

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2021

Present: Councillors Gloria Martin (Town Mayor), Liz Jones (Deputy Town Mayor), Peter Hollick (Chairman), Sid Abbot, John Gurney and Gladys Sanders

In Attendance: Councillor Kenson Gurney, Councillor Matt Brennan (remotely), David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services, remotely), Michelle Collings (HSHAZ Manager, remotely), Annette Clynes (Town Centre Services Officer, remotely), Lisa Stephens (Cultural Services Manager, remotely), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager, remotely) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Wendy Bater, Greg George, Pam Ghent, and Cameron Restall

Public: Nil

123. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 7 June 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

124. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

125. DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

The Town Centre Services Officer updated the Committee on Town Centre Services including, vacancy rates, Middle Row Markets and partnership working.

It was noted that Ashton Square Toilets would once again be entered in the national Loo of the Year competition and that vacancy rates were stable.

Welcome Back Fund (WBF)

It was noted that as part of the fund bunting was being displayed in parks, flower garlands and flower walls had also been set up, AstroTurf figures had been introduced that would remain in situ in High Street North and Grove House Gardens and 3D floor art in Ashton Square would take place from 15 to 18 September.

Christmas Lights

New lights would be installed in Ashton Square and Church Street and new lights would be ordered for the main tree in The Square and Priory Gardens.

As part of the discussion the Committee was advised that in a Times Newspaper survey, Dunstable had been included in a list of 23 top towns to live in. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive believed that Dunstable being included in such surveys reflected positively on the work the Town Council undertook to promote and improve the look of the town and the facilities and services available in Dunstable.

126. OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES

The Good Companions Club re-opened on 28 June. The Creasey Park Community Football Centre lunch club re-opened on 1 July with 21 members returning. From 8 September the lunch club would be held on a Wednesday. Members noted with sadness that some members of both clubs had passed away.

127. GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Grove Corner

Further to the last Committee report Grove Corner had received 335 visits from young people between 17 May and 20 August. Pokémon had received 76 visits from young people in the same time period.

Youth Engagement

Some of the young people attending Grove Corner were preparing for the transition to college. Officers had been supporting young people in their apprehensions and excitement at the new challenges they faced.

Community Engagement

Grove Corner was heavily hired by community groups during the daytime. Officers had provided the Committee with a full summary of the Summer Activities 2021. It was noted that they had been popular throughout the summer period. Officers had also planned four community litter picks in September and October. All Councillors were invited to attend and take part.

Service Level Agreements

Members were given a full account of the situation to date with all organisations receiving Service Level Agreement payments. Officers remain in touch with all groups.

128. PRIORY HOUSE

Customers had responded well to changes in Covid safety measures at Priory House. The staff felt safe in their working environment. Officers were considering options for using the attic office that would become free at the end of the year. Reports on the TIC and the Jacobean Room were noted.

Events

The Classic Motor Rally on 21 August went well. Members thanked the Events Officer for her organisation of the event. For Priory Pictures and Proms in the Park, new box meals could be ordered, and an additional offer had been made available; VIP tables for up to four people for Proms in the Park. Officers were also working with the Town Centre Officer and the Events Officer to create a Christmas events campaign.

Afternoon Teas had resumed, and bookings were now being taken for October. Following the success of Summer Pudding Nights officers were trialling pudding nights from October to December. The Catering Manager was devising a Christmas Afternoon Tea Menu to be introduced in November. It was noted the Tea Rooms income was down by 27%. The income for the Gift Shop was currently 26% down on income compared to the previous year.

129. 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

The High Street Heritage Action Zone Programme Manager reported on key developments' occurring under all the headings. The Committee also considered four tables appended to the report that summarised engagement and interest to date.

130. EVENTS AND MARKETING

Events Programme 2021 - Review

Members were informed that all main events staged to date had been held safely and successfully.

Events Programme 2021 – Forthcoming

Members were given details on all forthcoming events up to and including plans for Christmas.

Queens Jubilee Celebrations 2022

The Committee considered an information report that covered potential opportunities to celebrate HM the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in 2022. It was suggested that street party grants be made available as was the case in 2012 for the Diamond Jubilee. A grant fund of £1,000 could be made available to allow 10 x £100 grants for street parties.

The Big Jubilee Lunch would be held on 5 June 2022 and plans were being made to broadcast the planned live music concert being shown by the BBC. Dunstable Live was planned for June with a theme of 'Best of British'. As part of the celebrations, the National Trust was seeking a donation of £4,000 to part fund the lighting of the Beacon on Dunstable Downs. The Town Council was putting plans in place to support The Queen's Green Canopy Initiative with tree planting taking place probably in March 2022. A discussion took place that noted there was likely to be a civic event to be created to celebrate the Jubilee. It was also noted Jubilee bunting would be erected down Middle Row and Ashton Square and the Middle Row Market on 11 June would have a Jubilee theme. Priory House themed Jubilee Afternoon Teas would be offered throughout June along with children arts and crafts activities.

An additional £5,000 would be included in the draft revenue budget for 2022/23 to cover the suggested expenditure outlined above. Members could determine at this stage how they would like to fund any additional Jubilee celebrations.

131. DUNSTABLE FIREWORKS DISPLAY

The Committee considered a report which invited it to decide on the future of Dunstable Town Council's fireworks display based on the outcomes of the site suitability survey that had been circulated with the agenda. The Committee had been advised at its meeting in March 2021 of the impact the installation of a second ATP at Creasey Park Community Football Centre would have on future firework events. The second ATP pitch was built on the firing and fall out area for the display. Estimates of £45-£60,000 had been received to

protect the ATP surface.

In response to discussion at the 1 March meeting, the Committee considered a report that assessed alternative sites in and around Dunstable. Nine sites were assessed with none being suitable, primarily for reasons of health and safety. The Committee was also invited to consider establishing a community grants scheme that, in the absence of a fireworks display, would allow schools, clubs and community groups to apply for funding to enable them to hold their own community displays. The existing £18,000 fireworks budget would cover the expenditure involved.

A general discussion of the issues raised in the reports took place and it was

- RESOLVED:**
- (i) That for the foreseeable future, the Council is not able to hold the large-scale firework display due to a lack of a suitable venue.
 - (ii) That the Committee does not support the setting up of a community grants scheme to help fund community groups to hold their own public firework displays.

132. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

South Bedfordshire Dial-a-Ride:

Councillor Gloria Martin reported that the organisation was in good health financially and was purchasing a new bus.

Dunstable Town Band:

Currently it was not rehearsing although rehearsal space had been acquired at Vale Academy. It was hoped the band would hold concerts at Christmas.

Men in Sheds (MiS)

Councillor John Gurney updated the Committee about the refurbishment of the Shed. The refurbishment plans were being implemented. Also, it was reported Health and Safety issues were being addressed positively.

The meeting closed at 20.37