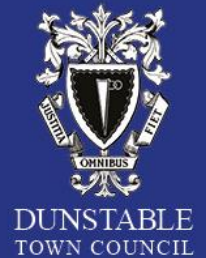


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Notice of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Paul Hodson Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: 12 January 2024

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** will be held on **Monday 22 January 2024** 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 or 01582 513000 by 4 pm on Friday 19 January 2024.

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 13 November 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
6. Marketing and Communications Report (see page 5)
7. Finance Report - Report (see page 9)
 - 7.1. Internal Audit - Report (see page 16)
8. Compliance and Facilities – Report (see page 26)
9. Corporate and Financial Risk Management – Decision Report (page 28)
 - 9.1. Corporate and Financial Risk Strategy – to agree the proposed strategy (page 31)
 - 9.2. Corporate and Financial Risk Management – to note and agree the Corporate Risk Assessment (page 40)
 - 9.3. Business Continuity Plan – to agree the proposed Plan (page 43)
10. Draft Budget for 2024 / 25 – Decision Report (to follow)
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. Reference from the Personnel Sub-Committee – (forwarded separately)

14. Staffing Report - (forwarded separately)

15. Priory House Works – to receive a verbal update.

16. Date of the next meeting – Monday 18 March 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 Blennerhassett, Johnson Tamara, and other Members of the Council for information.

FGP	193/23	18/09/2023	Talk of the Town to Businesses	To investigate further to send TOTT 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 by the Town Centre Manager once the new edition is delivered.	ongoing
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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024****MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS****Purpose of Report:** To update Members on current 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 social media posts. Social media channels have continued to see significant growth in followers since the last report. Dunstable Town Council has gained a further 231 followers and Priory House an extra 87 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	11,738 (+231)
Bennett's Splash Park	4,358 (+4)
Town Ranger Services	1,416 (+9)
Creasey Park Community Football Centre	1,097 (+29)
Grove Corner	1,216 (+10)
High Street Heritage Action Zone	987 (+1)
Priory House	1,260 (+87)

X (Twitter) account followers are:

Dunstable Town Council	2,495 (+7)
Middle Row Market	2,096 (0)
Dunstable Events	2,055 (-5)
Creasey Park Community Football Centre	724 (-2)
Bennett's Splash Park	100 (0)

Instagram followers are:

Grove Corner	440 (+4)
High Street Heritage Action Zone	257 (+7)
Dunstable Town Council	471 (+40)

LinkedIn followers are:

Dunstable Town Council	181 (+17)
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TikTok followers are:

Dunstable Town Council	27 (+11)
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These figures are accurate as of 09/01/24, and + is how many gained followers since the previous report date.

- 1.2 Dunstable Town Council launched a TikTok account, where different video content is produced. The platform helps reach a different demographic and showcases the council's services, events, and occasions.

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. Monthly Councillor newsletters are produced to provide a regular update of key events, press releases and current issues.
- 2.2 Working with the Business Support Manager, strong visual displays of Dunstable Town Council's core values and performance against the new Corporate Plan will go into offices across the service areas this year. This will help show a clear vision of what Dunstable Town Council stands for and ensure everyone is working towards the same common goals across 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 hasn't seen as many visitors. This is likely due to the festive period and events and markets finishing in November.
- 4.2 Plans are in place to retender for a new website this year with the launch being in 2025 to incorporate it with the 40-year anniversary of Dunstable Town Council. The new design and structure of the website will make it more mobile-friendly, as over 70% of users come directly to the website via their mobile. 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 (October to December 2023)

Twilight Market	3,485
Priory House	1,355
What's on	1,224
Grass pitches fixtures calendar	1,052
CPCFC	878
21-23 High Street South	793
Christmas Afternoon Tea Priory House	692

Traffic acquisition (October to December 2023)

Organic search (google, Bing etc)	9,941
Organic social (from social)	3,236
Direct	3,196
Website visitors	16,698
Page session	24,368
Engagement session per user	0.70s
Mobile users	71.1%
Desktop users	25.2%
Tablet users	3.7%

5 NOTICEBOARDS

- 5.1 Noticeboards across the wards are regularly updated showcasing a range of local services and events. The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer 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 in the noticeboards is an overview of 2024 events programme, Goodbye to Hi (HSHAZ) Middle Row Market, Dunstable Downs – sharing your memories, the Dunstable community group, along with joining the Good Companions Club and ward Councillors information. The town centre noticeboard has an overview of the 2024 events programme, until individual event posters go in before an event.

6 WHAT'S ON WINDOW

- 6.1 Many local organisations and community groups are making use of the What's on Window with a range of submission requests every month. The window is updated on the first working week of the month. Various social media posts will be going out to encourage more submissions. 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 The January edition is scheduled for delivery on the 18 January. It will be a 4-page edition with an overview what's on guide with an integrated calendar with the events / Middle Row Markets 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 due to unforeseen circumstances. The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer is overseeing the production of this edition with the Head of Community Services as the liaison.

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 was circulated was about the Christmas Carols and Torchlight Procession 2023 which was printed in the Luton News and Dunstable Gazette.

9 MAYORAL

- 9.1 The Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer has been working with the Town Mayor Cllr Liz Jones and the Democratic Service Manager to prepare for the remaining mayoral charity events of the current term. These include a Sunday lunch, the Fun/Run, and the Civic Service.

- 9.2 Email campaigns are sent to the Mayoral list via MailChimp. Social media posts are published to make residents aware of the events, along with updating the website with ticket information and a Mayoral monthly summary.

10 AUTHOR

- 10.1 Rachel Connor – Corporate Marketing & Communications Officer
communications@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****22 JANUARY 2024****FINANCE REPORT**

Purpose of Report	<p>To:</p> <p>1.1) provide a revenue budgetary control report for the financial year until 30 November 2023</p> <p>1.2) provide detail of the Council's earmarked reserves as of 31 December 2023</p> <p>1.3) provide update on elections reserve expenditure and request approval for further spend</p> <p>1.4) present to Members the 1st interim Internal Audit report for financial year 2023/24</p> <p>1.5) provide detail on current investments</p>
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1 ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 For Members to note the revenue budget position for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 November 2023.
- 1.2 For Members to note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as at 31 December 2023.
- 1.3 For Members to note the recent expenditure on the elections reserve and the release of the balance on this reserve of £11,552 for expenditure due for the bi-election in January 2024.
- 1.4 For members to receive and note the first interim Internal Audit Report for financial year 2023/2024, which concludes that the Council '*continues to maintain an adequate and affective system of internal control. The records held in support of the accounting transactions continue to be of a high standard and provide an effect audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation*'.
- 1.5 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 November 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 November 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 **£280,030**, 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 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 £134,530 underspent. Significant variances to the budget are as follows:
- *Staff Costs* to be underspent by £22,176 due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted
 - *Central Services* are predicted to be overspent by £9,030, mainly due to the appointment of solicitors for the Priory House lottery funding project
 - *Grove House* is due to be overspent by £3,396, due to the business rates increase for this financial year.
 - *Corporate Management* income is due to overachieve by £131,729 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 £13,740 due to May 2023 election and January 2024 bi-election costs exceeding the reserve balance, 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 £85,218 underspent. Significant variances in the budget are as follows:
- *Grounds Staff Costs* are predicted to be underspent by £53,834 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 £5,380; 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 £21,733, mainly due to income exceeding budget

- *Recreation Grounds* forecast to overachieve by £2,610, mainly due to a maintenance contract secured in year.
- *Town Centre and Gardens* is forecasting an overachievement of £17,063; this is predominantly due to the Central Bedfordshire Council maintenance contract being finalised above budget, offset by increased electricity costs on the Skatepark
- *Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground Splash Park* is due to be overspent by £4,719 which is mainly due to the extraction flue being vandalised, as well as an increase in stock costs offset by underachieving on income for the season.

3.6 **Community Services** the overall variance is forecast to be £61,049 underspent, significant variances to budget are as follows:

- *Staff Costs* are forecast to be underspent by £5,315, due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted
- *Older People's Support Service* is due to underspend by £4,617, due to reduced transport costs offset by underachieving on income due to reduced numbers of members during the first half of the year
- *Town Centre Services* is due to overachieve by £10,216; this is mainly due to a credit VAT adjustment for 4 years previous as well as savings on staff costs due to the pay award being less than budgeted.
- *Priory House* is due to be underspent by £37,748; this is largely due to the pay award being less than budgeted together with reduced staffing following closure of the Tearooms. This is offset by stock cost savings due to closure.

