

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