

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 29TH JANUARY 2007

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), Mrs J K Fairbairn, A E Green, M Jones, Mrs S B Littlechild and T A W Stock with Mr R Walden (Town Clerk) and Mrs R G Smith (Administration and Finance Manager)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors R R Anklesaria, B Ralley and Mrs A Stock

24 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th November 2006 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

26 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A resident of Canesworde Road urged the Committee to oppose alleged bus service reductions in the Langdale Road area, to support the introduction of a speed limit in Canesworde Road, to ensure that in future tree planting schemes there was a mix of evergreen and deciduous species and that publicity be given to the annual cost of repairing the effects of vandalism.

In reply the Chairman and Town Clerk advised that the Council had received no formal notification of changes to bus services; that the tree planting scheme for Grove House Gardens was discharging the species specific condition on the planning permission for the Grove Theatre and that it was the Council's policy to remedy the effects of vandalism as soon as possible and not to give publicity to those responsible.

(Note: Arriva The Shires have subsequently advised that, whilst it is considering changes to Service 31 which in part serves the Langdale Road area, no revisions have yet been registered and this step must precede implementation by 2 months. The Town Council will be advised if and when any changes are published).

27 PLANS-SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 21st November, 12th December 2006 and 8th January 2007 (see Appendix 'A') be received.

28 DUNSTABLE NORTHERN BYPASS

The Committee received notes of a meeting with the Roads Minister, Dr Ladyman, at which the Town Clerk had represented this Council, to discuss progress towards construction of the Northern Bypass.

The Minister had confirmed that, although funding for the project had yet to be agreed by the East of England Regional Assembly, he had instructed the Highways Agency to undertake all preliminary works up to and including public inquiry as if final funding was available. The Minister was also personally supportive of the proposal that the proposed new Junction 11A be constructed at the same time as the proposed widening of the M1 from Junctions 10-13.

29 BUS SERVICES

The County Council had advised that Stagecoach had announced the withdrawal of a number of local services from 18th February 2007 including the Flitwick-Dunstable service which would leave no regular direct service between Toddington and Dunstable. Toddington Parish Council had sought this Council's support for its opposition to the proposed changes.

RESOLVED: that this Council support Toddington Parish Council in the representations it is making.

30 WHITE LION RETAIL PARK – KINGSWAY LINK ROAD (BEDFORD WAY)

The Committee noted the latest response from the Leader of the County Council as to progress towards the formal adoption of this road as a highway open to all traffic. The Town Clerk reported that he had met the owners of the Retail Park and the access road and they too were anxious for its early adoption which it was hoped could be secured shortly.

31 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

The County Council had supplied details of a proposed new procedure for promoting and reviewing traffic regulation orders which included an enhanced consultation role for town and parish councils together with the ability for them to promote preferred schemes.

RESOLVED: that the new procedure be supported.

32 HIGH STREET NORTH GAS MAIN

It was noted that discussions were taking place with the National Grid on appropriate arrangements for consulting with Members of the Council on the traffic management implications of replacing the gas main in High Street North and adjoining roads during the current year.

33 HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE PROPOSALS 2007/08

The County Council had supplied details of its proposed Highways Maintenance Programme for the coming year. Members were asked to forward to their relevant local County Councillor any suggestions for additional works.

34 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)**

The Town Clerk recalled that the Committee had supported draft proposals of South Bedfordshire District Council for inclusion in its Statement of Community Involvement as

the first stage in preparing the new Local Development Framework which replaced the current Local Plan. Following the establishment of the Joint Planning and Transportation Committee for Luton and South Bedfordshire, the draft SCI had been incorporated into a composite document with Luton Borough Council. This approach had been accepted by Plans Sub-Committee at its meeting on 3rd March 2006.

The draft composite SCI had now been submitted to the Secretary of State for approval and was subject to a period of public consultation until 26th February. This proposed that existing consultation arrangements on both preparing new plans and considering individual planning applications would continue.

RESOLVED: that the proposal be supported.

35 **EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN**

The Government Office for the East of England was consulting on a draft revision of the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy. The Committee received advice from Bedfordshire County Council giving further details of the major changes within the draft Spatial Strategy which affected Bedfordshire. However, Members noted that the Regional Spatial Strategy incorporated without amendment the full content of the adopted Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy which set out the policies affecting growth in Luton and South Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED: that the draft Regional Spatial Strategy be noted.

36 **TOWN PLANS**

At the last meeting of the South Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) a presentation had been made by Leighton-Linslade Town Council (LLTC) on a draft Town Plan it was preparing following an extensive public consultation exercise. Councillor Mrs Newton, who represented this Council on the LSP, had asked that, in the light of the work by LLTC, this Council's policy with regard to town plans be reviewed, particularly as town and parish councils were being encouraged by Government to consider preparing such plans as a statement of community needs.

This matter had been last considered by this Council in 2002 when the then District Council Policy Manager, Mr George Crutcher, had visited the Committee to discuss options. Already in place was the Dunstable Town Centre Strategy 1997 which had been prepared jointly by the Town and District Councils following two extensive rounds of public consultation. Community Development Committee had also for many years produced its annual "community needs analysis" which compared current provision in each of the town wards with deprivation and other statistics and then drew conclusions as to possible priorities for community provision. The Council's support for the Downside initiative, the Mayfield Centre and more recently the Older People's Healthy Living Project, had all been initiated as a result of this process. This annual analysis also helped to inform the Council's response to the District Community Plan.

