Dunstable Town Council

Grove House, 76 High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1NF

PUBLIC NOTICE OF MEETING

Community Services Committee

Thursday, 20 August 2026

Dear All,

Notice is hereby given of a public meeting of the Community Services Committee to be held at 7:00 PM on Monday, 7 September 2026 at Council Chamber.

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. To submit a question, please contact the Council at democratic@dunstable.gov.uk or call 01582 513000 by 4 pm on the Friday immediately before the meeting.

This meeting will be filmed, livestreamed and will be made available for repeated public 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.

Paul Hodson

Town Clerk and Chief Executive to Dunstable Town Council

Apologies for Absence

1. Declarations of Interest

2. Public Question Time

3. To agree the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 1 June 2026 as an accurate record

4. Gateway Christmas Lighting Scheme Decision Report

5. Town Centre Services

6. Service Level Agreement Decision Report

7. Grove Corner and Community Engagement

8. Older People's Services

9. Events

10. Priory House

11. Corporate Plan Update

12. Reports from Outside Bodies

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

13. Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 9 November 2026 at 7 pm

APPENDIX I — Public Documents

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3. To agree the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 1 June 2026 as an accurate record

Minutes - Community Services Committee 1 June 2026 (1).pdf

4. Gateway Christmas Lighting Scheme Decision Report

4. Gateway Christmas Lighting Scheme Decision Report.pdf

5. Town Centre Services

5. Town Centre Services.pdf

6. Service Level Agreement Decision Report

6. Service Level Agreement Decision Report.pdf

7. Grove Corner and Community Engagement

7. Grove Corner and Community Engagement.pdf

8. Older People's Services

8. Older People's Services.pdf

9. Events

9. Events.pdf

10. Priory House

10. Priory House.pdf

11. Corporate Plan Update

11. Corporate Plan Update.pdf
Appendix 1 Corporate Plan Objectives - Community Services (4).pdf
Appendix 2 Corporate Plan Key Objectives - Community Services (4).pdf

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

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

GATEWAY CHRISTMAS LIGHTING SCHEME DECISION REPORT

Purpose of report:	For members to consider options for the town gateway Christmas lighting scheme, and if required to propose any increase to the revenue budget from 2027/28.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed enhancement has resulted in unexpected additional revenue costs of approximately £20,000 per annum above the agreed budget. Members are asked to identify which of the three options, as detailed in section 3 of the report, for the gateway Christmas lighting scheme, to adopt:

1.1. **Option 1** – Proceed with the proposed scheme for the installation of Christmas gateway lighting at the four entrances to Dunstable and recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to include an additional amount of £20,000 in the Council's revenue budget, beginning in 2027/28, to fund this.

1.2. **Option 2** – Extend the lighting scheme within the existing budget by relocating the additional lights to the entrances to the town centre.

1.3. **Option 3** – Do nothing – retain the existing town centre Christmas lighting scheme and not proceed with the proposed gateway lighting at any location.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. During the Christmas Lighting tender process in September 2025, Members requested that costings be obtained for the installation of Christmas gateway lighting at the four entrances to Dunstable. A subsequent report was presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee in January 2026, at which Members approved a budget of £13,410 and an annual fee of £2,340 for the proposed gateway lighting scheme.

2.2. It should be noted that, regardless of which option members choose, this agreed action would not be implemented until Christmas 2027. As previously reported, the ordering and sourcing of the lights themselves need to happen by spring of that year.

2.3. Following a detailed assessment, the Council's contractor - Lamps and Tubes - advised that the proposed gateway areas were situated in more complex locations than the current lights. As a result, several locations would require specialist traffic management due to their position on major roads and at key junctions. The additional traffic management costs are estimated to be approximately £18,000 per annum, with further potential costs associated with lane closures and the necessary licenses, which are yet to be confirmed but could be in the region of another £2,000, making £20,000 total. These additional annual costs would be in addition to the budget previously approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the purchase and storage of the lighting items.

3. OPTIONS

3.1. Members are asked to consider three options:

3.2. **Option 1** – Increase the annual Christmas lighting budget from 27/28 to accommodate the additional costs associated with the gateway lighting. This would require an increase of more than £20,000 per annum and is in addition to the budget previously approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

3.3. **Option 2** – Extend the lighting scheme within the existing budget by relocating the additional lights to the entrances to the town centre. The proposed locations would be High Street South, High Street North, Church Street, West Street and Queensway. This option would not incur any additional annual costs but would not deliver on members original request ‘to extend the Christmas lighting scheme beyond the town centre’.

3.4. **Option 3** – Do nothing. Retain the existing town centre Christmas lighting scheme and not proceed with the proposed gateway lighting. The budget previously allocated for the gateway lighting would be returned to reserves for 2026/27 and would not be required for subsequent years.

3.5. Without significant investment (as shown in section 4 of the report), the original request by members to expand a Christmas Lighting Scheme outside of the Town Centre cannot be achieved.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

4.1 The Finance and General Purposes Committee previously approved a budget of £13,410 for the Gateway Christmas Lighting Scheme, together with an ongoing annual maintenance fee of £2,340.

4.2 The options contained within this report have differing financial implications. Option 2 would have zero financial implications, and option 3 would see the council make an in-year saving and then incur no further costs.

4.2 Option 1 however would see the Council needing to increase the Christmas lighting budget considerably. The estimated cost of these traffic management measures is approximately £18,000 per annum. When combined with the annual maintenance costs for the additional twelve gateway lights, the total ongoing annual cost is estimated to be approximately £20,000. These costs would be in addition to the budget previously approved by the Committee. This represents a significant increase in expenditure and would effectively double the annual budget required for the Christmas Lighting Scheme should option 1 be chosen. It should also be noted that there is a risk that this revenue figure would increase year on year if costs for temporary lane closures, Traffic Regulation Orders or permit fees for the works increase over this period.

5. POLICY AND COROPRATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

5.1 It could be argued that extending the Christmas lighting scheme beyond the Town Centre would create a sense of pride in the town, which is one of the Council's corporate priorities. However, despite the level of funding required to deliver option 1 it is difficult to evidence how it could assist the Council in delivering any of the other five corporate priorities.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS - None

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Option 1 does bring with it a number of health and safety related matters due to the complexity of the locations for the gateway lighting scheme. However, this would be managed by our experience lighting contractor who has the relevant trained staff and knowledge to ensure that all risks were assessed minimised and removed wherever possible.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS - None

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS - None

10. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 In relation to option 1 and 2, all new lighting is LED, on a timer and located in urban areas where street lighting already exists, thus having minimal impact on biodiversity and the environment.

11. APPENDICES - None

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 Town Centre Services report - Commnity Services Committee 1 June 2026

13. AUTHOR

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

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

Purpose of report: For information

1. MIDDLE ROW MARKETS

1.1. Middle Row Markets has scheduled 27 markets for the year, including 17 event markets. The event markets have consistently achieved high bookings, averaging around 38 stalls, while the standard Middle Row markets are smaller in scale, with an average of approximately 18 stalls.

1.2. Market bookings to date:

Date	Booking	Event
8 August	16 booked	
14 August	23 booked	Ashton Square Day
15 August	33 booked	Ashton Square Day
05 September	20 booked	Soapbox Market
12 September	16 booked	Heritage Open Day
19 September	16 booked	United Charities
10 October		
17 October		
24 October		Halloween Market

1.3. Event markets are booked for Friday 14 August, Saturday 15 August – Ashton Square Day. Saturday 5 September – Soapbox Market, Saturday 12 September – Heritage Open Day, Saturday 19 September – United Charities. Stall bookings continue to be received in the lead-up to each event, and Officers have noted an increase in last-minute bookings.

