

Dunstable Town Council Annual Report

2024 - 2025



**DUNSTABLE
TOWN COUNCIL**

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Council Members for the Financial Year 2024 to 2025



Cllr Liz Jones

Cllr Trevor Adams

Cllr Greg Alderman

Cllr Michelle Henderson

Cllr Matthew Neall

Cllr Louise O'Riordan



Cllr Johnson Tamara

Cllr John Gurney

Cllr Kenson Gurney

Cllr Philip Crawley

Cllr Peter Hollick

Cllr Nicholas Kotarski



Cllr Matthew Brennan

Cllr Richard Attwell

Cllr Sally Kimondo

Cllr Mark Davis

Cllr Robert Blennerhassett

Cllr Wendy Bater

TOWN CLERK AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE – PAUL HODSON
HEAD OF CORPOATE SERVICES (RFO) – LISA SCHEDER
HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICE – BECKY WISBEY

HEAD OF GROUNDS OF AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES – JOHN CRAWLEY

EXTERNAL AUDITORS – FORVIS MAZARS LLP
INTERNAL AUDITORS – INTERNAL AUDIT SOLUTIONS LTD

Foreword



Town Clerk and Chief Executive Paul Hodson



Welcome to the annual report for the financial year 2024/2025. This year has been a remarkable period of growth and development for our town, marked by significant achievements and community engagement.

One of the highlights of the year was the completion of the £1.144 million High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) project in April 2024. The project has greatly enhanced the town, particularly with the refurbishment of the frontage of 21-23 High Street South. The HSHAZ scheme has played a crucial role in supporting various events and activities, contributing to the vibrancy of our community.

In response to the conclusion of the HSHAZ project, the Town Council has committed to increasing the number of summer activities for young people. We have planned weekly events throughout the summer holidays, ensuring that our youth have ample opportunities for engagement and recreation. Additionally, we have continued our successful programme of larger events, including St George's Day, the Dunstable Classic Motor Rally, Dunstable Live, and Priory Pictures.

Our commitment to community events remains strong, with the opening of the Splash Park for the summer season and the exploration of new uses for the Splashside Café. We continue to invite residents to share their ideas for utilising this facility during the evenings and off-season.

Financially, the Council has navigated significant challenges, including rising costs and the need to maintain service levels. Despite these hurdles, we have successfully set a budget that allows us to continue providing high-quality services and events.

Our markets have also seen growth, with the addition of the Antiques & Collectables Market, all of which rely on the continued support from local businesses. We are grateful to our sponsors, including Howden Insurance and Penrose Estate Agents, for their contributions to our events.

As we look forward to the coming year, we remain committed to enhancing the quality of life for all residents and "making Dunstable a better place". We encourage you to engage with us, share your feedback, and participate in the many activities and services we offer. Together, we can continue to build a vibrant and thriving community. Thank you for your continued support.

Town Clerk & Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Hodson".

Foreward



Town Mayor Councillor Louise O'Riordan



I am proud to present to you the annual report for Dunstable Town Council for 2024/2025. This year has been a remarkable journey for our town, and I am honoured to have served as your Town Mayor during this period.

Reflecting on my year as Mayor, I am grateful for the support and dedication of our community. Growing up in a working-class family on a council estate and later being a cared-for child, I never imagined that I would one day have the privilege of serving as Mayor. This role has been a testament to the fact that with determination and an open mind, anything is possible.

The theme of my mayoral year, "Unity within the Community: Putting YOU in the middle of CommUnity," guided my efforts to bring people together and promote mutual support, cohesion and inclusivity in our diverse town. From the fantastic events organised by our Dunstable Town Council to the inspiring community initiatives, the spirit of togetherness has been truly heartwarming.

One of the highlights of the year was attending the town's many events. The diverse and engaging events, such as the Classic Motor Rally and the In Bloom competition success, showcased the vibrant community spirit that defines Dunstable. The smiles, kindness, and enjoyment I witnessed at these events reminded me of the extraordinary people who make our town so special.

Supporting local charities and voluntary organisations has been a key priority for me. I have had the privilege of working closely with Dunstable Foodbank, raising awareness of their invaluable contribution to our town. Organisations such as this play a crucial role in supporting our residents and fostering a sense of community. I was particularly pleased to be able to present the Foodbank with a cheque at the end of the year.

As we look ahead, I am excited about the future of Dunstable. The progress we have made this year is a testament to what we can achieve when we come together with a shared vision. I am deeply grateful to my fellow councillors, local organisations, Town Council officers and, most importantly, the people of Dunstable for their unwavering support and commitment.

Thank you for making my year as your Mayor an unforgettable experience. Let us continue to work together to celebrate unity in our community.

Town Mayor of Dunstable

Councillor Louise O'Riordan

Foreword



Chair of the Community Services Committee Councillor Liz Jones



It gives me great pleasure to report on some of the work of the Community Services Committee for 2024/25.

Being the Chair of the Committee is a particular pleasure because the Committee is responsible for such a diverse range of services and activities. I would like to begin by thanking all my fellow Committee members and the Council's Head of Community Services, Becky Wisbey and all of her team for their hard work and support throughout the year. I have thoroughly enjoyed my year and am very proud of the achievements the Committee has made over the past 12 months.

The events programme continued to go from strength to strength. 'Dunstable Live's Soul and Motown Event was a great success with record breaking crowds in attendance. All of our events were very well supported which shows how popular they are with local people.

