

## DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

#### HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GROVE HOUSE, HIGH STREET NORTH, DUNSTABLE

#### ON MONDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

Present: Councillors Claire Meakins-Jell (Town Mayor), Pat Staples (Deputy Town Mayor), Patricia Russell (Vice-Chairman) (in the Chair), Jim Anklesaria, John Chatterley, Terry Colbourne, Jeannette Freeman, Paul Freeman, Vince Fildes, John Kane, Julian Murray, Roger Pepworth and Terry Stock

In Attendance: Councillors Peter Hollick, Liz Jones, Neal Reynolds and Beverley Whayman with David Ashlee (Town Clerk) and Rosemary O'Sullivan (Head of Finance and Support Services)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Paul Freeman, Julie Harnett, Mike Mullany and Nigel Warren

#### **170 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
Councillors Chatterley, Fildes, Hollick and Russell	Personal Interest – Members of DITA	Item 6 and 10
Councillors Peter Hollick, Julian Murray and Roger Pepworth	Personal Interest – Skateboard Park – Members of Central Bedfordshire Council	Item 9
Councillors Peter Hollick, Julian Murray and Roger Pepworth	Personal Interest – Public Conveniences – Members of Central Bedfordshire Council	Part II, Item 1
Councillors Peter Hollick, Julian Murray and Roger Pepworth	Personal Interest – Dunstable Market – Members of Central Bedfordshire Council	Part II Item 2
Councillor Pat Staples	Prejudicial Interest – Dunstable Market	Part II Item 2

#### **171 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Mike Mullany had given notice of his resignation from his position as Chairman of this Committee due to new work commitments.

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor Pat Staples be appointed Chairman of this Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2011/2012.

**At this juncture Councillor Patricia Russell vacated the Chair which was then taken by Councillor Pat Staples.**

#### **172 MEMBERSHIP OF ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

Councillor Mike Mullany had given notice of his resignation from the Accounts Sub-Committee due to new work commitments.

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor Pat Staples be appointed as a member to serve on this Sub-Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2011/2012.

#### **173 MEMBERSHIP OF DUNSTABLE JOINT COMMITTEE**

As Councillor Staples would by right be a Member of Dunstable Joint Committee as both Chairman of this Committee and Deputy Town Mayor, nominations were sought for another member to serve on the Committee as a representative of Finance and General Purposes Committee.

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor Patricia Russell be appointed as a member to serve on the Dunstable Joint Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2011/2012.

#### **174 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 May and 27 June 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **175 PRESENTATION BY DUNSTABLE INTERNATIONAL TWIN TOWN ASSOCIATION (Minute 131c/2011)**

Members of DITA had been invited to the meeting to present their plans for the future and how they intended to progress twinning activities.

Led by their Chairman, John Stevens, members of DITA gave a brief overview of the history of the twinning association and twinning activities over the years. The Association's constitution stated their role as one of a facilitator in putting like minded groups and/or individuals in touch with their counterparts in either of Dunstable's two twin towns. In order to do this the Association relied on funding from the Town Council but each of the affiliated organisations were responsible for their own fundraising to support twinning visits to and from Porz-am-Rhein and Bourgoin-Jallieu.

Members of DITA gave examples of some of the twinning visits and activities that had taken place recently, including a visit by 9 students and their tutors from Bourgoin-Jallieu to Dunstable, furthering the establishment of a link with Hillcrest School.

The Association promoted the availability for funding for twinning activities through information held at the Library and also made approaches to youth organisations and education departments of local schools in an effort to develop twinning links. There were also plans to develop a scheme for electronic pen pals.

In answer to a question regarding the Association's view of developing links with developing countries, Mr Stevens responded that he did not consider that practical on their small scale and he would like to keep twinning on a personal basis.

The DITA representatives were thanked for their presentation which would be taken into account when the Committee considered its proposal to conduct a review of how the Council undertakes its role and responsibilities in town twinning.

Councillor Staples also reported on the visit to Porz-am-Rhein over the previous weekend when she, in her role of Deputy Town Mayor, together with other members had accepted an invitation to join the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the town of Porz.

#### **176 ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the minutes of the meetings of Accounts Sub-Committee held on 20 July and 18 August 2011 (see Appendix 1).

