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Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Notice of a Meeting of the **Full Council**

Date: **Friday 28 March 2025**

Dear Councillor,

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of Dunstable Town Council which will be held on **Monday 7 April 2025**, at **Grove House in the Council Chamber** at **7:00 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 4 April 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

101/25 Apologies for Absence

102/25 Declarations of Interest

103/25 Public Question Time

104/25 To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 3 February 2025

Full Council February - Minutes.pdf

105/25 Town Mayor's Remarks including Civic Events and Mayoral Activities - attached is a summary of events the Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended

Chairs Remarks March.pdf

106/25 To receive reports of the following Committees:

106.1/25 Community Services 3 March 2025

Community Services Committee March - Minutes.pdf

106.2/25 Grounds and Environmental Services 10 March 2025

Grounds and Environmental Services Committee March - Minutes.pdf

106.3/25 Finance and General Purposes 17 March 2025

Finance and General Purposes Committee March - Minutes.pdf

107/25 Action Tracker – to review progress of previously agreed actions

Action Tracker.pdf

108/25 To receive the minutes or verbal updates of the Dunstable Joint Committee meetings held on 12 December 2024 and 27 March 2025

109/25 To receive reports/updates by Members of Central Bedfordshire Council on matters of interest to the Town Council

110/25 MOTION: to consider a motion from Councillor Alderman:

“To ask that officers investigate comparable councils to produce a range of potential models that Dunstable Town Council might consider for new substitute arrangements on our committees and sub-committees. These potential models would be presented to members to consider and vote on at the next most convenient Full Council meeting.

While it is right that a range of models be considered by members, my personal view would be that a cap on the number of substitutions allowed per member within a 6-month period be investigated and that the absent member should be given the opportunity to select their preferred substitute.

This motion is put forward with the need for flexibility in mind that members may need to occasionally draw upon due to unforeseen or urgent concerns that may prevent them from attending committee and sub-committees meetings. By implementing a system of substitutions that would fit the needs of Dunstable Town Council, we ensure that our committee and sub-committee meetings will continue to be quorate and always have a wide range of views represented to ensure the best possible governance of the Council on behalf of residents.”

111/25 Interim Internal Audit

[111 - Internal Audit report 2nd interim.pdf](#)

[111 - Internal Audit - Appendix 1.pdf](#)

112/25 Reference Up Report

[112 - Reference up from FGP Committee.pdf](#)

113/25 Exclusion of Public and Press

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

114/25 Freedom Awards

115/25 Priory House Exhibition Tender

116/25 Community Governance Review

To: All Members:

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

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2025 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Louise O’Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Town Mayor) Peter Hollick, Wendy Bater, Philip Crawley, Liz Jones, Johnson Tamara, Trevor Adams, Mark Davis, Michelle Henderson, Nicholas Kotarski, Richard Attwell, Robert Blennerhassett

In Attendance: Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Finance Officer), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services) and Becky Wisby (Head of Community Services)

In Attendance: Councillor John Gurney
(Remotely)

Public: 1

044/25 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Gregory Alderman, Matthew Brennan, Kenson Gurney and John Gurney.

045/25 - To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 2 December 2024

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 2 December 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

046/25 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest

047/25 - Town Mayor's Remarks including Civic Events and Mayoral Activities - attached is a summary of events the Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended

The Town Mayor update members on the events attended since the last meeting by both her and the Deputy Mayor.

048/25 - Public Question Time

There were no questions put to the meeting. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised Members that he had undertaken to arrange a meeting with the member of the public who was present to discuss issues related to the cemetery with the relevant Councillor and would be in touch directly to arrange this.

049/25 - To receive reports of the following Committees:

049.1/25 - Community Services 6 January 2025

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 6 January 2025 be received

049.2/25 - Grounds and Environmental Services 13 January 2025

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 13 January 2025 be received

Councillor Jones requested an update regarding Dunstable Bowls Club. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised a written update would be provided to Members which would confirm that the project is progressing as planned.

049.3/25 - Finance and General Purposes 20 January 2025

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20 January 2025 be received

050/25 - Action Tracker – to review progress of previously agreed actions

The Mayor updated Members on the completed actions that were presented to the Committee.

051/25 - Budget and Reserves Report 2025/26

The Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Finance Officer summarised the report provided to Members.

The Town Mayor and Councillor Kotarski thanked Councillors and Officers on behalf of all Members for all of their hard work over the past months which was put into preparing the 2025/26 budget.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the proposed budget and fees and charges for 2025/26 be approved as recommended by Community Services Committee on 6 January 2025, Grounds and Environmental Services Committee on 13 January 2025 and

Finance and General Purposes Committee on 20 January 2025.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the proposed ear marked reserves for 2025/26 be approved.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the 2024/25 forecast underspend of approximately £215,000 be allocated as; General Reserve contribution of £145,871 bringing the level to the minimum requirement; Vehicle Reserve contribution of £40,000 and Grove House Buildings Reserve contribution of £20,000.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That in consequence of the foregoing recommendations, the Town Council issue a precept upon Central Bedfordshire Council of £3,282,168 resulting in a Dunstable Town Council Tax charge of £246.13 for a Band D property per year, being an increase of 11.89%, which equates to an increase of £26.20, £2.18 per month or £0.50 per week.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the proposed four-year budget be adopted for the purpose of forward planning.

052/25 - Community Lottery Report

The Head of Community Services summarised the report to Members.

