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Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Notice of a Meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee**

Date: **Friday 6 June 2025**

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** will be held on **Monday 16 June 2025**, at **Grove House** in the **Council Chamber** at **7 pm**. 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 13 June 2025.

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:



Yours faithfully

Paul Hodson
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

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.

AGENDA

162/25 Apologies for Absence

163/25 Declarations of Interest

164/25 Public Question Time

165/25 To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Monday 17 March 2025

166/25 Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions

[166-25 Action tracker.pdf](#)

167/25 Finance Report

[167-25 Finance Report FGP 16 June 2025.pdf](#)

[167-25 Finance Report FGP 16 June 2025 - Appendix 1.pdf](#)

[167-25 Finance Report FGP 16 June 2025 - Appendix 2.pdf](#)

[167-25 Finance Report FGP 16 June 2025 - Appendix 3.pdf](#)

[167-25 Finance Report FGP 16 June 2025 - Appendix 4.pdf](#)

168/25 Compliance and Facilities Report

[168-25 Compliance Report FGP 16 June 2025.pdf](#)

169/25 Marketing and Communications Report

[169-25 Marketing and Communications Report FGP 16 June 2025.pdf](#)

170/25 Reports from Outside Organisations:

Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Attwell

Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – Town Mayor and Councillors Hollick and Kenson Gurney

Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Wendy Bater

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 Kenson Gurney and Jones

Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones

Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive – Councillor Kotarski

171/25 Date of the next meeting – Monday 22 September 2025 at 7.00 pm

Committee	Minute	Date	Action	Action Full	Responsible	Update	Status
FGP	194/24	16/09/2024	40th Anniversary	Councillor Jones put forward the idea for an exhibition in Grove House with the History Society to allow residents to visit and look through the 40 years of Dunstable.	The Town Clerk and Chief Executive	The History Society are developing plans with partners to provide a living exhibition as part of Heritage Open Day in September.	Ongoing
FGP	039/25	20/01/2025	Carbon assessment report	The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager to provide a Carbon assessment report to March's committee.	The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager	This work will be reported as part of the regular Compliance report to FGP, along with relevant updates to the correct committee.	Ongoing
FGP	092/25	17/03/2025	Compliance and Facilities Report	Councillor Crawley inquired whether the 10% efficiency saving had been due to the loss of Creasey Park. Officers confirmed that the saving had been due to the loss. Councillor Crawley then requested that the efficiency percentage across all council departments be provided. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive undertook to provide a written response after the meeting.	The Head of Corporate Services and The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services		Not Started

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 16 JUNE 2025

FINANCE REPORT

Purpose of report:	To
	1.1) provide a revenue budgetary report
	1.2) provide detail of the Council's Year End Balances and earmarked reserves
	1.3) present to Members the Internal Audit Report
	1.4) recommend an updated Treasury Management Policy
	1.5) request approval for expenditure from the General Reserve
	1.6) provide detail on current investments

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. To note the revenue budget position for the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 1.2. To note the Council's Year End Balances and earmarked reserves as of 31 March 2025.
- 1.3. To receive and note the conclusion of the final Internal Audit for financial year 2024/2025.
- 1.4. To adopt the updated Treasury Management Policy.
- 1.5. To request approval of expenditure from the General Reserve for Cemetery works.
- 1.6. To note current investments.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. It is required under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 that the Council must, no later than 30 June, consider the end of year accounting statements at Full Council.
- 2.2. The meeting of the Council to be held on 23 June 2025 will receive the Annual Return and supporting documentation for consideration and approval.
- 2.3. In advance of that meeting, this report summarises the net expenditure against the budget for each service area as of 31 March 2025. This forms the actual outturn at the end of the financial year and the actual variances to budget.

3. REVENUE BUDGETARY REPORT

- 3.1. The summary at Appendix 1 shows the net expenditure at 31 March 2025 per service area and the actual outturn against budget.
- 3.2. The summary shows an overall net revenue underspend at the end of the financial year of £233,363. This underspend was predominantly due to the National Pay Award for 2024/25 agreed in October 2024 being less than budgeted, along with greater income achieved from interest on the Council's reserves as well as the savings on the Priory House budget during the ongoing repair works.
- 3.3. Within **Corporate Services**, the overall variance was £40,824 underspent. Significant variances to the budget were:
 - Staff Costs were underspent by £19,376, mainly due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted together with known vacancies.
 - Central Services were overspent by £25,648; this is due to the budgeted service charge income not being achieved due to the loss of Creasey Park, together with the cross over of the IT contractors and termination fees incurred and asset valuations required but not budgeted.
 - Grove House was overspent by £3,754; this is mainly due to the loss of rent due to one tenant vacating in year, offset by a recharge of prior year rates received.
 - Corporate Management overachieved by £50,220, largely due to an increase in investment and bank interest received during the year.
- 3.4. Within **Grounds and Environmental Services**, the overall variance was £33,502 underspent. Significant variances to the budget were:
 - Grounds Staff and Vehicle Costs were underspent by £31,748 due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted together with vacancies throughout the year.
 - Allotments overachieved by £4,800, due to an increase in rent income together with reduced utility costs.
 - Cemetery overachieved by £90,376, mainly due to an increase in burial and memorial income together with staff costs savings due to an in-year vacancy.
 - Recreation Grounds was overspent by £23,915, mainly due to the Creasey Depot lease and associated costs not budgeted.
 - Town Centre and Gardens was underspent by £3,152, mainly due to the delay in the maintenance requirement of the water refill stations.
 - Town Ranger Service was £3,562 overspent due to additional machinery servicing, fuel and general maintenance costs.
 - Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground Splash Park overspent by £38,412. This is mainly due to the year round manager salary not being included in the original budget, together with increased costs for opening out of season, not budgeted.
- 3.5. **Community Services** overall variance was £159,037 underspent, significant variances to the budget were:
 - Staff Costs were underspent by £1,920, due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted.

