

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF LIBRARY AND PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

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

ON MONDAY 10TH JULY 2006

Present: Councillors Mrs C M Gresham (Town Mayor); Councillor M Tilley (Chairman); Councillor J Freeman (Vice-Chairman); Councillors R R Anklesaria, T C Colbourne, A E Green, Mrs S B Littlechild, C E Meakins-Jell and M J P Mullany

In Attendance: Mrs H Hupton, Ms M Alexander (Cultural and Regeneration Manager), Miss C Pearce (Cultural Services Officer), Mr S Simpson (Promotions Officer), Mr J Sutton (The National Trust) and Mrs R Lambert (Bedfordshire County Council)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Mrs B M Boatwright (Deputy Town Mayor) and Councillor T A W Stock.

202 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 8th May and 15th May 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

203 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).

204 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

Shop takings were now beginning to improve and raffle ticket sales, which fund the Kite Festival, were doing well. On-site National Trust membership sales were, however, well below last year, a trend common across the Trust as a whole this year.

b) Chilterns Gateway Visitor Centre

Work on the Centre continued to proceed well and it was now hoped that the building would be handed over towards the end of September. The National Trust would be operating the new centre and expected to be open for business in early October. The existing Countryside Centre would then be demolished later that month.

The Committee was reminded that new parking fees would be £1 per day with season tickets priced at £25. Charging would operate between 10am and 6pm, 7 days a week. Parking would be free at all other times.

The Property Manager again extended an invitation to the Committee to visit the construction site during the summer.

c) **Multi-user Route**

Bedfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Services had now submitted revised plans to the County Planning Department. Whilst there was still some concern from local residents over the use of the route there now appeared to be a greater degree of comfort with what had been proposed. Copies of the new plans could now be viewed at the Countryside Centre.

205 **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**

	May 06	May 05
Borrowers	12169	11850
Requests	475	363
Turnstile figures	23960	19672
Total Enquiries	1832	1306
<u>ISSUES</u>		
Uncatalogued	13	2
Adult Fiction	8820	8282
Adult Non-Fiction	5151	4893
Adult Spoken Word	598	572
Total	14569	13749
Junior Fiction	5707	4907
Junior Non Fiction	1452	1151
Junior Spoken Word	428	456
Junior Videos	96	125
Junior DVDs	184	128
Total	7867	6767
Compact discs	278	297
DVDs	166	141
Videos	59	172
Total	503	610
Jigsaws	65	84
TOTAL	23017	21210

b) **Exhibitions**

Exhibitions for April and May had included Age Concern, Dunstable Befrienders, the Parkinson's Disease Society and a promotion for Fostering and Carers' Week.

c) Library Promotion

Recent promotions had included a number of book displays. Events had been as follows:

- 3rd June - BBC Springwatch, Marston Vale Country Park.
- 22nd June - Digital camera workshop.
- 24th June - Cartoon drawing workshop for ages 13 and upwards.
- 28th June - 'Poems old and New' poetry reading session.
- 7th July - Scrap booking workshop.
- July - Reading Makeovers – offering a personal library shopper to help find those elusive good reads.

d) Outreach

The reader outreach worker had given talks about the Library Service to Toddington University of the Third Age, Adult Tutors of English as a second language and Adult Tutors at their annual training day.

e) 'Families Love Libraries' Campaign

Organised by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) this campaign was asking library users throughout the UK to say what makes their library service special. This consultation also gave families the opportunity to suggest one thing they would change to improve the facilities available. Phase two of the campaign would take place in October 2006. This would focus on disseminating the data collected in June.

f) Bedfordshire Libraries – website of the month

The Youth team's Teen Turf site had been named teen site of the month in May's 'Teen Librarian' monthly.

g) Queen's Birthday Celebration

All Bedfordshire Libraries had taken part in the Literary Weekend that led up to the special Live Show at Buckingham Palace on Sunday 25th June. The main theme of the weekend had been to celebrate 80 years of children's literature. A series of activities had taken place at the Library on Saturday 24th June.

h) Older teens' section

'The Corner' had now been adopted as the official name for this area. Refurbishment would be completed by the middle of July and would be marked with a special launch event.

i) Connexions

Connexions would be setting up an advice service in the Library for a trial period, starting Wednesday afternoons from 5th July. They would be providing information on vacancies, voluntary opportunities, courses and benefit advice and could broker support for young people needing to access counselling, drugs, alcohol, or sexual health services.

j) Summer Reading Challenge

This year's event, entitled 'The Reading Mission', would challenge young readers to explore new and adventurous reading with an exciting range of secret agent incentives along the way. Participants in the Challenge would enter secret training to become fully fledged Reading Agents – licensed to read! Their reading Mission involved code cracking, puzzle solving, and spreading the word about the best Summer holiday reading with lots of 'spy' goodies to earn along the way. Whitbread was again kindly sponsoring the event with a penny for each book read to be donated to the Keech Cottage Hospice.

k) Citizone

It was agreed to invite the Citizone Manager to attend the next meeting. Information would also be requested on the findings of the recent Citizone Review and circulated to Members.