Councillor Crawley expressed concerns about whether the Council should be involved in promoting gambling given the harm gambling addiction can cause. It was advised that the risk in terms of gambling addiction from a community lottery is the lowest form of risk from gambling. There would be a limit of 20 tickets per month, per person. Numerous markers would also be continuously monitored by the contractor.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

1.1. That the Council agreed to establish and run a community lottery for Dunstable in partnership with

Gatherwell Ltd. (the External Lottery Manager).

1.2. That the Council approve the spending of up to £5,000 from the general reserve to cover the initial start-up costs, which will be returned to the Town Council over the first 12 to 24 months of the lottery running.

053/25 - Annual Council Meeting Report

The Town Mayor summarised the key points of the report to Members.

It was proposed by Councillor Liz Jones, seconded by Councillor Peter Hollick and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Sally Kimondo be elected the new Town Mayor of Dunstable for 2025/26.

It was proposed by Councillor Nicholas Kotarski, seconded by Councillor Johnson Tamara and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Richard Attwell be elected as the new Deputy Town Mayor of Dunstable for 2025/26.

Members noted the plans for the Annual Council Meeting and Mayor Making is to be held on 19 May 2025.

054/25 - To receive the minutes of the Dunstable Joint Committee held on 12 December 2024 (to follow)

The Mayor updated Members that Central Bedfordshire Council had advised that the minutes for the meeting held on 12 December 2024 were not yet available for review.

055/25 - To receive reports/updates by Members of Central Bedfordshire Council on matters of interest to the Town Council

Councillor Crawley informed Members that the 2025/2026 budget for Central Bedfordshire Council was soon to be finalised. Councillor Crawley mentioned that one of the proposed budget cuts would include reducing the opening hours of Dunstable Library on Sundays and Mondays. Further updates will be provided once a decision is made.

Councillor Gurney advised Members that it has unfortunately been proposed to close the Library on a Sunday and Monday in which Monday had been noted as the second busiest day which could have a negative impact on Dunstable residents and local groups.

The Town Mayor advised Members that she would be attending a Central Bedfordshire Council budget briefing meeting on 19 February 2025 on behalf of the Council and invited Members with comments or questions they wish to be raised to please inform her via email.

Members discussed the upcoming change to car parking in the town whereby CBC will be making car parks cashless and the potential negative impact on some residents. Cllr John Gurney informed Members that the decision to do this had been made some months previously.

056/25 - Date of the next meeting - 7 April 2025 at 7:00 pm

The meeting closed at 8:13 PM

Event	Date	Comments
Squirrel scouts visit	23.01.25	Great fun showing the squirrels around the council chamber, Mayor's parlour and the marriage room. Adults and children alike enjoyed this, and the squirrels were especially happy with their free water bottles to use at the water refill stations. Thanks to Georgia for organising this.
Best Kept Garden Presentation evening	24.01.25	Totternhoe is a very pretty village which residents maintain with much pride. During the summer I had the pleasure of judging allotments, businesses and many gardens or residents with Cllr Debbie Bodnar. Debbie herself was very warm and hospitable during judging as well as incredibly knowledgeable about vegetation. She extended this hospitality again on awards night. It was so nice to meet some of the residents that I had been snooping on in their gardens! Very worthy winners and lovely, friendly people who enjoyed spending the evening with. Well done to all that took part.
'Year of Celebration' 140 years of work of the Salvation Army in Dunstable	25.01.25	Magnificent display of fellowship as well as expert singing and music playing. I always enjoy seeing Roger and Jacqueline, but this was an even more special visit as it marks the 140 years of the Salvation Army in Dunstable. 140 years of

		helping and being there for Dunstable residents without judgement or question. Years of providing a warm space for those that need it. Of hosting community groups. Of helping people with debt. The list is endless. Thank you, SA, for being here for all of us.
Motivational Talk based on personal experience for year 12 students - Cardinal Newman a specialist Science college	30.01.25	Incredibly humbling speaking to young people about what success looks like to me. My life's journey of hardship, poverty and substance abuse to transformation and helping others. It was inspiring to hear their views and experiences too.
Beecroft lunch club visit	03.02.25	Cllr Kimondo - I had the delightful opportunity to connect with the wonderful members of the Good Companions Lunch Club at the Beecroft Community Centre. When I asked the members what they love most about being part of the Good Companions Lunch Club, their responses were clear and heartfelt: it's all about socialising and making new friends! The joy in the room was contagious as everyone interacted and enjoyed each other's company. It was truly heartwarming to see such a vibrant atmosphere filled with laughter and connections.
Coffee Morning - Houghton Regis Town Council	08.02.25	Lovely morning at Jewels with the Mayor of

		Houghton Regis to raise money for her charities including Legend on a Bench.
James Bond themed charity event - Mrs crown and Glory 2024 & The Royal British Legion	08.02.25	Wonderful evening of glitz glamour bond fame characters and celebration of all that help in the community Special recognition went to the Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable truck convoy which was very well deserved
Charity Dinner – Luton Council	12.02.25	Stunning evening chi restaurant in Luton with the Luton mayor The police and crime commissioner Of a local mayors and local councillors Raising money for the most chosen charities Present also was Luton foodbank and Other charities that provide much needed support to the local community
Best Bar None Presentation	14.02.25	Cllr Kimondo - The Best Bar None ceremony, held in Central Bedfordshire, recognises excellence in licensed premises across the UK. This national accreditation scheme aims to enhance the safety of town centres, elevate customer service, and mitigate alcohol-related crime. We are delighted to announce that the following establishments were recognised as Best Bar None accredited premises for 2024: The nags head Dunstable Grove Theatre Dunstable

