

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday 26 September 2023
Title: Finance Report
Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, on this occasion by noon on Monday 25 September, to allow for a full response at the meeting.

BACKGROUND

Detailed income and expenditure statements for budgets which are the responsibility of this committee are enclosed; these are the management accounts for this committee. The period to which this report relates is 1 April 2023 to 31 August 2023.

For the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee the following cost centres are in place:

Cost centre	Service
206	Witney Country Park
403	Planning

Within each cost centre income and expenditure is then allocated to a four-digit nominal ledger code; these codes are common across the cost centres. Nominal ledger codes further define the costs associated with the cost centre and correspond to a specific type of account, such as materials or staffing costs. Codes commencing with “1” are income codes; codes commencing with “4” are expenditure codes.

A report is submitted to every ordinary meeting of the standing committees and previous reports are available on the relevant committee section of the website.

CURRENT SITUATION

Council financial years run from 1 April to 31 March following. Consequently, the management accounts to 30 June represent five months or 42% of the financial year.

There are no significant variances to report but Members may wish to note the following matters in relation to the management accounts:

1. Property maintenance/ Witney Country Park (code 4036/206). Expenditure to date £908 exceeding budget of £500. Most of this relates to fencing maintenance and repairs. This cost centre has a significant earmarked reserves and therefore the additional spend against this budget and others as the year progresses will be financed as necessary from these funds.
2. Recharges. The following recharges have been processed for the period 1 April to 30 June:
 - (i) 4896 – Maintenance staff.
 - (ii) 4897 – Maintenance staff overhead.
 - (iii) 4892 – Central support staff.
 - (iv) 4893 – Central support overhead.
3. Recharges have not been processed in relation to 4894 – grounds staff, 4895 – grounds staff overhead and 4899 - Depot reallocation. It is anticipated that these will be included in the report to the meeting due to take place on 28 November 2023.
4. There will always be a delay between expenditure being incurred and being shown in the accounts. However, the introduction of the computerised purchase order system from later this month will mean that committed expenditure will be shown on future reports, improving the timeliness of financial information.
5. Members recall that the Council is now accounting for earmarked reserve movements differently. The previous system, used by this and other councils, was to represent in-year funding from earmarked reserves as negative expenditure (4995 – transfer from earmarked reserves) and transfers to earmarked reserves as expenditure (code 4991). These fund movements will in future be shown in the final accounting column “Transfer to/from EMR” so they do not impact on expenditure but are correctly shown as funding. Appropriate adjustments have been made in the 2022/23 accounts.

It was previously agreed (minute P487, CBP meeting of 27 September 2022) to fund welcome signage to the Lake and Country Park, in the sum of £2,000; this is currently in the earmarked reserves. The Climate and Biodiversity Officer has reviewed this matter and based on a quotation it is considered that a sum of £6,000 is required in order to commission appropriate, robust signs which could include a map of the area. Consequently, your officers recommend that the budget is increased accordingly, with a sum of £4,000 to be released from the earmarked reserve for climate/biodiversity and authority the delegated to officers to commission and install the signage. Further information from the Climate and Biodiversity Officer will be available at the meeting.

Beyond and subject to the items detailed above there are no other significant variances to which I would draw to the attention of Members at this stage, and the position is as one would expect at this stage in the financial year.

REVENUE BUDGET 2024-25 AND CAPITAL & SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS 2024-25 AND BEYOND

In line with normal Council procedures, the RFO will shortly be commencing the annual review of all the Committees to prepare the revenue budget for 2024-25.

Draft budgets are prepared based upon current activities and patterns of income and expenditure. Any additional revenue expenditure is considered separately as Revenue Growth Items.

It is also normal practice that during the budget cycle the Council considers the Capital and Special Revenue budget to identify which projects or schemes are to be implemented and undertaken during the next financial year.

Members are requested to consider items to be included in next year's budget so that Officers can obtain costings accordingly. This will then enable the RFO to draft as accurate budget estimates as possible.

Further details including timetable will be provided to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting on 25 September 2023.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Council declared a Climate Change Emergency at its meeting on 26 June 2019; with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding the facilities and services it operates.

Officers are continually assessing the environmental impact of services and assets to ensure that where possible measures are taken to support the Council's climate declaration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2028. This extends to the procurement of goods and services.

RISK

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Members are reminded that collectively they are custodians of the public purse with most of the funding coming from the council taxpayers of Witney. Therefore, Officers ensure they get best value, value for money, and comply with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Procurement Policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above and in the attached appendices.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Members are invited to note the report approve the Committee's management accounts for the period 1 April to 31 August 2023.
2. That a sum of £6,000 is approved in order to commission appropriate, robust Welcome signage for the Lake and Country Park, which could include a map of the area. This to be funded from the £2,000 already earmarked and £4,000 to be released from the earmarked reserve for climate/biodiversity. Members are also requested to delegate authority to officers to commission and install the signage.