

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 31 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Councillors Lisa Bird (Deputy Town Mayor), Alan Corkhill, John Gurney, Peter Hollick (Chairman), Liz Jones (Town Mayor), Gloria Martin and Greg George

In Attendance: Councillor Kenson Gurney, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Annette Clynes (Town Centre Services Manager, remotely) and Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager)

In Attendance Remotely: Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services), Lisa Stephens (Cultural Services Manager), Michelle Collings (HSHAZ Manager), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager) and Gina Thanky (Events Officer),

Apologies: Councillors Wendy Bater, Pam Ghent, Lee Roberts and Gladys Sanders,

Public: Nil

168. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 5 September 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

169. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received

170. DUNSTABLE TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

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

Middle Row Markets had been entered into Market Achievement of the Year Award for the National Association of British Market Authorities Awards. The Committee was delighted to learn that the Dunstable submission had won the award for Small Market Achievement Award of the year. The Committee congratulated the Town Centre Manager on the award. The markets had attracted interest from new traders and new traders were joining each month. The Town Centre Services Manager expected a busy Christmas period. It was noted that there was a waiting list for all three days of the markets on 9, 10 and 11 December.

The Ashton Square Toilets had been entered into the Loo of the Year competition for 2022, and the results were expected any day now.

Town Centre

The Committee noted the vacancy rates and that the next count would be undertaken in January 2023. Events on The Square were set out in the report. The Twilight Markets were set for 9, 10 and 11 December would operate from 3 pm to 8 pm Friday and Saturday, and 10 am to 3 pm on Sunday 11 December. It was noted that the Salvation Army would be performing on Saturday 10 December at 3 pm around the Priory Gardens Christmas tree.

There would be a licensed street collection on behalf of the Mayor's three charities.

Partnership Working

Examples discussed were:

- The highly successful Halloween event in the Quadrant. The Quadrant Management, Members of staff, consultants BBB and the Mayor were thanked for their roles in making it such a success
- Random Act of Kindness
- The Community 'What's on' Window in West Street

Christmas Lights

It was noted that the Christmas tree fittings had been installed. The tree sponsor was Leaders for the next two years. The new Christmas decorations would be installed in the first week of November. The festoons in Grove Gardens would replace the old decorations.

171. OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES

The Committee received updates as follows;

Good Companions Club had twenty-four members. Events held recently included bulb planting and making lavender bags. The Creasey Park Community Football Centre Lunch Club currently had thirty members with a waiting list of twenty. Recent events included in house quizzes and games and Leighton Buzzard Railway and the visit of the Town Mayor.

Coffee Morning

Officers facilitated coffee mornings on 13 September, 11 October and another is booked for 8 November at Furness Avenue supported by Age UK Bedfordshire.

Rock and a Roll

Officers had recently worked on the event in October at Creasey Park Community Football Centre with 26 people attending. It was noted a further event would be held on Tuesday 13 December with a theme of Winter Wonderland.

172. GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Grove Corner

Grove Corner had received 227 visits from young people between 18 August and 7 October 2022. Pokémon was still popular, and feedback from users was always positive. Grove Corner had over 1,000 Facebook followers and Grove Corner Instagram had 368 followers.

Youth Engagement

Link to Change had been attending Grove Corner to present short workshops about healthy relationships, consent, resilience and the use of slang words and the meanings behind them. Officers were discussing enabling Central Bedfordshire Council to hold a Dunstable youth council in Grove Corner.

School Engagement

Officers were planning to run the 'Taking Charge of your Wellbeing' at Queensbury Academy.

Community Engagement

A litter pick had been held on Thursday 17 October arch at the cemetery with the Friends of Dunstable Cemetery.

173. HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (HSHAZ)

The Committee considered the latest update report on the High Street Heritage Action Zone.

Latest Updates

- Number 4 High Street South

The Committee noted the report and actions that were mostly outside of the HSHAZ

- Number 7 High Street South

Further to the report at the last meeting the tender process to undertake the building works had resulted in quotes higher than the agreed grant. There was a shortfall of £10,810; the tenant and owner would not meet the shortfall.

- Number 18 High Street South

It was noted that the works funded outside of the HSHAZ would soon be completed

- Number 21-23 High Street South

The owner had not responded to the latest grant offer. It was hoped the owner would return the signed grant offer by midday on 6 October. This had not happened; the issue was still pending.

Priory House

The Priory House project works started on 12 September and would run for approximately 40 weeks. The stonemasons had found a supply of hard chalk that might be appropriate for use for the webs. Tests on the chalk had been undertaken and the officers were waiting for the results.

Community Engagement

There were HSHAZ activities at the Middle Row Market on 15 October. The mosaic artist who joined us on 30 July returned running a hands-on activity creating a mosaic of Priory House. Puku B Heritage and Education www.pukub.co.uk/ also attended running activities related to prehistoric buildings.

