

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 1 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillors Peter Hollick (Town Mayor), Gloria Martin (Deputy Town Mayor and Chairman of the Committee), Cameron Restall (Vice-Chairman), Sid Abbot, Wendy Bater, Lisa Bird, 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), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies: None received

Public: Nil

33. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 4 January 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

34. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

35. GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It was reported Grove Corner remained closed in line with current Government guidance. The main points of the report were;

Grove Corner and Youth Engagement

Grove Corner continued to be closed resulting in the youth sessions being unable to operate in January and would not be going ahead until further notice.

Officers to facilitate a soft opening of Grove Corner when it was permissible do so. Officers continued to consult young people. Some of the funding received from the Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit run by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire would be used for rebranding Grove Corner, embracing the various sessions held.

Community Engagement

For February Half Term two online videos had been created for families to create arts and crafts at home.

The summer activities offer would be limited due to work on what could be delivered safely. Officers hoped to run small scale activities for Love Parks Week in July. There would also be small-scale August summer activities; details had yet to be determined.

Further to discussion at the Council meeting on 7 December 2020, all the community groups who had used the Downside Community Centre under the control of the Seventh Day Adventists management had been contacted and were in touch with Conroy Boxing.

Service Level Agreements 2020/21

The Committee was reminded that the Council funded on an annual basis the following voluntary sector bodies through Service Level Agreements:

- Community Action Bedfordshire (CAB) £500
- Dunstable Town Guides £800
- Priory Church £1,000
- Dunstable and District History Society £200
- Dunstable Town Band £1,000

The Committee noted CAB was merging with Bedfordshire Rural Community Council (BRCC). Therefore, if the Council wanted to continue to fund a sign posting and support service for the community and voluntary sector the SLA would require amendment as the service provider in the future would be BRCC.

It was also noted that the Dunstable Town Guides and Priory Church had not received SLA payments for 2020/21 because both organisations had not held AGMs, submitted accounts, or public liability details to the Council. Also, because of Covid-19 neither of the organisations had fulfilled the SLA requirements relating to service delivery. Therefore, the Committee was invited to consider whether the SLA monies were to be paid even though parts of the SLA had not been met by service providers.

RESOLVED:

- i) That it be recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that a member working group be established to review current arrangements for grant aiding the voluntary sector through Service Level Agreements. The working group to comprise of Councillors Gloria Martin, John Gurney, Cameron Restall and at least one other member from the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The working group to report back with recommendations to the Community Services Committee.
- ii) That it be recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the current grant given to Community Action Bedfordshire (CAB) be assigned to the Bedfordshire Rural Community Council (BRCC) in light of the BRCC merger with the CAB.
- iii) That it be recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the payment of the 2020/21 grant to the Dunstable Town Guides and Priory Church be deferred until both organisations have submitted required financial information to officers.
- iv) That it be recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the payment of the 2021/22 grant to Dunstable Town Band be deferred until the Band is operational again and their exact financial requirements are established.

36. OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY CARE SERVICES

Once again, it was reported that 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.

In relation to the Big Lunch, it was accepted that it would not be possible to organise in the normal way. However, there was a possibility that a virtual Big Lunch could be organised.

37. EVENTS AND MARKETING

(a) 2021 Events Programme

The Committee considered the proposed programme of events for 2021 that had been prepared on the basis that the standard events schedule could not be achieved. Instead of large events there would be a variety of bookable small workshops, attractions and low-key entertainment taking place on Ashton Square on Market days and in Grove House and Priory Gardens.

The Committee was assured that the marketing plan for activities would be closely measured and possibly targeted to meet some of the criteria from Historic England for the HSHAZ scheme. It was stressed that the promotion and advertising of any event would be managed to control acceptable attendance levels, risk assessments and adherence to the guidelines/regulations.

(b) HSHAZ Match Funding

The Committee was reminded that the Town Council had committed a percentage of the community services budget to match fund the HSHAZ. For the financial year 2021/22 £44,500 of the events budget had been committed to match funding and was to be spent on events and activities that supported the community engagement strand of the programme.

