

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

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

HELD ON MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2025 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Richard Attwell (Chair), Philip Crawley (Vice-Chair), Louise O'Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Town Mayor), Matthew Brennan, Robert Blennerhassett, Johnson Tamara, Matthew Neall and Michelle Henderson.

In Attendance: Councillors, Liz Jones, Peter Hollick and Nicholas Kotarski with Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive) Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), James Slack (Corporate Compliance and Facilities Manager), Lauren Swinnerton (Splash Manager), Mary Dobbs (Cemetery Manager), Katherine Doyle (Parks and Green Space Development Officer) and Dimitrisz Sopisz (Grounds Operations Manager).

Public: Nil

014/25 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Trevor Adams and Mark Davis

015/25 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

016/25 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of 11 November 2024 as a true record

The minutes of the meetings of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 11 November 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

017/25 - To receive the minutes of the Meetings of Plans Sub-Committee meetings held on: 4 November 2024, 18 November 2024, 9 December 2024 and 23 December 2024.

Councillor Brennan asked for an update regarding Dunstable Bowls Club, it was advised a verbal update would be provided at the informal meeting at the end of the month.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of the Plans Sub-Committee held on 4 November 2024,

18 November 2024, 9 December 2024 and 23 December 2024 be received.

018/25 - Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions

Members noted the Action Tracker provided.

Upon review of the action tracker, specifically with regard to the Pergola CCTV item at point 2, Members requested for a review to be carried out of the use of CCTV across the Council's estate. It was agreed that officers would produce a report for consideration by members at a later meeting.

Action: Head of Grounds and Environmental Services.

019/25 - Budget 25/26

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report and the budgetary savings proposed to Members.

Members discussed the budget savings in detail.

Councillor Crawley inquired about the apparent significant increase in the budget for bedding plants. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services explained that the increase is not due to the cost of the bedding plants but undertook to review the reason for the increase and to circulate a note to Members.

Action: The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services to clarify the bedding plant budget increase.

Members discussed the Council's overall arrangements for paying overtime. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that arrangements varied between services and any changes to the general arrangements would require changes to staff contracts which would take some time if Members wished to review this. Members were advised that this would not achieve a saving for the 2025/26 budget, but the Personnel Committee would be provided with a detailed report during 2025.

Councillor Tamara proposed an amendment to the recommendation: to completely remove Grounds Team overtime for Sunday working over all 52 weeks in the year instead of the 26 weeks reduction recommended within the report. The amendment was **NOT** seconded.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to reduce the originally proposed budgets by a total of £78,454 by reducing the Vehicle Replacement Reserve contribution by £55,000 (reducing by £15,000 and using £40,000 from 24/25 forecasted underspends), removing the Grounds Apprentice

post at a saving of £16,759, and by a reduction of overtime (reduce Sundays to 26 weeks of the year) at a saving of £6,695.

020/25 - Splash Park – Information Report

The Splash Manager summarised the key points of the report to members.

Members expressed their gratitude and thanks for the Splash Manager's work over the last few months to attract footfall.

Since the report was written both the extractor fan repairs and the installation of the bespoke protective caging had been completed.

Councillor Attwell enquired as to status of the introduction of seasonal parking restrictions raised at previous meetings which was agreed to be progressed with CBC. Officers advised they would enquire and provide a further update to members at a later date.

Action: Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager

021/25 - Grounds - Information Report

Cemetery

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report.

Allotments

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report.

It was noted that the waiting list for allotments had reduced slightly and that the new policy for notice to cultivate (effective from 01st January 2025) may have been a contributory factor.

Recreation Grounds – Play Areas

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report. There had fortunately been no vandalism since the last report.

Sports Pitches and General Grounds Maintenance

The Grounds Operations Manager updated members on the key parts of the report.

Town Centre and Town Rangers

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report. Councillor Kotarski requested that earlier notice be given for requests when the Town Rangers are due to

visit a particular ward.

Action: The Grounds Operations Manager to review the notice period with the Town Rangers.

Green Space Projects

The Parks and Green Space Development Officer summarised the report.

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services provided Members with a presentation detailing the updated technical drawings of the pergola, including simple illustrations of the 'Walk Through Time' laser cut panels and the plant support straining wires.

Members received a verbal update regarding the timescales for the refurbishment of the Church Street Phone Box. Members noted that a contractor had not yet been appointed, and the costs were still being finalised with the preferred contractor. The earliest possible start date for the works would be March 2025, when the temperature consistently exceeds 10 degrees Celsius. This would ensure favourable conditions, particularly for the painting of the structure.

022/25 - Reports from Outside Organisations:

CBC Development Committee – Cllr Nicholas Kotarski
Nothing to report.

Upon announcement by the Chair members expressed their appreciation to the Grounds Operations Manager and the Corporate Compliance and Facilities Manager, both of whom were leaving the Council, for their work and support over the years, and extended best wishes for their future endeavours.

023/25 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 10 March 2025 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 9:11 PM