#### **177 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented a revenue budgetary control report for the four month period April to July 2011, together with the current position of the Council's reserve funds.

Members noted that whilst variances had been identified against the revenue budget, all budgets were being closely monitored and would be managed within respective service areas.

The estimated projection of the final outturn for the year indicated a net underspend which, if realised, would be reflected in an increased contribution to the General Reserve Fund. It was however, noted, that whilst the General Reserve at 31 March 2011 had reached the targeted level of £300,000, this was likely to reduce by 31 March 2012, taking account of the £50,000 allocated for works at Priory House.

It was noted that the Council currently held £10,000 on reserve which had been transferred to the Council when the Dunstable Carnival Association had disbanded. Consideration would be given to the allocation of these funds at a future meeting of this Committee.

Members expressed their thanks to the Council's Senior Management Team for their stringent budgetary control and to the Finance team for the detailed reports.

#### **178 SKATEBOARD PARK FOR DUNSTABLE (Minute 162/2010)**

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk updating on progress to date on the exploration of land and funding opportunities to establish a new skateboard park for Dunstable.

Councillor Mullany, and the Town Clerk had met with representatives of Central Bedfordshire College and Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss the likelihood of £170,000 of Section 106 funding being made available from the College housing development site to part fund the building of a skateboard park. It was however noted that, if agreed, this funding would not be fully available for another 12 months at best and it was therefore anticipated that the skateboard park itself would not be available until spring 2013. Consultation would have to be timed accordingly.

An allocation of £28,128 Section 106 funding from the Luton Road development had been approved and released to Dunstable Town Council from Central Bedfordshire Council towards the project.

A preferred site had been identified at the back of the Grove Theatre Car Park to the rear of Go Bowling and Central Bedfordshire Council officers were currently considering the issue of how this land might be transferred to Dunstable Town Council.

Members considered the proposed project management arrangements for the development of the skateboard park which in the first instance would be led by the Head of Community Services. Once the new park was established the responsibility for its day to day maintenance and upkeep would be transferred to the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services.

Members noted that the Council had already had an offer from a leading national skateboard park developer who was prepared to produce an initial design proposal and then work with the Council on the consultation process in order to develop a final design with which to go out to tender. The company in question was fully aware that the final procurement process would be a competitive exercise.

If the Council agreed to accept the ongoing maintenance responsibility for the new park it would be necessary to make budget provision of £5,000 with any annual underspend being committed to an allocated capital reserve. This requirement was not anticipated until the financial year 2013/14.

**RESOLVED:** that, subject to the Council's budget setting process and final consideration of the Council's budget for 2013/14, it be agreed that the Council assume responsibility to project manage the development of a skateboard park for Dunstable in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council, specifically to include leading on the required consultation, procurement and commissioning of the new park and the subsequent management of the park thereafter.

**Action: Town Clerk**

#### **179 TOWN TWINNING REVIEW (Minute 131c/2011)**

As requested at the last meeting of the Committee, the Town Clerk presented a report recommending a review of how the Council undertakes its role and responsibilities in town twinning.

Members were aware that the Council was in the process of agreeing a Service Level Agreement with Dunstable International Twin Town Association and it was considered timely that the Council took the opportunity to review its own role in town twinning alongside this process.

The aim of the review was to make recommendations to clarify and improve the Council's role in town twinning.

The review group would be supported by the Town Clerk and the Head of Finance and Support Services and it was suggested that in undertaking the review, members give full consideration to the merits and future of town twinning activities for both community and civic aspects, with particular consideration of the following issues:

- How should the Town Council participate in town twinning activity?
- What is the aim of spending public money on twinning activity?
- How should the Council resource its twinning activity?
- What role would the Council like DITA to undertake in twinning activity?
- Are there other twinning arrangements that could be investigated?

The review group would report back to this Committee at the next meeting in November and DITA would be notified of the findings.

**RESOLVED:** i) that a review group be established comprising the following members:

Councillors Anklesaria, Chatterley, Colbourne, Freeman, Hollick, Kane, Meakins-Jell, Pepworth, Russell, Staples and Stock

ii) that meetings of the review group be held on 10 October and 31 October 2011.

