

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

ON MONDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2025

Present: Councillors Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor) (in the chair), Wendy Bater, Gregory Alderman, Mark Davis, Philip Crawley and Nicholas Kotarski

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Jackie Carrington (Democratic Services Manager), Gina Thanky (Events Officer) and Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager)

In Attendance: Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services), Annette Clynes (Remotely) (Town Centre Manager) and Councillor Peter Hollick

Public: One

228/25 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Matthew Neall (Chair), Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Louise O'Riordan and Robert Blennerhassett

229/25 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

230/25 - Public Question Time

None

231/25 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 8 September 2025 as an accurate record

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 8 September 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

232/25 - Action Tracker – to review progress of previously agreed actions

The committee reviewed the action tracker to monitor the progress of previously agreed actions. There were no other updates or comments on the action tracker.

233/25 - Town Centre Services

An update on the town centre services, noting an increase in bookings for the Twilight events

scheduled for December. Officers expressed confidence that the events would be fully booked and well-attended.

The tender for town centre services was due to be reviewed in November, with updates expected by the next committee meeting.

A query was raised regarding pre-application planning advice for Pulse communication boxes in the conservation area, which had been unfavourable. The Head of Community Services elaborated on the challenges faced due to conservation area restrictions and the lack of feasible suggestions from Central Bedfordshire's planning team, which hindered the project's progress.

234/25 - Budget Proposals for 2026/27

The budget proposals for the fiscal year 2026/27 were introduced, highlighting differences between the previously agreed four-year budget and current suggestions. The overall council budget was facing challenges, with an initial draft indicating a 12% increase compared to the 8% agreed in February.

Members requested that officers provide detailed information on event costs and income to make informed budget decisions and organise a working group to delve deeper into budgetary considerations a meeting with officers to review options for event funding and to establish the impact of removing an event from the calendar.

ACTION: Head of Community Services

RESOLVED:

to include the fallback proposal to commit £35,000 to ensure the continuity of detached youth services in case Central Bedfordshire Council withdraw their funding in the draft budget.

235/25 - Priory House

The Head of Community Services provided updates on Priory House, including the opening of the gift shop area and refurbishment works. The gift shop's light bites and retail stock were positively received, and the refurbishment was progressing well, with internal works and permissions in place.

A funding application for youth engagement workshops had been submitted to the National Archives, and the committee was asked to agree to accept the funding if successful.

RESOLVED:

to accept the funding from the National Archives for youth engagement workshops if successful.

236/25 – Events

The Events Officer reported on recent and upcoming events, noting a lower turnout for Proms in the Park compared to previous years, possibly due to weather conditions and competing events in neighbouring towns. Planning for the Christmas Carols and Torchlight Procession was progressing well, with confirmed participation from schools and choirs.

Changes to event dates for 2026 were outlined, with the Soapbox Derby moved to September to encourage teams to take part and Priory Pictures to August for better scheduling.

237/25 - Grove Corner and Community Engagement

The cafe's performance had been mixed due to varying weather conditions, with income fluctuating over recent weeks. New initiatives and the return of winter sessions are expected to drive continued growth against last year's income.

Updates were provided on Grove Corner and community engagement, noting an increase in new sign-ups and successful youth engagement initiatives, including a talent show organised by junior team club members. Detached youth work continued to adapt to seasonal changes, with significant engagement numbers reported. The committee acknowledged the positive impact of these activities and the importance of continued funding and support.

The community lottery had 30 good causes signed up and 151 players, generating £3175.20 in revenue for local good causes. Members agreed that a full year of operation would provide a clearer picture of the lottery's financial impact.

238/25 - Older People's Services

The report on older people's services highlighted various activities and initiatives.

The Household Support Fund would provide £1,839 for supermarket vouchers for members of Good Companions and Lunch Bunch during the week between Christmas and New Year. Officers had received kindness bags from the Small Acts of Kindness charity, which would be distributed among the groups.

The council expressed gratitude towards Cafe Nostalgia, the Household Support Fund, and the Small Acts of Kindness charity for their contributions.

239/25 - Date of the next meeting - Monday 12 January 2026 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 9:00 PM