

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE**

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

ON MONDAY 8 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillors Peter Hollick (Town Mayor), Gloria Martin (Deputy Town Mayor), Liz Jones (Chairman), Lisa Bird (Vice-Chairman), Mark Cant, Greg George, Pamela Ghent, Kenson Gurney, Gladys Sanders, and Johnson Tamara

Apologies: None received

In Attendance: Councillor John Gurney, David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Mary Dobbs (Cemetery Manager), Katherine Doyle (Parks and Green Space Development Officer), Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager), James Slack (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager) and Ian Swinnerton (Grounds Operations Manager).

Public: None

42 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 11 January 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

43 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

44 PLANS-SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 5 January, 26 January and 16 February 2021 be received.

45 TREE PLANTING AND ASSOCIATED GRANT FUNDING

The Chairman welcomed Katherine Doyle, the new Parks and Green Space Development Officer to the meeting.

In accordance with the Corporate Plan 2020 to 2023, the Committee noted that there was an objective to improve Mentmore Recreation Ground with tree planting. The Committee considered a report which outlined proposals for tree planting projects in various parts of the Town. The projects consisted of tree planting at Mentmore

Recreation Ground which was ideal for tree planting and wildflower areas. The Committee was shown a concept plan that was being developed by the Parks and Green Space Development Officer. The proposals included (a) a 0.5 ha woodland area using native species planted as whips and transplant trees; (b) the development of a 500m² forest garden planted with edible fruit and nut trees (to be reviewed); (c) the creation and strengthening of 270m of new and existing hedgerows with native tree species and (d) the planting of 40 to 50 standard sized oak trees.

It was estimated the planting scheme as described could be achieved within a budget of £7,000 (plants and materials only). There were also plans to create an urban tree planting project consisting of planting standard trees. The trees would be a mixture of ornamental and native trees planted in larger open spaces throughout the town. Dunstable in Bloom had already indicated a willingness to support the project. It was estimated a sum of £4,000 would secure the planting of 40 trees (plants and materials only). It was stressed that the Town Council would engage with local communities on the development and implementation of both projects.

It was further noted that there were funding opportunities for the planting schemes including Central Bedfordshire Councils' community tree planting grant fund (up to £5,000). Other sources of potential funding had been identified such as the Woodland Trust, Trees for Cities and the Apples and Orchards UK Network Initiative. It was also planned to support National Tree Week in November 2021 and Members suggestions for planting sites would be welcomed. Councillor Peter Hollick suggested an area in College Drive and a site by the busway. He suggested this would need discussions with Luton Borough Council.

RESOLVED – that the tree planting projects detailed in the report be agreed; that an application be made to the Central Bedfordshire Community Tree Fund and that officers explore other match funding sources to maximise the funding opportunities as they arise.

46 DELEGATION OF ENFORCEMENT POWERS TO COUNCIL STAFF – LITTERING AND DOG FOULING

The Committee considered a report that addressed an action in the Councils' Corporate Plan 2020 to 2023 to investigate the feasibility of the Council adopting enforcement powers relating to dog fouling and littering and to train staff in enforcement duties. The detailed report advised the Committee of the officer discussions held with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). The conclusion of the research was the use of enforcement powers required specialist officers with skills relating to evidence collection, potential attendance at court and complaint handling and resolution. Also, it was noted the delegation of enforcement powers would have to be sought from Central Bedfordshire Council or the police and CBC did not have a policy of delegation of powers and services to parish and town councils. A discussion took place about the roles of the Safer Neighbourhood Officers Team at CBC. It was noted that the Town Council Ranger Service and the Heads of Service were engaging with the new team and it was hoped strong communication links would be constructed to help inform enforcement activity and the targeting of these enforcement resources. Members were keen to learn about the role and performance of the Safer

Neighbourhood Officer Team and it was hoped the Town Council could engage with the appropriate CBC Cabinet Member. It was suggested that the Dunstable Joint Committee had regular reports on the enforcement role of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team.