4 RESERVES

4.1 The schedule enclosed at Appendix 3 provides detail of actual contributions to, and expenditure from, reserve funds as at 31 December 2023.

4.2 Members are asked to note the expenditure from the elections reserve of £43,965 for the May 2023 local elections recently paid to Central Bedfordshire Council.

4.3 Members are aware that the by-election on 18 January 2024 will incur further costs from Central Bedfordshire Council.

4.4 It is therefore requested to release the balance of the elections reserve of £11,552 towards this cost, with the balance being met from the 2023/24 revenue budget.

5 INVESTMENTS UPDATE

5.1 Dunstable Town Council's current bank and investment account balances as 31 December 2023 were as follows:

Account	Balance	Interest earned in month
Current Account	£10,000.00	-
Business Reserve Account	£329,179.24	£462.22
CCLA Deposit Account 1 – CP 3G Pitch	£95,641.31	£411.94

CCLA Deposit Account 2	£2,763,509.88	AGENDA ITEM 7 £14,024.93
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6 FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 Councillors should, as a minimum, view and audit the Council's accounts on a quarterly basis.
- 6.2 The last quarterly financial Councillor audit took place virtually and was completed on 30 November 2023 with the Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Councillor Hollick, Vice Chair Councillor Alderman and Councillor Kotarski taking part. The Councillors carried out a 'mini audit' which included requests of financial information on various purchase ledger invoices paid, contract information and bank statement queries, together with verifying the bank statements of all accounts against the Accounts Software relating to July, August and September 2023.
- 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 INTERNAL AUDIT

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the first interim Internal Audit Report appended to this report and is pleased to that the report concludes that the Council's financial systems remain robust and records continue to be of a high standard.
- 7.2 The Internal Audit report has one recommendation in regard to tender reporting to committee and the minuting of tender approvals following the award of a contract in October 2023 for the HSHAZ project, as detailed in the report. Due to stipulations regarding the HSHAZ project through Historic England the company who had the contract awarded to them could not be named at the time of reporting. However, officers will ensure future tenders will be reported and minuted in accordance with standing orders.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

9 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Summary of Net Revenue Expenditure at 30 November 2023
Appendix 2 – Summary of Earmarked Reserves at 31 December 2023
Appendix 3 – 1st interim Internal Audit Report 2023/2024

10 AUTHOR

Lisa Scheder – Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer
lisa.Scheder@dunstable.gov.uk

Dunstable Town Council

Summary of Actuals vs Budget

30/11/2023

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	-265,592	-407,673	22,176
101	Central Services	-110,770	-92,827	-119,800	-9,030
102	Grove House	-32,436	-18,486	-29,040	3,396
106	Corporate Management	-117,115	4,336	14,614	131,729
107	Democratic Management & Representation	-23,500	-17,304	-37,240	-13,740
110	Capital & Projects (inc loan charges)	-98,666	-93,684	-98,666	0
	Grand Total	-812,336	-483,557	-677,806	134,530

Grounds and Environmental Services

	Service Area	Budget 2023/24	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
200	Staff Costs	-814,800	-508,370	-760,966	53,834
201	Allotments	3,200	-5,635	-2,180	-5,380
202	Cemetery	63,917	64,029	85,650	21,733
205	Recreation Grounds	-73,450	-45,132	-70,840	2,610
403	Town Centre and Gardens	-40,630	-11,658	-23,567	17,063
206	Town Ranger Service	-12,400	-8,107	-13,091	-691
210	Capital & Projects	-101,784	-174,873	-101,784	0
	Sub Total	-975,947	-689,746	-886,778	89,169
111	Income: Creasey Park - Football	229,322	247,951	243,500	14,178
111	Costs: Creasey park - Football	-108,209	-65,532	-104,312	3,897
112	Income: Bar & Catering	234,249	184,890	271,899	37,650
112	Costs: Bar & Catering	-386,944	-320,142	-441,901	-54,957
	Sub Total	-31,582	47,167	-30,814	768
115	Bennett Memorial RG Splash Park	-35,575	-40,270	-40,294	-4,719
	Grand Total	-1,043,104	-682,849	-957,886	85,218

Community Services

	Service Area	Budget 2023/24	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
300	Staff Costs	-278,202	-173,535	-272,887	5,315
209	Older People's Support Service	-29,407	-5,199	-24,790	4,617
303	Community Engagement (inc Grants)	-20,207	9,186	-20,092	115
304	Grove Corner	-25,382	-15,532	-24,993	389
401	Events Programme	-135,955	-102,807	-135,557	398
405	Town Centre Services (inc Special Markets)	-75,182	-36,906	-64,966	10,216
407	Public Conveniences (Ashton Square)	-3,875	-4,009	-5,250	-1,375
306	High Street Heritage Action Zone	-29,357	-32,368	-25,731	3,626
310	Capital & Projects	-70,201	99,243	-70,201	0
	Sub Total	-667,768	-261,927	-644,467	23,301
402	Income: Priory house - Tea Rooms	150,000	80,510	103,000	-47,000
402	Costs: Priory house - Tea Rooms	-61,000	-36,065	-44,000	17,000
402	Income: Priory house - Shop	16,600	13,336	14,100	-2,500
402	Costs: Priory house - Shop	-7,500	-8,004	-8,000	-500
402	Other Costs (Inc Staff)	-366,137	-202,084	-295,389	70,748
402	Sub Total	-268,037	-152,307	-230,289	37,748
	Grand Total	-935,805	-414,234	-874,756	61,049

DTC Grand Total	-2,791,245	-1,580,640	-2,510,447	280,798
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In year commitments from General Reserve 0

Precept -2,791,245 *Balance* 280,798

Allocation to/from CPCFC Reserve at year end -768

280,030

	Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.23	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.12.23	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	-£36,263	£20,017			£20,017
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	-£3,000	£34,565	Chairmans Approval 17.04.23= bal of £2,000 roof survey & development plans (of £5,000 approved)	-£2,000	£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	-£43,965	£11,552			£11,552
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
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	£3,352		£12,001	Interest accrued on ringfenced deposit - retained for contribution towards future pitch replacement - with 381 below		£12,001
340	Capital Finance Account	TC&CE	£144,023			£144,023	Depreciation account saving - allocated to 2024/25 budget	-£144,023	£0
341	Outdoor Leisure (non play) Reserve	TC&CE / HofGES	£25,718		-£15,399	£10,319			£10,319
342	Memorial Kerbs Reserve	HofGES	£6,570		-£6,060	£510	Chairmans Approval 25.07.23= bal of £210- purchase of 10 Sanctums (from £6,270 approved)	-£210	£300
343	Cemetery Building Maintenance Res	HofGES	£31,924	£5,000	-£24,643	£12,281	FGP 20.09.21- Minute 148- Bal of £442 for various repair works (from £58,342 agreed)	-£442	£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	£678,181	-£1,065,986	£62,714	4 year HSHAZ scheme programme	-£62,714	£0
348	NEW - Unfulfilled Orders	TC&CE / HofF	£60,452		-£47,037	£13,416	Unfulfilled orders committed in 2022/23	-£13,416	£0
349	NEW - Priory House works (HSHAZ)	HofCS	£0	£95,228		£95,228	Funded works	-£95,228	£0
	Earmarked Reserves Total		£2,161,551			£1,824,029		-£716,652	£1,107,377

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	£-30,210	£45,791	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; FGP 18.09.23- Minute 187/23= balance of the reserve for development of he new cemetery	£-45,791	£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		£-26,685	£73,315	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	£-73,315	£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		£-15,127	£2,873	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23- bal of £2,873 for purchase and installation of Splash Canopies, benches and parasols (from £18,000 approved)	£-2,873	£0
Capital Receipts Total		£500,000			£427,978		£-427,978	£0

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 Willoughy (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	£38		£50,021	Bal in holding code as committed Joint Committees fund only = not DTC	£-50,021	£0
S106/External Funding Total		£186,006			£179,701		£-62,059	£117,642
		£2,847,557			£2,431,709		£-1,206,689	£1,225,020

Key:

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



Dunstable Town Council

Internal Audit Report (1st Interim) 2023-24

Stephen Christopher

*For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd*

Background

All town and parish councils are required by statute to make arrangements for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control, and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Auditing Solutions Ltd have been appointed to undertake this function on behalf of Dunstable Town Council for the 2023-24 financial year.