2. ASHTON SQUARE TOILETS

2.1. Dunstable Town Council has submitted an application for the Loo of the Year Awards 2026/27. The recommendations from the 2025 awards have been implemented, and further improvements are being completed ahead of the 2026 judging period. Judging will take place at an unannounced time during August and September. Notifications of the award will be sent in October. Officers are confident that the toilets will be able to regain a Platinum award.

3. TOWN CENTRE

3.1. The Young Traders Market, held on Saturday 4 July, welcomed seventeen young traders, with judging undertaken by the Town Mayor. The overall winner of the Dunstable Young Traders Competition was County House Treats, who received a complimentary trading pitch at the Twilight Market. In addition, three young traders, including County House Treats, were selected to represent Dunstable at the Regional Young Traders Finals. County House Treats went on to win the East of England Regional Final in Bury St Edmunds on Wednesday 29 July and will now represent Dunstable and the East of England at the National Young Traders Market Final in Stratford-upon-Avon on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 August. This achievement highlights the success of the Young Traders initiative in supporting local young entrepreneurs and providing opportunities for them to develop and showcase their businesses at regional and national level.

3.2. Party in the Park welcomed 25 market stalls as part of the Middle Row Markets, showcasing a diverse range of crafts and local products. The event also provided an excellent platform for young traders and new businesses to gain valuable experience of trading at a large-scale town centre event and to engage with a wider customer base. Trader demand continues to increase, and officers will explore opportunities to expand to 30 stalls, enabling greater participation and further enhancing the visitor experience.

3.3. With the support of Dunstable Town Council, Ann Marie's Fresh Caribbean Food successfully delivered its inaugural Reggae and Rum event on Saturday 25 July in The Square. The event featured a variety of food vendors, market stalls, family-friendly activities and live entertainment, while raising £1,130.00 for the Errol McKellar Foundation to support prostate cancer awareness. Officers worked closely with the organisers throughout the planning and delivery of the event, which attracted a large and diverse audience, including strong support from the Afro-Caribbean community. Live performances by Warm N Easy, Leviticus Sound, MC Preacher, Yvonne Michelle, Tim Heights, JTW and Jenny created a vibrant atmosphere throughout the afternoon and were well received by attendees. The event was a significant success, enhancing the diversity of the Council's events programme, increasing footfall within the town centre and attracting new visitors. Officers will continue to support the organisers in developing the event further, with the aim of establishing it as an annual community event.

3.4. The Summer Window Competition was held on Tuesday 28 July as part of Anglia in Bloom and Britain in Bloom. Judging was undertaken by the Town Mayor and Town Centre Officers, with ten local businesses taking part in the competition. All participating businesses received a bouquet of flowers in recognition of their efforts and contribution to enhancing the appearance of the town centre. 69ers Private Hire was awarded third place and will receive a voucher for a local garden centre. Tuftys Flowers and Cards was awarded second place, while Moody Styles Hairdressers took first place. Both Tuftys Flowers and Cards and Moody Styles Hairdressers will be invited to attend the Dunstable in Bloom Awards Evening on 30 September, where they will each receive a garden centre voucher in recognition of their achievements.

3.5. Ashton Square Days will take place on Friday 14 August, from 4 pm to 9 pm, and Saturday 15 August, from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm. The Friday event will feature a selection of street food vendors and craft stalls, while Saturday will host Middle Row Markets. Both days will include performances on the Community Stage, free retro arcade, children's soft play and face painting. Officers are actively promoting the event through social media, direct marketing and targeted emails to prospective traders to maximise participation and attendance. The event is expected to attract families and visitors into the town centre, increase footfall and provide continued support for local businesses. Verbal update to follow.

3.6. Street Food Heroes will have their final event on Thursday 17 September. Street Food Heroes will return March 2027, dates to be confirmed later in the year.

3.7. Dunstable Town Council has been invited to host the next East of England Regional Meeting of the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM). As part of the event, officers have been invited to deliver a presentation highlighting the positive work taking place within Dunstable town centre, followed by a guided study tour. Hosting the regional meeting provides an excellent opportunity to promote Dunstable to town centre management professionals from across the region, share examples of best practice and highlight the Council's ongoing investment in creating a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive town centre. Officers are currently working with ATCM to confirm a suitable date, with the meeting expected to take place towards the end of September.

3.8. The Head of Community Services and the Town Centre Manager met with Sue Glantz from Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss the High Street Rental Auctions (HSRA) initiative and identify suitable vacant units within Dunstable town centre. Following the meeting, the Town Centre Manager undertook a walkabout of the High Street with the CBC officer to review a number of vacant properties, providing local insight into current occupancy levels, potential opportunities and the suitability of individual premises for inclusion within the scheme. Central Bedfordshire Council is continuing to assess the most appropriate location for the initial rollout of the HSRA initiative and has yet to determine which town will be selected as the first pilot within the authority area.

3.9. The Town Centre Manager successfully completed an interview with Ian Harvey, Head of the Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University, as part of the application process to become an IPM member. The discussion focused on the management of the town centre, highlighting the successful programme of events delivered in Ashton Square, including the Middle Row Markets and Street Food Heroes. These initiatives were recognised for supporting local businesses, increasing footfall, and encouraging greater use of the town centre. The interview also explored the Council's approach to community engagement and partnership working in delivering these activities. The Institute of Place Management was highly complementary of the achievements and positive outcomes delivered to date and, as a result, invited the Town Centre Manager to speak at one of its online programmes later this year to share Dunstable's experiences and best practice. The interview also created valuable networking opportunities, including establishing links with Crewe Town Council, which is delivering similar town centre initiatives. An online meeting has been arranged in the coming weeks to explore opportunities for sharing knowledge, experiences, and good practice.

3.10. Officers attended Court on 21 July to provide evidence relating to three alleged breaches of conditions by Adam Bates. To support their attendance, officers gave evidence remotely via video link from the Council's solicitors' office in Milton Keynes. Following the hearing, the Judge determined that the conditions had been breached. The next court appearance was scheduled to take place on 12 August at the time of writing this report.

4. VACANCY RATES

4.1. The vacancy rates to the end of July 2026 are provided below. The count will be undertaken again at the start of October 2026.

4.2. The town centre area used for the survey includes properties in High Street North up to Regent Street, High Street South to Friars Walk (excluding Thames Industrial Estate), Church Street up to and including Aldi and West Street up to the Police Station/St Mary's Gate.

4.3. Eleanor's Cross, Ashton Square, Albion Street, The Quadrant and Grove Park (including Asda) have been included but rates can be calculated with or without these properties.

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

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
253	**33 vacant**	**13.04%**	11.85% count end of April 26.

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

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
210	**29 vacant**	**13.80%**	12.85% count end of April 26.

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

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
43	**4 vacant**	**9.03%**	6.97% count end of April 26

4.7. Units in Grove Park area and Asda:

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
6	**0 vacant**	**0%**	0% count end of April 26

5. TOWN CENTRE BUSINESS PLAN

5.1. Year three of the Business Plan is being implemented. Bites on the Square has welcomed a new trader, Eastpoint Fish, to the market. The addition of the fresh fish stall has been well received by the public, with positive engagement across social media channels and encouraging customer feedback. The trader has reported a successful start, demonstrating strong interest and new customers. Officers continue to work towards increasing trader numbers across both the Middle Row Markets and event markets. Event markets have proved particularly successful in attracting traders, and efforts are ongoing to build on this momentum. As part of the Year Three Business Plan, officers are working towards achieving an average of 35 stalls at event markets, increasing trader participation, enhancing the visitor experience and further supporting the vitality of Dunstable town centre.

