

Notice of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

David Ashlee Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: 10 June 2022

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** will be held on **Monday 20 June 2022** at **Grove House in the Council Chamber commencing at 7.00 pm**. Those members of the public and press who wish to attend are invited to do so either remotely using Microsoft Teams or by attending in person at the Council Chamber. Therefore, they are asked to notify their intention to attend by emailing Ian.Reed@dunstable.gov.uk by 17 June 2022

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence
2. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 21 March 2022 (copy previously circulated).
3. Specific Declarations of Interest.
4. Referral Reports – To consider a referral report from the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 6 June 2022 (any referrals from the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee meeting on 13 June will be circulated next week) – (see page 3)
5. Financial Monitoring - Report (see page 4)
6. Marketing and Communications Report (see page 26)
7. Domestic Abuse Policy (see page 28)
8. Downside Community Centre Building Repairs (see page 37)

9. Representatives on Outside Organisations - to receive reports from representatives on the following outside organisations:

CAB Management Committee – Councillor Bater

Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – Town Mayor and Councillors Corkhill and Abbott

Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Jones

Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillors Corkhill and Hollick

NB: Those Members who are not members of this Committee but are representatives of organisations reporting thereto are reminded to provide a report in time for the meeting.

Part 2 of the Agenda

Move to exclude press and public in accordance with Public Bodies – (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1961 sect.1.2 to discuss matters;

(a) affecting the Councils' Staffing Establishment

10. Changes to the Council's Staffing Establishment

Report circulated separately

Yours faithfully,



David Ashlee
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

To: All Members of Finance and General Purposes Committee:
Councillors Liz Jones (Town Mayor), Lisa Bird (Deputy Town Mayor), Gloria Martin (Chairman), Philip Crawley (Vice-Chairman), Sid Abbott, Wendy Bater, Matthew Brennan, Mark Cant, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Peter Hollick, Cameron Restall, Lee Roberts and Johnson Tamara and other Members of the Council for information.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 20 JUNE 2022

REFERRAL REPORT FROM COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Purpose of Report: To consider and approve a recommendation made by the Community Services Committee on 6 June 2022

1. RESERVE SPENDING APPROVAL – PRIORY HOUSE RESERVE

- 1.1 At the meeting members received a report detailing the option to reconfigure the ground floor of Priory House to optimise income and to adjust service delivery. Members noted the balance of funding available from the Priory House Building Reserve which currently stands at £98,569.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommends to Finance and General Purposes the release of up to £60,000 from the Priory House Building Reserve to reconfigure the ground floor of Priory House as detailed in the report.

2. AUTHOR

- 2.1 Becky Wisbey
Head of Community Services
becky.wisbey@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****20 JUNE 2022****FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

Purpose of Report:	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) provide a revenue budgetary control report for the financial year ending 31 March 2022 ii) provide detail of the Council's Year End Balances as of 31 March 2022 iii) provide detail of the Council's earmarked reserves as of 31 March 2022 iv) present to members the final Internal Audit Report for financial year ending 31 March 2022 v) provide an updated Treasury Management Policy
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1. ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 For Members to note the financial reports for the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 1.2 For Members to note the Council's Year End Balances and earmarked reserves as of 31 March 2022.
- 1.3 For Members to note the final internal audit report completed in June 2022, which concludes that the Council *"continues to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal control. The records held in support of the accounting transactions continue to be of a high standard and provide an effective audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation."*
- 1.4 For Members to adopt the updated Treasury Management Policy, which has been updated to include a recommendation to maintain the general balance (reserve) of *"485,000 or 25% of the salary budget, whichever is the higher to reflect current salary commitments to protect the Council from unforeseen events and to give time to respond to such events."*

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Members will be aware that it is a requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 that the Council must, not later than 30 June, consider the accounting statements by the members meeting as a whole.
- 2.2 The meeting of the Council to be held on 27 June 2022 will receive the Annual Return and supporting documentation for consideration and approval.
- 2.3 In advance of that meeting, this report summarises the net expenditure against the budget for each service area as of 31 March 2022. This forms the actual outturn at the end of the financial year and the actual variances to budget.

3. REVENUE BUDGETARY REPORT

- 3.1 The summary at Appendix 1 shows the net expenditure on 31 March 2022 per service area and the actual outturn against budget.
- 3.2 The summary shows an overall net revenue underspend at the end of the financial year of £13,192. This figure includes £82,551 of previously approved commitments from the General Reserve and £39,819 overachievement at Creasey Park Community Football Centre (CPCFC) being allocated to the CPCFC Reserve.
- 3.3 Within the **Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Department** the overall variance was **£66,098 underspent**. Significant variances to budget were as follows:
- *Town Clerk and Chief Executive's* staff costs were underspent by **£15,514** mainly due to a restructure resulting in revised officer roles.
 - *Central Services* was overspent by **£7,157** due to additional professional fees required.
 - *Grove House* overachieved by **£18,156** mainly due to rent received from new tenants.
 - *Corporate Management* was underspent by **£34,458**, mainly due to the Covid and Pay Award contingency budgets not being used, however underspend offset 1.75% pay award on individual staff cost budgets across all service areas.
 - *Democratic Representation* was underspent by **£4,523** due to reduced mayoral allowance and transport required during the pandemic.
- 3.4 Within **Grounds and Environmental Services** the overall variance was **£20,030 overspent**. Significant variances to budget were as follows:
- *Grounds Staff Costs* was underspent by **£10,043** due to in year vacancies.
 - *Cemetery* was overspent by **£29,209**, this was due to £58,342 commitment agreed from General Reserve now being met from in year savings. Burial Fees overachieved by £34,000; there were £4,000 in year vacancy savings less £10,000 additional expenditure on repairs, maintenance, utilities and cleaning costs.
 - *Recreation Grounds* was overspent by **£17,604** due to loss of maintenance contracts; non use of £8,000 Willoughby funding and overspends on cleaning, equipment and maintenance.
 - *Town Centre and Gardens* was **£21,842** overspent, this is mainly due to £19,214 commitment agreed from General Reserve now being met from in year savings plus additional cleaning costs
 - *Town Ranger Service* was overspent by **£4,864**, mainly due to vehicle maintenance costs.
 - *Creasey Park* **over-achieved by £39,819**, mainly due to income from the second ATP, which was allocated to the CPCFC Reserve at year end.
 - *Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground Splash Park* was underspent by **£2,606**: £22,000 underachievement on income due to reduced opening, offset by an underspend on costs, including staff savings.
- 3.5 Within **Community Services** the overall variance was **£6,928 underspent**. Significant variances to the budget were as follows:
- *Staff Costs* were overspent by **£3,630** due to the pay award.
 - *Older Peoples Services* was underspent by **£6,116** based on a 3-month closure of services due to pandemic.

