

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF LIBRARY AND PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

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

ON MONDAY 15TH MAY 2006

Present: Councillor Mrs B M Boatwright (Deputy 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 T A W Stock

In Attendance: Mrs H Hupton, Ms M Alexander (Cultural and Regeneration Manager) and Mr S Simpson (Promotions Officer)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Mrs C M Gresham (Town Mayor) and M J P Mullany; Mr J Sutton (The National Trust) and Mrs R Lambert (Bedfordshire County Council).

139 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th March 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

140 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members 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)
Cllr T A W Stock	Personal Interest	Dunstable Downs (Member of National Trust).

141 DUNSTABLE DOWNS

The Property Manager had been unable to attend the meeting. A copy of his report would be circulated to Members when received.

142 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

	March 06	March 05
Borrowers	12274	12009
Requests	660	391
Turnstile figures	24214	21159
Total Enquiries	1738	1786

<u>ISSUES</u>		
Uncatalogued	11	17
Adult Fiction	9192	10058
Adult Non-Fiction	5756	6647
Adult Spoken Word	603	710
Total	15562	17432
Junior Fiction	6590	5997
Junior Non Fiction	1429	1557
Junior Spoken Word	448	531
Junior Videos	88	326
Junior DVDs	244	
Total	8799	8411
Compact discs	322	427
DVDs	261	304
Videos	69	352
Total	652	1083
Jigsaws	97	120
TOTAL	25110	28174

b) Exhibitions

Exhibitions for March and April had included Bedfordshire Advocacy for Older People, Age Concern and Dunstable Befrienders.

c) Library Promotion

Recent promotions had included a number of book displays with the introduction of a new County wide scheme to sort Adult fiction into genres, presenting a user friendly bookshop approach for easier browsing.

d) Teen Working Group

A working group was compiling a questionnaire for older teens to find out what they want from the Library service. The survey would take place in September at upper schools, colleges, work places and libraries across Bedfordshire.

e) Older Teens Section

The area continued to be developed and with the help of young people the refurbishment was scheduled to be completed by the end of May. A display of art work by 15-20 year olds was currently being arranged to help promote the 'older teen' area.

f) Children's Library

Recent promotions had included an 'Easter Activity Time' and 'Saturday Family Events'. Further ideas to help reduce the decline in Saturday visits to the Library included a 'Wally hunt', 'Fantastic football' and a birthday party for the Queen. Library staff were planning these events with the aim of increasing footfall on Saturdays by 15% and children's issues by 5%.

g) Reference and information services

New online services would include Oxford Reference Online, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, the Oxford English Dictionary, additional newspaper titles and a collection of 100 e-books.

143 PROMOTIONS

a) Past Events

The Promotions Officer reported on events that had taken place since the last meeting, all of which had attracted good levels of attendance. These had included Lunchtime Recitals, the Dunstable Town Band Launch Concert, Town Centre Easter Entertainment, St George's Day Entertainment and the Dunstable Carnival.

b) Forthcoming Events

Arrangements were approved for forthcoming events including Sunday Afternoon Band Concerts, Charity Croquet Competition, Kite Festival and the Dunstable Folk and Dance Festival.

c) Carved Wooden Eagle

At the last meeting the Committee had agreed to arrange repair of the eagle which had been damaged during 2005 and then immediately remove it and put it into storage. Whilst the repairs had been satisfactorily completed it had now been established that there would be higher costs and possible damage involved in removal and the eagle had therefore been left in-situ to enable the Committee to consider this matter further. Taking these factors into account and noting that the eagle had remained damage free since its repair Members accordingly agreed to review its previous decision and leave the eagle in its current location for the time being.

d) Founding of Dunstable

The Committee considered correspondence from Dunstable Historic and Heritage Studies regarding the theory that Dunstable was founded in either 1106 or 1107 and proposing that this be used as the basis for celebrating 900 years of the town. The Heritage Education Officer was accordingly authorised to submit proposals to mark this anniversary for consideration at the next meeting.

e) Dunstable College Awards Ceremony

The Committee considered a request from Dunstable College to sponsor an award for its Annual Awards Ceremony on 13th July 2006. The timing of the request meant that the Committee was unable to make provision for this in its current year's budget. It was also considered that a request for Council sponsorship should be considered by full Council. The Committee accordingly declined the invitation to sponsor a Dunstable College Award in 2006 and agreed that any request for 2007 should be referred to a meeting of the Council.

f) Use of 'The Square'

