

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 26 JANUARY 2026 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor), Nicholas Kotarski (Chair), Johnson Tamara (Vice Chair), John Gurney, Matthew Brennan, Gregory Alderman, Michelle Henderson and Peter Hollick

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Finance Officer), Jackie Carrington (Democratic Services Manager), Rachel Connor (Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer) and Corrine Gilmore (Compliance Manager)

In Attendance: Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services)
(Remotely)

Public: None

036/26 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Kenson Gurney, Louise O’Riordan, Philip Crawley and Matthew Neall.

037/26 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

038/26 - Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public

039/26 - To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Monday 17 November 2025

The minutes of the Meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 17 November 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

040/26 - Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions

The Action Tracker was summarised by The Town Clerk and Chief Executive. Members noted that all actions had been completed. Additionally, the requirement to nominate another member and a vice chair for the Personnel Committee was highlighted, which would be added to the agenda for the next Full Council meeting.

041/26 - Downside Roof Tender

The Head of Community Services presented the report on the Downside Roof Tender, seeking approval for the recommended contractor to undertake necessary repairs at Downside Community Centre. The total reserve for the repairs was £79,769, and the proposal included releasing the full balance of the reserves. It was noted that following the tender process, five tenders were received, with bidder C being the recommended contractor.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- (i) that bidder C be appointed the recommended contractor to undertake the roof repairs at Downside Community Centre
- (ii) that the balance of the reserve 316 be released

042/26 - Christmas Lights Tender

The Head of Community Services presented the Christmas Lights Tender report, seeking approval for the recommended supplier, bidder A, and a decision on whether to extend the Christmas lighting scheme. The tender process resulted in bidder A being the preferred supplier due to their high score, local presence, and experience.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- (i) that bidder A be appointed the recommended supplier for Christmas Lighting
- (ii) that the Christmas Lighting Scheme be extended using the recommended supplier

043/26 - Finance Report

The Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Finance Officer summarised the Finance Report provided to members.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 To note the revenue budgetary position report for the financial year 2025/2026
- 1.2 To approve the allocation, and subsequent expenditure of the current financial year's forecast underspend of £89,723, together with the unrequired Neighbourhood Development reserve of £12,668, for:
 - 1.2.1 £31,000 – detached youth work reserve
 - 1.2.2 £5,000 – performance area access door
 - 1.2.3 £30,000 – Grove House Gardens 'ranger' stores' essential roof repairs
 - 1.2.4 £36,391 OR balance at 31 March 2026 – professional fees

- 1.3 To note the Council's earmarked reserves
- 1.4 To note the details of current investments
- 1.5 To approve the following expenditure:
 - 1.5.1 £5,000 from the civic hospitality budget 2026/27
 - 1.5.2 £4,038 from the balance of the Developer's Contribution earmarked reserve allocated for Court Drive landscaping to refurbish the raised beds, large street planters and planted areas in the town centre and the planters on Court Drive in preparation for Dunstable's 2026 Britain in Bloom entry
- 1.6 To note the outcome of the External Audit

044/26 - Budget Report 2026/27

The proposed budget for the financial year 2026/27 was presented by The Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Finance Officer, detailing adjustments based on updated requirements and information received since the initial budget proposal.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed budget for 2026//27 be presented to Council for approval

045/26 - Compliance and Facilities Report

The report was presented the Compliance Manager and highlighted key updates such as the annual Cyber Essentials accreditation, the marriage license approval for Grove House, and ongoing lease reviews.

046/26 - Marketing and Communications Report

The Marketing and Communications Officer summarised the report noting milestones such as reaching over 1,000 followers on Instagram and the target of 16,000 followers on Facebook. The performance of social media posts and videos was reviewed, along with updates on the website's smooth operation and accessibility audit.

047/26 - Social Media and Film and Photography Policies

Members reviewed the amended social media policy and the new film and photography policy.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 To approve the amended social media policy
- 1.2 To adopt the new filming and photography policy

048/26 - Reports from Outside Organisations:

Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Attwell provided an update. In 2025, the committee assisted over 3,000 clients, addressing more than 7,000 issues and offering 550 face-to-face appointments. The service was in high demand and faced potential funding cuts from Central Bedfordshire Council.

Dunstable International Town Twinning Association - Councillor Hollick highlighted that the contact with Germany remains active, but the relationship with France had been affected by local government reorganisation. Efforts to engage schools, clubs, and local businesses have not been successful. Councillor Hollick agreed to meet with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive to discuss further.

ACTION: Councillor Hollick and Town Clerk & Chief Executive

Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Kotarski highlighted the importance of supporting carers who often neglect their own needs while caring for others. He noted that the organisation visited St Augustine Church recently and emphasised the need for more carers to come forward.

Ashton Almshouses Charity & Ashton Schools Foundation - Councillor Alderman reported that the next meeting was scheduled for early March and that he would report back after the meeting.

Chew's Foundation - Councillor Hollick shared an update on the Charity, which provides grants for school uniforms and equipment. In 2025, they provided nearly £12,000 in grants to children in need in the Dunstable area. He proposed that the flyer for Chew's Foundation be displayed on notice boards and shared online to increase awareness.

Poor's Land Charity – Councillor Hollick reported that the committee meets twice a year to distribute funds to individuals within the Dunstable Parish. He also mentioned the Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity, indicating that a new councillor needs to be appointed to replace the outgoing councillor.

Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive - Councillor Kotarski stated that the organisation is functioning well and highlighted a recent Christmas event attended by the deputy mayor.

Rotary Club of Dunstable - members mentioned that they plan to attend in the near future.

049/26 - Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED:

In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items would be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it was, therefore, **RESOLVED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

050/26 - Reference up from Personnel Sub Committee 15 January 2026

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD STRUCTURE

Members discussed the propose change in detail.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerk & Chief Executive be the sole Designated Safeguarding Lead, supported by three Deputy Safeguarding Leads

HONORARIUM

RESOLVED:

That a non-consolidated honorarium payment to be approved as per the report provided

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES STAFFING STRUCTURE

Members considered the proposal for a new staffing structure within the Youth and Community Service. Members discussed the proposal in detail and

RESOLVED;

That the proposed new staff structure for post 31 March 2026 be approved

051/26 - To discuss correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Full Council that the Council adopts the recommendation of the Monitoring Officer providing that all Councillors commit to participate by being interviewed individually

052/26 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 16 March 2026 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 21:29 PM