- *Community Engagement* was underspent by £2,109, mainly due to reduction on grants distributed in 2021/22.
- *Grove Corner* overachieved by £13,955 due to an increase of £9,000 in room hire bookings and savings on staffing and utilities.
- *Events Programme* was overspent by £18,019 due to a £9,112 underachievement predicted on concessions, £19,799 overspend on salaries due to restructure and pay award, offset by £10,892 of various cost savings.
- *Central Marketing* was underspent by £1,367 due to reduced production of Talk of the Town during the pandemic.
- *Priory House* was underspent by £5,929, this was mainly due to loss of income due to the pandemic offset by a saving on staffing due to restructuring (offsetting overspend on the Events Programme salaries)

4. **YEAR END BALANCES**

- 4.1 The balance of the Council's cash accounts at the year ending 31 March 2022 are summarised at Appendix 2 (subject to audit).
- 4.2 The table below summarises the movement in the General Reserve.

	Balance on 1 st April	Expenditure from/ contribution to	Balance on 31 st March
			(inc stock)
2020/21	£520,570	£104,452	£625,022
2021/22	£625,022	£13,192	£638,214

5. **RESERVES**

- 5.1 The schedule enclosed at Appendix 3 provides detail of actual contributions to, and expenditure from, reserve funds as at the end of the financial year 31 March 2022.

6. **FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE**

- 6.1 In place of Accounts Sub-Committee, Councillors should, as a minimum, view and audit the Council's accounts on a quarterly basis.
- 6.2 The last quarterly financial Councillor audit took place virtually and was completed on 19 May 2022 with the Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Councillor Abbott and Councillor John Gurney taking part. The Councillors carried out a 'mini-audit' which included requests of financial information on various purchase ledger invoices paid, together with verifying all of the bank statements of the accounts against the Accounts Software relating to January, February and March 2022.
- 6.3 No issues or discrepancies material or otherwise, were raised.
- 6.4 Further quarterly meetings are to be arranged and all Members of this Committee have been invited to attend any future Financial Governance Audit meetings they can make.
- 6.5 This report also recommends an update to the Council's Treasury Management Policy, which in turn recommends an increase to the base level of the Council's

General Reserve to £485,000 which reflects the Council's overall staffing costs liability for this financial year.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the final 2021/22 internal audit report appended to this report, and it is pleasing to report that the Council has been given a clean bill of health.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 These are inherent within the content of this report.

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Summary of Net Revenue Expenditure
Appendix 2 – Summary of Year End Balances
Appendix 3 – Summary of Allocated Reserves
Appendix 4 – Final 2021/22 Internal Audit Report
Appendix 5 – Treasury Management Policy June 2022

10. AUTHOR

- 10.1 Lisa Scheder – Finance & Procurement Manager & Deputy RFO
E-mail: Lisa.Scheder@dunstable.gov.uk

Dunstable Town Council**Summary of Actuals vs Budget****31 March 2022****Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Office**

Service Area	Budget 2021/22	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
Staff Costs	-328,912	-313,398	-313,398	15,514
Central Services	-106,850	-114,007	-114,007	-7,157
Grove House	-45,498	-27,342	-27,342	18,156
Corporate Management	-133,227	-98,769	-98,770	34,458
Democratic Management & Representation	-15,750	-11,227	-11,227	4,523
Capital & Projects (inc loan charges)	-95,832	-95,228	-95,228	604
Grand Total	-726,069	-659,971	-659,971	66,098

Grounds and Environmental Services

Service Area	Budget 2021/22	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
Staff & Vehicle Costs	-672,819	-662,776	-662,776	10,043
Allotments	1,000	1,553	1,553	553
Cemetery	72,090	42,881	42,881	-29,209
Recreation Grounds	-49,500	-67,104	-67,104	-17,604
Town Centre and Gardens	-31,900	-53,742	-53,742	-21,842
Town Ranger Service	-12,000	-16,864	-16,864	-4,864
Capital & Projects	-120,831	-120,363	-120,363	468
Sub Total	-813,960	-876,415	-876,415	-62,455
Income: Creasey Park - Football	196,522	245,202	245,202	48,680
Costs: Creasey park - Football	-72,155	-69,918	-69,918	2,237
Income: Bar & Catering	200,000	199,554	199,554	-446
Costs: Bar & Catering	-324,367	-335,019	-335,019	-10,652
Sub Total	0	39,820	39,819	39,819
Bennett Memorial RG Splash Park	-31,664	-29,058	-29,058	2,606
Grand Total	-845,624	-865,653	-865,654	-20,030

Community Services

Service Area	Budget 2021/22	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
Staff Costs	-181,590	-185,220	-185,220	-3,630
Older People's Support Service	-24,352	-18,236	-18,236	6,116
Community Engagement (inc Grants)	-16,707	-14,598	-14,598	2,109
Grove Corner	-24,977	-11,023	-11,022	13,955
Events Programme	-149,362	-167,381	-167,381	-18,019
Central Marketing	-28,500	-27,133	-27,133	1,367
Town Centre Services (inc Special Markets)	-61,908	-62,443	-62,443	-535
Public Conveniences (Ashton Square)	-3,050	-3,196	-3,196	-146
High Street Heritage Action Zone	-23,455	-24,053	-24,053	-598
Capital & Projects	-64,995	-64,613	-64,614	381
Sub Total	-578,896	-577,896	-577,896	1,000
Income: Priory house - Tea Rooms	138,500	127,946	127,946	-10,554
Costs: Priory house - Tea Rooms	-48,000	-48,801	-48,801	-801
Income: Priory house - Shop	13,500	15,455	15,455	1,955
Costs: Priory house - Shop	-6,500	-9,166	-9,166	-2,666
Other Costs (Inc Staff)	-340,879	-322,884	-322,884	17,995
Sub Total	-243,379	-237,450	-237,450	5,929
Grand Total	-822,275	-815,346	-815,347	6,928

DTC Grand Total	-2,393,968	-2,340,970	-2,340,972	52,996
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Allocation to CPCFC Reserve -39,819

Net Balance to General Reserve 31.03.22 13,177

actual 13,192 due to roundings

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**Year End Balances 2021-2022 (Subject to Audit)**

As at 31.03.22

210 Petty Cash Admin	£150.00
225 Petty Cash Grove Corner	£70.00
231 Petty Cash Priory House Tearooms	£240.00
240 Cash Float Priory House	£500.00
250 Petty Cash CPCFC	£200.00
251 Cash Float CPCFC	£650.00
Petty Cash/Cash Floats	<u>£1,810.00</u>
201 Current Account	£16,313.00
202 Business Reserve Account	£1,183,862.07
223 Variable Rate Deposit Account (CCLA Fund 1)	£90,586.33
224 Variable Rate Deposit Account (CCLA Fund 2)	<u>£1,010,389.87</u>
	<u>£2,302,961.27</u>
TOTAL (Box 8 Annual Return)	<u>£2,302,961.00</u>

	Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.21	Contributions Revenue/Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.03.22	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
310	General Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£625,022	£13,192		£638,214	Original in year commitments totalling £82,551 covered by in year revenue savings		£638,214
311	Corporate Plan Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£3,195		-£3,195	£0		£0	£0
312	Vehicles Reserve	HofGES	£54,498	£29,417	-£53,888	£30,027			£30,027
313	CPCFC Reserve	TC&CE	£7,579	£47,416	-£5,218	£50,078	£7,596 - 4 years sponsorship 22/23-25/26	-£7,596	£42,482
314	Christmas Lights Reserve	HofCS	£27,244	£3,500	-£13,742	£17,002	5 year replacement lighting plan	-£17,002	£0
316	Downside Building Maintenance Res	HofCS	£4,523		-£2,992	£1,530			£1,530
317	Grove Corner Building Maint Reserve	HofCS	£30,329	£4,000	-£4,764	£29,565			£29,565
318	Building Security Systems	TC&CE / HofF	£5,357			£5,357			£5,357
319	Cemetery Memorial Safety	HofGES	£3,300	£1,000		£4,300	Memorial safety inspections		£4,300
320	Priory House Tearooms Equipment	HofCS	£1,500	£1,500		£3,000			£3,000
321	IT/Equipment Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£24,796	£15,000	-£10,956	£28,840	Bal of £2,100 for Cemetery Software (from £21,690 agreed) £1,931 for WiFi at CP Depot (Chairs approval)	-£2,100	£26,740
322	Older People's Day Care Syce	HofCS	£12,545			£12,545	£3,887 for increased transport costs £237 donation for activities (from £1,000 received)	£0	£12,545
323	Election Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£18,017	£12,500		£30,517			£30,517
324	Grove House Building Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£90,550	£29,000		£119,550			£119,550
326	Mayoral Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£3,000			£3,000	FGP 19.01.15-Minute 24 - to be retained for transport/allowance as required		£3,000
327	Priory House Exhibition	HofCS	£15,000		-£3,851	£11,149			£11,149
328	Priory Churchyard	HofGES	£34,862	£5,000		£39,862	As determined by quinquennial report		£39,862
329	Performance Area Reserve	HofCS	£11,535		-£1,361	£10,174	Council Minute 35 29.08.20- Bal of £10,355 for Performance Area (from £14,000 agreed) - reduced commitment following CS 19.01.22	-£3,410	£6,763
330	Town Twinning Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£8,367	£500	-£34	£8,833	Retained for twinning activities to be determined		£8,833
331	Tree Reserve	HofGES	£7,763	£5,000	-£11,219	£1,544	GES Minute 67 13.03.17- 5 year tree maintenance programme	-£1,544	£0
332	Open Spaces Improvement Plan	HofGES	£40,000	£15,000	-£15,983	£39,137	FGP Minute 8 20.01.20- Bal of £4,723 for improvement works (from £28,668 agreed) Council Minute 85 29.08.20- £15,000 agreed for Priory Gardens Pergola	-£19,723	£19,414
333	Priory House Building Reserve	HofCS	£56,396	£21,778		£78,174			£78,174
334	Pavilion Buildings Maintenance Res	HofGES	£65,435	£15,000	-£1,845	£78,590			£78,590
336	NEW - Staff Restructuring	TC&CE / HofF	£20,000		-£17,397	£2,603	Restructuring / Recruitment costs	-£2,603	£0
338	Allotments Reserve	HofGES	£24,170	£5,000		£29,170	Improvement works required		£29,170
339	Creasey Park 3G Pitch - Interest	TC&CE	£6,883	£63		£6,946	Interest accrued on ringfenced deposit - retained for contribution towards future pitch replacement - with 361 below		£6,946
341	Splashpark/Skatepark/BMX Reserve	TC&CE / HofGES	£47,408	£12,000	-£2,690	£56,718			£56,718
342	Memorial Kerbs Reserve	HofGES	£6,570			£6,570	for purchase of future supplies		£6,570
343	Cemetery Building Maintenance Res	HofGES	£28,963	£60,100	-£32,293	£56,769	FGP Minute 148 20.09.21- £55,100 for Cemetery repair works (from £58,342 agreed)	-£55,100	£1,669
344	Fencing Maintenance Reserve	HofGES	£3,957	£1,000	-£2,957	£2,000			£2,000
346	NEW - HSHAZ Scheme	HofCS	£437,493	£401,719	-£232,683	£606,529	4 year HSHAZ scheme programme	-£606,529	£0
348	NEW - Unfulfilled Orders	TC&CE / HofF	£51,466			£51,466	Unfulfilled orders committed in 2021/22= all committed	-£51,466	£0
Earmarked Reserves Total			£1,778,023			£2,059,760		-£767,074	£1,292,686

S106/External Funding/Ringfenced Expenditure specified by funding body

315	Awards for All Event	HofCS	£207		-£207	£0	Weird and Wonderful Event- 7 & 8 September 2019		£0
325	Shop Front Improvement Scheme	HofCS	£3,548	£4,789	-£7,345	£990	Shop Front Scheme	-£990	£0
380	Developers Contributions- CAP	HofGES	£18,065			£18,065	Frenchs Avenue S106 £13,779: Frenchs Avenue Fencing £4,286		£18,065
381	CPCFC Capital	TC&CE	£83,641			£83,641	Retained for future repair/replacement of All Weather Pitches at CPCFC (with 339 above)		£83,641
385	Development Contributions- REV	HofGES	£34,316			£34,316	£2,000 committed in 2022 revenue budget from Bal of £30,126 for Willows (from S106 £47,645) Bal of £4,016 for Court Drive Landscaping (from CPC £15,000)	-£12,039	£22,278
570	Joint Committee Fund	HofCS	£10,709		-£1,943	£8,766	Bal in holding code as committed Joint Committees fund only = not DTC	-£8,766	£0
S106/External Funding Total			£150,484			£145,778		-£21,794	£123,984
			£1,928,507			£2,205,538		-£788,868	£1,416,670

Key:

= Finance and General Purposes Committee

= Grounds and Environmental Services Committee

= Community Services Committee



Dunstable Town Council

Internal Audit Report (Final Update) 2021-22

Stephen Christopher

***For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd***

Background

All town and parish councils are required by statute to make arrangements for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control, and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Auditing Solutions Ltd were appointed to undertake this function on behalf of Dunstable Town Council for the 2021-22 financial year.

