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DUNSTABLE
TOWN COUNCIL

Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: **Friday, 19 June 2026**

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Full Council Meeting** will be held on **Monday 22 June 2026**, at Grove House in the Council Chamber at **7:00 PM.** To view the meeting live or afterwards use this link: livestream. Members of the public and press are also welcome to attend in person. Members of the public may ask a question during the public session, either in person or online via MS Teams. If you 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 19 June 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.

Table of contents

To: All Members of the **Full Council Meeting:**
Gregory Alderman (Council Member), John Gurney (Council Member), Johnson Tamara (Council Member), Kenson Gurney (Council Member), Mark Davis (Council Member), Matthew Brennan (Council Member), Matthew Neall (Council Member), Michelle Henderson (Council Member), Nicholas Kotarski (Council Member), Peter Hollick (Council Member), Philip Crawley (Council Member), Richard Attwell (Council Member), Robert Blennerhassett (Council Member), Sally Kimondo (Council Member), Shaun Moulster, Steve Collins (Council Member), Trevor Adams (Council Member) and Wendy Bater (Council Member)

AGENDA

202/26 Apologies for Absence

203/26 Declarations of Interest

204/26 Public Question Time

205/26 To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting

Held on 18 May 2026

206/26 To receive reports of the following Committees:

206.1/26 Community Services 1 June 2026

206.2/26 Grounds and Environmental Services 8 June 2026

206.3/26 Finance and General Purposes 15 June 2026

207/26 To receive a verbal update from the Dunstable Joint Committee held on 4 June 2026

208/26 Town Mayor's Remarks including Civic Events and Mayoral Activities

attached is a summary of events the Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended from 21 May to 15 June 2026

209/26 Proposed Motion from Councillor Richard Attwell (Town Mayor)

In the interests of promoting a more appropriate and unified civic leadership approach to the role of Deputy Mayor, and to better reflect the dignity, status and public expectations associated with the office, I propose that the relevant wording within the "Notes for the Guidance of the Town Mayor" be amended to reinforce the principle of a joint civic leadership team comprising both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Specifically, I propose that the wording contained within Point 8 of the Mayoral Handbook be amended to clarify that the Deputy Mayor is not required to seek the Mayor's approval before wearing the Deputy Mayor's Chain of Office when undertaking official civic duties.

This change would demonstrate a visible and much enhanced joint professional partnership at civic leadership level that better reflects the importance of the Deputy Mayor's office, promotes civic pride, and reinforces the principle of collaborative working between the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Specifically, I propose that guidance should now read:

8. *A) The Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress/Consort will be expected to attend all the annual civic functions and chains/badge of Office should be worn as appropriate. As a general rule the Deputy Mayor's chain/badge of Office should be worn at all the major annual civic events and for all full Council meetings* ***and when the Deputy represents the Mayor at official engagements and at all other events/receptions attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor together in an official capacity.***

By enhancing the recognition of the Deputy Mayor as an integral part of the town's civic leadership team, these changes would help ensure that the role is better presented and respected in a manner consistent with its expected status and responsibilities.

210/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26

210.1/26 To receive the final internal audit report for 2025/26

210.2/26 To approve the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements in the Annual Governance Return for 2025/26

211/26 To review membership of the New Cemetery Working Group

212/26 Reference up from Finance and General Purposes

213/26 To receive reports/updates by Members of Central Bedfordshire Council on matters of interest to the Town Council

214/26 Reports from Outside Organisations

Dunstable Rotary - Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairs of Community Services, Grounds and Environmental services and Finance and General Purposes
Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils - Councillor Kenson Gurney

215/26 Exclusion of Public and Press

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

216/26 Reference up from Grounds and Environmental Services

To Follow

217/26 Date of the Next Meeting

5 October 2026 at 7pm

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD AT DUNSTABLE CONFERENCE CENTRE, HIGH STREET NORTH

ON MONDAY 18 MAY 2026 FROM 7 PM

Present: Councillors Sally Kimondo (Retiring Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Retiring Deputy Town Mayor), Trevor Adams, Wendy Bater, Robert Blennerhassett, Matthew Brennan, Steven Collins, Philip Crawley, Mark Davis, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Michelle Henderson, Peter Hollick, Nicholas Kotarski, Shaun Moulster, Matthew Neall and Johnson Tamara with Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive)

Before the commencement of the meeting Reverend Julian Richards led the Council in prayer.

136/26 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR

It was proposed by Councillor Alderman, and seconded by Councillor John Gurney and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Richard Attwell be elected Town Mayor of Dunstable for the ensuing Municipal Year.

137/26 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The newly elected Town Mayor made the statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office and gave a short address to the Council. The Town Mayor signed the Form of Declaration, witnessed by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

The Town Mayor was presented with his robes and chain of office whilst Patricie Jurackova was presented with her Mayor’s consort badge.

138/26 VOTE OF THANKS FOR THE RETIRING MAYOR

It was proposed by Councillor Brennan and seconded by Councillor Bater and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Sally Kimondo be in receipt of the sincere thanks of the Council for the courteous, efficient, and admirable manner in which she had discharged the important and exacting duties of the office of Town Mayor of Dunstable during the Municipal year ended 18 May 2026.

Councillor Kimondo was presented with her past Mayor’s badge.

139/26 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS

There were no specific declarations of interest.

140/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor Gregory Alderman passed on apologies for the meeting.

141/26 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

It was proposed by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Crawley, and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Robert Blennerhassett be elected Deputy Town Mayor of Dunstable for the ensuing Municipal Year.

142/26 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The newly appointed Deputy Town Mayor made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and signed the Form of Declaration, witnessed by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

Councillor Blennerhassett was presented with the Deputy Mayor's chain whilst his consort received the Deputy Mayor's consort badge.

143/26 TOWN MAYOR'S CHAPLAIN

The Town Mayor was pleased to report that Reverand Ricky Turner, of St. Augustine's Church had agreed to be the Town Mayor's Chaplain for the ensuing Municipal Year.

