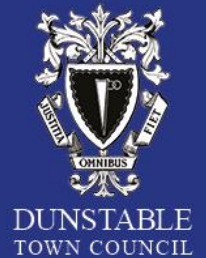


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Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: **Wednesday, 18 February 2026**

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Community Services Committee** will be held on **Monday 2 March 2026**, at **Council Chamber** at **7pm**. 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 intend to raise a question, it is helpful to let us know beforehand to give councillors a chance to prepare an informed answer. Please contact the Council via democratic@dunstable.gov.uk or 01582 513000 by 4 pm on Friday 27 February 2026.

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.

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To: All Members of the **Community Services Committee:**
Cllrs Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor), Matthew Neall (Chair), Kenson Gurney (Vice-Chair), Trevor Adams, Greg Alderman, Wendy Bater, Rob Blennerhassett, Phillip Crawley, Mark Davis, Nicholas Kotarski, Louise O’Riordan and other Members of the Council for information.

AGENDA

071/26 Apologies for Absence

072/26 Declarations of Interest

073/26 Public Question Time

074/26 To agree the minutes of the meeting of 12 January 2026 as an accurate record

075/26 Action Tracker

To review the progress of previously agreed actions.

076/26 Events

077/26 Town Centre Services

078/26 Priory House

079/26 Grove Corner and Community Engagement

080/26 Older People's Services

081/26 Reports from Outside Bodies

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee - Cllr Peter Hollick
Dunstable Town Band - Cllr Robert Blennerhassett
Men in Sheds - Cllr Richard Attwell

082/26 Date of the next meeting

Monday 1 June 2026 at 7 pm

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GROVE HOUSE, HIGH STREET NORTH, DUNSTABLE,

ON MONDAY 12 JANUARY 2026

Present: Councillors Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor), Matthew Neall (Chair), Gregory Alderman, Wendy Bater, Philip Crawley, Mark Davis, and Nicholas Kotarski

In Attendance: Councillor Peter Hollick, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services), Jackie Carrington (Democratic Services Manager), Lisa Stephens (Cultural Services Manager) and Gina Thanky (Events Officer)

Public: Two

001/26 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Louise O'Riordan, Trevor Adams and Robert Blennerhassett

002/26 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

003/26 - Public Question Time

A representative from Ringcraft Boxing raised concerns about the delay in receiving the lease for the building, which was voted on in early 2024. Additionally, a health and safety issue regarding a leaking roof in the building's kitchen was raised. The council acknowledged the delays in legal matters and agreed to arrange a meeting. Regarding the roof repairs, it was explained that while temporary repairs had been made, full repairs were pending tender analysis and would be completed in the first half of the year.

004/26 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of 3 November 2025 as an accurate record

The minutes of the Community Services meeting held on 3 November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

005/26 - Action Tracker – to review progress of previously agreed actions

The committee reviewed the action tracker to monitor the progress of previously agreed actions.

006/26 - Town Centre Services

The Head of Community Services presented the Town Centre Services update.

The Head of Community Services mentioned ongoing work with Central Bedfordshire Council regarding premises of concern in the High Street, with a task group meeting scheduled to address these issues.

Cash Access UK had confirmed the location for the permanent banking hub following the closure of Santander, with a temporary hub to be set up until the permanent one is operational.

007/26 - Budget Proposals for 2026/27

The budget proposals for 2026/27 were discussed. The budget report had not been included in the agenda, and was circulated immediately after the meeting. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive The significant changes in the budget included the removal of the budget for the additional Priory Pictures event, and adjustments to pensions and salaries. The proposed contribution to the reserves for detached youth work would now be funded from the forecast in-year underspend. The additional Priory house reserve contribution of £67,000 was no longer required.

It was noted that Central Bedfordshire Council had suggested not funding the Good Companions Club as part of their budget discussions. Any impact of this funding cut would need to be addressed in the budget proposals for 2027 and 2028.

008/26 - Grove Corner and Community Engagement

The Head of Community Services summarised the report on Grove Corner and Community Engagement noting Grove Corner continued to attract good numbers of young people, and one young person had expressed interest in joining the youth parliament following engagement with Central Bedfordshire Council Youth Services. Written confirmation had been received from Central Bedfordshire Council that their funding for detached youth work would continue for another year.

009/26 - Older People's Services

It was noted that the Food Club was developing well and it was hoped that members would begin to take ownership and coordinate activities independently.

010/26 – Events

The Events Officer highlighted the success of past events such as the Christmas carols and Torchlight procession, which saw an estimated attendance of 5,000 people and participation from 13 schools and various choirs..

Members asked about progress to raise sponsorship and additional income to help fund the events programme. Conversations with businesses regarding sponsorship for the 2026 events programme were ongoing. . It was noted that while the events cannot generate enough income to be self-sufficient, efforts are made to maximise income through concessions and stalls. The importance of free events for families was highlighted, and the need to balance this with the financial pressures faced by residents was discussed.

011/26 - Priory House

The Cultural Services Manager updated the Committee that following the reopening of the Priory House shop there had been positive feedback on the refurbishment and the introduction of lunch offerings.

The refurbishment works were progressing well, with an advised programme date of the end of October. Stakeholder workshops had been held to discuss the exhibition plans.