- Older People's Support Service underspent by £6,471, mainly due to reduced transport costs, offset by reduced numbers of members during the first half of the year.
- Community Engagement was underspent by £1,778 which was mainly due to reduced SLAs and entertainment expenditure.
- Grove Corner was overspent by £2,020, due to a higher-than-average utility costs, offset by staff costs saving due to the pay award agreed being less than budgeted.
- Events overachieved by £2,445, mainly due to additional income generation for sponsorship and concessions.
- Priory House underspent by £128,709, due to the savings on salary costs offset by underachieving on income due to ongoing works and partial closure of the building.
- Town Centre Services underspent by £18,878, this is mainly due to the planned pop-up shop not going ahead, as well as additional sponsorship secured and savings on staff costs due to the pay award being less than budgeted.
- Public Conveniences were underspent by £2,119 due to cleaning and maintenance costs being reduced.
- HSHAZ was overspent by £1,000, due to final staffing costs associated with the ending of the 4-year programme overlapping.

4. YEAR END BALANCES

- 4.1. The balance of the Council's cash accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025 is summarised at Appendix 2.
- 4.2. As noted at 3.2, the overall net underspend at 31 March 2025 was £233,363. At the Council meeting on 3 February 2025, Members approved the contributions totalling £205,871 to reserves using the then forecast underspend from the financial year 2024/25. This resulted in a surplus contribution to the general reserve at 31 March 2025 of £27,492, giving a year-end balance in the general reserve of £593,193.

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY

- 5.1. It is the Council's policy to work towards maintaining a minimum general reserve balance of 25% of the salary budget. Based on the budget set for 2025/26, the general reserve requires a balance of £565,701.
- 5.2. Members are requested to adopt the amended Treasury Management Policy to reflect this amount for financial year 2025/26, as found at Appendix 2 of this report.

6. GENERAL RESERVE EXPENDITURE

(Reference up from Grounds and Environmental Services 9 June 2025)

- 6.1. As noted in 4.2, the total year-end balance in the general reserve has a balance of £593,193, which is £27,492 over the minimum requirement.

- 6.2. A report is due to be presented to Grounds and Environmental Services Committee on 9 June 2025, which includes a request be recommended to this committee for approval to spend the surplus amount of £27,492 from the general reserve for cemetery repair works.
- 6.3. As noted in 3.4 of this report, the Cemetery service significantly overachieved on income against budget during the financial year 2024/25. Officers would therefore recommend that the surplus in the general reserve be used for the purpose of essential maintenance works at the cemetery.
- 6.4. Members are asked to approve the release of £27,492 from the general reserve, for works detailed in the report to be presented to Grounds and Environmental Services Committee on 9 June 2025, found at background papers at item 19 of this agenda.

7. RESERVES

- 7.1. The schedule enclosed at Appendix 3 provides detail of actual contributions to, and expenditure from, reserve funds as at the end of the financial year 31 March 2025.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT

- 8.1. The final Internal Audit for financial year 2024/25 took place on 5 June 2025 and Members are asked to note the report appended to this report at Appendix 4. Members will be pleased to note that the report concludes that the Council maintained an adequate and effective system of internal control throughout the year.

9. INVESTMENTS UPDATE

- 9.1. Dunstable Town Council's current bank and investment account balances as 31 March 2025 were as follows:

Account	Balance	Interest earned in month
Current Account	£10,000.00	-
Business Reserve Account	£239,495.94	£307.98
CCLA Deposit Account	£1,884,628.36	£7,615.89

- 9.2. The Head of Corporate Services (RFO) and Town Clerk and Chief Executive met with the Council's bankers, NatWest, earlier in the year to discuss the current position and goals going forward for the Council. NatWest were unaware of the discussions regarding a banking hub for the town, which will hopefully resolve the issues that arise with banking needs via the Post Office.
- 9.3. Investment opportunities were also discussed, and although NatWest were increasing interest rates, these were not competitive in comparison the CCLA offer of on average around 5% on their instant access deposit account, giving the Council maximum return on their investment.

10. FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

- 10.1. Councillors should, as a minimum, view and audit the Council's accounts on a quarterly basis.
- 10.2. At the time of writing this report, the last quarterly Councillor audit for financial year 2024/25 had been sent to the Chair, Vice Chair and one representative of the committee, and was due to be completed by 13 June 2025.
- 10.3. As Chair of the Committee, Councillor Kotarski, and the Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer will sign the bank reconciliations for the fourth quarter 2024/25, verifying the amounts to the bank statements provided, before the committee meeting takes place.
- 10.4. Further quarterly meetings will be arranged, and all Councillors on Finance and General Purposed Committee are invited to be part of any future Financial Governance Audits they are available for.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS- none

12. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 12.1. These are inherent in this report.

13. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS – none

14. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS- none

15. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS- none

16. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS- none

17. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS- none

18. APPENDICES

- 18.1. Appendix 1 – Summary of Net Revenue Expenditure at 31 March 2025
Appendix 2 – Updated Treasury Management Policy
Appendix 3 – Summary of Earmarked Reserves at 31 March 2025
Appendix 4 – Year End 2024/2025 Internal Audit Report

19. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 19.1. [150-25 Cemetery Reserve Spending.pdf](#)

20. AUTHOR

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Dunstable Town Council

Summary of Actuals vs Budget

Monday, March 31, 2025

Corporate Services

Service Area	Budget 2024/25	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
Staff Costs	(505,964)	(486,588)	(486,588)	19,376
Central Services	(101,561)	(127,209)	(127,209)	(25,648)
Grove House	(34,616)	(38,370)	(38,370)	(3,754)
Corporate Management	(73,085)	(22,865)	(22,865)	50,220
Democratic Management & Representation	(24,600)	(24,399)	(24,398)	202
Capital & Projects (inc loan charges)	(104,582)	(104,154)	(104,154)	428
Grand Total	(844,408)	(803,585)	(803,584)	40,824
	192,631			

