

## DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

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

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

ON MONDAY 28TH JANUARY 2008

Present: Councillor Mrs B M Boatwright (Town Mayor); Councillor Mrs S A Newton (Chairman); Councillor M J P Mullany (Vice-Chairman); Councillors P J Boatwright, T C Colbourne, A J Fairbairn, M Hearty, M Jones, P E Russell, T Stock and M Tilley

In Attendance: Councillor Mrs C Gresham with Mr D Ashlee (Town Clerk) and Mrs R G Smith (Head of Finance and Support Services)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor A E Green (Deputy Town Mayor) and A Fairbairn

#### **32 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th November 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **33 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no specific declarations of interest.

#### **34 TOWN MAYOR AND DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR**

**RECOMMENDED:** Unanimously, that Councillor A E Green and P E Russell be nominated for election as Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor respectively at the Annual Council Meeting to be held on 12th May 2008.

#### **35 ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING (Minute 275/2007)**

Members considered the options for the venue for the Annual Council Meeting and Mayor Making Ceremony to be held on 12th May 2008.

The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor with officers had visited various venues and discussed the accommodation that could be provided to facilitate the meeting and reception for approximately 200 guests, including:

- Up to twelve guests of the retiring Town Mayor
- Up to twelve guests of the Town Mayor-elect
- Up to four guests of the Deputy Town Mayor-elect
- Up to four guests of the Leaders of both parties
- One guest per other Member
- (All may invite additional guests but at their own expense)
- One representative (usually the Chairman) and guest from local organisations
- A representative (usually the Headteacher) and guest of Dunstable schools

**RESOLVED:** i) that the offer of Northfields School to provide the venue and catering arrangements be accepted

ii) that a buffet menu be provided with costs not exceeding £1,500.

**Action: Head of Finance and Support Services**

**36 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

Members considered the arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting to be held on 21st April 2008 at Dunstable College.

Community Development Committee had previously agreed proposals for the introduction of annual Youth Acknowledgement Awards (Minute 14/2007 refers) with the winners of the four agreed categories being invited to the Town Meeting for presentation of their award.

Members also considered various proposals for suggested guest speakers or presentation items, including Unitary Authority, Teen Council and Council activities.

**RESOLVED:** i) that the Youth Acknowledgement Awards be presented at the Town Meeting

ii) that the meeting include a presentation by the Town Clerk on Town Council activities, including information on the proposed Unitary Authority if available.

**Action: Town Clerk and Head of Finance and Support Services**

**37 PROPOSED EVENTS PROGRAMME 2008/2009 (Minute 6/2008)**

**RESOLVED:** that this Committee concurs with the recommendation of Library and Promotions Committee for the addition to the establishment of a part-time post of Events Assistant.

**38 VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY (Minute 13/2008)**

**RESOLVED:** that this Committee concurs with the recommendation of Community Development Committee that the Council adopts the Vulnerable Adults Policy as now amended.

**39 THE PLACE – FUNDING FOR IMPROVEMENTS (Minute 18/2008)**

**RESOLVED:** that this Committee concurs with the recommendation of Community Development Committee that the sum of £5,300 be released from the identified earmarked reserves for General Projects.

**40 GREEN FLAG AWARD (Minute 27/2008)**

**RESOLVED:** that this Committee concurs with the recommendation of Highway, Parks and Planning Committee that a contribution of £5,250 be made available to enable an application for Green Flag status to be developed for Grove House Gardens.

**41 ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meetings of Accounts Sub-Committee held on 22nd November, 20th December 2007 and 24th January 2008 (see Appendix 'A').

**42 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2005/2006 AND 2006/2007**

The Head of Finance and Support Services reported on current progress on the audit of accounts.

**RESOLVED:** that Accounts Sub-Committee be authorised to approve any required amendments to the Statement of Accounts 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 under signature of the Chairman as required.

**Action: Head of Finance and Support Services**

**43 BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PENSION FUND**

The Committee noted the results of the 2007 Actuarial Valuation and the recommended employer contribution rates effective from 1st April 2008.

**RESOLVED:** that the Council's employer contribution rate be confirmed at 17.3% of pensionable pay.

**44 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2008/2009 AND TOWN COUNCIL PRECEPT 2008/2009**

The Town Clerk presented a schedule of increases in expenditure for 2008/2009 compared with 2007/2008, the Council's total loan debt, a schedule of income liabilities on the revenue budget and a schedule of currently held reserve funds with an anticipated end of year balance.

