

## **DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HIGHWAYS, PARKS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

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

**ON MONDAY 24TH JULY 2006**

Present: Councillor Mrs C M Gresham (Town Mayor), Councillor Mrs B M Boatwright (Deputy Town Mayor), Councillors P J Boatwright (Chairman), P E Russell (Vice-Chairman); R R Anklesaria, Mrs J K Fairbairn, A E Green, M Jones, Mrs S B Littlechild and T A W Stock

In Attendance: Councillor 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 A J Fairbairn, B Ralley and Mrs A Stock

#### **223 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 8th May and 12th June 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **224 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **225 PLANS SUB-COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 13th June and 4th July 2006 (see Appendix 'A') be received

#### **226 LAND ADJOINING 2 CHURCHILL ROAD**

At the last meeting it had been agreed to delegate to the Watling Ward Councillors authority to comment on behalf of the Council on a request from the owner of this property to incorporate an adjoining area of highway amenity land into her garden. The land had been apparently subjected to nuisances from young people and her fence had been damaged many times. The County Council had advised the owner that it only considered requests for removal of highway amenity land if they were supported by the relevant town or parish council.

The Ward Councillors, having visited the site, had acknowledged the nuisances which were taking place but could not support incorporating the land into a private garden. They considered such amenity areas were essential in maintaining the open plan character of the estate and that to support this request would set an undesirable precedent. The Councillors had therefore recommended the County Council overcome the problem by planting a series of thorny bushes as had proved so effective in a similar situation at Bunhill Close. The resident had thanked the Council for its positive suggestion and the County Council had advised that it would work with her to find a way forward for her request.

Subsequently it had been established that the land in question possibly fell within the management responsibilities of South Bedfordshire District Council and the Deputy Town Clerk had been assisting the resident in finding a final solution.

## **227 DUNSTABLE NORTHERN BYPASS AND TRANSLINK**

Members noted a letter from the Transport Minister to the East of England Regional Assembly confirming his decisions on regional funding for transport schemes.

Translink had received funding approval in the period 2006-09 but the Northern Bypass, which the Regional Assembly had proposed not start until 2013-14, had been identified as a scheme which could start earlier if there was slippage in expenditure on other schemes. The Minister also supported building of the essential new M1 junction 11A as part of the junctions 10-13 widening scheme. These important variations to the Regional Assembly's priorities had come about following extensive lobbying by Mr Andrew Selous MP. Mr Selous had kindly offered to keep up this pressure by accompanying a Town Council representative to see the key personnel at the County Council and Regional Assembly in September.

Members expressed their deep disappointment that Translink had been given a much higher funding priority than the essential Dunstable Northern Bypass. The efforts of Mr Selous were fully supported and Members agreed to urge the County Council (as the local representative) to bring as much pressure as possible at the Regional Assembly to secure an earlier construction of the Northern Bypass.

## **228 PROPOSED CEMETERY EXTENSION: VICTORIA ALLOTMENTS**

Progress on convening a public inquiry into objections to the compulsory purchase order made by South Bedfordshire District Council in respect of the cemetery extension had been slow. The District Council's solicitor dealing with the matter had been on extended sick leave but it was now agreed that the Inquiry would be held on 10th/11th October.

In the meantime the Town Council had continued to acquire by agreement the various allotment plots covered by the Order. With the exception of the plots owned by the principal objector and those in unknown ownership, all plots had now been acquired.

## **229 DUNSTABLE CEMETERY**

### **a) General**

The Administration and Finance Manger reported on current activities at Dunstable Cemetery, including pot hole and fencing repairs. The Committee asked that the possibility of replacing existing chain link fencing with metal palisade be investigated and possible implementation be included within a revised 5 year financial plan.

### **b) Purchase of Exclusive Rights of Burial (Minute 168(a)/06)**

Members considered a complaint from a resident of Luton that this Committee's previous decision denied her the opportunity to pre-purchase a number of additional grave spaces. Members agreed that the recently introduced new policy of not permitting pre-purchases be adhered to, which was in line with the policy of neighbouring authorities including Luton Borough and Houghton Regis Town Councils.

**c) Memorials**

The Administration and Finance Manager reported that repairs to 55 recently tested memorial stones had been agreed and an order had been placed for work to commence in the very near future.