012/26 - Priory House Decision Report

RESOLVED:

To spend £220,282.49 from allocated reserves for the following items:

Repairs to main staircase -	£16,501.75
Improvement to the parapet gutter of gift shop roof	£3,355.00
Repairs to windows on the west elevation and north gable including secondary glazing where appropriate and draft strips	£73,263.50
Reder repair to external wall	£12,162.24
Design fees for above works	£10,000.00
Contingency	£15,000.00
New till ordering system (using tablets to remove the operational issues)	£3,000.00
Increasing the scope of the exhibition to include a higher specification in the third room	£55,000.00
Additional workshops with young people relating to the exhibition should funding application be unsuccessful	£5,000.00
Outdoor furniture and overall house redecoration/design	£27,000.00

013/26 - Reports from Outside Bodies

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee: Cllr Peter Hollick reported on the current state of the land occupied by the committee, describing it as desolate and lacking services. Dial-a-Ride were exploring options for relocating their service.

Dunstable Town Band: No report given

Men in Sheds: Cllr Richard Attwell reported changes in trustees, with new co-chairmen and a new secretary elected. The shed refurbishment was completed, but minor repairs were needed. Financially, the organisation was stable but needs to replace old equipment, necessitating a slight increase in member subscriptions. They had successfully applied for charitable grants.

014/26 - Date of the next meeting - Monday 2 March 2026 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 8:45 PM

Committee	Minute	Date	Action	Action Full	Responsible	Update	Status
CS	176/25	08/09/2025	Christmas Lights	Members raised the possibility of the Christmas Lights being extended further along the High Street from the crossroads. It was noted that this was a good time to explore options as the tender for the next five years was up for renewal.	Town Centre Manager & Head of Community Services	The extension has now been agreed and will be implemented for Christmas 2026	Completed
CS	003/26	01/12/2026	Public Question Time	Downside Roof - Representatives from Ringcraft Boxing raised concerns over the delay in receiving the lease for the building, which was voted on in early 2024. Additionally, a health and safety issue regarding a leaking roof in the building's kitchen was raised. The council acknowledged the delays in legal matters and agreed to arrange a meeting.	Town Clerk and Chief Executive	Meetings have been held with Ringcraft Boxing. The planned roof repairs are underway. Any necessary repairs following the leak will be made once the new roof is in place. An updated licence to occupy is now in place and the lease arrangements are in hand.	Completed

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2026

EVENTS

Purpose of report: For information and a decision on free use of Grove Theatre.
--

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1. To provide one of the Council's two free uses of the Grove Theatre to the Dunstable Musical Theatre Company for a performance of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* on Friday 16 October 2026.

2. FUTURE EVENTS - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1. St George's Day - Saturday 18 April (10 am to 4 pm)

The St George's Day celebrations will take place in Priory Gardens. To date, the following activities have been confirmed:

- George and the Dragon - Frantic Fables
- Fighting Knights Display
- Meet the Giant Dragon and Baby Dragon
- Knights School
- Dragon 101 Show
- Living History Knights Display
- DJ Dragon Dance Party
- Teaching Talons, Animal Encounter
- Punch and Judy
- Arts and crafts
- Dunstable Town Band
- Aldbury Morris Men
- Children's Jousting
- Archery
- Dragon Town Trail
- Climbing Wall

The event will be promoted via leaflets and posters, Facebook, DTC website, Talk of the Town, and the Town Council's noticeboards.

2.2. Around The World - Saturday 16 May (10.30 am to 4.30 pm)

Around the World is currently in the early stages of development. Activities confirmed for this event are:

- Native American Experience - storytelling, songs, storytelling and crafts
- Tai Chi demonstration and workshop
- Sam O' Shanty Puppetry Theatre Show
- Lion Dance
- Chinese Folk Dances and workshops
- Around the World Storyteller
- Colombian dances and workshops
- Puppetry arts and crafts workshop

The Events Officer is currently inviting local community groups to participate in the event, to showcase their talents.

2.3. Dunstable Classic Motor Rally - Saturday 13 June (10.30 am to 4.30 pm)

Registration for the Classic Motor Rally is now open. Alongside the classic vehicles, the event will also feature live music, a children's outdoor theatre show, stalls, catering and arts and crafts.

The History Alive interactive character trail will return, based around local heritage transportation links including the Vauxhall Factory and the London Gliding Club. All past participants have been invited to this year's event.

2.4. Sunday Concerts - Sunday 21 June, 26 July, 9 August (12 noon & 2.30 pm)

This year, the Sunday Concerts will feature different musical genres alongside traditional brass bands. The table below shows the confirmed line-up:

Sunday 21 June	12 noon	RAF Halton Voluntary Band
Sunday 21 June	2.30 pm	Dunstable Salvation Army Band
Sunday 26 July	12 noon	TBC
Sunday 26 July	2.30 pm	Dunstable Town Band
Sunday 9 August	12 noon	Beati Vocal Ensemble
Sunday 9 August	2.30 pm	Prestige Trio Jazz Band

An advert will be placed in the April edition of *Talk of the Town* inviting applications for the remaining slot from community groups, including bands, school or college ensembles, military bands and choirs. Charities will again be invited to apply for the tea and coffee concession.