This report sets out the results of our first interim internal audit in relation to 2023-24, which was undertaken in November 2023. We wish to thank Council staff for providing the documentation and explanations required for our audit.

Internal Audit Approach

In carrying out our work for the year to date, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts/AGAR. We have employed a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks in a number of key areas, in order to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls are appropriate and fit for the purposes intended.

Our audit programme is designed to afford assurance that the Council's financial systems remain robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the Council's AGAR, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

On the basis of the programme of audit work we have undertaken for the year to date, we have concluded that the Council continues to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal control. The records held in support of the accounting transactions continue to be of a high standard and provide an effective audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation.

In the sections below, we have explained the objectives of each area of our audit, summarising the work undertaken and our findings. We identified one area where we consider that the control arrangements could be strengthened, which is detailed in the report. We ask that Members consider the content of this report and respond in due course to the recommendation, as set out in the appended 'Action Plan', indicating the action to be taken,

<p>This report has been prepared for the sole use of Dunstable Town Council. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no responsibility or liability is accepted by Auditing Solutions Ltd to any third party who purports to use or rely, for any reason whatsoever, on this report, its contents or conclusions.</p>

Detailed Report

Accounting records and Banking arrangements

Our objective is to confirm that the accounting records are accurate and up to date, with no anomalous entries in the cashbooks or financial ledgers, and that appropriate banking arrangements are in place.

The Council maintains its accounting records using the RBS Omega software, which is generally acknowledged as a market leader at this tier of local government.

Day-to-day business banking services continue to be provided by NatWest Bank. Two accounts are held, a Current Account and an instant access Business Reserve Account, with an automatic daily transfer between the accounts to retain a balance of £10,000 in the Current Account. In addition to the Business Reserve Account, other funds that are not required for immediate use are held in two Public Sector Deposit Fund accounts with CCLA Investment Management Ltd.

In our audit work for the year to date, we have:

- Checked and agreed the opening trial balance on Omega for 2023-24 to the closing balances on the 2022-23 AGAR and the detailed accounts;
- Verified that the financial ledgers remained “in balance” as at 31st October 2023;
- Confirmed that the accounting code structure remains appropriate for the Council’s budget reporting and control requirements;
- Checked and agreed transactions in the Omega cashbooks for the Current and Business Reserve accounts to the relevant NatWest bank statements for May and October 2023;
- Checked the bank reconciliations for all active bank account reconciliations, including the CCLA deposits, as at 31st October 2023, confirming that there are no long-standing uncleared cheques or other anomalous entries;
- Confirmed that the bank reconciliations continue to be subject to regular independent review by councillors, as part of the quarterly ‘financial Councillor audit’ and that the latest investment position is reported at each Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GP) committee, as part of the RFO’s financial report;
- Noted that the External Auditors issued their ‘report and certificate’ on the Council’s 2022-23 AGAR on 26th September 2023 and that there were no significant matters arising, and
- Confirmed that the Council continues to ensure that its IT systems are regularly backed-up offsite.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from the audit work undertaken in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Corporate Governance

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place and that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain (as we do not attend Council or Committee meetings), all meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been, or are being, considered for implementation.

During the course of our first interim audit, we have confirmed the following:

- Our review of the minutes of the meetings of the Full Council and its standing committees in the year to date have not identified any issues that we consider might have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council's future financial stability;
- The Council is keeping its governance arrangements under regular review. The most recent Financial Regulations were adopted by the F&GP Committee on 20th March 2023, with revised "Constitution, Standing Orders and delegation to committees and officers" approved by the Council on 26th June 2023;
- A range of other policies and procedures remain in place and are reviewed on a regular basis, and
- The Council continues to exercise the General Power of Competence. This was re-adopted at the first Annual meeting of the new Council on 15th May 2023 and will apply for the 4-year term to May 2027.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from the audit work undertaken in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Expenditure

Our objective is to confirm that:

- Council resources are released in accordance with approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- Official orders have been raised for purchases, where appropriate;
- Any discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

We have commenced our review of the procedures in place in this area. To test compliance with the above criteria, we reviewed a sample of non-pay related payments from the first half of the financial year. Our test sample included all payments in excess of £7,500, together with a more random selection of every 80th payment as recorded in the Omega cashbook. The overall gross value of expenditure in our sample totalled £1,054,603.

The Council makes use of a NatWest Commercial Credit Card, with a monthly limit of £6,000, which is used mainly for items such as internet purchases and subscriptions. There are currently three users, each with a monthly expenditure limit of £2,000. The Card is settled monthly by direct debit. We reviewed the statement for a sample period (month ending 10th November 2023), confirming that all purchases were adequately supported by receipts and were appropriate to the Council's business and that, where appropriate, VAT was accounted for correctly.

A Fuel Card is also in use, for the purchase of fuel for the Council's vehicle fleet. We will review its usage at our second interim audit.

We confirmed that VAT Returns continue to be submitted quarterly in electronic format, as required by extant legislation, with the detail being reconciled to the Omega financial ledger. We reviewed the detail of the VAT reclaim submitted for the first quarter of the year.

As part of our testing of expenditure, we reviewed the approach followed in relation to the tender for work in relation to the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) project. We confirmed that a sound approach was taken to the management of the tender process, including the involvement of specialist external architects in the evaluation of tenders received and that, in accordance with the national regulatory requirements, the tender was published on the Government's Contracts Finder website.

Conclusion and recommendation

On the basis of our audit work in this area to date, we consider that the Council has adopted a sound approach to its responsibilities in relation to purchasing. The one matter we would draw to Members' attention concerns the formal approval of the award of the contract relating to the HSHAZ project.

The Council's contract standing orders (standing order 18.d.vi) require that "tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the Council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility". Whilst the outcome of the tender process was reported to the Community Committee on 30th October 2023, the draft minutes do not confirm that the Committee formally approved the award of the contract.

RI In accordance with its contract standing orders (standing order 18.d.vi), the Council, or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility, should formally approve the award of any contracts resulting from a formal tendering process and that decision should be minuted.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also

ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

There is a requirement for the Council to formally review and approve its risk management arrangements during each financial year. We confirmed that the 'Corporate Risk Log', which provides an assessment of the Council's organisational strategic risks, was last reviewed and re-affirmed by the Council at its meeting on 27th June 2022, as part of the annual review of corporate governance arrangements. At the time of our first interim audit visit for 2023-24 no further review had taken place, but we understand this is scheduled for January 2024.

The Council's primary insurance cover continues to be provided by Zurich Municipal and we have reviewed the schedule for the current policy (to 31st March 2024) to confirm that an appropriate level of cover remains in place. The policy includes Employer's Liability and Public Liability of £10 million, and Fidelity Guarantee cover of £2.0 million, all of which appear to be adequate to meet the current needs of the Council.

As part of its wider health and safety arrangements, a regular programme of reviews of the Council's playgrounds and play equipment is undertaken. This includes daily and weekly inspections by the Council's own staff, with quarterly external inspections by the Play Inspection Company to confirm compliance with national regulatory standards. The most recent external inspections were completed in September 2023 and, from review of the summary of inspection findings provided by the Grounds Operations Manager, we have confirmed that no significant risks were identified and that the Grounds Maintenance team is addressing the various matters reported.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from the audit work undertaken in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Budget Setting, Budgetary Control and Reserves

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust procedures in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and the level of Precept to be drawn down from Central Bedfordshire Council, and that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also consider whether the Council retains appropriate funds in earmarked and general reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

At our first interim visit we considered the information provided to the Council on progress against the 2023-24 budget. The F&GP Committee continues to receive financial monitoring reports at each meeting, with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review. We note that the most recent report, detailing performance for the first half year, estimates an overall underspend of approximately £220,241 which is to be taken into consideration in setting the 2024-25 budget. We confirmed that the financial monitoring reports also continue to provide Members with details of the movements in earmarked reserves during the year and an up-to-date summary of the overall funds held in the various accounts.

From our review of the minutes and agendas, we note that consideration of the 2024-25 budgetary requirements is now underway, with each committee having undertaken an initial assessment of its areas of activity.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from the audit work undertaken in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation. We will review the 2024-25 budget setting process during our second interim audit.