6. THE PREMISES OF CONCERN TASKING GROUP

6.1. Following a presentation at the ATCM High Street Conversations programme on Thursday 2 July, which explored illicit activity and its impact on town centres, the Town Centre Manager and the Head of Community Services worked alongside Paul Ambrose from Rochdale BID to support John Abbate from Westminster City Council, who is experiencing similar challenges relating to illicit activity within the town centre. Officers organised a Microsoft Teams meeting on 7 July, providing an opportunity to share experiences, discuss potential solutions and consider the legislative powers available to address these issues. The discussion reinforced that illicit activity is a nationwide challenge affecting many town centres and highlighted the importance of collaboration, knowledge sharing and partnership working to develop effective approaches and identify best practice

6.2. Officers continue to support Trading Standards by gathering and sharing relevant information relating to a number of supermarkets and a barber within the town centre. This information has been provided to assist with ongoing enquiries and demonstrates the Council's continued commitment to working in partnership with enforcement agencies to address issues affecting the town centre.

7. AUTHOR

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

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT DECISION REPORT

Purpose of report: To approve four-year Service Level Agreements.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1. It is recommended that the Council enter into a four year Service Level Agreement from budget 303 4321 with Dunstable Foodbank; for £2,000 per year, totaling £8,000 over the four years.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Dunstable Town Council awarded a service level agreement to Dunstable Foodbank, from 2022-2026. Unfortunately, the 2025-2026 money could not be issued due to not receiving the documents required from Dunstable Foodbank, despite many attempts from officers. However, it has since come to light that the contact the Town Council had was on long-term leave, and the emails had not been picked up by anyone else.

2.2. Officers have met with Dunstable Foodbank, who have expressed that they wish to have a further four-year SLA, and have provided evidence why funding is still required, their learning over the past four years, and the impact their project has had as a direct result of the SLA. The team currently have over 100 volunteers, but all do different hours throughout the week. The Foodbank is used to help people at the end of the month; however, there is now an increased need for food parcels throughout the month. They have found many new people reaching out for help and are working to remove the stigma some may have surrounding the Foodbank. The Foodbank is also finding that it is referring more people to other services for support not only around food, but money and mental health support.

2.3. Dunstable Foodbank has indicated that it would like to reapply for £2,000 per year. The Foodbank currently provides support to many residents who rely upon the services it provides. The Foodbank has advised that its current biggest challenge is buildings, due to needing to vacate the old Argos premises. It would like to secure a suitable building for the proposed evening distribution Centre, but this has not yet been confirmed. The Foodbank also has ongoing costs associated with running the van and the need to purchase a new van.

2.4. The £2,000 SLA would support the safe and affective establishment of an additional distribution Centre. Currently the Foodbank is in talks with different venues to see where would work for the evening distribution Centre to take place. This is intended to improve access for residents who are in employment, or who have daytime commitments, and are therefore unable to access the Foodbank's current daytime distribution sessions. The evening Centre would complement the existing locations by increasing choice, improving accessibility, and helping to reduce food insecurity amongst families and individuals.

2.5. The funding would contribute towards the full range of costs associated with setting up and operating the new distribution Centre, including regular volunteer recruitment and training in safeguarding, confidentiality, first aid and good hygiene; storage units and other equipment required to operate the Centre; signage and promotional materials to help residents and referral partners access the service; printing of client information, volunteer resources and operational documents; volunteers uniforms and identification and running costs, including utilities and other essential operational expenses.

2.6. Currently, Dunstable Foodbank runs from four centres: St Augustine's Church, New Life Church, Christchurch and Houghton Regis Baptist Church. These are open at least one day per week, for a two-hour period.

3. MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

3.1. Members have already agreed that SLAs no longer need to be for new projects if existing recipients of SLAs can prove they are meeting a need and having a positive impact. However, members still need to consider if they wish to fund existing organisations (as stated in section 2 of the report) who have already received an SLA for the past four years.

3.2. Officers have met Dunstable Foodbank, and this has provided officers with a deeper understanding of the project and how the SLA supports the delivery of this, along with why officers did not receive the required documents in 2025/26.

3.3. Officers can confirm that whilst the work is not new the support provided by SLA funding does mean that the work continues to have a positive impact on residents, and therefore funding should continue. It should be noted that as part of the annual reviews these organisations have submitted evidence of proper governance and financial management through the submission of appropriate reports and policies.

3.4. The additional evening distribution centre would provide a clear community benefit by improving access to emergency food support outside normal working hours, increasing flexibility for residents and referral agencies, ensuring volunteers are appropriately trained to provide a safe, welcoming and professional service, and enabling the Foodbank to respond to changing patterns of need within the community.

3.5. Officers are satisfied that the request is linked to an identified community need and that the proposed evening provision would support improved access to emergency food support for residents who are unable to access daytime provision.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

4.1. There would be no additional financial impact to the town council as a result of the recommendations of this report. £13,500 has been allocated for grants to voluntary and community organisations in the 26/27 budget and in the following three years. At present £600 (Sorted Counselling) £2,000 (BRCC) £2,000 (CAB)

£2,000 (Hospice at Home) £1,000 (Dunstable Town Band) and £800 (Dunstable Town Guides) is committed, leaving £1,000 available for seedcorn funding and £4,100 available for SLAs.

If members were to approve the four-year SLA to Dunstable Foodbank, a total of £2,100 per year would still be available for groups and organisations to apply for and/or to increase existing SLA amounts.

5. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The recommendations contained within the report supports the Council's overall vision to make Dunstable a better place, creating a lively and vibrant town and improving the quality of life for all those who live, work and visit. It also supports the corporate priorities of preserving and enquiring the history and identity of the town, creating a sense of pride in Dunstable and continue to improve services targets to all community sectors in the town.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Continuing to support the same voluntary groups through SLAs could been seen as preventing equal access to funding. However, there is still funding available in the for voluntary organisations to apply should they wish. The groups recommended for funding deliver a wide variety of services and activities across the town. As long as the town continues to promote its financial support to the voluntary and community sector through diverse methods then there are no implications relating to equalities and diversity as a result of the recommendations of this report.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS – none

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS – none

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – none

10. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS – none

11. CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IMPLICATIONS – none

12. AUTHOR

12.1 Gill Peck, Youth and Community Manager
gill.peck@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Purpose of report: For information

1. GROVE CORNER

1.1. Grove Corner received 252 visits from young people between 8 May 2026 and 3 August 2026. Twelve new young people have signed up over this time. Grove Corner was closed on Monday 25 May due to the bank holiday and on Friday 10 July due to no water supply to the building.

The Wednesday trial session outlined in paragraph 2.1 was less successful than hoped. Officers will therefore amend the session for the autumn term.

1.2. Grove Corner received 370 visits from young people between 7 May 2025 and 13 August 2025.

1.3. Pokémon and SEND Friendly have received 156 visits from young people between 8 May 2026 and 14 July, with 6 new signups.

