

## **DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**HELD ON MONDAY 27 JUNE 2022 COMMENCING AT 7.00 P.M.**

Present: Councillor Liz Jones (Town Mayor); Councillor Lisa Bird (Deputy Town Mayor); Councillors Sid Abbott, Lisa Bird, Phil Crawley, Greg George, Pamela Ghent, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Peter Hollick, Gloria Martin and Johnson Tamara, David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Lisa Scheder (Finance and Procurement Manager) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager).

In attendance: The Mayors' Chaplain  
Members of the public; One

#### **117 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Corkhill, Cameron Restall, Lee Roberts and Gladys Sanders

#### **118 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Annual Council Meeting held on 16 May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

#### **119 DECLARATIONS**

There were no specific declarations of interest.

#### **120 CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Mayor advised the Council that this was the final meeting Mr David Ashlee, Town Clerk and Chief Executive would attend before his retirement in August 2022. The Mayor observed that David had been in post for over fifteen years. Members noted that they would have the opportunity to say farewell to David at another time.

The Town Mayor spoke in support of a report relating to her activities from 16 May to 19 June. It was noted that between the Mayor and Deputy Mayor they had attended over 50 events in that period. She was particularly pleased that a recent charity coffee morning had raised over £610 for her charities. She also reminded Councillors that a charity lunch was being held at Vantage Indian Restaurant on 10 July and her charity Golf Day would be at Dunstable Downs Golf Club on 29 September 2022.

#### **121 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions put to the meeting

#### **122 TO ANSWER QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 16**

There were no questions put to the meeting.

**123 COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 6 June 2022 be received.

**124 GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 13 June 2022 be received.

**125 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:** (1) that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20 June be received.

(2) That the Council approves the promotion of the Finance and Procurement Manager to Head of Finance and in doing so appoints her as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer from 1 August 2022 on the salary grade set out in the report

**126 DUNSTABLE JOINT COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED:** that as the minutes of the meeting of the Dunstable Joint Committee held on 9 June had not yet been published by Central Bedfordshire Council they be considered at the next Council in October 2022.

**127 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2021/22**

The Council meeting considered a report detailing the requirements for the submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to the auditor in compliance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) for the year ended 31 March 2022.

The AGAR comprised four sections, namely, the Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22; the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1); the Accounting Statements 2021/22 (Section 2) and the External Auditor Report and Certificate (Section 3).

The Council received an explanation on each of the four sections and Councillors were pleased to note that the Annual Accounts would be made available for inspection as required.

**RESOLVED:** i) that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/2022 be noted.

ii) that the Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022 at Section 1 of the Annual Return be completed in the affirmative and the Town Mayor and Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to sign accordingly.

iii) that the Accounting Statements 2021/2022 at Section 2 of the Annual Return be approved, and the Town Mayor be authorised to sign accordingly.

iv) that the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2022 be approved for submission to the auditor.

**128. ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 AND REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented the Annual Report for 2021/2022 which would be published on the Council's website and made available at other usual public distribution outlets. The document provided an evidence source to residents as to the quality of services provided by the Council, as well as being an important planning tool for the organisation to ensure it could demonstrate continuous service improvement.

The Annual Report included a summary of the Council's activities and achievements over the last year, illustrated as "A Year in Dunstable". Section 4 set out how the Council was performing in relation to its stated aims contained within the Corporate Plan, the objectives for which are from the Corporate Plan adopted January 2020. Also included was a report on the annual outturn for the Council's adopted performance indicators.

The Corporate Risk Log had been updated and Members noted that the main identified areas of strategic risk remained as income generation and property management. Income generation had been identified as high risk because of the current economic downturn caused by the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic and property management arrangements had been identified as high risk due to the high cost of maintaining Council property which included listed buildings.

Members noted the reviewed Council's Health and Safety and the Environment and Sustainability Policies.

**RESOLVED:** i) that the Annual Report 2021/2022 be approved.

ii) that the improvements to the Council's governance arrangements be noted.

iii) that the Corporate Risk Log be noted.

iv) that the Council's Health and Safety Policy be approved.

v) that the Council's Environment and Sustainability Policy be approved.

**129 APPLICATION TO THE PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD FOR FUNDING TO COMPLETE RESTORATION WORKS TO PRIORY HOUSE**

The Town Council considered a report on making an application to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) for up to £215,000 to ensure there was sufficient budget to complete restoration works to Priory House in line with Corporate Plan aspirations and the High Street Heritage Action Zone scheme.

Council was advised that following the Council's successful bid for High Street Heritage Action Zone funding the officers with consultancy support had developed a specification for restoration works at Priory House. This was to ensure the works to the house removed it from Historic England's 'At Risk' register. It was further reported that following the tender process for necessary works at Priory House the preferred tenderer had priced the work at £789,807.

The project fund provided by the Town Council and Historic England stood at £771,752. Already £178,548 had been allocated to fees, environmental monitoring, stone purchase and historic building recording. This left a sum of £596,205 leaving a shortfall of £212,507. The Council was advised that if it looked to use the General Reserve, which stood at £638,214 with £50,000 earmarked to fund an anticipated shortfall in Priory House income target for the current financial year income target, as a result of the impending building works, this would leave £588,214 in the General Reserve and the Councils' Financial Regulations stated £485,000 should always be maintained leaving only £103,214 available.

The Council was provided with a summary of the financial implications including seeking a loan through the Public Works Loan Board. The council was advised of the implications of borrowing through the PWLB.

**RESOLVED:** that the Council seeks the approval of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to submit an application to the PWLB for a loan of up to £215,000 on the basis of an Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) loan over a period of 20 years to complete the restoration works to Priory House. The total loan payments would be approximately £287,724 with repayments of the loan being budgeted for in the manner set out in the report from 2023/24 onwards. Members noted that taking out the loan and budgeting for subsequent loan repayments would not affect the Council's precept.

### **130 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND OUTSIDE BODIES REPRESENTATION**

The Council received a report recommending some amendments to committee and sub-committee membership, and representation on an outside body

**RESOLVED:**

- That Councillor Sid Abbott replaces Councillor Cameron Restall on the Community Services Committee
- That Councillor Cameron Restall replaces Councillor Sid Abbott on the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee
- That Councillor Greg George replaces Councillor Liz Jones on the Plans-Sub Committee
- That Councillor Gloria Martin replaces Councillor Cameron Restall as the Council's representative on the Dunstable District Scout Council Executive

### **131 REPORTS/UPDATES BY MEMBERS OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Council discussed the following questions and statements summarised below with Councillors Crawley and Tamara

1. What does CBC plan to do to tackle the ongoing problem of inappropriate parking across the town?
2. When will the parking charges on High Street North commence in the pull in spaces outside Subway? The parking meter is covered over and therefore vehicles are parking all day without charge stopping the intended short stay parking opportunities for both disabled and short-term customers.
3. The movement of the recycling facility to inside the Disabled car parking area has caused a reduction in disabled bays in the Ashton Square car park.

4. The amount of refuse sacks left on the high street between the planters near the main crossings is increasing once again. What is being done to improve refuse facilities for those living in converted retail units with no formal refuse collection points?

Councillors Crawley and Tamara agreed to raise the issues with the relevant officers and cabinet Members at Central Bedfordshire Council

**The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.**