Priory House restoration works continued and the additional bid for funding to allow the project to continue was successful. Despite the works, the building continued to be used and enjoyed, with attendance at workshops and events continuing to be popular. Our twice monthly markets attracted more businesses to trade, achieving a record number in 2024/2025. I was particularly pleased that, following the successful Dunstable Young Traders market initiative, the local winner went on to win the Portobello Regional and Category Champion.

The Big Lunch, held in Grove House Gardens for older residents, was a great success as well as the popular summer activities for young people, being a fantastic addition to the town in the summer months.

After a four year scheme, we saw the successful High Streets Heritage Action Zone project coming to end, with the final project being the completion of a long awaited shop front restoration at 21-23 High Street South (former Moore's).

A £30,000 grant was secured to support and empower community-led performing arts groups in Dunstable, as well as capital funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support initiatives for the town, including living pillars, water refill stations, power points, sculpture trail and art in Middle Row.

Chair of the Community Services Committee

Councillor Liz Jones

Foreword



Chair of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee Councillor Richard Attwell



It gives me great pride to share and celebrate the outstanding achievements we have made together over the past year.

I am absolutely delighted to announce that we have retained all four Green Flags once again, in Priory Gardens, Grove House Gardens, Dunstable Cemetery and Bennett's Recreation Ground. This is no small achievement. The Green Flag Award is the national benchmark for parks and green spaces, recognising only those that meet the highest environmental standards, are beautifully maintained, and are accessible to all.

We have again also been awarded the prestigious Green Heritage Accreditation for Priory Gardens – an accolade reserved for sites of historic importance that are managed to the highest conservation and public engagement standards. Priory Gardens is not only a place of beauty and reflection but also a cherished piece of our town's rich history.

Our green achievements don't stop there. In this year's Anglia in Bloom awards, our town has once again stood out for all the right reasons, achieving a prestigious gold award again in the large town category. These awards celebrate horticultural excellence, environmental responsibility, and community participation. I'm thrilled to say that our team, alongside local volunteers and partners, has delivered another fantastic result that puts Dunstable firmly on the map as a vibrant, green, and welcoming town.

Behind all of these accolades is a group of dedicated individuals – the entire Grounds and Environmental Services team. I would especially like to thank John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services) the Grounds Team, Cemetery Manager, Development Officer, Operations Manager, and everyone else who plays a vital part. In particular, I would also like to highlight our excellent Town Ranger Service. Day in and day out, our Rangers respond swiftly to issues, supporting events, engaging with the public, and keeping our spaces clean, safe, and beautiful.

Innovation continues to be at the heart of everything we do. Whether it's adopting sustainable planting methods such as the introduction of our new living pillars, installation of the water refill stations, the new solar benches, trailing new methods to improve biodiversity, or finding creative ways to involve the community, Grounds and Environmental Services remains forward-thinking and solution-focused.

My special thanks also go to the Dunstable in Bloom team who work tirelessly in helping to maintain our beautiful floral displays that adorn our town, deadheading, weeding and planting bulbs in open spaces in partnership with the local community and local schools.

As we look ahead, we do so with renewed energy, knowing that our town continues to flourish – greener, prouder, and stronger than ever.

If any readers wish to comment on the activities of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee or attend one of our meetings then please visit the Council's website, www.dunstable.gov.uk for more information.

Chair of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee

Councillor Richard Attwell

Foreword



Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Councillor Gregory Alderman



As the Chair of the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee, I am delighted to be able to report on some of the initiatives and achievements the Council progressed during 2024/25.

As with the previous municipal year, the Council's budget-setting process was a challenging one. Our council tax base has reduced, our costs have risen, and the success of our brilliant services in Dunstable has led to a rise in demand on our spending in those areas too. However, I was delighted that in February 2025 the Council was able to set a budget that protected the range of services delivered by the Council, to the benefit of Dunstable's residents.

This incredible work could not have been achieved without the combined efforts of our councillors, our officers, and, in particular, I'd like to commend the tireless work of the Council's senior management team, led by our Town Clerk and Chief Executive, Paul Hodson. I want to thank Paul, all council officers and my fellow Committee members for all their support throughout the year. The financial year commenced with the newly established Corporate Services Team, following a restructure of the service from the previously named Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Office. I had the pleasure of working alongside the newly promoted Head of Corporate Services and the Council's Responsible Financial Officer, Lisa Scheder, who celebrated 20 years of service to Dunstable Town Council in November 2024. Lisa's mind for detail and mastery of the Council's operations were crucial in delivering a successful budget amidst a year of financial challenges.

During the previous municipal year, the Committee I am honoured to have Chaired continued to oversee the sound governance and prudent financial management of the Council. Improvements were made to the Council's Constitution and Standing Orders, and the Council received another unqualified opinion on their accounts from the external auditor. In addition, the Council performed very well against a number of income targets.

It should also be said that the Council was sad to say goodbye to the management of Creasey Park Community Football Centre on 31 March 2024, following 13 years of hard work and dedication from all involved to make the Centre a popular venue for the community, local clubs and organisations.

We wish the new management organisation every success for the future of the Centre.

Finally, I would like to thank all who have contributed and continue to contribute to the admirable work of Dunstable Town Council. Officers and councillors alike have shown their dedication to 'making Dunstable a better place', and I look forward to seeing the newly adopted Corporate Plan being implemented over the next three years, which demonstrates the Council's commitment to serving Dunstable through improving our services, representing our residents' values and interests, as well as preserving the history and identity of the town.

If any readers wish to comment on the activities of the Finance and General Purposes Committee or attend one of our meetings then please visit the Council's website, www.dunstable.gov.uk for more information.

Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Councillor Gregory Alderman

Vision, Mission Statement & Values



VISION

“To help make Dunstable a better place”

MISSION STATEMENT

Dunstable Town Council will do all it can to create a lively and vibrant town, promoting civic pride and improving the quality of life for all those who live, work and visit Dunstable.

VALUES

The Council will at all times:

Be an advocate and campaigning voice for the people of Dunstable

Work to the highest standards of integrity and openness and deliver services to the best of our abilities

Work in partnership with other organisations to improve services and deliver value for money for the Dunstable council taxpayer

The aim of the document is to give Dunstable's residents a clear understanding of what the Council is aiming to achieve and how it intends to deliver. It sets out what the Council will focus on and in doing so also defines what the Council will not necessarily focus on as it may be that other public sector bodies are better placed for other areas of service provision. The document will be reviewed on an annual basis and updates on achievements will be reported through the Council's annual reporting process.

A Year in Dunstable

Gold again for Dunstable in the Large Town Category



New Mental Health Support Bench in partnership with 'Legend in a Bench'



Four Green Flags retained with Priory Gardens also retaining Green Heritage status



A Year in Dunstable

Dunstable's Middle Row Market
Hosts First-Ever Young Trader Market



Dunstable Young Trader Wins Big at Portobello: Regional & Category Champion



Number of businesses trading on the market, aiming for 89, achieved 137



A Year in Dunstable

Community Celebrates Together at Dunstable Town Council's Big Lunch



Record-Breaking Crowds at Dunstable Live's Soul & Motown Event



Crowds Gather in Dunstable for the Classic Motor Rally, Truck Convoy and Middle Row Market



A Year in Dunstable



Completion of Shop Front Restoration 21-23 High Street South (former Moore's) on High Street South



Improving Park Waste Management by Replacing Red Dog Waste Bins with Modern General Litter Bins



Bulb Planting in Open Spaces in Partnership with Dunstable in Bloom and Local Schools



A Year in Dunstable

£30,000 Grant Obtained to Support and Empower Community-led Performing Arts Groups in Dunstable



UK Shared Prosperity Funded (UKSPF) Initiatives. Living Pillars, Water Refill Stations, Power Points, Sculpture Trail, Solar Benches and Art in Middle Row



Key Objectives for the Council over the Next Three Years



In 2024 the Council adopted its fifth Corporate Plan to span the years 2024 to 2027. During the lifespan of the first four Corporate Plans the Council showed remarkable focus on its Key Priorities and Objectives and from 2020 to the end of 2023 successfully completed 34 of the original 51 objectives that were set out.

What follows is a table showing 50 objectives adopted in the new Corporate Plan and narrative that describes progress made to date against each of the six objectives as at the end of March 2025. All of the objectives will continue to be reported through future annual reports.

Comments made in green show that Objectives are progressing well or have been completed.

Comments made in amber show that progress has started to be made or that Objectives have not been considered yet.

Comments made in red show that actions have not or will not be completed and a reason given.

1. Continuing to improve the organisational management and efficiency of the Town Council

Action	Council Committee	Lead Member and Officer	Timescale	Progress to March 2025
1 Deliver Investors In People action plan	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2027	
2 Carry out internal refurbishment of Kingsbury sports pavilion and renew the roof.	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2025	Work is currently in design stages and will go out to tender at the end of 2025.
3 Carry out a planned maintenance programme at Grove House to ensure the building is safe and suitable for ongoing use by the Council.	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2025	PPM completed and now in progress of implementing plan.
4 Scope the viability of expanding the Council's wedding and event offer to include Grove House.	Community Services		By the end of March 2025	Premises licence has now been received. Marriage licence application is in progress. Work to remediate marriage and reception room is in quotation stages.
5 A doorway created in the outside Rangers area (Grove House) to access the back of the band stand to allow equipment to be moved easily at events and create a secure area during events for equipment and staff.	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2025	This objective is aspirational and is not being progressed at this stage.

6	Work towards making Dunstable Town Council a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, including by investigating the possibility of installing solar panels on suitable Council venues, beginning with the Dunstable Cemetery	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2027	Following an Energy and Carbon assessment and review, it is unrealistic to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. This objective will be reviewed.
7	Create and implement a Biodiversity Policy and Plan	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	This has now been completed and was adopted in June 2024.
8	Carry out a programme of replacing existing vehicles with more fuel efficient, hybrid or electric vehicles where appropriate	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	Vehicle Replacement policy is in place. Programme of replacement will be amended to reflect budget. This will be presented at January 2026 committee.
9	Develop the organisation's use of IT to include all data being stored externally and all staff being able to work flexibly	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2025	The Council are now working with new IT provider, and all data is stored externally on a cloud-based system.
10	Ensure the Council is transparent, and residents are able to find out what they need to know about how the Council is run	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2025	In progress with new website development.
11	Obtain and keep Cyber Essentials accreditation	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2025	Cyber Essentials credentials were obtained in December 2024, and work is ongoing to obtain this accreditation.
12	Review the use and functionality of the current chapel; scope providing new chairs, a screen, music streaming system, and webcast facility	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	To be incorporated into service plans for 2026.
13	Scope providing a weatherproof cover over the seating area at Priory House	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	Currently not achievable.
14	Provide new office accommodation / mess facilities for grounds staff	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	Project is now in design stages.
15	Improve events infrastructure by installing additional power points and better configuration of outside stores	Community Services		By the end of March 2025	In progress, planned for Feb 2025
16	Increase the use of Bennett's <u>Splashside</u> Café outside of the splash park season.	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2025	Currently being achieved and reported to GES Committee. Year 1 complete and report to go to September Committee to decide about ongoing resources. This item will now be reported to communities committee.
17	Purchase and install an external LED board to replicate the information provided from the information window on the High Street	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	This objective is being pursued as part of the Joint Committee, planning advise is currently being sort.