144/26 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS ON STANDING COMMITTEES

And

145/26 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF STANDING COMMITTEES

RESOLVED: That the following Committees be appointed for the ensuing Municipal Year 2026/2027

RESOLVED: By the Members of each Committee in turn that the following Chairs and Vice-Chairs be appointed for the ensuing Municipal Year 2026/2027

Finance and General Purposes Committee	Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor (ex-officio), Councillors Alderman, Brennan (Deputy-Chair), Collins, Crawley, Davis, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Henderson, Hollick, Moulster, Neall, and Tamara (Chair)
Community Services Committee	Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor (ex-officio), Councillors Adams (Deputy-Chair), Alderman, Bater, Collins, Crawley, Davis, Kenson Gurney (Chair), Kimondo, Kotarski and Neall
Grounds and Environmental Services	Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor (ex-officio), Councillors Adams, Bater, Brennan, John Gurney, Henderson (Chair), Hollick, Kimondo, Kotarski (Deputy-Chair), Moulster and

Committee	Tamara.
Personnel Sub-Committee	Councillors Attwell, Henderson, Hollick, Kimondo, Kotarski, Neall and Tamara
Dunstable Joint Committee	Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor and Chairs of the three Standing Committees (Named substitutes: Vice-Chairs of the three Standing Committees)
Plans Sub-Committee	Councillors Attwell, Bater, Collins, Henderson, Kotarski, Moulster and Tamara

146/26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 March 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

147/26 TOWN MAYOR'S REMARKS

None

148/26 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

It was moved by Councillor John Gurney seconded by Councillor Collins, and

RESOLVED: That the representatives to serve on outside organisations be as follows:

Body	Representative
Observer at Development Committee (Central Beds)	Nicholas Kotarski
Dunstable International Town Twinning Assoc.	Richard Attwell, Kenson Gurney and Peter Hollick
South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Cttee	Peter Hollick
Citizens Advice Management Committee	Richard Attwell
Hospice at Home Management Cttee	Wendy Bater
Dunstable Town Band	Robert Blennerhassett
Dunstable District Scouts Trustee Board	Nicholas Kotarski
Ashton Schools Foundation	Gregory Alderman, Peter Hollick
Ashton Almshouses Charity	Gregory Alderman, Peter Hollick

Chews Foundation	Matthew Brennan, Kenson Gurney
Poor's Lands Charity	Wendy Bater, Johnson Tamara
Lockington Charity	Sally Kimondo, Johnson Tamara
Marshe Charity	Wendy Bater, Johnson Tamara
Dunstable Men in Sheds	Richard Attwell
BATPC	Kenson Gurney
Dunstable Pride	Matthew Brennan
Friends of Priory House and Gardens	Nicholas Kotarski

149/26 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 22 June 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 1 JUNE 2026

Present: Councillors Richard Attwell (Town Mayor), Kenson Gurney (Chair), Trevor Adams (Vice Chair), Gregory Alderman, Wendy Bater, Steven Collins, Nicholas Kotarski and Matthew Neall.

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager) and Gina Thanky (Events Officer).

In Attendance Remotely: Councillors John Gurney, Sally Kimondo and Johnson Tamara. Annette Clynes (Town Centre Manager)

Public: Nil

150/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

151/26 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

152/26 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from the public.

153/26 TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 2 MARCH 2026 AS AN ACCURATE RECORD

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 2 March 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

154/26 TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

The Town Centre Manager presented a detailed report on Town Centre initiatives including market bookings, Ashton Square Toilets, trader engagement, vacancy rates, and the Christmas lighting scheme.

Members noted that bookings for upcoming market events were rising, with strong participation anticipated for June events. The Committee also noted the positive feedback from recent town centre events, including Love Your Local Market and Bites on the Square.

In relation to Christmas lighting, officers advised that a full decision report with options would be presented in September for Christmas 2027.

155/26 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT DECISION REPORT

Councillor Sally Kimondo declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Hospice at Home on the basis that she is a trustee of that organisation. Councillor Kimondo attended the meeting online so was not physically present or able to vote, and did not speak during this item.

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

Members were advised that the existing four-year service level agreements with local organisations had reached, or were approaching, the end of their current term, and that the relevant organisations had provided evidence of the positive impact of the funding received.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the Council enter into the following four-year Service Level Agreements from budget 303 4321:

Organisation	**2027/28**	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**2030/31**	**Total (4 years)**
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC)	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£8,000
Dunstable Citizens Advice	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£8,000
Dunstable Town Band	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£4,000
Dunstable Town Guides	£800	£800	£800	£800	£3,200
Total per year	**£5,800**	**£5,800**	**£5,800**	**£5,800**	**£23,200**

156/26 EAR MARKED RESERVES

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the key points in the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve the release of £12,325 from the ear marked reserve 322 – Older People's Day Care Service - for expenditure incurred specifically for their purpose.

157/26 GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Youth and Community Manager summarised the report.

Members noted ongoing projects at Bennetts Splash Cafe and Community Hub, including a sustainable fashion project hosted by a local resident, a formation of a group of park and cafe users to help plan a family event in September and noted that a 16-hour catering assistant had been recruited at Priory House.

158/26 OLDER PEOPLE SERVICES

The Youth and Community Manager summarised the report.

Members noted that the rising catering costs may exceed the allocated budget per person, which currently sits at £8.50 for a two-course meal. Officers were monitoring food wastage to help optimise those orders.

The over 55's breakfast club was at capacity with 20 members. The Chatty Cafe, aimed to provide additional social opportunities for those on the waiting list.

It was noted that coffee mornings have successfully connected isolated individuals with local groups which was positive for the residents.

All 175 tickets for the Big Lunch were allocated within several hours of the launch.

159/26 EVENTS

The Events Manager provided the report on recent and upcoming events in the Town.

St George's Day and Around the World events were extremely successful, with each of them having an estimated attendance of 3,000 – 4,000 visitors.

To date, 12 teams had entered the Soapbox Derby race, double the number of entrants from last year.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the proposed 2027/2028 events programme be approved.

160/26 PRIORY HOUSE

The Head of Community Services presented the report on Priory House.

Repair works were on schedule. Efforts were underway to increase community awareness through social media, events and collaborations with partners to raise community awareness on Priory House and its re-opening.

Creative Core were working with archaeologists and local partners to develop the interactive exhibition.

161/26 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

An update was provided in relation to Men in Sheds. Members noted that the organisation were preparing for a busy summer show season and continued to undertake commissioned work for the community.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was to be held on Monday 7 September 2026 at 7 pm.

Meeting closed at 7.55 pm

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 8 JUNE 2026 FROM 7 PM

Present: Councillors Richard Attwell (Town Mayor), Robert Blennerhassett (Deputy Town Mayor), Michelle Henderson (Chair), Nicholas Kotarski (Vice-Chair), Matthew Brennan, Sally Kimondo, Shaun Moulster and Johnson Tamara

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Jane Conway (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Katherine Doyle (Parks and Green Space Development Officer) Daniel Mott (Grounds Operations Manager), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager) and James Stenson (Cemetery Manager)

In Attendance Remotely: Councillors John Gurney and Peter Hollick

Public: Nil

171/26 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Trevor Adams, Wendy Bater, John Gurney and Peter Hollick

172/26 – Specific Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

173/26 - Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

174/26 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes from the meeting of the Grounds & Environmental Services Committee held on Monday 9 March 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

175/26 - To receive the minutes of the Meetings of Plans Sub-Committee meetings held on 16 March, 13 April and 11 May 2026.

RESOLVED: that the minutes from the Plans Sub-Committee meetings held on 16 March, 13 April and 11 May 2026 be received

176/26 - Action Tracker

Councillor Tamara entered the chamber at 7.04 pm

Members were informed that the CCTV camera within Priory Gardens was running and in use.

