

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF LIBRARY AND PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

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

ON MONDAY 9TH JANUARY 2006

Present: Councillor Mrs C M Gresham (Deputy Town Mayor); Councillor M Tilley (Chairman); Councillor J Freeman (Vice-Chairman); Councillors R R Anklesaria, A E Green and M J P Mullany

In Attendance: Councillors Mrs J K Fairbairn with Mrs H Hupton, Ms M Alexander (Cultural and Regeneration Manager), Mr S Simpson (Promotions Officer), Mr J Sutton (The National Trust) and Mrs R Lambert (Bedfordshire County Council)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor A J Fairbairn (Town Mayor); Councillors T C Colbourne, C E Meakins-Jell and T A W Stock

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 31st October 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Member declared their interest in the items indicated:

Cllr A E Green	Personal Interest	Dunstable Downs (Member of National Trust)
Cllr A E Green	Personal Interest	Priory House (Member of English Heritage).

3 DUNSTABLE DOWNS

The Committee received a report of the National Trust Property Manager on matters relating to the management of the Downs.

a) Countryside Centre

The past two months had been relatively quiet in the Centre shop. The new interpretive panels within the shop area, whilst dominating the space, had ensured that visitors could not miss the information on display about the Gateway Centre.

b) Chilterns Gateway Visitor Centre

On-site operations had started later than planned with construction beginning on 15th November. It was noted that the original delay in the commencement of this scheme had been due to problems in securing funding for the project.

To date there had been little to interrupt the building schedule although minor design changes to the joints on the structural steelwork had meant a delay in its production. The footings had already been laid for the building access road and car parks in addition to work on landscaping with some of the earth banks already beginning to take shape. The entrance way and bus turning circle had been surfaced before the Christmas holidays.

It was noted that next year's Kite Festival would go ahead as planned although the building would not be completed until the end of August 2006.

Haymills Construction had been working with the County Council on the promotion of the new building. Signage for the new centre had been designed and the staff and volunteers would soon be issued with sweatshirts advertising the new centre.

Behind the scenes members of the National Trust's Enterprises team had been working with local staff on the design and layout of both the shop and the café areas within the new centre. The shop would sell an enhanced range of stock similar to that currently available with an extensive range of kites. The display units had been designed so that visitors could enjoy the view whilst shopping.

The Centre including the café and educational areas would be operated by the National Trust on behalf of the Gateway Partnership which included Bedfordshire County Council, the National Trust, Chilterns Conservation Board, Luton Borough Council and South Bedfordshire District Council.

The Property Manager's office would be relocated permanently into the new building prior to opening to provide easy access and support to both visitors and staff. The wardening team and countryside volunteers would continue to be based at Chute Farm which would not be open to visitors.

c) Multi-user Route

Work commenced on 4th January on the first phase of the route linking the new visitor centre with the tarmac car park adjacent to the existing centre. Bedfordshire County Council had submitted a revised planning application covering phase 2 of the route which it was hoped would run from the existing centre to the Tring Road roundabout in Dunstable. This new route would now join the road to the south of Royce Close and would not therefore interrupt the amenity grassland adjacent to Tring Road.

d) Stock Grazing

Sheep were currently grazing on Whipsnade Downs and would hopefully be moved to Dunstable Downs within the following two weeks. They were only expected to remain there for a month before returning to Tebworth for lambing.

e) Scrub Clearance

Clearances funded by Bedfordshire County Council had taken place within the areas of scrub to the east of the Five Knolls. It was noted that this had been planned work and was not linked to the construction of the Multi-user Route. Four acres of scrub had also been cleared from the rifle range at the foot of the Downs.

f) Tring Road Amenity Grassland

The wardens had continued with clearances on this and adjoining areas from which a big improvement was now evident on the ground.