		Ewe & Lamb The White Swan The Highwaymen
NHS App Central Beds Day	14.02.25	Important promotion of the NHS app and all that can be done in the app to make patients access better and easier. Lovely to meet the team behind the app improvements and local people visiting.
Budget Briefing	19.02.25	Cllr Kotarski attended this CBC meeting on behalf of the Mayor. Grateful for his attendance and the update shared with all councillors and officers.
Coffee and a chat - Downside Pre-School	24.02.25	It was a pleasure to meet the committee and understand how they support the school services. All are welcome and encouraged to get involved.
Bingo Night - Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Charity	27.02.25	A very successful and well attended evening of fundraising that was great fun! Thanks to Charmaine and the team for all that they do to support the Luton & Dunstable Hospital.
Awards Night – Sea Cadets	28.02.25	It was wonderful to be part of this celebration of the achievements of the cadets and officers. Special recognition should be given to Kayte Hollis who inspires, encourages and brings life to this unit. She is fabulous leader and all that the Cadets do for the community, especially DTC events, is very much appreciated by all. You make us proud.

Civic Service	02.03.25	<p>This was an event I was incredibly nervous about but which I enjoyed and felt proud of. The attendance of all of the community groups, Chain gang, Dunstable Town Council Officers, Community Leaders, friends, family, fellow Councillors and Dunstable Foodbank filled me with pride. The theme of my year is Unity in the CommUnity – putting YOU in the middle and this event encapsulated all of that and more. Biggest thanks go to Rev. Rachel Phillips who delivered a beautiful service and engaged with attendees to show how important community is. Thanks also to Caritas choir for their beautiful performance and the Sea Cadets, Air Cadets, Scouts etc for their involvement in proceedings. Notable attendees included Vice Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire. Special Recognition was given to Dunstable Community Halls (Beds RCC) and Graham & Gina Munt of the Dunstable & Leighton Buzzard Truck Convoy for all that they do for the community and charity by way of the Mayors Community Award. The star of the service was Mabel Fox who delivered a perfect reading of</p>
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		'Anyway'. A wonderful celebration of Dunstable's Community.
Beaver Scouts Visit	06.03.25	A wonderful tour of the council chamber and Mayors Parlour (see earlier entry) which was delightful and fun.
Celebrate Appreciation Day - Caddington Grove Care Home	07.03.25	Employee Appreciation Day was recognised by Manager Emma who personally wrote to each individual member of her staff which totals over 100. The sense of belonging and value that emanates from this place is wonderful. Emma is a great leader who not only shows how she values the staff, but the residents also benefit from it as there is a very positive environment for all as a result.
International Women's Day Event	08.03.25	Thanks to the Mayor of Luton for organising this event in the Luton Council Chambers celebrating all women. Cllr Tahmina Saleem is a friend of Dunstable and the current Mayor. The partnership and hospitality she has shown has been a wonderful example of friendship and loving thy neighbour. She used this day to empower and celebrate all women and had some excellent and inspiring guest speakers. It was an honour to attend.
Civic Service - Ampthill Town Council	09.03.25	A very down to earth and humble service, it was a real pleasure to attend and support the current Mayor

		Cllr Stephen Judge who has been a great neighbour and friend as well as an excellent Mayor.
Calling Dunstable	09.03.25	Words cannot describe this event – it was such a huge success and bigger and better than anyone realised. Every single person enjoyed the wide range of acts, performances and activities that filled this day and the showcase at the end was applause rapturing! The talent of our artists in Dunstable was given a platform that must be continued, I truly hope that this group and the objective continues for many years to come, and that funding is found to ensure this happens. Well done to all that were involved in this year long project.
Mayor's Charity Wine Tasting	14.03.25	Cllr Kimondo - Attended WINE TASTING Hosted by the Mayor of Harpenden, raising funds for Youth Talk and The Harpenden Trust's Wellbeing Hub
St Patrick's Day service	15.03.25	Luton Irish Forum and Luton Town Council wow all residents every year with this celebration of the Irish and every other culture and nationality. Big thanks to the Luton mayor, Noelette Hanley – CEO of LIF and the Interact group (youth) that organised the VIP Breakfast. I am proud to be British. I am also proud to be Irish and to be

		part of this event for the second year in a row.
Legend on the bench unveiling	19.03.25	Reminding al of the importance of suicide Prevention and Talking about Mental Health is always important. Legend on the Bench are doing this and more. Thanks Micky Hazard and Michelle Hazard for continuing Jay's legacy to help others.
Dunstable Library - Safer in the Lines launch	22.03.25	A wonderful immersive art exhibition raising awareness of Women's rights to walk the streets safely without fear of antisocial behaviour.
Hospice at Home Volunteers Charity Night	22.03.25	A great night of fundraising and fun with Joe Corrigan and his talented wife Kirsty.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 3 MARCH 2025 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Matthew Neall (Vice-Chair) (in the chair), Louise O’Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Town Mayor), Robert Blennerhassett, Wendy Bater, Gregory Alderman and Nicholas Kotarski.