Members discussed the cleanliness of the town centre pavements. Officers undertook to review options for carrying out a jet washing programme.

ACTION: Head of Grounds and Environmental Services and Grounds Operations Manager

177/26 - Brewers Hill and Downs Road Recreation Grounds Management Plans

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services summarised the report which Members discussed in detail.

Members expressed concern that no clear timetable had been provided for renewing play areas. They asked for a more transparent priority order based on condition, usage and community need, rather than investment being directed to sites already performing well. Particular concern was raised about French's Avenue, which was considered to be in poor condition and in urgent need of improvement.

Members noted that play equipment was subject to regular inspections, including quarterly independent inspections, an annual insurance inspection, and ongoing visual checks. Grass cutting and general maintenance operated on a performance-based approach, ensuring areas were maintained to an acceptable standard.

It was agreed that officers would provide details of the full likely cost of renewing and replacing the Council's play areas in the next ten years. This would be provided to the Committee later in 2026.

Action: Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: that the draft management plans for Brewers Hill and Downs Road Recreation Grounds be adopted.

178/26 - Ear Marked Reserves

The committee received a recommendation to approve the release of Grounds and Environmental Services specific ear-marked reserves for expenditure due to be incurred specifically for their purpose.

Reserve	Balance at 30/04/2026 (excluding commitments)	Detail

331 – Tree Reserve	£24,861	For ongoing annual surveys / inspections and subsequent essential works
344 – Fencing Reserve	£14,088	For essential replacement and repair works

Members discussed the recommendation and the role of ear-marked reserves. It was noted that the Community Services Committee had approved a similar recommendation, but Members of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee had reservations in providing a blanket spending approval.

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: that the matter be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for further consideration.

179/26 - Parks and Recreation Grounds, Cemetery, Allotments, Town Centre Gardens and Rangers Services

The Grounds Operations Manager, Cemetery Manager and Parks and Green Space Development Officer summarised the report.

Members were informed that judging for Anglia in Bloom would take place on 22 July 2026 and Britain in Bloom would be 3 August 2026. Preparations were progressing well with the production of a submission portfolio and promotional film underway.

Members noted that Dunstable in Bloom had been shortlisted for the Environmental Award at the BBC Three Counties Make a Difference Awards.

180/26 - Reports from Outside Organisations

Central Bedfordshire Council (Development Committee)

Members noted that there had been no significant updates arising from recent meetings.

Friends of Priory House and Gardens

The AGM had been conducted in a straightforward manner. A presentation was delivered on community engagement and partnership working, highlighting the contribution of local groups to the town. The organisation continues to focus on fundraising and community involvement.

181/26 - Motion to exclude public and press

It was proposed, seconded and

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

182/26 - Vehicle Replacement Programme and Spending Approval

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report to members. The report was discussed in detail.

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED:

1.1. to authorise the release of an additional £75,000 from the Vehicle and Equipment Reserve for the purchase of a replacement Ride on Mower and Cemetery Digger.

1.2. to approve the reallocation of £35,000 from the same budget towards the purchase of a replacement ride-on mower and a new digger for the Cemetery. The previously approved £15,000 allocation for refurbishment of the existing cemetery to also be redirected towards the cost of replacing the digger.

183/26 - Removal of Unauthorised Memorial at Dunstable Cemetery

The Committee received a report summarised by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: to defer the matter to Full Council for decision.

184/26 - New Cemetery Development Progress Update

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report.

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: to approve the release of £12,725 from earmarked reserves towards the cost of the new cemetery development work.

185/26 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 5 October 2026 at 7 pm

The meeting closed at 9.37 pm.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 15 JUNE 2026 FROM 7 PM

Present: Councillors Robert Blennerhassett (Deputy Town Mayor), Johnson Tamara (Chair), Matthew Brennan (Vice-Chair), Gregory Alderman, Steven Collins, John Gurney, Peter Hollick and Shaun Moulster.

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

In Attendance: (Remotely) None

Public: None

186/26 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Richard Attwell (Town Mayor), Michelle Henderson, Kenson Gurney and Corrine Gilmore (Corporate Performance & Compliance Manager)

187/26 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest

188/26 - Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

189/26 - To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Monday 16 March 2026.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 16 March 2026 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

190/26 - Action Tracker

Members received and noted the Action Tracker.

191/26 - Finance Report

The Head of Corporate Services and RFO summarised the report.

RESOLVED: 1.1) To note the revenue budgetary position for the financial year 1 April to 31 March 2026
1.2) To note the Council's year end balances and earmarked reserves as of 31 March 2026
1.3) To note the Council's final Internal Audit for financial year 2025/26
1.4) To note the Treasury Management Policy
1.5) To note the current investments
1.6) To approve to spend from allocated earmarked reserve for the by-election on 14 May 2026
1.7) To note the request for information from the HMRC

192/26 - Compliance and Facilities Report

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

Members noted that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were to sign two License to Occupy agreements for rooms at Grove House, with the Hope Church and the History Society.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To recommend to Full Council to approve the updated Health and Safety Policy.

193/26 - Marketing and Communications Report

The Marketing and Communications officer summarised the report.

It was noted that residents living in particular flats had not been receiving Talk of the Town copies. Officers had advised checks would be carried out at the time of delivery to ensure that all residents would be receiving copies.

ACTION: The Marketing and Communications Officer

194/26 - Referral Report from Personnel Sub-Committee

Members received and discussed the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to adopt the Uniform Policy

195/26 - Dunstable Mayoral Fund

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive presented the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

1.1) In principle, to establish the Dunstable Mayoral Fund
1.3) To approve the fund giving policy for the charity
1.4) To approve the purpose of the charity as set out
1.5) To defer the decision as to the decision making process to the following meeting, pending further discussion.
"

196/26 - Review of Flag Flying Policy

The report was summarised by The Town Clerk and Chief Executive

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To install the Town Crest permanently on the second flagpole at the front of Grove House and for the Union flag to be installed permanently on the main flagpole except for designated days for marking particularly occasions with other flags.

197/26 - Referral Report from Grounds and Environmental Services

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Services and RFO summarised the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve the release of Grounds and Environmental Services specific ear-marked reserves for expenditure due to be incurred specifically for their purpose, i.e. from the following reserves:

Reserve	Balance at 30.04.2026 (excluding commitments)	Detail
331 – Tree Reserve	£24,861	For ongoing annual surveys / inspections and subsequent essential works
344 – Fencing Reserve	£14,088	For essential replacement and repair works

198/26 - Reports from Outside Organisations:

Citizen's Advice Management Committee – no update

Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – Councillor Hollick advised members that a Twin Towning exchange visit was due to take place on the coming Thursday to celebrate an anniversary of their twinning committee.

Hospice at Home Management Committee – no update

Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillor Alderman advised an update would be provided to the next meeting

Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillor Alderman advised an update would be provided to the next meeting

Chew's Foundation – Councillor Brennan updated members that the charity had school uniform grants totalling up to £11,175 gratified at the meeting to aid local families to be able to purchase school uniform, computers etc.