Income

The Council receives income from a wide variety of sources including the Allotments, Cemetery, Creasey Park, Specialist Markets, Priory House, and Bank and deposit interest.

Our objective is to confirm that robust procedures are in place to ensure that all income due to the Council is identified and invoiced (where appropriate), with recovery effected within a reasonable time span, and also that it is banked promptly in accordance with the Financial Regulations. In the course of our first interim audit, we undertook the following work in relation to income:

Fees and charges: We confirmed that the fees and charges for 2023-24 were approved by the Council as part of the annual budget setting process, following detailed consideration by the F&GP Committee. We understand that a similar approach will be followed in determining the fees and charges for 2024-25.

Banking of income: As noted earlier in this report, we have checked and agreed two sample month's receipts transactions from cashbooks to the relevant bank statements, confirming the timeliness and accuracy of transactions.

Creasey Park Community Football Centre – facilities hire: We reviewed the booking records for a sample week in September 2023, confirming that all of the hires in that week were either covered by a long-term hire agreement or subsequent bookings and that, in the case of one-off function bookings, these had been paid for in advance. There were no issues arising.

Outstanding debts: We reviewed the Sales Ledger as at 31st October 2023. We were pleased to note that the overall value of long-standing debts remains relatively low and we confirmed that effective control arrangements remain in place, with appropriate action being taken in relation to outstanding payments.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from the audit work undertaken in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation. We will consider the controls in other income areas at our second interim audit.

Petty Cash

As part of the internal audit certification process on the Council's AGAR, we are required to consider and comment upon the controls in place over the operation of petty cash accounts at the Council. Our objective in this area is, therefore, to ensure that appropriate controls are in place; that expenditure incurred is adequately supported by trade invoices or till receipts; that the expenditure is appropriate for the Council's requirements; that VAT has been separately identified for periodic recovery and that cheque reimbursements from the main cashbooks are properly recorded.

At our first interim audit, we reviewed the procedures in place for the main petty cash account holding at Grove House, which is effectively operated on an Imprest basis with a float of £150. We checked and agreed the cash balance held at the date of the first interim audit to the petty cash ledger, and confirmed that there was appropriate supporting information for petty cash payments made since the date of the last reconciliation.

We also checked and agreed the balance of the petty cash and the bar till floats held at Creasey Park.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from the audit work undertaken in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Staff Salaries

In examining the Council's payroll function, our objective is to confirm that extant employment legislation is being adhered to, that the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation are satisfied regarding the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions and that the requirements of the local government pension scheme are met.

To meet this objective, we examined the payroll procedures in place and the computations undertaken for the payments to staff in 2023-24 by reference to the November 2023 payroll documentation produced by the Council's external payroll bureau (Payroll Options Ltd, Milton Keynes).

Our audit work involved the following:

- We confirmed that the Council has applied the approved employee pay rates for the financial year – noting that the annual pay settlement to apply from 1st April 2023 was agreed at the start of the month and back-pay included in the November payroll;
- From review of the contracts of employment for a sample of full and part time staff whose employment commenced in 2023-24, we confirmed that appropriate signed contracts of employment are held;
- We checked and agreed the detail of the salary payments made to a sample of staff in November 2023 to the latest schedule of salaries and pay scales;
- We confirmed that tax and NI deductions have been made applying the appropriate tax code and NI Table, also ensuring that appropriate amounts are paid to HMRC;

- We confirmed that the appropriate employee and employer contributions to the pension scheme have been applied in accordance with the current arrangements and confirmed that these have been paid over to the Pension Fund Administrators on a timely basis, and
- We confirmed that the monthly net salary payments to staff agreed to the underlying records.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from the audit work undertaken in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Investments and Loans

Our objective is to confirm that an appropriate investment/treasury management policy is in place, that any funds not required for immediate use, whether temporarily or on a longer-term basis are invested in line with that strategy and that interest earned is brought to account correctly and appropriately in the accounting records. We also confirm that any loan repayments due to or payable by the Council are transacted in accordance with the relevant loan agreements.

During the course of our interim audit, we confirmed the following:

- As required by the ‘Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments’, a Treasury Management Policy is in place and this was last updated and approved at the F&GP meeting on 18th September 2023;
- At present, the Council does not hold any long-term investments. As noted above, surplus funds are held in either the NatWest (instant access) Business Reserve Account or the two CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund accounts, and
- We have checked and agreed the half-yearly Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan instalment repayments made to date for 2022-23 to the third party “demand” notices from the UK Debt Management Office;

Conclusion

There are no matters arising from our audit work in this area to date that require a formal comment or recommendation. In our subsequent audits for the year, we will confirm the payment of the second half-yearly instalments of principal and interest and that there is correct disclosure of the PWLB loans in the AGAR, Section 1, Boxes 5 and 10.

Action Plan

Rec No.	Recommendation	Response
Expenditure		
R1	In accordance with its contract standing orders (standing order 18.d.vi), the Council, or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility, should formally approve the award of any contracts resulting from a formal tendering process and that decision should be minuted.	

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024**

Purpose of Report: To update Members on the Council's Corporate Compliance and Facilities.

1. COMPLIANCE, HEALTH & SAFETY

- 1.1. The Council appointed WorkNest Ltd in April 2023 as the new Health & Safety and HR Consultants. WorkNest will provide professional qualified H&S advice for all staff to help simplify health and safety legislation and find workable solutions to health and safety challenges. Through WorkNest the Council have also now implemented a new Health & Safety Management System (H&SMS) via its online software system SafetyNest.
- 1.2. SafetyNest is a real-time user-friendly health & safety management tool to ensure compliance, H&S monitoring and incident reporting is continually observed, adhered to and safely recorded. Officers have now been trained in the system and embedded it as a part of their working practices. SafetyNest will ensure the council continues to be proactive in its approach to health & safety and remains fully compliant across all services and departments.
- 1.3. A review of the Town Council's Security & Fire service contracts highlighted that the council were employing numerous contractors across CCTV, Intruder and Fire alarms. Therefore, a tender exercise was undertaken to install uniformity and continuity across all sites and with third party alarm monitoring stations. As a result, from April 2024 the council will only be employing one single service contactor to maintain CCTV, Intruder and Fire Alarms at all council sites.
- 1.4. The Compliance Manager is currently conducting a review of the Council's other contracts to ensure there is uniformity and that quality and best price are being met.
- 1.5. To enhance contractor sign in procedures at each location a new site 'Sign In' QR code system has been implemented at each site.

2. FACILITIES**2.1. Grove House**

- 2.2. The council recently commissioned Brasier Freeth (BF), the Council's appointed Building Surveyors to conduct two reports on Grove House, i. Planned Preventive Maintenance Schedule (PPM), ii. Property Survey.
- 2.3. The PPM schedule & Property Survey provides a broad overview of the conditions of the external & internal features of Grove House and identifies what BF considers to be the salient points.

- 2.4. Officers are now working with BF to produce a succinct Schedule of Works to enable planned works in line with budgetary constraints. Once a schedule of works is established an update will be provided in future reports.
- 2.5. Hospice at Home have given notice on their Licence to Occupy office space they rent in Grove House and currently are in the process of vacating. Morton's Solicitors have confirmed they wish to take on a new Licence to Occupy this space and the formal agreement is being finalised.

3. SPECIAL PROJECTS

3.1. IT Tender

- 3.2. The Town Council's current IT managed service and maintenance contract expires the beginning July 2024. The Council will therefore conduct a full tender process leading up to this date to secure a new contract. Part of the tender process will also include a review of equipment, devices and software used at Council sites and by staff and councillors. It is intended to tender for replacement tablets for councillors.

4. AUTHOR

- 4.1. James Slack – Compliance Manager

james.slack@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE****MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024****CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT**

Purpose of Report: To review and approve the revised risk management arrangements and corporate risk assessment

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) requires the Council to assert that:
- 1.2. *“We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this smaller authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.”*
- 1.3. The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) provides a guide on completing the AGAR. The 2023 guide explains that “in order to warrant a positive response to this assertion, the authority needs to have the following arrangements in place:
- 1.31 Identifying and assessing risks — The authority needs to identify, assess and record risks associated with actions and decisions it has taken or considered taking during the year that could have financial or reputational consequences.
 - 1.32 Addressing risks — Having identified, assessed and recorded the risks, the authority needs to address them by ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to mitigate and manage risk. This might include the introduction of internal controls and/or appropriate use of insurance cover. “

Further Guidance on managing risk from the Joint Panel is included in Appendix 1.