**Action: Town Clerk**

## **180 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

Members received reports from representative Members on outside organisations as follows:

a) CAB Management Committee

Councillor Staples had attended the recent AGM when Stuart Jones had been re-elected as Chairman. Demand for the services of CAB had risen but the funding had declined.

b) Ashton Schools Foundation

Councillor Russell had attended the last meeting which had considered the Ofsted reports.

c) Hospice at Home Management Committee

The Council's representative, Councillor Martin, had been unable to attend the last meeting as it had conflicted with another meeting.

## **181 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** that, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting.

## **182 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Town Clerk reported that Central Bedfordshire Council had taken the decision to cease operating the Ashton Square public conveniences from April 2012 as part of their efforts to address Central Government cuts to their revenue support grant.

In making this decision, CBC had committed to discussing the issue with affected town and parish councils and as a result, meetings had taken place with the Town Clerk and Head of Grounds and Environmental Services over the summer to provide financial and staffing information in relation to the current arrangements to operate the public conveniences.

Members considered options for continuing the service under the direct control of this Council and it was noted that reported financial figures would be re-visited.

- RESOLVED:** i) that, subject to the Council's budget setting process for 2012/13 and further negotiations with Central Bedfordshire Council concerning the actual transfer of responsibility arrangements, the Council agrees in principle, to accept future management responsibilities for the Ashton Square public conveniences from April 2012
- ii) that final consideration and decision making on this issue be held at the next meeting of this Committee on 21 November 2011.

**Action: Town Clerk**

**NB: At this juncture, Councillor Pat Staples, having declared a prejudicial interest in the following item, vacated the Chair and left the meeting. The Chair was then taken by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Patricia Russell.**

### **183 FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF DUNSTABLE MARKET (Minute 149/2011)**

The Council, at its meeting on 4 July 2011, had agreed, in principle, to manage Dunstable Market in line with outline details reported at that time and a letter of intent had been submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council setting out proposed terms for any contractual arrangement to be developed with them.

This had led to the development of a draft full business case proposal prepared by the Town Clerk which had been submitted to CBC at the beginning of August.

Following a further meeting with the Town Clerk and Head of Community Services held on 19 August, CBC had responded to the letter of intent and the draft business plan, a copy of which was submitted for Members' consideration.

It was noted that the draft business plan now sent to members contained revised financial information from the original sent to CBC which showed improved projected financial performance as a result of refining the proposed charging structure.

**RESOLVED:** that, subject to the Council's budget setting process for 2012/13 and final contractual negotiations with Central Bedfordshire, the following be agreed:

- i) that the Council requests Dunstable Joint Committee to allocate up to £10,000 of funding to support the first year of the Council managing Dunstable Market
- ii) that, subject to the approval of the funding request to the Dunstable Joint Committee, the Council informs Central Bedfordshire Council that it is prepared to manage Dunstable Market in line with the submitted business plan and in accordance with the terms set out in the CBC letter of 24 August 2011
- iii) that further discussions be held with CBC to clarify contractual arrangements in years 4 and 5 of any proposed contract with a view to reducing the annual payment to be made to CBC for managing the market

iv) that, subject to reaching a final agreement with CBC, officers be delegated authority to consult with market trader representatives on details contained within the draft business plan

v) that, subject to reaching a final agreement with CBC, £40,000 from the general reserve be allocated to a new Dunstable Market reserve within the 2012/13 budget in order to provide funding to purchase new market stalls and equipment, as well as marketing and promotional material, in preparation for management arrangements that would start from Wednesday 30 May 2012

vi) that, subject to reaching a final agreement with CBC, and subject to the approval of the funding request to the Dunstable Joint Committee, up to £5,000 additional revenue funding be identified in the budget preparation process for 2012/13 in establishing a new Dunstable Market revenue budget

vii) that, subject to any possible TUPE conditions, the staffing arrangements for operating the market be approved and that a recruitment process is carried out early in the next financial year for the proposed new posts as identified in the draft business plan.

viii) that, further consideration and decision making on this issue be held at the next meeting of this Committee on 21 November 2011.

**Action: Town Clerk**