This report sets out the results of our final audit visit in relation to 2021-22, which was undertaken on 7th June 2022. It updates the report issued in March 2022, following the completion of our second interim audit. We wish to thank Council staff for providing the documentation and explanations required for our audit.

Internal Audit Approach

In carrying out our internal audit work for the year, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts/AGAR. We employ a combination of 100% substantive testing or selective sampling techniques, where considered appropriate, in order to gain assurance that the Council's systems and controls are appropriate and are fit for the purposes intended.

Our audit programme is designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council's financial systems remain robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the Council's AGAR, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

On the basis of the programme of audit work we have undertaken for the year, we have confirmed that the Council continues to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal control. The records held in support of the accounting transactions continue to be of a high standard and provide an effective audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation. We have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the 2021-22 AGAR, having concluded that the internal control objectives as set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

In the sections below, we have explained the objectives of each area of our audit, summarising the work undertaken and our findings. We are pleased to report that there are no matters arising that require a formal recommendation for further action. We ask that Members consider the content of this report.

12

Detailed Report

Accounting records and Banking arrangements

Our objective is to confirm that the accounting records are accurate and up to date, with no anomalous entries in the cashbooks or financial ledgers, and that appropriate banking arrangements are in place.

The Council continues to maintain its accounting records using the RBS Omega software, which is generally acknowledged as a market leader at this tier of local government. Accounting support, in particular the completion of the year-end closedown and production of the annual statutory Accounting Statements (Section 2 of the AGAR), is provided by DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd, who also prepare separate detailed financial statements.

NatWest Bank is used for day-to-day business banking services. Two accounts are held, a Current Account and an instant access Business Reserve Account, with an automatic daily transfer between the accounts to retain a balance of £10,000 in the Current Account. In addition to the Business Reserve Account, all other funds not required for immediate use are held in two Public Sector Deposit Fund accounts with CCLA Investment Management Ltd.

In our audit work for the year, we have:

- Checked and agreed the opening trial balance on Omega for 2021-22 to the closing balances on the 2020-21 AGAR and detailed accounts;
- Verified that the financial ledgers remained “in balance” at the time of our interim audits and as at 31st March 2022;
- Confirmed that the accounting code structure remains appropriate to meet the Council’s budget reporting and control requirements;
- Checked and agreed transactions in the Omega cashbooks for the Current and Business Reserve accounts to the relevant NatWest bank statements for a sample of three months (September 2021, January 2022 and March 2022);
- Checked the detail on all active bank account reconciliations, including the CCLA deposits, as at 30th September 2021, 31st January 2022 and 31st March 2022, to confirm that there are no long-standing uncleared cheques or other anomalous entries,
- Confirmed that the bank reconciliations continue to be subject to independent review by two councillors, every three months, as part of the quarterly ‘financial Councillor audit’;
- Noted that the External Auditors issued their ‘report and certificate’ on the Council’s 2020-21 AGAR on 4th October 2021. In their report, they commented that the audited AGAR and External Auditors’ report for the previous year had not been formally considered by the Council. We confirmed that this was addressed for the 2020-21 AGAR,
- Confirmed that the overall cash balance has been reported correctly in the draft AGAR (Section 2, Line 8), and
- Confirmed that the Council continues to ensure that its IT systems are regularly backed-up offsite.

13

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Corporate Governance

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place and that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain (as we do not attend Council or Committee meetings), all meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been, or are being, considered for implementation.

During the course of our audit work, we have confirmed the following:

- Our review of the minutes of the meetings of the Full Council and its standing committees in the year did not identify any issues that we consider might have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council's future financial stability;
- The Council is keeping its governance arrangements under regular review, with an updated the 'Constitution, Rules and Standing Orders' approved by the Council at its meeting on 9th April 2021 and revised Financial Regulations adopted by the Council on 4th October 2021 (with both the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations being further updated shortly after the year end), and
- The Council continues to exercise the General Power of Competence, which was re-adopted at the Council meeting on 13th May 2019, following the last Council elections.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Expenditure

Our objective is to confirm that:

- Council resources are released in accordance with approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where an invoice is available;
- Official orders have been raised for purchases, where appropriate;
- Any discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

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We have completed our review of the procedures in place in this area. To test compliance with the above criteria, we reviewed a sample of non-pay related payments made during the year. Our test sample included all payments in excess of £7,500, together with a more random selection of every 80th payment as recorded in the Omega cashbook. The overall value of expenditure in our sample totalled just over £916,000, equating to approximately 41% of non-pay expenditure in the year.

The Council makes use of a NatWest Commercial Credit Card, with a monthly limit of £6,000, which is used mainly for items such as internet purchases and subscriptions. There are currently three users, each with a monthly expenditure limit of £2,000. The Card is settled monthly by direct debit. In the course of our audit work, we reviewed the statement for a sample period (month ending 12th November 2021), confirming that all purchases were adequately supported by receipts and were appropriate to the Council's business.

A Fuel Card is also in use, for the purchase of fuel for the Council's vehicle fleet. We reviewed a sample of three invoices paid in November and December 2021 and confirmed that these were adequately supported by receipts and confirmation of the vehicle registrations.

We confirmed that VAT Returns continue to be submitted quarterly in electronic format, as required by extant legislation, with the detail being reconciled to the Omega financial ledger. We reviewed the detail of three of the VAT reclaims submitted during the financial year.

During our interim audits, we reviewed the approach followed for the tendering of a sample of three contracts awarded during the year; Christmas lighting, cleaning of premises and HR/health & safety consultancy. On the basis of the information provided to us, we were able to confirm that the tendering approach followed for each contract met the requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potentially significant areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

There is a requirement for the Council to formally review and approve its risk management arrangements during each financial year. We confirmed that this requirement has been met, with the 'Corporate Risk Log', which provides an assessment of the Council's organisational strategic risks, being subject to review and re-affirmation by the full Council at its meeting on 28th June 2021.

During 2021-22, the Council's primary insurance cover was provided by Zurich Municipal. The policy included Employer's Liability and Public Liability of £10 million, and Fidelity Guarantee cover of £2.5 million, all of which appear to be adequate to meet the current needs of the Council. We note that the policy with Zurich has been extended for a further year.

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We confirmed that, as part of its wider health and safety arrangements, a regular programme of reviews of the Council's playgrounds and play equipment is undertaken. This includes daily and weekly inspections by the Council's own staff, with external inspections (quarterly by Wicksteed and annually by RoSPA), to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

The most recent quarterly inspections were completed in January 2022 and, we confirmed at our second interim audit visit, the reports and actions required were being considered by the Head of Grounds & Environmental Services and his team, with the emphasis being placed on addressing the higher risk areas.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Budget Setting, Budgetary Control and Reserves

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust procedures in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and the level of Precept to be drawn down from Central Bedfordshire Council, and that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also consider whether the Council retains appropriate funds in earmarked and general reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

During the year, the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee received regular financial monitoring reports on progress against the 2021-22 budget, with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review. Whilst the first quarter's report indicated a potential net overspend, subsequent reports to F&GP identified a markedly improved position, which was also reflected in the final outturn. This will be reported to F&GP on 20th June 2022.

