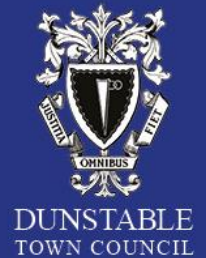


Dunstable Town Council  
Grove House  
76 High Street North  
Dunstable  
Bedfordshire  
LU6 1NF

Tel: 01582 513000  
E-mail: [info@dunstable.gov.uk](mailto:info@dunstable.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.dunstable.gov.uk](http://www.dunstable.gov.uk)



## Notice of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

**Paul Hodson** Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: 3 November 2023

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** will be held on **Monday 13 November 2023** at **Grove House in the Council Chamber**. To view the meeting live or afterwards use this link: [livestream](#). Members of the public and press are also welcome to attend in person. Members of the public may ask a question during the public session, either in person or online via MS Teams. If you would like to ask a question, please contact the Council via [democratic@dunstable.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@dunstable.gov.uk) or 01582 513000 by 4pm on Friday 10 October 2023.

*This meeting will be filmed by the Council and broadcast live and will be capable of repeated viewing. If you are seated in the Council Chamber it is likely that the cameras will capture your image. By your presence you are deemed to consent to be filmed, and to the use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting or training purposes.*

*If you address the committee in person or via Teams, your contribution will be recorded and broadcast, unless this is during a private session, as permitted by the Access to Information provisions.*

*Please see the below QR code to access the full agenda:*



*Members are reminded when making decisions that the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 requires Members to have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't, and to foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.*

## **A G E N D A**

1. Apologies for Absence
  2. To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 18 September 2023 (copy previously circulated)
  3. Specific Declarations of Interest
  4. Actions From Previous Meetings (see page 4)
  5. Referral Reports – to consider any referral reports from other Committees (to follow)
  6. Finance Report - Report (see page 5)
    - 6.1. Financial Management
    - 6.2. External Audit Report
  7. Corporate and Financial Risk Management – Decision Report (to follow)
    - 7.1. Corporate and Financial Risk Strategy – to agree the proposed document (report to follow)
  8. Draft Budget for 2024 / 25 (report to follow)
  9. Marketing and Communications Report (see page 22)
  10. Annual Council Meeting – Decision Report (see page 25)
  11. Representatives on Outside Organisations - to receive reports from representatives on the following outside organisations:
    - Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Atwell
    - Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – Town Mayor and Councillors Hollick and Kenson Gurney
    - Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Jones
    - Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillors O'Riordan and Alderman
    - Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillors Hollick and Alderman
    - Chew's Foundation – Councillors Brennan and Kenson Gurney
    - Poor's Land Charity – Councillors Hollick and Jones
    - Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones
    - Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive – Councillor Kotarski
- NB: Those Members who are not members of this Committee but are representatives of organisations reporting to it are reminded to provide a report in time for the meeting.**
12. RECOMMENDED In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.
  13. Priory House Works – to receive a verbal update

#### 14. Date of the next meeting – Monday 15 January 2024 at 7.00 pm.

To: All Members of Finance and General Purposes Committee:

Councillors Liz Jones (Town Mayor), Louise O'Riordan (Deputy Town Mayor), Peter Hollick (Chairman), Gregory Alderman (Vice-Chairman), Nicholas Kotarski, Mark Davis, Richard Attwell, Michelle Henderson, John Gurney, Matthew Brennan, Wendy Bater, Phillip Crawley, Robert Blennerhasset, Johnson Tamara and other Members of the Council for information.

Committee	Minute	Date	Action	Action Full	Responsible	Update	Status
FGP	193/23	18/09/2023	Talk of the Town to Businesses	To investigate further to send TOT to businesses. A Member asked whether the Talk of The Town was delivered to businesses as well as residents.	Town Clerk and Chief Executive	Copies will be delivered to ground floor town centre businesses in January as a first initiative	ongoing
FGP	193/23	18/09/2023	Live streaming on Facebook	To investigate into live streaming on Facebook. Cllr Alderman asked whether the Council's live streaming of meetings could take place on Facebook due to the higher numbers of followers.	Town Clerk and Chief Executive	Streaming will be via YouTube for now. Facebook presents additional security risks and comments cannot be monitored. Facebook will be used to promote livestreams and recordings.	Completed

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL****FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****13 NOVEMBER 2023****FINANCE REPORT**

<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<p>To:</p> <p>1.1) provide a revenue budgetary control report for the financial year until 30 September 2023</p> <p>1.2) provide detail of the Council's earmarked reserves as of 31 October 2023</p> <p>1.3) report the outcome of the External Audit report for financial year 2022/23</p> <p>1.4) provide detail on current investments</p>
--------------------------	--

**1 ACTION RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 For Members to note the revenue budget position for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.
- 1.2 For Members to note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as at 31 October 2023.
- 1.3 For Members to receive and note the outcome of the External Audit for financial year 2022/23.
- 1.4 For Members to note current investments.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This budgetary control report summarises the net expenditure against the budget for each service area as at 30 September 2023. This forms the basis for the projected outturn at the end of this financial year taking account of current known variances.