Key Objectives for the Council over the Next Three Years



1. Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the Town, creating a sense of pride in Dunstable

Action		Council Committee	Lead Member and Officer	Timescale	Progress to March 2025	
18	Celebrate the Town Council's 40th anniversary in 2025: Enhance the events programme and all services to reflect and celebrate 40 years of achievement. Hold at least one civic event	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of December 2025	Plans are in place, or have taken place for the following events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree and bulb planting Soapbox Derby Free seed packets handed out at all events Street dressing ACM extended 	
19	Support Dunstable in Bloom to enter Anglia in Bloom each year	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	2024	Complete
					2025	Complete
					2026	
					2027	
20	Invest in and increase public art. Provide a sculpture trail, additional Middle Row art and virtual trail	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	Wooden heritage sculpture trail installed, which was funded by UKSPF.	
21	Review and expand the Town Rangers Service.	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2025	New Ranger was appointed in September 2024.	
22	Retain the Heritage Flag for Priory Gardens. Improve access to historical information and interpretation of the site	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	2024	Complete
					2025	Complete
					2026	
					2027	
23	Reopen Priory House and engage users in line with funders' requirements. Promote Priory House as an important heritage destination.	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	Major ongoing building works.	

2. To further improve and develop the provision of the green and open space in the Town

Action		Council Committee	Lead Member and Officer	Timescale	Progress to March 2025
24	Take ownership and create garden by White Lion busway stop - College Drive	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	20k funding secured, with 10k to be spent by March 2026. Land transfer being progressed.
25	Work with Dunstable Town Bowls Club to ensure future provision of outdoor bowling opportunities in Dunstable	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2026	Delayed due to external factors.
26	Plan for and open new cemetery in Dunstable	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2029	A suitable site has been identified, and the Council have received a positive response from the Environmental Agency following initial testing. Next stage is to procure consultants.



	Recreation <u>Ground</u> Brewers Hill Recreation Ground.				
	Year 2 - 2025/26: Ridgeway Avenue Recreation Ground, Dowsndse Recreation Ground + <u>Mentmore</u> Recreation Ground.			Year 3: By the end of March 2027	
	Year 3 - 2026/27: Newton Recreation Ground, Markham Crescent Public Open <u>Space</u> , Frenchs Avenue Public Open Space + Olma Road Recreation Ground				
32	Replace Priory Gardens pergola and knee rail	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2026	Pergola is complete. The Council are on track to complete knee rail by summer 2026.
33	Look to maintain more of the grass verges across our town and smarten them up	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	This objective is not being progressed at this stage.
34	Resurface the Bennett's Rec Tennis Courts with a safer surface that can be played on all year round	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	No funding secured at present
35	Undertake feasibility study and consider the creation of a Pickleball Court in one of our open spaces that incorporates other sporting / activities	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	No funding secured at present
36	Install disabled / inclusive play equipment at larger play sites	Grounds and Environmental Services Committee		By the end of March 2027	Equipment has been installed at Grove House Gardens playground, using UKSPF funding. No further plans as yet.

3. Continue to improve services targeted to all community sectors in the Town

Action		Council Committee	Lead Member and Officer	Timescale	Progress to March 2025
37	Increase the Big Lunch Opportunities to 150 older people	Community Services		By the end of March 2025	Complete
38	Launch additional lunch club or other activities for older people	Community Services		By the end of March 2026	Launched breakfast club at Bennetts Splash Park, and Food club successfully. Lunch Club has also moved venue which has increased capacity.
39	Extend Grove Corner buildings, creating a proper hub for youth services in the town	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	Plans have been drawn up, and this project has been scoped. Benefits of works do not currently justify the funding required.
40	Deliver current programme of detached work to March 2026 and secure ongoing resources	Community Services		By the end of March 2026	Funding in place until March 2026. Question to go to committee in September 2025, about direction for 2026/27, which will guide budget setting.

Key Objectives for the Council over the Next Three Years



4. Contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre and development of neighbourhoods in the Town

Action	Council Committee	Lead Member and Officer	Timescale	Progress to March 2025
41 Create a pop-up meanwhile space	Community Services		By the end of March 2026	DTC were unable to secure a unit from Central Bedfordshire Council, and The Quadrant.
42 Create a parklet/Green Space in Town Centre	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	Negotiations are underway with Luton Borough Council for the purchase of suitable land. Expected to commence in spring 2026.
43 Implement the Town Centre Management Business Plan	Community Services		By the end of March 2025	Delivery of this objective is on target, except for the pop-up shop which has not been viable due to in ability to secure a suitable unit.
44 Make physical improvements such as: Install solar benches with USB ports in appropriate locations, water refill stations, living columns + art trails	Community Services		By the end of March 2025	Complete
45 Install Self-clean pop-up toilets in the town and gardens, increasing the toilets in the town and offering more choice to the public.	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	This objective is aspirational and is not being progressed at this stage.
46 Review the Council's support for the Community and Voluntary Sector	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	This objective is not being progressed at this stage.
47 Strengthen and develop cultural services and activities in the town; deliver cultural capacity development programme funded by UKSPF	Community Services		By the end of March 2025	Complete
48 Establish a community Lottery to enable local community groups to raise funds.	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2027	Complete

5. Represent residents, businesses and community groups of Dunstable on key strategic issues facing the Town

Action	Council Committee	Lead Member and Officer	Timescale	Progress to March 2025
49 Scope a Neighbourhood Plan to give the Dunstable more say over its own future, be it to protect the town from unwanted development or have more control over the developments that do take place in the town	Finance and General Purposes Committee		By the end of March 2027	Complete
50 Ensure best use of developer contributions and key developments in the town	Community Services		By the end of March 2027	Funding being sought for Kingsbury Pavillion development.

