

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

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

ON MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024 FROM 7 pm

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

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

Apologies: Councillors Robert Blennerhassett, Johnson Tamara and John Gurney.

Public: Nil.

25/24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 13 November 2023 were approved as a correct record following one minor amendment and were signed by the Chair.

26/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

27/24 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members received the report provided.

28/24 REFERRAL REPORTS

Members received a referral from the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee regarding the provision of litter and dog waste bins across the Council’s open spaces and considered the rationalisation of all waste bins including the removal of all dog waste bins to be replaced with new litter bins.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

To release £5,700 from the Parks and Play Improvement Reserve to purchase 30 new general waste litter bins.

29/24 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Officer summarised the report provided to members. Since the time of writing the report, the new lamppost banners had been installed on the previous Friday, however due to storm Isha some had been damaged by the wind. Officers were investigating options for repairing or replacing the six damaged banners.

Councillor Phillip Crawley entered the Chamber at 7:05 pm.

30/24 FINANCE

Members received the report provided. The Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer summarised the reports to members.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the revenue budget position for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 November 2023.
- ii. To note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as of 31 December 2023.
- iii. 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 by-election in January 2024.
- iv. To 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 and effect audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation'.
- v. To note current investments.

31/24 COMPLIANCE AND FACILITIES

The Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer summarised the report to members.

Hospice at Home had given notice on the room they rented from Dunstable Town Council. Morton's Solicitors took on the lease immediately to expand the space they use in Grove House.

32/24 CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

Members received the report provided. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised key points of the report and highlighted that the proposed risk strategy policy was a new introduction and that the style of the risk assessment had been revised.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. To adopt the proposed Risk Management Policy.
- 1.2. To note and adopt the revised Corporate and Financial Risk Assessment

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive introduced and summarised the Business Continuity Plan to members.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

- 1.3. To adopt the Business Continuity Plan provided.

33/24 DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2024 / 25

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive Officer summarised the report provided. It was highlighted that the Community Services Committee had recommended that FGP adopt the proposed budget. It was also highlighted that the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee had recommended that the proposed capital reserve of £20,000 be removed and that money be used to make a one saving from the overall precept.

Councillor Alderman proposed the following amendment recommendation options 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3:

, "I propose an amendment to Civic Hospitality, Nominal Code 4503, which has a total annual budget £9k. Of that £9k, I understand £5k is rightly committed to the commemoration of the D-Day Landings, and that money should be protected. I propose that of the remaining £4k, a modest saving of 10% be explored, amounting to £400. As I understand it, this would already be possible this coming financial year as a different venue is being procured for the Annual Council Meeting. Going forward, a reduced budget in this area will serve as a continuous incentive for the Town Council to organise this area of the budget to offer the best value for money to all."

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

That the budget for Civic Hospitality, Nominal Code 4503, be reduced by £400.

With this change, it was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

To adopt recommendation 1.3, i.e. that the proposed budget for 2024/25 be approved minus the use of £10,000 towards the Corporate Plan and with a reduction of £10,000 from the contribution to the IT reserve, making that contribution £20,000 instead of £30,000, resulting in a total reduction of £20,000.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

For the Town Clerk and Chief Executive to be authorised to incur the various items of expenditure detailed in the budget, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

That the revised scale of fees and charges, set out in the report, be approved with effect from 1 April 2024 or the start of the 2024/25 winter playing season, as appropriate.

34/24 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Richard Attwell

Cllr Attwell advised members that there would be a further update at a later date.

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

Cllr Hollick advised there have been no update since September last year. There is some work needed to be done to determine the future of the Town Twinning Association. Cllr Hollick advised that Porz is very keen on a delegation from Dunstable going to Porz.

- Hospice at Home Management Committee - Councillor Liz Jones

Cllr Jones advised as previously stated that the organisation's office had moved from Grove House to Keech. They are looking at maintaining a Dunstable postal address, as they are known as the Hospice at Home Dunstable and Houghton Regis Charity.

They had a successful Volunteers evening last week at Coconut Garden, as a part of Coconut Gardens' 32nd Anniversary. Coconut Garden invited all of the volunteers to and have a meal which was sponsored by a local businessman and his wife and the restaurant itself. All funds put into the restaurant that night were given to the Hospice at Home Charity.

Fundraising is being looked into at the back end of this year to help support the growth of the Charity.

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

Cllr O’Riordan advised there have been no further updates. There was due to be an annual inspection of Francis Ashton House on the 19th of January, which has since been postponed to the 31st of January.

- Ashton Schools Foundation - Councillors Peter Hollick and Gregory Alderman

The major work now undertaken by the Foundation is to oversee the expenditure by both Manshead and Ashton Lower School. The monies that were raised from the sale of Ashton Middel School sale have made a considerable difference to both schools, Manshead in particular and has been used for educational purposes.

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

No Update.

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

The next meeting will be 1st February 2024 to discuss and determine the amount of money which each resident who qualifies will receive.

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

There is a meeting coming up where the annual inspections of the properties in Church Street will be carried out, looking at the refurbishment work carried out on the properties both internal and external.

- Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive - Councillor Nicholas Kotarski

The scout hut in Creasey Park Drive has experienced issues with cars parking in Creasey Park Drive making access difficult on Saturday mornings and includes users of CPCFC parking in the scout car park.

DTC are working with CBC for double yellow lines on both sides of the road.

Cllr Brennan has taken up the issue of potholes in the approach road.

Cllr Attwell has identified the building at the Chiltern School as a potential building for a provision in the south.

35/24 EXCLUSIONS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: 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 therefore, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

36/24 REFERENCE FROM THE PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that the recommendation be agreed that in accordance with the Council's agreed honorarium policy; for three members of staff to each receive a non-consolidated honorarium payment.

37/24 STAFFING REPORT

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. That the Town Clerk & Chief Executive's Department be renamed Corporate Services
- 1.2. That the role changes described in the report be adopted, including any amendments made by the external regrading of the new posts:

	Service Area	Current Spinal Column Point	New Spinal Column Point
Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer	Corporate	37-40	
Head of Corporate Services (RFO)	Corporate		46-49
Business Support Manager	Corporate	30-32	-
HR & Payroll Manager	Corporate	-	30-32
Sports & Leisure Facilities Manager (17 hours)	Corporate	32-33	
Corporate Compliance Manager (20 hours)	Corporate	32-34	
Corporate Performance & Compliance Manager (37 hours)	Corporate		35-38
Finance Officer No.2 (20 hours per week)	Corporate		19-22

Business & Administration Apprentice	Corporate	National Rate	National Rate
Grounds Apprentice	GES	National Rate	National Rate
Cemetery & Grounds Administration Assistant (20 hours)	GES	7-11	
Cemetery & Grounds Administration Assistant (37 hours)	GES		7-11
Assistant Town Ranger No.3	GES		7-11
Community Services Assistant	Communities	5-6	7-11
Town Centre Assistant (24 hours)	Communities		12-17

38/24 PRIORY HOUSE WORKS

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive updated Members that the investigative works at Priory House had identified further issues of concern, particularly with the state of internal walls, as well as finding additional wallpaper of interest. The team were working hard to identify a costed programme of works to clarify the future funding requirement and Members would be updated as soon as more was known.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm