

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 13 JANUARY 2020

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

In Attendance: Councillor Peter Hollick, David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Mary Dobbs (Cemetery Manager), Sharon Long (Democratic Services Manager) Ian Swinnerton (Grounds Operations Manager) and Lisa Vincent (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager),

Public: None

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 11 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

4 PLANS-SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 12 November and 3 December 2019 be received.

**5 CREASEY PARK COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CENTRE AND SPLASH PARK
UPDATE**

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

The availability of coffee grounds for use for gardening was to be advertised in *Talk of the Town* and was proving popular, particularly with allotment holders. Councillor Abbott asked if other Council venues were handing out coffee grounds and the Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager confirmed the Centre was being used as an initial trial

venue. If the scheme proved successful it would be rolled out across more of the Council's venues.

Staff had recently redecorated the centre and a new sound system had been installed enabling users to use their own playlists rather than having to hire DJs. Councillor Cant asked about the implications in relation to performance rights and the Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager confirmed the Centre held an appropriate licence.

6 CEMETERY, ALLOTMENTS, RECREATION GROUNDS, TOWN CENTRE GARDENS AND RANGER SERVICE INFORMATION AND UPDATE REPORT

The Cemetery Manager and Grounds Operations 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 November to December 2019 along with the profiled income and expenditure figures as at the end of November 2019. These indicated a positive variance of £7,205. The Cemetery Manager indicated that January burials were expected to deliver over £20,000 of income.

b) Allotments

Members received the detail of the waiting list in a new and improved format.

c) Recreation Grounds

Since the last report it had become evident that installation of the York stone play stack, which was to replace the fire damaged Geo Boulder at Bennett's Adventure Play, was impractical due to its weight. Accordingly, an order for a new climbing tower had been placed and was to be installed week commencing 3 February. The fire damaged boulder had no residual value and has had to be scrapped.

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services is investigating the provision of insurance cover on larger items of the Council's play equipment.

The trial of the use of the second hand G26 ride-on mower had been successful.

d) Town Centre Area

The annual bedding plant displays had been modified to reflect the theme of Dunstable in Bloom's 2020 campaign, 'Pollinating Insects and Wildflowers' and the plants had been ordered.

e) Dunstable in Bloom

Dunstable is to represent the Anglia region in the 2020 Britain in Bloom finals and Members were reassured that the works to extend the car park at Grove House will be completed prior to judging. Members questioned whether the High Street Improvement plans would impact upon the Britain in Bloom or Anglia in Bloom judging and were advised that these works were not likely to commence until after judging had taken place.

f) **Town Ranger Service**

The Ashton Square toilets are now fully operational.

7 **PRIORY GARDENS CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STATEMENT**

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services explained that as Members had decided to seek Green Heritage status for Priory Gardens, it was necessary to put in place a Conservation Management Statement. A draft of the proposed Conservation Management Statement was made available as an appendix to the report.

Councillor Hollick had provided the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services with some additional detail for inclusion in the statement and also suggested that the equipment and allocated reserves the Council intends to use to deliver its conservation management objectives should be included in the Statement to demonstrate the Council has the resources to achieve them.

RESOLVED: that the draft Conservation Management Statement be adopted, subject to the amendments suggested by Councillor Hollick.

8 **RESERVE SPENDING PROPOSAL**

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services presented a report detailing various spending proposals to be funded from a number of allocated reserves including the Vehicle and Equipment Reserve, the Cemetery Building Reserve, the Fencing Reserve and Parks and Open Space Reserve.

The proposals included the acquisition of an electric van and a second hand G26 ride-on mower, repair and maintenance works to the cemetery building, fencing, footpath repairs and new park benches. They amounted, in total, to £95,425. The Chief Executive and Town Clerk confirmed that the proposed works and equipment purchases would be fully funded by the identified reserves, and there were sufficient other reserves to ensure the Council's finances were healthy enough to proceed with the spending proposals.

Members were pleased to note the acquisition of an electric vehicle and agreed that the reuse of the second-hand G26 ride-on mower was a more environmentally sustainable option than acquisition of a new vehicle.

RESOLVED: that the Committee recommends to Finance and General Purposes Committee the release of up to £95,425 of earmarked reserves as outlined in the appendix to the report.

9 **PARKS AND GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services presented a detailed report that requested approval for the creation of a Parks and Green Space Development Officer post.

Councillor Ghent noted that the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services currently carried out a number of the tasks that the post was anticipated to cover. The Chief Executive and Town Clerk explained that the transfer of the tasks would

free the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services up to pursue opportunities for grant funding and related matters that were currently being missed as he did not have sufficient time and resource to do so. He also explained that that the draft Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2023 contained aspirations that fell under the new post.

Councillor Abbott noted that the post included a requirement to promote the use of the parks to the public that clearly fitted with the government's *healthy living* agenda.

Councillor Gurney asked about the Council's policy on charging for use of park and green spaces. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services explained that the charge was £10 per hour for those running such activities as a business. Each case was taken on its merits. Users were required to demonstrate that they hold appropriate public liability insurance and provide a risk assessment to the Council.

RESOLVED: that the Committee recommends to the Finance and General Purposes Committee the creation of the new post of Parks and Green Space Development Officer as detailed in the report and further recommends the revenue budget allocation contained within the draft revenue budget paper.

10 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2020/21

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented the Budget Proposals for 2020/21. He explained that this had not changed significantly since the draft Budget had been presented to Members before Christmas and that the Grounds and Environmental Services budget could still be accommodated within the anticipated one per cent increase in council tax the Council would be requesting in the 2020/21 Precept request.

RECOMMENDATION: the Committee recommend the draft Grounds and Environmental Services budget as presented, with no amendments or further recommendations, to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

11 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

CBC Development Management Committee:
Members had no updates to give.