2.5. Dunstable Live - Saturday 27 June (2 pm to 8 pm)

The theme for this year's Dunstable Live is 'Queens of Sound', celebrating the best of female groups and artists. A poll was created on Facebook, receiving over 1,100 votes. The highest-voted tribute acts have been booked as follows:

- 2 pm to 2.45 pm: Amy Alive (Amy Winehouse tribute)
- 3 pm to 4 pm: The One and Only Adele
- 4.15 pm to 5.15 pm: Taryn Charles as Simply Whitney
- 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm: Kinisha as Tina Turner - Simply the Best
- 7 pm to 8 pm: Spice Forever (Spice Girls tribute)

For the first time, Middle Row Markets will be joining Dunstable Live. The event will also feature the accessible viewing platform for the second year, which will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

2.6. Party in the Park - Saturday 18 July (12 noon to 8 pm)

Plans are in the early stages of development for this event. However, a headline act has been booked and will be announced on Friday 3 April in line with the distribution of The Talk of The Town.

Also confirmed are the accessible viewing platform, Kidzone area and the funfair. Following the successful trial of Middle Row Market at Party in the Park last year, the market will be returning to the event once again this year. The Events Officer is currently contacting local groups to increase community involvement in the event.

2.7. Soapbox Derby - Saturday 5 September (From 12 noon)

Plans are in the early stages of development for this event. To date, two teams have already registered their interest in entering a kart. Officers have invited previous participants to take part again this year and will promote the event to charities, not-for-profit organisations and community groups via email and visits to local businesses to encourage sign-up. The event will be promoted via an advert placed in the April edition of Talk of the Town alongside social media call outs.

3. SPONSORSHIP

3.1 The Events Officer has been working on sponsorship for this year's Events Programme. The following events and elements have been sponsored by Penrose Estate Agents in Dunstable.

- Party in the Park
- Christmas Tree and Torchlight Procession
- Ashton Square Christmas Tree

3.2 The Events Officer will continue seeking sponsorship for the remaining 2026/27 Events programme. A sponsorship package has been promoted on the website, on Facebook and will be advertised in the April edition of Talk of the Town.

4. FREE USE OF GROVE THEATRE

4.1. Dunstable has two free uses a year of Grove Theatre per year, from April to March. These opportunities are usually offered to the community and voluntary sector and are promoted through social media pages and the Town Council's website.

4.2. The Council has been approached by Dunstable Musical Theatre Company, who are seeking use of the venue for a performance of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* on Friday 16 October 2026. The performance will once again include adults and children/young people from in and around Dunstable, both on stage and backstage.

4.3. The constitution of Dunstable Musical Theatre Company states that its purpose is to provide entertainment to the people of Dunstable. It is the only performing arts

community group based in the town, and its free use would benefit both its local members and residents attending the performance.

4.4. Members are asked to approve this request. No other requests have been received.

5. AUTHORS

5.1 Gina Thanky – Events Officer
Gina.thanky@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2026

TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

Purpose of report: For information

1. MIDDLE ROW MARKETS

1.1. Bookings are open for Middle Row Markets in 2026. Young traders are being invited to re-register for the Young Traders Programme. Middle Row Markets has 27 markets planned for the year, including 17 event markets. The first market of 2026 will take place on Saturday 14 March, and will be a Mother’s Day event market.

1.2. Market bookings to date:

14 March	28 booked
21 March	24 booked
11 April	10 booked
18 April	13 booked

1.3. Event markets are booked for Saturday 14 March - Mother's Day, Saturday 21 March - Easter Market and Saturday 18 April - St George’s Day.

2. ASHTON SQUARE TOILETS

2.1. As part of the Loo of the Year award 2026 recommendations, officers will be adding shelving to the baby changing toilets and hooks on the doors. The Sunday deep clean has now been implemented by the Town Rangers and is having a positive effect on the toilets. A QR code is being used to record the daily cleans by the Town Rangers.

2.2. Dunstable Town Council will be applying again for Loo of the Year award 2026/27. Officers are confident that the toilets will be able to regain a Platinum award.

3. TOWN CENTRE

3.1. Markets will take place on 14 March and 21 March, with both dates hosting event markets. The first event, held on 14 March, will be a Mother’s Day Market. Activities will include free flowers for mums, craft activities for children, and a bath salt–making workshop. Live music has been booked, featuring local singers

who previously performed at the Twilight Markets. The second event, on Saturday 21 March, will be the Easter Market. Free activities will include face painting, a bunny hunt, and crazy golf. Officers are also supporting More Than Board Games, a community interest company, which will offer members of the public the opportunity to try tabletop and board games during the market.