Grounds and Environmental Services

Service Area	Budget 2024/25	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
Staff Costs	(906,293)	(874,545)	(874,545)	31,748
Allotments	2,425	7,225	7,225	4,800
Cemetery	54,280	144,655	144,656	90,376
Recreation Grounds	(74,565)	(98,480)	(98,480)	(23,915)
Town Centre and Gardens	(32,195)	(29,043)	(29,043)	3,152
Town Ranger Service	(12,760)	(16,321)	(16,322)	(3,562)
Capital & Projects	(139,950)	(167,803)	(167,802)	(27,852)
Sub Total	(1,109,058)	(1,034,312)	(1,034,310)	74,748
Income: Creasey Park - Football	283,622	(3,196)	(3,196)	(286,818)
Costs: Creasey park - Football	(114,080)	(1,020)	(1,020)	113,060
Income: Bar & Catering	288,049	281	281	(287,768)
Costs: Bar & Catering	(457,591)	3,935	3,935	461,526
Sub Total	0	0	0	0
Bennett Memorial RG Splash Park	(37,919)	(79,165)	(79,165)	(41,246)
Grand Total	(1,146,977)	(1,113,477)	(1,113,475)	33,502

Community Services

Service Area	Budget 2024/25	Actuals to Date	Year-end Forecast	Year-end Variance
Staff Costs	(310,818)	(308,898)	(308,898)	1,920
Older People's Support Service	(27,840)	(21,369)	(21,369)	6,471
Community Engagement (inc Grants)	(31,207)	(29,429)	(29,429)	1,778
Grove Corner	(20,340)	(22,360)	(22,360)	(2,020)
Events Programme	(162,931)	(160,486)	(160,486)	2,445
Priory House	(329,774)	(201,065)	(201,065)	128,709
Town Centre Services (inc Special Markets)	(131,906)	(113,028)	(113,029)	18,878
Public Conveniences (Ashton Square)	(6,775)	(4,656)	(4,656)	2,119
High Street Heritage Action Zone	(13,688)	(14,688)	(14,688)	(1,000)
Capital & Projects	(99,436)	(99,698)	(99,698)	(262)
Grand Total	(1,134,715)	(975,677)	(975,678)	159,037
DTC Grand Total	(3,126,100)	(2,892,739)	(2,892,737)	233,363

192,631

Precept (2,933,469)

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PRACTICES

1. Dunstable Town Council defines its treasury management activities as “the management of the Council’s cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”.
2. The Town Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for Dunstable Town Council.
3. The Town Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving best value in treasury management, and to employing suitable performance measurement techniques within the context of effective risk management.
4. The borrowing of monies purely to invest or on-lend and make a return is unlawful and this Council will not engage in such activity.
5. The Council will only enter into further long-term borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board when absolutely necessary for essential major works or capital purchases.
6. A general balance is maintained to protect the Council from unforeseen events and to give time to respond to such events. The Council will work towards maintaining a general balance of 25% of the annual salary budget.
7. The general policy for the Council is the prudent investment of its treasury balances. The Council’s investment priorities are:
 - The security of capital and
 - The liquidity of its investments
8. The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity.
9. The Council maintains investments with CCLA, providing instant access to funds, with no penalties for withdrawals.
10. **Investment Objectives:**
 - 10.1. In accordance with Section 15 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council will have regard to
 - such guidance as the Secretary of State may issue, and
 - such other guidance as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify.
 - 10.2. Both the CIPFA Code and the CLG Guidance require the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security (protecting the capital sum from loss) and liquidity (ensuring funds are easily available/available when required) of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return/yield.

10.3. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. The Council will therefore aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with appropriate levels of security and liquidity.

10.4 The Council's investment priorities therefore are, in order of importance:

- the **security** of its reserves
- the adequate **liquidity** of its investments
- the **return** (yield) on investments

10.5 All investments will be made in sterling.

10.6. The Department for Communities and Local Government maintains the borrowing of money purely to invest or to lend and make a return is unlawful and the Council will not engage in such activity.

Approved at Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting on Monday 16 June 2025

	Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.24	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.03.25	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
310	General Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£757,573			£757,573	Council 05.02.24- Minute 47/24- £192,631 contribution to 24/25 budget & contributions to reserves totalling £145,112	-£337,743	£419,830
311	Corporate Plan Development Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£5,000		-£5,000	£0			£0
312	Vehicles Reserve	HofGES	£80,017	£58,142	-£63,990	£74,169	FGP 17.06.24- Minute 141/24- bal of £28,347 for 2 replacement vehicles & 1 additional ride on mower (of £92,337 approved)	-£28,347	£45,822
313	CPCFC Reserve	TC&CE	£33,965		-£33,965	£0		£0	£0
314	Christmas Lights Reserve	HofCS	£2,094	£10,556	£0	£12,651	5 year replacement lighting plan 21/22-25/26 ; Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= release of £8,731 for replacement and repairs of lights	-£9,095	£3,556
315	Street Dressing Reserve	HofCS	£5,427	£5,000	-£9,380	£1,047	FGP 16.09.24- Minute 194/24= bal of £1,047.28 for 40th anniversary street dressing (of £7,467 approved)	-£1,047	£0
316	Downside Building Maintenance Res	HofCS	£53,002	£3,000	-£3,233	£52,769	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23= £36,679 & £8,792.55- for 2nd phase roof repairs	-£45,472	£7,297
317	Grove Corner Building Maint Reserve	HofCS	£34,565	£4,000		£38,565	Chairmans Approval 17.04.23= bal of £2,000 roof survey & development plans (of £5,000 approved)	-£2,000	£36,565
318	Building Security Systems	HofCorp	£5,357			£5,357	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £5,357 for improved security for Grove House	-£5,357	£0
319	Cemetery Memorial Safety	HofGES	£1,500	£1,575		£3,075	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £3,075 for periodic inspections and subsequent works	-£3,075	£0
320	Priory House Tearooms Equipment	HofCS	£7,434	£3,000	-£1,434	£9,000	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £9,000 for replacement of kitchen/catering equipment	-£9,000	£0
321	IT/Equipment Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£55,902	£20,000	-£74,689	£1,213	FGP 18.03.24- Minute 84/2= bal of £1,213 for new IT contract (of £75,902 approved)	-£1,213	£0
322	Older People's Day Care Svce	HofCS	£12,325			£12,325	Revenue budget committed= £1,200	-£1,200	£11,125
323	Election Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£0	£20,000		£20,000	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £20,000 for future election costs due to CBC	-£20,000	£0
324	Grove House Building Reserve	HofCorp	£177,550	£69,000	-£56,029	£190,521	essential repair and maintenance works (of £226,550 approved)	-£170,521	£20,000
325	Priory House Works Contingency	HofCS	£29,864			£29,864	Council 07.04.25- Minute 115/25= £29,864 for PH Exhibition (in £161,013 total with £11,149 on 327 & £120,000 on 333)	-£29,864	£0
326	Mayoral Reserve	HofCorp	£3,000			£3,000	FGP 19.01.15-Minute 24 - to be retained for transport/allowance as required	-£3,000	£0
327	Priory House Exhibition	HofCS	£11,149			£11,149	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £11,149 for programme of future exhibitions	-£11,149	£0
329	Performance Area Reserve	HofCS	£609		-£609	£0			£0
330	Town Twinning Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£8,739		-£350	£8,389	Retained for twinning activities to be determined		£8,389

	Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.24	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.03.25	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
331	Tree Reserve	HofGES	£4,448	£15,000	-£4,967	£14,481	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23- Bal of £980 for 23/24 work requirements (from £17,090 agreed) Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £15,488 for programme of tree inspections and subsequent works	-£14,481	£0
332	Open Spaces Improvement Plan	HofGES	£59,089	£63,665	-£70,995	£51,759	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; FGP 17.06.24- Minute 141/24- bal of £12,960 for Pergola and Kneerail project in Priory Gardens (of £35,600 agreed) + £10,000 external contribution	-£25,515	£26,244
333	Priory House Building Reserve	HofCS	£235,646	£29,357	-£2,980	£262,023	Chairs 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; Council 07.04.25 - Minute 115/25= £120,000 for Priory House Exhibition (25/26 contrib due)	-£232,666	£29,357
334	Pavilion Buildings Maintenance Res	HofGES	£23,644	£15,000	-£11,012	£27,632			£27,632
335	Church Street Phone Box Maintenance	HofGES	£5,000		-£1,998	£3,002	FGP 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £5,000 for Church Street phone box maintenance	-£3,002	£0
337	Member Training Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£1,000		-£1,000	£0		£0	£0
338	Allotments Reserve	HofGES	£23,300	£5,000	-£5,473	£22,827	FGP Minute 107 20.06.22= bal for 5 year infrastructure improvement programme (upto £42,800 approved) (includes £5,000 pa contributions to 26/27)	-£21,606	£1,221
339	Investment Account Interest	TC&CE	£13,261	£4,187	-£17,448	£0			£0
341	Outdoor Leisure (non play) Reserve	TC&CE / HofGES	£10,319	£12,000	-£7,268	£15,052			£15,052
342	Memorial Kerbs Reserve	HofGES	£461			£461	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24= £300 for purchase of memorial kerbs	-£300	£161
343	Cemetery Building Maintenance Res	HofGES	£12,281	£5,000		£17,281			£17,281
344	Fencing Maintenance Reserve	HofGES	£0	£7,000		£7,000			£7,000
346	HSHAZ/Priory House HAR	HofCS	£3,341	£1,109,827	-£959,886	£153,282	HSHAZ scheme programme / HAR 1 Priory House works programme- to future claim	-£153,282	£0
348	Unfulfilled Orders	HofCorp	£3,351		-£3,351	£0			£0
353	Neighbourhood Development	TC&CE / HofCorp	£10,888	£9,112	-£7,333	£12,668			£12,668
	Earmarked Reserves Total		£1,691,105	£1,469,420	-£1,342,390	£1,818,135		-£1,128,936	£689,199

Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.24	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.03.25	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
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Capital Receipt - Sale of Land at Meadway

	Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.24	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.03.25	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
371	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 Cemetery Development	HofGES	£36,776	£116,000	-£5,415	£147,361	FGP 18.09.23- Minute 187/23= balance of £31,360.5 for development of the new cemetery (of £36,775 approved)	-£31,361	£116,000
373	Grounds Depot Extension	HofGES	£100,000			£100,000	FGP 17.06.24- Minute 141/24= Depot Extension	-£100,000	£0
374	Luton Road MUGA	HofGES	£42			£42	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- bal of £1,873 for a MUGA at Kingsbury Recreation Ground (previously known as Luton Road) (of £100,000 approved)	-£42	£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		-£1,000	£169,000	Chairs Approval 11.04.25- bal of £1,830 (from £2,830 approved) - Professional Fees	-£169,000	£0
377	NEW - Splash Canopies	TC&CE	£2,873		-£2,816	£57	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23- bal of £57 for purchase and installation of Splash Canopies, benches and parasols (from £18,000 approved)	-£57	£0
	Capital Receipts Total		£345,690	£116,000	-£9,231	£452,460		-£452,460	£0

S106/External Funding/Ringfenced Expenditure specified by funding body

350	Developers Contributions- CAP	HofGES	£11,723		-£11,723	£0			£0
351	CPCFC Capital	TC&CE	£83,641		-£83,641	£0			£0
352	Development Contributions- REV	HofGES	£34,316			£34,316	£8,000 committed in 23/24 revenue budget from Bal of £22,129 for Willoughby (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	£50,021			£50,021	Bal in holding code as committed Joint Committees fund only = not DTC	-£50,021	£0
	S106/External Funding Total		£179,701	£0	-£95,364	£84,337		-£62,059	£22,278
			£2,216,496	£1,585,420	-£1,446,984	£2,354,932		-£1,643,454	£711,478

Key:

= Finance and General Purposes Committee

= Grounds and Environmental Services Committee

= Community Services Committee

Dunstable Town Council

Internal Audit 2024-25 (Final Update Report)

5th June 2025

Stephen Christopher

***For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd***

Background

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 was appointed to undertake this function on behalf of Dunstable Town Council for the 2024-25 financial year.