1.4. Pokémon received 165 visits from young people between 07 May 2025 and 15 July 2025.

1.5. Grove Corner now has 1,596 Facebook followers and Grove Corner's Instagram has 530 followers.

2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

2.1. Officers have been using a questionnaire to understand what young people, parents and guardians would like from the Wednesday session. Officers have also trialled different age-group sessions during the summer holidays. The transition session held on Wednesdays during the summer term was less successful than expected. The SATS party was popular, but attendance during the remaining weeks was much lower. Following consultation and the trial of different session times, officers will run the Wednesday session during the autumn term from 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm for young people aged 13 to 18. This will mirror the Monday session at Grove Corner, which is popular with this age group. Officers will review the session after October half term.

2.2. Officers continue to work with young people to co-design sessions. This includes supporting young people to run a talent show. Young people are also considering an activity they would like to attend as part of the sessions. Youth workers are also working with young people to create an in-house Halloween party. Officers continue to encourage young people who attend Grove Corner to identify activities and workshops they would like to see at the venue.

2.3. Officers will work with young people during the autumn term to explore whether they would like to produce a podcast, with support from youth workers. The podcast would allow young people to discuss current and emerging issues that affect them. Officers have also discussed the proposed social media ban with young people. Many have said they do not feel they have a voice. The podcast is being explored as one possible response.

2.4. Officers continue to liaise with Core Creative, which is co-producing the exhibition space at Priory House with young people. Officers have invited Core Creative to attend four sessions in September and are waiting for confirmation of the details. A verbal update will be provided at committee.

3. DETACHED YOUTH WORK

3.1. Between 28 April 2026 and 3 August 2026, officers have delivered 36 detached activities across Dunstable. The team visit different areas of the town, three times per week to engage with young people.

3.2. Between 28 April 2026 and 3 August 2026, officers have engaged with 382 young people by headcount. 194 of these young people have been new young people.

3.3. Therefore, there has been a total of 790 interactions with young people between 28 April 2026 and 3 August 2026, through centre-based youth work and detached youth work. 212 of these interactions have been new interactions with young people.

3.4. Officers have consulted young people as autumn and winter approach. Young people have said they would like detached youth work to continue on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, but at an earlier time because of darker and colder evenings. Officers will therefore run sessions from 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm. Officers will keep the approach flexible so the service can respond to need as it arises. Officers plan to use Mondays for an engagement walk around the town, Wednesdays for a six-week focus at one location, and Thursdays for partnership work with the Leisure Centre, focused on the Skate Park, Grove House Gardens and nearby areas.

3.5. The detached team ran a summer activities programme. Officers worked with young people to decide what activities and events to provide as part of this programme and designed an activities programme to cater for these needs. Again, some of these activities differed to last year:

- Zoo Trip - 20 young people
- Ghost Walk – 9 young people
- Super Sports – update provided at committee
- Gaming Bus – update provided at committee
- Swim Party – 18 young people
- Movie Night – update provided at committee

3.6. Officers are currently in the process of planning for the October and Christmas holidays and will continue to run a weekend session, once per month.

3.7. The Head of Community Services attended a meeting about the new Best Start Family Hub, which will open in Downside in September. Discussions are at an early stage, but there has already been discussion about how the Town Council could work in partnership with the hub, particularly through detached youth work. There is scope for this to start after October half term, subject to further discussion.

4. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

4.1. Officers completed the Wellbeing Project at Priory Academy with Boxing Saves Lives. Due to the success of the project, officers have applied for funding from Sport England. If successful, the project will run again at All Saints Academy. Officers understand that many young people in Dunstable who attend this school would benefit from the project. This follows meetings with teachers and discussions about the outcomes the project can achieve. These include increasing confidence and resilience, developing self-esteem and helping young people learn about healthy relationships, sexual health, mental health and how to manage triggers in a healthy way.

4.2. Officers will visit schools in September to promote the sessions available for young people.

4.3. Officers met Central Bedfordshire College to discuss partnership working. In previous years, officers developed a good working relationship with the college. Last year, for unknown reasons, the relationship appeared to become one-sided. Officers have therefore met college staff to re-establish the relationship and explore how DTC and the college can work together during the new academic year.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1. Officers completed Wheelie Fantastic and have received many positive comments from passers-by outside Grove Corner about the Sensory Corner and the difference this area makes. Officers have invited participants of Wheelie Fantastic to attend a celebration and awards evening in September.

5.2. Officers continue to develop a better understanding of the needs of the voluntary and community sector and how the Council can support it. Officers have met different charities and community groups to understand their needs. The next step will be to create a focus group.

5.3. Officers have facilitated the summer activities – a verbal report will be provided at committee.

Activity	Number of attendees 2025	Number of attendees 2026
Inflatable Fun Day	548 children	561 children (57 attended SEND session)
National Play Day	271	387 (59 attended SEND session)

		Quote from SEND session: 'Thank you so much for putting on the early session. It is so so appreciated. As soon as it got busy, my son was saying out, out, so thank you so much as it meant he could come.'
K-POP Workshop	Did not run in 2025	44 / 60 attended
Action and Adventure Day	220	Verbal update at committee
Art and STEM Day	Did not run in 2025	Verbal update at committee

5.4. Officers planned ahead this year and provided specific SEND Friendly hours for four of the summer activities before open access began. Families appreciated this approach and provided positive feedback. Officers also made sensory toolkits available for those who needed them.

5.5. As part of Love Parks Week, officers will be launching an eco-friendly trail. This digital trail will allow those of all ages, to take part, and enjoy the green spaces that the town has to offer. This trail will be able to be adapted and developed over time. The trail launched on Monday 27 July and so far, has had 195 people partly complete and 39 people fully complete it. It is worth noting that this trail does not need to be completed in one go, and families can choose to come back to it as and when they please.

5.6. As part of Love Parks Week, officers launched an eco-friendly digital trail. The trail allows people of all ages to enjoy the town's green spaces and can be adapted and developed over time. The trail launched on Monday 27 July. So far, 195 people have partly completed it and 39 people have fully completed it. The trail does not need to be completed in one visit, so families can return to it when they wish.

6. BENNETT'S SPLASH, CAFÉ AND COMMUNITY HUB

6.1. Between 30 April 2026 and 31 July 2026, there have been several events organised. The activities that have been facilitated included:

Over 55s Breakfast Club – 12 sessions
Friday Craft Club – 12 sessions
Knit and Natter – 12 sessions

6.2. Between 30 April 2026 and 31 July 2026, there have been 0 hirers due to commercial season.

6.3. Officers have been working with Sprout and Swap, who have been meeting with people to swap plants, and trade gardening tips. After a successful first session, Sprout and Swap have booked in again for 29 August.

6.4. The Thursday adult craft group continues to meet weekly. The group has worked with In Bloom to create a range of letterbox toppers, which are displayed around the town. This has been a positive example of community groups working together.

6.5. The commercial season commenced on Monday 4 May. It has been successful so far, supported by consistently high temperatures. A cool menu has been introduced and is used automatically when the temperature rises above 30 degrees. Officers have adapted well and can implement the menu without intervention from senior management. The reduced menu has not negatively affected café income, with takings remaining consistently high and improving on previous years.

6.6. The cross-service arrangement working with the rangers has largely been positive. It has been a successful relationship which has developed and grown on its first year.

