

## **DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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

**ON MONDAY 12 JANUARY 2026**

**Present:** Councillors Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor), Matthew Neall (Chair), Gregory Alderman, Wendy Bater, Philip Crawley, Mark Davis, and Nicholas Kotarski

**In Attendance:** Councillor Peter Hollick, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services), Jackie Carrington (Democratic Services Manager), Lisa Stephens (Cultural Services Manager) and Gina Thanky (Events Officer)

**Public:** Two

#### **001/26 - Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Louise O'Riordan, Trevor Adams and Robert Blennerhassett

#### **002/26 - Declarations of Interest**

There were no specific declarations of interest.

#### **003/26 - Public Question Time**

A representative from Ringcraft Boxing raised concerns about the delay in receiving the lease for the building, which was voted on in early 2024. Additionally, a health and safety issue regarding a leaking roof in the building's kitchen was raised. The council acknowledged the delays in legal matters and agreed to arrange a meeting. Regarding the roof repairs, it was explained that while temporary repairs had been made, full repairs were pending tender analysis and would be completed in the first half of the year.

#### **004/26 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of 3 November 2025 as an accurate record**

The minutes of the Community Services meeting held on 3 November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **005/26 - Action Tracker – to review progress of previously agreed actions**

The committee reviewed the action tracker to monitor the progress of previously agreed actions.

### **006/26 - Town Centre Services**

The Head of Community Services presented the Town Centre Services update.

The Head of Community Services mentioned ongoing work with Central Bedfordshire Council regarding premises of concern in the High Street, with a task group meeting scheduled to address these issues.

Cash Access UK had confirmed the location for the permanent banking hub following the closure of Santander, with a temporary hub to be set up until the permanent one is operational.

### **007/26 - Budget Proposals for 2026/27**

The budget proposals for 2026/27 were discussed. The budget report had not been included in the agenda, and was circulated immediately after the meeting. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive The significant changes in the budget included the removal of the budget for the additional Priory Pictures event, and adjustments to pensions and salaries. The proposed contribution to the reserves for detached youth work would now be funded from the forecast in-year underspend. The additional Priory house reserve contribution of £67,000 was no longer required.

It was noted that Central Bedfordshire Council had suggested not funding the Good Companions Club as part of their budget discussions. Any impact of this funding cut would need to be addressed in the budget proposals for 2027 and 2028.

### **008/26 - Grove Corner and Community Engagement**

The Head of Community Services summarised the report on Grove Corner and Community Engagement noting Grove Corner continued to attract good numbers of young people, and one young person had expressed interest in joining the youth parliament following engagement with Central Bedfordshire Council Youth Services. Written confirmation had been received from Central Bedfordshire Council that their funding for detached youth work would continue for another year.

### **009/26 - Older People's Services**

It was noted that the Food Club was developing well and it was hoped that members would begin to take ownership and coordinate activities independently.

## 010/26 – Events

The Events Officer highlighted the success of past events such as the Christmas carols and Torchlight procession, which saw an estimated attendance of 5,000 people and participation from 13 schools and various choirs..

Members asked about progress to raise sponsorship and additional income to help fund the events programme. Conversations with businesses regarding sponsorship for the 2026 events programme were ongoing. . It was noted that while the events cannot generate enough income to be self-sufficient, efforts are made to maximise income through concessions and stalls. The importance of free events for families was highlighted, and the need to balance this with the financial pressures faced by residents was discussed.

## 011/26 - Priory House

The Cultural Services Manager updated the Committee that following the reopening of the Priory House shop there had been positive feedback on the refurbishment and the introduction of lunch offerings.

The refurbishment works were progressing well, with an advised programme date of the end of October. Stakeholder workshops had been held to discuss the exhibition plans.

## 012/26 - Priory House Decision Report

### RESOLVED:

To spend £220,282.49 from allocated reserves for the following items:

Repairs to main staircase -	£16,501.75
Improvement to the parapet gutter of gift shop roof	£3,355.00
Repairs to windows on the west elevation and north gable including secondary glazing where appropriate and draft strips	£73,263.50
Reder repair to external wall	£12,162.24
Design fees for above works	£10,000.00
Contingency	£15,000.00
New till ordering system (using tablets to remove the operational issues)	£3,000.00
Increasing the scope of the exhibition to include a higher specification in the third room	£55,000.00
Additional workshops with young people relating to the exhibition should funding application be unsuccessful	£5,000.00
Outdoor furniture and overall house redecoration/design	£27,000.00

## **013/26 - Reports from Outside Bodies**

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee: Cllr Peter Hollick reported on the current state of the land occupied by the committee, describing it as desolate and lacking services. Dial-a-Ride were exploring options for relocating their service.

Dunstable Town Band: No report given

Men in Sheds: Cllr Richard Attwell reported changes in trustees, with new co-chairmen and a new secretary elected. The shed refurbishment was completed, but minor repairs were needed. Financially, the organisation was stable but needs to replace old equipment, necessitating a slight increase in member subscriptions. They had successfully applied for charitable grants.

**014/26 - Date of the next meeting - Monday 2 March 2026 at 7.00 pm**

**The meeting closed at 8:45 PM**