Poor's Land Charity – no update

Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity – no update

Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive – no update

Friends of Priory House and Gardens – no update

199/26 - Motion to exclude public and press

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

200/26 - Honorarium

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That a nonconsolidated honorarium payment be made as recommended.

201/26 - Date of the next meeting

Monday 21 September 2026 at 7 pm

The meeting closed at 8:34 pm

Date	Organisation	Event	Venue	Comments
21.05.26	Dunstable F.C. Walking Football Club	Dementia Walking Football Event	Dunstable Leisure Centre	A wonderful first event for me to attend as Mayor. So inspiring to see Dunstable FC along with many other support organisations run such a fabulous event for people with special needs. Walking football helps in so many different ways by nurturing friendships, preventing loneliness, and keeping fit all whilst improving dexterity and mental health. It meant so much to those in attendance and gave me a chance to get involved, pull on my shirt and play with them. A very powerful, humbling and rewarding event.
22.05.26	Dunstable Sea Cadets	Awards Night	The Old Mill, West Street, Dunstable	A very proud moment in support of the Sea Cadets and to present their well deserved awards, along with an extremely professional drill formation display. A wonderful opportunity to celebrate the successes of young people in our town and for me to show my support and appreciation.
28.05.26	UK Curry Connect	UK Curry Championships	Central Beds College, Dunstable	A unique experience to attend this National Championship with Master Chef's from all over the country competing to become the 'National Chef of the year'. It was such a privilege to see the chef's battling it out against the clock in the kitchen to produce some amazing dishes with presentation and taste all being judged by Michelin awarded chefs. A truly inspiring culinary experience.
01.06.26	Dunstable Town Council	Good Companions Club	The Beecroft Community Centre	A wonderful opportunity to attend the Good Companions Club and thank the volunteers who do such amazing work for the elderly residents that attend during volunteering week. It was such a pleasure to talk to all those in attendance and see how much the club means to them. It was clearly very much appreciated and equally as rewarding for me.
01.06.26	Dunstable Town Council	1st Anniversary of Community Lottery	Grove House	A great occasion to support and celebrate the 1st Anniversary of the Community Lottery, to hear how it has grown and the difference such support has already made to the charities concerned.
04.06.26	Dunstable Town Council	Visit By Group From Our Twin Town of Porz	Grove House	A rewarding opportunity to welcome a contingent of guests from one of our twin towns, to give them an insight into the history of our town and my role as Mayor along with a tour of Grove House and a tour around town to see the sights of our historic buildings and wonderful award winning gardens.

Date	Organisation	Event	Venue	Comments
05.06.26	Nevilles Funeral Service	5th Anniversary	High Street South	It was a real pleasure to attend and show my support to a business who has provided a vital service to our town, to see the facilities, learn the history of the company and the sympathetic extent of the respectful services they provided to our community.
05.06.26	Luton & South Beds Samaritans	60th Anniversary	33 Cardiff Road, Luton	A very humbling event to celebrate the wonderful volunteers and vital work carried out by the Luton & Beds Samaritans along with some wonderful stories and memories from long standing staff regarding the work that they do.
06.06.26	Dunstable Quadrant	Anniversary Celebration	The Quadrant, Dunstable	A proud moment to officially open the Quadrant Shopping Centres 60th anniversary celebrations and the contribution it has made to serving our town. To cut the fabulous cake, take part in all the celebration activities and to personally visit some of the shops to thank them for their contribution to our town, especially Hind's The Jewellers and Boots who are the only 2 founding member shops still left from when Bob Monkhouse opened the Quadrant Shopping Centre 60 years ago.
06.06.26	Newport Pagnell Town Council	Vintage Event	Bury Common, Newport Pagnell	A fabulous fun event which was vintage themed to D-Day along with characters in period consume, performers, solo singers and an incredible children's choir who were absolutely amazing. There was even a chance to meet a very convincing double of Winston Churchill with personality, voice and even the legendary cigar to match.
07.06.26	Harpenden Town Council	Civic Service	St Nicholas' Parish Church, Harpenden	A highly enjoyable civic service attended in support of the Mayor of Harpenden as one of our local towns. The choir of St Nicholas Parish Church were particularly notable with the power and angelic nature of their wonderful singing and harmony, a true joy to behold.
09.06.26	Dunstable Town Council	Planting Event In the Quadrant Shopping Centre	The Quadrant, Dunstable	A great opportunity to assist Dunstable Town Council and Dunstable in Bloom with planting up 20 containers with an array of colourful bedding plants to enhance our town and make a small contribution towards the floral displays in readiness for the Anglia and Britain in bloom competitions.

Date	Organisation	Event	Venue	Comments
13.06.26	Dunstable Town Council	Car Rally	Priory Gardens, Dunstable	An absolutely incredible day. The day started with the wonderful opportunity to ride in one of the lead lorries of the truck convoy into town which was an amazing experience, to see the size of the crowds lining both sides of the road and the joy it brought to the faces of young and old alike will long live in my memory and was a very powerful emotional experience. The Car Rally itself was an incredibly successful event with the most amazing array of cars to the highest standard which left the judging along with my Deputy Mayor a very difficult task. With many side events and attractions for children to enjoy along with a full market and wonderful weather to match this really was a incredible event for all to enjoy which was reflected in the record number of people in attendance. An event run with exceptional organisation and one that will long be remembered.
13.06.26	High Sherrif of Bedfordshire	Garden Party	Tudor House, Ravensden, Milton Keynes	A wonderful opportunity to attend such a magnificent event held by the High Sherrif of Bedfordshire in thanks and appreciation to those in public service within the county.
14.06.26	School of Performing Arts Dunstable (PAD Centre)	Talents Showcase	Grove Theatre	An excellent showcase of the wonderful talents of young people in our town. The levels of professionalism and performances were literally outstanding. A very proud moment and very memorable event.
15.06.26	The Beds College Group	FE Student Awards Ceremony	Central Bedfordshire College	Yet another celebration of the talents and skills of young people in our town. A chance to reward the outstanding achievements of the students who have excelled with their education and skills and who have gone above and beyond in their attitude, dedication and hard work. A very inspiring and proud moment in celebrating our students and the talents of the college teaching staff.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 22 JUNE 2026

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2025/2026

Purpose of report:	To
	1.1) Present to Members the final Internal Audit Report for financial year 2025/2026 1.2) To approve the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements 1.3) To authorise the Chair and Clerk to sign the Annual Governance Statement 1.4) To authorise the Chair to sign the Accounting Statements 1.5) To note the schedule of loans and long-term liabilities

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1. To receive and note the Internal Audit Report (final) for 2025/2026 at Appendix 1, also presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 15 June 2026.

1.2. To approve the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2026, for submission to the Council's external auditor, in compliance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (S1 2015/234) as presented at Appendix 2.