**3 REVENUE BUDGETARY REPORT**

- 3.1 The summary at Appendix 1 shows the net expenditure at 30 September 2023 per service area and gives an indication of the anticipated outturn against budget, taking account of seasonal variances and known commitments for the remainder of the financial year.

- 3.2 The summary shows a forecast revenue underspend at the end of the financial year of **£220,241**, which takes account of the overachievement forecast for Creasey Park Community Football Centre (CPCFC) being transferred to the specific reserve. This also takes account of the National Pay Award agreed on 1 November 2023 which has resulted in a significant saving on the budgeted salaries for the current financial year, along with a substantially greater income achieved from interest on the Council's reserves than was budgeted.
- 3.3 Members should note that proposals for allocating the forecast underspend have been included in the proposed budget for 2024/2025 and is featured in the budget reports being received by this Committee.
- 3.4 Within the **Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Office** the overall variance is forecast to be £122,003 underspent. Significant variances to the budget are as follows:
- *Staff Costs* to be underspent by £19,836 due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted
  - *Central Services* are predicted to be overspent by £10,570, mainly due to the appointment of solicitors for the Priory House lottery funding project
  - *Grove House* to be overspent by £3,147, due to the business rates increase for this financial year.
  - *Corporate Management* income is due to overachieve by £121,124 due to a large increase in investment and bank interest received to date and forecast to achieve throughout the year; a saving on VAT unclaimable due to changes in legislation for sports pitches and a saving on the Insurance premium, offset by increased costs on the production of Talk of the Town
  - *Democratic Management* is due to be overspent by £5,240 due to the cost of a road closure for Remembrance previously not charged for, and the repairs required to the Mayoral Chain.
- 3.5 Within **Grounds and Environmental Services** the overall variance is forecast to be £105,202 underspent. Significant variances in the budget are as follows:
- *Grounds Staff Costs* are predicted to be underspent by £51,198 due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted together with vacancies in the first quarter of this financial year.
  - *Allotments* are due to be overspent by £6,076; this is due to increased water usage and budget for electricity recharge being delayed pending the Men In Sheds lease being finalised
  - *Cemetery* is due to overachieve by £28,587, mainly due to burial income exceeding budget
  - *Recreation Grounds* forecast to overachieve by £3,100, mainly due to a maintenance contract secured in year.
  - *Town Centre and Gardens* is forecasting an overachievement of £18,121; this is predominantly due to the Central Bedfordshire Council maintenance contract being finalised above budget, offset by increased electricity costs on the Skatepark
  - *Creasey Park* is forecast to overachieve by £12,577; this largely due to additional income predicted.
  - *Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground Splash Park* is due to be overspent by £1,805 due to the extraction flue being vandalised.

- 3.6 **Community Services** the overall variance is forecast to be £5,613 underspent, significant variances to budget are as follows:
- *Staff Costs* are forecast to be underspent by £13,855, largely due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted
  - *Older People's Support Service* is due to underachieve by £3,728, mainly due to reduced numbers of members during the first half of the year
  - *Events* is forecast to overspend by £1,800; this is due to the agreed £3,000 contribution from reserve for increased entertainment costs as well as events wages being under budgeted for the financial year, offset by sponsorship secured in year.
  - *Town Centre Services* is due to underspend by £3,432; this is mainly due to savings on staff costs due to the pay award being less than budgeted.

## 4 RESERVES

- 4.1 The schedule enclosed at Appendix 2 provides detail of actual contributions to, and expenditure from, reserve funds as at 30 September 2023.

## 5 INVESTMENTS UPDATE

- 5.1 Dunstable Town Council's current bank and investment account balances as 30 September 2023 were as follows:

Account	Balance	Interest earned in month
Current Account	£10,000.00	-
Business Reserve Account	£371,064.61	£683.21
CCLA Deposit Account 1 – CP 3G Pitch	£94,409.36	£407.22
CCLA Deposit Account 2	£3,620,580.65	£11,467.75

## 6 FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 Councillors should, as a minimum, view and audit the Council's accounts on a quarterly basis.
- 6.2 The next quarterly financial Councillor audit is due to take place this month, where Councillors Peter Hollick and Nicholas Kotarski will be carrying out a 'mini-audit'.
- 6.3 Further quarterly meetings have been arranged, and all Councillors on Finance and General Purposed Committee have been invited to attend any future Financial Governance Audit meetings they can make.