- 3.2. More Than Board Games is working in partnership with Middle Row Markets to enhance the overall market experience for the community. Officers will provide three gazebos and tables to enable the organisation to host free board and tabletop gaming sessions throughout the event. More Than Board Games is also part of the Young Traders Programme and will receive discounted stalls throughout the year as part of ongoing support for the programme.
- 3.3. Street Food Heroes will take place on The Square on Thursday 19 March. The Town Centre Manager and Trainee Town Centre Assistant will attend the first Street Food Heroes event to help promote. Street Food Heroes will then continue on the third Thursday of each month until September.
- 3.4. Officers are working with local businesses to secure sponsorships for Middle Row Markets and associated events. The Christmas tree has once again been sponsored as part of the Torchlight event. Officers are also progressing discussions to secure sponsorship for the Young Traders Programme, with the aim of confirming a sponsor by the end of February.
- 3.5. The Town Centre team has booked a stand at the next job fair at the Methodist Church on Wednesday 25 March, from 2 pm to 3.30 pm, to promote Middle Row Markets as a start-up business opportunity. Officers will be on hand to provide support and information about opportunities for Young Traders and for those looking to take their hobby to the next stage.
- 3.6. The Town Centre footfall count will take place on Friday 6 March and Saturday 7 March to continue with the footfall information that has been collected over the past 16 years.

4. VACANCY RATES

- 4.1. The vacancy rates to the end of January 2026 are provided below. The count will be undertaken again at the start of April 2026.
- 4.2. The town centre area used for the survey includes properties in High Street North up to Regent Street, High Street South to Friars Walk (excluding Thames Industrial Estate), Church Street up to and including Aldi and West Street up to the Police Station/St Mary's Gate.
- 4.3. Eleanor's Cross, Ashton Square, Albion Street, The Quadrant and Grove Park (including Asda) have been included but rates can be calculated with or without these properties.

- 4.4. These figures have been shared with Central Bedfordshire Council officers:

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
253	30 vacant	11.85%	11.46% count end of Oct 25.

- 4.5. The following figures relate to the High Street (including Grove Park, Albion Street, Eleanor's Cross and Ashton Square but excluding the Quadrant Shopping Centre:

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
210	27 vacant	12.85%	11.90% count end of Oct 25.

- 4.6. The following figures relate to the Quadrant Shopping Centre only:

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
43	3 vacant	6.97%	9.30% count end of Oct 25

- 4.7. Units in Grove Park area and Asda:

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
6	0 vacant	0%	0% count end of Oct 25

5. TOWN CENTRE BUSINESS PLAN

- 5.1. Year three of the Business Plan will be implemented this year. Bites on The Square will remain on officers' agenda, with a focus on growing the event and exploring opportunities to attract additional food vendors for the Wednesday markets. In 2026, officers will also arrange entertainment to support the Wednesday traders. Middle Row Markets will host 17 event markets and aims to achieve its third-year target of an average of 35 stalls across both regular and event markets. Officers will support Middle Row traders in expanding their businesses and, where appropriate, moving into town centre units as they become available. Officers will also work alongside community groups to encourage participation in Middle Row Markets and build confidence in using the area for larger community events.

6. THE PREMISES OF CONCERN TASKING GROUP

- 6.1. Town Council officers established a premises of concern tasking group which has identified six premises in Dunstable Town centre. Departments within CBC will review these to establish what action is or could be taken. Trading standards have a number of enforcement activities planned in March. CBC also arranged meetings with the key commercial letting agents in the town to help them understand the problems that are generated when premises are let without due diligence, and the potential ramifications this can have on the landlords

themselves. It is hoped that this will deter letting agents from advising their clients to simply take the lettings offer and consider the wider picture.

- 6.2. Both Historic England and Central Bedfordshire Council planning have been in contact regarding the future of number 4 High Street South. Discussions continue.
- 6.3. Officers are working with Planning Enforcement regarding 7 Queensway Parade. The business has until the 14 February to appeal or submit a new planning application. Planning is considering formal enforcement action, but this is a lengthy process, so it is anticipated that the business will continue to trade, until a formal conclusion is reached.

7. **CHRISTMAS LIGHTING SCHEME**

- 7.1 The Town Centre Manager has met with Lamps and Tubes regarding the removal of the festoon lighting in Grove House Gardens, as it is no longer functioning. Replacement bulbs have been installed in the Middle Row festoon lighting, and the entrance lighting at Eleanor's Cross has also been replaced
- 7.2 **Dunstable Christmas Lighting Scheme 2026–2030** The lighting tender is due to finish with Lamps and Tubes at the end of March 2026. A new tender was issued to cover the period 2026 to 2030 (inclusive). Following the tender process, Lamps and Tubes were successful in securing the new contract and will work closely with officers to ensure the additional gateway schemes are ready for 2026.

8. **AUTHOR**

- 8.1 Annette Clynes – Town Centre Manager
Annette.clynes@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2026

PRIORY HOUSE

Purpose of report: For information only
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1. UPDATE

- 1.1 A Wedding Open Day was held at Grove House on Saturday 14 February. The event was very well attended and received positive feedback from visitors. Interest levels were high, and the event generated several enquiries. A more detailed verbal update will be provided to the committee.
- 1.2 Two weddings are now confirmed for Grove House taking place in March and May. There has been a lot of interest and enquiries are coming in daily since launching.
- 1.3 Officers have ordered a selection of new stock items for the shop, including sunglasses, umbrellas, and an expanded range of jewellery. These items have proved popular with customers and have been selling well since their introduction. Frenchic paint has also started to start selling well again.
- 1.4 Officers are now in the process of developing a spring menu, with a view to transitioning into lighter summer options, seasonal drinks, and a new range of fresh fruit smoothies, something customers have asked for.