1.3. To authorise the Chair and Clerk to sign the Annual Governance Statement.

1.4. To authorise the Chair to sign the Accounting Statements.

1.5. To note the Council's loans and long-term liabilities as at 31 March 2026 as presented at Appendix 3.

2. INTERNAL AUDIT

2.1 The final Internal Audit for financial year 2025/2026 took place on 29 May 2026 and Members will be pleased to note that the Internal Auditors' report concludes that *'we are satisfied that the Council has continued to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal control. The records held in support of the accounting transactions were of a high standard and provided an effective audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation'.* The final Internal Audit Report, appended to this report (Appendix 1) was also presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 15 June 2026.

3. ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT REGULATIONS 2015

3.1. The Council is required to follow the regulations set out in the Practitioners' Guide as issued by the Smaller Authorities' Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) to support the preparation of the statutory annual accounting and governance required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. For the purposes of Section 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, Dunstable Town Council qualifies as a "smaller relevant body" being that its gross income or gross expenditure was not more than £6.5 million and can therefore prepare an income and expenditure account and a statement of balances in accordance with, and in the form specified by the regulations.

3.2. The Regulations state that "A smaller relevant body must, no later than 30th June – a) consider the accounting statements by the members meeting as a whole;
b) following that consideration, approve the accounting statements for submission to the auditor by a resolution of the body and
c) following approval, ensure that the accounting statements are signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting at which that approval was given

4. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

4.1. The Annual Return comprises:
- Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/2026
- Annual Governance Statement 2025/2026 (Section 1)
- Accounting Statements 2025/26 (Section 2)
- External Auditor Report and Certificate (Section 3)

4.2. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) is enclosed at Appendix 2 and will be submitted to the External Auditor with the requisite supporting information once approved by the Council

Annual Internal Audit Report

4.3. The Council should receive and note the internal audit report prior to approving the annual governance statement before approving the accounts.

4.4. The Council's Internal Auditor has duly completed the relevant part of the Annual Return, assigning positive assurances in all areas. Their full report is included at Appendix 1.

Annual Governance Statement

4.5. The Council is required to consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return, in which members acknowledge their responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control.

4.6. The statement can be evidenced by the Internal Audit Reports provided throughout the year and the final Internal Audit Report, from which it will be noted that there are no issues arising which require Members' attention.

4.7. Evidence also includes the quarterly financial reports submitted to Finance and General Purposes Committee.

4.8. The Council maintains a Corporate Risk Log which is reviewed by the Council each year. The Risk Log identifies the main strategic risks facing the Council and what interventions are currently in place in order to contain and minimise the risks. The Risk Log was reviewed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 6 October 2025 (Minute no. **224/25**).

4.9. The Council has adopted a Corporate Plan detailing the Council's objectives up until 2027.

4.10. If approved, the Annual Governance Statement will be signed by the Chair and Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

External Auditor Report and Certificate

4.11. Section 3 of the Annual Return is for completion by the External Auditor on completion of the audit.

5. EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS

5.1. The Council is required to provide electors with the opportunity to inspect the accounts and other documents for a period of 30 working days which must include the first 10 working days of July.

5.2. The exercise of public rights commences on 24 June 2026 and will end on 4 August 2026.

5.3. All statements will be published on 24 June 2026 together with a summary of Electors' Rights.

6. SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL RETURN

6.1. The Annual Return is to be submitted to the External Auditor by 30 June 2026.

6.2. The Council's appointed auditors are Forvis Mazars LLP.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1. These are inherent within the content of this report.

8. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

8.1. The recommendations align with the Council's Financial Regulations.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS - none

10. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS - none

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS- none

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1. The report and recommendations have been prepared in compliance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (S1 2015/234).

13. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS – none

14. APPENDICES

14.1. Final Internal Audit Report for financial year 2025/2026 – Appendix 1

14.2. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/2026 – Appendix 2

14.3. Schedule of loans and long-term liabilities at 31 March 2026 – Appendix 3

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/234/pdfs/uksi_20150234_en.pdf

15.2. Practitioners' Guide 2025

16. AUTHOR

Lisa Scheder – Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer
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Dunstable Town Council

Internal Audit Report (Final Update) 2025-26

2nd June 2026

Stephen Christopher

For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd

Background

All town and parish councils are required by statute to arrange for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control, and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Auditing Solutions Ltd was appointed to undertake this function on behalf of Dunstable Town Council for the 2025-26 financial year.

This report sets out the results of our final audit visit, which was undertaken on 29th May 2026. It updates the reports we issued in November 2025 and March 2026, following our interim audits. We wish to thank the Head of Corporate Services (RFO) and her colleagues for providing the documentation and explanations required to enable us to complete our audit work.

Internal Audit Approach

In carrying out our internal audit work, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Accounting Statements/AGAR. We employ a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks in key areas, in order to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls are appropriate and are fit for the purposes intended.

Our audit programme is designed to afford assurance that the Council's financial systems remain robust and operate in a manner which ensures effective probity of transactions and a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors, or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the AGAR, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

On the basis of the programme of audit work we have undertaken, we are satisfied that the Council has continued to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal control. The records held in support of the accounting transactions were of a high standard and provided an effective audit trail, with clear cross-referencing of all relevant documentation. We have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' on Page 3 of the 2025-26 AGAR, in which we have concluded that, in all significant respects, the control objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

In the sections below, we explain the objectives of each area of our audit, summarising the work undertaken and our findings. We are pleased to report that there are no matters arising that require a formal recommendation. We ask that Members consider the content of this report.

Detailed Report

Accounting records and Banking arrangements

Our objective is to confirm that the accounting records are accurate and up to date, with no anomalous entries in the cashbooks or financial ledgers, and that appropriate banking arrangements are in place.

The Council maintains its accounting records using the RBS Omega software, which is generally acknowledged as one of the market leaders for this tier of local government.

Day-to-day business banking services continue to be provided by NatWest Bank. Two accounts are held, a Current Account and an instant access Business Reserve Account, with an automatic daily transfer between them to retain a balance of £10,000 in the Current Account. In addition to the Business Reserve Account, other funds that are not required for immediate use are held in a Public Sector Deposit Fund instant access account with CCLA Investment Management Ltd.

In the course of our audit work, we confirmed the following:

- Checked and agreed the opening trial balance on Omega for 2025-26 to the closing balances on the 2024-25 AGAR and the detailed accounts;
- Verified that the financial ledgers remained "in balance" throughout the year;
- Confirmed that the accounting code structure remains appropriate for the Council's budget reporting and control requirements;
- Checked and agreed transactions in the Omega cashbooks for the Current and Business Reserve accounts to the relevant NatWest bank statements for three sample months - September 2025, plus January and March 2026;
- Checked the bank reconciliations for all active bank account reconciliations, including the CCLA deposit, as at 31st October 2025, 31st January 2026 and 31st March 2026, confirming that there were no anomalous entries;
- Confirmed that the bank reconciliations continue to be subject to regular independent review by councillors, as part of the quarterly financial Councillor audit, and that the latest investment position is reported at each Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GP), as part of the RFO's 'Finance Report';
- Noted that the External Auditors finally issued their 'report and certificate' on the Council's 2024-25 AGAR on 9th December 2025 and that there were no matters arising;
- Confirmed that the overall cash balance has been reported correctly in the draft AGAR (Section 2, Box 8), and
- Confirmed that all IT systems are now regularly backed up to the Cloud by the Council's IT Support provider.