This report sets out the results of our final audit visit, which was undertaken on 5th June 2025. It updates the report issued following our interim audits, in November 2024 and March 2025. We wish to thank the Head of Corporate Services (RFO) and her colleagues for providing the documentation and explanations required to enable us to complete our audit work.

Internal Audit Approach

In carrying out our audit, 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, 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. We have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' on Page 3 of the 2024-25 AGAR, having concluded that the internal control objectives as set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

In the sections below, we explain the objectives of each area of our audit, summarising the work undertaken to date and our findings. We are pleased to report that there were no matters arising that required a formal comment or recommendation. We ask that Members consider the content of this report.

<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 one of the market leaders for 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 a Public Sector Deposit Fund account with CCLA Investment Management Ltd (Until March 2025, two separate CCLA accounts were held, but these were merged just prior to the year end).

In our audit work for the year, we have:

- Checked and agreed the opening trial balance on Omega for 2024-25 to the closing balances on the 2023-24 AGAR and the detailed accounts;
- Verified that the financial ledgers remained “in balance” throughout the year;
- 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 three sample months - June and September 2024, plus February and March 2025;
- Checked the bank reconciliations for all active bank account reconciliations, including the CCLA deposits, as at 31st October 2024, 28th February 2025 and 31st March 2025, confirming that there are no anomalous entries;
- Confirmed that the funds held in the CCLA account closed in March 2025 were transferred correctly to the remaining account
- 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 2023-24 AGAR on 30th September 2024 and that there were no matters arising;
- Confirmed that the overall cash balance has been reported correctly in the draft AGAR (Section 2, Line 8), and
- Confirmed that since the recent change in IT Support provider, all systems are now regularly backed-up to the Cloud.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising 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 audit work, we confirmed the following:

- Our review of the minutes of the meetings of the Full Council and its standing committees in the year did not identify any issues that we consider might have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council's future financial stability.
- The Council continues to keep its governance arrangements under regular review. Both the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders were updated and approved at the F&GP Committee meeting on 18th March 2024, with a further minor amendment to the Standing Orders agreed at the Council meeting on 24th June 2024. The Financial Regulations were subject to detailed review during 2024-25, to take into account the most recent changes to the NALC model financial regulations and a revised version was approved at the F&GP meeting on 17th March 2025.
- A range of other policies and procedures remain in place and are reviewed on a regular basis. From discussion with the Head of Corporate Services (RFO) we understand that consideration is to be given to the introduction of a formal timetable for the future review of all key policies and procedures.
- 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 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 undertaken a review of the procedures in place in this area. To test compliance with the above criteria, we examined a sample of non-pay related payments from across the financial year. Our test sample included all individual 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 items included in our sample amounted to £1,939,555. There were no matters arising.

The Council makes use of a NatWest Commercial Credit Card, with a monthly limit of £8,000, which is used mainly for items such as internet purchases and subscriptions. There are currently four users, each with a monthly expenditure limit of £2,000. The Credit Card is settled monthly by direct debit. We reviewed the statements for three sample months (periods ending 10th October 2024, 10th January 2025 and 10th March 2025, 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.

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. At the time of our final audit, the VAT reclaims for the fall four quarters of the year had been submitted and reimbursement had been received from HMRC.

As part of our testing of expenditure, we also check, on a sample basis, to confirm that the Council is following appropriate national requirements and its own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations when entering into contracts that require to be formally tendered. At our first interim visit, we reviewed documentation relating to the award of the contract for 'Website development, hosting and maintenance'. We confirmed that the national regulatory requirements had been followed, with the tender opportunity advertised on the Government's Contracts Finder website and that, following a clear evaluation process, the award of the contract was formally approved at the F&GP Committee meeting on 16th September 2024 and subsequently minuted.

At our second audit visit, we confirmed that these regulatory requirements had also been followed for the award of a contract for waste management solutions, which was formally approved at the F&GP meeting on 17th March 2025. We also noted that, at that meeting, the F&GP Committee made a decision to allow for urgent repair works to be undertaken to the front of Grove House by extending the existing contract for the firm currently undertaking work on the building, rather than undertaking a further contract exercise. This approach is in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

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 have confirmed that this was done during 2024-25, with an updated Corporate Risk Log - setting out the Council's strategic risks and the mitigating controls - being reviewed and approved by the F&GP Committee on 20th January 2025.

The Council's primary insurance cover continues to be provided by Zurich Municipal, on a long-term contract ending on 31st March 2026. We have reviewed the schedule for the current policy (to 31st March 2025) to confirm that an appropriate level of cover remains in place. We confirmed that 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 check compliance with national regulatory standards. The most recent external inspections were completed in February 2025 and, from our review of the inspection reports and discussion with the Head of Grounds & Environmental Services, 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 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.

During our audits, we considered the information provided to Members on progress against the 2024-25 budget. We confirmed that the F&GP Committee received financial monitoring reports at each meeting during the year, identifying areas of over/under-spending and also providing details of the movements in earmarked reserves.

In the course of our second interim audit, we reviewed the approach taken by the Council to setting its budget and Precept for 2025-26. As in previous years, the budget process involved detailed consideration by the various committees, in particular F&GP, before the Precept was

formally approved by the Full Council at its meeting on 2nd February 2025. The Precept has been set at £3,282,168 (£2,933,469 for 2024-25), which represents a Council Tax charge of £246.13 per annum for a Band D property, an increase of 11.89% from the previous year.