Performance Measures, Service Planning and Monitoring Arrangements



In order to monitor effectively how the Council is performing in relation to its priority objectives, a series of performance indicators (PI's) have been developed. PI's have been created for all Council service areas. Some are user based, whereas others are more performance based. There are also some indicators that the Council does not have direct control over, such as town centre vacancies, but are measured nevertheless as the information is useful in determining the overall 'health' of the town. The indicators set out below were agreed at the end of 2024 when Members of the Council adopted the current Corporate Plan. The indicators were reviewed to become more in line with measuring performance against each of the Council's Corporate Priorities.

A total of 50 indicators have been reported upon, of which:

- 32 have achieved target or improved from previous year's performance
- 4 are slightly below target
- 5 are below target
- 9 were unable to be reported on

Highlights in Council performance include:

- Facebook followers significantly exceeding the 4 year target figure
- 114 volunteers got involved with council activities
- Increased number of events held throughout the year
- Significantly Increased number of opportunities for older people to engage

1. Continuing to improve the organisational management and efficiency of the Town Council.

Responsible Committee	Performance Indicator		Service Area	1-Year Target to March 2025	March 2025 Out-turn
Finance and General Purposes	1	Number of bids/tenders submitted, <u>Including</u> grant applications, tenders submitted and quotes for new work.	Corporate	6	14
Finance and General Purposes	2	Income secured as a percentage of gross expenditure outside of the council tax collection	Finance	31%	21.53%
Council	3	By annual survey, Percentage of residents satisfied overall with Council services	Corporate	79%	No Data
Finance and General Purposes	4	IIP accreditation maintained at a minimum of <u>Silver</u> standard	HR	Silver	Silver



Finance and General Purposes	5	Council General Reserve level maintained at 25% of salary bill	Finance	25%	24%
Finance and General Purposes	6	Average number of sick days per employee	HR	7.7	7.7
Finance and General Purposes	7	Staff retention, by percentage of contracted staff who remain employed for at least two years.	HR	NEW	64.15%
Finance and General Purposes	8	Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR) completed with no exceptions	Finance	Yes	Yes
Council	9	Provide/facilitate a minimum of seven publicly accessible community facilities across the town per annum	Corporate	7	7
Finance and General Purposes	10	Percentage of Performance Indicators/Objectives achieved	Corporate	NEW	69%
Council	11	Percentage of contracted staff undergoing training.	HR	75%	32%
Council	12	Reduce energy consumption	Corporate	2%	No Data
Council	13	% of low emission vehicles in fleet	Corporate	40%	56%
Council	14	% of recycling in weight collected	Corporate	40%	No Data

2. Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the Town, creating a sense of pride in Dunstable



Responsible Committee	Performance Indicator		Service Area	1-Year Target to March 2025	March 2025 Out-turn
Community Services	15	Increase in income year on year from actual	Priory House	NEW	£10,854.25
Community Services	16	Percentage of users satisfied with service	Priory House	NEW	No Data
Community Services	17	Increase in visitors/customers year on year with 2025/26 being the baseline	Priory House	NEW	No Data

Performance Measures, Service Planning and Monitoring Arrangements



3. To further improve and develop the provision of the green and open space in the Town

Responsible Committee	Performance Indicator	Service Area	1-Year Target to March 2025	March 2025 Out-turn
Grounds & Environmental Services	18 Percentage of users satisfied with service	Bennett's Splash	NEW	No Data
Grounds & Environmental Services	19 Increase in income year on year	Bennett's Splash	NEW	£58,832
Grounds & Environmental Services	20 Percentage of residents satisfied overall with green and open spaces	Green Spaces	92%	No Data
Grounds & Environmental Services	21 To retain Green Flag accreditation at four sites	Green Spaces	4	4
Grounds & Environmental Services	22 % of play equipment faults fixed within 2 working days.	Green Spaces	NEW	No Data
Grounds & Environmental Services	23 To annually retain ICCM Charter for the Bereaved silver status at Dunstable Cemetery.	Cemetery	Silver	Silver
Grounds & Environmental Services	24 Number of volunteers working directly with the Council to enhance the town's green spaces	Green Spaces	24	114
Grounds & Environmental Services	25 The completion of 10 new management plans for recreation grounds and large open spaces over 3 years – 3 in Year 1, 3 in Year 2 and 4 in Year 3.	Green Spaces	3	0

4. Continue to improve services targeted to all community sectors in the Town

Responsible Committee	Performance Indicator	Service Area	1-Year Target to March 2025	March 2025 Out-turn
Grounds & Environmental Services	26 Town Ranger income achieved	Green Spaces	£6,000	£5,488
Community Services	27 Percentage of people satisfied with events	Events	98%	93%
Finance and General Purposes	28 Total number of events	Corporate	47	100



