

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING

HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

ON MONDAY 28 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillor Gloria Martin (Town Mayor) (in the Chair); Councillor Liz Jones (Deputy Town Mayor); Mr D Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive) and 25 electors of the Parish of Dunstable, 16 of whom were elected representatives of the Town Council.

1. WELCOME

The Town Mayor welcomed electors to the 2022 Dunstable Town Meeting and explained its purpose

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 29 March 2019 were approved and the Town Mayor would sign the minutes as a correct record.

3. QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS

Two electors had submitted questions before the meeting these were as follows -

1. Regarding item 24 of the Key Objectives on the Corporate Plan which is: *‘Carry out a feasibility study to determine the best Council owned public open space to install or convert an existing area into a multi-use games area’*. Will the Council bring forward its feasibility study to be completed within the next 12 months? Your Corporate Plan states that the study is due to be completed by March 2023; this happens to be just before the next elections are held. A newly elected Council could veto whatever the results happen to be. As this current Council has included the item in the Corporate Plan should this not be the Council that makes the decision to implement the results of the study. With no events this year due to the pandemic, surely the Council staff have more time available to do the work involved to complete the feasibility study within the next 12 months?

The Mayor addressed the comments relating to the workloads of staff members and explained the employment policies of the Town Council through the lock downs and the pandemic.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised the meeting how items prioritised in the Corporate Plan were identified and implemented. There were currently no committed funds identified for the project and therefore it was marked for completion by the end of March 2023. The Town Council had recently appointed an officer to carry out development work in the Council’s parks who would be tasked with taking forward this objective in the Corporate Plan. The Chairman of the Council’s Grounds and Environmental Services Committee further assured the meeting she was keen to see its implementation.

The questioner advised the meeting he would like to see a multi - use games area in Luton Recreation Ground as he felt there was little provision of community facilities in

east Dunstable. The meeting was assured the identification of a suitable site would be part of the feasibility study.

2. Will there be access through the hillside next to the AstroTurf during the building of the hub etc?

It was explained that during the building works, clearance of vegetation would take place and a path formed to bypass the skatepark to the hill past the Health Hub and parklands. The temporary path would be boarded on both sides to protect pedestrians.

The Mayor then allowed additional questions to be put at the virtual meeting from electors as follows;

The first question related to the Town Councils' plans for Summer and Autumn events. It was not yet clear whether Priory Pictures would be held. If possible, events like the Motor Rally, Proms and Pictures would be held but they might be held in early autumn and there may be restrictions on capacity. Dunstable Town Council (DTC) would liaise with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and details would be published as soon as such events could go ahead.

There were then concerns expressed about rubbish bags being left on the footway/highway around Moore's shop and the watch and clock shop on High Street South. CBC Councillors explained that due to Government legislation concerning Permitted Development Rights (PDR), shop owners are allowed to convert rooms above shops into accommodation and through PDR domestic waste facilities did not have to be provided. The meeting was advised that through normal planning applications such issues could be addressed; so PDR was causing problems in town centres. CBC had raised the issue with the MP, Andrew Selous, and it was hoped there would be a full inquiry into PDR. CBC reps assured the meeting they were doing everything they could to address the issue.

A further discussion took place about planning applications determined by the CBC Development Management Committee and its relationship with DTC's Plans Sub-Committee. Councillor Liz Jones asked the CBC representatives about the installation of electric car charging points in High Street South. It was hoped CBC would develop a policy for installation of units across Dunstable. Councillor Jones had information about a local firm that could help. On the issue of climate change and sustainability, CBC had commissioned a feasibility study that would help to build on its sustainability agenda.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and closed the meeting at 8.20 pm.