

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 21 JUNE 2021

Present: Councillor Liz Jones (Deputy Town Mayor), Sid Abbott (Chairman), Philip Crawley (Vice-Chairman), Wendy Bater, Matthew Brennan, Lisa Bird, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Peter Hollick, Lee Roberts, and Johnson Tamara

In Attendance: David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), David Brough (Senior Finance Manager, remotely), Lisa Scheder (Finance and Procurement Manager, remotely), and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Gloria Martin (Town Mayor) and Cameron Restall

Public Attendance: None

100. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15 March 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

101. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

102. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented the financial monitoring report for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Members also noted the details of year end balances and earmarked reserves as of 31 March 2021. The Committee noted with satisfaction the March 2021 second interim and June 2021 final internal audit reports that recorded firm financial control and effective systems of accountancy and governance.

In presenting the Council's healthy financial outturn for last year, the Town Clerk and Chief Executive made members aware of the current challenging financial position the Council is in due to a downturn in the trading environments for Priory House and Creasey Park Community Football Centre because of the ongoing Pandemic. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive assured members that strict financial controls were in place to manage revenue expenditure but that at this early stage in the financial year, it is anticipated that there is a potential for a revenue deficit at the end of March 2022.

The Committee requested to record their thanks to both the Finance and Procurement Manager and the Senior Finance Manager for all their hard work over the last twelve months and expressed their thanks to the Town Clerk and Chief Executive for his leadership in ensuring the Council maintained a healthy financial position.

RESOLVED: That the above reports be noted

103. UPDATE ON WORKING TOWARDS CARBON NEUTRAL STATUS BY 2030

The Committee considered an update report on progress made with the baseline assessment of the Council's greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint

RESOLVED: That the above reports be noted and that the membership of the Working Group be amended with Councillor Brennan replacing Councillor Bater.

104. REFERRAL REPORTS FROM SERVICE COMMITTEES

The Committee considered a report that outlined recommendations made by the Community Services Committee on 7 June 2021 relating to Service Level Agreements and a further report from Grounds and Environmental Services Committee recommending the release of up to £34,000 from the earmarked vehicle reserve to purchase a new replacement tractor as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: i) That an annual budget sum of £10,000 be created during the budget setting process for 2022/23.

ii) That of the new budget, £9,000 be made available for formal Service Level Agreements and the remaining £1,000 be made available to support new and emerging voluntary groups.

iii) That the release of £34,000 from the earmarked vehicle reserve to purchase a replacement tractor be approved

105. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

CAB Management Committee – no update

Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – no update

Hospice at Home Management Committee – virtual meetings taking place; a new Treasurer had been appointed and volunteer workers had a work strategy moving forward and fundraising was recommencing.

Ashton Almshouses Charity – no update

106. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED; To exclude the public and press in accordance with Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1961 S1.2 to allow discussion on matters that affect the information relating to the potential disposal of land in the ownership of the Council and proposed changes to the Council's Staffing Establishment

107. DISPOSAL OF LAND IN THE OWNERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

The Committee considered a report that outlined in detail progress being made on land disposals at Meadway Allotments and Dunstable Cemetery and informed the Committee on the imminent lease of office space at Grove House

RESOLVED; That the report be noted

108. CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT

The Committee considered a range of recommendations relating to the Council's staffing establishment, a number of which were recommended from the Community Services Committee. Following a full debate the following was resolved:

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the following posts be deleted from the Council's current staffing establishment:
 - Head of Finance and Support Services
 - Priory House Manager
 - Events and Marketing Manager
 - P/T Events Assistant
 - Finance and Procurement Manager (to be deleted in line with timescales set out at paragraph 5.2)
 2. That the following new posts be established:
 - Cultural Services Manager
 - Events Officer
 - P/T Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer (25hrs)
 - P/T, temporary HSHAZ Assistant (10hrs)
 - Head of Finance
 3. That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive's role be temporarily expanded to assume the statutory role of responsible Financial Officer and to take on all existing line management of staff within the new Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Office as set out at appendix 1 of the covering report.
 4. That the existing Finance and Support Services department be dissolved.
 5. That the Council's Managing Organisational Change Policy be implemented for all current staff that will be affected by the recommendations above.
 6. That the current temporary position of P/T Senior Finance Manager be extended until November 2021.

7. That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to recruit to the new posts as per the Council's normal recruitment procedures and make all changes to individual's terms and conditions of employment as set out at paragraphs 5 and 6 of the covering report.

Councillor Lisa Bird requested that her decision to abstain from voting on the recommendations be recorded.

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The meeting closed at 20.15.