Finance and General Purposes	29	Total number of volunteers	Corporate	27	29
Community Services	30	Total number of young people visits to services for young people	Grove Corner	4,000	7,363
Community Services	31	Total number of individual young people engaging in youth provision run by DTC	Grove Corner	500	No Data
Community Services	32	Hours of youth provision delivered to young people	Grove Corner	804.5	1,471
Community Services	33	Meet budgeted income year on year	Grove Corner	£10,750	£10,676
Community Services	34	Total number of older people visits to council delivered older people services	Older People	2,000	3,340
Community Services	35	Increase provision offered to the older community	Older People	1	6
Community Services	36	Number of <u>community</u> led initiatives supported	Community engagement	1	2
Community Services	37	New community groups engaged with	Community engagement	2	3

5. Contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre and development of neighbourhoods in the Town

Responsible Committee	Performance Indicator		Service Area	1-Year Target to March 2025	March 2025 Out-turn
Community Services	38 Number of new traders on markets etc.		Town Centre	40	77
Community Services	39	Number of trading businesses on the market	Town Centre	89	137
Community Services	40	Average number of stalls per market for middle row	Town Centre	27	30
Community Services	41	Number of businesses engaged with each year	Town Centre	140	200

Performance Measures, Service Planning and Monitoring Arrangements

6. Represent residents, businesses and community groups of Dunstable on key strategic issues facing the Town

Responsible Committee	Performance Indicator	Service Area	1-Year Target to March 2025	March 2025 Out-turn
Finance and General Purposes	42 Percentage increase in the number of followers on all social media platforms	Communications	5%	35%
Finance and General Purposes	43 Number of website visits per year	Communications	10,000	29,000
Finance and General Purposes	44 Number of people reached via Facebook	Communications	324,220	465,800
Finance and General Purposes	45 Number of articles published	Communications	NEW	12
Finance and General Purposes	46 Number of views of Council meetings online	Democratic	NEW	768
Council	47 Percentage physical councillor attendances at all main committees	Democratic	72%	85%
Council	48 Percentage of recommendations to main committees approved	Democratic	NEW	96
Council	49 Percentage of events attended by the <u>Mayor</u> which are in <u>Dunstable per annum</u>	Democratic	65%	97%
Council	50 Number of Councillor led surgeries (open public meetings)	Democratic	10	5

Budget and Precept (excerpt from Financial Regulations)



Budget Preparation and Approval

- Councils are legally required to calculate and approve a council tax budget before setting a precept, following the Local Government Finance Act 1992 or later laws.

Salary Budget Review

- Budgets for salaries and employer contributions must be reviewed annually in autumn by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Draft Budget & Forecast

- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) prepares a draft budget by December each year:
 - Includes income and expenditure estimates
 - Provides a 3-year forecast
 - Accounts for asset lifespans and related costs

Earmarked Reserves

- Unspent funds from partially completed projects can be carried forward only with full council approval, by placing them in earmarked reserves.

Committee Responsibilities

- Committees with budgetary authority must:
 - Review their draft budgets
 - Submit proposed amendments to the Finance and General Purposes Committee by end of December

Final Consideration

- The Finance and General Purposes Committee reviews all inputs and makes a recommendation to the full council.

Setting the Precept

- The council sets the final budget and precept—which is the required amount for council tax—no later than end of February for the next financial year.



Budget and Precept (excerpt from Financial Regulations)



2024/2025 Budget Setting

When preparing the budget for financial year 2024/2025, the Council faced a number of unknowns including:

- Utilities still on higher tariff
- National pay award unknown, previous years indicate 6% requirement
- Council tax base increase of only 14
- Unknown future of management of Creasey Park Community Football Centre past 31 March 2024
- Exact underspend unknown from financial year 2023/2024

In addition, the Council also had awareness of a number of challenges that had a financial impact including:

- Vehicle replacement requirements – current reserve contributions not sufficient
- Grove House building repairs required
- Priory House building repairs impacting on a drop in sales
- High Street Heritage Action Zone project ending – impact on events package

The Council made the decision to subsidise the budget by using £192,631 from the general reserves, resulting in a precept requirement of £2,933,469, a Council Tax increase of 4.99%. This equated to a rate of £219.93, Band D Council Tax rate.

Dunstable Town Council publish a full budget on our website, which includes a full breakdown of each services expenditure for the year ahead and a further forecast of the 3 years following, as well as fees and charges for the coming year.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)



The Council must submit its Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024–25 to the External Auditor by 30 June 2025. The accounts contained in this return present fairly the Council's financial position, are consistent with the underlying financial records, and have been prepared based on Income and Expenditure.

The AGAR for 2024–25 is shown below:

	<u>Last Year £</u>	<u>This Year £</u>	<u>General Notes for Guidance</u>
1	Balances brought forward	2,860,551	2,168,307 Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of the previous year.
2	(+) Precept or Rates and Levies	2,791,245	2,933,469 Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3	(+) Total other receipts	1,856,247	2,058,695 Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4	(-) Staff costs	2,200,520	2,184,074 Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5	(-) Loan interest/capital repayments	125,813	122,376 Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6	(-) All other payments	3,013,403	2,713,490 Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7	(=) Balances carried forward	2,168,307	2,140,531 Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. [Must equal (1+2+3)-(4+5+6)]
8	Total value of cash and short term investments	2,277,012	2,135,048 The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9	Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	8,207,590	8,406,182 The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10	Total borrowings	920,242	841,714 The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

Income and Expenditure Budget & Actual Comparison 2024/2025



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE BUDGET & ACTUAL COMPARISON 2024/2025

