

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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 7 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present: Councillors Peter Hollick (Town Mayor), Gloria Martin (Chairman and Deputy Town Mayor), Cameron Restall (Vice-Chairman), Sid Abbott, Lisa Bird, Philip Crawley, Greg George, Pamela Ghent, John Gurney and Gladys Sanders

In Attendance: David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), James Slack (Head of Community Services), Michelle Collings (HSHAZ Manager) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Wendy Bater

Public: One

86 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Community Services Committees held on 2 March and 18 May 2020 were approved as a correct record and it was agreed that they be signed by the Chairman shortly.

87 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

88 EVENTS AND MARKETING

The Head of Community Services presented an update and information report on the 2019/2020 events programme. It was noted that in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting Government regulations the following events had been cancelled; St George's Day, Around the World, Classic Motor Rally (see paragraph below), Sunday Band Concerts, Dunstable Live, Priory Pictures, Party in the Park, Proms in the Park and Fireworks.

It was noted that the decision to cancel Fireworks was also a result of the building of the additional artificial turf pitch (ATP) at Creasey Park which would stretch into November. The Committee was also updated on a positive increase year on year of likes and followers of the Town Council on both Facebook and Twitter. As a result, the Town Council's social media activities were reaching more people and were continuing to grow.

The Committee welcomed the news that the Classic Motor Rally was to be held on 26 September from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. and had been organised in line with current Government guidelines. The event would benefit from the following features:

- Static display of 75 motor vehicles with a 2m gap between each vehicle

- A one-way system around the display allowing for social distancing monitored and supervised by stewards during the event
- Accessible toilets on site
- Small children's activities
- Catering units
- A singer performing

The event would be promoted via posters, Facebook and the Town Council website. In order to ensure effective stewarding for the event all Members were invited to volunteer as stewards between 8.00 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. It was noted that in future the events survey would be conducted in relation to each individual event rather than all events.

The Committee had a discussion about other events that were normally in the Town Councils' events and marketing offer. It was noted with regret that Christmas torchlight procession would be cancelled. The proposal to hold a Christmas light switch on 27 November as well as a weekend event in Priory Gardens was welcomed.

In response to a question from a Member the Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that the Remembrance Sunday arrangements 2020 would be changed this year with the procession, march and church service cancelled but alternative commemorations would be put in place and the act of remembrance would be live streamed via Facebook and the Town Council's website.

ACTION - Members to volunteer as stewards for the Classic Motor Rally on 26 September 2020

89 GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Community and Young People's Services Manager reported on Grove Corner and community engagement following the Covid-19 close down. Officers had maintained links with the young people that had regularly attended Grove Corner. Although Grove Corner was still closed it had 537 likes and its Instagram account had 222 followers.

The Town Council had successfully applied to the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioners' Violence and Exploitation Fund. The application had received a sum of £5,250 to attract young people to Grove Corner to take part in video gaming in a safe environment. The grant would be put towards the provision of 12 new gaming consoles and associated equipment. Officers were working with E-Sports on holding gaming competitions.

It was further reported that the new Youth and Community Manager would be in post in September and this would lead to the launch of a multi -faced youth programme.

There had not been any daytime hire available during the Covid-19 lock down to 3 August. The following services were returning; Minds2together, Sight Concern, Yawn life NCS, Hear 2 listen, NOAH Enterprise- IT courses.

Officers reported on Community engagement since the Covid-19 lockdown. Officers supported the Central Bedfordshire Council Referral and Befriending Scheme. Officers carried out befriending and check-up calls (850 calls in 17 weeks).

Summer activities had been cancelled although a craft Facebook event was held on 19 August and a 'Dunstable through the ages trail' was arranged on 29 August.

90 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.

There were a number of confirmed bookings for weddings in the Jacobean Room and several provisional bookings.

The Tea Rooms had opened on 6 July and throughout the summer the trade and income had increased. The Governments 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme had caused a rise in trade Monday to Wednesday, but Thursday and Fridays were quieter. Although income was steadily increasing for the year to date the Tea Rooms were 77% down compared to the same period last year.

91 DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

The Head of Community Services updated the Committee on Town Centre Services. **Markets** – Middle Row Markets re-started on 13 July and from July small attractions were added to the Square such as classic cars, buskers and street entertainers. Also, more gazebos were planned so by the Christmas market there would be 25 stalls.

Christmas lights - a review of the condition of the lighting had been carried by the lighting contractor. For the first time the Christmas tree at the rear of Grove House would be illuminated. The Christmas Lights Working Group had not met so far in 2020 so it was likely that the issues would be picked up in 2021.

The Christmas Magic event was planned for 12 and 13 December with the entertainment offer of a ferris wheel, carousel, street entertainers and stalls.

The Dunstable Joint Committee Shop Front Improvement Scheme would be extended in to 2021. The Committee also received reports on Town Centre vacancy rates and the Town Centre benchmarking survey

RESOLVED - (1) That the Town Centre Working Group be appointed to carry out a daytime walkabout

(2) That the Chairman of the Committee and Councillors Ghent, Gurney, Jones and Sanders be appointed to the Working Group

92 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

South Bedfordshire Dial-a-Ride:

No report

Dunstable Town Band:

No report

93 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - to exclude press and public in accordance with Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 sect 1.2 to discuss matters of commercial confidentiality.

94 HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (HSHAZ)

The Committee received an information report on the High Street Heritage Action Zone

The Meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.