In the light of this position it had been concluded in 2002 that a separate town plan for Dunstable was unnecessary as other wider planning issues were adequately dealt with by the local plan process. In any event it was not considered possible to isolate Dunstable

(other than the town centre) from the rest of the conurbation especially Houghton Regis and most, if not all, infrastructure requirements (open space, employment land, roads, public transport, health and education facilities, etc) covered the wider area. It had, however, been agreed that there was a need to review the Town Centre Strategy and this

had been completed through the Town Centre Management Committee in 2004 following a limited public consultation exercise.

The Town Clerk had discussed these issues with the Deputy Chief Executive at South Bedfordshire District Council and her views were circulated.

- RESOLVED:** i) that the Council re-affirm its previous position that it is not appropriate to produce a separate Dunstable Town Plan at this stage but the Council will continue to work in close partnership with the District Council to ensure the Local Development Framework and the Community Plan take account of the town's infrastructure requirements
- ii) that South Bedfordshire District Council be advised that the Town Council would welcome the opportunity of working in partnership to formally review the Town Centre Strategy at a future appropriate date.

37 DUNSTABLE CEMETERY

The Administration and Finance Manager reported on recent maintenance activity at the Cemetery and advised that the number of interments remained consistent with those in previous years. In accordance with the Committee's previous decisions contractual tree surgeons had completed work on cutting back overgrown shrubs and conifers on individual graves within the lawn section of the Cemetery.

38 ALLOTMENTS

The Administration and Finance Manager reported on recent works undertaken within the various allotment sites. Following the annual renewal of tenancies, several plot holders had indicated they no longer wished to continue and the resulting vacancies would be filled from the waiting list. Problems continued over vandalism to a section of fencing at the Meadway site adjacent to Quarry Walk. This section was in the ownership of Paradigm Housing Association who had placed an order for the necessary repairs. Following consultation with plot holders a new system of locking the Meadway site and allocating keys to plot holders would be introduced by 1st February.

39 TOWN CENTRE MAINTENANCE

The Committee received a detailed report of the Culture and Regeneration Manager on recent activities undertaken by the Town Centre Maintenance Team. The small brick store in Priory Gardens adjacent to Parkside Flats had been demolished in order to improve visibility and security within the area generally. Alternative storage was available in the store buildings at the rear of The Place.

In Grove House Gardens the landscaping works associated with the Grove Theatre had been completed and over 10,000 spring bulbs had been planted. The final reinstatement of grass areas would be undertaken in March.

The Committee also considered quotations received for the tree and shrub planting in the Gardens as required under the planning permission for the Theatre. It was suggested that other than the lowest would provide the most satisfactory planting scheme.

Other works included repairs to the walls of raised beds in High Street South, replacement of gates to fenced play areas at Grove House Gardens and Brewers Hill Road and the provision of new bus shelters at Meadway and in High Street North near Frenchs Avenue.

RESOLVED: that the quotation of Majestic Trees of Flamstead in the sum of £10,123.25 for tree planting in Grove House Gardens be accepted.

40 PEPPERCORN PARK: BMX CLUB

The Performance and Environment Manager reported on the considerable progress being made by the Dunstable BMX Club concerning its use and maintenance of the BMX track at Peppercorn Park. The Council's representative on the Club commented favourably on the enthusiasm and dedication of its members.

RESOLVED: that the BMX Club be commended on the progress they are making and their existing maintenance agreement be extended for a period of 3 years.

41 BENNETT MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND

Members noted the considerable attention which had to be given to repairs and redecorations to the pavilion at this ground as a result of vandalism. Members also concurred with a proposal of Library and Promotions Committee to provide improved temporary access to the Ground from Bull Pond Lane on the occasion of special events such as the Charity Fireworks and Carnival.

The Committee approved the request of Dunstable Carnival Association to hold the 2007 Carnival at Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground on 7th May.

42 RECREATION GROUNDS: ANNUAL DOG FOULING CAMPAIGN AND USERS SURVEY

The Committee received a detailed analysis of the results of the annual survey of users of the Recreation Grounds which indicated that satisfaction with the service remained high at 96.97%. Several comments had been received suggesting the provision of glass recycling collection points in recreation grounds but Members noted that the County and District Councils were discussing the imminent introduction of a household glass recycling collection service and accordingly felt that it would not be appropriate to provide collection points in parks.

43 BIODIVERSITY PLAN

Members were pleased to note the success of the recent decision to allow longer grass with shrub planting on certain boundaries at the Ridgeway Avenue Recreation Ground and Staveley Road open space. In pursuance of the objectives of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Plan it was agreed that certain of the boundaries at Brewers Hill Road, Cusworth Walk, Downside, Luton Road, Markham Crescent and Mentmore Crescent Recreation Grounds be similarly treated.

44 DRAFT BUDGET 2007/08

The Committee considered revised estimates for the current financial year and a draft budget for 2007/08

RESOLVED: that the revised estimates and draft budget be approved and forwarded to Finance and General Purposes Committee.

45 TIDY CAMPAIGN

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of TIDY held on 25th October 2006.

46 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.

47 DUNSTABLE CEMETERY

The Town Clerk reported on the independent investigation into a complaint concerning the decision to no longer permit the pre-purchase of grave plots and advised that the matter had been concluded to the satisfaction of the complainant.