts of smaller authorities.

Mulberry LAS, previously operating as part of **Mulberry & Co**, has over **20 years of experience** in conducting internal audits for local councils. Our auditors have deep sector knowledge and can rotate between clients to ensure **full independence** throughout your engagement.

Company Number 15566682. Company Directors: Mark L Mulberry BA (Hons) FCCA CTA, Nicky Mulberry, Andy Beams CiLCA, Anna Beams CiLCA

In the 2025/26 financial year, we are supporting over **350 councils** with their internal audit requirements, including:

- Small councils exempt from limited assurance reviews
- Larger town and parish councils managing **multi-million-pound budgets** and **complex financial systems**

Audits are conducted **either on-site or remotely**, based on your council's preferences and circumstances.

We publish on our website an **annual internal audit guide**, which enables our councils to prepare for their audits by providing details of the information we review at each visit and reminding them of the publication requirements on the council's website.

Fees and Charges

Our pricing for internal audits for the financial year commencing **1 April 2026** is as follows:

- Precept below £1 million **- £80 per hour + VAT**
- Precept £1 million and above **- £85 per hour + VAT**
- **Travel costs** (for on-site visits) are billed at the standard **HMRC rate of 45p per mile**
- No charges for travel time

Audit duration depends on your council's financial complexity. Once appointed, your assigned auditor will be happy to discuss a **personalised estimate** and timeline.

Engagement Options

We offer **one-year** and **three-year** engagement periods. If you commit to a **three-year term**, we guarantee that your hourly rate will remain **fixed for the full duration** of the agreement.

Added Benefits

As a client of Mulberry LAS, you will gain access to **discounted rates** on our **training programme for officers and councillors**. Details of upcoming courses can be found at: www.mulberrylas.co.uk/training-programme

Contact Us

If you have any questions or require further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We look forward to supporting your council's internal audit needs.

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL
Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Deputy Town Clerk: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Section 1)

1. 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.

1.1 Key Purposes of the AGS

- Public Accountability
- Assessment of Governance Effectiveness
- Compliance with Governance Principles
- Risk Management
- Continuous Improvement

2. Overview

2.1 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.
See Appendix 12a below. (The full report is attached separately).

3. Recommendation

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **CONSIDER** and **AGREE to** the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3 AND the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 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 £15 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 2025/26

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 2026.**
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 2026** 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 2026
   - 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 2025/26

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 Return **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 2026 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 2025/26** approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2025/26** approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2026 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) 2025/26

- 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 initialled.
- 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 2026
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) **must** be approved before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references, even where approved on the same day.
- 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 which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- **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.
- Additional costs may be incurred if additional audit work is required.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2025) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2026).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 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 2026**

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 2026** 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.	N/a	

****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***

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

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 2026, that:

	Agreed Yes	Agreed No*	N/A	'Yes' means that this authority:
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✔			*prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✔			*made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.*
3. We have assured 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.	✔			*has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.*
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.		✔		*during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.*
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.		✔		*considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.*
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✔			*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.*
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.		✔		*responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.*
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.	✔			*disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.*
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.**			✔	*has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.*
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.		✔		*has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.*

***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

www.bicester.gov.uk

Agenda Item 13

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL
Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Deputy Town Clerk: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915
Paul.Canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Accounting Statements (AGAR Section 2) - Return 2025/2026 Form 3

1. Background

1.2 The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a section within the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Form that serves to provide a transparent and accountable assessment of an organisation's governance arrangements, ensuring they are effective and suitable for the intended purpose.

1.3 Key Purposes of the AGS

- Public Accountability
- Assessment of Governance Effectiveness
- Compliance with Governance Principles
- Risk Management
- Continuous Improvement

2. Overview

2.1 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. See Appendix 13a.

3. Recommendation

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** to the Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26.

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

Bicester Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures **must** agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	4,171,341	3,766,076	*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	1,800,238	1,872,968	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	507,026	520,955	*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	840,096	952,743	*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	10,285	10,097	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	1,862,189	1,652,647	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	3,766,076	3,544,512	*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	3,712,933	3,515,029	*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	3,801,959	4,026,453	*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	136,500	131,625	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	✔		*For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 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.

Date 08/06/2026

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

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

WHITELANDS CRICKET PITCH CHANGE OF USE

1. Background

1.1 CDC is looking to submit a report to obtain Portfolio Holder Approval to release the obligation of providing a cricket square and outfield at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground. The intention is to repurpose this area to increase the offering of rugby facilities on the site.

Due to the loss of rugby facilities at the Oxford Road Sports Facility in Bicester, CDC have been exploring options to increase provision at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground for both rugby and football.

When Whitelands Farm Sports Ground was constructed, plans included the provision of a cricket pitch on the site. This stand-alone cricket facility has never been used / hired since Whitelands opened and there has been limited interest from any local clubs/organisations. The facility is located at the furthest point from the pavilion, so accessibility/appeal is limited. There are no local cricket clubs based at Whitelands.