6.7. The plant room has had some operational issues, and officers have identified improvements to help reduce the risk of problems recurring. This includes investing in a COSHH cabinet to hold water-testing chemicals, spare probes, probe cleaners and filters, as well as COSHH information and procedures. The splash company has identified that the Granados system may be reaching the end of its effective lifespan and may soon need replacing. If these works are considered, officers would also suggest installing footpaths at the splash park entrances to help reduce debris entering the system.

6.8. Following last year's success, officers will arrange an opportunity for dogs to use the Splash Park before it is decommissioned for the season. The aim is to invite companies to hold stalls and provide an additional draw for the event. This would also increase awareness through their own social media audiences. The date is yet to be confirmed, as officers are liaising with the grounds team to ensure the park will be usable on 6 September.

6.9. Officers have been working in partnership with Chatty Café. It remains difficult to attract sufficient footfall for this scheme. Officers will use social media to promote the project and will also include it in Talk of the Town.

6.10. The table below shows a comparison between takings excluding VAT comparing 2025 to 2026 covering May, June and July.

Month	Dates	2025	2026	+/-
May	6-12	£1,576	£934	-£641
	13-19	£1,428	£546	-£882
	20-26	£601	£3,311	£2,710
	27-2	£1,524	£6,368	£4,844

	Monthly total	**£5,130**	**£11,160**	**£6,030**
June	3-9	£484	£514	£29
	10–16	£1,451	£1,034	-£416
	17–23	£4,137	£1,636	-£2,501
	24–30	£2,005	£3,081	£1,075
	Monthly total	**£8,077**	**£6,264**	**-£1,813**
July	1-7	£1,721	£1,233	-£487
	8-14	£2,051	£2,632	£581
	15-21	£1,158	£2,138	£981
	22-28	£1,669	£2,963	£1,294
	Monthly total	**£6,597**	**£8,966**	**£2,369**
Overall	**Total**	**£19,805**	**£26,391**	**£6,586**

6.11. Income during the May to July period is £6,586 higher than last year. Consistently good weather and a strong social media presence have had a positive effect on catering takings. Officers have also identified a market for retail sales within the café and have invested in merchandise for customers to purchase. This has received positive feedback and has reduced the amount of disposable plastic entering the system.

6.12. Officers are continuing to explore the creation of a Friends of Bennett's group. Engagement has been slower than hoped, however a resident has come forward with an interest in supporting the development of the group.

6.13. A family fun event is planned for 12 September. This will be used to promote the Friends Group, speak directly with families and gather further expressions of interest from local residents. This will help officers assess whether there is enough community support to develop the group in a sustainable way.

6.14. Officers will facilitate a pizza and drinks night on Friday 4 September, with live entertainment. Officers need to obtain personal licences for the sale of alcohol. Local artists are being approached to provide two 30-minute performance slots. A marketing meeting is being held in August to confirm the best way to promote the event. Menu decisions and timings have been confirmed, and a verbal update will be provided at committee.

6.15. Officers are preparing for the off season and will work with community groups to encourage use of the space. Sprout and Swap is looking to use the café as a more regular meeting venue. Officers are in discussion with a potential regular hirer who is seeking a term-time space for a toddler sensory session. This would help reduce the loss of youth café venue hire income. Home Education sessions will commence in September. Officers are also considering café opening hours during the winter period. Public consultation will be undertaken to determine the most beneficial opening times, while taking account of footfall and income from previous years.

7. PETER NEWTON PAVILION

7.1 A report on the Peter Newton Pavilion is usually presented to committee in June. However, there was a delay in Bedfordshire FA providing the relevant documentation. Bedfordshire FA has now confirmed that it has changed its accounting year. Documentation will therefore be available for report to committee during the January committee cycle each year, rather than the June cycle.

8. AUTHORS

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Purpose of report:	For information and to vote on changing the age of Good Companions Club membership.

1. GOOD COMPANIONS CLUB

1.1. The Good Companions Club currently has 20 members. However, currently on average, 15 people are attending per week, due to continued ill health, and sadly another member has recently passed away. Officers continue to market the group, and have recently met with Re-Engage, a national charity who support those aged 75+ who are isolated, to promote the service, and Good Companions will be promoted by the charity to residents of Dunstable, whom the charity support.

1.2. Officers have spoken to Central Bedfordshire Council about changing the age of the group and beginning it from 70+ - this would provide more residents with the opportunity to attend and hopefully attend for longer. CBC have agreed this would not cause any issue with the funding they provide. Therefore, members are asked to note the age to 70+ rather than 75+for Good Companions.

1.3. The group have enjoyed a variety of activities, included a summer party, lunch out, bowling, a talk by Teatime Tales, learning more from the history society, and a visit from two officers from CBC about healthy relationships, domestic abuse and keeping safe.

1.4. Over the next few weeks, Good Companions have various activities and trips planned. These include a session with the Parks and Green Spaces Officer, a visit from Animal Edge, a trip to the zoo and fire station, and a visit from Harlington Hospital.

2. LUNCH BUNCH

2.1. The Lunch Bunch continues to operate a waiting list, with the group currently having 38 members. Priory View have begun their own lunch club, which meets on a Thursday, and therefore, officers have signposted those on the waiting list from Priory View to the Thursday lunch club, along with others who are currently on the waiting list, as this club is open to all.

2.2. The Lunch Bunch have enjoyed a variety of activities and talks in recent weeks. This has included lunch out, a talk from CBC on healthy relationships, domestic abuse and keeping safe and their summer party. Due to the extreme heat, and the air conditioning being broken in Priory View (which is now repaired), a few sessions had to be cancelled in recent months.

3. OVER 55S BREAKFAST CLUB

3.1. The over 55s Breakfast Club continues to be at capacity. Officers have been promoting other services to those who have expressed an interest in the breakfast club. Officers continue to try and seek volunteers to help support with the running and facilitation of this group.

4. COFFEE MORNINGS

4.1. Officers have run three coffee mornings since the last update, and these have been well attended. These have taken place at Priory View, Dunstable Cemetery Chapel and St Mary's Church Hall.

4.2. Officers will be running coffee mornings throughout the year at various locations within the town. Members are welcome to attend the coffee mornings to meet local residents. These will take place from 10.30 am to 12 noon on the following dates and locations:

Tuesday 15 September – Beecroft Community Centre
Tuesday 20 October – Peter Newton Pavilon
Tuesday 17 November – Grove Corner
Tuesday 22 December – Priory View
Tuesday 19 January – Dunstable Cemetery Chapel
Tuesday 2 March – St Mary's Church Hall

5. ROCK AND ROLL

5.1. Rock and Roll took place in July, with live music from a local singer from Central Bedfordshire. Officers will be marketing the next Rock and Roll which is taking place at the end of September.

6. AUTHOR

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

EVENTS

Purpose of report: For information only.

1. PAST EVENTS

1.1. Dunstable Classic Motor Rally - Saturday 13 June

The Dunstable Classic Motor Rally was well received, with 200 classic vehicles on display and an estimated 6,000 visitors attending throughout the day. Regtransfers returned as event sponsors for the third consecutive year and awarded the Sponsor's Trophy on the day. The programme of live entertainment, themed activities, children's attractions, stalls and catering, alongside Middle Row Markets and the Truck Convoy, offered something for all ages and contributed to a lively atmosphere throughout the event.

Dunstable Live - Saturday 27 June

Dunstable Live attracted an estimated 5,000 visitors throughout the day. Despite the extremely hot weather, the event maintained a relaxed atmosphere and received excellent feedback from attendees, with many praising the high standard of performances and the Queens of Sound line-up.