Conclusion

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

Corporate Governance

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place and that, as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain (as we do not attend Council or Committee meetings), all meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been, or are being, considered for implementation.

During the course of our audit work, we confirmed the following:

- Our review of the minutes of the meetings of the Full Council and its standing committees held during 2025-26 did not identify any issues that we consider might have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council's future financial stability.
- The Council has continued to keep its governance arrangements under regular review. We confirmed that amended Financial Regulations were considered by the F&GP Committee on 16th March 2026 and, together with updated Standing Orders, were formally reported to the subsequent Council meeting, on 30th March 2026, for review and adoption.
- A range of other policies and procedures remain in place and are reviewed on a regular basis. We have noted previously that a formal timetable for the review of all key policies and procedures is being developed and confirmed that this was still in progress at the year-end.
- The Council is aware of its responsibilities in relation to digital and data compliance and has taken appropriate steps to ensure that it can provide a positive response to the new 'Assertion 10' in the Annual Governance Statement of the 2025-26 AGAR. This has included the approval of updated Information Security and Data Protection policies by the F&GP Committee at its meeting on 22nd September 2025. The Head of Corporate Services (RFO) informed the F&GP Committee on 26th January 2026 that the Council already satisfies all relevant requirements and provided further detail in her Finance Report to the F&GP meeting on 16th March 2026.
- The Council continues to exercise the General Power of Competence. This was re-adopted at the first Annual meeting of the new Council on 15th May 2023 and will apply for the 4-year term to May 2027.

Conclusion

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

Expenditure

Our objective is to confirm that:

- Council resources are released in accordance with approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- Official orders have been raised for purchases, where appropriate;

- Any discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

To check compliance with the above criteria, we examined a sample of non-pay related payments across the year. Our test sample included all individual payments of more than £7,500, plus a random selection of every 80th payment as recorded in the Omega cashbook. The overall gross value of expenditure items covered in our sample amounted to £1,381,995. There were no matters arising.

The Council makes use of a NatWest Commercial Credit Card, which is used mainly for items such as internet purchases and subscriptions. During 2025-26, there were four users, each with a monthly expenditure limit of £2,000. (This has recently been reduced to three users). The Credit Card is settled monthly by direct debit. We reviewed the settlements made in September and December 2025, confirming that all purchases recorded on the statements were adequately supported by receipts and were appropriate to the Council's business, and that, where appropriate, VAT was accounted for correctly.

As part of our testing of expenditure, we also check, on a sample basis, to confirm that the Council is following appropriate national requirements and its own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations when entering into contracts that require formal tendering. During our first interim audit, we considered the approach followed in relation to the tender for the Priory House Exhibition & Interpretation Design Team. We confirmed that the national regulatory requirements had been followed, with the tender opportunity advertised on the Government's 'Find a Tender' website. Following an evaluation process, the award of the contract was formally approved at the Council meeting on 7th April 2025 and subsequently minuted. At our subsequent audit visits, we confirmed that appropriate arrangements had also been followed for three further tenders - Christmas lighting, re-covering of the Downside Community Centre roof and appointment of a contractor for the new cemetery development.

We confirmed that VAT Returns for the year were submitted quarterly in electronic format, as required by extant legislation, with the detail being reconciled to the Omega accounts. We have been advised by the Head of Corporate Services that HMRC has raised a query regarding the most recent quarterly return, due to the high value of VAT which is being reclaimed, and that she is currently in correspondence with them on this matter.

Conclusion

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

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

There is a requirement for the Council to formally review and approve its risk management arrangements during each financial year. We confirmed that this was done in 2025-26, with the Corporate Risk Management Report including the detailed 'Risk Log' being reapproved by the Council on 6th October 2025. Further amendments to the risk management arrangements were agreed by the F&GP Committee in March 2026 and these were approved by the Council at its meeting on 30th March 2026.

During 2025-26, the Council's primary insurance cover was provided by Zurich Municipal. The policy included Employer's Liability and Public Liability of £10 million, and Fidelity Guarantee cover of £2 million, which appeared adequate for the current needs of the Council.

As part of the wider health and safety arrangements, a regular programme of reviews of the Council's play areas and play equipment is undertaken. This includes daily and weekly inspections by the Council's own staff, with quarterly external inspections by the Play Inspection Company to check compliance with national regulatory standards.

The most recent external inspections were completed at the beginning of March 2026. From our review of the summary inspection report and discussion with the newly appointed Head of Grounds & Environmental Services, we confirmed that none of the issues identified were categorised as 'High Risk' and that the Grounds Maintenance team have been addressing the 'Medium Risk' and most significant 'Low Risk' issues, in order of priority.

In our first interim audit for 2025-26, we had noted that the detailed quarterly external inspection reports for each play area are available for Members to review, should they wish to do so, but that the results of the inspections were not routinely reported to Committee. The outgoing Head of Grounds & Environmental Services agreed that, going forward, the 'Information Report' presented to each Grounds & Environmental Services (G&ES) Committee meeting would include a reference to the more significant issues arising from the latest play inspections and the actions being taken to address them.

The results of the final quarterly inspections for 2025-26 were not received in time for the G&ES Committee meeting on 9th March 2026, but the 'Information Report' noted that they had taken place. We have confirmed that a report on the next round of quarterly inspections will be on the agenda for the G&ES Committee meeting in June 2026.

Conclusion

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

Budget Setting, Budgetary Control and Reserves

Our objective is to confirm that the Council has robust procedures in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and the level of Precept to be drawn down from Central Bedfordshire Council, and that an effective reporting and budget monitoring process is in place. We also consider whether the Council retains appropriate funds in earmarked and general reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

We reviewed the approach taken by the Council to setting its budget and Precept for 2026-27. We confirmed that, as in previous years, the budget process involved detailed consideration by the various committees, in particular F&GP, before the Precept was formally approved by the Full Council at its meeting on 9th February 2026. The Precept has been set at £3,622,546 (£3,282,168 for 2025-26), which represents a Council Tax charge of £265.63 per annum for a Band D property, an increase of 7.92% on the previous year.

We are satisfied that Members were provided with an appropriate level of information on which to base the budget decision, with comprehensive supporting documentation within the budget pack produced by the Head of Corporate Services (RFO) and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive. This included detailed consideration of future reserve requirements and the level of fees and charges that will apply in 2026-27.

