

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 27TH MARCH 2006

Present: Councillors A J Fairbairn (Town Mayor); Mrs C M Gresham (Deputy Town Mayor); Mrs B M Boatwright (Chairman); M J P Mullany (Vice-Chairman); P J Boatwright, J Harnet, Mrs S A Newton, P E Russell and M Tilley with Mr R Walden (Town Clerk), Mrs H A Hupton (Deputy Town Clerk) and Mrs R G Smith (Administration and Finance Manager)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Mrs J K Fairbairn and M Jones

98 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30th January 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

99 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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| Councillor P J Boatwright | Dunstable International Twinning Association (DITA) | Prejudicial Interest (Member of DITA Executive) (and left meeting during discussion) |
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100 ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of Accounts Sub-Committee held on 23rd February and 23rd March 2006 (see Appendix 'A') be approved.

101 CIVIC EVENTS AND MAYORAL ACTIVITIES

The Committee received a detailed report of the Civic Administration Officer on the various events at which the Town Mayor had represented the Council since the last meeting of the Committee.

The Committee was delighted to hear that the High Sheriff had awarded his Civic Award to Colin and Catherine Ball in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the success of the Luton and Bedfordshire Youth Association over very many years.

102 TOWN CENTRE GRASS CUTTING

RESOLVED: that the Committee concur with the proposal of Highways, Parks and Planning Committee to acquire a new triple turf mower as set out at Minute 94c/06.

103 TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 28th February 2006 (see Appendix 'B').

With regard to Minute 13 relating to the A5 Eastern Bypass, Members noted that Highways, Parks and Planning Committee had already authorised representations being made to the County Council seeking to ensure the continued protection of the route of the A5 Eastern Bypass once it ceased to have protection as a trunk road project. Members felt that these representations would have added weight if they were endorsed by the full Council as a matter of policy. The Town Clerk advised of the difficulties in achieving continued protection for the whole of the route of the Eastern Bypass. A report on the relevant process was being presented to the next meeting of the Management Committee on 4th April.

RECOMMENDED: that the Town Clerk be instructed to make further representations to Bedfordshire County Council requesting that the whole of the route of the A5 Eastern Bypass remains protected until the full effects of the Northern Bypass has been fully evaluated: The Council being of the firm opinion that full traffic relief for the town will only ever be achieved with a full Northern Bypass and Eastern Bypasses.

104 SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Committee received the minutes of the Partnership Board held on 12th January 2006.

105 BEST VALUE

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of the Best Value Working Party held on 20th February 2006 (see Appendix 'C') be received.

106 DUNSTABLE MARKET

It was noted that the District Council had determined that, in view of expressions of interest from a commercial operator willing to manage the markets in Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable, it had been agreed to undertake a formal tendering exercise and that the two town councils would also be invited to submit final offers which could be considered alongside private operator bids. It had further been agreed that any bids or offers would be evaluated and a final decision taken on the basis of a combination of financial qualitative criteria.

Members were disappointed at the decision and re-affirmed their interest in devolution of the Dunstable market rights but that, having regard to the current deficit being incurred by Dunstable market, not to make any financial offer for the transfer of this service.

Leighton-Linslade Town Council had invited this Council to take part in a joint meeting to discuss the current situation but Members felt that this was not appropriate at the present time.

107 OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

a) Ardley Hill Lower School

RESOLVED: that Members of the Council at the next Council meeting be invited to fill the current vacancy for a representative on this School Governing Body.

b) Lockington Marsh Charity

It was agreed to ascertain whether an existing Council representative was willing to continue for a new term of office to enable the matter to be concluded at the next Council Meeting.

108 INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The Town Clerk reported the receipt of formal notification from UNISON, representing the Council's staff, advising that industrial action was to be taken on Tuesday 28th March as part of a national dispute concerning the Local Government Pension Scheme. It would be necessary to close the Council Offices and the Tourist Information Centre that day as a result of this action.

109 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

The Committee received a position statement from the Chief Executive of the National Association of Local Councils setting out his view as to the future role of Town and Parish Councils having regard to the Government Stated Intention to review the structure of Local Government to facilitate the introduction of mainly Unitary Government. The views of the Chief Executive of the District Council on the matter were also noted.

The NALC Position Statement also drew attention to other initiatives affecting the Parish sector including the introduction of new community empowerment awards relating to innovative projects across various service areas. It was agreed that the Council would explore the possibility of submitting for consideration the Council's work with both young and older people.

110 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.

111 STAFFING MATTER

The Town Clerk reported the recommendations of the Chairmen of the four Standing Committees on a staffing matter.

RECOMMENDED: that the recommendations set out in the report be adopted (separate enclosure for Members only).