Several new additions enhanced this year's event. The large screen proved particularly successful, improving visibility of the performances for visitors further away from the stage and those using the accessible viewing platform. Middle Row Markets also attended for the first time, providing a wide variety of local traders alongside the catering concessions, children's activities and outdoor bar.

Party in the Park - Saturday 18 July

The event attracted an estimated 6,000 visitors throughout the day. Visitors enjoyed a varied programme of live music, family entertainment and free activities across the park.

Positive feedback was received for the varied stage line-up, free children's activities, including the K-Pop dance party and storytelling, the large number of local traders attending as part of Middle Row Markets and the wide variety of catering concessions. Traders, performers and activity providers all reported strong public engagement and successful trading throughout the day.

A successful new addition was the Chill-Out Teepee Zone, providing visitors with a welcoming and relaxing space away from the main event activity. This area will return as part of next year's event planning, with additional planning to incorporate SEN-friendly activities within the area.

The Ceremony Room was opened to the public throughout the event, allowing prospective couples to view the venue as a potential wedding location. As a direct result, two wedding bookings have already been secured.

Event sponsor Penrose Estate Agents once again supported the event with a climbing wall. Their 'Beat the Clock' challenge proved particularly popular and, through voluntary public donations, £489.01 was raised for the Mayor's Charities.

Sunday Concerts Attendance - Sunday 21 June, 26 July, 9 August
The attendance at this year's Sunday Concerts is shown in the table below:

Date	Band	Attendance (2026)	Attendance (2025)
Sun 21 June*	RAF Halton Voluntary Band	76	70
Sun 21 June*	Dunstable Salvation Army Band	84	82
Sun 26 July	Wayland Smithy Band	86	96
Sun 26 July	Dunstable Town Band	108	80
Sun 9 August*	Beati Vocal Ensemble	110	88
Sun 9 August*	Five Star Swing	85	64

*Extremely hot weather

A total of six Sunday Concerts were held over the summer, with two performances scheduled on each day. The series continued to provide a diverse range of musical styles, from brass and military bands to folk, vocal, swing and jazz. Despite the prolonged period of exceptionally hot weather, which is likely to have affected attendance at some performances, visitors continued to enjoy the relaxed atmosphere and varied programme, with positive feedback received throughout the series.

2. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR 2026

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

The Soapbox Derby has generated strong interest, with over 80 initial enquiries and 25 applications received. To date, 10 applicants have been officially confirmed, with the Events Officer continuing to contact the remaining applicants to confirm their attendance. A number of other earlier applicants have subsequently withdrawn due to logistical challenges, changes in personal circumstances and the time and practicalities involved in building and transporting a kart. For some applicants, the initial interest in taking part has not translated into a completed kart or confirmed commitment as the event date approaches. The line-up for the event is as follows:

10.30 am: Practice Run
12 pm: 1st Timed Race
1 pm: 2nd Timed Race
2 pm: 3rd Timed Race
3 pm: Prize Giving Ceremony (Fastest Time & Best Presentation)
3.15 pm: *Zootopia 2* (PG)

5.15 pm: *F1: The Movie* (12A)

Officers have continued to promote the event through local businesses, community organisations and social media, alongside efforts to secure sponsorship. Three banner sponsors have been secured: Juuls Ltd, Chiltern Vehicles and Tyres and Hardings ARC.

Scrutineering will be held for teams the day prior (Friday 4 September), allowing teams time to modify their karts overnight if they do not pass the scrutineering. Practice runs will also be offered on the Friday as well as one test run on the event day. This is a change from last year which is intended to avoid any last minute concerns about a kart's viability to run and to ensure competitors have the best opportunity to take part successfully. Stalls, catering and an outdoor bar have also been booked as part of the event alongside the large screen.

Priory Proms in the Park - Saturday 12 September (From 3 pm)
Priory Proms in the Park will take place in Priory Gardens on Saturday 12 September from 3 pm, beginning with a special screening of '*Elvis'*, celebrating the life of The King of Rock 'n' Roll ahead of the 50th anniversary of his passing in 2027.

Due to the prolonged period of hot and dry weather this summer and the increased risk of wildfires and outdoor fires highlighted by Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, the planned fireworks finale will not take place this year as a precautionary fire safety measure. The remainder of the programme will continue as planned, with performances from Dunstable Town Band and Emily Yarrow before and during the live BBC broadcast, which will be shown on a giant screen. The event will also include lighting effects at Priory Church, an outdoor bar, food concessions and a VIP tables area managed by Priory House.

2.2. **Christmas Carols & Torchlight Procession - Friday 27 November (From 7 pm)**
In September, a letter will be sent to all local schools inviting children to participate in the procession. The road closure has already been submitted, allowing the A5183 to be closed for the duration of the event.

Penrose Estate Agents are once again sponsoring the event. It is also hoped that the Grove Theatre pantomime cast will take part, and Santa has been booked. The event finale will be delivered by contractor BBB, who will provide a professional light show and compere the event, which worked particularly well last year.

Following feedback from last year's event, a large screen will be introduced this year. Due to the large attendance, this will provide a better viewing experience for those further away, including improved visibility of the procession, Santa and the school choirs performing on the Methodist Church steps. Catering units will also be available during the evening.

3. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR 2027

3.1. Dunstable Live

Planning is already underway for the 2027 events programme. A Facebook poll was created to gather public suggestions on the preferred music genre for next year's Dunstable Live. Of the themes suggested - *Through the Decades, Country* and *Ska and Reggae* - *Through the Decades* has received the most votes to date and will therefore be the theme for Dunstable Live 2027.

4. AUTHOR

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

PRIORY HOUSE

Purpose of report: For information only

1. UPDATE

1.1 Footfall has remained positive throughout the summer period, with an encouraging increase in food and drink sales. Officers have continued to post regularly across the Priory House social media pages, promoting the current food and drink offer as well as weekly specials. This has been well received by customers and has helped to generate additional interest and encourage repeat visits.

1.2 Officers have also noted a noticeable increase in new customers visiting Priory House. The ongoing building works, including the works to the front and rear of the building and the guttering, have generated a significant amount of interest from visitors and passers-by. Although the works have caused some disruption, they have created many positive conversations with customers, who are pleased to see visible progress being made. There is generally a real sense of excitement and anticipation around the full reopening of Priory House and what the new offer will include

1.3 The recruitment process for the Catering Manager has now commenced and will be followed by recruitment for the Senior Priory House Assistant. Recruitment for the remaining Priory House positions is planned to begin in October, with the aim of having the full team recruited and in post from the beginning of December. This will provide sufficient time for the new team to undertake training, become familiar with the building and new operation, and prepare for the reopening.

1.4 Alongside recruitment, officers are progressing a number of operational areas in preparation for reopening. This includes obtaining costs and developing designs for the new staff uniform, as well as planning and booking a comprehensive programme of staff training. Training will include customer service, specific hospitality and barista training to ensure the team is confident and able to provide a consistently high standard of service from reopening. Officers are also developing the marketing strategy for the reopening, which will focus on building anticipation, promoting the new offer, and encouraging both existing and new customers to visit Priory House.

1.5 The first drafts of the exhibition artwork, interpretation wording and overall design concepts have now been received and are currently being proofed and reviewed by officers. This process will ensure that the information presented is accurate, engaging, and appropriate before the designs are formally signed off and progressed to the next stage. The development of the exhibition continues to be an important part of the wider reopening plans and will help to showcase the history and heritage of Priory House in an accessible and engaging way for visitors.