In the course of our second interim audit, we reviewed the approach taken by the Council to setting its budget and Precept for 2022-23. As in previous years, the budget process involved detailed consideration by the various committees, in particular F&GP, before the Precept was formally approved by the Full Council at its meeting on 7th February 2022. The Precept has been set at £2,480,490 (£2,393,969 for 2021-22), which represents £187.66 (£182.02) per annum for a Band D property. We are satisfied that Members were provided with an appropriate level of information on which to base the budget decision, with comprehensive supporting documentation included in the budget pack produced by the RFO.

At 31st March 2022, the Council's overall reserves amounted to £2,196,772 (compared to £1,866,332 at the previous year-end). They comprised Earmarked Reserves of £1,422,536 (£1,101,535), Commuted Sums of £136,022 (£139,775) and a General Reserve of £638,214 (£520,570). Under the current Treasury Management Policy, the Council is aiming to maintain a General Reserve balance of £465,000, or 25% of the salary budget, whichever is the higher. Whilst the year-end balance is above this target, equating to 33% of the 2022-23 salary budget, this does not seem unreasonable, given the current economic climate.

Conclusion

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There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Income

The Council receives income from a wide variety of sources including the Allotments, Cemetery, Creasey Park, Specialist Markets, Priory House, and bank and deposit interest. Over the past two years, as a consequence of Covid-19 and in particular the “lockdown” requirements, the income from some of these areas has been significantly lower than originally anticipated, although, as noted in the section above, trading activity has increased significantly in recent months.

Our objective is to confirm that robust procedures are in place to ensure that all income due to the Council is identified and invoiced (where appropriate), with recovery effected within a reasonable time span, and also that it is banked promptly in accordance with the Financial Regulations. In the course of our audits, we undertook work in the following areas:

Fees and charges: We confirmed that the fees and charges for 2021-22 were approved by the Council at its meeting in February 2021, as part of the budget setting process, following detailed consideration by the F&GP Committee. We also confirmed that a similar approach has been followed for 2022-23.

Cemetery-related fees and charges: We reviewed the interment applications and other cemetery-related activities for a sample month (July 2021). We confirmed that, in all cases, the correct amounts had been charged and that income due was received and banked on a timely basis.

Allotment income: We reviewed the allotment records for the current year (commencing 1st January 2022), confirming that requests for rental payment have been emailed to all allotment holders, encouraging payment via the Council website or by bank transfer. At the time of our second interim audit, the bank reconciliations for the end of February had still to be finalised (to confirm the details of all income received). However, we were advised that, as soon as this was done, it was the intention to issue formal reminder letters to all tenants whose rents remain outstanding. At our final audit visit, we confirmed that appropriate action had been taken, where necessary.

Creasey Park Community Football Centre – facilities hire: We reviewed the booking records for a sample week in December 2021, confirming that all of the hires in the week were either covered by a long-term hire agreement or, in the case of one-off functions, had been paid in advance. There were no issues arising.

Banking of income: As noted earlier in this report, we have checked and agreed two sample months’ receipts transactions from cashbooks to the relevant bank statements;

Outstanding debts: We reviewed the aged debtor’s position during the year and at the year-end. We were pleased to confirm that the overall value of long-standing debts has remained low during the year, with effective controls in place and that appropriate action is taken in relation to any outstanding payments.

Conclusion

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There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Petty Cash

As part of the internal audit certification process on the Council's AGAR, we are required to consider and comment upon the controls in place over the operation of petty cash accounts at the Council. Our objective in this area is, therefore, to ensure that appropriate controls are in place; that expenditure incurred is adequately supported by trade invoices or till receipts; that the expenditure is appropriate for the Council's requirements; that VAT has been separately identified for periodic recovery and that cheque reimbursements from the main cashbooks are properly recorded.

Petty cash accounts are operated at several locations. At our first interim audit, we reviewed the procedures in place for the main petty cash account holding at Grove House, which is effectively operated on an Imprest basis with a float of £150. We checked and agreed the cash balance held at the date of the first interim audit to the petty cash ledger, and confirmed that there was appropriate supporting information for petty cash payments made since the date of the last reconciliation. At our second interim audit, we confirmed that regular reconciliations of the other petty cash accounts are being undertaken by the Finance team.

At our final audit, we confirmed that the correct petty cash balances have been included in the cash and bank figure in Section 2, Line 8 of the AGAR.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Staff Salaries

In examining the Council's payroll function, our objective is to confirm that extant employment legislation is being adhered to, that the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation are satisfied regarding the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions, and that the requirements of the local government pension scheme are met.

To meet this objective, we examined the payroll procedures in place and the computations undertaken for the payments to staff in 2021-22 by reference to the October 2021 payroll documentation produced by the Council's bureau provider (Payroll Options Ltd, Milton Keynes). We confirmed the following:

- Appropriate signed contracts of employment are in place for new staff appointed in the year;
- The detail of staff salaries and wages paid in October 2021 agreed to the overall schedule of salaries and pay scales;
- Tax and NI deductions have been made by applying the appropriate tax code and NI Table, with the correct amounts paid over to HMRC each month;
- Appropriate employee and employer contributions to the pension scheme have been determined and have been paid over to the Pension Fund Administrators on a timely basis;
- The backdated arrears due to staff in relation to the delayed national Local

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Government Services pay agreement for 2021-22 were paid in March 2022, and

- Staff costs have been reported correctly in Section 2, Line 4 of the draft AGAR.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Asset Register

In the AGAR, councils are required to report the value of each asset at purchase cost, or at a suitable proxy where that value is not known, and for community assets to be valued at a nominal £1. The value of individual assets should not change from one year to another, with the only changes being the inclusion of new assets purchased or removal of assets disposed of.

A basic asset register is maintained by DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd and reported as a note (note 10) to the detailed financial statements. This includes the original cost of all assets held, as required for the AGAR. We have confirmed that the asset register has been updated for assets acquired and disposed of during 2021-22 and that the updated total cost as at 31st March 2022, £7,873,739, has been included in the draft AGAR (Section 2, Line 9).

Investments and Loans

Our objective is to confirm that an appropriate investment/treasury management policy is in place, that any funds not required for immediate use, whether temporarily or on a longer-term basis are invested in line with that strategy and that interest earned is brought to account correctly and appropriately in the accounting records. We also confirm that any loan repayments due to or payable by the Council are transacted in accordance with the relevant loan agreements.