We are satisfied that Members were provided with an appropriate level of information on which to base the budget decision, with comprehensive supporting documentation within the budget pack produced by the Head of Corporate Services (RFO) and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive. This included detailed consideration of future reserve requirements and the level of fees and charges that will apply in 2025-26.

At 31st March 2025, the Council's overall reserves stood at £2,140,531, which was slightly less than at the previous year end (£2,168,306). Of the total reserves, Earmarked Reserves amounted to £1,547,338 compared to £1,410,733 at 31st March 2024. The main movements from the prior year were an increase of just under £150,000 to the High Street Heritage Action Zone project reserve and £110,585 in the new cemetery development reserve, partly offset by the removal of reserves held in relation to Creasey Park, totalling £130,866.

The Council's remaining funds are held in the General Reserve. At 31st March 2025, the balance of this reserve stood at £593,193, compared to £757,573 at the previous year-end. It had initially been anticipated that £192,631 would be required to support the 2024-25 revenue budget. However, the outturn position was significantly better than anticipated, principally as a result of lower than anticipated salary costs and higher than budgeted interest on balances and only approximately £27,000 was required.

During the year, in the light of favourable budget forecasts, the Council agreed to make contributions to the Earmarked Reserves and to bring the General Reserve in line with its stated aim, as set out in the Treasury Management Policy, of maintaining a minimum balance equivalent to 25% of the annual salaries. The final outturn position was in line with this aim.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Income

During 2024-25, the Council received income from a variety of sources, including, Dunstable Cemetery, Allotments, Specialist Markets, Events, Bennett's Café & Community Hub, and bank and deposit interest. Two significant changes from the previous year were the loss of income from Creasey Park, following Central Bedfordshire Council's decision not to renew the Town Council's management agreement, and from the closure of Priory House for major restoration works, which are not scheduled for completion until June 2026.

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 audits, we undertook the following work in relation to income:

Fees and charges: Fees and charges for 2024-25 were approved by the Council as part of the annual budget setting process, following detailed consideration by the F&GP Committee. We noted that a similar approach has been taken for 2025-26.

Banking of income: As noted earlier in this report, we checked and agreed four sample months' receipts transactions from the Omega cashbook to the relevant bank statements, confirming the timeliness and accuracy of transactions.

Cemetery-related fees and charges: We reviewed the interment applications and other cemetery-related activities for a sample month (September 2024). We confirmed that, in all cases, the correct amounts had been charged and that, with minor exceptions, the income due had been received and banked on a timely basis.

Allotments: At our first interim audit, we reviewed the records for the allotment year which commenced on 1st January 2024, confirming that requests for rental payments were sent to all allotment holders on a timely basis. At the time of our second interim visit, only a very few payments remained outstanding and reminder letters have been sent. We noted that revised allotment agreements have recently been sent out to allotment holders, which will apply from 1st January 2025. Our testing included the review of the documentation relating to a sample of new tenancies, entered into since 1st January 2025. We confirmed that, in all instances, the Council holds signed copies of the tenancy agreements. Work in relation to the allotments year commencing 1st January 2025 will be undertaken at our first interim audit for 2025-26.

Markets: We reviewed the spreadsheet records maintained for one sample market (held on 12th October 2024) to supporting information, to confirm that the correct amounts had been charged to stallholders, that payments were received on a timely basis, and that the details of insurance cover required by the Council had been provided. There were no matters arising

Outstanding debts: At our second interim, we reviewed the Sales Ledger as at 28th February 2025. We were pleased to note that the overall value of long-standing debts was low and we confirmed that effective control arrangements remain in place, with appropriate action being taken in relation to outstanding payments. In particular, we noted the significant efforts that had been made to recover debts owing to the Council following the termination of the Creasey Park management agreement. These were explained in a confidential report to the F&GP Committee on 17th March 2025, at which it was agreed to write off two small debts that were not recoverable. At our final audit, we confirmed that effective debtor control arrangements remained in place.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

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 Grove House petty cash account. We checked and agreed the cash balance held to the petty cash ledger, as at the date of our audit visit, and confirmed that there was appropriate supporting information for petty cash payments made since the date of the last reconciliation. We also confirmed the balance of the corporate petty cash float held at Grove House.

At our second interim, we checked and agreed the petty cash float held at the Bennetts Café to the petty cash ledger and reviewed the supporting vouchers for the previous week, which had recently been submitted to the Finance team following the previous reconciliation. We confirmed that appropriate control arrangements are in place.

At our final audit, we confirmed that the year-end petty cash balances as at 31st March 2025 had been included correctly in the 'cash and bank' figure in Section 2, Line 8 of the AGAR.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising 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 2024-25, by reference to the October 2024 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 applied the approved employee pay rates for the financial year – noting that the annual pay settlement to apply from 1st April 2024 was agreed during October 2024, with the back-pay due to be 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 2024-25, 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 October 2024 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.

- We confirmed that the monthly net salary payments to staff agreed to the underlying records.
- We also reviewed the calculation of revised pay rates and the schedule of backdated pay which has been provided to the Payroll Bureau with regard to the national pay award for 2024-25.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Asset Register

The reporting arrangements for assets in the AGAR require councils to include purchase cost of each asset, or at a suitable proxy where that value is not known, and for community assets to be valued at a nominal £1. The value of individual assets should not change from one year to another, with the only amendments being the inclusion of new assets purchased or removal of assets disposed of.

In 2023-24, the Council purchased the RBS 'Asset Inventory' software, which is now used to maintain a detailed record of all assets held. The asset register is updated at each year end and at our final audit, we confirmed that the total cost of assets held as at 31st March 2025, £8,415,932, has been reported correctly in the draft AGAR (Section 2, Line 9).

Conclusion

There are no matters arising 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 audit work, we confirmed the following:

- As required by the 'Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments', the Council has a Treasury Management Policy in place. 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 Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan instalment repayments made during 2024-25 to the third party “demand” notices from the UK Debt Management Office;
- The repayments of principal and interest (the latter reported on an accrual basis) and the overall loan balances outstanding at the year-end have been reported correctly in the draft AGAR (Section 2, Lines 5 and 10, respectively)..