RESOLVED - that no further action be taken to pursue the adoption of delegated enforcement powers for littering and dog fouling subject to a review in twelve months' time and that CBC be asked to submit regular performance reports on the work of the Safer Neighbourhood Team to the Dunstable Joint Committee

47 CEMETERY, ALLOTMENTS, RECREATION GROUNDS, TOWN CENTRE GARDENS, RANGER SERVICE AND CREASEY PARK INFORMATION AND UPDATE REPORT

The Cemetery Manager and Grounds Operations Manager presented a detailed information report covering all areas of the Council's grounds maintenance responsibilities.

a) Dunstable Cemetery

Members received the burial figures for January to February 2021, which were compared for the same period last year along with the profiled income and expenditure figures as at the end of February 2021. The expenditure figures indicated a positive variance of £21,218, which was largely due to the higher levels of burial income.

It was also noted the Green Flag assessment for 2021 would be a desktop assessment using the Dunstable Cemetery Management Plan.

Action; Cemetery staff be thanked for their work in a prolonged stressful period during the Covid-19 pandemic.

b) Allotments

Members were advised that the waiting list was growing significantly; there were 287 people on the waiting list. The Committee received a summary detailing the make-up of the current waiting list.

c) Recreation Grounds

Since the last report, there had been no incidents of vandalism to play equipment. During the latest lockdown period, there had been a large increase in the number of people visiting the play areas and grounds staff continued to sanitise all play areas. Remedial work to the play mat surfacing at Frenchs Avenue play area was to be implemented. In addition, there was uncertainty if and when local football leagues would complete their seasons. This would determine when renovations works could commence.

Action; Grounds staff be thanked for their important work during the winter months.

d) Town Centre Area

Officers were liaising with Central Bedfordshire Council to determine the locations for new wayfinding and gateway signage as part of the Dunstable High Street Improvement Programme. The Town Council had made available a sum of £67,000 from the Market Town Regeneration Fund for installation of the signage. The gateway signs and the wayfinding signs would include maps of the town centre detailing key locations and would include QR codes linking smart phone users to additional information to be hosted on the Town Councils website. The Committee was advised a letter had been received about the lack of dog poo bins in the Downside area. Officers would contact the resident to look at provision in the area.

e) Dunstable in Bloom

Dunstable was to represent the Anglia region in the 2020 Britain in Bloom that would now take place in 2022. The Committee was informed Dunstable in Bloom was meeting regularly on a monthly basis.

Members were advised that the Parks and Green Space Development Officer would liaise with Dunstable in Bloom on a number of projects and initiatives.

f) Town Ranger Service

The Rangers had been working in the Central Ward during February carrying out litter picking, path clearing, hedge cutting and jet washing.

g) Creasey Park Community Football Centre

It was noted that due to lockdown there was no operational activity at Creasey Park. The Committee was advised that the new ATP was completed with only minor defects. The new CCTV system was operational. Also, through S106 funding, a freestanding and retractable pergola with a durable roof terrace awning was being installed. This would be located on the paved patio area. In responding to the recent Government 'road map' the Committee was supplied with a summary of a timetable relating to re-opening services.

h) Bennet's Splash and Splashside Café

It was noted that in line with the Government road map the Splashpark and café could be open on 21 June. Officers were making appropriate plans on the re-opening.

i) Clarification of issue - request for free use of the ATP at Creasey Park

Councillor Greg George raised an issue about the old artificial turf pitch (ATP) site behind Go Bowling in Dunstable. This issue had been raised at the January Committee. It was acknowledged it had not been an agenda item however, it was considered important that the discussion was recorded as part of the minute because the issue was subject to lots of discussion on social media.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised the meeting that the pitch site was to be part of the proposed Health Hub and associated housing. Once the old artificial turf pitch had been decommissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) it had been used on a regular basis by the public for sports and other leisure activities. It was stressed that the use had not been authorised by CBC and that ideally the site should have been made secure at the time of decommissioning as it was never intended to be used as general public open space. The old ATP was always a bookable space that had to be paid for.

The new ATP at Creasey Park was a replacement for the old pitch site. The new ATP was a £1.2 million investment and free use of the new ATP was not part of the management agreement between the Town Council and CBC.

48 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

CBC Development Management Committee:
Members had no updates.

The meeting closed at 20.14