HSHAZ activities were being planned for the Twilight Market including an interactive game being led by Event Production Live over the three days of the market. There will also be traditional street games at the market on the Sunday.

HSHAZ activities are being planned for the market on 17 December. Officers will be joined by Hysterical History www.hystericalhistory.co.uk/ as a Victorian Police Officer. Urban Canvas www.urbancanvas.org.uk/ will be running a Victorian themed Christmas lanterns activity.

AGENDA ITEM 8

In addition to HSHAZ activities at the markets during October to December, the HSHAZ and Grove Corner teams are planning some workshops. Puku B Heritage and Education www.pukub.co.uk/ will be delivering workshops at Beecroft Academy on 12 December.

Madam Geneva and Gent <https://madamgenevaandgent.co.uk/> will be delivering the *three ages of gin - From medicine to mother's ruin and gin today* at Priory House on 1 December. This will comprise a talk covering monasteries to the present day along with a couple of Gin and Tonic and tasters.

Members thanked the HSHAZ Manager for her efforts to deliver the programme.

174. **EVENTS**

The Events Officer updated the Committee on plans for the Christmas Tree Carols and Torchlight Procession. In all, 15 schools have agreed to attend, with a total of 393 children confirmed to take part in this year's event. This is an increase of over 140 children who attended last year's event.

Grove Theatre's Christmas pantomime cast from Cinderella have confirmed they will be attending the event however, at time of writing we do not yet know which cast members in particular will be attending. BBB will be providing the light show finale.

A suggestion has come from a member to invite the Dunstable Rock Choir to attend this event to support the school choirs. Members agreed that this was a good idea.

ACTION: Events Officer to invite Dunstable Rock Choir.

175. **EVENTS REVIEW**

The Committee discussed the proposals relating to the proposed events 2023/24 and following a discussion about resources and budget preparation it was agreed to recommend the events budget provided, and that the following would make up the events programme 2023:

- (i) St George's Day – 22 April
- (ii) Kings' Coronation – Live Streaming – 6 May
- (iii) Classic Motor Rally – 10 June
- (iv) Dunstable Live – 24 June
- (v) Party in the Park – 8 July
- (vi) Around the World featuring the Dunstable Festival of Archaeology – 29 July
- (vii) Priory Pictures – 12 August
- (viii) Priory Proms – 9 September
- (ix) Christmas Carols and Torchlight Procession – 24 November

176. **PRIORY HOUSE INFORMATION REPORT**

Operational Issues

The Committee was advised that there was little disruption from the HSHAZ building works.

Tourist Information Centre and Retail Outlet

A new Shop Assistant had been appointed for six months. Officers were looking to recruit a further person for the Christmas period and for events. Trading was going well. The seating area had assisted the tea rooms maintain a good service. Takeaway coffees from the new

Bean to Cup machine was popular with 39 cups sold in September and 82 in October.

The Jacobean Room

All the weddings for the year had now taken place. There were six weddings confirmed for 2023. The Committee was advised of all the bookings for the Jacobean Room which included 64 paid functions.

Priory House Tea Rooms

The tea rooms were trading well. The extra seating in the gift shop was very popular. The total income including additional income for 2022/23 was £78,400.65. This was welcomed. The Committee requested that Members be circulated with staffing costs for the same period.

177. BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2023/24

The Committee noted the budget proposal would be considered at the meetings of the Committee in October and January. This would allow Members to request for additional information/proposals that could be prepared for the next meeting. During the discussion the officers were asked to supply Members with details of all allocated reserves and budgeted contributions in time for the next round of committee meetings.

178. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

South Bedfordshire Dial-a-Ride

Councillor Gloria Martin provided an update on the operation of the service. It was noted that a new General Manager had been appointed and the former General Manager was still assisting the running of the operation. It had been a difficult year but Dial a Ride was on much firmer footing with secure premises.

Dunstable Town Band

Councillor Martin had not been invited to any meetings since the last meeting.

Men in Sheds (MiS)

Councillor John Gurney reported on the latest developments including;

- The latest training arrangements
- Health and safety issues
- Details of the refurbishment works
- Provision of an extractor fan
- High operating costs

179. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public and press in accordance with Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1961 S1.2 to allow discussion on establishment and contractual matters.

180. PRIORY HOUSE STAFFING RESTRUCTURE DECISION REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 8

The Committee had been provided with a report setting out a proposed new Priory House staffing structure. The proposals would be delivered within the existing agreed budget and with no significant changes to job roles. The Committee had the power to agree to the proposed changes if it supported the proposals

RESOLVED: that the staffing restructuring report be approved.

The meeting closed at 21.00