- 1.4. It has been this Council’s practice to review the Council’s corporate risk register each summer along with consideration of the annual report. This approach will be renewed in 2024.

2. CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

- 2.1. Members are asked to review and adopt the proposed Risk Management Policy. This is a new document for the Council, and is designed to ensure the Council meets the requirements of the Joint Pantel and has effective oversight of key risks.

3. CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

- 3.1. Members are asked to review the revised Corporate and Financial Risk Assessment and approve the document, with any suggested changes.
- 3.2. The risk assessment provided is high level and draws attention to key corporate risk. Each relevant service, facility and activity has its own risk assessment and mitigations

in place. These are managed within each service with the support of the Compliance Manager to ensure consistency and compliance with policies and good practice.

4. BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

- 4.1. The proposed Business Continuity Plan lays out measures to ensure the Council can continue to operate if faced with a range of emergency situations. Members are asked to suggest any changes and approve the proposed plan.

5. AUTHORS

James Slack – Compliance Manager
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Paul Hodson
Town Clerk & Chief Executive

AGS Assertion 5 — Risk management

- 5.84. In order to warrant a positive response to this assertion, an authority must have appropriate arrangements in place. As a minimum, an authority must identify and assess risks, and address those identified risks by mitigating or managing them.
- 5.85. Appropriate arrangements will vary and need to be proportionate to the size and nature of the operations of an authority.
- 5.86. Smaller authorities should identify both financial and operational risks. The record should include controls/ mitigation and be formally reported and considered by the authority annually.
- 5.87. Larger authorities are likely to adopt more extensive procedures, which, whilst reflecting the basic principles above, may utilise a risk assessment matrix and undertake more extensive risk arrangements (eg a working party to consider risks) and/or a full risk register.
- 5.88. Risks are uncertain events or conditions (not just financial) that if they occur, will affect the authority’s ability to achieve its objectives. The authority generally, and members individually are responsible for risk management.
- 5.89. Typical categories of risks include:
- financial – loss of money;
 - security – fraud, theft, embezzlement;
 - property – damage to property;
 - legal – breaking the law or being sued;
 - IT – failure of IT systems or misuse or data loss; and
 - reputational – actions taken could harm the authority’s public reputation.
- 5.90. Risks are unavoidable, but they need to be managed either by mitigation or controls such that they are tolerated, treated, transferred or terminated.
- 5.91. Insurance is a significant way of managing and reducing risks relating to property, cash and legal liability (amongst other things).
- 5.92. Authorities could use a simple risk assessment matrix as follows:

Priority of risk management				
Likelihood of occurrence	Highly Likely (score 3)	Medium (3 x 1)	High (3 x 2)	Very High (3 x 3)
	Possible (score 2)	Low (2 x 1)	Medium (2 x 2)	High (2 x 3)
	Unlikely (score 1)	Very low (1 x 1)	Low (1 x 2)	Medium (1 x 3)
		Negligible (score 1)	Moderate (score 2)	Severe (score 3)
Impact				

- 5.93. A proforma risk assessment template that authorities can adapt for their own use is included in section 6.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

Dunstable Town Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage risks, both internal and external, and is therefore committed to the implementation of a risk management strategy in line with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in order to protect the Council from avoidable losses.

2. Responsibilities

This Policy places a responsibility on all Members and Officers to have regard for risk in carrying out their duties. Its purpose is to enable the Council to manage its risks through anticipation and control.

3. Definition

The Audit Commission (2001) defined “risk” as an event or action which will adversely affect an organisation’s ability to achieve its objectives, project plans and processes and to successfully execute its strategies. Therefore “risk management” is the process by which risks are **identified, evaluated and controlled**.

It is good business practice that risk management processes should be supportive rather than restrictive and should be embedded in the culture of the Council and embraced by all staff and Members.

4. Aims

The Council’s aims with respect to risk management are as follows:

- a) To integrate risk management into the culture of the Council.
- b) To raise awareness of the scope of risk management including business risk, the identification of opportunities as well as threats and that the process supports innovation.
- c) To manage risk in accordance with best practice.
- d) To minimise losses, injury and damage and reduce the cost of risk.
- e) To ensure appropriate actions are taken to address identified risks.
- f) To ensure that risks are monitored and that an appropriate reporting mechanism exists to support the annual assurance statement on the effectiveness of the Council’s system of internal control.
- g) To ensure appropriate actions are taken to identify and pursue opportunities.

These aims will be achieved through the Council's risk management strategy which details the roles, responsibilities and actions necessary for successful implementation.

The co-operation of all Members and officers is essential to ensure the Council's resources and service provision are not adversely affected by uncontrolled risk, to ensure the Council does not fail to seize opportunities which benefit the community.

5. Relevant Legislation

Dunstable Town Council will implement its Risk Management Policy using the Risk Management Strategy (Appendix) in accordance with the current legislation governing local authorities and the associated codes of practice.

APPENDIX 1 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. Introduction

This strategy sets out the framework on which risk management processes at Dunstable Town Council are based. This framework ensures a consistent approach is taken across the Council and provides for an element of independent oversight by Council Officers.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are:

- to clearly identify roles and responsibilities for managing risk,
- to follow a structured framework for the identification, assessment and evaluation of risks,
- to ensure a corporate approach is adopted across the Council which facilitates the prioritisation of risks and avoids duplication of mitigating action,
- to ensure risk management principles are embedded in all systems and processes to help demonstrate openness, integrity and accountability in all the Council's activities,
- to ensure the risk management process contributes to the development of a more robust internal control framework, providing assurance to senior officers and Members that appropriate levels of control exist, and
- to provide a framework for ensuring actions are proportionate to identified risks thereby efficiently and effectively utilising resources and maintaining a balance between risks and controls.

3. Definitions

- a) **Risk:** an event or action which will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its project plans or processes and thus to successfully execute its strategies
- b) **Risk Management:** the process, by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled, which includes the following:
 - Improve the controls to reduce the probability or impact to acceptable limits (treat the risk)
 - Insure against risk / outsource / design & build option for contracts (transfer the risk)
 - Live with it, the risk is acceptable and additional controls would not be cost effective (tolerate the risk)
 - Do not pursue the course of action, the risk is unacceptable and cannot be economically mitigated to an acceptable level (terminate the risk)

4. Categories of Risk

The risks facing the organisation can be split into Strategic and Operational.

<p style="text-align: center;">STRATEGIC</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Risks which may threaten the achievement of the Council's objectives</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">OPERATIONAL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Risks which members and staff may encounter in the daily course of their work.</p>
<p>Political: failure to deliver key objectives or policies of other levels of Government use of political allegiance to influence Council policies</p> <p>Economic: the Council's ability to meet its financial commitments and risks</p> <p>Social: the effects in changes in demographic, residential or socio-economic trends on the Council's ability to deliver its objectives</p> <p>Technological: the Council's capacity to deal with technological change or its ability to use technology to meet changing demands</p> <p>Legislative: current or potential changes in national or European law.</p> <p>Environmental: the environmental consequences of service delivery (in terms of energy efficiency, pollution, recycling, landfill needs, emissions etc)</p>	<p>Professional: professional competences of staff</p> <p>Financial: financial planning and control and the adequacy of insurance cover</p> <p>Legal: possible breaches of legislation</p> <p>Physical: fire, security, accident prevention and health & safety</p> <p>Contractual: the failure of contractors to deliver services or goods to agreed costs and specifications</p> <p>Technological: reliance on operational equipment (IT systems or equipment and machinery)</p>

<p>Competitive: the competitiveness of the service/ the ability to deliver best value.</p> <p>Customer failure to recognise the changing needs and expectations of the community</p>	<p>Environmental: pollution, noise or energy efficiency of ongoing service operation.</p> <p>Resources (inc Employment): Ensuring that the right level and amount of human resources and other resources available to meet objectives and risks including employment risk costs.</p>
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5. Processes

In line with best practice, the Council has adopted a seven-step process to support the implementation of risk management and help maintain impetus. In addition to whole Council risk assessment, there are many service specific and operational risk assessments.