In Attendance: Councillor Richard Attwell, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager) and Lisa Stephens (Cultural Services Manager).

In Attendance (Remotely): Councillors Liz Jones (Chair) and Peter Hollick, Annette Clynes (Town Centre Manager) and Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services).

Public: Nil

057/25 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Trevor Adams and Mark Davis and Gina Thanky (Events Officer).

Councillor Jones gave apologies for not being able to attend and chair her last Community Services Committee of the municipal year in person. Councillor Jones expressed her gratitude to all councillors and officers for their support, valued contributions and collaborative approach in ensuring that the town and its residents continue to receive excellent service across the various events, programmes, and services provided by the Council.

058/25 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

059/25 - Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

060/25 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 6 January 2025 as an accurate record

The minutes of the meetings of the Community Services Committee held on 6 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair.

061/25 - Town Centre Services

The Town Centre Manager highlighted the key points of the report to members.

The Town Ranger and Town Centre team were proud to have achieved multiple

awards at the Loo of the Year Awards 2025 including Platinum Award, Period Dignity Award, Washroom Technician Award, Roll of Honour and the Premier League Award.

It was noted that since the report was written 30 stalls had been booked for the first market of the year on 29 March 2025, with the hope that this number would increase to approximately 35 stalls over the coming weeks.

The Town Centre Manager and the Events Officer had successfully secured the support of Howdens Insurance for the Young Traders Market. Howdens Insurance has generously agreed to sponsor 20 traders by providing them with free stalls on 5 July 2025.

Members were informed that the next Shop Watch would take place on 25 March 2025, which would be the 25th meeting after restarting after Covid.

The bunting for Middle Row had been ordered, featuring the same design as seen on the High Street. The installation was scheduled to take place in mid-March.

There was significant effort put into planning the art display for the festoons. Unfortunately, due to sudden illness the commissioned artists had to pull out, giving the Town Centre Manager only a few weeks to arrange another installation. The Town Centre Manager had been collaborating with Lamps and Tubes, and it was confirmed that the installation would take place on Middle Row in March 2025.

Councillor Hollick inquired about the vacancy rates for Ashton Square and Middle Row, noting that the empty units were owned by Central Bedfordshire Council. There had been no updates. However, Councillor Jones advised that the Dunstable Joint Committee was scheduled to provide an update at the next meeting at the end of March.

062/25 - Events

The Cultural Services Manager summarised the key points in the report.

Members were informed that the lineup for Dunstable Live had been finalised, and the headliner for Party in the Park had been booked. The announcement of this act would be made in the April edition of Talk of the Town.

It was previously requested that officers investigate the possibility of charging an entry fee for the exhibitors at the Classic Motor Rally. A questionnaire had been sent to exhibitors and the results indicated that 40% would not pay to attend and show their cars. After reviewing the comments from the 40% who said no, it was found that if the Council made this a chargeable event, the event would lose around 100 cars based on the 40% who would no longer attend.

On Saturday 15 February, an 'Open Door/Meet the Manager' event was held at Grove Theatre as part of the UKSPF Calling Dunstable project. The event was attended by representatives from Grove Theatre, Dunstable Town Council, Calling Dunstable, NGYT and the BBB group. The aim was to foster more positive

relationships between Grove Theatre and local performers and groups. Officers reported that the event was highly successful, featuring a tour of the building followed by an open and honest conversation. The event was expected to continue in the future, building on the relationships established.

Members were informed that Calling Dunstable would be hosting a Community Arts Day on Sunday 9 March 2025, at Grove Theatre. The event was to feature a variety of workshops, including dance, puppetry, singing, and piano lessons, finishing with a finale performance. Members were encouraged to attend, and seats had been allocated for all members.

Members received a verbal update regarding the Street Party Grant application to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Central Bedfordshire Council had agreed to grant free road closures for anyone in Dunstable wishing to apply and host a street party in celebration of VE Day.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to allocate £1,000 from the 2025/26 civic hospitality budget for ten street parties to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day within Dunstable.

063/25 - Cultural Services Project UKSPF - Phase 2 Report

The Cultural Services Manager covered this report within the previous Agenda item.

064/25 - Priory House

The Cultural Services Manager summarised the report provided to members and highlighted key information.

Councillor Hollick raised concerns about the delay in the works at Priory House, expressing disappointment over the postponed opening times and potential additional costs. The Head of Community Services informed members that Historic England was currently engaged in serious internal discussions regarding the delays presented by Central Bedfordshire Council's planning processes. The Town Council was working to arrange a meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council's planning officers and Historic England by the end of the month to find a solution to the current hold ups affecting the works at Priory House.

The Town Mayor inquired about the demographic profile of shop item sales and how these sales might be impacted by moving online. It was noted that the demographic has changed significantly and become more diverse. The Cultural Services Manager regularly consults with frequent customers about the shop stock, asking if there are items that are not selling well or things they would like to see more of. Consideration is also given to what stock might appeal to the audience they are not currently reaching. Regarding the transition to online sales, a telephone sales option was being offered, which should not significantly affect sales. Promotions were currently in place to inform regular customers that stock would be moving to Grove House and

online, ensuring they were aware that items would still be available.

065/25 - Grove Corner and Community Engagement

Members noted the report provided which was summarised by the Youth and Community Manager.