2. WEDDINGS

2.1 A total of 21 wedding bookings have been booked since opening Grove House for weddings. Six weddings have taken place so far with nine more still to take place this year with a further six for 2027 so far. Most bookings are for the Ceremony Room. Four bookings currently include canapés and prosecco, providing additional income generated through offering an enhanced wedding package.

2.2 Feedback from both couples and registrars has been very positive. Officers have also asked newly married couples to provide testimonials, which will be uploaded to the Council's website to help promote the venue and encourage more couples to choose Grove House for their wedding ceremony.

2.3 Officers recently attended a Wedding Fair in Milton Keynes to gain a better understanding of how best to promote Grove House and Priory House as wedding venues. Having two venues available will provide couples with greater choice when deciding where to get married in Dunstable, strengthening the Council's overall wedding offer.

2.4 In addition, a further Wedding Open Day is planned for the beginning of October to showcase the venue and highlight opportunities for winter weddings and spring/summer 2027 ceremonies. Officers have started to approach wedding vendors in readiness for the open day, with the aim of further promoting Grove House and Priory House as attractive wedding venues in Dunstable.

3. PRIORY HOUSE REFURBISHMENT

3.1 The scaffolding currently in place to the rear of Priory House, which is being used to facilitate the refurbishment of the external windows, has unfortunately been subject to incidents of vandalism. Members of the public have forced access and climbed the scaffolding, resulting in damage being caused to some of the windows.

3.2 Following these incidents, additional security netting has been installed around the scaffolding to restrict unauthorised access and provide greater protection to the building and ongoing works. Since these additional measures have been put in place, there have been no further reported incidents or damage.

3.3 A further challenge has been identified in relation to the sinkhole within the Priory House car park. Investigations indicate that this is likely to be the location of a post-medieval cesspit or well, with the collapse believed to have been caused by the compaction and/or wash-out of historic backfill material.

3.4 Initial excavation has identified very soft material continuing to a significant depth. In addition, the adjacent boundary wall incorporates the remains of a historic clunch wall, which has been found to be in a very poor condition.

3.5 Engineers are now considering appropriate infill solution and extent of the remedial works which will need to be agreed by Historic England. These works were not included within the original Priory House refurbishment project scope and will result in additional costs. These are likely to need to be funded from Dunstable Town Council reserves, but to date full costs are still to be confirmed.

3.6 Following the archaeological discoveries made during the works to the front of Priory House, a reburial strategy is currently being developed and agreed with the relevant specialists and CBC. Once the strategy has been formally approved and the reburial has taken place, works within this area will be able to continue.

3.7 The archaeological discoveries and subsequent reburial requirements are likely to have an impact on the overall building programme and final handover date. However, at this stage, it is not anticipated that this will necessarily delay the planned reopening of Priory House in January.

3.8 Officers and the project team are exploring options to minimise any impact on the reopening programme, which may include a phased handover of the building. This would allow completed areas to be handed back and made operational while any remaining works are completed.

4 FINANCIAL

TEAROOMS TAKINGS (EX VAT)

	2025/26	**2026/27**	**Variation 2025/26 to 2026/27**
April	£665.59	£856.29	£190.70
May	£792.88	£998.38	£205.50
June	£558.21	£1,063.86	£505.65
Total 1st quarter	**£2,016.68**	**£2,918.53**	**£901.84**
July	**£0.00**	**£1,149.09**	**£1,149.09**
Totals	**£2,016.68**	**£4,067.62**	**£2,050.94**

4.5 Members will note that food and drink sales have continued to increase month on month, which is a positive indication of growing customer confidence and awareness of the current offer. Officers have also seen an increase in new customers visiting Priory House for lunch, as well as customers choosing to meet with friends and socialise more regularly.

4.2 Officers have continued to trial different menu items, specials and seasonal drinks to understand what appeals most to customers. These have proved popular and have provided useful insights which will help to shape and develop the food and drink offer ahead of the full reopening.

4.3 **SHOP TAKINGS (EX VAT)**

	2025/26	2026/27	Variation 2025/26 to 2026/27
April	£267.05	£1,929.07	£1,662.02
May	£180.48	£2,774.81	£2,594.33
June	£174.70	£1,727.25	£1,552.55
Total 1st quarter	**£622.23**	**£6,431.14**	**£5,808.91**
July	**£121.12**	**£1,411.31**	**£1,290.19**
Totals	**£743.35**	**£7,842.45**	**£7,099.10**

4.4 Shop sales have remained steady during this period, with the introduction of some new stock lines helping to maintain customer interest. Officers continue to engage with customers to better understand the types of products they would like to see available and use this feedback to help shape the future retail offer.

4.5 A new range of Dunstable-themed gifts is currently being developed and will be available in the shop shortly. This will include items such as tea towels, mugs, magnets and other souvenirs. Dunstable-related products are regularly requested by customers, and it is hoped that the new range will provide a popular addition to the shop and support increased sales.

5. AUTHOR

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE

Purpose of report:	To update Members on progress with the Corporate Plan objectives and actions associated with the Community Services Committee.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. In 2023, a Corporate Plan was adopted by the Council, highlighting the aspirations for the Council between 2024-2027. The purpose of this report is to highlight to Members the achievements to date and the ongoing work of the team to deliver this committee's objectives.

2. PROGRESS ON CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES – COMMUNITY SERVICES

2.1. The Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 contains 50 objectives and of these 19 have been assigned to this committee. Details of progress against each of the 19 objectives are provided in Appendix 1 to this report. 15 objectives for this committee are being successfully progressed or have been completed.

3. PROGRESS ON CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – COMMUNITY SERVICES

3.1. The Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 contains 50 performance indicators and of these 18 have been assigned to this committee. Details of the outcomes against each of the 2025/26 targets are provided in Appendix 2 to this report.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. Some objectives are part of service plans for 2026/27, and progress will be included in future reports.

4.2. Members are reminded that KPI's are not targets, rather they are indicators which are intended to help Members understand and review service areas using available data. It is likely that some indicators will be exceeded and some not met. The reasons for these differences will enable Members to have detailed information to help to review service performance.

5. APPENDICES

5.1. Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan Objectives– Community Services

5.2. Appendix 2 –- Key Objectives - Community Services

6. AUTHOR

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KEY OBJECTIVES	ACTION		COMMITTEE	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE	STATUS	UPDATE / NOTES
1. Continue to improve the organisational management, efficiency and environmental sustainability of the Town Council							
	4	Scope the viability of expanding the Council's wedding and event offer to include Grove House.	Communities	Business plan to be provided; self-funding	Mar-25	**Complete**	First Wedding Held in May 2026
	13	Scope providing a weatherproof cover over the seating area at Priory House	Communities	Aspirational	Mar-27	**Complete**	Scope achieved but due to listed building consent this objective will not progress
	15	Improve events infrastructure by installing additional power points and better configuration of outside stores	Communities	Part UKSFP funded	Mar-25	**Complete**	
	16	Increase the use of Bennett's Splashside Café outside of the splash park season.	Communities	Business plan to be provided; self-funding	Mar-25	**Complete**	Open All Year Round
	17	Purchase and install an external LED board to replicate the information provided from the information window on the High Street	Communities	Aspirational	Mar-27	**Not Possible**	Multiple Options were discussed, as yet no planning permission has been granted or likely to be.
2. Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the Town, creating a sense of pride in Dunstable							
Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the town	20	Invest in and increase public art. Provide a sculpture trail, additional Middle Row art and virtual trail	Communities	Aspirational and UKSPF	Mar-27	**Complete**	Wooden heritage sculpture trail installed. This was funded by UKSPF.
	23	Reopen Priory House and engage users in line with funders' requirements. Promote Priory House as an important heritage destination.	Communities	Funding in place	Mar-27	**On Track**	Major ongoing building works.
4. Continue to improve services targeted to all community sectors in the Town							
	37	Increase the Big Lunch Opportunities to 150 older people	Communities	Using current Budgets	Mar-25	**Complete**	