## 7 EXTERNAL AUDIT 2022/2023

- 7.1 Officers have received the completed AGAR for the financial year 2022/2023 from our appointed external auditors Mazars LLP, and members will be pleased to note the successful completion of external audit. Please find Appendix 3 attached for information.
- 7.2 The report noted a 'minor scope for improvement in 2023/2024' as follows:  
*The Council has left Box 11a in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) blank. Although the answer that the Council are not sole trustees for any trust funds could be inferred from other answers on the AGAR the Council should ensure all boxes are filled in, marking nil or not applicable where appropriate.*
- 7.3 This technical point will be amended in the following year.

## **8 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 The Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer has been in post for over a year now and has completed a full detailed review of the Council's Financial processes, controls, legal requirements and regulations.
- 8.2 The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners Guide details the proper accounting and governance practices required of "smaller authorities". In accordance with Section 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, an authority is a 'smaller authority' if the higher of the authority's gross income for the year and its gross expenditure for the year does not exceed £6.5m. The guidance sets out the appropriate and statutory standard of financial and governance reporting for smaller authorities.
- 8.3 It has been the practice of Dunstable Town Council to employ an accountant to amend the Council's finances at the end of each year to be prepared using the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008) (FRSSE). This has been incorrect. This standard was withdrawn in 2015 and superseded with an updated version. In any case, Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 no longer required smaller authorities to use this standard. One difference between the JPAG's current guidance and the standard previously used by the Town Council is that the previous standard required capital expenditure to be reported as depreciating. This is not correct – the Town Council should not report depreciation in its accounts. (The Council DOES recognise depreciation for the purposes of insurance). The Council prepares for replacing capital items by developing ear-marked reserves as required.
- 8.4 Reporting under SORP has prevented Dunstable Town Council from completing year end accounts in house so, by removing the assets and long-term liabilities from the balance sheet enables the finance team to produce the Annual Return using the finance software in place.



- 8.5 The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) includes total borrowings, therefore there is no requirement to hold this information on the Balance Sheet. In addition, the Assets are already held on spreadsheets internally.
- 8.6 The Financial Review carried out has concluded that the Responsible Financial Officer should complete the Council's end of year accounts directly, using JPAG's guidance. The Council's finance package, Rialtas, automatically produces the necessary reports. The Responsible Financial Officer and Town Clerk & Chief Executive have taken professional advice which has all supported this change.
- 8.7 The Town Clerk and Chief Executive and the Head of Finance (and RFO) received comprehensive training in October 2023 from the SLCC recommended provider enable in house VAT calculations to be completed.
- 8.8 Completing year end accounts in house will ensure that the Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer has a much clearer view of the finances and will not have to rely on a third party.
- 8.9 The Town Council's Internal Auditors, together with the finance software provider and SLCC VAT expertise will be in place to provide continued guidance, advice and monitoring to ensure all processes, controls and legal requirements are followed at all times.
- 8.10 The change will result in £67,132 no longer being required to account for depreciation. This amount is therefore available for allocation to general or earmarked reserves.

## **9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **10 APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Summary of Net Revenue Expenditure at 30 September 2023

Appendix 2 – Summary of Earmarked Reserves at 30 September 2023

Appendix 3 – External Audit Completion letter and AGAR 2022/23

## **11 AUTHOR**

Lisa Scheder – Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer  
[lisa.Scheder@dunstable.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.Scheder@dunstable.gov.uk)

## Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Office

	Service Area	Budget 2023/24	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
100	Staff Costs	-429,849	-183,822	-410,013	19,836
101	Central Services	-110,770	-69,412	-121,340	-10,570
102	Grove House	-32,436	-14,220	-35,583	-3,147
106	Corporate Management	-117,115	-18,227	4,009	121,124
107	Democratic Management & Representation	-23,500	-13,319	-28,740	-5,240
110	Capital & Projects (inc loan charges)	-98,666	-75,486	-98,666	0
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>-812,336</b>	<b>-374,486</b>	<b>-690,333</b>	<b>122,003</b>

