

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

HELD ON MONDAY 4 JANUARY 2021

Present: Councillors Peter Hollick (Town Mayor), Gloria Martin (Deputy Town Mayor and Chairman of the Committee), Sid Abbot, Wendy Bater, Phillip Crawley, Gregory George, Pamela Ghent, John Gurney and Gladys Sanders

In Attendance: David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services), Michelle Collings (HSHAZ Manager), Annette Clynes (Town Centre Services Officer), Lisa Vincent (Events and Marketing Manager), Jack Adams-Rimmer (Neighbourhood Development Officer) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillor Lisa Bird

Public: Nil

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 2 November 2020 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

2. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

3. GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Jack Adams-Rimmer (Neighbourhood Development Officer) reported that once again the Covid-19 restrictions were affecting all services. The main points of the report were;

- The planned soft reopening of Grove Corner youth sessions in January were affected by the current lockdown and would not be going ahead until further notice.
- Officers had been engaging with young people from Central Bedfordshire College through digital provision for six weeks.
- Officers had delivered free arts and crafts at the Christmas Market where they had engaged with 150 children and their parents/carers. It was hoped that this engagement would generate more youth club members.
- Further to discussion at the Council meeting on 7 December 2020, it was now clear there were four youth organisations currently based at the Downside Community Centre,

Action: Officers would be contacting them with an update report to be made to the next Committee meeting

4. OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY CARE SERVICES

Once again, because of the most recent Covid-19 lockdown, no services were in operation apart from for weekly video calls. It was difficult to say when Lunch Clubs would be resumed.

5. PRIORY HOUSE

The Events and Marketing Manager updated the Committee on the operation of Priory House because as a result of the recent Covid-19 lockdown the agenda report circulated before Christmas now needed some updating.

It was noted that Priory House had opened late on 11 December for the Twilight market and £369 had been taken that evening.

There were sixteen confirmed bookings for weddings in the Jacobean Room starting in March and over 20 further provisional inquiries had been received.

The operation of the shop and the tea rooms had been severely hampered by the COVID-19 regulations and the latest Covid-19 lockdown had seen Priory House closed with most of the staff to be furloughed again.

The Priory House salary saving due to the furloughing of staff would be reported to the next meeting. The Events and Marketing Manager received compliments on the recent video on the Councils website promoting Priory House.

6. DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

The Town Centre Services Officer updated the Committee on Town Centre Services including Ashton Square Toilets and the themed and craft market trader figures. It was noted that Men in Sheds had made steps for the Ashton Square public toilets to allow children to access the wash basins.

The take up of the themed markets by traders had been very successful and the Town Centre Services Officer was congratulated for her work.

It was further reported that in March this year the markets would be known as Middle Row Markets. Some Members queried the need to change the name of the markets and they asked for the naming strategy to be monitored.

In relation to the Christmas lights it was reported that the new lights on the Priory House Christmas tree and Grove House had positive feedback from the public.

The report identified that the Christmas Lighting Working Group needed to meet to discuss the following items;

- The possible supply of a real Christmas tree in 2021
- The review of quotes received for picket fences
- Future lighting schemes
- Planning the tender process for the 2021 Christmas lighting scheme.

It was agreed a meeting of the Working Group would be held on Monday 8 February 2021
Action Ian Reed Democratic Services Manager and Town Centre Services Manager

The Christmas window competition had been a success with twenty-two businesses taking part. The intention was to increase this number for next year.

7. HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (HSHAZ)

The Committee received an information report that covered all aspects of the project from September 2020 which is summarised as follows;

- HSHAZ webpages set up on the Town Councils' website.
- A tender process had been completed to employ lead professional conservation accredited architects for the High Street South/Middle Row projects.
- Priory House –the Construction Impact Study had been issued on 14 December and investigations were continuing.
- Middle Row projects – an update was given on each project
- Cultural Programme – the Dunstable Cultural Consortium would be working on the Pilot Activity projects – Augustinian Dunstable and Queen Eleanor of Castille
- Community Engagement - stalls had been taken at the Christmas markets to promote the HSHAZ.
- Programme Hub - efforts had been made to obtain a property in the Middle Row area to serve as an office for the HSHAZ Programme Manager and as a hub for the project. It was now clear this would not be achieved
- Community Events Programme – events would be arranged on an annual basis

8. BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented the budget proposals for 2021/22. He explained that this had not changed significantly since the draft budget had been presented to Members and if the Community Services budget, as presented in the report, was adopted, it could be accommodated within the anticipated 0.5% per cent increase in council tax.

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

9. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

South Bedfordshire Dial-a-Ride:

Councillor Gloria Martin reported that the Dial-a-Ride service was still operating in difficult circumstances

Dunstable Town Band:

No report

Men in Sheds(MiS)

Councillor John Gurney made a report. He advised the Committee that his report would be limited because Men in Sheds Trustees were still meeting in person which made it difficult for him to attend because he was a carer. Also, he reported that a (MiS) trustee had died recently.

It was again noted that Men in Sheds had made steps for the Ashton Square public toilets to allow children to access the wash basins. Councillor John Gurney encouraged the Town Council to look at how it could use Men in Sheds for small jobs such as making ramps, fences etc

Action: All Services to be encouraged to engage Men in Sheds where possible

The meeting closed at 19.59