The draft budget for 08/09 proposed a precept of **£1,580,926**. This in turn reflected a 4.9% increase on the current Band D Council Tax levy i.e. an increase from £120.98 to £126.91 based on a 12,457.07 tax base. The total net budget for 08/09 of **£1,655,526** was proposed which equated to an 8.7% increase or £132,874 on last year's budget, predicated on a £74,600 use of reserves.

- RECOMMENDED:**
- i) that the proposed budget for 2008/2009 be presented to Council for approval
  - ii) that the Town Clerk be authorised to incur the various items of expenditure detailed in the budgets, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Council's Standing Orders
  - iii) that the revised scale of charges, set out in the report, be approved with effect from 1st April 2008 or the start of the 2008/2009 winter playing season, as appropriate
  - iv) that, in consequence of the foregoing recommendations, the Town Council issue a precept upon South Bedfordshire District Council in the sum of £1,580,926
  - v) that the expenditure proposals funded from reserve funds as set out in the report be approved

vi) that the Mayoral allowance be treated as a normal Council expenditure account in 2008/2009, for subsequent review in consultation with the Town Mayor.

**Action: Town Clerk**

**45 AUDITOR'S STATUTORY REPORT ON THE BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2007/2008**

Members were pleased to note the satisfactory audit opinion on the Best Value Performance Plan for 2007/2008. The Auditor had not identified any matters to report to the Town Council and had no recommendations to make on procedures in relation to the Plan.

**46 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

The Committee considered a revised Health and Safety Policy as required under Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work Act, etc 1974. Subject to clarification on the extent to which Councillors would be bound by any acts and/or omissions of the Town Clerk and his staff, it was

**RESOLVED:** i) that the revisions to the Town Council's Health and Safety Policy be approved

ii) that the Town Clerk be authorised to revise the policy as and when required during the next 12 months and to report to this Committee on revisions made

iii) that the Town Clerk be authorised to append the Health and Safety Policy with any necessary policies to ensure that the Town Council is compliant with current and future legislation and regulations.

**Action: Town Clerk**

**47 PERSONNEL AND CONSTITUTION/STANDING ORDERS PANEL**

When agreeing last year's Best Value Performance Plan, the Council had committed to work towards achieving Investors in People for the organisation and to review the Council's personnel practices.

It was also felt that it was good working practice for the Council to occasionally review its Standing Orders.

**RESOLVED:** that two time-limited Members Panels be established, comprising the four Chairmen of Committees, to review, develop and update a range of Council personnel policies and the Council's Constitution and Standing Orders.

**Action: Town Clerk**

**48 TRADE UNION RECOGNITION AGREEMENT**

The Committee considered a draft Trade Union Recognition Agreement between Dunstable Town Council and the GMB which was being sought following a number of the Town Council's employees now joining that Union.

**RESOLVED:** that, subject to clarification on items now identified, the Council enter into a Joint Recognition Agreement with the GMB Trade Union.

**49 CIVIC EVENTS AND MAYORAL ACTIVITIES**

- a) The Committee received a detailed report of the Civic Administration Officer on recent events and activities at which the Town Mayor had represented the Council since the last meeting of the Committee.
- b) The Committee considered an invitation from Moorlands School, Luton to appoint a Member of Dunstable Town Council as School Governor.

**RESOLVED:** that the invitation be considered at full Council.

- c) The Committee considered an invitation for one representative of this Council to attend the Town and Parish Council Reception to be held at County Hall on 19th February.

**RESOLVED:** that the invitation be considered at full Council.

**50 VETERANS DAY**

The Committee received the report of the Mayoral and Democratic Services Officer regarding arrangements for Veterans Day 2008 and the proposed support from this Council.

**RESOLVED:** that the support for the event being organised by Luton and District Combined Ex-Services Association, as set out in the covering report, be approved.

**51 TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of Town Centre Management Committee held on 27th November 2007 (see Appendix 'B').

**52 SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

The Committee received a report on the meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership held on 13th December 2007.

**53 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.

**54 STAFFING**

**RESOLVED:** that the working hours of the Head of Events and Town Centre Services be increased from four days per week to five days per week, ie, full time hours, as from 1st April 2008.