

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 7 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillors Gloria Martin (Town Mayor), Liz Jones (Deputy Town Mayor), Peter Hollick (Chairman), Sid Abbott, Wendy Bater, Alan Corkhill, Greg George, Pam 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, remotely), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager, remotely), Gina Thanky (Events Officer, remotely), Annette Clynes (Town Centre Services Officer, remotely) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillor Cameron Restall

Public: One

38. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 10 January 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

40. CRIME AND POLICE COMMISSIONER (PCC)

The Crime and Police Commissioner for Bedfordshire (PCC) attended the meeting via Teams. The PCC covered the following issues;

1. Bedfordshire being a net exporter of County Lines
2. Policing of County Lines is a severe drain on resources
3. Bedfordshire Police was funded as a rural Police Authority while the challenges of the main urban centres meant it faced issues of policing resources
4. Community policing
5. Introduction of schemes to address the exploitation of young people

Councillors raised the following issues:

- The need for interagency and inter faith working
- The need to support schools particularly after 2 years of Covid -19 lockdown
- Anti-bullying projects in schools
- Action needed to address drug culture on the streets

41. DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

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

Middle Row Markets would start again on 26 March 2022 with a Mother's Day Market. Middle Row Markets would then continue being held on the second and third Saturday of the month starting on Saturday 9 April 2022.

The repairs required at Ashton Square Toilets were noted. The Committee also noted with satisfaction that as well as receiving its Loo of the Year award it had received a platinum award for receiving maximum points in its category.

Town Centre

Events on the Square had been confirmed for Ashton Square Day – 6 August with an extra market on this date. Twilight Markets 9, 10 and 11 December (times to be confirmed). Shop Watch had a second meeting in January which had been well attended with those that could not make the meeting receiving notes of the meeting. All partners were present at the meeting to support local businesses and shops. A second meeting constituted with a Chairman and Secretary was held on 1 March 2022.

Welcome Back Fund

The Welcome Back Fund had provided the following for February half term activities; land train, illuminations and valentine's selfie area, bubble entertainment, walkabout entertainment and Love Match meter. It was unfortunate that this had coincided with the red weather warning, but despite this the feedback was positive.

A discussion took place on the feasibility of the land train returning to The Square. It was explained the costs were prohibitive but could be considered for future years.

Christmas Lights

The report on the Christmas lights was noted. The Committee was advised that a fixing for the Christmas tree was being installed.

42. HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (HSHAZ)

Latest Updates

Two grant offers for physical works (to 2 Church Street and 9 High Street South) were issued on 27 October 2021 but had not progressed and were now void. In mid to later December 2021 four new grant offers were issued including a second grant offer for Number 4 High Street South which had been accepted. Three grant offers were made on 21 December 2021 in respect of 9 High Street South, 32 High Street South and 7 High Street South, only the latter of which had been accepted.

Since 13 December 2021 there had been four applications from the owners of 4 High Street South in respect of design work, survey work, scaffolding design and works and project management and Principal Designer/Construction Design Management (CDM) work.

To date there had been six grant applications from private property owners for initial work such as survey work and feasibility studies, these were in relation to the following properties:

- 4 High Street South (Pizza Roma/Tillys)
- 12-14 High Street South (Top Cut Barbers)

- 20 and 22 High Street South (Coffee Pod and Celebrations)
- 24 High Street South (StudioJ)
- 26 High Street South (Beards and Barbers)
- 32 High Street South

The initial feasibility work in respect of 12-14, 20, 22, 24 and 26 High Street South had been completed and unfortunately these properties are not continuing to work with the HSHAZ.

In total six grants were offered in the period from October to December 2021 four of which had not progressed and were void including:

- 2 Church Street (former supermarket).
- 9 High Street South (former Co-op funeral directors)
- 32 High Street South (former Get Stuffed)

Two of the grants offered in the period from October to December 2021 had been accepted but there had been limited progress to date. This included:

- 4 High Street South (Pizza Roma/Tillys) Grant offer for Conception Architects Design Work for 4 High Street South
- 7 High Street South (Herringtons) Grant offer for shopfront scheme for 7 High Street South.

In respect of Number 4 High Street South (Pizza Roma/Tillys) Conception Architects provided details of the work required and costs for design work in December 2021 and a grant offer has been accepted. Since January 2022 the Conservation Accredited Structural Engineers, Conisbee provided details of the work required and costs for work up to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage 3, along with several specialist surveys and specialist work and scaffolding design and scaffolding works. In Mid-February 2022 Conception Architects provided costs for project managing the project and Principal Designer/Construction Design Management (CDM) work up to the end of March 2022. Historic England was keen to support this further work at a higher grant rate on the understanding that the work was completed before 31 March 2022 at the very latest and any associated invoices submitted before 17 March 2022 deadline.

Priory House

The Heritage Impact Assessment, which was required to aid and finalise decision-making was produced in January 2022. The Listed Building Consent application was submitted on 7 February 2022 under application reference PP-11020769. The application allowed for some flexibility during the works and decision making on site if required. Due to the delay in the application process officers were advised at the Priory House meeting on 17 January 2022 that the site work would possibly commence a couple of months later than previously hoped (i.e. early June) – subject to confirmation pending the tender process and contractors availability. It was now estimated that the start could be delayed until September 2022.

43. GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Grove Corner

Further to the last Committee report, Grove Corner had received 438 visits from young people between 6 December to 18 February 2022. Due to the red weather warning Grove Corner was closed on Friday 18 February 2022. Pokémon was still popular and numbers continued to increase.