Members noted that since the report was written, the attendance figures for the February Half Term Activities were as follows: the swim party was attended by 23 young people, a movie afternoon attended by 10 young people, bowling attended by seven young people, and a games and sports session attended by 16 young people.

Since Monday 17 February, Bennetts Splash Café and Community Hub had been integrated into the Community Services Department. This change provided the service with broader team support and access to expertise in delivering community services within a community development framework and approach. Members were informed that a more detailed report would be presented at the next committee meeting.

Officers had submitted the license application for the Community Lottery and were looking to Launch this at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2025. Working with the project planning guidance from Gatherwell, the Community Engagement Team was compiling a list of good causes to invite to sign up.

066/25 - Older Peoples' Services

The Youth and Community Manager summarised the report provided to members.

It was agreed that the discussion on item 2 would be deferred to a confidential session at the end of the meeting.

Members noted that the over 55s Breakfast Club at Bennetts Café aimed to encourage attendees to become members. The membership fee was £5 per week, which covers food and any speakers or games that may be organised. This project targeted a different group of older individuals who were unable to participate in other services offered.

Due to the increasing popularity of the Rock and Roll event, it was noted that this event would now be held four times a year instead of the current three.

067/25 - Reports from Outside Bodies

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee - Cllr Peter Hollick

Councillor Hollick advised members that a new bus had been acquired which was hoped to reduce maintenance costs in the future.

Dunstable Town Band - Cllr Robert Blennerhassett

Nothing to report.

Men in Sheds - Cllr Richard Attwell

Councillor Attwell informed members of the Shed were working on a range of items and commissions.

Several new members had joined the shed in recent weeks, including the first female member.

Dunstable Men in Sheds was now a selectable option under the Co-Op Community scheme where loyalty club members can elect a local charity to benefit from shopping there.

It was proposed, seconded and

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

066/25.1 - Older Peoples' Services

Members were provided with a verbal update progress with efforts to ensure the ongoing provision of the Creasey Park Community Football Centre Lunch Club.

068/25 - Date of the next meeting - Monday 2 June 2025 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 8:35 PM

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

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

HELD ON MONDAY 10 MARCH 2025 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Richard Attwell (Chair), Philip Crawley (Vice-Chair), Louise O’Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Town Mayor), Trevor Adams, Matthew Brennan, Matthew Neall, Mark Davis and Michelle Henderson.

In Attendance: Councillors John Gurney and Liz Jones, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), Katherine Doyle (Parks and Green Spaces Development Officer), Mary Dobbs (Cemetery Manager) and Jackie Carrington (Priory House Duty Manager).

In Attendance: Councillors Nicholas Kotarski and Peter Hollick.
(Remotely)

Public: 2

069/25 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Johnson Tamara, Robert Blennerhassett and Kenson Gurney

070/25 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

A member of the public raised concerns to Members and Officers regarding the two pedestrian gates into Kingsbury Park that provide access onto Jeans Way. It was noted that neither of these gates was equipped with return springs, which affects their ability to close properly.

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services responded to the member of the public, stating that he had considered the issue and reviewed the recent consultation related to the management plans being prepared for several of the Council's recreation grounds. It was noted that a previous report of this issue had been recorded for consideration during this consultation. The management plans were being drafted and would be presented to the committee at a later date. These plans would take into account the suggestion that had been made. Members were informed that modifying the gates would not be straightforward, as the current gates required the handle to be physically lifted and latched to close. The self-closing gates in question would require a different handle, mechanism, and latch arrangement. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services undertook to investigate the best solution and understand the cost implications involved.

Action: The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

071/25 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of 13 January 2025 as a true record

The minutes of the meetings of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 13 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

072/25 - To receive the minutes of the Meetings of Plans Sub-Committee meetings held on 13 January 2025, 3 February 2025, and 24 February 2025.

It was

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of the Plans Sub-Committee held on 13 January 2025, 3 February 2025 and 24 February 2025 be received.

073/25 - Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions

Members noted the Action Tracker provided.

Members were updated that the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services was waiting for Central Bedfordshire Council to commence a review on how they're working with Town and Parish Councils to improve salting and gritting arrangements.

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services informed members that he had spoken with the CCTV team at Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss whether there is anywhere within Priory Gardens or the surrounding area, where the CCTV could be relocated. There unfortunately wasn't anywhere particularly obvious however, the most obvious area at present other than its current location, was to place it onto the back of Priory House but considering the ongoing works this would not be possible immediately. The best option was to keep the camera where it is, on land that the Council does not own. It was noted that the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services managed to contact the owner of the former medical centre and enquired about the possibility of reinstalling the electricity supply to get the CCTV operational again. The owner advised that this matter would be looked into. Furthermore, it was noted that discussions would be held to determine whether a negotiation for a licence was possible, or at the very least, to ensure the CCTV remains on their land with the new owners.

Members were informed of the following updates regarding the Action Tracker: a full CCTV review was requested by members across the Council's entire estate to ensure that adequate detection measures are in place. It was noted that a report will be provided at a later date.

Councillor Crawley requested an update on the increased budget for the bedding plants; members were advised that this increase came from the 40th anniversary additions associated with this committee.

An issue was previously raised regarding seasonal parking at Bennette's Recreation Ground, where the Corporate Compliance Manager was to liaise with Central Bedfordshire Council to explore potential options. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised Members that the Team was in regular communication with Central

Bedfordshire Council's parking enforcement team to ensure that parking enforcement is prepared for the new season and to resolve any potential issues.