206 PROMOTIONS

a) Past Events

The Promotions Officer reported on the weekend band concerts which had taken place since the last meeting in Priory Gardens and Grove House Gardens. The Committee agreed to both extend this year's series of concerts in Priory Gardens and to establish whether there was sufficient interest amongst Members to re-introduce Council Hosting at next year's concerts.

b) Forthcoming Events

Arrangements were approved for forthcoming events including Town Centre Summer Entertainment, Charity Croquet Competition, Kite Festival, Teddy Bears Picnic and the Dunstable Folk and Dance Festival.

The Committee noted difficulties in securing suitable entertainment for the Charity Firework Display and agreed that the budget set aside for arena entertainment be used instead to enhance the Firework Display. Times would be revised accordingly with Gates Opening at 6.00 pm and the Main Display commencing at 7.00 pm.

207 PRIORY HOUSE

a) Tourist Information Centre

Stocks of literature and holiday brochures continued to grow. National Express coach ticket sales continued to do well and staff had been in contact with First Capital Connect regarding the sale of train tickets. On 17th June Priory House Tourist Information Team had held a competition for Father's Day with the prize being a glider flight courtesy of London Gliding Club. On Saturday 8th July the TIC would be holding a competition for children to dress up as their favourite film star and present themselves to the Mayor of Dunstable. Tourist Information Centre staff would be attending the Bedfordshire County Show over the weekend 8/9th July, to promote Priory House and the area, and to build on the existing database of clients. Staff regularly visit the Quadrant Shopping Centre and Ashton Square areas to liaise with members of the public and raise awareness about Priory House and would continue to do so throughout the summer months. Literature and information would also be available at all Town Council events, such as the Band Concerts, playscheme and Folk and Dance Festival.

TIC enquiries for the last 2 month period had been as follows:

Enquiries	May	June
National Express	28%	26%
Rail Enquiries	10%	10%
Holiday Brochures	21%	18%
Attraction Tickets	2%	3%
Accommodation	9%	9%
Coach Service/Tates	6%	11%
Local Leaflets	7%	6%
Other Leaflets	5%	2%
Bus Enquiries	12%	15%

Visitor Figures

Visitor numbers to the Heritage Centre as a whole and to the Tourist Information Centre specifically, had shown an increase on those earlier in the year. Staff had, however, noticed a drop in attendance figures as the weather had warmed up and the total and average figures for June reflected this as follows:

Visitor Figures (Heritage Centre)			
Daily Average	February	40	
	March	73	
	April	78	
	May	78	
	June	71	
Weekly	February	178	(4 week month)
	March	406	(5 week)
	April	422	(4 week)
	May	486	(4 Week)
	June	463	(4 week)
Monthly	February	712	(4 week)
	March	2032	(5 week)
	April	1690	(4 week)
	May	1942	(4 week)
	June	1852	(4 week)

Visitors to the Tourist Information Centre:

Visitor Figures TIC)			
Daily Average	February	9	
	March	14	
	April	20	
	May	21	
	June	33	
Weekly	February	33	(4 week month)
	March	84	(5 week)
	April	109	(4 week)
	May	134	(4 week)
	June	214	(4 week)
Monthly	February	132	(4 week)
	March	422	(5 week)
	April	438	(4 week)
	May	537	(4 week)
	June	855	(4 week)

Sales

Retail takings since opening were as follows:

MONTH	DATE ENDING	TAKINGS	LESS VAT	TOTAL
NOVEMBER	01.12.05	2973.65	382.73	2590.92
DECEMBER	29.12.05	3950.01	477.40	3472.61
JANUARY	02.02.06	1404.41	156.68	1247.73
FEBRUARY	02.03.06	1051.71	133.23	918.48
MARCH	30.03.06	1032.62	112.87	919.75
APRIL	27.04.06	1998.39	110.97	1887.72
MAY	31.05.06	2183.70	116.43	2067.27
JUNE	30.06.06	2141.40	77.01	2064.39

Members noted that the profit generated by this level of sales was well below that included in the current financial plan.

b) Interpretation

The first floor exhibition had now been completed and opened to the public on Wednesday 21st June 2006. Volunteers staffed the exhibition, which was open from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm, Monday to Saturday, in line with the Tourist Information Centre hours. Council staff were working on a strategy of marketing and promotion for the exhibition and Priory House as a whole.

c) Education

The report of the Heritage Education Officer was received.

d) The Rose Garden Tea Rooms

Trade in the café continued to grow and the garden furniture had proved popular with visitors. The extended hours (9am to 5pm) for the Tea Rooms had so far not proved to be profitable in the mornings. The afternoons, however, had had a more positive response in terms of visitor numbers. Numbers would be monitored and the extended hours might be seasonal in the future and not continue throughout the year. Regular meetings between the Catering Partner and Town Council staff continued to take place. The Committee approved the reimbursement of additional catering items as detailed in the report, subject to the Catering Partner agreeing to produce timetabled plans for the development of this service.

In addition, Officers were authorised to carry out a preliminary review of all Priory House budgets and services with a view to submitting proposals for potential efficiency improvements to the next meeting.