## Grounds and Environmental Services

	Service Area	Budget 2023/24	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
200	Staff & Vehicle Costs	-814,800	-354,818	-763,602	51,198
201	Allotments	3,200	-4,291	-2,876	-6,076
202	Cemetery	63,917	40,476	92,504	28,587
205	Recreation Grounds	-73,450	-40,395	-70,350	3,100
403	Town Centre and Gardens	-40,630	-7,825	-22,509	18,121
206	Town Ranger Service	-12,400	-7,748	-12,900	-500
210	Capital & Projects	-101,784	-161,603	-101,784	0
	Sub Total	-975,947	-536,204	-881,517	94,430
INCOME	111 Income: Creasey Park - Football	229,322	238,966	239,800	10,478
COSTS	111 Costs: Creasey park - Football	-108,209	-50,714	-96,623	11,586
INCOME	112 Income: Bar & Catering	234,249	132,729	261,899	27,650
COSTS	112 Costs: Bar & Catering	-386,944	-236,778	-424,081	-37,137
	Sub Total	-31,582	84,203	-19,005	12,577
115	Bennett Memorial RG Splash Park	-35,575	-37,063	-37,380	-1,805
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>-1,043,104</b>	<b>-489,064</b>	<b>-937,902</b>	<b>105,202</b>

## Community Services

	Service Area	Budget 2023/24	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
300	Staff Costs	-278,202	-116,911	-264,347	13,855
209	Older People's Support Service	-29,407	-1,927	-33,135	-3,728
303	Community Engagement (inc Grants)	-20,207	8,014	-19,374	833
304	Grove Corner	-25,382	-8,683	-24,111	1,271
401	Events Programme	-135,955	-91,601	-137,755	-1,800
405	Town Centre Services (inc Special Markets)	-75,182	-26,036	-71,750	3,432
407	Public Conveniences (Ashton Square)	-3,875	-3,099	-5,250	-1,375
306	High Street Heritage Action Zone	-29,357	-22,842	-29,322	35
310	Capital & Projects	-70,201	112,197	-70,201	0
	Sub Total	-667,768	-150,888	-655,245	12,523
402	Income: Priory house - Tea Rooms	150,000	70,798	110,000	-40,000
402	Costs: Priory house - Tea Rooms	-61,000	-29,165	-52,000	9,000
402	Income: Priory house - Shop	16,600	9,554	16,600	0
402	Costs: Priory house - Shop	-7,500	-5,175	-7,500	0
402	Other Costs (Inc Staff)	-366,137	-150,208	-342,047	24,090
402	Sub Total	-268,037	-104,196	-274,947	-6,910
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>-935,805</b>	<b>-255,084</b>	<b>-930,192</b>	<b>5,613</b>
	<b>DTC Grand Total</b>	<b>-2,791,245</b>	<b>-1,118,634</b>	<b>-2,558,427</b>	<b>232,818</b>

## In year commitments from General Reserve

Precept	-2,791,245	Balance	232,818
		Allocation to/from CPCFC Reserve at year end	-12,577
			<b>220,241</b>

**Dunstable Town Council - Reserves Summary 2023/24**

	Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.23	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.10.23	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
310	General Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£553,930	£62,977		£616,907			£616,907
311	Corporate Plan Development Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£5,000			£5,000	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £5,000 for development of 4 year corporate plan	-£5,000	£0
312	Vehicles Reserve	HofGES	£46,280	£10,000	-£16,878	£39,402	FGP 23.01.23- Minute 45/23= £19,985- for purchase of an articulated dumper	-£19,985	£19,417
313	CPCFC Reserve	TC&CE	£44,620		-£10,655	£33,965	Bal of £3,798 - 4 years sponsorship 22/23-25/26 (from £7,596)	-£3,798	£30,167
314	Christmas Lights Reserve	HofCS	£5,232	£7,000	-£9,418	£2,814	5 year replacement lighting plan 21/22-25/26	-£1,084	£1,731
315	Street Dressing Reserve	HofCS	£14,336		-£8,909	£5,427	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= bal of £4,540 for streeting dressing (of £18,000 approved)	-£5,427	£0
316	Downside Building Maintenance Res	HofCS	£41,209	£11,793		£53,002	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £36,679 & £8,792.55- for 2nd phase roof repairs	-£45,472	£7,530
317	Grove Corner Building Maint Reserve	HofCS	£33,565	£4,000		£37,565	Chairmans Approval 17.04.23= £5,000 roof survey and development plans	-£5,000	£32,565
318	Building Security Systems	TC&CE / HofF	£5,357			£5,357			£5,357
319	Cemetery Memorial Safety	HofGES	£0	£1,500		£1,500			£1,500
320	Priory House Tearooms Equipment	HofCS	£4,500	£1,500		£6,000			£6,000
321	IT/Equipment Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£38,002	£20,000	-£2,100	£55,902	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23 - £10,000 for IT Contract retendering/members tablets	-£10,000	£45,902
322	Older People's Day Care Svce	HofCS	£12,325			£12,325			£12,325
323	Election Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£43,017	£12,500		£55,517			£55,517
324	Grove House Building Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£148,550	£29,000		£177,550			£177,550
325	Priory House Works Contingency	HofCS	£29,864			£29,864	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £29,864- for Priory House contingency	-£29,864	£0
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	£11,149			£11,149			£11,149
328	Priory Churchyard	HofGES	£0			£0			£0
329	Performance Area Reserve	HofCS	£39,113		-£38,505	£609	Chairmans Approval 09.03.23= Bal of £609 for additional repairs/refurbishment costs (from £6,263 agreed)	-£609	£0
330	Town Twinning Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£8,239	£500		£8,739	Retained for twinning activities to be determined		£8,739