4 DUNSTABLE LIBRARY

The Library Manager reported on progress in relation to activities and promotions that had taken place in the Library since the last meeting of the Committee.

a) **Library Statistics**

	Sep 05	Sep 04
Borrowers	11828	11963
Requests	561	584
Turnstile figures	22540	25662
Total Enquiries	1493	1612
<u>ISSUES</u>		
Uncatalogued	5	4
Adult Fiction	8492	10290
Adult Non-Fiction	5759	6275
Adult Spoken Word	637	652
Total	14893	17221
Junior Fiction	7244	7043
Junior Non Fiction	1507	1609
Junior Spoken Word	498	288
Junior Videos	143	503
Junior DVDs	153	152
Total	9545	9595
Compact discs	281	392
DVDs	108	292
Videos	200	208
Total	589	892
Jigsaws	103	45
TOTAL	25130	27753

b) **Exhibitions**

Exhibitions for December had included Bedfordshire County Council local transport plans, Leighton Buzzard Singers, The Bogtrotters local walking group, 'Landscapes, mountains and water' and 'Think before you drink' a timely reminder not to drink and drive.

c) **Library Promotion**

Recent promotions had included:

- Library induction tours
- 'Welcome to your Family Library' a new leaflet targeting families
- "What's in the Library for me?" a new guide to our services for 'children only'.

d) **People's Network**

Libraries across England were working together to introduce a 24/7 *National* public library service, a service designed to help everyone with access to the net make the most of the online world. This new service would include:

- 'Enquire' - instantly connecting the enquirer to Library staff trained to help with reference enquiries
- 'Read' – inviting you to explore books and read online as well as bringing people together to discuss their favourite reads with like minded people
- 'Discover' – offering a personal guide through the net to websites, news, pictures, and much more, from libraries, museums, archives and elsewhere.

e) Adult and Community Learning Service

Taster learning sessions currently on offer included designing Christmas cards, researching family history on the internet and basic computing and other related topics.

f) Tudor Day

Dunstable Library had participated in Tudor Day by dressing in Tudor costume, providing story telling sessions and acting as host to 'Discover Your Ancestors' an all day event, courtesy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

g) Christmas Activity Time

On 14th December Santa Claus had popped in to lead this one off 'special' with songs, stories and presents for the under fives.

h) Virtual Library

New additions included:

- 'Making the most of search engines'
- Selected articles supplied by the Dunstable and District Local History Society on the Local and Family History site
- Local newspapers and magazines index.

i) Citizone

The Committee noted with disappointment that information regarding Citizone had not been included in the report and asked that the Citizone Manager be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on this service.

j) Car Parking Charges

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on correspondence regarding complaints about parking fees from Library visitors using the Asda car park. It was noted that whilst South Bedfordshire District Council owned the freehold of the Asda site it did not control the parking in the Asda car park. However, during recent discussions with South Bedfordshire District Council Asda had agreed to provide some free parking for visitors to the Library. It was noted that South Bedfordshire District Council had now written to Asda asking for this provision to be made. Further information regarding this issue would be reported as it became available.

5 PROMOTIONS

a) Town Charity Firework Display: Saturday 5th November 2005 – Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground

All aspects of this event had gone well, including the public attendance on the night of somewhere in the region of 5,000 people. As last year, the concept of having the event on 'Bonfire Night' had worked well with the main office being inundated with phone calls from people across the three counties asking for directions to the recreation ground. The gates had opened at 6.00 pm and thanks to a steady stream of people the display had been able to start just after 7.30 pm. Due to unforeseen technical problems, the automatic firing of the fireworks had unfortunately failed. This had not, however, detracted from the display as Celebration Displays had manually fired the fireworks and the crowd had not been disappointed.

b) Remembrance Day Parade and Act of Remembrance: Friday 11th November and Sunday 13th November 2005 - Priory Gardens

The Act of Remembrance held on Friday 11th November at the War Memorial in Priory Gardens had again been well supported, with quite a few members of the public in attendance. Pupils from four of the five middle schools had participated in laying the crosses in remembrance of those lives that had been lost in times of war.

The Remembrance Day Parade on Sunday 13th November had been very well received by those in the community who had attended. Once again good numbers from local schools had participated in the parade and wreath laying ceremony, an aspect of the day that staff hoped to continue to build upon for future years. The commemorative booklet that accompanied the ceremony had been favourably received again this year and several positive comments had been made about including the biography details of a local servicewoman.

c) Dunstable Tudor Day: Saturday 19th November 2005 - All areas of the Town Centre

The sixth annual Dunstable Tudor Day had again been well supported by the town. Despite the cold weather, the dry morning had encouraged local residents to venture into town and join in the festivities. The event had been attended by a total of 1,500-2,000 visitors from various counties and had included 4 coach parties.