2. PRIORY HOUSE REFURBISHMENT

- 2.1 RIBA Stage 2 of the exhibition project has now been successfully completed, marking an important milestone in the overall development and planning process. This stage has enabled the project team to further refine the design approach, review interpretation themes, and ensure that the exhibition aligns with both heritage requirements and visitor engagement objectives.
- 2.2 The external hoarding and scaffolding are scheduled to be removed this month. The existing railings will also be temporarily removed to allow for a comprehensive inspection and to carry out any repairs and restoration.
- 2.3 Works to bays two and three are currently underway, with the stone masons carrying out conservation and repair works. The archaeologists are continuing to visit site, monitoring the works and carrying out investigations where needed to ensure any significant findings are properly recorded and preserved.
- 2.4 The gift shop will be temporarily closed from Monday 16 March to Wednesday 18 March to allow for the installation of a new fire alarm and fire suppression system. These essential works are being carried out to improve safety and ensure compliance

with current regulations. Subject to works being completed as scheduled, the shop is expected to reopen on Thursday 19 March.

- 2.5 Advance notice will be provided to the public through social media channels, along with clear signage displayed in the shop prior to the closure, to ensure visitors are fully informed and disruption is kept to a minimum.
- 2.6 Plans for community engagement associated with the repairs are ongoing and will be linked to the Town Council’s existing events. It is also anticipated that there will be some tours of the building as part of Heritage Open Days, but before the house is reopened to the public. Officers have liaised with the History Society, the Friends of Priory House and Gardens and the project team to pull together content for a time capsule that is being installed in bay three of the vaults.

3. FINANCIAL

3.1 GIFT SHOP TAKINGS (EX VAT)

	2024/25	2025/26	Variation 2024/25 to 2025/26
April	£1,759.75	£267.05	-£1,492.71
May	£2,426.56	£180.48	-£2,246.08
June	£2,667.56	£174.70	-£2,492.86
Total 1st quarter	£6,853.87	£622.22	-£6,231.65
July	£1,596.00	£121.12	-£1,474.88
August	£2,146.28	£134.69	-£2,011.59
September	£2,098.07	£397.64	-£1,700.43
Total 2nd quarter	£5,840.35	£653.45	-£5,186.90
October	£1,375.27	£501.76	-£873.51
November	£1,603.30	£2,742.14	£1,138.84
December	£2,566.04	£2,763.79	£197.75
Total 3rd quarter	£5,544.61	£6,007.68	£463.07
January	£1,234.43	£877.11	-£357.32
TOTAL	£19,473.25	£8,160.46	-£11,312.79

- 3.2 December sales were very encouraging, with the new range of Christmas gifts performing strongly and receiving positive customer feedback. Additional product lines, including dog coats, TY Beanies, hats and gloves, contributed to increased income and helped broaden the shop’s overall offer compared to the previous year.

3.3 January sales were impacted by an additional week of closure to allow for essential building works to take place within the shop. This closure has significantly contributed to a reduction in income compared to the same period last year.

3.4 PRIORY TEA ROOMS TAKINGS (EX VAT)

	2024/25	2025/26	Variation 2024/25 to 2025/26
April	£1,697.99	£418.76	-£1,279.23
May	£2,418.64	£792.88	-£1,625.76
June	£1,990.93	£709.94	-£1,280.99
Total 1st quarter	£6,107.56	£1,921.58	-£4,185.98
July	£2,932.83	£196.00	-£2,736.83
August	£2,575.21	£0.00	-£2,575.21
September	£1,746.55	£189.00	-£1,557.55
Total 2nd quarter	£7,254.59	£385.00	-£6,869.59
October	£1,126.12	£355.87	-£770.25
November	£839.05	£756.73	-£82.32
December	£101.19	£898.18	£796.99
Total 3rd quarter	£2,066.36	£2,010.78	-£55.58
January	£0.00	£477.98	£477.98
Total 4th quarter			
TOTAL	£15,428.51	£4,795.35	-£10,633.16

3.5 Food sales performed very well in December, with the gift shop continuing to establish itself as a popular lunchtime destination. Many customers now regularly visit to purchase lunch and meet friends, which has helped strengthen repeat footfall and community engagement.

3.6 As expected, January was significantly quieter. In addition to a planned week of closure, colder weather conditions reduced overall footfall, particularly impacting visitors to Priory House and those walking through that part of town during colder periods.

4. AUTHOR

4.1 Lisa Stephens – Cultural Services Manager Lisa.stephens@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2026

GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Purpose of report: For information

1. GROVE CORNER FIGURES

- 1.1. Grove Corner received 119 visits from young people between 11 December 2025 and 3 February 2026. Eleven new young people have signed up over this time.
- 1.2. Grove Corner received 315 visits from young people between 11 December 2024 and 7 February 2025.
- 1.3. Pokémon received 88 visits from young people between 16 December 2025 and 3 February 2026.
- 1.4. Pokémon received 163 visits from young people between 17 December 2024 and 4 February 2025.
- 1.5. Officers are aware that both Grove Corner and Pokémon are currently quieter than this time last year. Every few years, officers see the same pattern happen, where a cohort of young people move on, or outgrow the sessions, or begin to attend different clubs and have new hobbies. Therefore, officers are currently busy promoting sessions, conducting consultation, and exploring session times and ages, with the view to trial a change in these to see if this attracts more people, based on feedback that has been received.
- 1.6. Officers plan to trial a change in session times and ages in the first half of the summer term, with the aim that if this is popular and successful, these changes will be implemented permanently from September.

