

DUNSTABLE LIAISON FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM

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

ON WEDNESDAY 7TH JUNE 2006

Present: Councillors P Hollick (Chairman), Mrs J Fairbairn, Mrs G Howard, P Swaisland, Ms H Fudge (Policy Adviser) and Mr C Foster (Operations Manager, Youth Service) (Bedfordshire County Council)
Councillors A Fairbairn, P Freeman, D McVicar, Ms A Sparrow and Mrs P Staples (South Bedfordshire District Council)
Councillors T Colbourne, J Freeman and Mrs S Newton, Mr R Walden (Town Clerk) and Mrs H Hupton (Deputy Town Clerk) (Dunstable Town Council)

Apologies for Absence: Town Councillors Mrs B M Boatwright and A Green

41 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: that Councillor Hollick be appointed Chairman of the Forum for the ensuing municipal year.

42 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 16th December 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44 TRANSLINK AND DUNSTABLE NORTHERN BYPASS

The Town Clerk recalled that all Members had received a copy of a letter addressed to the Town Council from the Government Office for the East of England advising that construction of the Northern Bypass would not start until 2013 and that the Secretary of State had approved the Transport and Works Act application for the construction of Translink which would start in 2006/07. Subsequent enquiries by South Bedfordshire District Council had revealed that this letter had been sent in error and no decision had yet been taken on Translink. A further letter confirming the accurate position would be despatched shortly.

45 THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY LIAISON FORUMS

Members considered a proposal of the County Council that Community Liaison Forum's (CLFs) were no longer a priority. It was proposed that they be replaced by developing the community leadership role of individual elected Members through the introduction of "Councillor Liaison Meetings". Such meetings would be informal with no minutes taken and have no decision making powers and would not be open to the public and no funding would be available for distribution as grants.

RESOLVED: i) that the County Council be advised:

- a) that the proposed demise of CLFs be deeply regretted as the process has worked particularly well in Dunstable where several successful high-quality campaigns have been co-ordinated
 - b) liaison linked to solely to individual wards/divisions is far too narrow
 - c) the new arrangements lack accountability and appropriate reporting mechanisms
 - d) the public will lose their opportunity of participating at meetings of the Executive and County Council unless they are able to travel to Bedford
 - e) the proposal is contrary to current government policy of devolving decision making to local communities and neighbourhoods
- ii) that Dunstable Town Centre Management Committee be asked to consider making representations to the District and Town Councils that its constitution be amended to enable it to consider and make recommendations on key issues of relevance to all three tiers of local government but relating to a wider area than the town centre.

46 THE PLACE

The Forum received copies of recent correspondence between the County Council and Dunstable Town Council concerning a proposal that the County Council's annual contribution of £16,000 towards the running costs of The Place be withdrawn in the current financial year. Members debated with County Council Officers the reasons behind the proposal which it was felt totally failed to recognise the significant contribution made by The Place over the past eleven years towards achieving the County Council's strategic and youth service objectives.

RESOLVED: i) that the Forum

- a) regrets the withdrawal of funding for The Place and youth outreach work in Dunstable without adequate consultation
 - b) regrets the apparent desire to replace the partnership between local authorities and other bodies with a room hire agreement
 - c) recognises "Best Value" as well as supporting the concept of partnership between local authorities and other bodies
- ii) that the Town and County Councils be urged to immediately negotiate a service level agreement to formalise the current and future delivery of strategic partnership objectives by the Town Council from "The Place" in return for continued funding by the County Council and a further report thereon be submitted to a

further meeting of the Forum to be held on 19th July.

47 **MANSHEAD WARD CHILDREN'S CENTRE**

Members were pleased to receive a report from the Head of Integrated Early Years Services on the current development of proposals for a Children's Centre in the Manshead Ward. The developing proposals for a facility on the Downside Lower School site should be capable of delivering services for families and young children presently provided within the Mayfield Centre as well as Children's Centre Services.

Forum Members were delighted that the proposal was moving forward from its original position and expressed their continuing desire that all services currently delivered from the Mayfield Centre would be incorporated within the Children's Centre Development. Members were, however, concerned that the Children's Centre was unlikely to be opened before the current funding arrangements for the Mayfield Centre expired at the end of the current financial year and asked that urgent consideration be given to further interim funding for the Mayfield Centre.

48 **NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED: that the next meeting of the Forum be held at Grove House on Wednesday 19th July 2006 at 7.30 pm.