**230 PRIORY GARDENS**

Members commented favourably upon the current summer bedding displays in Priory Gardens, particularly the new planting spheres at the rear of Priory House and on The Square.

Following the success of the recent Charity Croquet Match, the co-ordinators of the event had enquired as to the possibility of creating a permanent croquet lawn.

**RESOLVED:** i) that the Culture and Regeneration Manager be authorised to agree with relevant interested parties the creation of a permanent croquet lawn in the Gardens initially on the basis that the facility would be operated by a Croquet Club

ii) that the possibility of creating an open public facility be reviewed in the light of initial experience of the proposed new Club.

**231 GROVE HOUSE GARDENS**

Members noted the extensive landscaping and pathway works associated with the Grove Theatre which were now taking place in Grove House Gardens. Details were submitted of the proposed public art scheme discussed at the last meeting of the Town Centre Management Committee and these found favour with Members. The Town Clerk, however, was asked to discuss with the commissioning artist the possibility of the proposed reconstituted glass features being capable of reflecting light from the new lighting columns.

Members noted that the Dunstable Teen Council would be holding a barbeque at The Place on Thursday 17th August and raised no objections should part of the activities spill out into the Gardens.

**232 TOWN CENTRE MAINTENANCE**

The Culture and Regeneration Manager reported that a new Town Centre Maintenance Officer, Malcolm Ayres, had started his duties within the town centre team which were broadly the same as the previous post holder but now also included maintenance/caretaking of Priory House.

When the post had been introduced initially on a trial period a vehicle had been leased for a period of 3 years which was shortly to expire.

**RESOLVED:** that, subject to the concurrence of Finance and General Purposes Committee, the vehicle be replaced with the purchase of a Ford Ranger Regular Cab 4x2 Pickup.

**233 RIDGEWAY AVENUE PLAY AREA**

Members noted that refurbishment works at the Ridgeway Avenue play area funded from Section 106 payments was due to commence by the end of the month. Installation of the new equipment was estimated to take five days to complete.

**234 LUTON ROAD RECREATION GROUND**

The continuing agreement with Kingsbury Bowls Club for the use and management of the bowling green and adjacent facilities at this ground would expire later in the year.

**RESOLVED:** i) that a new agreement be entered into with the Club for a period of 3 years from 2007 on identical terms

ii) that the Performance and Environment Manager be asked to investigate the possibility of replacing existing chain link boundary fencing at this and all other recreation grounds with metal palisade fencing and to present future proposals for implementation within a revised financial profile.

**235 STAVELEY ROAD OPEN SPACE**

Renewed complaints from residents regarding nuisances taking place in this ground were noted. Officers were asked to re-investigate a new solution to the problem including a new planting scheme.

**236 PEPPERCORN PARK: BMX CLUB**

Members noted the continuing work being carried out by the new BMX Club at Peppercorn Park but asked that they be requested to provide a clear timetable for completing all the outstanding works.

**237 DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT**

The Manager of the Disability Resource Centre had submitted recommendations for improving disability access to the Luton Recreation Ground Pavilion and these were being included within a continuing programme of work.

**238 FOOTBALL PITCHES**

Members noted the results of the Annual Meeting with representatives of local Football Leagues using Council facilities which included a review of the 2005/06 season. The Leagues had identified a need for additional junior football pitches. It was also agreed that pitch markings would include additional lines at the side of pitches to keep spectators further away from the playing area.

**239 WATER USAGE**

It was noted that the Performance and Environment Manager was progressing a water usage audit for all areas of the Council following guidelines provided by an environmental advice organisation.

**240 RECREATION GROUNDS – STAFF FACILITIES**

As requested at the last meeting of the Committee the Deputy Town Clerk submitted a detailed report on various options for providing essential new storage and mess facilities for the Recreation Grounds Team.

Members concluded that by far the best option would be a short term lease of a suitable building which could meet the Council's requirements. During the period of the lease the possibility of acquiring or constructing permanent facilities could be fully explored.

**RECOMMENDED:** i) that, subject to the concurrence of Finance and General Purposes Committee to any necessary variation in the Council's Financial Plan, the Deputy Town Clerk be authorised to conclude a short term lease of a suitable industrial unit

ii) that, subject to a suitable lease being concluded, the possibility of demolishing the small brick store within Priory Gardens be investigated with community safety partners in order to improve general security within that area.

**241 BLOWS DOWN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 14th March 2006 were noted.