331	Tree Reserve	HofGES	£2,578	£15,000	-£2,790	£14,788	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23- Bal of £14,300 for 23/24 work requirements (from £17,090 agreed)	-£14,300	£488
332	Open Spaces Improvement Plan	HofGES	£47,933	£15,000	-£3,844	£59,089	FGP 20.01.20- Minute 8- Bal of £4,723 for improvement works (from £26,668 agreed) Council 29.06.20- Minute 85- £15,000 agreed for Priory Gardens Pergola Repairs	-£19,723	£39,366
333	Priory House Building Reserve	HofCS	£235,646			£235,646	Chairmans Approval 08.07.22= bal of £9,446 - lease of bean machine (£10,000 approved); FGP Minute 41/23 23.01.23- £21,200- drainage, infill and electrical works; FGP Minute 41/23 23.01.23- £205,000- tendering process for additional works	-£235,646	£0
334	Pavilion Buildings Maintenance Res	HofGES	£26,930	£15,000	-£11,480	£30,449	FGP Minute 147 26.09.22- Bal of £6,767 for Meadway Store Refurbishment (from £9,908 agreed)	-£6,767	£23,682
335	Church Street Phone Box Maintenance	HofGES	£5,000			£5,000	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £5,000 for Church Street phone box maintenance	-£5,000	£0
337	Member Training Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£1,000			£1,000	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £1,000 for Members training / induction	-£1,000	£0
338	Allotments Reserve	HofGES	£18,300	£5,000		£23,300	FGP Minute 107 20.06.22 - 5 year infrastructure improvement programme- upto £42,800 (includes £5,000 pa contributions)	-£11,931	£11,370
339	Creasey Park 3G Pitch - Interest	TC&CE	£8,649	£2,121		£10,770	Interest accrued on ringfenced deposit - retained for contribution towards future pitch replacement - with 381 below		£10,770
341	Outdoor Leisure (non play) Reserve	TC&CE / HofGES	£25,718		-£9,368	£16,350	Chairmans Approval 12.09.22= Bal of £5,267 for Sewerage Pump and associated works- Splash Park (from £7,635 agreed)	-£7,635	£8,715
342	Memorial Kerbs Reserve	HofGES	£6,570			£6,570	Chairmans Approval 25.07.23= Purchase of 10 Sanctums	-£6,270	£300
343	Cemetery Building Maintenance Res	HofGES	£31,924	£5,000	-£23,845	£13,079	FGP 20.09.21- Minute 148- Bal of £1,239.35 for various repair works (from £58,342 agreed)	-£1,239	£11,839
344	Fencing Maintenance Reserve	HofGES	£6,020			£6,020			£6,020
345	Events Reserve	HofCS	£3,000			£3,000	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £3,000 for Events increased costs expected	-£3,000	£0
346	HSHAZ Scheme	HofCS	£450,519	£674,722	-£823,335	£301,907	4 year HSHAZ scheme programme	-£301,907	£0
348	NEW - Unfulfilled Orders	TC&CE / HofF	£60,452		-£44,524	£15,929	Unfulfilled orders committed in 2022/23	-£15,929	£0
349	NEW - Priory House works (HSHAZ)	HofCS	£0	£95,228		£95,228	Funded works	-£95,228	£0
<b>Earmarked Reserves Total</b>			<b>£2,017,528</b>			<b>£1,999,719</b>		<b>-£851,813</b>	<b>£1,147,906</b>

**Capital Receipt - Sale of Land at Meadway**

	Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.23	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 12.06.23	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
370	Capital Receipts Reserve	TC&CE / HofF	£1,000		-£1,000	£0	£500,000 Income from sale of land- Council approval for creation of reserves		£0
371	NEW - White Lion Land Landscaping	HofGES	£10,000			£10,000	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	-£10,000	£0
372	NEW - New Cemetery Development	HofGES	£75,000	£1,000		£76,000	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022; FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £1,000 unallocated balance from meadway capital receipt tfr	-£76,000	£0
373	NEW - Grounds Depot Extension	HofGES	£100,000			£100,000	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	-£100,000	£0
374	NEW - Luton Road MUGA	HofGES	£100,000		-£27,091	£72,909	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	-£72,909	£0
375	NEW - Priory House Furniture	HofCS	£26,000			£26,000	Council 17.04.23 Minute 104/23- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	-£26,000	£0
376	NEW - Kingsbury Pavilion Refurbishment	HofGES	£170,000			£170,000	Council 17.04.23 Minute 104/23- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	-£170,000	£0
377	NEW - Splash Canopies	TC&CE	£18,000		-£14,006	£3,994	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23- bal of £17,494 for purchase and installation of Splash Canopies, benches and parasols (from £18,000 approved)	-£3,994	£0
	<b>Capital Receipts Total</b>		<b>£500,000</b>			<b>£458,903</b>		<b>-£458,903</b>	<b>£0</b>