During our audit visits, we also considered the information being provided to Members on progress against the 2025-26 budget. We confirmed that the F&GP Committee has continued to receive financial monitoring reports at each meeting, with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review.

At 31st March 2026, the Council's overall reserves stood at £2,118,420, which was slightly less than at the previous year end (£2,140,531). Of the total, Earmarked Reserves amounted to £1,552,704.95, compared to £1,547,338 at 31st March 2025. The most significant movement in the year was a reduction of £90,000 in the reserve held for the High Street Heritage Action Zone project, which has now ended. The remaining funds in that reserve are now being used towards the costs of ongoing works at Priory House. The existing reserve for Priory House and the Grove House reserve also reduced in the year, by £39,000 and £30,000 respectively, due to expenditure on those projects. New reserves have been established for essential roof repairs to the Grove House Gardens "Ranger Store" (£30,000) and support for the Detached Youth Service initiative (£31,000), with a further £44,000 set aside for Professional Fees.

The Council's remaining funds are held in the General Reserve. At 31st March 2026, the General Reserve balance stood at £565,715, compared to £593,193 at the previous year-end. This amount is in line with the Council's stated aim, set out in the Treasury Management Policy, of maintaining a minimum contingency balance equivalent to 25% of the annual salaries expenditure.

Conclusion

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

Income

The Council receives income from a variety of sources, including Dunstable Cemetery, the Allotments, Specialist Markets, Events, Bennett's Café & Community Hub, and from bank and deposit interest.

Our objective is to confirm that robust procedures are in place to ensure that all income due to the Council is identified and invoiced (where appropriate), with recovery effected within a reasonable time span, and also that it is banked promptly in accordance with the Financial Regulations. In the course of our 2025-26 audit, we undertook the following work in relation to income:

<u>*Fees and charges:*</u> We confirmed that the fees and charges for 2025-26 were approved by the

Council as part of the annual budget setting process, following detailed consideration by the F&GP Committee. We noted that a similar approach has been taken for 2026-27.

Banking of income: As noted earlier in this report, we checked and agreed three sample months' receipts transactions from the cashbook to the relevant bank statements, confirming the timeliness and accuracy of transactions.
Cemetery-related fees and charges: We reviewed the interment applications and other cemetery-related activities for a sample month (July 2025). We confirmed that, in all cases, the correct amounts were charged and income due was received and banked on a timely basis.

Allotments: We reviewed the records for the current allotment year (which commenced on 1st January 2026), confirming that requests for rental payment were sent to all allotment holders on a timely basis. By the time of our final visit, all payments due had been received. We also reviewed a sample of tenancy agreements for new tenants who have taken over allotments since the start of the current financial year. We confirmed that, in all cases, signed copies of the agreements are held by the Council.

Markets: We reviewed the spreadsheet records maintained for one sample market (held on 20th September 2025) to supporting information, to confirm that the correct amounts had been charged to stallholders, that payments were received on a timely basis, and that the details of insurance cover required by the Council had been provided. There were no matters arising.

Outstanding debts: We reviewed the Sales Ledger as at 31st March 2026 and were pleased to note that the overall value of long-standing debts remained very low. We confirmed that effective control arrangements remain in place, with appropriate action being taken in relation to outstanding payments.

Conclusion

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

Petty Cash

As part of the internal audit certification process on the Council's AGAR, we are required to consider the controls in place over the operation of petty cash accounts. Our objective in this area is, therefore, to ensure that appropriate controls are in place; that expenditure incurred is adequately supported by trade invoices or till receipts; that the expenditure is appropriate for the Council's requirements; that VAT has been separately identified for periodic recovery and that cheque reimbursements from the main cashbooks are properly recorded.

The Council maintains petty cash floats at a number of locations. At our first interim audit, we undertook a sample review to confirm that robust processes and procedures are in place for the use and recording of petty cash - checking the petty cash held at Grove House and agreeing this to the petty cash ledger. We confirmed the balance held and that there was appropriate supporting information for all payments made since the last reconciliation.

At our final audit, we confirmed that the petty cash balances as at 31st March 2026 had been included correctly in the 'cash and bank' figure in Section 2, Box 8 of the draft AGAR.

Conclusion

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

Staff Salaries

In examining the Council's payroll function, our objective is to confirm that extant employment legislation is being adhered to, that the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation are satisfied regarding the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions and that the requirements of the local government pension scheme are met.

To meet this objective, we examined the payroll procedures in place and the computations undertaken for the payments to staff in 2025-26, by reference to the September 2025 payroll documentation produced by the Council's external payroll bureau (Payroll Options Ltd, Milton Keynes).

Our audit work involved the following:

- We confirmed that the Council has applied the approved employee pay rates for the financial year.
- From review of the contracts of employment for full and part-time staff whose employment commenced in 2025-26, we confirmed that appropriate signed contracts of employment are held.
- We checked and agreed the detail of the salary payments made to a sample of staff in September 2025 to the latest schedule of salaries and pay scales.
- We confirmed that tax and NI deductions have been made applying the appropriate tax code and NI Table, also ensuring that appropriate amounts are paid to HMRC.
- We confirmed that the appropriate employee and employer contributions to the pension scheme have been applied in accordance with the current arrangements and confirmed that these have been paid over to the Pension Fund Administrators on a timely basis.
- We confirmed that the monthly net salary payments to staff agreed to the underlying records.

* Note: The annual pay settlement applying from 1st April 2025 was agreed in August 2025, with the back-pay included in that month's payroll. We reviewed the calculation of the back pay due and confirmed, on a sample basis, that correct payments had been made.

Conclusion

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

Asset Register

The reporting arrangements for assets in the AGAR require councils to include all assets at purchase cost, or at a suitable proxy where that value is not known, and for community assets to be valued at a nominal £1. The value of individual assets should not normally change from one year to another, with the only amendments being for acquisitions and disposals.

The Council has recently moved to the RBS ‘Asset Inventory’ software to record all assets held. This has replaced a spreadsheet maintained by the Council’s former external accountant. From our discussions with the Head of Corporate Services (RFO), we are aware that a review the accuracy of some of the historic information held on the asset register is being undertaken. We confirmed that this had not been completed in time for the year end closedown and any adjustments required will be made during 2026-27.

At our final audit visit, we confirmed that the total value of assets held at the previous year-end had been updated for acquisitions during 2025-26 (there were no disposals in the year) and the revised total asset value has been reported correctly in the AGAR (Section 2, Box 9).

Investments and Loans

Our objective is to confirm that an appropriate investment/treasury management policy is in place, that any funds not required for immediate use, whether temporarily or on a longer-term basis are invested in line with that strategy and that interest earned is brought to account correctly and appropriately in the accounting records. We also confirm that any loan repayments due to or payable by the Council are transacted in accordance with the relevant loan agreements.