	Budget £	Actual £
EXPENDITURE		
Community Services:		
Community Services Staff Costs	-335,990	-374,401
Priory House	-488,274	-244,482
Older People's Day Care Service	-56,406	-47,228
Grove Corner	-31,090	-33,036
Community Engagement	-27,907	-28,862
*Grants to voluntary community organisations	-13,500	-10,100
Bennett Memorial RG Splash Park	-80,369	-132,998
Town Centre Management	-145,706	-129,766
Ashton Square Public Conveniences	-6,775	-4,656
Events	-175,431	-175,114
High Street Heritage Action Zone	-13,688	-14,688
Grounds & Environmental Services:		
Grounds Service Staff Costs	-861,115	-839,095
Grounds Service Vehicle Costs	-45,178	-35,843
Town Centre & Gardens	-71,815	-71,067
Recreation Grounds	-83,665	-114,804
Town Ranger Service	-18,760	-21,808
Dunstable Cemetery	-159,870	-157,780
Allotments	-12,625	-7,036
Corporate Services:		
Corporate Services Staff Costs	-505,964	-486,588
Corporate Management (inc Central Services)	-262,155	-299,218
Grove House	-72,688	-77,637
Democratic, Civic & Marketing	-24,600	-24,981
Capital Costs:		
Loan Charges, transfers to reserves	-343,968	-431,655
TOTAL	-3,837,539	-3,762,843

INCOME

Community Services:		
Funded Staff Costs	25,172	65,503
Service Income (retail, concessions, hires)	267,610	165,522
Central Bedfordshire Contract - Older People's Service	9,156	9,156
Grounds Services:		
Cemetery	214,150	302,434
Service Income (rents, hires, maintenance)	32,870	40,844
Central Bedfordshire Contract - Town Centre Maintenance	36,900	37,645
Corporate Services:		
Service Income (hires, rents)	54,581	49,055
Investment Income	71,000	139,944
TOTAL	711,439	810,103
Contribution to/from Reserves	-3,126,100	-2,952,740
PRECEPT ON CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL	192,631	-2,933,469

*Grants to voluntary community organisations 'actual' expenditure is made up of £7,500 Service Level Agreements for 5 organisations, and 6 Seedcorn grants

Dunstable Town Council - Reserves Summary 2024/25

Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.24	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.03.25	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
General Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£757,573			£757,573	Council 05.02.24- Minute 47/24- £192,631 contribution to 24/25 budget & contributions to reserves totalling £145,112	-£337,743	£419,830
Corporate Plan Development Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£5,000		-£5,000	£0			£0
Vehicles Reserve	HofGES	£80,017	£58,142	-£63,990	£74,169	FGP 17.06.24- Minute 141/24- bal of £28,347 for 2 replacement vehicles & 1 additional ride on mower (of £92,337 approved)	-£28,347	£45,822
CPCFC Reserve	TC&CE	£33,965		-£33,965	£0			£0
Christmas Lights Reserve	HofCS	£2,094	£10,556	£0	£12,651	5 year replacement lighting plan 21/22-25/26 ; Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- release of £8,731 for replacement and repairs of lights	-£9,095	£3,556
Street Dressing Reserve	HofCS	£5,427	£5,000	-£9,380	£1,047	FGP 16.09.24- Minute 194/24- bal of £1,047.28 for 40th anniversary street dressing (of £7,467 approved)	-£1,047	£0
Downside Building Maintenance Res	HofCS	£53,002	£3,000	-£3,233	£52,769	FGP 12.08.23- Minute 141/23- £36,679 & £8,792.55- for 2nd phase roof repairs	-£45,472	£7,297
Grove Corner Building Maint Reserve	HofCS	£34,565	£4,000		£38,565	Chairmans Approval 17.04.23- bal of £2,000 roof survey & development plans (of £5,000 approved)	-£2,000	£36,565
Building Security Systems	HofCorp	£5,357			£5,357	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £5,357 for improved security for Grove House	-£5,357	£0
Cemetery Memorial Safety	HofGES	£1,500	£1,575		£3,075	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £3,075 for periodic inspections and subsequent works	-£3,075	£0
Priory House Tearooms Equipment	HofCS	£7,434	£3,000	-£1,434	£9,000	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £9,000 for replacement of kitchen/catering equipment	-£9,000	£0
IT/Equipment Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£55,902	£20,000	-£74,689	£1,213	FGP 18.03.24- Minute 84/24- bal of £1,213 for new IT contract (of £75,902 approved)	-£1,213	£0
Older People's Day Care Svce	HofCS	£12,325			£12,325	Revenue budget committed= £1,200	-£1,200	£11,125
Election Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£0	£20,000		£20,000	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £20,000 for future election costs due to CBC	-£20,000	£0
Grove House Building Reserve	HofCorp	£177,550	£69,000	-£56,029	£190,521	essential repair and maintenance works (of £226,550 approved)	-£170,521	£20,000
Priory House Works Contingency	HofCS	£29,864			£29,864	Council 07.04.25- Minute 115/25- £29,864 for PH Exhibition (in £161,013 total with £11,149 on 327 & £120,000 on 333)	-£29,864	£0
Mayoral Reserve	HofCorp	£3,000			£3,000	FGP 19.01.15-Minute 24 - to be retained for transport/allowance as required	-£3,000	£0
Priory House Exhibition	HofCS	£11,149			£11,149	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £11,149 for programme of future exhibitions	-£11,149	£0
Performance Area Reserve	HofCS	£609		-£609	£0			£0
Town Twinning Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£8,739		-£350	£8,389	Retained for twinning activities to be determined		£8,389
Tree Reserve	HofGES	£4,448	£15,000	-£4,967	£14,481	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23- Bal of £980 for 23/24 work requirements (from £17,090 agreed) Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £15,488 for programme of tree inspections and subsequent works	-£14,481	£0
Open Spaces Improvement Plan	HofGES	£59,089	£63,665	-£70,995	£51,759	FGP 20.01.20- Minute 8- Bal of £4,723 for improvement works (from £26,668 agreed); Council 29.06.20- Minute 85- £15,000 agreed for Priory Gardens Pergola Repairs; FGP 17.06.24- Minute 141/24- bal of £12,960 for Pergola and Kneelall project in Priory Gardens (of £35,600 agreed) + £10,000 external contribution	-£25,515	£26,244
Priory House Building Reserve	HofCS	£235,646	£29,357	-£2,980	£262,023	Chairs Approval 08.07.22- bal of £9,446 - lease of bean machine (£10,000 approved); FGP Minute 41/23 23.01.23- £21,200- drainage, infill and electrical works; FGP Minute 41/23 23.01.23- £205,000- tendering process for additional works; Council 07.04.25 - Minute 115/25- £120,000 for Priory House Exhibition (25/26 contrib due)	-£232,666	£29,357
Pavilion Buildings Maintenance Res	HofGES	£23,644	£15,000	-£11,012	£27,632			£27,632
Church Street Phone Box Maintenance	HofGES	£5,000		-£1,998	£3,002	FGP 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £5,000 for Church Street phone box maintenance	-£3,002	£0
Member Training Reserve	TC&CE / HofCorp	£1,000		-£1,000	£0			£0
Allotments Reserve	HofGES	£23,300	£5,000	-£5,473	£22,827	FGP Minute 107 20.06.22- bal for 5 year infrastructure improvement programme (upto £42,800 approved) (includes £5,000 pa contributions to 26/27)	-£21,606	£1,221
Investment Account Interest	TC&CE	£13,261	£4,187	-£17,448	£0			£0
Outdoor Leisure (non play) Reserve	TC&CE / HofGES	£10,319	£12,000	-£7,268	£15,052			£15,052
Memorial Kerbs Reserve	HofGES	£461			£461	Council 15.04.24- Minute 99/24- £300 for purchase of memorial kerbs	-£300	£161
Cemetery Building Maintenance Res	HofGES	£12,281	£5,000		£17,281			£17,281
Fencing Maintenance Reserve	HofGES	£0	£7,000		£7,000			£7,000