1.7. Officers are currently planning to change some of the session times or ages for the centre based youth work, based on observation and feedback that has been received. Officers are currently noting that the detached youth work, is reaching the older cohort of young people, and once a young person outgrows Junior Youth Club, they may struggle with the transition to move to a different session running from Grove Corner. Therefore, officers are proposing to run the following sessions during the first half of the summer term to September:

- Mondays, 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm – drop-in session for young people aged 13 to 18
This remains the same.
- Tuesdays, 5 pm to 6.30 pm – Pokémon session for young people aged 8 to 14 (term time only)
This remains the same.
- Tuesdays, 6.45 pm to 8.15 pm – SEND Friendly rebranded session for young people aged 15 to 18 (up to 25 SEND) (term time only)
Just a change in the session theme.
- Wednesdays, 3.30 pm (straight after primary school ends flexible) to 5.30 pm – summer term transition to secondary school group for young people aged 10 to 12.
Theme and age change and removal of second session.
- Fridays, 4 pm to 5.30 pm – Drop-in (co-designed session) for young people aged 13 to 18
This remains the same.
- Fridays, 6.45 pm to 7.45 pm – Junior Youth Club for young people aged 10 to 13
This remains the same.

1.8. The main change for this proposal is that the second session on a Tuesday is no longer a Pokémon themed session but becomes a SEND friendly session, based on current uptake and need, and Pokémon no longer being as popular for this age cohort.

1.9. The second change will be to sessions on Wednesday. Currently, there are two sessions on a Wednesday, 3.30 pm to 5 pm for young people aged 16 to 18 – this is currently reaching limited young people, who access provision throughout the week, and the second session running from 5.15 pm to 6.45 pm. However, officers are proposing to remove the second session on a Wednesday evening, due to current take up on a Wednesday being very low, despite officers promoting sessions and attending schools to promote sessions, and providing a detached youth work session at this time instead, to meet the need and demand of young people in the town in an alternative way.

- 1.10. To ensure that young people continue to have evening support from youth workers, the detached team will run three sessions per week:
- Monday from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm
 - Wednesday from 3.15 pm to 5.15 pm
 - Thursday from 4 pm to 6 pm
- 1.11. The team will continue to engage with 12 to 19 year olds (up to 25 SEND) in the places and spaces that young people are spending their time, where young people still want to access youth workers.

2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- 2.1. Officers have been working with The Chiltern School, to promote Grove Corner, and staff from the school have brought small groups of young people to use the centre. Officers have spoken with the team from the school, to explore ways to encourage their students to independently attend Grove Corner during the drop-in sessions.
- 2.2. Officers are currently working with the young people who attend Grove Corner to think about internet safety and have been providing informal education to explore ways in which young people can keep themselves safe online, and to think about age ratings on different games and apps.

3. DETACHED YOUTH WORK

- 3.1. Between 11 December 2025 and 3 February 2026, officers have delivered 10 detached activities and engagement sessions across Dunstable, excluding Dunstable East. The areas covered include Priory Gardens, Ashton Square, Dunstable Cemetery, Downside estate, Brewers Hill Recreation Ground, Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground, The Quadrant, Eleanor's Cross, Spoodell and Mentmore Recreation Ground.
- 3.2. From 11 December 2025 to 3 February 2026, officers continue to deliver nine hours per week detached youth work across Dunstable East. Officers have continued to work with The Dunstable Centre, providing free sessions, one hour per session, three times per week. Officers also continue to visit White Lion Retail Park, Kingsbury Recreation Ground, Grove Skate Park, Grove House Gardens, Peter Newton Recreation Ground and Katherine Drive Shops
- 3.3. The funding for the Leisure Centre project ends on 31 March 2026. Therefore, officers are currently in discussions with Everyone Active, to see if there is an

opportunity for Dunstable Town Council to continue to match fund this project by providing youth workers for one hour per week, and Everyone Active to fund the hire of the hall, for this project to continue to some capacity, once a week. These discussions are currently ongoing, and members will be provided with an update once a decision is made.