Councillor Kotarski previously requested that residents be given more notice regarding which ward the Ranger service will be working in. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services informed members that he would double check the time frames as it was believed that this was already happening.

Action: The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

074/25 - Grounds - Information Report

Cemetery

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report.

Allotments

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report.

Councillor Attwell commented on the impressive new notice boards and noted that the new notice, which informed allotment holders about how to care for their soil, was a valuable asset for tenants at the allotments. The Cemetery Manager confirmed that this information is widely available for all residents on the Council's website.

Recreation Grounds – Play Areas

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services summarised the report.

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services updated members that since the report was written, unfortunately there had been an incident of arson at Bennette's Recreation Ground. Somebody had taken one of the composite picnic tables and placed it up against the café building and set light to it. The intense heat from the fire managed to take the external paint off of the wall, blackened the wall and had melted the lighting which overhangs the front of the building. Fortunately, the building was still intact. The other picnic benches situated in front of the café would be relocated to ensure that, in the event of a similar incident occurring again, the building would hopefully not be at risk. Councillor Attwell suggested that all picnic tables should be secured in place to the ground with brackets attached to their legs. The Head of Grounds took this on board as a good suggestion and will look to progress.

Action: The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services.

Sports Pitches and General Grounds Maintenance

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services updated members on the key parts of the report.

Councillor O'Riordan queried if there had been some vandalism to the Swan Jewel sculpture. The Parks and Green Space Development Officer advised that it may have been climbed on however no damage had been noticed.

Councillor Attwell inquired whether a QR code could be placed on the Swan Jewel sculpture to provide residents with information about its purpose. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that the Swan Jewel sculpture was one of six sculptures around the Town which will in time form a trail, they will all be fitted with plaques which include links to the trail and information on each one.

Councillor Jones referred back to the arson incident at Bennett's Recreation Ground, expressing concern that, given one arson had already occurred and with a good summer period expected, there was a question as to whether the CCTV at Bennett's was operational. If it was not, it urgently needed to be inspected and repaired to prevent future incidents of vandalism.

Action: The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services updated members on the instillation of additional bins and the removal of the dog waste bins. It was confirmed that all bins had now been installed, in accordance with the agreed plan. Checks were being conducted to ensure that all bins had stickers indicating they were suitable for both dog waste and normal waste. Any bins found without these stickers would be reported and addressed by the team. Councillor Attwell requested the help of all to assist the Grounds and Environmental Team with this task by reporting any bins they observe without stickers so these can be specifically and efficiently targeted. It was noted that there was one spare bin which had been installed at Mentmore Recreation Ground in response to a request from a resident.

Town Centre and Town Rangers

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services summarised the report.

Councillor Kotarski advised the Committee that the streetlights through Grove Gardens heading to Grove Theatre were not working. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services undertook to report this issue to Central Bedfordshire Council's lighting team. Councillor O'Riordan added that a resident in Dunstable East reported that the flood lights in Ashton Square car park were constantly on throughout the day and had been like this for quite some time.

Action: The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

Councillor Attwell passed on his thanks to the Town Ranger Team on the fantastic work they do, and for the see it, sort it, scheme working so efficiently to fix issues as they come up around the town.

Green Space Projects

The Parks and Green Space Development Officer summarised the report.

Councillor Jones update members that Dunstable in Bloom was being sponsored by 10 different organisations across Dunstable who were each sponsoring a different

category of the competition. Members noted that this was the first year Dunstable in Bloom has been so well sponsored and that this year, each winner of the individual categories would go home with a small gift as well as their certificate and trophy, as would the runners up.

Councillor O’Riordan passed on thanks to Councillor Jones for her contribution in successfully securing sponsorship for the Church Street Phone Box. Councillor Attwell expressed gratitude to the Parks and Green Space Development Officer for all their hard work in ensuring that the Church Street Phone Box works and preparations were being carried out to the highest standard for the best outcome for the town.

075/25 - Reports from Outside Organisations:

CBC Development Committee – Cllr Nicholas Kotarski

Councillor Attwell provided an update on behalf of Councillor Kotarski that no attendance had been needed at the Development Committee.

Councillor Attwell passed on his thanks to the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services, the Parks and Green Space Development Officer, the Cemetery Manager and all members of the team for their fantastic work and support throughout his year as Chair of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee. Councillor Attwell expressed that he felt incredibly proud to have been a part of some of the remarkable achievements that had occurred throughout the year.

076/25 - Motion to exclude public and press

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following item will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and therefore, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

077/25 - New Cemetery Update

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services updated members on the latest advice received from the Environment Agency regarding suitability of land for burial at the potential new cemetery site. The assessment was positive, and officers would commence the process for tendering for the design and development of a new cemetery.

078/25 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 9 June 2025 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 8:30 PM

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 17 MARCH 2025 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Gregory Alderman (Chair), Nicholas Kotarski (Vice-Chair), Louise O’Riordan (Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Mayor), Peter Hollick, Matthew Brennan, Liz Jones, Johnson Tamara, Michelle Henderson, Richard Attwell, and Phillip Crawley.

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager) and Rachel Connor (Marketing and Communications Officer)

Public: Nil

086/25 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors John Gurney and Wendy Bater

087/25 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest

088/25 - Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public

089/25 - To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20 January 2025

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

090/25 - Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions

Members received and noted the Action Tracker summarised by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

Councillor Tamara inquired about the 40th Anniversary exhibition and whether historical items from Dunstable would be included. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that this would be considered.