(c) Fireworks Event

The Committee was advised that following the installation of the new ATP pitch at Creasey Park the work had effectively removed the site for the fireworks event because the Town Council had to follow the requirements of Central Bedfordshire Council to protect the pitch from firework fallout and consequent damage. Unfortunately, suitable coverings would cost in the region of £40,000 to £60,000 which meant it was not a feasible option. A number of Members expressed their disappointment that the event would be removed from the event calendar. A discussion took place where various alternative sites were identified. However, none were considered acceptable to host an event that attracted up to 15,000 people.

It was also reported that the £18,000 budget for the event could be used to create a new Festive light event to compliment and build on the Christmas lighting scheme. The Chairman suggested the new lighting scheme could last from November in line with Divali and run into the New Year and would be welcomed by visitors as well as town centre businesses and users.

(d) Electronic Signage

In accordance with the current Corporate Plan the Committee discussed the purchase of a mobile electronic sign to be used to promote and market events across the town. An opportunity to purchase a sign had arisen with Central Bedfordshire Council Councillors offering a sum of £8,000 with the Town Council required to commit up to £20,000 towards the purchase. It was also noted there would be a revenue commitment for servicing and

maintenance. The two options for the electronic sign were a Variable Message Sign (VMS) or a LED screen. Following a discussion, the Committee indicated its preference for the VMS type sign.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that up to £20,000 from anticipated 2020/21 revenue savings be allocated for the purchase of an electronic highways sign.

38. PRIORY HOUSE

The Events and Marketing Manager updated the Committee on the operation of Priory House, which had been closed following the Covid-19 close down in December. There were sixteen confirmed bookings for weddings in the Jacobean Room.

39. DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

The Town Centre Services Officer updated the Committee on Town Centre Services including;

Middle Row Markets

The first market would be held on 17 April and there could be up to 30 stalls

Christmas Lighting

The Christmas Lighting Working Group had met in February and had suggested a strategy to light up trees in Church Street and Ashton Square and natural areas in the town. The Working Group had discussed the tender process for the 2021 Christmas Lighting Scheme, which would begin later this month. It was hoped the successful contractor would provide the lighting scheme for the next five years.

Further to Minute (37c) above the Events and Marketing Managers' plans for the creation of a new winter lights event in Grove House Gardens using the £18,000 firework budget were noted with interest as it would be a town centre attraction and generate increased footfall. It was hoped that tenders for the winter lights would be obtained at the same time as the Christmas lighting because there could be logistical and financial benefits if the same company was used with the capacity to carry out both contracts.

40. HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (HSHAZ)

The Committee was reminded that there were three strands to the HAHAZ scheme as follows;

- Physical interventions.
 - Cultural Programme/Cultural Consortium
- Community engagement.

In relation to physical interventions, the Committee discussed in detail the following properties;

Number 4 High Street South (Pizza Roma) – officers were trying to initiate a Teams meeting with the new owners

Number 18 High Street South (Chilly and Spice) – The owner's representative had been introduced to the conservation architect and was currently considering next steps

Numbers 21-23 High Street South (Moore's) - it was noted HSHAZ funding could not be made available based on the existing planning permission and approved plans. In order to apply for funding a scheme would have to be based on scholarly research and a previous façade. The owner was still considering next steps; however, the meeting was advised he may continue with the approved scheme rather than working with the programme.

Numbers 20 and 22 High Street South (Celebrations and Coffee Pod)

Once again it was reported the owner of the property was considering the scope of works to the property and how best to move forward.

In relation to **Community Engagement** further to Minute (37) above, the Committee noted the details of community engagement and the development of a community events programme.

41. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

South Bedfordshire Dial-a-Ride:

Councillor Gloria Martin assisted by Councillor Peter Hollick reported that the Dial-a-Ride service was still operating in difficult circumstances. During the lockdown it had delivered 4,500 prescriptions and the transport to hospital service was open to non-members.

Dunstable Town Band:

No report

Men in Sheds (MiS)

Councillor John Gurney had circulated a detailed report prepared by Men in Sheds to Members of the Committee. It was noted that the Town Council had recently spent £3,500 on the refurbishment of the building used by MiS which was owned by the Town Council.

The meeting closed at 20.54