The official public launch of Priory House had proved popular and the Undercroft with Elizabeth I in residence had been filled with visitors throughout the day. The Rose Garden Tea Rooms had provided refreshment for a constant stream of people. The Tourist Information Centre had also remained busy from opening at 10am to closing at 4pm, providing information on the activities throughout the day and forthcoming events, as well as selling souvenirs so that visitors could take away a memento of Priory House.

d) Christmas Tree Carols and Torchlight Procession: Friday 2nd December 2005 – The Square

This year's Christmas Tree Carols and Torchlight Procession event had been as well received as ever, with a total of 22 choirs, consisting of 640 people, participating in the procession. Unfortunately, the weather conditions had been unfavourable with most of the ceremony taking place in the rain. Although this had affected attendance figures with approximately 600 members of the public witnessing the celebrations, it had not dampened the enthusiasm of the crowd.

e) **Town Centre Christmas Entertainment: Saturday 26th November – Saturday 24th December 2005 – The Quadrant Shopping Centre**

The town centre entertainment had continued to be well received by traders and public alike. In addition to the Saturday entertainment sessions, the Quadrant Shopping Centre had also played host to Ashton Middle and Queensbury and Manshead Upper Schools.

f) **Lunchtime Recitals: Tuesdays 4th September - 13th December 2005 – Council Chamber, Grove House**

The autumn programme of Lunchtime Recitals had concluded on 13th December, with a concert by 'Duette'. As well as enjoying the performance from 'Duette' the audience had also received the sherry and mince pies that are customary on the last recital before Christmas, courtesy of the Town Mayor. The recitals had so far attracted an average audience of 20 per session and Promotions staff continued to advertise throughout the town and publicise the recitals with regular press releases in the Dunstable Gazette.

The winter programme was as follows:

10th January	Michelle Wellborn Folk/Country Music & Guitar	28th February	George Woodcraft Baritone accompanied by Alex Wells
17th January	Manshead School A-level Students	7th March	Two's Company Shirley Woods & Serena Kurash
24th January	M&M Jazz	14th March	Patchwork Light Music
31st January	Trio Simpatico Classical & Renaissance Music	21st March	Rick Christian Folk Guitarist and Singer
7th February	Dunstable saxophone Quartet Singing, Reading, Playing	28th March	Emily Haig Soprano
14th February	John Blackwell Piano Led Jazz Trio	4th April	Anthony Stuchbury & David Philips Tenor and piano accompaniment
21st February	John Doherty Tenor, accompanied by Shirley Woods	11th April	David Huckvale Piano

6 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTING**

The Christmas Illuminations in the town centre this year had so far been almost 'trouble free'. Alterations and upgrading of the column infrastructures along the stretch of High Street North and High Street South, initiated by the Highways Agency, had ensured that the Christmas decorations would stay energized should the lamp go out and vice versa. Prior to this work if either the lamp or the decoration had fused, both would go out. The addition of a Christmas tree this year in Priory Gardens to the rear of Priory House had also been very

well received by the public and it was agreed to both repeat this practice in future years and look to replace the main tree lights with the more intensive type used in Priory Gardens.

7 PROMOTIONS PROGRAMME 2006/2007

RESOLVED: that the report of the Cultural Services Officer, including the draft programme of events as attached at Appendix 'A', be approved and all recommendations contained therein be adopted.

8 2006/2007 BUDGET

RESOLVED: that the draft estimates be approved for submission to the next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee.

9 PRIORY HOUSE

a) General Update

The Committee received the general progress report of the Cultural Services Officer and noted that with the exception of the first floor exhibition the building was now fully operational. Trade in the tea rooms had to date been good with most tables in full use during the lunchtime hours. Discussions with the catering partner had identified a requirement for better signage on the High Street. Following discussions with the Conservation Officer an outline agreement for this had now been drawn up.

The Committee was further advised that the installation of window locks as requested at the last meeting was now being dealt with as a matter of urgency. Officers were also asked to arrange for the removal of the Estate Agents signs from the building.

b) Tourist Information Centre

The progress report of the Tourist Information Centre Supervisor was received. It was noted that requests had been received for additional services to be provided at the Centre and it was accordingly agreed that a feasibility report regarding these and any other identified potential services would be submitted to the next meeting for Members' full consideration.

c) Education

The report of the Heritage Education Officer was received. Members approved the draft constitution for the "Friends of Priory House" as contained in the report.