

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
SERVICES**

**HELD ON MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2024 FROM 7:00 PM**

**Present:** Richard Attwell (Chair), Philip Crawley (Vice Chair), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Mayor), Kenson Gurney, Matthew Brennan, Johnson Tamara and Matthew Neall.

**In Attendance:** Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), James Slack (Corporate Performance & Compliance Manager), Katherine Doyle (Parks and Green Space Development Officer), Mary Dobbs (Cemetery Manager) and Dimitrisz Sopsis (Grounds Operations Manager)

**Public:** Nil

**240/24 - Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Louise O'Riordan (Town Mayor), Trevor Adams and Mark Davis

**241/24 - Declarations of Interest**

There were no specific declarations of interest

**242/24 - Public Question Time**

There were no questions from the public

**243/24 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of 9 September 2024 as a true record**

The Minutes of the meeting of Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 9 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**244/24 - To receive the minutes of the Meetings of Plans Sub-Committee meetings held on 9 September 2024 and 7 October 2024.**

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meetings of the Plans Sub-Committee held on 9 September 2024 and 7 October 2024 be received.

**245/24 - Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions**

Councillor Kenson Gurney entered the chamber at 7:06 pm

Members received and noted the updates on actions from previous meetings.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided members with an update on the planters around the town; there has been an offer from Central Bedfordshire Council for Dunstable Town Council to carry on looking after the plants inside the planters along with other contracted works for 2 years with 3 a year extension. The Town Council is seeking clarity that includes an annual RPI increase.

#### **246/24 - Bennetts Splash – Information Report**

The Corporate Performance & Compliance Manager summarised the key points of the report to members.

The build-a-bear workshop held over the October half term was extremely successful with positive feedback provided by attendees. Another workshop will be held for the Christmas period.

A question was asked regarding parking restrictions around Bennetts Recreation Ground for certain times in the year. Members were advised that officers are speaking to CBC about the parking arrangements.

Councillor Attwell made a suggestion of potentially considering hire of a marquee so as to offer the flexibility to cater for larger events if requests are made rather than having to decline potential income based upon restriction of area which would offer a further welcome revenue stream.

A further question was asked regarding progress of the grill to protect the extraction flue on the café which has been vandalised numerous times now. It was confirmed that a bespoke design is currently being progressed with installation imminent.

#### **247/24 - Grounds - Information Report**

Members received the report circulated.

Councillor Crawley queried whether potential costs savings could be made on mowing less grass areas within our parks and recreation grounds or to lessen the frequency. The Grounds Operations Manager advised that considering that we already have large areas which are left to grow in order to protect biodiversity and attract nature this was already taking place, he also advised that given that grounds teams were salaried on a full time basis and that any grass left longer to grow only accumulates more grass clippings any costs savings would be very limited anyway. The wear and tear on machinery would also be negligible and the feeling is that given the sensitivity residents would not take kindly to any further restrictions in this area.

#### **Cemetery**

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report.

### **Allotments**

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report. The waiting list is reducing slowly which is positive.

### **Recreation Grounds – Play Areas**

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report. There had fortunately been no vandalism since the last report.

### **Sports Pitches and General Grounds Maintenance**

The Grounds Operations Manager updated members on the key parts of the report.

As of the first of November the Frenches Avenue Footpath works were completed which has seen plenty of positive feedback from the community.

### **Town Centre and Town Rangers**

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report.

A question was asked regarding what would happen if the planters were to get damaged. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that this matter still belongs to Central Bedfordshire Council.

### **Green Space Projects**

The Parks and Green Space Development Officer summarised the report.

Members were given an update on the Pergola project. Dunstable Town Council has received scheduled monument consent and in accordance with the consent, the Council has commissioned KDK archaeology to support the works of the pergola installation. Since writing the report the written scheme of investigation has been completed which has allowed officers to approach contractors for the installation of the Pergola.

Friends of Priory House and Gardens have since indicated they are willing to donate further funds above the £10,000 they originally committed to.

Councillor Attwell requested for sincere thanks to be passed on to the Friends of Priory House for their very kind gesture to donate the extra funds.

Regarding the phone box project, the Council have heard back from local contractors for quotes. These have come in substantially over budget. Officers have since found and approached specialist restorers and are waiting on the quotes to come back.

Members asked whether the Pergola within Priory Gardens fell under the CCTV perimeter. Officers have advised that this is something which will be looked into and reported back at the next meeting.

**Action – Parks and Green Space Development Officer**

## **248/24 - 40th Anniversary Report**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided a summary on the report provided to members.

A discussion took place regarding an update on the options available and the resulting costs savings these solutions could provide which has resulted in a £8,750 saving from the original figure that was estimated to members in September 2024. This new proposal incorporates savings made by community engagement with planting bulbs and trees. It was also agreed that rather than supplying packets of seeds with each copy of "Talk of The Town" which would represent purchase of 17,200 seeds packets which may not be used or of interest to some people which would represent wastage it would be better to purchase 5000 packs to distribute to targeted audiences at events or available to residents to collect which would ensure maximum effectiveness, less costs and waste.

Councillor Neall asked if consideration could be made for a proportion of these seeds packets to be made up with vegetable or tomatoes seeds etc rather than flowers as some residents would prefer this, especially growing your own is a favourable option in this cost of living crisis. Members generally thought this was a good idea with a 50/50 split of flower/vegetable seeds being considered with seed packets being branded with the town councils crest/40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Kathy agreed to investigate the potential of this with suppliers and progress. Kathy also confirmed that an application grant towards tree planting will be progressed with CBC at the appropriate time following new budget allocations in April 2025.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** to include the one-off allocation of £7,750 in the draft budget for 2025/26, to cover the costs of the grounds service 40th Anniversary projects, as detailed in this report. This specifically includes the three elements of tree planting, bulb planting and the seed giveaway.

## **249/24 - Salting and Gritting in Dunstable - Report to follow**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided members with a verbal update. It was advised that The Head of Grounds and Environmental services will be meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council to talk about the possibilities for Dunstable Town Council to do more with Salting and Gritting next winter.

## **250/24 - Grounds and Environmental Services Budget Report**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided a summary of the report.

Councillor Brennan asked if there could be more information provided on the value of the CCTV in Priory Gardens; is it working as a deterrent, i.e. how useful has it been / what benefit do the Council get from it.

Councillor Attwell also asked if a review could be carried out on protecting all our most valuable assets with CCTV and the potential for warning signs to be erected to act as a deterrent, in particular, but not limited to, protecting our new pergola in Priory Gardens once installed. It was agreed that a report would be produced and presented to members.

**Action** – The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services and The Grounds Operations Manager

Councillor Tamara asked Officers if an estimate resale cost of vehicles the Council are going to buy next year could be provided to see whether it can be forecasted for some income to slightly reduce the ear-marked reserve for vehicle replacement.

**Action** – The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services and The Grounds Operations Manager

Councillor Crawley asked if it would be possible to purchase more perennial bedding plants than bedding plants to provide a saving over the next coming years.

**Action** – The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services and The Grounds Operations Manager

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** to recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to adopt the draft budget proposals and fees and charges for the Grounds and Environmental Services Department for 2025/26, as well as indicative budget changes for the following three years outlined within the report.

## **251/24 - Reports from Outside Organisations:**

CBC Development Committee – Cllr Nicholas Kotarski

No Update

**252/24 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 13 January 2025 at 7.00 pm**

**The meeting closed at 8:36 PM**