

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

**HELD VIRTUALLY ON MICROSOFT TEAMS AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS
(CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
MEETINGS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020**

ON MONDAY 29 JUNE 2020

Present: Councillor Peter Hollick (Town Mayor); Councillor Gloria Martin (Deputy Town Mayor); Councillors, Sid Abbott, Lisa Bird, Matthew Brennan, Mark Cant, Alan Corkhill, Greg George, Pamela Ghent, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Liz Jones, Cameron Restall, Lee Roberts, Gladys Sanders and Johnson Tamara with David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Lucy Salim (Head of Finance and Support Services), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), James Slack (Acting Head of Community Services).

Members of the public x 2

Before the commencement of the meeting, Revd Rachel Phillips led the Council in prayer.

74 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Wendy Bater and Philip Crawley

75 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held 3 February 2020 and 18 May 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

76 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS

There were no specific declarations of interest.

77 CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Town Mayor informed the Council of his recent visits to the town centre to support the re-opening of the Council's markets and local retailers. He had also visited Dunstable Laminates and Coppersmiths on Boscombe Road. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic continued, thereby curtailing Mayoral activity, the Mayor would do all he can to support the local economy and community activity.

78 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions put to the meeting

79 TO ANSWER QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 16

There were no questions put to the meeting.

80 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2019/20 OUTTURN

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented the end of year outturn figures for the Council's revenue budget and allocated reserves for 2019/20. She was pleased to report that the revenue budget was underspent by nearly £100,000; the underspend being allocated to fully fund the Council's four-year revenue spend commitments for the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme. She highlighted the main areas of underspend under each of the Council's departments, identifying that the bulk of the savings were achieved through temporary staff vacancies and exceeding income targets, especially at Dunstable Cemetery.

The Council noted the outturns for both the revenue budget and allocated reserves and comments were made that expressed satisfaction at how the finances were managed during 2019/20 and approval that the HSHAZ scheme was now fully funded.

RESOLVED: i) That members note the financial reports from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

ii) That members note the balance of the Council's allocated reserves as of 31 March 2020.

81 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented her report detailing the requirements for the submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019/20. She was pleased to report that all requirements had been completed as well as reporting on the end of year balance for the General Reserve.

The AGAR comprised four sections, namely, the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20; the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 (Section 1); the Accounting Statements 2019/20 (Section 2) and the External Auditor Report and Certificate (Section 3). The Head of Finance and Support Services gave an explanation on each of the four sections and the Council were pleased to note that the Annual Accounts would be made available for inspection as required.

RESOLVED: i) that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/2020 be noted

ii) that the Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020 at Section 1 of the Annual Return be completed in the affirmative and the Town Mayor and Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to sign accordingly

iii) that the Accounting Statements 2019/2020 at Section 2 of the Annual Return be approved, and the Town Mayor be authorised to sign accordingly

iii) that the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2020 be approved for submission to the auditor.

Action: Head of Finance and Support Services

82 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented her report outlining an early assessment of the Council's revenue budget for 2020/21 and the balance of the allocated reserve as at the end of May 2020.

The very early assessment of the Council's revenue budget concluded that a slight surplus may be achieved by the end of this financial year. However, both the Responsible Financial Officer and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive urged a strong note of caution that the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic made it difficult at this stage to predict revenues and expenditure and the Council's financial position may look very different by the end of the financial year. Members were assured that finances would be very closely monitored throughout the year.

RESOLVED: That members note the current financial projections for the Council's revenue budget and the balance of the allocated reserve as at the 31 May 2020.

83 ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 AND REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented the Annual Report for 2019/2020 which would be published on the Council's website and made available at other usual public distribution outlets. The document provided an evidence source to residents as to the quality of services provided by the Council, as well as being an important planning tool for the organisation to ensure it could demonstrate continuous service improvement.

The format for the Annual Report was the same as agreed for last year's report and included a summary of the Council's activities and achievements over the last year, illustrated as "A Year in Dunstable". Section 4 set out how the Council is performing in relation to its stated aims contained within the Corporate Plan, the objectives for which are from the Corporate Plan adopted in February 2020. Also included was a report on the annual outturn for the Council's adopted performance indicators.

The Corporate Risk Log had been updated and Members noted that the main identified areas of strategic risk remained as income generation and property management. Income generation had been identified as high risk because of the current economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic and property management arrangements had been identified as high risk due to the high cost of maintaining Council property which included listed buildings.

Members noted the reviewed Council's Health and Safety and the Environment and Sustainability Policies.

RESOLVED: i) that the Annual Report 2019/2020 be approved

ii) that the improvements to the Council's governance arrangements be noted

iii) that the Corporate Risk Log be noted

iv) that the Council's Health and Safety Policy be approved

v) that the Council's Environment and Sustainability Policy be approved.

Action: Town Clerk and Chief Executive

84 **TOWN CLERK AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE USE OF DELEGATED POWERS AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCK-DOWN PERIOD**

At the 16 March 2020 Finance and General Purposes Committee, members delegated executive decision-making powers to the Town Clerk and Chief Executive in association with relevant Committee Chairmen for the duration of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented his report that detailed the nature of a range of key decisions he had taken during this period. The decisions were as follows:

- The allocation of £100,000 of end of financial year revenue surpluses to a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) reserve.
- The commissioning of essential environmental monitoring at Priory House.
- A 12-month extension to the Christmas lighting contract.
- The cancellation of most of the annual events programme.
- To submit an application for the furloughing of casual staff
- The implementation of maternity cover arrangements for the Head of Finance and Support Services

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive also reported current progress being made with the HSHAZ programme. Members welcomed the decision taken to try and furlough casual members of staff.

RESOLVED: That members note the schedule of key decisions taken by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive taken during the current Covid-19 Pandemic.

85 **REFURBISHMENT OR THE MARKET CROSS CLOCK TOWER, GROVE HOUSE GARDENS PERFORMANCE AREA AND PRIORY GARDENS PERGOLA**

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services presented his report detailing a request for the release of up to £57,000 from Council reserves for the repair and restoration of a number of Council assets. The assets comprised:

- The Market Cross Clock Tower
- The Grove House gardens Performance Area
- The Priory Gardens Pergola

The report detailed the work required for each asset and a cost estimation for each project that totalled £57,000.

RESOLVED: That members approved the allocation of up to £57,000 from various Council reserves to fund the repair and restoration of the Market Cross Clock Tower, the Grove House Gardens Performance Area and the Priory Gardens Pergola.