POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Financial Matters referred from Spending Committees

Meeting Date: Monday, 24 November 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

It is the Council's usual practice that all matters discussed, and recommendations made by spending Committees which have financial implications, are reported to this committee.

Following a resolution of Full Council on 6 October (Minute No. 581 refers), this report provides a summary of all spending committee decisions, both approved and declined, to ensure comprehensive and transparent scrutiny by this Committee which holds overall responsibility for the Council's financial management and oversight of budgetary decisions.

Current Situation

Parks & Recreation Committee – 3 November 2025

There were no recommendations for the current fiscal year but the following for 2026/27 budget-setting:

PR618 – Capital Projects. The Committee recommended that Officers progress work to look at options to refurbish the courts at King Georges Field and the OCC owned court.

PR622 – Sports Pitches Update. The Committee recommended that two portable sight screens (for cricket at The Leys) be agreed for the sum of £2,880 inc. VAT.

PR623 – Major Projects. The Committee recommended that the sinking fund for a replacement Splash park be maintained.

Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee – 10 November 2025

H631 – Public Halls Report. The Committee recommended that officers proceed with seat sponsorship at the Corn Exchange with an outlay of approximately £250 from existing budgets.

H635 - Newland Allotments Plot Clearance Request – The Committee recommended that the request for Council assistance, equating to approximately £750 in labour costs be declined and referred to the WAA.

There were no further recommendations for the current fiscal year but the following for 2026/27 budget-setting:

H629 - That, a budget line related to Green Initiatives for Burwell Hall be created.

H631 - That, the sum of £6,000 be added to the budget requirements for 2026/27 to finance the installation of hearing loops within the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall.

H633 - That, a budget be set for improvements to the Corn Exchange kitchen.

H634 - That, a budget of £25,000 to install 40 burial vaults & 20 Trident Vaults in the new ashes section be approved and that, a budget of £1,500 be approved for the initial purchase of 20 ashes urns. (This will be taken from the Cemeteries EMR).

Stronger Communities Committee – 17 November 2025

Flag Flying Policy – The Committee recommended the purchase of an Oxfordshire flag and replacement England Flag for the sum of up to £450 for both, from existing budgets.

Bus Shelter Replacement – The Committee recommended the purchase of an anti-vandal sedum roof shelter as a replacement at Oxford Hill to be funded from the Infrastructure EMR (369) for a sum of approximately £7,500-8,500. This EMR balance stands at £79,000.

Street Furniture Correspondence – The Committee recommended that the Council should not agree to ongoing responsibility and maintenance of the furniture highlighted in the report and asked for further information as part of the wider High Street scheme.

There were no further recommendations for the current fiscal year but the following for 2026/27 budget-setting:

Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) – The Committee recommended that the Council should not purchase these signs for Witney and this should be reviewed in 12 months' time.

Past, Present & Future Working Party – The Committee endorsed the recommendation to set a budget of £2,000 for the facilitation of a St George's Day event in 2026.

Witney Town Band Summer Program 2026 – The Committee recommended support to continue this initiative to the sum of £660-700 from existing budgets.

In Bloom – The Committee recommended that £1,500 for the 2026/27 Budget be earmarked for improvements to Unterhaching Park, £800 for the replacement of four Schools in Bloom wheelbarrows, £650 for schools gardening vouchers & £280 in prizes, and £120 for community gardening vouchers.

Youth Services – The Committee recommended the following budgets be set for the Youth Services Grant (£20,000), The Station (£28,500), and Home-Start Oxford (£12,000).

Third Party Events - The Committee recommended that Witney Music Festival should be awarded a £10,000 grant for 2026 in line with the agreed partnership with the Council.

Climate & Biodiversity Committee – 9 September 2025

CB509 – Biodiversity Update. The Committee agreed that a wildflower area be established at the Curbridge Roundabout. This would incur staff labour costs to dig out the roots of the current vegetation.

CB510 – Lake & Country Park Report. The Committee agreed that Officers resubmit an application for Green Flag status. The cost being £500 from existing budgets.

There were no further recommendations for the current fiscal year here and recommendations from the ***Climate Action Working Party*** *held on* ***25th September*** *were sent to* ***Full Council*** *on* ***6 October 2025****.*

582 - That the following capital project requests be considered in the budget setting for the 2026/27 municipal year. Installation of Public Water Refill Station £4,500, Installation of Solar PV Panels at Burwell Hall £16,000 and installation of Ceiling Insulation at Burwell Hall £22,000.

Items referred to this Committee for Further Information regarding 2026-27 budget-setting:

Parks & Recreation

- **Basketball Court refurbishment** – Due to time restraints, officers have not been able to progress this in terms of providing an estimate. Depending on the level of refurbishment this could range from £15-75,000.
- **Park Run Hogging Path** - Due to time restraints, officers have not been able to progress this in terms of providing an estimate.
- **Playing Pitch Drainage Proposals for each of the Council's pitches -** Due to time restraints, officers have not been able to progress this in terms of providing an estimate. For information, the text below was what was provided in the Officer report to the Committee.

  'Officers have approached the FA for potential grant funding on drainage solutions. The FA's approved contractor for the area has agreed to preliminary site meetings, but from initial discussion, it appears unlikely the pitches would be suitable for drainage. The cost of this drainage is estimated at £75,000 per 11a-side pitch, with the FA funding up to £25,000. In a situation where the field is suitable for draining, the council would need to allocate sufficient funding to meet the gap between the FA's grant funding.'

Stronger Communities

- **Leys Refill Station** – A Member raised this as an item which should have been referred to this Committee for consideration. An updated quotation for the refill station was presented to Full Council on 6 October as part of the Climate Action Plan report, with estimated costs for service connections totalling approximately £4,500.
- **Community Litter picking equipment** – At the time of writing, costs for lockable litter picking cabinets have not been received. They may be available to provide at the meeting.
- **Bus Shelters (Woodgreen)** – Sedum roof shelters are costed at approximately £7,500-8,500 for supply and installation. The Committee indicated it would like to include Woodgreen as a growth item for 2026/27.
- **Experience Oxfordshire** – an update on this will be provided ahead of the meeting.
- **Advertising in Existing Publication Quarterly** – an update on this will be provided at the meeting.
- **APCAM Mental Health Drop-in & We Game Sessions** - Further specific information on these activities was requested from the provider as discussed at the meeting.

  If the Council chooses not to fund these services via a specified budget in 2026/27, it has the option of ringfencing funds (approx. £5,000) towards a youth mental health function which may not yet be apparent. A further option would be to invite the provider to apply for funding via the Youth Services Grant in 2026. In 2025 this scheme was launched for applications between May-June – the Council could launch this in March to bring it in line with the new financial year as the scheme will run under the existing criteria.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

a) Equality – Covered in specific project reports.
b) Biodiversity – Covered in specific project reports.
c) Crime & Disorder – Covered in specific project reports.
d) Environment & Climate Emergency - Covered in specific project reports.

Risk

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

All the Council's Committees receive financial reports to conduct its checks and balances, and consideration is given to budgets and funding availability when agreeing expenditure.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The benefits of these items should be considered at the time of recommendation.

Financial implications

The report forms part of the Council's mechanisms for budgetary control. Specific financial implications are detailed.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider agreeing the recommendations of the spending committees as detailed above.
2. Consider any further budget implications for 2026/27 which have been referred to this Committee for further information, these being: Basketball refurbishment, Parkrun hogging path, playing pitch drainage, a Leys refill station, community litter picking cabinets, a bus shelter for Woodgreen, experience Oxfordshire, advertising externally in a quarterly publication and APCAM sessions.