Youth Engagement

Officers had delivered informal discussions and activities during the drop-in session on Monday evenings, At the request of the young people they had covered discussion areas such as confidence, coping strategies, anxiety and stress and motivation. On 25 February another silent disco was held on Friday 25 February which had once again been a success.

School Engagement

Officers continued to work with Ringcraft Boxing and St Augustine's Academy. The project would end on 17 March with the Mayor visiting St Augustine's Academy. Officers hoped to reintroduce The Good, The Bad and the Ugly project at a date to be agreed. The same project could be introduced at Priory Academy during the spring term. Following comments from members of the Committee it was agreed all members of the Council would be advised about the event. Updates were also provided on the Young Guardians and Junior Wardens.

Community Engagement

Officers were working with local businesses and community groups to discuss the High Street Heritage Action Zone. As part of the engagement process the Good, the Bad and the Ugly was to be held in March.

It was noted a community litter pick had been held on 15 February at Katherine Drive with Councillor Liz Jones attending. Six bags of litter were collected. It was noted officers would be running a Family Fun Event on 7 April from 10 am to 12 noon. There would be 50 free art and craft bags available on a first come first served basis. Councillors discussed various issues including welcoming activities organised at various venues including the punch bags.

44. OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES

The Good Companions Club continued to do well. The Committee received a report on its activities and noted that the postponed Christmas Lunch was now changed to a music event held on 16 February 2022 with local music talent Joe Corrigan, which was enjoyed by all those attending. Creasey Park Community Football Centre lunch club continued to do well. Since the last meeting it had hosted a visit from the Cinnamon Trust which looks after animals when their owners were ill or had passed away.

Coffee Morning

Officers held a coffee morning on 15 February at the Beecroft Community Centre which was supported by Age UK and SSAFA.

Rock and a Roll

Officers reported that the next event would be held on 15 March at Creasey Park Community Football Centre, the Committee noted it was sold out.

Big Lunch

Officers were working on the Big Lunch event to be held on Tuesday 31 May 2022, which would have a Platinum Jubilee theme.

Councillor Gloria Martin had received feedback from members of the Good Companions Club who had requested that publicity for events be produced in larger print. The officers confirmed that this would be done.

45. **EVENTS**

Future Events

The Committee considered a report on the following events:

- (i) St George's Day – to take place on Saturday 23 April at Priory Gardens. The event to be promoted via leaflets, posters, DTC noticeboards, website and social media
- (ii) Classic Motor Rally
- (iii) Queen's Jubilee Concert – Saturday 4 June
- (iv) Sunday Band Concerts – through the summer months
- (v) Dunstable Live - more information would be provided on 31 March
- (vi) Party in the Park
- (vii) Around the World
- (viii) Priory Pictures

Event Review Working Group

At the November meeting it was agreed by the Committee that a Working Group be setup to review the events programme. The Working Group would evaluate the success and viability of the current events programme. The Committee was reminded that the Events Review Working Group met in January and had reviewed the 2021 programme, the methodology for the review of past events and the evaluation of 2022 events. It was further noted that a number of public feedback exercises would be undertaken via Survey Monkey, Talk of the Town Facebook and surveys undertaken on the day of the events. These results would be considered by the Working Group in June where it would review St George's Day, Motor Rally and Dunstable Live. Councillor Liz Jones encouraged all members to attend the events provided by the Town Council and she advised officers that councillors were happy to assist with events if required.

46. **PRIORY HOUSE INFORMATION REPORT**

Operational Issues

The Committee was advised that the lift was working. It was noted that on Friday 18 February Priory House was closed. All bookings made for that day had been rearranged.

Tourist Information Centre and Retail Outlet

It was noted it was trading well.

The Jacobean Room

There were 21 confirmed weddings for 2022. The first wedding open day was held in February.

Events

The Committee noted the cheese and wine evening had been rescheduled for Saturday 7 May. The first Sunday afternoon tea session had sold out.

Priory House Tea Rooms

It was noted that the tea rooms were trading well.

47. **PRIORY HOUSE RECONFIGURATION OF THE GROUND FLOOR**

The Committee considered a report on an officer proposal to scope the reconfiguration of the Priory House Gift Shop in order to generate additional income for the House. This was considered essential as the operations of the House would be affected by the planned major repairs to the Undercroft. Members welcomed the opportunity to review the trading

opportunities at Priory House and made a number of suggestions to be included in the scoping report such as maximising the offer in the Tea Rooms and new food offers in the Gift Shop.

RESOLVED: That the Council provides in principle support for officers to scope the reconfiguration of the Priory House Gift Shop in order to generate additional income for the House and the Committee will welcome a summary of the financial implications of the reconfiguration at its June meeting.

48. REQUEST FOR FREE USE OF GROVE THEATRE

The Committee considered an additional report about the possible staging of a charity music event in aid of Ukraine. To achieve this, it was suggested one of the Town Councils' free uses of Grove Theatre was given to local musicians to organise a charity music event. It was reported the music event could be held by 31 March. The Committee was keen to support this local initiative and would assist in publicising the event.

RESOLVED: That the Council supports the local initiative to organise a charity music event for Ukraine and agrees to offer one of its free uses of Grove Theatre to the music initiative.

49. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

South Bedfordshire Dial-a-Ride:

Councillor Gloria Martin reported that the organisation was in good health financially. However, it had been under threat operationally because its premises and hardstanding facilities at the Old Mill, Dunstable had been subject to a notice to quit. She was pleased to report that Dial a Ride now had permanent and secure premises.

Dunstable Town Band:

No report.

Men in Sheds (MiS)

Councillor John Gurney reported that all members of MIS were now subject to a training arrangement to ensure they were all trained on the use of hand tools and machinery.

The meeting closed at 20.45