Dunstable Town Council - Reserves Summary 2024/25



HSHAZ/Priory House HAR	HofCS	£3,341	£1,109,827	-£959,886	£153,282	HSHAZ scheme programme / HAR 1 Priory House works programme- to future claim	-£153,282	£0
Unfulfilled Orders	HofCorp	£3,351		-£3,351	£0			£0
Neighbourhood Development	TC&CE / HofCorp	£10,888	£9,112	-£7,333	£12,668			£12,668
Earmarked Reserves Total		£1,691,105	£1,469,420	-£1,342,390	£1,818,135		-£1,128,936	£689,199

Capital Receipt - Sale of Land at Meadway

Description	Officer	Balance as at 01.04.24	Contributions Revenue/ Other	Expenditure in year	Bal as at 31.03.25	Commitments/Programme of works, etc	Committed Amount	Bal after committed
White Lion Land Landscaping	HofGES	£10,000			£10,000	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	-£10,000	£0
New Cemetery Development	HofGES	£36,776	£116,000	-£5,415	£147,361	FGP 18.09.23- Minute 187/23= balance of £31,360.5 for development of the new cemetery (of £36,775 approved)	-£31,361	£116,000
Grounds Depot Extension	HofGES	£100,000			£100,000	FGP 17.06.24- Minute 141/24= Depot Extension	-£100,000	£0
Luton Road MUGA	HofGES	£42			£42	Council 05.12.22 Minute 210- bal of £1,873 for a MUGA at Kingsbury Recreation Ground (previously known as Luton Road) (of £100,000 approved)	-£42	£0
NEW - Priory House Furniture	HofCS	£26,000			£26,000	Council 17.04.23 Minute 104/23- creation of new reserve from capital receipt received July 2022	-£26,000	£0
NEW - Kingsbury Pavilion Refurbishment	HofGES	£170,000		-£1,000	£169,000	Chairs Approval 11.04.25- bal of £1,830 (from £2,830 approved) - Professional Fees	-£169,000	£0
NEW - Splash Canopies	TC&CE	£2,873		-£2,816	£57	FGP 12.06.23- Minute 141/23- bal of £57 for purchase and installation of Splash Canopies, benches and parasols (from £18,000 approved)	-£57	£0
Capital Receipts Total		£345,690	£116,000	-£9,231	£452,460		-£452,460	£0

S106/External Funding/Ringfenced Expenditure specified by funding body

Developers Contributions- CAP	HofGES	£11,723		-£11,723	£0			£0
CPCFC Capital	TC&CE	£83,641		-£83,641	£0			£0
Development Contributions- REV	HofGES	£34,316			£34,316	£8,000 committed in 23/24 revenue budget from Bal of £22,129 for Willoughby (from S106 £47,645) £8,000 committed in 23/24 revenue budget from Bal of £22,129 for Willoughby (from S106 £47,645) Bal of £4,038 for Court Drive Landscaping (from CBC £15,000)	-£12,038	£22,278
Joint Committee Fund	HofCS	£50,021			£50,021	Bal in holding code as committed Joint Committees fund only = not DTC	-£50,021	£0
S106/External Funding Total		£179,701	£0	-£95,364	£84,337		-£62,059	£22,278
		£2,216,496	£1,585,420	-£1,446,984	£2,354,932		-£1,643,454	£711,478

Key:

- = Finance and General Purposes Committee
- = Grounds and Environmental Services Committee
- = Community Services Committee