

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

ON MONDAY 2 MARCH 2020

Present: Councillors Sid Abbott (Town Mayor), Liz Jones (Deputy Town Mayor), Gloria Martin (Chairman), Gladys Sanders (Vice-Chairman), Wendy Bater, Lisa Bird, Cameron Restall, Lee Roberts, Pamela Ghent, John Gurney and Peter Hollick

In Attendance: David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), James Slack (Head of Community Services), Sandy Coyle (Community and Young People's Services Manager), Gina Thanky (Events Officer) and Sharon Long (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillor Greg George

Public: Two

40 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 6 January 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

42 EVENTS AND MARKETING

The Head of Community Services presented an update report on the 2020 events programme and also updated members on the usage of the Council's website and social media.

It was noted that there was an update to paragraph 3 as Specsavers had since decided to pull out of sponsoring the events programme. Opportunities to secure another sponsor or sponsors are being investigating.

Councillor Jones asked if the Around the World event would have any VE Day themed events. It was confirmed it would.

It was noted that the film licence for Priory Pictures was generally the same regardless of age of the film and that Houghton Hall were also advertising outdoor cinema events. Councillor Jones suggested checking that it was worth seeking to avoid any clash of dates. Councillor Hollick also raised the issue of ensuring that the screen was positioned to avoid the sun obscuring the view of some participants.

43 GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Community and Young People's Services Manager reported on recent attendance figures and activities at Grove Corner and reported on recent community engagement activities.

She noted that numbers for juniors attending Grove Corner were growing, with 29 members of the junior group and 11 members of the transition group. In response to a query from the Chairman, she explained that whilst the maximum number was 50, in fact, and given the age range, 35 was really the maximum number.

The NHS were keen to book more sessions for the new Hoarding Group; whilst the initial programme of sessions was finished, these were fully booked, and subject to funding, they were keen to book more. There was also interest from an arts and drama therapy group and for counselling rooms.

44 OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY CARE SERVICES

The Community and Young People's Services Manager reported that the Saracens Head were keen to work in partnership with the Council to deliver a new lunch club session. Forty invites had been sent out for the first April date, eight replies had already been received but The Community and Young People's Services Manager was receiving calls and emails every day about it. The maximum capacity is 35 people. There are to be six trial sessions between the April start date and the next Committee meeting, where it was hoped to table a recommendation to make the sessions part of the Council's established programme. They were designed to time with the availability of free parking on Tuesday afternoons at Ashton Square.

Councillor Jones enquired how many people attended more than one lunch club. The Community and Young People's Services Manager explained this was very much based on individual circumstance/ need but generally people only attended one.

Councillor Abbott asked about the current waiting list at Creasey Park. The Community and Young People's Services Manager explained there were 19 on the waiting list who had been offered the opportunity to attend the Saracen's Head session instead.

The next Big Lunch session is on 7 April and is already sold out, with six people on the waiting list. The Community and Young People's Services Manager will continue to gauge interest so demand can be assessed for future events. Last year the team had worked based on a capacity of 130, but this was too tight so this year it had been reduced to 100.

45 PRIORY HOUSE

The Head of Community Services presented a report on recent operations and activities at Priory House, including trading account figures and Priory House maintenance.

Bookings of the Jacobean Room are up on last year.

Councillor Roberts had been approached by residents to notify him of the fact Priory House tearoom had been running a reduced menu on occasion. It was explained that this happened very rarely and was due to staffing issues. The need to increase the casual staffing pool was being addressed, and as the tea rooms were the priority, from time to time the Tourist Information Centre was closed and staff there diverted to the tea rooms. Councillor Hollick commented that he had recently attended a wedding at the Jacobean Room and it had taken some time to get the meal upstairs. Councillor Bater also commented that on the occasions she had attended there had been no gluten free bread. The Head of Community Services said both issues were being addressed, along with the growing demand for vegan products.

46 DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

The Head of Community Services updated the Committee on Town Centre Services including Ashton Square Toilets and the themed and craft market trader figures.

He explained the Town Centre Officer is looking at alternative options to reduce the carbon footprint of the town's Christmas lights, including the impact of cutting down a large living tree. **Members agreed to set up a small Working group to oversee the lighting review. The first meeting will take place at 11.30am on Wednesday, 25 March in the Council Chambers and will comprise Councillor Gloria Martin, Councillor Gladys Sanders and Councillor Liz Jones (who is unable to attend the first meeting), and Councillors Pam Ghent and John Gurney**, assisted by the Town Centre Officer and the Manager of Priory House. It was anticipated that the meeting would also comprise a walk around the town so attendees should dress appropriately for the weather.

The VE Day event was also discussed. Councillor Roberts raised that there was a need to tidy up the area around Middle Row and Ashton Square generally and Councillor Jones requested that the Town Rangers be asked to seek to clean it up before the event. The Chairman also raised the problem of parking on the pavement outside Priory House that had caused permanent staining of the new paving with oil, despite the Rangers best effort to remove it. The possibility of siting more large planters there to prevent it was raised.

Councillor Jones indicated she would follow up with Councillor Hegley on the missing seats in Middle Row.

Councillor Gurney queried whether there were funds available to residents to apply for road closures to enable street parties to be held to mark VE Day. The Head of Community Services indicated that there were 10 lots of £100 available for this purpose and that the availability of the funds would shortly be advertised on the Council's Facebook page.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive urged Members to fill in the People and Places town centre survey as promoted on the Council's Facebook page. Councillor Roberts commented on the need to look at vacancy rates in Middle Row/ Ashton Square, particularly following the closure of Martin's. Whilst the shop itself had not necessarily been a big draw, the fact it had a cashpoint had been. Councillor Hollick also noted that the Travelhub had also recently closed. Councillor Roberts commented that community events had recently been centred on the Quadrant (including the recent Pancake Race and the proposed Easter events) and it would be good to see more taking place in Middle Row/ Ashton Square. The Head of Community Services indicated that at least 3 or 4 big events were planned there as well as the area benefiting from the award of funding following its recent designation as a High Street Heritage Action Zone. The availability of two hours' free parking on Tuesdays was also commented on to encourage footfall.

47 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

South Bedfordshire Dial-a-Ride:

The Chairman noted there would be a meeting later that week, but the organisation was doing well and comfortably keeping its head above water financially.

Dunstable Town Band:

No report – the Democratic Services Manager would look at when the next meeting was due to be held.