

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GROVE HOUSE, HIGH STREET NORTH,  
DUNSTABLE**

**ON MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2023 FROM 19:00**

Present: Councillors Liz Jones (Town Mayor), Louise O’Riordan (Deputy Town Mayor), Peter Hollick (Chair), Gregory Alderman (Vice-Chair), Richard Attwell, Nicholas Kotarski, Matthew Brennan, Robert Blennerhasset, Philip Crawley, Michelle Henderson, and Johnson Tamara.

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager) and Lisa Scheder (Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Mark Davis, and John Gurney.

Public: Nil.

**231/23 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 18 September 2023 were approved as a correct record following one minor amendment and were signed by the Chair.

**232/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no specific declarations of interest.

**233/23 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Members received the report provided.

**234/23 REFERRAL REPORTS**

Members received and noted the report.

UK Shared Prosperity and S106 Funding Applications,

**RESOLVED:**

To release any funding secured from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and from S106 funds to deliver the projects applied for.

Fencing Reserve Spending approval,

**RESOLVED:**

To release £6,019 from the Fencing Reserve to undertake the works identified in the report.

**235/23 FINANCE**

**RESOLVED:**

- i. To agree the revenue budget position for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.
- ii. To note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as at 31 October 2023.
- iii. To note the outcome of the External Audit for financial year 2022/23.
- iv. To note current investments.

**236/23 CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT**

Deferred to next meeting.

**237/23 DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2024/25**

Members received the report provided. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised key points of the report. Members were invited to ask questions or make suggestions to officers in the following weeks to support the preparation of the final version of the budget for the next meeting of the Committee.

**238/23 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive Officer summarised the report provided. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive informed Members that a rates card for advertising in Talk of the Town had been put in place, and one advertiser secured for the next edition.

**239/23 ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING**

Members received a report and discussed the report's recommendation to hold the event at the same venue and for the same budget as the previous year.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive reminded Members that alcohol is never served or sold before or during a meeting, only after a Council meeting has concluded.

Councillor Tamara informed members that he had spoken to a representative from the Conference Centre during the day and had been advised that the venue had offered to reduce their charge by £600.

The following amendment to the report's recommendation was proposed by Councillor Alderman and seconded:

That the council cuts the catering costs of the upcoming ACM and mayor making ceremony, by charging for alcoholic drinks at the bar, and asking for those attending to reduce food and soft drink costs of the event through voluntary contributions. This amendment is considered in light of the costs of providing these provisions from last year being £160.20 and £666.67, respectively a cost that is likely to rise this coming year. This motion is also informed by the public expectation that taxpayer money be used for public services not for food and drink at an already costly event.

Following a debate, the following proposals were made:

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council agree the most cost-effective venue considering the event and ensure that the cost of refreshments are kept within or below those for 2023.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:**

That officers look at whether the Peter Newton Pavilion would be a suitable meeting venue given the nature of the event.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:**

That if the event is to be held at the Peter Newton Pavilion the Council offer a pay bar.

It was proposed, seconded and

**NOT RESOLVED:**

That if the event is to be held at the Dunstable Conference Centre the Council offer tea and coffee and soft drinks only.

**240/23 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

- Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Richard Attwell

Cllr Attwell advised that CA recently held a meeting where the audits were signed off.

- Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – Councillors Liz Jones, Peter Hollick and Kenson Gurney

Cllr Hollick advised that 1 member of the Twinning Association recently visited Porz however advised members that a meeting needed to be held for the future of the organisation.

- Hospice at Home Management Committee - Councillor Liz Jones

Cllr Jones advised that there will be another meeting this week for the organisation. Recently training for volunteers have been provided and further extension has been added to the organisation, so they are now dementia friendly to reach a wider audience who need their support.

- Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillors Louise O’Riordan and Gregory Alderman

Cllr O’Riordan advised members that a property was available, and a tenant was being sought.

- Ashton Schools Foundation - Councillors Peter Hollick and Gregory Alderman

Recently the foundation has placed a grant application which will enable funding for new laptops for 10 students.

- Chew’s Foundation - Councillors Matthew Brennan and Kenson Gurney

No Update.

- Poor’s Land Charity - Councillors Hollick and Liz Jones

Next meeting will be 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 to discuss the share of money.

- Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity - Councillors Kenson Gurney and Liz Jones

No Update.

- Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive - Councillor Nicholas Kotarski

There have been no meetings since the last report. The next meeting is due on Wednesday 22nd November 2023.

Cllr Kotarski met with the new District Commissioner after the Remembrance Day Parade. He will continue the efforts to reintroduce scouting into the Dunstable South area.

## 241/23 EXCLUSIONS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the

following item will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and therefore, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

**242/23      PRIORY HOUSE WORKS – VERBAL UPDATE**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive updated members regarding the ongoing works to Priory House. No details of cost or timescale for the additional works required were yet available. Further updates will be provided to future meetings.

**The meeting closed at 20:56**