During the course of our audit work, we confirmed that:

- A formal Treasury Management Policy is in place, as required by the 'Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments'. This was last updated and approved at the F&GP meeting in January 2021;
- At present, the Council does not hold any long-term investments. As noted above, surplus funds are held in either the NatWest (instant access) Reserve Account or the two CCLA Public Sector Deposit Funds;
- The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan repayments (principal and interest) made during 2021-22 agreed to the third party "demand" notices from the UK Debt Management Office, and
- The PWLB loan repayments for the year (£108,426) and the outstanding balance at the year-end (£850,433) have been reported correctly in the draft AGAR – Section 2, Lines 5 and 10 respectively.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

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Statement of Accounts and AGAR

We have reviewed the financial statements produced by DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd from the RBS Omega software and also the draft of the statutory 'Accounting Statements 2021-22' that has been produced, and which the Council is required to formally approve (Section 2 of the AGAR). We have confirmed that the AGAR entries reconcile to the financial statements and to other related documentation.

Conclusions

There are no matters arising from this area of our review that require any formal comment or recommendation. We look forward to receiving a copy of the finalised AGAR (Sections 1 and 2), once the document has been approved by the Council.

On the basis of the work undertaken during the course of our review for the year, we have completed and signed the Annual Internal Audit Report in the AGAR, assigning positive assurances in all areas of internal control.

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PRACTICES

1. Dunstable Town Council defines its treasury management activities as “the management of the Council’s cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”.
2. The Town Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for Dunstable Town Council.
3. The Town Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving best value in treasury management, and to employing suitable performance measurement techniques within the context of effective risk management.
4. The borrowing of monies purely to invest or on-lend and make a return is unlawful and this Council will not engage in such activity.
5. The Council will only enter into further long-term borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board when absolutely necessary for essential major works or capital purchases.
6. A general balance is maintained to protect the Council from unforeseen events and to give time to respond to such events. The Council will work towards maintaining a general balance of £485,000 or 25% of the salary budget, whichever is the higher.
7. The Council will aim to reduce its reliance on its use of reserves when setting future years’ budgets and work towards increasing its general reserve to a recommended minimum level as given in point 6 above.
8. The general policy for the Council is the prudent investment of its treasury balances. The Council’s investment priorities are:
 - The security of capital and
 - The liquidity of its investments
9. The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity.
10. The Council maintains a Liquidity Select Account providing instant access to funds, with no minimum deposit or balance and no penalties for withdrawals.
11. The Council will invest purely in bank deposits. Reserves are invested through the Council’s bankers in short term deposit accounts. The period of commitment for which funds may prudently be committed is determined by the Responsible Financial Officer who shall properly assess the risk of committing funds to longer term investments.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****MONDAY 20 JUNE 2022****MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS****Purpose of Report:** For information only.**1. SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 1.1 The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer is overseeing all social media channels and regularly posting. Officers have been utilising Twitter more for events and markets, and this has been quite effective.
- 1.2 The social media channels have continued to see significant growth, with the Dunstable Town Council Facebook page growing by over 300 followers since the last report. Most of the Facebook pages have been switched to Facebook's 'new pages experience', which now only counts followers instead of likes. Page followers are people that see your posts in their feed. Page followers are shown below:

Facebook page followers are:

Dunstable Town Council	9,701 (+3.5%)
Bennett's Splash Park	2,885 (+9.8%)
Town Ranger Services	1,324 (+1.45%)
Creasey Park Community Football Centre	888 (+6.1%)
Grove Corner	932 (+8.1%)
High Street Heritage Action Zone	635 (+11%)
Priory House	642 (+15.9%)

Twitter account followers are:

Dunstable Town Council	2,417 (+0.7%)
Dunstable Town Centre	2,148 (+0.04%)
Dunstable Events	2,024 (+0.4%)
Creasey Park Community Football Centre	707 (+1.4)
Priory House	478 (-0.2%)

Instagram followers are:

Grove Corner	365 (+3.7%)
High Street Heritage Action Zone	185 (+13.5%)

These figures are as of Monday 6 June 2022, and percentages are since the previous report dated 21 March 2022.

2. EMAIL MARKETING

- 2.1 The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer has been working with Officers at Priory House Heritage Centre and Tea Rooms to create more attractive and engaging email marketing campaigns. The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer is

also working on a staff newsletter to be sent out via email as part of the Investors in People improvement plan, as well as a general Town Council email newsletter to be sent to the public.

3. WEBSITE

- 3.1 Since March the website has continued to see more visitors, particularly with the start of the Summer Events programme and the reopening of Bennett's Splash Park and Splashside Café. The website is still primarily being looked after by the Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer, with Treacle Factory on hand for support. Below are updated statistics since the last report:

Unique website visitors	19,422 (+118.2%)
Pages per session	2.50 (-8.8%)
Average session duration	01:37 (-7 secs)
Mobile users	71.56% (+4.1%)
Desktop users	24% (-2.77%)
Tablet users	4.46% (-1.32)
Sessions per user	1.44 (+7.5%)

4. NOTICEBOARDS

- 4.1 The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer has visited each of the Town Council's noticeboards, both in the town center and local wards. These noticeboards are being regularly updated, with the assistance of the Town Rangers, with posters bespoke to each ward.

5. PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

- 5.1 The Dunstable Town Council promotional video has been uploaded to the Town Council Facebook page, Twitter account and website. So far, the video has a total of 252 views.

6. AUTHOR

- 6.1 Jemma Candy – Corporate Marketing & Communications Officer –
jemma.candy@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****MONDAY 20 JUNE 2022****DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

Purpose of Report:	To request that members approve the adoption of a Domestic Abuse Policy.
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1. ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 That the committee approve the adoption of a Domestic Abuse Policy, the details of which are set out below and submitted at appendix 1.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 As part of the Council's approach to becoming an "Investors in People" organisation, the Council's Senior Management Team is continually considering ways in which to improve our management of the organisation and its employees
- 2.2 Officers identified there was a gap regarding a domestic abuse policy. This was through Central Bedfordshire Council approaching officers to identify 'safe spaces' for victims of domestic violence should anybody require support.
- 2.3 While staff have not raised concerns regarding domestic abuse, it is beneficial for the Council to have a policy in place should this matter arise.

3. DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

- 3.1 The policy at appendix 1 clearly states the Council's responsibilities as an employer and how it encourages, supports, and enables support for employees, with regards to Domestic Abuse.
- 3.2 This policy refers to management actions, which are embedded in the organisation such as 1:1 and annual appraisals. The policy should not bring any additional burdens or responsibilities to the Council and merely lays out clearly what the workforce can expect from the Council and the ways the organisation manages and supports employees that may be experiencing domestic abuse. The adoption of such a policy encourages more open discussion and the opportunity to improve working practice where and if appropriate.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The recommendation accords with the Council's aim of becoming an Investors in People Organisation and specifically with the Council's objective of '*continuing to improve the organisational management and efficiency of the Council*'.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This would be on a case-by-case basis depending on individual circumstances. A risk assessment would be carried out if required. The policy refers to certain suggestions for support within this.
- 6.2 Grove Corner Young People's Centre and Creasey Park Community Football Centre will become 'safe places' that people can access to contact organisations supporting victims of domestic abuse as and when required.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 As part of the policy, any information that is shared will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will then liaise with Human Resources when required.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None

9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- 9.1 By adopting the policy it enables the Council to clearly state and further evidence how they will ensure they meet the requirements under the Equality Act 2010.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix 1 Domestic Abuse Policy.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The adoption of this policy compliments what the Council is already doing to ensure that its workforce has positive health throughout their time as an employee. Through the adoption of the policy, it will ensure the way in which victims of domestic abuse are managed and dealt with are consistent across the organisation.

12. AUTHORS

- 12.1 Jack Adams-Rimmer – Senior Neighbourhood Development Officer
Email – Jack.Adams-Rimmer@dunstable.gov.uk
- 12.2 Gill Peck – Youth and Community Manager
Email – Gill.Peck@dunstable.gov.uk



DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

Domestic Abuse Policy

Overarching Statement

It is Dunstable Town Council's policy that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that it will be treated effectively, sympathetically and confidentially. This policy also covers the approach the Town Council will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse. Dunstable Town Council is committed to developing a workplace culture that recognises that some employees may be experiencing domestic abuse and that Dunstable Town Council will be a place of safety. The organisation will not discriminate against anyone who has been subjected to domestic abuse.

Definition of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is:

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality’.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional.

Controlling behaviour- is acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance, escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour- is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten someone. This definition includes stalking and ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

All forms of domestic abuse come from the abuser's desire for power and control over other family members or intimate partners.

Domestic Abuse Policy

- Domestic abuse occurs in all social classes, cultures, and age groups whatever the sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical ability.
- Once Domestic Abuse has started, it often becomes more frequent and more violent.
- It can severely affect children emotionally and physically.

- Victims/survivors are sometimes beaten or harassed by members of their immediate or extended family.

Impact of Domestic Abuse at work.

Dunstable Town Council is aware that the challenges that domestic abuse victims face can manifest themselves in problems such as chronic absenteeism or lower productivity.

We recognise that domestic abuse does not occur only within the home and an employee can experience domestic abuse:

- through threatening visits, phone calls and emails from the perpetrator while they are at work or
- when travelling to and from work.

Colleagues can experience threatening or intimidating behaviour from the perpetrator of the abuse.

Identification of the problem at work

While it is for the individuals themselves to recognise they are a victim/survivor of domestic abuse, there are signs, which may indicate an employee may be a victim/survivor. These may include the following:

- The member of staff may confide in their colleagues/manager.
- Staff may inform their manager that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse.
- There may be obvious effects of physical abuse (it is important not to make assumptions).
- It may become known because of enquiries into a drop in performance or a significant change in behaviour.
- It may reveal itself as the background to poor attendance or presence – where victims/survivors prefer to be at work rather than at home.

It is essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one. Line managers should address the issue positively and sympathetically ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance can be provided.

Confidentiality

Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

However, confidentiality cannot be assured in some circumstances. Any officer that receives a disclosure will seek advice from the designated safe guarding lead or from a Domestic Abuse Champion, before information is shared. If an individual believes that a colleague may be experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse, they should report their concerns to your line manager, who will take necessary safeguarding measures if an individual's safety is at risk.

All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims/survivors of domestic abuse. Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Disclosure of abuse

Staff experiencing domestic abuse may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from their line manager, colleague, domestic abuse champion or Head of Service. Line managers will not counsel victims/survivors, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost other organisations.

If an individual believes that a colleague may be experiencing domestic abuse they should report to a safe guarding lead. If an individual believes that a colleague may be perpetrating domestic abuse, they should report their concerns to the individuals line manager. In both instances, relevant policies and procedures will then be followed.

Dunstable Town Council officers will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing from domestic abuse.

Role of colleagues

Dunstable Town Council encourages all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager and or Head of Service about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, Dunstable Town Council will ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

Impact on performance

Where domestic abuse has been reported, line managers will treat poor performance, unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

If an employee is underperforming it is important to make that employee aware of the concerns about performance.

The company will make reasonable efforts to consider all aspects of the employee's situation to support them through a challenging time. The manager should agree reasonable targets with the employee and provide any necessary support. If the poor performance continues and the employee does not appear to be able to improve their performance at work notwithstanding the support given, further discussions will be held with the employee.

Although the use of formal procedures e.g. disciplinary or capability is not prohibited, this should be a last resort.

Support

Line managers once made aware of abuse will review their job risk assessment to establish whether any changes are required. Dunstable Town Council may also offer employees experiencing domestic abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to
- Rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns.
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Flexible working.
- Review any lone working arrangements.
- Access to counselling/support services in work time.
- Adjusting targets to reduce any undue pressure on the employee.

- Agreeing code words or hand signals to be used during a telephone or video call to signal that the employee is in a threatening situation, and what action needs to be taken when one is used.
- A salary advance to a bank account other than that which is normally used.
- Access to courses developed and support services for survivors of domestic abuse, for example The Freedom Programme (www.freedomprogramme.co.uk)

Employees should be reminded of their access to the Employee Assistance Programme, a confidential telephone counselling service offered by the Company where they can talk to a trained counsellor about their circumstances.

Safety planning

Dunstable Town Council will prioritise the safety of employees if they make it known that they are experiencing domestic abuse. Line managers may have to consider incidents such as violent partners or ex-partners visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls, intimidation or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator, and these will need to be addressed in any safety planning.

When an employee discloses domestic abuse, they will be encouraged to contact a specialist support agency (or suitably trained specialist who can undertake a DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour-based violence risk assessment– www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk) and advise appropriate referrals where necessary. See contact details at the end of document.

Dunstable Town Council will work with the employee and relevant agencies (with the employee's consent) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues, considering the duty of care for all employees.

Safe Spaces

Dunstable Town Council will offer safe spaces at Grove Corner Youth and Community Hub and Creasey Park Community Football Centre should an employee or member of the public require a private space to make telephone calls for information, advice and guidance.

It is unlikely that this should produce any further work for officers the intention of these spaces is to provide an individual a place which is safe and confidential that they are able to use.