**S106/External Funding/Ringfenced Expenditure specified by funding body**

350	Developers Contributions- CAP	HofGES	£18,065		-£6,342	£11,723	Frenchs Avenue S106 £7,437; Frenchs Avenue Fencing £4,286		£11,723
351	CPCFC Capital	TC&CE	£83,641			£83,641	Retained for future repair/replacement of All Weather Pitches at CPCFC (with 339 above)		£83,641
352	Development Contributions- REV	HofGES	£34,316			£34,316	£8,000 committed in 23/24 revenue budget from Bal of £30,129 for Willoughby (from S106 £47,645) Bal of £4,038 for Court Drive Landscaping (from CBC £15,000)	-£12,038	£22,278
570	Joint Committee Fund	HofCS	£49,984			£49,984	Bal in holding code as committed Joint Committees fund only = not DTC	-£49,984	£0
	<b>S106/External Funding Total</b>		<b>£186,006</b>			<b>£179,664</b>		<b>-£62,021</b>	<b>£117,642</b>
			<b>£2,703,534</b>			<b>£2,638,285</b>		<b>-£1,372,737</b>	<b>-£1,265,548</b>

Key:

= Finance and General Purposes Committee
= Grounds and Environmental Services Committee
= Community Services Committee

Mrs L Scheder  
Dunstable Town Council  
Grove House  
76 High Street North  
Dunstable  
Bedfordshire  
LU6 1NF

Direct line: +44 (0)191 383 6348  
Email: [local.councils@mazars.co.uk](mailto:local.councils@mazars.co.uk)

Date: 26 September 2023

Dear Mrs Scheder

### **Completion of the audit for the year ended 31 March 2023**

We have completed our audit for the year ended 31 March 2023 and I have pleasure in enclosing the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The External Auditor's Certificate and Report is given in Section 3.

If there are any significant matters arising from the audit, they are summarised in the External Auditor's certificate in Section 3. If we have identified minor scope for improvement we have recorded this on page 2 of this letter. The Council must consider these matters and decide what action is required. In most cases this will be self-evident. In some instances we have referred to further guidance available, in particular, in the publication "*Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners' Guide (England) 2022*". This can be obtained via your NALC or SLCC branch, or downloaded free of charge.

### **Action you are required to take**

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what you must do at the conclusion of the audit. In summary, you are required to:

Publish (which must include publication on the authority's website) a statement:

- that the audit has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
- of the rights of inspection conferred on local government electors by section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
- the address at which, and the hours during which, those rights may be exercised.
- Keep copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return remains available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was first published.

*The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 do not specify the period the Completion Notice needs to be on the council's website but this period must be reasonable.*

**Minor scope for improvement in 2023/24**

The Council has left Box 11a in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) blank. Although the answer that the Council are not sole trustees for any trust funds could be inferred from other answers on the AGAR the Council should ensure all boxes are filled in, marking nil or not applicable where appropriate.

**Accessibility Regulations**

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

**Audit fee**

Our fee note for the audit, which is in accordance with the audit fee scales set by SAAA, and available at <http://www.localaudits.co.uk/fees.html> will follow.

We would be grateful if you could arrange for this to be paid at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



**Cameron Waddell**

Partner

For and on behalf of Mazars LLP

# Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities\*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
  - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
  - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

## Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
  - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
  - **Sections 1 and 2** must be completed and approved by the authority.
  - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2023**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2023**. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
  - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
  - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2023
  - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
  - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
  - Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

## Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2023 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2022/23**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2023 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

\*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.



## Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide\** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2023.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chairman, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide\**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not **fully** explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2022) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2023).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which **must** include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2023**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including <b>the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights</b> , been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at <b>31 March 2023</b> been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? <b>NB:</b> do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		✓

**\*Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices**, can be downloaded from [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) or from [www.ada.org.uk](http://www.ada.org.uk)

# Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

## DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

ENTER PUBLIC [www.dunstable.gov.uk](http://www.dunstable.gov.uk) E/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No	Not covered
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

22/11/2022

28/02/2023

06/06/2023

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

SF Christopher for Auditing Solutions Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

SF Christopher

Date

06/06/2023

\*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

\*\*Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).



## Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

### DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓

**\*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

26/06/2023

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE 158/23

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

Clerk

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

ENTER PUBLICLY [www.dunstable.gov.uk](http://www.dunstable.gov.uk) WEBSITE ADDRESS

## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

### DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	1,866,332	2,196,772	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	2,393,969	2,480,490	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	1,579,975	2,268,793	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	1,832,647	1,987,336	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	108,426	109,364	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	1,702,431	1,988,805	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	2,196,772	2,860,550	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	2,302,961	2,821,081	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – <b>To agree with bank reconciliation.</b>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	7,873,739	7,901,976	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	850,443	998,395	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

**Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval**



Date

14/06/2023

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

26/06/2023

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE 159/23

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



## Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

**Dunstable Town Council**

### 1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>.

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

### 2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2022/23

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

Not applicable

### 3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

\*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable

External Auditor Name

**Mazars LLP, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1DF**

External Auditor Signature

*Mazars LLP*

Date

**26 September 2023**

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL****FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES****COMMITTEE MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2023****MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

**Purpose of Report:** To update Members on the Council's marketing and communications.

**1 SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 1.1 Heads of Service and Management Team members work alongside the Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer to prepare content and schedule posts. Social media channels have continued to see significant growth in followers since the last report. Dunstable Town Council has gained a further 160 followers and Priory House an extra 79 followers. Even though Bennett's Splash Park shut for the season and no social posts are going out, there have still been new followers. The High Street Heritage Action Zone Facebook account goal is to reach 1,000 milestone by the end of the HSHAZ.

**Facebook page followers are:**

Dunstable Town Council	11,507 (+160)
Bennett's Splash Park	4,354 (+81)
Town Ranger Services	1,407 (+5)
Creasey Park Community Football Centre	1,068 (+32)
Grove Corner	1,207 (+10)
High Street Heritage Action Zone	986 (+28)
Priory House	1,173 (+79)

**X (Twitter) account followers are:**

Dunstable Town Council	2,488 (-8)
Middle Row Market	2,096 (-2)
Dunstable Events	2,060 (+1)
Creasey Park Community Football Centre	726 (+5)
Bennett's Splash Park	100 (same)

**Instagram followers are:**

Grove Corner	436 (+8)
High Street Heritage Action Zone	250 (+2)
Dunstable Town Council	431 (+25)

**LinkedIn followers are:**

Dunstable Town Council	164 (+22)
------------------------	-----------

These figures are accurate as of 31 October 2023, and + is how many gained followers since the previous report date.

- 1.2 Dunstable Town Council now has a TikTok account, where video content is produced. The platform helps reach a different demographic and showcases the council's services, events, and occasions. So far, there are 16 followers.

- 1.3 Dunstable Town Council are participating in NALC White Ribbon Day which is to support ending violence against women. A video will be produced by NALC showcasing a range of Cllrs from different towns all coming together to show support. Cllr Peter Hollick was nominated by Paul Hodson Town Clerk and Chief Executive to represent Dunstable Town Council.
- 1.4 Since the funding has been awarded from Historic England and the National Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of Priory House, various social media posts will be published over the duration of the project.

## **2 INTERNAL MARKETING**

- 2.1 Monthly staff newsletters are produced to keep employees regularly informed and updated with relevant information to ensure employees are advocates for Dunstable Town Council.
- 2.2 Working with the Business Support Manager, strong visual displays of Dunstable Town Council's core values will go into offices across the service areas. This will help show a clear vision of what Dunstable Town Council stand for and ensure everyone is working towards the same common goal across the organisation.
- 2.3 On entering Grove House building, a Dunstable Town Council visual design will be displayed to personify a clear visual identity of the organisation.

## **3 EMAIL MARKETING**

- 3.1 The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer has designed and sent out the latest event information to subscribers on the Dunstable Events email communications list to support the Events Officer.
- 3.2 Monthly Councillor newsletters are sent with all relevant information which includes bulletins and Dunstable Town Council events. Officers would welcome feedback or suggestions on the Councillor newsletters.
- 3.3 The Corporate Marketing & Communications Officer is planning to produce a Dunstable Town Council public email newsletter in the future once technical challenges have been resolved.

## **4 WEBSITE**

- 4.1 Since the last report, the website has seen almost half as many viewers. This is likely due to the end of the summer events programme during this time, which is often what attracts visitors to the website. Users come directly to the website using Mobile. When designing the new website in the coming year, this will be taken into consideration regarding the layout of the to ensure it is more mobile-optimised. The website is still primarily being looked after by the Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer, along with other officers from services area updating their content and Treacle Factory on hand for support.