Conclusion

There are no matters arising that require a formal comment or recommendation.

Statement of Accounts and AGAR

We have examined the detailed accounts produced by the RBS Omega system and also the draft of the statutory “Accounting Statements 2024-25” that the Council is required to complete and approve (Section 2 of the AGAR). We have agreed the detail to the supporting accounting records and other related documentation.

Conclusions

There are no matters arising from this area of our review that require any formal comment or recommendation. We look forward to receiving a copy of the finalised AGAR (Sections 1 and 2), once the document has been approved by the Council.

On the basis of the work undertaken during the course of our review for the year, we have completed and signed the ‘Annual Internal Audit Report’ on page 3 of the AGAR, assigning positive assurances in all areas of internal control

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 16 JUNE 2025

CORPORATE COMPLIANCE AND FACILITIES REPORT

Purpose of report: For information

1. FACILITIES

Grove House – Building Works

- 1.1. Brasier Freeth (the Councils appointed Building Surveyors) have progressed with contractors to complete the initial drawing up a specification of works for the rear parapet wall repairs. It was hoped that a tender process would take place, leading to a proposed contractor. However, developments at the front of the building may mean less budget being available for the rear. Once costs are clarified for the front, officers will review what is possible within existing budgets at the rear.
- 1.2. The current works to the front of the building have identified a number of issues of concern. The wall at the front is not tied in and cracks are showing along the building which imply that the front wall is not safely attached. This is likely to have been the case for some time; this is newly discovered but a not a new issue. The metal beam over the door midway along the building is no longer sound, and initial investigations suggest that the original design of the beam is too short to safely support the building above.
- 1.3. The Council's contractor is currently preparing detailed design and method statements for the necessary works to make the building safe. Once received, these will be used to issue a request for planning consent to CBC and to tender for the works. Members will be kept updated accordingly. It may be necessary to hold an Extraordinary Meeting during the summer to approve works.

Grove House – General

- 1.4. Members will recall that Officers had submitted the premises licence application for Grove House. This has now been granted which allows officers to apply for the wedding licence to enable the Council to hold ceremonies at Grove House.
- 1.5. Officers have acquired a tenant for the vacant first floor office, previously occupied by Hospice at Home, and are hopeful that the incoming tenants, Hope Church South Bedfordshire, will occupy the space within the next month under a licence. The Licence will be available at the meeting for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to sign.

- 1.6. There has been a delay in finalising the lease for Mortons Solicitors to incorporate the additional rooms occupied since January 2025. This has now been finalised and the amended lease will be available at the meeting for the Mayor and Deputy to Sign.
- 1.7. Officers have been involved in initial discussions with the Local History Society, Town Guides and the Heritage Consortium to take part in the national Heritage Open Day by arranging a Grove House Open Day on 13 September 2025. The History Society are keen to work with the Council to promote the 40th anniversary as well as share the local history within the building, with members of the public.

Downside Community Centre

- 1.8. The Council's solicitors are currently drafting the lease agreed for the Downside Community Centre. The current licence holders have declined to apply for a Service Level Agreement and have explained their reasons to officers.

Staffing

- 1.9. The new Compliance Manager is due to start work on 16 June, which will enable various delayed areas of work to be resumed.

2. APPENDICES - none

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS - none

4. AUTHORS

- 4.1. Lisa Scheder - Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer
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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 16 JUNE 2025

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Purpose of report: For information

1. SOCIAL MEDIA

- 1.1. The Marketing and Communications Officer acknowledges the importance of having planned and effective communications in place on the day of an event or market to highlight what is on offer. The Town Centre Manager was approached by a member of the public at the Around the World event and market who initially indicated they would not have initially attended the event due to the complex needs of their family. However, after seeing the promotional video on social media, they felt reassured that the event would be well-suited to attend. The inclusion of a quiet space, animal interactions and the variety of activities help convey the event as inclusive, welcoming, and thoughtfully designed for families with diverse needs.
- 1.2. Additional feedback from the public indicated that many young people attended Around the World after seeing the stories on Instagram. Officers will continue to share Instagram stories to Facebook, as well as direct posts to reach the wider audience.
- 1.3. Dunstable Town Council had the highest engagement overall, with 13,879 visitors and strong growth across all platforms. Bennett's Café and Splash Park has 4,997 followers and soon will reach their 5,000 milestone.
- 1.4. Officers are continuing to test the use of paid (boosted) posts on Facebook to help promote events, activities, and other initiatives. The aim is to see whether this type of advertising leads to increased public interest, higher attendance, and greater community participation. Early results are being monitored to assess the overall impact and cost-effectiveness of this approach.
- 1.5. Officers have set up a dedicated Facebook account and page for the Town Mayor. The page is managed by officers, but the Mayor will also have access. The purpose of the page is to highlight the Mayor's activities, including attendance at local events and community engagements. This will help raise the profile of the Mayor's role and improve communication with residents about civic events and initiatives.

- 1.6. The following figures are accurate as of 2 June 2025 and show how many followers have been gained since the previous report date:

Platform	Entity	Followers	Change
Facebook	Dunstable Town Council	13,879	+423
	Bennett's Café & Splash Park	4,997	+169
	Town Ranger Services	1,484	+3
	Grove Corner	1,465	+13
	Priory House	1,460	+11
Instagram	Dunstable Town Council	850	+85
	Bennett's Café & Splash Park	42	+19
	Grove Corner	501	+2
LinkedIn	Dunstable Town Council	327	+31
TikTok	Dunstable Town Council	176	+28