091/25 - Finance Report

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report provided to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. To note the revenue budget position for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025.
- 1.2. To note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as at 31 January 2025.
- 1.4. To recommend to Full Council the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the financial year 2025/2026.
- 1.5. To note current investments.

091.1/25 - Financial Regulations

The Head of Corporate Services briefed members on the amended Financial Regulations which were based on The National Association of Local Council's (NALC) updated Model Financial Regulations.

The following addition and amendment to the previous Financial Regulations were noted:

Additional Legislation "Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them."

'Withdrawal from any earmarked reserves shall be agreed by the relevant committee'. This was a change to the previous practice, whereby any request for expenditure from a specific reserve relevant to a committee other than Finance and General Purposes, was required to be referred for approval to Finance and General Purposes.

Officers advised Members that any other matters, for example creating or amending ear-marked reserves, would still require referral for approval.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- 1.3. To approve the amended Financial Regulations.

092/25 - Compliance and Facilities Report

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the 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.

Action: The Head of Corporate Services and The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

Following the meeting, Members received an update from officers providing a conclusion from the consultant:

There has been some progress made since the previous footprinting exercise, but this has been constrained by finance and the need to focus on matters such as the unwinding of the Creasey Park CFC arrangements.

On a like for like basis, Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from energy have fallen by approximately 10% over the two years, and although there may be some special circumstances associated with Priory House, they seem likely to fall further with the upgraded boiler at Grove House. There are still some relatively straightforward measures that could be taken, that should enable the downwards trajectory of emissions to continue.

Councillor Alderman provided Members with a brief update on the status of the carbon working group. The working group had identified a couple of actions to be presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee at a later date.

093/25 - Tender for Waste Management

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To award the 3-year waste services contract to Contractor A, commencing 1 April 2025.

094/25 - Marketing and Communications Report

The Marketing and Communications officer summarised the report.

Since the report was written, the April edition of Talk of the Town had been designed and was in the final proof stages before print production, ready to be distributed on 4 April 2025.

Councillor Kotarski mentioned the negative responses that had been left under the social media post regarding the installation of wooden sculptures around the Town. Councillor Crawley noted that when grants and funding are provided for such projects to enhance the Town, social media posts should clearly communicate that to avoid negative responses from residents.

094.1/25 - Marketing and Communications Strategy Report

The Marketing and Communications officer briefly summarised the report.

Councillor Hollick inquired whether there would be any relevant guidelines for Councillors to follow within the Strategy. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive

advised that the Council had a social media policy outlining how everyone, including Councillors, should communicate. The new Marketing and Communications Strategy reflects the tone and messaging that Town Council staff would use in official communications and that it would not be appropriate for officers to dictate the tone of voice that Councillors should use.

Councillor Alderman asked about the possibility of the Town Council having a WhatsApp broadcasting group which could be used to communicate with residents; it was advised that the concept is under investigation.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve the proposed Marketing and Communications Strategy for Dunstable Town Council.

095/25 - Referral Reports from Other Committees

Members received and discussed the reference up from Community Services Committee which was summarised by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

Councillor O'Riordan inquired whether qualifications to host a street party should be obtained before providing the funds. It was advised that Central Bedfordshire Council had a process in place for providing free street closures, and the Town Council had a process in place to effectively establish this.

Councillor Jones proposed an amendment to the recommendation to provide flexibility on the timing of the street parties.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Alderman and the recommendation was

AMENDED: To approve the spend of £1,000 from the 2025/26 civic hospitality budget for street parties to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day, providing flexibility about the days which the Council fund the street parties on.

It was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To agree the proposed amendment.

Members received and discussed a reference up from Personnel Sub-Committee which was summarised by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- i) That the amended Dignity at Work policy be approved.
- ii) That the Safer Recruitment policy be approved and adopted.
- iii) That officers seek advice from the Council's HR

advisors regarding any additions that could be made to the Dignity at Work Policy regarding how the policy relates to Members and make appropriate recommendations to a future meeting of the Personnel Committee.

096/25 - Reports from Outside Organisations:

Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Attwell

Nothing to report

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

Nothing to report

Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Wendy Bater

Councillor Jones updated Members on behalf of Councillor Bater that the organisation was currently planning events for the coming year to help fundraise for ongoing activities. The organisation now have 30 volunteers working alongside approximately 28 clients.

Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillors O’Riordan and Alderman

Councillor Alderman informed Members that everything was running smoothly. The installation of motion-sensitive lights outside the building was benefiting the residents, as the rooms were no longer constantly lit up throughout the night.

Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillors Hollick and Alderman

Councillor Hollick informed Members that Manshead had been visited to review how the funds donated from the sale of the middle school had been utilised. A notice was currently being prepared to acknowledge that the money was donated by the Ashton Schools Foundation.

Chew’s Foundation – Councillors Brennan and Kenson Gurney

Nothing to report

Poor’s Land Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones

Councillor Jones informed Members that the organisation was about to enter the period during which they will distribute money to approximately 80 residents who are entitled to the annual Maundy Thursday money.

Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones

Councillor Jones informed Members that the external works at the ladies' lodges in Church Street had now been completed. Additionally, some tree works had been carried out by Central Bedfordshire Council as the branches had been touching the property and the roof. Due to concerns raised about the fence erected in the Old Palace Lodge car park, it was noted that the fence had been lowered to half the height with some assistance.

Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive – Councillor Kotarski

Councillor Kotarski advised members the organisation would be hosting the St.

Georges Day parade and renewal of promises where they will be marching through the town.

097/25 - Motion to exclude press and public

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

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following item will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and therefore, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

098/25 - Creasey Park final Finance Report, including Bad Debt

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

1.1. To note the final financial position for Creasey Park Community Football Centre and approve the movement of balances in the reserves for Creasey Park Community Football Centre to the Open Spaces Improvements Reserve.

1.2. To approve the write off of two bad debts relating to the closure of Creasey Park Community Football Centre.

099/25 - Grove House Building Works Report

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve waiving Financial Regulations section 5.10 iii, to allow commencement of urgent Grove House building repair works.

100/25 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 16 June 2025 at 7.00 pm

Councillor Alderman thanked officers for their continued support throughout his year as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. He wished the future Chair all the best in the role and thanked all Councillors for their support.

The meeting closed at 8:20 PM

Committee	Minute	Date	Action	Action Full	Responsible	Update	Status
Full	048/25	03/02/2025	Meeting with a member of the public	The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised Members that he had undertaken to arrange a meeting with the member of the public who was present to discuss issues related to the cemetery with the relevant Councillor and would be in touch directly to arrange this.	The Town Clerk and Chief Executive	This meeting has been held with the Chair of Grounds and Environmental Services	Complete

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 7 APRIL 2025

INTERNAL AUDIT

Purpose of report: For information

1. ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. For members to receive and note the outcome of the second interim Internal Audit for financial year 2024/25.

2. INTERNAL AUDIT

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the second interim Internal Audit Report for financial year 2024/25 appended to this report and will be pleased to note that the report concludes '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'.

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1. Appendix 1 – Internal Audit Report – 2nd Interim 2024/25

4. AUTHOR

Lisa Scheder - Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer
lisa.scheder@dunstable.gov.uk



Dunstable Town Council

Internal Audit Report (2nd Interim) 2024-25

25th March 2025

Stephen Christopher

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

Background

All 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 have been 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 second interim internal audit for the year, which was undertaken on 19th and 20th March 2025. It updates the report issued following our first interim audit, in November 2024. 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 to date, 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.

In the sections below, we have explained 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 two Public Sector Deposit Fund accounts with CCLA Investment Management Ltd.

In our audit work for the year to date, 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” as at 28th February 2025, the latest completed month’s accounts at the time of our second interim audit visit;
- 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 2025;
- Checked the bank reconciliations for all active bank account reconciliations, including the CCLA deposits, as at 31st October 2024 and 28th February 2025, confirming that there are no anomalous entries;
- 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, and
- Confirmed that, following the recent change in IT Support provider, all systems are now regularly backed-up to the Cloud.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date 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 interim audits, we confirmed the following:

- Our review of the minutes of the meetings of the Full Council and its standing committees in the year to date have not identified 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 to date 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 continued our review of the procedures in place in this area. To test compliance with the above criteria, we have examined a sample of non-pay related payments to the end of February 2025. 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 £1,768,083. 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 the periods ending 10th October 2024 and 10th January 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 second interim audit, the VAT reclaims for the first three 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 to date 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 has been 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 to date 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 interim audits, we considered the information provided to Members on progress against the 2024-25 budget. We confirmed that the F&GP Committee has continued to receive financial monitoring reports at each meeting, with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review. We note that the most recent report, detailing the position as at the end of January 2025, forecasts an overall revenue underspend of just over £230,000 at the end of the financial year. We confirmed that the financial monitoring reports also continue to provide Members with details of the movements in earmarked reserves during the year and an up-to-date summary of the overall funds held in the various accounts. We will review the 2024-25 revenue outturn and the end of year reserves position at our final audit.

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.

Conclusion

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

Income

The Council receives 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 are 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 first interim audit, 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 have checked and agreed two sample months' receipts transactions from cashbooks to the relevant bank statements, confirming the timeliness and accuracy of transactions.

Cemetery-related fees and charges: We have 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: We reviewed the records for the current allotment year (which commenced on 1st January 2024), confirming that requests for rental payment 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.

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 is 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.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date 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.

Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation. At our final audit, we will confirm that the correct petty cash balances have been included in the cash and bank figure in Section 2, Box 8 of the AGAR.

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 has 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 to date 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 the year end.

We have not undertaken any work in this area, to date. At the final audit, we will confirm that the Asset Register has been updated for all acquisitions and disposals during 2024-25 and that the total value of assets owned by the Council is included correctly in Section 2, Box 9 of the AGAR.

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 interim audits, 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;

Conclusion

There are no matters arising to date that require a formal comment or recommendation. At our final audit, we will confirm that there is correct disclosure of the PWLB loans in the AGAR, Section 2, Boxes 5 and 10.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 7 APRIL 2025

REFERRAL REPORT FROM FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Purpose of Report: To recommend to Full Council the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the financial year 2025/2026.

1. PROPOSAL

1.1. At the meeting Members received a report requesting approval to appoint Auditing Solutions for a further one year – for financial year 2025/26

1.2. RESOLVED:

1.4. To recommend to Full Council the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the financial year 2025/2026.

Minute Number (091/25)

2. AUTHOR

Lisa Scheder - Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer
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