A request received from the New Covenant Church for use of The Square for Open Air Evangelism was not granted.

a) Tourist Information Centre

Stocks of literature and holiday brochures continued to grow as had contact with attraction and accommodation providers and nationwide Tourist Information Centres. Customers were currently being surveyed in order to evaluate the service being provided. 96% of customers had rated the services as good or excellent, with 100% rating the staff as good or excellent and 93% rating the information as good or excellent. The purposes of visits had varied greatly, but bus information stood out the most with 28% of respondents specifying timetables as the purpose of the visit. Similarly the frequency of visits had varied but 57% recorded a visit of once a month or more frequently. The majority of users during this period had been local residents with 935 visiting from within Dunstable itself. Other users had travelled between 5 and 25 miles to visit the centre.

In addition to the survey, a log of TIC enquiries showed the following breakdown of requests for information/services:

Enquiries in Person	January	February	March	April
Silver Link	1%	1%	1%	0.50%
National Express	20%	24%	23%	25%
Rail/Bus Timetables	4%	5%	9%	11.50%
Holiday Brochures	30%	28%	26%	25%
Theatre Tickets and Brochures	0.73%	0.50%	3%	2%
Rail Tickets	3%	2%	4%	5%
Accommodation	6%	5%	7%	6%
Coach Services	13%	16%	7%	9%
Tates Coach Timetables	0%	3.50%	4%	2%
South Beds District Council Guides	0%	0%	2%	1%
Tickets	0.73%	2%	2%	1%
Other Leaflets	22%	13%	12%	12%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Visitor numbers to the Heritage Centre as a whole and to the Tourist Information Centre specifically, continued to show an increase as follows:

Visitor Figures for Priory House

Visitor Figures (Heritage Centre)		
Daily Average	February	40
	March	73
	April	78
Weekly	February	178 (4 week month)
	March	406 (5 week)
	April	422 (4 week)
Monthly	February	712 (4 week)
	March	2032 (5 week)
	April	1690 (4 week)

Visitors to the Tourist Information Centre

Visitor Figures (TIC)		
Daily Average	February	9
	March	14
	April	20
Weekly	February	33 (4 week month)
	March	84 (5 week)
	April	109 (4 week)
Monthly	February	132 (4 week)
	March	422 (5 week)
	April	438 (4 week)

Retail takings month by month from opening in November 05 to year end March 2006 were reported as shown below. The profit on all items sold to March 2006 was £3,626.93. As expected, there was a decline in the post Christmas period which has continued through to April with a total of £842.92 for the month.

Retail takings Nov 05 to March 06

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
		10412.40	1262.91	9149.49

Officers were meeting regularly with the appointed retail consultant to discuss strategies for increasing sales. Initiatives included events and promotions, changing displays on a regular basis, monitoring the client base and the suitability of the merchandise for their needs, and ordering in of new stock lines, alternative display units, etc. Staff were also looking at the possibility of linking promotions in with the Rose Garden Tea Rooms where visitors could be offered an incentive to buy. It was further anticipated that the now imminent opening of the first floor exhibition would increase sales as more school and coach party visits were secured.

b) The Rose Garden Tea Rooms

Trade in the tea rooms continued to grow, with takings now on the increase. An improvement in weather conditions had allowed the tea rooms to spill outside into Priory Gardens and utilise the garden furniture several times already. Easter trade in the tea rooms had been generally good although trade on Good Friday had been disappointing and for next year opening times over the Easter weekend would be revised.

The catering partner continued to trial promotions and offers to encourage trade and use of the loyalty card continued. Regular meetings were taking place with Town Council staff regarding ongoing participation in events and the marketing of the project as a whole and any building issues.

A proof for improved building signage had been produced and submitted to the Conservation Officer at the District Council, who had requested elevation drawings for the

position of the sign on the building. Agreement in principle to the signage had already been given.

From 2nd May 2006, the opening times of the Tea Rooms would be to 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. Consideration was also being given to Sunday opening.

The catering partner was also investigating the production of function packs for the marketing of Priory House as a function/party venue.

c) Education

The report of the Heritage Education Officer was received. Members were pleased to note continuing attendances of an average of 25 people at the weekly Heritage Talks.

It was agreed to formally approach Mr Richard Brown of Manshead School, a published historian and consultant for the BBC, about teaching a short course at Priory House.

It was further agreed to offer school parties the opportunity of purchasing 'Priory House Goody Bags' at £1.50 per head but noted that this could not be used as a condition of entry for educational visits.