	Steps	
1	Identifying risk	Risks will be identified during the service delivery planning process and cross-referenced, where possible, to key tasks and to the achievement of corporate objectives.
2	Analysing risk	Risks will be assessed against probability / likelihood and impact of the identified risks using the Council's approved evaluation criteria to give a risk score.
3	Profiling risk	The evaluation exercise will result in a risk score from which significant risks can be established.
4	Prioritising action	Risks will be entered in the risk register detailing the inherent risk score, existing controls and residual risk score.
5	Determining action	Further actions required to reduce the threat of the risk occurring or minimise its impact will be stated in the risk register. Target dates and assignment of responsibility will also be stated.
6	Controlling risk	The specified actions will be carried out as stated in the risk register.
7	Monitoring	The Finance & General Purposes Committee will keep the Corporate Financial and Management Risk Register under review and progress against further actions identified will be monitored quarterly. The identification and mitigation of risks is a continual process and risks

		emerging throughout the year will be evaluated and, where necessary, added to the register.
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APPENDIX 2 RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE:

The assessment of risk is based on the probability of an event occurring that constitutes a risk to an individual, the environment or the Council.

The risk score is calculated by multiplying the severity of the impact of the risk with the likelihood of the risk taking place. The risk score is **SEVERITY x LIKELIHOOD:**

Impact	Catastrophic	5	10	15	20	25
	Major	4	8	12	16	20
	Moderate	3	6	9	12	15
	Minor	2	4	6	8	10
	Negligible	1	2	3	4	5
Risk Score		Improbable	Remote	Possible	Probable	Almost certain
		Likelihood				

Assessment of Impact								
		Financial	Reputation	Stakeholder	Community/ Customers	Safety	Health	Environmental
1	Negligible	Under £500	Minimal loss of public trust	Minimal impact on stakeholder business arrangements	Minimal impact or disruption to community contained within a community area	First aid case, with no lost time. Negligible safety impact	Mild health effect for short period.	Minimal environmental impact.
2	Minor	£501 to £1,000	Slight loss of trust with no lasting impact. Little adverse publicity	Minor impact on stakeholder business arrangements	Minor impact to community and community dissatisfaction. Limited service disruption.	Minor injury (worker or third party). Medical treatment beyond first aid.	Reversible health effect. Minor illness.	Local impact requiring response, but from which there is a natural recovery.
3	Moderate	£1,001 to £10,000	Moderate loss of trust that receives significant adverse publicity locally with no lasting impact	Moderate disruption to stakeholder's arrangements.	Moderate impact to community and customer dissatisfaction. Moderate service disruption.	Single major injury,	Irreversible health effect for example loss of hearing. Serious illness from which there is full recovery.	Moderate environmental impact, requiring response to aid recovery. Reportable to authorities.
4	Major	£10,001 to £100,000	Significant loss of trust and receives local media attention. Potential for lasting impact	Significant disruption to and opposition from stakeholders	Significant service disruption and community opposition. Threat of legal action.	Multiple major injuries which may result in permanent disabilities	Life shortening health effect. Health effect causing significant irreversible disabilities.	Major environmental incident resulting in significant impact requiring management by external authorities
5	Catastrophic	Over £100,001	Significant loss of trust and receives national media attention with potential for persisting impact.	Major disruption to and strong opposition from stakeholders who represent vulnerable clients	Major service disruption. Significant community opposition. Legal action. Long-term public memory.	Death	Death	Extreme environmental incident, resulting in irreversible long term or widespread harm

Assessment of Likelihood			
	Description	Guidance	Probability Range
1	Improbable	Very remote probability that the event would occur	□1%
2	Remote	Event may occur only in exceptional circumstances	1 – 10%
3	Possible	Event could occur at some time	11 - 50%
4	Probable	Event should occur at some time	51 – 90%
5	Almost Certain	Event will occur in most circumstances	□90%

CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT JANUARY 2024

RISK	Control Measures & Resources in place	Assesment of current risk			Actions (if necessary)	Owner
		Severity	Likelihood	Score		
Loss of equipment,	The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) maintains a detailed asset register which is submitted to Council annually, and accurate values are provided to the insurance company.	4	2	8		SMT
Loss of services or effective management due to an emergency	Business Continuity Insurance is in place. All office staff are able to work from home or alternative locations. Staff have use of mobile phones. The IT contract includes a requirement to provide emergency support. The Council is part of the Central Bedfordshire Emergency Response Group	5	2	10		SMT
Failure to properly manage the Cemetery service or to meet legislative requirements.	The Council employs a cemetery team including grounds staff and a Cemetery Manager. The Council is a member of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) who provide professional advice. The Council retains the silver award under the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved. The Cemetery holds a Green Flag. Cemetery records are managed through a specialised digital package. The Council reviews the Cemetery rules and regulations each year.	4	1	4		HoGES
Failure to provide sufficient burial space to meet the town's needs	It is currently estimated that there is sufficient burial space to last until the end of 2029. The Council has begun work to develop a new cemetery site. Land has been identified and further bore holes have been installed. These will require monitoring until December 2024. Once this data is available, the Council will work with its specialist consultant to submit a full proposal to the Environment Agency for a burial licence. Parallel work is ongoing to provide initial designs and prepare a planning application.	4	2	8		TC&CE & HoGES
Council facilities or services severely damaged or impeded by unpredictable, extreme weather.	All events, markets and other outdoor activities have a bad weather risk assessment with mitigations including cancellation for wind, rain, and extreme hot or cold temperatures. Grounds Management Plans take account of possible climate change when selecting new plants and trees.	5	2	10		SMT
Damage to the Council's reputation	The Council employs a Marketing and Communications Officer who manages the Council's social media and traditional media output and responses. Staff receive media training. The Media Policy ensures staff and Councillors are clear about their roles. The website is updated regularly and Talk of the Town issued quarterly to ensure residents are aware of the Council's services.	2	2	4		SMT
Data loss, IT security / cyber attacks	The Council employs an IT company to oversee all IT related operations. The external company provides appropriate firewalls and security arrangements. The service will be retendered during 2024 and the tender requirement will include a detailed security specification. The Council's electronic records are currently stored on a server and backed up off-site. The new IT specification will be for a fully cloud-based service with the additional protection this will provide.	4	2	8		TC&CE C&CM

CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT JANUARY 2024

Failure to keep records in accordance with the GDPR	A Council policy is in place to ensure compliance with the GDPR . The Policy is administered by the Compliance Manager, and regularly reviewed by the Head of Finance and RFO.	3	2	6		TC&CE
Structural failure or additional works required to Priory House	The cost of the current works has increased by £2million since works begun and further works are now required. It is not yet known what the required scope or cost will be. It is not therefore possible to know whether external funding will be available to meet further costs. The Council does not have any further funds allocated to Priory House.	5	3	15		HoCS
Failure to properly manage the Council's finances	The Council is subjected to both internal and external financial audits which are reported to Full Council and any actions arising are monitored. Then internal audit ensures controls are adequate. The Responsible Financial Officer has achieved the FILCA qualification. The financial regulations lay out the Council's monitoring and safety procedures. The Council employs Rialtas to carry out quality assurance of the use of the accounts package each year, and receives VAT advice from PS Tax to ensure full compliance.	4	1	4		RFO
Loss of income	Whilst the Council maintains effective financial control systems, the generation of income will always be subject to wider market and economic factors. The Council budgets for c. £1,000,000 of earned income. However most income streams are offset against the relevant service costs; if the income from Creasey Park, events sponsorship, Splash Cafe or Priory House Tea Rooms were lost, the only impact would be to that service, not the Council's wider finances, for example. The majority of the Council's income is from the precept. It is a statutory requirement for Central Bedfordshire Council to provide this. Any change to the law or process would require longer than a year, so the Council would have time to plan ahead for any proposed changes.	3	2	6		RFO
Failure to meet pension liabilities	The Council's pension fund contributions are determined by the fund's actuary on a triennial basis and are set to meet 100% of the liabilities of the pension fund, in accordance with relevant government regulations. The last actuarial valuation took place in March 2022 and the current contribution rates are in line with their requirement.	4	1	4		RFO
Fraud	The financial regulations ensure Councillors and the internal auditor have full oversight of financial processes. Measures are in place to ensure no single staff member can make or authorise transactions without another staff member checking. Dual authorisation is required for all cheques and online payments.	4	1	4		RFO
External economic factors such as high inflation or energy price rises substantially impact service delivery	The Council's precept is set in advance of the year; CBC carry the risk of in year changes to Council Tax payment. The Council holds adequate general reserves to cover the salary bill for 3 months. Ear-marked reserves are in place for the Council's key facilities and assets. Any requirement for additional funds or reductions to services would be identified in future years budget setting processes.	4	2	8		RFO

CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT JANUARY 2024

<p>Failure to comply with legislation or recommended practice result in decisions being unsafe or ultra vires</p>	<p>The Council has a Constitution, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations that are regularly updated and based on national good practice. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration and has access to legal advice from NALC, the BATPC, the SLCC, peers and solicitors when required.</p>	4	1	4		TC&CE
<p>Death or injury due to Council failure</p>	<p>The Council's Management Team reviews H&S issues on a monthly basis. The Council has an agreed Health and Safety Policy. The Council also retains the services of professional health and safety support through Worknest. The Council is also implementing a rolling programme of health and safety related training for all staff. The Council employs a Compliance Manager with a remit to ensure Health and Safety measures are properly implemented and recorded across all services and buildings. The Council responsibly manages its tree stock to manage risk of failure. All trees have been surveyed and selected trees are reinspected annually to inform each year's tree work programme. Staff are suitably trained and undertake required precautions to ensure food hygiene and allergies risk management.</p>	5	2	10		TC&CE SMT
<p>Failure to adequately insure the Council's assets and activities.</p>	<p>The Council makes provision for public, employers, fidelity, building, contents, and equipment etc insurance liability. All insurance cover is reviewed on an ongoing basis and adjustments such as new purchases and additional service provision is identified.</p>	4	1	4		TC&CE RFO
<p>Loss of staff, poor staff wellbeing or legal claims due to poor staff management</p>	<p>The Council updates the Staff Handbook at least annually, following advice provided by the HR advisor. The Council has retained the services of a specialist HR company and has introduced an HR management package called BrightHR. All members of staff have access to the handbook. The Council is a silver accredited Investors in People Organisation, which requires the Council to continually demonstrate excellent leadership and management arrangements. The Council carries out an annual staff survey and takes appropriate actions, holds regular wellbeing sessions, and provides a programme of enhances staff benefits. The Council has insurance in place to cover legal claims. The Council has introduced health assessments.</p>	4	2	8		TC&CE
<p>Failure to provide sufficient resources to meet the Council's delivery requirements</p>	<p>The Personnel Sub-Committee meets to consider any staffing issues. The Council's budget is set each year alongside an establishment review to ensure sufficient resources are in place.</p>	4	1	4		SMT
<p>Unplanned expense or loss of service due to damage or structural failure of Council buildings</p>	<p>The Council has retained the services of a property expert and has made considerable progress on completing a back log of work that was required on Council property. A 10 year plan for Grove House is under development, and a 10 year plan for Priory House will be provided at the end of the current building works. The annual reserve contribution for Grove House has been increased in the 2024/25 budget to meet the building's future liabilities. An overall asset management plan will be developed during 2024/25.</p>	5	3	15		TC&CE

Dunstable Town Council
BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Adopted
Review by

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Plan details the procedures that will be followed in the event of significant interruption to the business of the Council. The plan covers all sites at which Dunstable Town Council provide services to the public. This is an operational document which will be monitored and updated.

2. AIM OF THE PLAN

2.1 The aim of this Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is to ensure that the Town Council is able to continue business with as little disruption as possible, no matter what the location, and to ensure that any critical business functions are re-established as soon as possible.

3. PLAN ACTIVATION SEQUENCE

3.1 For larger councils such as Districts, Counties, Unitary Councils, the Fire Service and Police the following activation sequence is used. In the event of any major disaster or terrorist act the Town Council would follow the instructions of Central Bedfordshire Council's 'Resilience' team who have statutory responsibility for implementation of emergency procedures under the Civil Contingencies Act. It is therefore important that all staff understand the activation sequence.

- "Standby" phase – Standby will be used as an early warning of a situation which might at some later stage escalate and thus require implementation of this plan. A standby phase allows key officers time to think, brief staff, start a business interruption log and prepare for the deployment of resources should an implementation message be received. Resources are not normally deployed at this stage. It is possible that 'Stand Down' may follow this type of alert.
- "Implementation" phase – Implementation will be used to request the immediate utilisation of the Council's officers and resources in the activation of the plan.
- "Stand Down" phase - Stand Down will be used to signify the phased withdrawal of any services provided due to the activation of the plan.

Dunstable Town Council's only critical business function is the cemetery service.

3.2 The Town Council will endeavour to support and provide assistance to other organisations in the event of a major disaster in accordance with the Major Incident Plan.

4. DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL PLAN ACTIVATION

4.1 The Town Council does not require such a detailed activation sequence. In the event of a business interruption, an immediate notification will be given to the most appropriate manager who will then inform the Town Clerk & Chief Executive. If there is an interruption to the IT system, the Manager should be notified to contact the IT support service.

4.2 In response to any major interruption to business the Town Clerk & Chief Executive will notify the all staff, the Mayor, and any emergency services.

4.3 Most business interruptions will be able to be dealt with in a relatively short space of time without the need to contact any other organisation or persons.

4.4 The Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Heads of Service and senior managers will be provided with feedback regarding any significant business interruption, which will allow an assessment of the effectiveness of this plan and inform any future planning.

5. NOTIFICATION OF BUSINESS INTERRUPTION

5.1 Notification of a business interruption will be most likely to come from Town Council personnel who occupy the sites identified within the plan or Central Bedfordshire Council in the case of a major emergency. In any situation it is essential that the Town Clerk is contacted as soon as possible.

5.2 The Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Heads of Community Services, Responsible Finance Officer and Head of Grounds & Environmental Services all have the authority to activate the plan and will act as the co-ordinator to assist the quickest return to normal business.

5.3 The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will assume the role of the Business Continuity Manager. If the Town Clerk & Chief Executive is not available another member of the Senior Management Team will take this role. The primary role of the Business Continuity Manager is to formulate the Town Council's overall strategic response to the business interruption. The Business Continuity Manager will inform any other relevant bodies such as the Emergency Services and the Mayor.

6. BUSINESS FUNCTION IMPORTANCE

6.1 Business Critical Functions are defined as follows:

- Class One Function - an essential function needing to be restored within 0-24 hours.
- Class Two Function - is an important function needing to be restored within 3 days.
- Class Three Function - is a function which can be restored progressively after 14 days.
- Time Sensitive Functions - are identified as being functions which become more important to re-instate depending upon the time of the week, month, or year etc.

7. DEFINITIONS

7.1 A 'Business Interruption' is any unwanted incident which threatens personnel, buildings or the operational procedures of the organisation and requires special measures to be taken in order to restore daily activities.

For the purpose of the plan the following scales of business interruption have been determined:

- Minor Business Interruption - is defined as a business interruption which affects part of a service area.

- Significant Business Interruption - is defined as a business interruption which affects a number of service areas but not in their entirety which may be located over a number of sites, or one specific site.
- Major Business Interruption - is defined as a business interruption which affects a number of service areas in their entirety or more than one specific site.

8. BUSINESS SUMMARY

8.1 Dunstable Town Council has one 'class one function' (burials) and 'time sensitive functions' such as the payment of wages and accounts. All other services are likely to be 'class three functions'.

8.2 Generally speaking, any business interruptions are likely to be minor. In the event of a major business interruption the Town Council would follow the instructions of Central Bedfordshire Council.

8.3 Council Offices:

8.3.1 Dunstable Town Council offices (Grove House) are the central point for the service provision of IT, financial, administrative support, and the main meeting facilities.

8.3.2 In the event of the loss of the building the services would be transferred to the next most appropriate building. This is likely to be Priory House if building works are not going on. Secondary options are Creasey Park and the Cemetery. Officers would be able to access files and emails from home if necessary, in the short term and demountable buildings would be hired if necessary. All IT records are backed up off site and Priory House has phone lines and is able to sustain basic Town Council office functions for a short period, while additional equipment is installed as required. The main business re-instatement, as a time sensitive business requirement, would be the financial systems and IT, followed by office and meeting accommodation.

8.4 Cemetery/Mess Room

The cemetery mess room facilities are key to the provision of cemetery services for the residents of Dunstable. In the event of short-term loss, the administrative and operational functions would be returned to the Grove House. The main area and class one function would be to ensure the continuation of burials. All other services could be resumed as and when ready.