**Top web pages (August to October 2023)**

Priory House Tea Rooms	2,699
What's on	2,479
Events for September 2023	2,072
Creasey Park Football Centre	2,030
Events for August 2023	1,774
Bennett's Splash Park	1,612
Grass pitches fixtures	1,250

**Traffic acquisition (August to October 2023)**

10,000 traffic users come to the website from organic search (search engines like google)

Website visitors	18,041
Page session	25,496
Engagement session	0m. 46s
Mobile users	73.2%
Desktop users	23.6%
Tablet users	3.3%

**5 NOTICEBOARDS**

- 5.1 Noticeboards across the wards are regularly updated showcasing a range of local services and events. The Corporate Marketing and Communications ensures the information showcased is in date with a preferred uniform design (A4 size). The noticeboards continue to be regularly updated with the help of the Town Rangers.
- 5.2 Currently, on the noticeboards is the Priory Church Christmas Tree Festival, Christmas Carols and Torchlight Procession, Twilight Markets and Vegan Market, the Dunstable community group, along with joining the Good Companions Club and ward Councillors.

**6 WHAT'S ON WINDOW**

- 6.1 Many local organisations and community groups are still making use of the window with a range of submission requests. The window is updated on the first working day of the month. The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer regularly updates the design and content for the presentation to be displayed on the screen. The Town Centre Manager makes sure the latest version is uploaded.

**7 TALK OF THE TOWN**

- 7.1 In 2024, we will see 4 editions of *Talk of the Town*. The January edition is scheduled for delivery on 18 January. It will be a single sheet and will be an overview guide on some of the events that Dunstable Town Council will be hosting throughout the year. Although most events will be covered, some events may be added or can be subject to change. The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer will be overseeing the production of this edition with the Head of Community Services as the liaison.
- 7.2 Since the last report about issues with distribution, there haven't been any recurrences that the Corporate Marketing and Communications officer is aware of.



## **8 PRESS RELEASES**

- 8.1 The Corporate Marketing and Communications officer produces and circulates press releases to a dedicated distribution list after every event or achievement, for example, Green Flag raising at Bennett's Memorial Recreation Ground, Party in the Park or new playground and Multi Use Games Area at Kingsbury Recreation Ground. Press releases from the month are always included in the monthly Councillors email newsletter.
- 8.2 The latest press release that has been circulated is retaining a Platinum Award for Ashon Square Toilets for Loo of the Year. *Please note, that it is down to the editor whether they choose to produce the publication.*

## **9 MAYORAL**

- 9.1 The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer has been working with the Town Mayor's Cllr Liz Jones and the Democratic Service Manager on mayoral charity events for 2024.
- 9.2 Email campaigns, social media posts and updating the website with ticket information will be all part of the process for each event.

## **10 AUTHOR**

- 10.1 Rachel Connor – Corporate Marketing & Communications Officer  
[communications@dunstable.gov.uk](mailto:communications@dunstable.gov.uk)

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL****FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2023****ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING AND MAYOR MAKING 2024**

<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	For Members to note plans for the Annual Council Meeting to be held on 20 May 2024
---------------------------	--

**1. ACTION RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1. That the Committee notes that the venue for the Annual Council Meeting and Mayor Making Ceremony to be held on 20 May 2024 will again be the Dunstable Conference Centre subject to the hire of the venue providing good value to the Council.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1. The Annual Council Meeting combines the statutory annual meeting of the Council with the formal Mayor Making ceremony. The event is a key date in the Council's calendar which enables the Council to invite a range of residents, partners, and those previously involved in the Council to observe the meeting and celebrate the Council's year. The event is designed for the incoming Mayor to be able to host their charity representatives and any particular local organisations or partners they may wish to highlight during the Mayoral year.

- 2.2. Last year the Mayor Making Ceremony and Annual Council Meeting was held at the Dunstable Conference Centre.

**3. VENUE**

- 3.1. The Dunstable Conference Centre is large enough, available and within the parish boundary. No other suitable venue has been identified which meets these criteria.

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. The cost of the venue hire, catering and associated costs for the Annual Meeting are met from the Civic Hospitality budget of £3,000.
- 4.2. Last year the budget was spent on –

Venue	Hall Hire	<b>£1,500.00</b>
Venue	Round table cover hire	<b>£290.00</b>
Catering	Food	<b>£666.67</b>
Catering	Drinks	<b>£160.20</b>
Sound Management	Includes Live Stream, set up and sound management	<b>£320</b>
	<b>Total amount</b>	<b>£2,936.87</b>

It's proposed to follow the same approach in 2024.

5. **AUTHOR**

Georgia Pearson, Democratic Services Manager  
e-mail: [democratic@dunstable.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@dunstable.gov.uk)