

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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

**ON MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Present: Councillors Sid Abbott (Town Mayor), Liz Jones (Deputy Town Mayor & Chairman), Lisa Bird (Vice-Chairman), Matthew Brennan, Greg George, Pamela Ghent, Kenson Gurney, Johnson Tamara

In Attendance: Councillor Peter Hollick, John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Mary Dobbs (Cemetery Manager), James Slack (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), Ian Swinnerton (Grounds Operations Manager) and Lisa Vincent (Events and Marketing Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Mark Cant, Philip Crawley and Gladys Sanders

Public: None

**136 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings of Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 13 May and 10 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**137 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no specific declarations of interest.

**138 PLANS-SUB COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 11 June, 2 July, 23 July and 20 August be received.

**139 RECREATION GROUNDS, TOWN CENTRE GARDENS, CEMETERY AND ALLOTMENTS**

The Grounds Operations Manager and Cemetery Manager presented a detailed information report covering all areas of the Council's grounds maintenance responsibilities.

**a) Dunstable Cemetery**

Members received the burial figures for June to August 2019 along with the profiled income and expenditure figures as at the end of July 2019. These indicated a negative variance of £4,594. The Cemetery Manager advised that the income for August 2019 would be in excess of £20,000 which would offset the negative variance for the period up to the end of July.

Dunstable Cemetery has retained its Green Flag Status. A flag raising ceremony was scheduled to take place on 12 September.

The Cemetery Management Plan included an action to survey the wildflowers present in the cemetery. This had now been completed by the Wildlife Trust and the recommendations would be reviewed by officers.

The Friends of Dunstable Cemetery were hosting another evening in the cemetery chapel with a Town Guide giving a talk on notable graves in the cemetery. Interpretation panels for some of the notable graves would be erected in the coming weeks at various locations within the cemetery.

#### **b) Allotments**

There were currently 96 people on the waiting list. Members received the detail of the waiting list. There were currently only 3 vacant plots, which were in the process of being let.

Following recent suggestions from an allotment tenant Members were asked what information they would like to receive in future regarding occupancy rates and waiting lists. Members suggested that additional information be provided on the number of plots at each site, percentage occupancy / vacancy rates, average waiting times and the outcome of regular inspections to determine cultivation compliance. Members also suggested that waiting times could be published on the Councils web site.

Officers were working with tenants at Hillcroft allotments to improve the site. Waste had been cleared to create a communal area, sign boards had been put in and new palisade fencing had been erected

#### **c) Recreation Grounds**

Since the last report there had been three incidents of vandalism within the recreation grounds, one of which were at the new adventure play area at Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground where the climbing boulder had been set on fire causing extensive damage. The Grounds Operation Manager was seeking costs to replace the climbing boulder and repair the mulch base.

Members suggested that consideration be given to replacing the climbing boulder with a more robust fire-resistant boulder or other equipment. Members noted local residents and park users strong opinions and support for the Council on this matter and requested that the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services investigate the possibility of crowdfunding to support the cost of replacing the item.

The Fire Service had been called to remove a child from the slide chute who had his leg stuck. This had resulted in some damage to the chute which was promptly repaired on site.

The Chairman provided the Committee with the outcome of the fencing consultation undertaken during the school holidays noting that one third of the respondents were in favour of providing a fence and two thirds were against. Members were advised that, in accordance with this Committees previous resolution to delegate the final decision on fencing to the Chairman and the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services, the decision had been taken not to provide a fence. However, taking

account of comments made during the consultation, officers would arrange to erect signage to advise dog owners to keep dogs on a lead in the play area and would install more seating around the periphery.

Football pitches had been marked out for the season. There had been an increase of adult teams requesting bookings especially at Luton Road Recreation Ground.

There had been a break in at the Depot at CPCFC with fourteen pieces of equipment being stolen. The cost to replace the equipment was £4,582 which would be covered by the Councils insurance arrangements.

**d) Town Centre Area**

The Anglia In Bloom judging had gone well this year. The awards ceremony would be held on 10 September.

**e) Town Ranger Service**

The Town Rangers had been painting the bollards in Ashton Square to enhance the general appearance of the locality.

Throughout the summer the rangers had been cutting back basal growth of trees and overgrown foliage blocking footpaths along with the general sweeping, jet washing and weed removal. It was reported that there had been an increase in the amount of graffiti removal carried out by the rangers.

**140 CREASEY PARK COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CENTRE AND SPLASH PARK**

The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager presented a detailed report on recent operations at the Centre including pitch and function hire and marketing and trading account figures.

The football season had now started for AFC Dunstable and Dunstable Town FC with AFC currently unbeaten at the top of the league.

AFC and Dunstable Town Youth had held a youth festival over the summer. Both were extremely well attended with AFC's hosting 112 youth teams and Dunstable Town Youth hosting 117 youth teams.

Members sought an update on current initiatives to lessen the impact of supporters and users of Creasey Park parking on streets surrounding the area. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager provided a brief summary and agreed that he would forward detailed information to Members.

ATP bookings were at 97% capacity and youth grass pitch bookings were oversubscribed, with some teams moved to the town's recreation ground pitches.

Members noted the profiled income and expenditure figures were currently showing a positive variance of £37,401.

Increased college room usage has meant that the centre is at capacity 9.00 am to 4.00 pm, Monday to Friday, except Wednesday afternoons.

Secretary of State approval had been secured to transfer some of the educational land (previously Brewers Hill School pitches) to full CBC control enabling the additional ATP to now be facilitated. CBC would be providing project outline and dates in due course.

Bennett's Splash was closed for the season. A report on the financial outturn would be provided in the next report.

The Splash Park had unfortunately suffered numerous issues over the summer due to technical failures. These issues were experienced on the hottest and potentially busiest days. A review meeting with the contractors, Kingcombe was to take place to ascertain why these problems had developed, persisted and actions required to remedy. It was agreed that Councillors Jones, Ghent and Abbott would also participate in the review.

#### **141 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE MINOR STAFFING ALTERATION**

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services presented a detailed report that sought approval to delete two 7-month temporary seasonal Grounds Assistant posts and create one new full-time Grounds Assistant post.

Over the last three years it had become increasingly difficult to recruit staff for the seasonal posts. Officers had also identified a need for a more robust and structured approach to managing the Council's play equipment, play areas, BMX track, skatepark as well as the park furniture and litter bins. It was therefore proposed that the two existing 7-month seasonal grounds posts be deleted from the establishment and a new full-time post of Grounds Assistant (Play and Outdoor Equipment) be created.

Members received a copy of the draft Job Description and Person Specification and noted that the proposal would provide an annual saving of £3,155 in the 2020/2021 budget.

- RESOLVED:**
- (i) that two 7-month temporary seasonal Grounds Assistant posts are deleted from the Council's staffing establishment.
  - (ii) that a new post of Grounds Assistant (Play and Outdoor Equipment) is created in line with the detailed proposals set out in the report.
  - (iii) that the Committee recommend to Finance and General Purposes Committee the changes to the Council's staffing establishment.

#### **142 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

##### CBC Development Management Committee:

Members had no updates to give.