During the course of our audits, we confirmed the following:

- As required by the ‘Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments’, the Council has a Treasury Management Policy in place. This was updated and approved at the F&GP meeting on 16th June 2025.
- At present, the Council does not hold any long-term investments. As noted above, surplus funds are held in either the NatWest (instant access) Business Reserve Account or the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund account.
- We have checked and agreed the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan instalment repayments made in the year to date to the third party “demand” notices from the UK Debt Management Office.
- The repayments of principal and interest (the latter reported on an accrual basis) and the overall loan balances outstanding at the year-end have been reported correctly in the draft AGAR (Section 2, Boxes 5 and 10, respectively).

Conclusion

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

Statement of Accounts and AGAR

We have examined the detailed accounts produced by the RBS Omega system and also the draft of the statutory “Accounting Statements 2025-26” that the Council is required to complete and approve (Section 2 of the AGAR). We have agreed the detail to the supporting accounting records and other related documentation.

Conclusions

There are no matters arising from this area of our review that require any formal comment or recommendation. We look forward to receiving a copy of the finalised AGAR (Sections 1 and 2), once the document has been approved by the Council.

On the basis of the internal audit work undertaken during the year, we have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' on page 3 of the AGAR, assigning positive assurances in all areas of internal control.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- **where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £15 million; or**
- **where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:**
  - **are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or**
  - **have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)**

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices.*

2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
   - The **Annual Internal Audit Report must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
   - **Sections 1 and 2 must** be completed and approved by the authority.
   - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2026.**
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2026** Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
   - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
   - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2026
   - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
   - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
   - Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities **must** publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2025/26** approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2025/26** approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

**for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.*

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments **must** be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2026
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) **must** be approved before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references, even where approved on the same day.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) **must** certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority **must** in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor **must** be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements **(Section 2, page 5)**. An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- Additional costs may be incurred if additional audit work is required.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2025) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2026).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2026**

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including **the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights**, been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at **31 March 2026** been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? **NB:** do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		✓

Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices, can be downloaded from **www.nalc.gov.uk** or from **www.ada.org.uk**

Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

www.dunstable.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2026, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2025/26 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✔		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✔		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✔		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✔		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✔		
F. Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✔		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✔		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✔		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✔		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✔		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✔
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✔		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(during the 2025/26 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2024-25 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✔		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024/25 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✔		
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.	✔		
P. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✔

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 14/11/2025 04/03/2026 29/05/2026

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: SF Christopher for Auditing Solutions Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit: SF Christopher

Date: 29/05/2026

***If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**

Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report **must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, that:

	Agreed			
	Yes	No*		'Yes' means that this authority:
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓			*prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓			*made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.*
3. We have assured ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓			*has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.*
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓			*during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.*
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓			*considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.*
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓			*arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.*
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓			*responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.*
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓			*disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.*
9. **(For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.**	Yes	No	N/A	*has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.*
			✓	
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	✓			*has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.*

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

22/06/2026

and recorded as minute reference:

209/26

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk SIGNATURE REQUIRED

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures **must** agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	2,168,307	2,140,531	*Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value **must** agree to Box 7 of previous year.*
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	2,933,469	3,282,168	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	2,058,695	1,847,735	*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	2,184,074	2,260,638	*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	122,376	121,151	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	2,713,490	2,770,226	*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	2,140,531	2,118,420	*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	2,135,048	1,983,821	*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	8,406,182	8,423,801	*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	841,714	770,293	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	✓		*For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval.

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date 16/06/2026

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

22/06/2026

as recorded in minute reference:

209/26

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of | DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit,** it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/ .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026 and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2025/26

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

ENTER NAME OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

External Auditor Signature | SIGNATURE REQUIRED | Date | DD/MM/YYYY

APPENDIX 3

LOANS AND LONG TERM LIABILITIES - AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

PWLB	Amount	Date of Loan	Term	Type	Annual Principal	Annual Interest 2025/26	Total payable 2025/26	Amount Outstanding at 31.03.2026	Final Repayment Due
Luton Road	85,000.00	1987 original	40 years	EIP	£1,062.50	£239.06	**£1,301.56**	£1,593.75	Nov 2026
	33,468.75	part repaid May 1996							
Priory House Part 1	500,000.00	March 2004	30 years	EIP	£16,666.68	£7,072.90	£23,739.58	£133,333.04	Nov 2033
Priory House Part 2	131,237.00	September 2004	30 years	EIP	£4,374.58	£2,002.99	£6,377.57	£37,183.53	May 2034
							£30,117.15		
Grove House Part 1	207,000.00	March 2005	30 years	EIP	£6,900.00	£3,330.11	£10,230.11	£62,100.00	Nov 2034
Grove House Part 2	500,000.00	September 2005	30 years	EIP	£16,666.68	£7,602.07	£24,268.75	£158,333.06	May 2035
							£34,498.86		
Cemetery Loan 2008	450,000.00	21 November 2008	30 years	EIP	£15,000.00	£9,858.75	**£24,858.75**	£195,000.00	Nov 2038
Priory House Part 3	215,000.00	18 October 2022	20 years	EIP	£10,750.00	£10,590.10	**£21,340.10**	£182,750.00	Oct 2042
				Totals	**£71,420.44**	**£40,695.98**	**£176,732.43**	**£770,293.38**	

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 22 JUNE 2026

NEW CEMETERY WORKING GROUP

Purpose of report: To agree the membership of the New Cemetery Working Group

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1. To agree the membership of the New Cemetery Working Group

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. The following working group members were appointed by Full Council in October 2023: Councillors Gregory Alderman; Richard Attwell; Matthew Brennan; Kenson Gurney; Liz Jones and Louise O'Riordan. (**Minute 201/23**) Two of those Members have now left the Council, and other Members may have changed their circumstances in the last two and a half years.

2.2. Some members of the group have been on site visits to look at burial facilities to see first-hand what other providers are offering by way of facilities, layout and memorialisation. Local sites visited included Bierton Crematorium and Gardens near Aylesbury and Oakfield Gardens Crematorium near Flitwick. Their feedback helped to form the tender brief for the new cemetery. Now that contractors are in place and initial designs are being developed, the working group will be brought together later this year to look at designs and options for the new facility. Members are therefore asked to review membership of the group.

3. FINANCIAL IMPACT – none

4. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS- none

4.1. The development of the new cemetery supports the Council's Corporate Plan objective to plan for and open a new cemetery in Dunstable.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS- none

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS- none

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS- none

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS- none

9. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS – none

10. AUTHOR

Paul Hodson – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Paul.hodson@dunstable.gov.uk

AGENDA ITEM 212/26

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 22 JUNE 2026

REFERRAL REPORT FROM FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Purpose of Report:	For Members to approve recommendations made by Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15 June 2026.

Compliance and Facilities Report

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To recommend to Full Council to approve the updated Health and Safety Policy.

Minute Number (192/26)

3. AUTHOR

Paul Hodson
Town Clerk& Chief Executive
Paul.hodson@dunstable.gov.uk