8.5 Priory House

PH is a key but not a critical service provided by the Town Council. In the event of short-term loss, the administrative and operational functions would be returned to the Grove House. Public services would be suspended. The service would be resumed as and when ready.

8.6 Creasey Park Community Football Centre

CPCFC is a key service provided by the Town Council. In the event of short-term loss, the administrative and operational functions would be returned to Grove House. The main area and class two function would be to ensure the continuation of football provisions. All other services could be resumed as and when ready.

In the event of the loss of the building the services would be transferred to the next most appropriate building. This is likely to be Priory House if building works are not going on. Officers would be able to access files and emails from home if necessary, in the short term and demountable buildings would be hired if necessary. All IT records are backed up off site and Priory House has phone lines and is able to sustain basic Town Council office functions for a short period, while additional equipment is installed as required.

8.7 Grove Corner

In the event of short-term loss, the administrative and operational functions would be returned to the Grove House. The service would be resumed as and when ready.

8.8 Bennetts Splash

In the event of short-term loss, the administrative and operational functions would be returned to the Grove House. The service would be resumed as and when ready.

8.9 Grounds Operations

In the event of short-term loss, the administrative and operational functions would be returned to the Grove House. The service would be resumed as and when ready.

9. INSURANCE

9.1 As soon as practical the RFO will be appraised of the circumstances and all losses and contact the Council's insurers, Zurich Municipal (tel. 0870 2418050 and fax 0845 6000083). Where possible, loss mitigation and salvage should be identified and reported accordingly.

10. RISK AND ACTION PLAN

The following is a risk-based action plan of potential business disruption causes. Incident	Who is affected	Recovery Actions (lead officers in brackets)
Significant damage to/loss of Council Offices Inc - fire, theft, malicious damage or incident at any nearby large industrial facility	Staff, Members, customers	Salvage as much IT and office equipment as possible and set up alternative base in Priory House or secondary option. Notify staff (TC) Contact IT provider to arrange emergency IT support (RFO) Source replacement IT and office equipment (RFO/TC&CE) Contact BT to install additional telephones if required (RFO) Notify local media of re-location and display appropriate signage (Communications and Marketing Officer)

AGENDA ITEM 9

		Place information on website (Communications and Marketing Officer) Pursue insurance claim/repair (RFO) If required, source demountable/temporary office accommodation (TC&CE)
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Significant damage to/loss of Cemetery Mess Room Inc - fire, theft, malicious damage or incident at any nearby large industrial facility	Staff, customers	Salvage as much equipment as possible and transfer to other Council-owned locations (GS) Notify staff (GS) Transfer operations to Grove House Source replacement or hire of new equipment – prioritised by need. (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services/RFO/TC&E) Pursue insurance claim/repair (RFO) Contact CBC regarding any emergency outstanding work (Head of GES) Place information on website and in local press if needed (CMO)
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Significant damage to/loss of PH Inc - fire, theft, malicious damage or incident at any nearby large industrial facility	Staff, users of services/facilities, public	Salvage as much equipment as possible and transfer to Grove House Pursue insurance claim/repair (RFO) Reinstate IT equipment and networks as soon as possible, or source replacement IT and office equipment (RFO) Notify staff (TC) Notify local media (CMO) Place information on website (CMO)
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Significant damage to/loss of CPCFC Inc - fire, theft, malicious damage or incident at any nearby large industrial facility	Staff, users of services/facilities, public	Salvage as much equipment as possible and transfer to Grove House Pursue insurance claim/repair (RFO) Reinstate IT equipment and networks as soon as possible, or source replacement IT and office equipment (RFO) Notify staff (TC)
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AGENDA ITEM 9

		Notify local media (CMO) Place information on website (CMO)
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Significant damage to/loss of Grove Corner Inc - fire, theft, malicious damage or incident at any nearby large industrial facility	Staff, users of services/facilities, public	Salvage as much equipment as possible and transfer to Grove House Pursue insurance claim/repair (RFO) Reinstate IT equipment and networks as soon as possible, or source replacement IT and office equipment (RFO) Notify staff (TC) Notify local media (CMO) Place information on website (COM)
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Significant damage to/loss of Bennetts Splash Inc - fire, theft, malicious damage or incident at any nearby large industrial facility	Staff, users of services/facilities, public	Salvage as much equipment as possible and transfer to Grove House Pursue insurance claim/repair (RFO) Reinstate IT equipment and networks as soon as possible, or source replacement IT and office equipment (RFO) Notify staff (TC&CE) Notify local media (CMO) Place information on website (CMO)
Loss of gas/electric supply	Staff, customers	Council Offices/PH/Cemetery Mess Room – hire temporary heaters (FO)
Loss of water supply	Staff, customers	Depending on severity: - Council Offices/Cemetery Mess Room/PH - Purchase bottled water for drinks and washing; hire temporary toilets (FO)
Pandemic/epidemic affecting service delivery	Staff, Members, customers	Follow instructions from Central Bedfordshire Council Resilience (TC&CE)

AGENDA ITEM 9

Industrial action affecting service delivery	Staff, customers	Inform staff (TC & CE) If required use outside contractors (TC & CE) Inform the media and place information on the website (TC & CE)
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Loss of IT services	Staff, customers	Council Offices; Contact Manager who will contact IT Provider (RFO) If infrastructure is damaged ie fibre optic cut though - implement paper systems where necessary (TC&CE)
Loss of Town Clerk & Chief Executive	Staff	Investigate interim cover to assume duties (Mayor, Deputy Mayor & Chair of Finance and General Purposes) All Councillors to be informed and an action plan drawn up
Loss of RFO	Staff	TC&CE to assume duties and Investigate interim cover to assume duties (TC&CE)
Significant loss of staff due to sickness	Staff, customers	Investigate interim cover to assume duties (Senior Management Team)

TC&CE = Town Clerk & Chief Executive
RFO = Responsible Financial Officer
CMO = Communications and Marketing Officer

CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT JANUARY 2024

Failure to properly care for children and young people (child protection)	The Council has adopted and reviewed its child protection policy. All staff and volunteers that regularly come into contact with young people are subject to a DBS check. These staff and volunteers undertake specific safeguarding training and permanent staff are able to access additional regular training updates. The Council employs a qualified youth worker.	4	1	4		HoCS
Failure to properly care for vulnerable adults (vulnerable adult protection)	The Council operates its older people's services in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council and through a service contract that identifies minimum service requirements. The Council has adopted a Vulnerable Adults Policy and both staff and volunteers have access to regular training updates. Volunteers and members of staff in direct contact are subject to a DBS check.	4	1	4		HoCS
Failure to deliver the services required by Councillors due to Multiple sickness, unfilled vacancies or staff absence	The Council has a clear management structure and all staff have relevant job titles and clear job descriptions. The Council has a Corporate Plan, which includes Key Performance Indicators which are reported to Councillors annually. Each Service Area has an annual Service Plan which is based on the Corporate Plan. The Council has a wellbeing programme to support staff. Multiple recruitment approaches are taken. Wherever possible roles can be carried out by more than one member of staff. Knowledge is shared through team meetings and joint working.	4	1	4		SMT
Failure to pay staff correctly	Payroll is outsourced to a specialist provider. Both the Responsible Financial Officer and Business Support Manager keep up to date with the payroll process. All timesheets are checked by line managers and the Business Support Manager.	5	1	5		RFO
Failure to effectively manage data or to respond to Data Protection/FOI disclosure requests as required by law	A Council policy is in place to ensure compliance with Data Protection and Freedom Of Information requirements. The Policy is administered by the Compliance Manager, and regularly reviewed by the Head of Finance and RFO.	3	1	3		TC&CE
Loss of service due to emergency, disease or disaster	The Council has a Business Continuity Policy which ensures services will be continued with appropriate timescales within an emergency. The Council does not provide any life or death services.	5	1	5		SMT
Financial loss, loss of service or damage to reputation due to contractor failure	The Council has a comprehensive procurement policy and process. The Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring effective procurement and management of contractors and associated risks.	4	2	8		TC&CE RFO
Loss of skill, corporate memory or expertise due to staff leaving	The Council structure is evolving to ensure that all roles can be covered by one than one person, and that the knowledge required for each role is routinely shared through joint working. The Council's staff wellbeing programme aims to provide an attractive workplace. The Council's training programme supports staff to develop skills ready to take on other opportunities, and to ensure skill and experience is shared across the organisation.	4	2	8		TC&CE RFO