If both the victim and the perpetrator are employed by the company

In cases where both the victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse work for the Company, we will take appropriate action including:

- considering utilising different work locations both within the building at which the employees work, or another of our work locations, working hours, shift patterns etc.
- minimising the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim.
- offering impartial support and where possible ensure both the victim and perpetrator have different supervisors who are able to provide appropriate information to each party.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be condoned under any circumstances. If an employee approaches Dunstable Town Council about their abusive behaviour, Dunstable

Town Council will provide information about the services and support available to them and will encourage the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source.

There are four potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- Disciplinary action
- providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
- identifying risk.

Following Dunstable Council's Disciplinary Procedure Policy, this would be a breach of gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken.

Dunstable Town Council is committed to ensuring that:

- Allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
- All employees will receive guidance and support
- Confidentiality will be maintained, and information restricted only to those who have a need-to know basis
- Investigations will be thorough and independent
- All cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays
- This procedure is intended to be safety focussed and supportive.

The alleged perpetrator will be treated fairly and honestly, helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved, kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process.

If a colleague is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones or email, they will have committed a serious disciplinary offence.

If it becomes evident that an employee has made a malicious allegation that another employee is perpetrating abuse, then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

Key Contact Numbers

- If you are concerned for your own or someone else's immediate safety, ring the police on 999

General

- National Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 2000 247 (Freephone and 24 hour) / www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- Citizens advice bureau - www.adviceguide.org.uk
- National centre for domestic violence – 0800 970 2070 / www.ncdv.org.uk

- Galop: 0800 999 5428 / www.galop.org.uk National LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline for LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse. Monday to Wednesday 10 am to 5 pm, Thursday 10 am to 8 pm, Friday 1 pm to 5 pm and Sunday 12 pm to 4 pm. Tuesday 1 pm to 5 pm is a trans specific service. Email: help@galop.org.uk Online chat: 3 pm to 7 pm Saturday, 3 pm to 7 pm Sunday.
- Bright Sky app is a free to download mobile app, providing support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know. The app is also designed to be used by anyone looking for information about issues around domestic abuse such as online safety, stalking and harassment and sexual consent. More info here: <https://www.hestia.org/brightsky>
- Women's aid - www.womensaid.org.uk - call 0808 2000 247 the Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) or email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk
- Jewish Women's Aid - 0800 591203 / www.jwa.org.uk
- Refuge - 0800 2000 247 / www.refuge.org.uk - offers a range of services, which provide women and children access to professional support whatever their situation.
- Southall Black Sisters - 020 8571 9595 / www.southallblacksisters.org.uk
- Muslim Women's Helpline - 020 8904 8193 or 020 8908 6715 / www.mwnhelpline.co.uk
- IKWRO: Women's rights organisation for Middle Eastern and Afghan women - 020 7920 6460 / www.ikwro.org.uk
- ManKind Initiative: 01823 334 244 / www.mankind.org.uk
- Respect Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm or email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk www.respect.uk.net
- Men's Advice Line for men experiencing domestic abuse. Call 0808 801 0327

For perpetrators

- Respect: If you are worried about your behaviour towards your partner, or if you have been abusive or violent, you can get information from the Respect Phone line. Call 0808 802 4040 (free from landlines and most mobile phones). Monday – Friday 9 am to 5 pm, you can leave a message when the lines are closed or busy and they will get

back to you within two working days. Email: info@respectphoneline.org.uk
www.respectphoneline.org.uk 0808 802 4040 / www.respect.uk.net

Version 1.1 June 2022
To be reviewed annually

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 20 JUNE 2022

DOWNSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE BUILDING REPAIRS

Purpose of Report:	The purpose of this report is to request authorisation from this Committee to repair the roof and rainwater goods at Downside Community Centre using allocated reserves.
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1. ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 That the Committee approves the release of up to £75,000 from the earmarked Pavilions Reserve to repair the roof, windows and rainwater goods at Downside Community Centre as detailed in this report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During the winter 2021 officers were made aware of water ingress at the Downside Community Centre which is currently managed via a license by Conroy Boxing. Following investigations, it was identified that the ingress was from the roof and that there were also additional issues with the rainwater goods and windows.
- 2.2 Although Conroy Boxing have a license to manage the centre, Dunstable Town Council, as the owner and landlord, has the responsibility for maintaining the structure and external repairs including the roof.

3. MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Since managing the building, Conroy Boxing have increased usage and successfully engaged with the local community ensuring that the building is an important asset to Downside. To ensure that this continues, repairs to the building to make it water tight are imperative and therefore officers are not presenting a 'do nothing' option. To do nothing would simply mean that over time Conroy Boxing would have to move out leaving Dunstable Town Council with the liability of an empty dilapidated building.
- 3.2 The recommended repairs would see the building water tight for the foreseeable future ensuring that the building can be a positive asset of the Council's for local community use.
- 3.3 Dunstable Town Council's building contractor Braiser Freeth completed the specification of works and went out to tender. They received four tenders back ranging between £67,194 to £98,091.

Following a detailed review of the contractor's submissions and obtaining clarifications, the corrected and adjusted tender sums are noted in the table below.

Contractor	Tender Sum (excluding Dayworks and including Contingency Sum)	Additions	TOTAL
1	£53,472.00	£13,722.00	£67,194.00
2	£55,125.60	£28,886.01	£84,011.61
3	£73,019.77	£25,071.41	£98,091.18
4	£86,965.00	No price	£86,965.00

Table 1 – Works Totals is all the additions are included

- 3.4 The timing of the repairs is important to ensure that issues of water ingress are addressed before the wetter winter months, and therefore if the spend is approved the works will be completed as soon as the contractor is able to complete them, with the aim being a September 2022 completion date. The preferred contractor states a four week lead in, with the works taking five weeks in total, although Braiser Freeth believe that a more realistic timescale for the works is an eight-week programme.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The allocated Pavilions Reserve balance currently stands at £93,590. A commitment of £75,000 would reduce the balance to £18,530.
- 4.2 It should be noted that whilst the works will cost in the region of £67,000 there are then professional fees of Braiser Freeth to factor in, totalling 10% of the value of works plus £750, totalling £7,469.40.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Should these repairs not be undertaken then the ingress of water into the building could cause health and safety implications e.g., slips due to pooled water. It is therefore one reason why the repairs are necessary.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Due to the age and design of the building it is not possible to replace the roof with a more insulated alternative, options are limited. Therefore unfortunately, the resolution does not address any environmental improvements which would cut down on heating costs. However, they will ensure the building is water tight for the foreseeable future and therefore ensure its future usage.

7. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN, HUMAN RESOURCE, LEGAL AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It is recommended that Dunstable Town Council utilise the available reserve fund to repair its asset to ensure it can continue to remain a positive asset and be of use to the community for many more years to come. From the tender process the company who provided tender number one offers best value for money and should be instructed to complete the works.

9. AUTHOR

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