KEY OBJECTIVES		ACTION	COMMITTEE	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE	STATUS	UPDATE / NOTES
Continue to improve services for older people	38	Launch additional lunch club or other activities for older people	Communities	Aspirational	Mar-26	**Complete**	Launched breakfast club at Bennetts Splash Park, and Food club sucessfully. Lunch Club has also moved venue which has increased capacity.
Continue to improve services for younger people	39	Extend Grove Corner buildings, creating a proper hub for youth services in the town	Communities	Aspirational	Mar-27	**Not Possible**	Plans have been drawn up, and this project has been scoped. Benefits of works do not currently justify the funding required.
	40	Deliver current programme of detached work to March 2026 and secure ongoing resources	Communities	Funding in place / Aspirational	Mar-26	**Complete**	Three nights of detached youthwork secured until March 2027
5. Contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre and development of neighbourhoods in the Town							
Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre	41	Create a pop-up meanwhile space	Communities	UKSFP funded	Mar-26	**Not Possible**	DTC were unable to secure a unit from Central Bedfordshire Council, and The Quadrant.
	42	Create a parklet/Green Space in Town Centre	Communities	Aspirational	Mar-27	**On Track**	Land negotiations continue with Luton Borough Council.
	43	Implement the Town Centre Management Business Plan	Communities	Using current budgets	Mar-25	**Complete**	Delivering and on target, except for the pop up shop which has not been viable due to in ability to secure unit.
	44	Make physical improvements such as: Install solar benches with USB ports in appropriate locations, water refill stations, living columns + art trails	Communities	UKSFP funded	Mar-25	**Complete**	Complete
Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre	45	Install Self-clean pop-up toilets in the town and gardens, increasing the toilets in the town and offering more choice to the public.	Communities	Aspirational	Mar-27	**Not Started**	This objective is aspirational and is not currently being progressed.
Improve services provided to the community	46	Review the Council's support for the Community and Voluntary Sector	Communities	Using current Budgets	Mar-27	**On Track**	
	47	Strengthen and develop cultural services and activities in the town; deliver cultural capacity development programme funded by UKSPF	Communities	UKSFP funded	Mar-25	**Complete**	
6. Represent residents, businesses and community groups of Dunstable on key strategic issues facing the Town							

KEY OBJECTIVES	ACTION		COMMITTEE	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE	STATUS	UPDATE / NOTES
Represent residents on key strategic issues	49	Scope a Neighbourhood Plan to give Dunstable more say over its own future, be it to protect the town from unwanted development or have more control over the developments that do take place in the town	Communities	Using current budgets for scoping work	Mar-27	**Complete**	Complete

Corporate Plan Priority (CP)	Key Objective	Service Area	Performance Indicator	Method Statement	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Outturn	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Outturn	2025/26 Outturn commentary	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target	4 Year Target
2	Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the town	Priory House	Increase in income year on year from actual	Income from functions, events, tea rooms, shop	from 25/26	£10,854	was £158,500, budget updated 25/26 to £29,200	£20,366	Priory House closure not known at time of target set- budget updated 25/26	was £166,420, budget updated 25/26 to £67,800	was £174,731 budget updated 25/26 to £163,418	was £174,731, budget updated 25/26 to £163,418
2	Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the town	Priory House	Percentage of users satisfied with service	Annual satisfaction survey electronic and paper	NEW	No Data	80%	No Data	Building/Tearooms closed	81%	82%	82%
2	Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the town	Priory House	Increase in visitors/customers year on year with 2025/26 being the baseline	Attendees at functions/workshops, number of transactions in tea rooms and shop	NEW	No Data	5%	No Data	Building/Tearooms closed	5%	5%	15%
4	Continue to improve services to all community sectors	Events	Percentage of people satisfied with events	Electronic survey straight after events programme	98%	93%	98%	93.34%	586 responses collected; 39 selected 'neither' or dissatisfied/very dissatisfied- feedback included adverse weather, accessibility, sound, choice of entertainment with some reflecting non event related negativity	98%	98%	98%
4	Continue to improve services for younger people	Grove Corner	Total number of young people visits to services for young people	Headcount of young people at each session or activity	4,000	7,363	4,000	9,771		4,000	4,000	4,000 young people per year - Grove Corner / Pokémon / Detached provision per year
4	Continue to improve services for younger people	Grove Corner	Total number of individual young people engaging in youth provision run by DTC	Individuals no repeat count	500	No Data	500	No Data	PI not being measured	500	500	500
4	Continue to improve services for younger people	Grove Corner	Hours of youth provision delivered to young people	Number of hours recorded per session or activity delivered for young people. i.e. GC, Detached, Schools work etc	804.5	1471	810	1289.5		810	810	810
4	Continue to improve services to all community sectors	Grove Corner	Meet budgeted income year on year	Year end budget	10,750	£10,676	was £10,750, budget updated to £11,000	8,703	Income target is for room hire - external funding previously received for room hire which ceased once detached youthwork added to the service. In addition, 1 long term hire ended. Marketing planned for future perspective hirers.	was £10,750, budget updated 25/26 to £11,330	was £10,750, budget updated to £11,670	24/25 £10,750 25/26 £10,750 26/27 £10,750 27/28 £10,750
4	Continue to improve services for older people	Older People	Total number of older people visits to council delivered older people services	Headcount of older people at each session or activity	2,000	3340	2,000	3,528		2,100	2,300	2,300
4	Continue to improve services for older people	Older People	Increase provision offered to the older community	New project, new one off event or significant increase in scale of existing provision	1	6	1	3		1	1	1
4	Continue to improve services to all community sectors	Community engagement	Number of community led initiatives supported	Total number of new community led initiative projects over 4 year period which are ongoing	1	2	1	6		1	1	1
4	Continue to improve services to all community sectors	Community engagement	New community groups engaged with	Build new networking opportunities/ run different activities/ funding/ partnership work	2	3	2	3		2	2	2
5	Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre	Town Centre	Number of new traders on markets etc.	Maintain numbers	40	77	40	66		40	40	40
5	Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre	Town Centre	Number of trading businesses on the market	Maintain numbers	89	137	93	141		97	100	100
5	Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre	Town Centre	Average number of stalls per market for middle row	Maintain numbers	27	30	27	28		28	28	28
5	Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre	Town Centre	Number of businesses engaged with each year	A visit, a meeting attendance, direct support, participation in an event	140	200	140	210		140	140	140
3	Develop the provision of green space in the town	Bennett's Splash	Percentage of users satisfied with service	Annual Satisfaction Survey. electronic, paper	NEW	No Data	80%	No data		81%	82%	82%
3	Develop the provision of green space in the town	Bennett's Splash	Increase in income year on year		NEW	£53,832	£65,000	£56,792	Income target set in 24/25 for 25/26 based on estimate; budgets updated for 25/26 onward based on prior year actuals and reflected in future years targets	£55,800	£57,309	£57,309