- 3.4. Between 11 December 2025 and 3 February 2026, officers have engaged with 549 young people by headcount. 389 of these young people have been within Dunstable East and the remaining 160 have been within the rest of the town. 41 new young people have signed up over this time.
- 3.5. Between 11 December 2024 and 7 February 2025, officers engaged with 363 young people by headcount. The increased amount of young people that officers have engaged with, during the same time period, for this year, this may also be the reason why some sessions in Grove Corner are quieter, as the detached youth work, is reaching a different cohort of young people, and providing more choice for young people to attend provision that meets their needs and requirements.
- 3.6. It is worth noting that the youth team have had 756 interactions with young people between 11 December 2025 and 3 February 2026, through Centre-based youth work and detached youth work.
- 3.7. Officers have facilitated several activities over February half term. This included a trip to Orbital, a Go-Karting trip, a trip to Tokko in Luton to use their climbing wall and finally to the Leisure Centre for their Air X Inflatable. A verbal update will be provided at committee.
- 3.8. Officers continue to advertise the under 18s night happening on Tuesday 31 March. Tickets have begun to sell, and officers anticipate ticket sales will pick up as it gets closer to the event.
- 3.9. Officers will be conducting internal interviews for the 16-hour post for the detached youth worker.
- 3.10. Officers have been conducting the managing change process with the Senior Detached Youth Worker – with this position becoming redundant from 1 April 2026. Officers will therefore be working with young people to support them in the managing change process, with detached youth work decreasing from five nights per week, to three nights per week.

SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

- 3.11. Officers have been facilitating several assemblies in recent weeks and have more booked in to deliver.
- 3.12. Officers delivered a whole school assembly to Queensbury Academy via Teams to promote the youth provision that Dunstable Town Council offers. Officers have also delivered assemblies to Weatherfield Academy, Beecroft Academy and St Augustine's academy.
- 3.13. Officers have approached Ashton St Peter about facilitating a litter pick in the second half of the spring term.
- 3.14. Officers were contacted by Lancot Academy and asked to run workshops on internet safety for children in year 4, 5 and 6. This was because of an assembly that officers delivered last year on internet safety, which the school expressed was extremely beneficial, and therefore contacted officers to return.
- 3.15. Officers have also contacted all high schools, and the college, to promote the under 18s night, and the college has also circulated information to their students regarding the events volunteer photographer opportunity.
- 3.16. Officers have been facilitating a weekly well-being project at Priory Academy, in partnership with Boxing Saves Lives. This project has been made possible due to external funding from Sports England. Twenty young people participate in the project weekly and learn boxing skills, as well as engaging in a weekly workshop around wellbeing. Different speakers attend each week to facilitate a session on the week's theme. This has been well received by both young people, and the school and officers were asked to deliver an additional one-off session to young people at the school who are unable to be in the mainstream provision.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. The Youth and Community Manager and Community Services Assistant met with a local CIC called Hands of Help. The aim of this group is to support young people to gain paid work experience in relation to food, and to also facilitate an intergenerational heritage food project. Once this project is ready to launch, officers will work with Hands of Help to see if this project can collaborate with lunch clubs and breakfast club.

- 4.2. A local resident contacted officers to borrow the litter picking equipment, to conduct a local litter pick with the walking group they belong to.
- 4.3. The Youth and Community Manager and Senior Neighbourhood Development Officer have completed and gained their Level 3 qualification in mental health first aid. Both staff members have completed training in this field and were given an opportunity to take a formal exam, to gain a qualification. This will benefit their roles within the community, as well as the town council, where both officers are mental health first aiders.

5. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

- 5.1. The four-year Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between Dunstable Town Council and various organisations are coming to an end. Members have agreed that organisations currently receiving funding may reapply for a further four-year SLA.
- 5.2. Officers will write to all current SLA holders to confirm whether they wish to reapply. Where the funded project is proposed to continue, applicants will be asked to explain why ongoing funding is required, what (if anything) they would do differently, and to provide an evaluation of the project to date.
- 5.3. Applicants will also be asked to state the amount of funding requested, up to a maximum of £2,000. It should be noted that not all current SLA holders receive the maximum amount.
- 5.4. In addition, organisations will be required to submit updated policies and procedures before new four-year SLAs are issued.

6. BENNETT'S SPLASHSIDE CAFÉ AND COMMUNITY HUB

- 6.1. Between 05 December 2025 and 03 February 2026, there have been 40 events organised. The activities that have been facilitated include:

- Breakfast Club – 7 sessions
- Adult Craft Club – 6 sessions
- Canine Coffee Club – 2 sessions
- Youth Café – 6 sessions
- Dunstable Croquet Club – 2 sessions
- Home Education – 15 sessions
- Elf on Shelf Christmas party – 1 session

- Christmas crafts - 1 session

6.2. Between 5 December 2025 and 3 February 2026, there have been four hirers. These have been build a bear session, detached youth, happy and active, and the breakfast club.

6.3. Officers have been supporting a local resident who is facilitating a weekly sustainable fashion project. The space was provided free of charge until the end of March. This project is attended by a core group each week. As part of this community development approach, officers have also met with other local groups, who have enquired about using the space. Officers are currently working with More Than Board Games CIC who are planning to facilitate sessions weekly on a Wednesday evening. Again, the space initially will be provided for free, to allow them to develop this project. Officers have also met with a local veteran who is speaking to his manager about using the space. Officers will work alongside these groups but will not deliver the activities to or for the groups.

6.4. Officers have been trialing the new café opening hours. Although there has not been a massive increase in footfall, it has allowed more community groups to use the space informally and enquire about using the space going forwards.

6.5. The table below shows a comparison between takings excluding VAT comparing 2024 to 2025/2026 covering December, January and February, up to 3 February 2026.