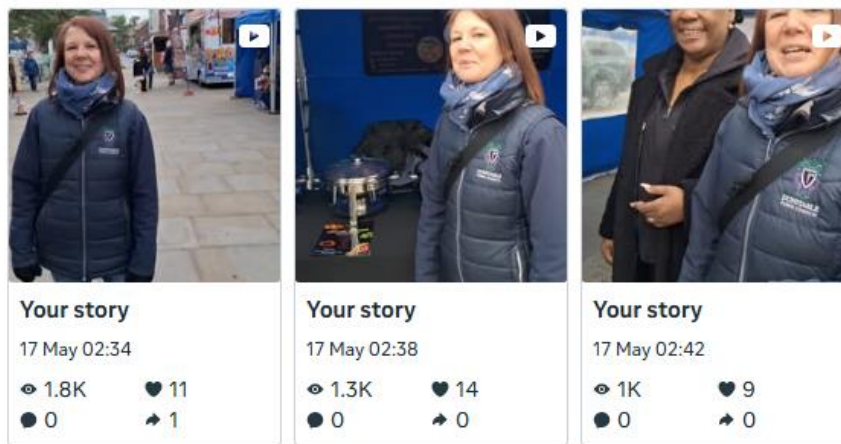
- 1.7. **Dunstable Town Council Facebook insights.**
Top three social media Facebook posts from 1 March to 1 June by interactions:
1. New Mayor post at ACM
 2. New Mayor press release
 3. Soapbox (sponsored advert)

 **Top posts by interactions**



- 1.8. **Top three social media Facebook stories from 1 March to 1 June by views:**
1. LYLM & Around the World event
 2. LYLM & Around the World event
 3. LYLM & Around the World event

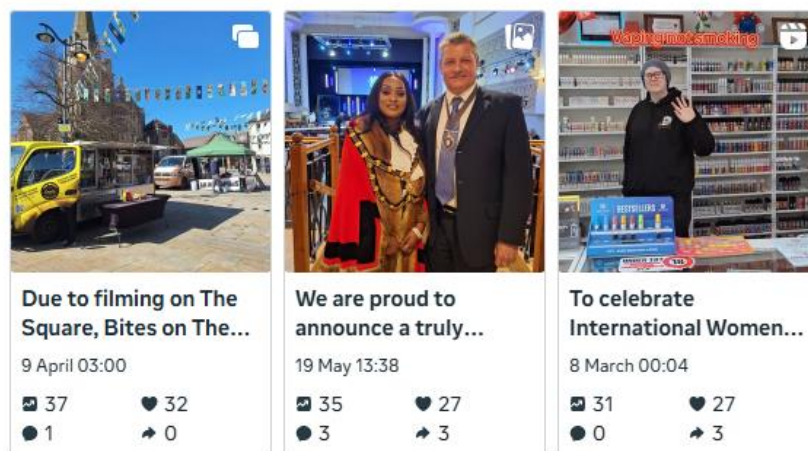
 Top stories by views



1.9. **Top three social media Instagram posts from 1 March to 1 June by interactions:**

1. No Bites on The Square
2. New Mayor ACM
3. International Women's Day video

 Top posts by interactions



1.10. **Top three social media Instagram stories over the last month (February 2025) by reach:**

1. Street Food Heroes
2. Street Food Heroes
3. Love Your Local Market & Around the World event

Top stories by reach



2. EMAIL MARKETING

- 2.1 Monthly Councillor newsletters continue to be sent with all relevant information which includes bulletins and Dunstable Town Council events. Officers would welcome feedback or suggestions on the Councillor newsletters. A Town Council newsletter will be produced with a sign up integrated into the new website to ensure the public can keep up to date with regularly news and bulletins from the Town Council.

3. WEBSITE

- 3.1 The Town Council is preparing to launch a new website this summer. The Marketing and Communications Officer has been actively working on developing and uploading new content to ensure the site is up-to-date, engaging, and user-friendly. While there is not yet a confirmed launch date, officers are taking the time to thoroughly test the website and ensure all content is accurate and fully approved. The goal is to ensure the website runs smoothly and effectively from day one, providing better experience for residents and visitors.
- 3.2 The figures below show how users have visited the Town Council website from 1 March to 1 June:

1. What's on
2. Events in May
3. Events in April
4. Job Vacancies
5. Bennett's Splash

Organic search (google, Bing etc.)	18,491
Direct:	4,386
Organic social (Facebook, Instagram)	2,091
Mobile:	70.7%
Desktop:	26.7%
Tablet:	2.6%

4. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- 4.1 The Corporate and Marketing Communication Officer is working on a branding style guide for other offices in the Council to use to ensure consistency across all platforms.
- 4.2 The What's on Window continues to be used regularly by the Town Council and other community groups.

5. TALK OF THE TOWN

- 5.1. The July edition is now in the design phases with our supplier. GoodOaks Homecare is advertising in the edition.
- 5.2 Officers are continuing efforts to attract additional advertisers for *Talk of the Town*. As part of this, the new Town Council website will feature a dedicated *Talk of the Town* page. This page will provide easy access to the latest edition and include clear information on advertising rates, with the aim of generating greater interest from potential advertisers.

6. COMMUNITY LOTTERY

- 6.1. The Marketing and Communications Officer has put together a plan to encourage local good causes to sign up and start raising money through the lottery. The plan includes promoting the lottery through social media, email newsletters, ward noticeboards, and other local channels. It also aims to get local people to play the lottery and choose a cause to support, helping those groups raise much-needed funds. Members are encouraged to share and promote to the good causes they are involved with.

7. AUTHOR

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To: All Members:

John Gurney (Council Member), Liz Jones (Council Member), Kenson Gurney (Council Member), Matthew Brennan (Council Member), Matthew Neall (Council Member), Philip Crawley (Council Member), Wendy Bater (Council Member), Mark Davis (Council Member), Gregory Alderman (Council Member), Richard Attwell (Council Member), Johnson Tamara (Council Member), Nicholas Kotarski (Council Member), Louise O'Riordan (Council Member), Michelle Henderson (Council Member), Peter Hollick (Council Member), Trevor Adams (Council Member), Sally Kimondo (Councillor), Robert Blennerhassett (Council Member)