

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 18 MARCH 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, John Gurney, Nicholas Kotarski and Johnson Tamara.

In Attendance: Councillors Kenson Gurney and Sally Kimondo, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), Lisa Scheder (Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer) James Slack (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager) Anne Harding (Administration Assistant), Helen Martin (Administration Assistant) and Rachel Connor (Marketing and Communications Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Mark Davis.

Public: Nil.

78/24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 22 January 2024 were approved as a correct record following one minor amendment and were signed by the Chair.

79/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

80/24 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members received the report provided. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive updated members on Talk of The Town deliveries to businesses in Dunstable. The Town Manager undertook these deliveries, however this took days to complete. Councillor Jones suggested that Members of the Council could help to deliver these to local businesses for the future issues.

81/24 REFERRAL REPORTS

Councillor Crawley entered the chamber at 7:09 pm

Members received a referral from the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager updated members on the key points of the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

To recruit a full-time Splash Park Manager on a one year fixed-term contract from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

82/24 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications and Marketing Officer summarised the report provided to members. Councillor Hollick asked the Communications Officer if there will be new advertisers in the upcoming Talk of The Town. Members were advised that in April's edition of Talk of The Town there will be a new advertiser represented in the newsletter.

It was asked by Councillor O'Riordan if officers could look into advertisement options on Experience Bedfordshire's website.

ACTION: Marketing and Communications Officer

Councillor Hollick asked whether the mobile advertisement signage has been used regularly. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised members this would be looked into and reported.

ACTION: Marketing and Communications Officer

83/24 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 31 January 2024.
- ii. To note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as of 29 February 2023.
- iii. To note the second 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*'.
- iv. To note current investments.

84/24 COMPLIANCE AND FACILITIES

The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager summarised all reports to members and pointed out the key parts.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. To note the update on Corporate Compliance and Facilities.
- 1.2. To approve the proposed Retention of Records Policy

The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager summarised the new IT Tender proposal.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. To approve the award of the new IT Support, Infrastructure, Telephony & Connectivity contract to Bidder B for the amount proposed, at a cost of £40,853 per year.
- 1.2. To release up to the balance of £75,902 of the IT Reserve for the one-off capital cost of the proposed contract.

85/24 PROCUREMENT POLICY

The Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer summarised key points of the report.

Councillor Henderson asked whether the proposed policy covered how to deal with declared interests by staff and councillors. It was agreed to amend the policy to include a clear statement about declarations of interest.

ACTION: Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer

Councillor O’Riordan suggested that a question requesting the public liability insurance number/company registration number of the business be added. This was agreed.

ACTION: Head of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. To approve the proposed Procurement Policy provided at Appendix 1, with the above amendments.
- 1.2. To approve the amendments described to the Council’s Financial Regulations and Standing Orders following the updates made to the Procurement Policy.

86/24 AMENDED BUDGET FOR 2024 / 25

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive informed Members that it was not yet possible to provide an amended budget given ongoing negotiations.

87/24 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Richard Attwell

Councillor Attwell advised members that he last attended a board meeting on February 1, the audit inspection of the governance was completed successfully.

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

No Update.

- Hospice at Home Management Committee - Councillor Liz Jones

Councillor Jones advised members that in the past few weeks they have continued to support their volunteers to all become dementia friends.

The organisation whilst based at Keech Hospice, is also working in collaboration with Neville Funeral Service at their Dunstable base.

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

Councillor Alderman updated members they have recently had an inspection of their almshouse rooms which came back well, and residents continue to be happy.

- Ashton Schools Foundation - Councillors Peter Hollick and Gregory Alderman

Councillor Alderman advised members that funding is being released for facility improvements in a couple of the schools for the Easter and Summer. They are going to be giving grants out to some students who are hoping to get some school supplies or equipment to aid their studies.

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

No Update.

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

There was a meeting back in February and members will be coming back together Thursday 21 to give out the money to this year's recipients.

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

Councillor Jones was able to attend the last meeting . The external works have been completed with the internal works to be completed house by house as they become vacant.

- Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive - Councillor Nicholas Kotarski

No Update.

88/24 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.

89/24 BAD DEBT

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

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To write-off the debt set out in Appendix 1 of the enclosed report (total amount £288.00).

90/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LOSS OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CREASEY PARK COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CENTRE

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To enter into a Tenancy at Will to enable the Town Council to continue to occupy and use the Depot from 1 April 2024 pending finalisation of lease arrangements.

The meeting closed at 9.29 pm.