DECEMBER	2nd - 8th	£94.88	£131.48	£25.00		£10.00	£166.48	£71.60
	9th - 15th	£210.99	£235.38	£25.00		£77.08	£337.46	£126.47
	16th - 22nd	£343.54	£279.09	£25.00		£68.33	£372.42	£28.88
	23rd - 29th	CLOSED	£25.00	£15.00			£40.00	CLOSED
JANUARY	30th - 5th	£116.72	£71.71	£25.00			£96.71	£-20.01

	6th - 12th	£200.46	£185.31	£25.00		£10.00	£220.31	£19.85
	13th - 19th	£338.22	£188.60	£25.00	£0.83	£32.50	£246.93	£-91.29
	20th - 26th	£241.81	£208.62	£25.00		£45.00	£278.62	£36.81
	27th - 2nd	£327.46	£232.93	£25.00	£-	£3.75	£261.68	£-65.78

6.6. The table above shows that overall, the Café and Community Hub has increased its income over the last year. It is worth noting that, due to the way opening times fell this year, the cafe was open for a day and a half less than last year in the week 30 December to 5 January, therefore, it is likely this would have impacted on income.

6.7. In 2025, home education sessions were new and as such curiosity drove a lot of footfalls into the café as people explored a new initiative. However, this year despite regular conversations with attendees and polls online regarding what activities they would like to see at the café, the attendance for Home Education is less than this time last year.

6.8. Officers are currently working with local community groups, with the hope that once established, some of the initiatives will hire the venue, which will boost income at the café.

6.9. Currently, officers are preparing a poll to get feedback on menu items to drive sales moving into the busier season. During the February half term, officers will be facilitating some crafts activities available for people to drop in, which will be promoted on social media.

6.10. The home education sessions continue to be well attended; officers need to push for more café sales during them. Officers are routinely trying to up-sell, and activities are being facilitated based on feedback. Officers have changed communications methods with the adult craft club, to create a soft space for new members to meet people who attend before joining. It is hoped that this will steer the group into becoming more of a community owned initiative.

6.11. Officers will be interviewing for a 16-hour Catering Assistant at the Café and Community Hub. This role was advertised internally. Interviews take place on Monday 23 February.

7. AUTHORS

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2026

OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Purpose of report: For information

1. GOOD COMPANIONS CLUB

- 1.1. Good Companions Club currently has 22 members, and therefore, at present, there are two spaces available.
- 1.2. The group have spoken to officers to see if it would be possible to facilitate a trip to the seaside later in the year. Officers are now exploring this suggestion, with the hope of taking the group on a trip in the summer.
- 1.3. Good Companions Club continues to enjoy different activities. The group has been bowling, have taken part in scatterorgies and dominos, have been visited by Re-engage, Coop Estates, Weatherfield Academy and Beds Fire.
- 1.4. Officers will be taking Good Companions Club to Tring Garden Centre on Monday 2 March.
- 1.5. Officers have provided notice to Farmhouse catering, who will stop providing their services to the group at the end of March 2026. This was due to the proposed increase in weekly fees for the catering company. From 1 April 2026, catering will be facilitated by C:R Catering, who also cater for The Lunch Bunch.

2. THE LUNCH BUNCH

- 2.1. The Lunch Bunch continues to operate a waiting list, with the group currently having 38 members.
- 2.2. The Lunch Bunch returned to Priory View on Wednesday 4 February.
- 2.3. The group has had a variety of activities and speakers over recent weeks, including talks from Good Life Sorted, a Winter Warmth Talk and a local coach company promoting day trips. The group has also taken part in bingo scattergories and a quiz.

3. OVER 55s BREAKFAST CLUB

- 3.1. The over 55s breakfast club continues to be popular, with officers regularly receiving verbal feedback from those who attend about how they enjoy the sessions.
- 3.2. Officers will soon be reviewing the weekly fee for members who attend breakfast club, and will likely increase this slightly, due to the increasing price of food.

4. HAPPY AND ACTIVE TOGETHER

- 4.1. Happy and Active Together continues to be popular with those who attend. Officers will be working with the facilitators of both groups and will carry out consultation with those who have attended the sessions, to explore the option for the facilitators to continue to provide the activities, at a fee and for officers to step back. Currently, the sessions have been free due to external funding, but this is due to end at the end of March.

5. FOOD CLUB

- 5.1. The Food Club recently enjoyed a meal at Donna Maria's. The group have spoken highly about their enjoyment of the monthly meet ups and have expressed that new friendships have been formed. Officers will continue to support the group to arrange two more meet-up sessions and then will begin to hand over the organisation of sessions to those who attend.

6. ROCK AN' A ROLL

- 6.1. Rock an' a Roll took place on Tuesday 24 February, with 89 people attending. Entertainment was provided by The Wilsons and C:R Catering provided an afternoon tea style lunch. Officers plan to facilitate up to four Rock an' a Roll events in the new financial year.

7. COFFEE MORNINGS

- 7.1. Officers facilitated a coffee morning at St Mary's Church Hall on Tuesday 3 February. This was well attended, and officers did some informal consultation with those in attendance about recent barriers to people attending. The consensus was that people prefer it to be held in the morning, as opposed to an afternoon.

8. AUTHORS

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