2. Proposal

2.1 The decision requested is for the approval to remove the provision of the cricket square and outfield at Whitelands and explore the options of providing additional grass pitch space for rugby. In agreement with Oxfordshire Cricket Board, the loss of the facility will be mitigated with the enhancement of cricket facilities at Fringford Cricket Club, a club in rural Bicester which is actively developing cricket in the locality. The repurposing of the cricket pitch to a grass rugby pitch will be funded through a S106. The repurposing of the current cricket pitch will provide a long-term home for Bicester Rugby as the club will have access to a three-rugby pitch site in addition to access to the rugby compliant 3G pitch at Whitelands.

3. Recommendation

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the change of use of an additional grass rugby pitch.

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING
Monday 22nd June 2026

Chair: Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915 |
paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915 |
paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Cemetery

1. Background

1.1 A meeting was held with Officers of Cherwell District Council regarding the current cemetery and future opportunities for sites within the parish.

2. Overview

Current Cemetery

2.1 Current cemetery has not had a professional 3rd party inspection carried out to provide an objective technical survey.

2.2 Staff have issues locating existing burial plots; impaired further, due to the current mapping system being on paper as well as out of date.

2.3 Health and safety assessment of head stones (topple testing) has never been carried out.

2.4 Paths need to be surveyed due to an outstanding insurance claim that is ongoing whereby a member of public has tripped.

2.5 Cherwell District Council has £20,000.00 available to contribute to the cost.

2.6 A professional survey would help with grave location, any available space and improve health and safety.

3. Mapping and layout surveys

- Create accurate site plans of the cemetery
- Mark grave locations, plots, pathways, and boundaries
- Use GPS, total stations, or drones for precise mapping
- Help update or create digital burial records

4. Grave and plot verification

- Confirm the exact position of burial plots

- Check that graves are correctly spaced and aligned
- Identify encroachments or overlaps between plots
- Support resolving disputes about burial locations

5. **Boundary and land ownership surveys**
    - Verify the legal boundaries of the cemetery. Resolve boundary disputes with neighbouring landowners
    - Provide plans suitable for legal or Land Registry use

6. **Condition and maintenance assessments**
    - Ground stability (subsidence risks)
    - Drainage issues
    - Pathways, walls, fencing, and structures
    - Identify health & safety risks (trip hazards, unstable ground)

7. **Headstone and memorial inspections**
    - Check stability and condition of headstones and monuments
    - Identify unsafe or leaning memorials
    - Provide reports to help meet safety regulations

8. **Capacity and future planning**
    - Estimate remaining burial capacity
    - Assist with planning new sections or extensions
    - Advise on land usage and spacing efficiency

9. **Compliance and documentation**
    - Ensure compliance with:
        - Local authority regulations
        - Health & safety standards
    - Produce reports for councils

10. **Dispute resolution support**
    - Provide **independent evidence** in disputes involving:
        - Plot ownership
        - Burial rights
        - Incorrect burials or positioning

11. **New cemetery**

    11.1 Two property developers are currently in discussion with CDC; one developer has a small amount of space that can be utilised as an interim cemetery before the second developer provides a more substantial site. Currently, the size of both sites are to be determined.

    11.2 BTC officers have been invited to a CDC meeting on July 14th to provide a verbal update on the impact of having no cemetery availability on the residents of Bicester. This would include redacted emails from residents being read and the first-hand experience of BTC officers dealing with bereaved family members in the Council offices.

12. **Proposal**

    The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to **NOTE** the report and **APPROVE** Officers proceed to obtain 3 quotes for a professional 3rd party survey.

Agenda Item 16

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING
Monday 22nd June 2026

Mayors Report

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Chair: Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

1. Overview

During the period of **11th May 2026 – 22nd June 2026** the following visits were made:

The Mayor Cllr, Dr Paul Wheatley attended the following functions:

May 11th – Bicester Town Council Mayor Making

12th - The Town Mayor Election for Banbury Town

15th - Memorial Service - Bicester Motion Fire

20th - Welcome the Lord Mayor of Oxford

28th – Bicester Vision Annual General Meeting

29th - Aylesbury Town Mayor Cllr Nidhi Mehta – Inauguration

June 5th - Buckingham Town Council - Mayor Making

9th - His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire and the Bishop of Dorchester Dinner

12th - Bicester Motion Stakeholders Event

13th – Creative Connections

15th – Bicester Village Unlock Futures Fund

17th - NAPE - Festival of Voices 2026

18th - Shop Opening Bicester - Dream Doors

19th - Celebration Afternoon Tea – Enrich Ability

The Deputy Mayor Cllr Dan Hallett attended the following functions:

May 11th – Bicester Town Council Mayor Making

Exclusion of Press and Public

RECOMMENDED

That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.