Dunstable Town Council

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Held at the Council Chamber, Grove House, 76 High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1NF

On Monday, 21 September 2026

Attendance

Present: Councillors Tamara (Chair), Alderman, Attwell, Brennan, Davis, J Gurney, K Gurney, Henderson, Hollick, Moulster, Neall

Apologies: Councillor Collins

Also present: Paul Hodson, Katie Williams, Lisa Scheder, Georgia Pearson

Public: 1

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

253/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest

254/26 Public Question Time

Nick James of Greensand Community Energy attended and addressed the Committee in connection with a motion submitted by Councillor Brennan. Mr James explained that Greensand Community Energy is a non-profit volunteer organisation working to assist communities and organisations in the mid-Bedfordshire area to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels. He outlined the organisation's ambitions to support local bodies in making that transition.

255/26 To agree the minutes of the meeting of 15 June 2026 as an accurate record

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15 June 2026 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

256/26 Action Tracker

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the Action Tracker items to members.

Councillor Hollick informed members that initial discussions had taken place regarding a potential visit of six representatives from Germany, following an invitation received earlier in the year. Formal invitations had not yet been issued but would be sent before the end of the calendar year.

An update was provided regarding the delivery of Talk of the Town. Members were advised that the previously reported delivery issues had been resolved. However, residents and Members

were encouraged to report any future concerns, including non-delivery or duplicate deliveries, to enable officers to investigate these with the distribution contractor.

257/26 Motion from Councillor Brennan

Councillor Brennan presented the motion to members.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Brennan advised that no specific decisions were being sought at this stage. The purpose of the motion was to authorise officers to enter into discussions with Greensand Community Energy to explore opportunities for supporting energy generation initiatives within the town. Any proposals arising from those discussions would be reported back to Council for consideration and decision at a future meeting.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that officers engage with the voluntary group Greensand Community Energy, and explore any possible opportunities for community owned energy generation projects using council owned facilities or land, to help realise the Council's ambitions around renewable energies in line with the corporate plan objective

258/26 Marketing and Communications Report

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive outlined the key aspects of the report for Members.

Members were advised that the Council's social media presence continued to grow, with Facebook followers exceeding 17,000. It was noted that the Council remained the only Town Council with the highest number of Facebook followers.

259/26 Corporate Compliance and Facilities Report

The Corporate Performance and Compliance Manager summarised the report to members.

Since writing the report, an update was provided to members advising that a meeting had been booked for 28 September, where CBC would attend Grove House in person as a part of the pre application process for Grove House Building works. It was considered encouraging that the meeting would take place on site, and Members were advised that a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

Members were advised that consideration was being given to holding a further wedding venue open day event later in the year to promote twilight wedding packages available.

260/26 Corporate Plan Update Report

The Corporate Performance and Compliance Manager updated members, which detailed progress against those objectives, falling within the remit of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Members queried the KPI relating to income generated from sources other than Council Tax. Officers explained that the original target had been set when the Council operated Creasey

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Park Community Football Centre and included income from football bookings, catering and bar sales. Since the Council's management contract ceased for these premises, the target was no longer achievable. However, Members were advised that the original target would remain within the Corporate Plan for comparison purposes.

Members discussed the staff retention KPI and noted that the reported figure had been affected by the retirement of two long-serving employees. Concern was expressed that retirements should not necessarily be viewed negatively within staff retention statistics. Officers agreed to review the calculation methodology and confirm whether the measure had been reported correctly.

Members noted on the Residents' Satisfaction Survey KPI, that too few residents had responded to the survey for the results to be considered reliable. Previous efforts to increase responses through social media and Talk of the Town had limited success. Members discussed using an external company to carry out a larger survey and suggested conducting a full residents' survey every four years to provide a reliable benchmark, with other engagement activities taking place in between.
Officers agreed to include a suggested budget in the 2027/28 draft budget to present at the next committee meeting.

ACTION: To include a suggested budget for an external company to carry out a larger survey and research in the 2027/28 draft budget - The Head of Corporate Services and RFO

ACTION - To review and amend the staff retention KPI - The Head of Corporate Services and RFO

261/26 Finance Report

The Head of Corporate Services and RFO highlighted the key parts of the report to members.

Members were updated that, since writing the report, officers had been in communication with the External Auditors, and further information had been submitted. Officers are hopeful that it will be completed by the deadline of 30 September.

Members noted that the annual pay award had been agreed for 2026/7 at 3.3%.

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED:

1.1) To note the revenue budget position and year end forecasts for the current financial year, to 31 July 2026

1.2) To note the Council's earmarked reserves as at 31 July 2026

1.3) To note current investments as at 31 August 2026

1.4) To note the financial governance update

1.5) To note and confirm the current Direct Debits as at September 2026

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

1.6) To note the pay award for 2026/2027

1.7) To note the current position of the Internal and External Audits

262/26 Reference up from Personnel Sub-Committee

The Head of Corporate Services and RFO summarised the report to members.

The Committee was asked to adopt the Violence and Aggression at Work Policy and approve the amendments to the reviewed policies as detailed within the referral report.

It was proposed, seconded and:

RESOLVED: i)that the adoption of the Violence and Aggression at Work Policy be approved
ii)that the acceptance of the reviewed policy amendments be approved

263/26 Reports from Outside Organisations

Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Attwell

Councillor Attwell advised members that the demand for the service remained high, with increasing numbers of residents seeking support. Members were advised that many clients faced digital exclusion and required significant assistance to access online services and benefit applications. As a result, advisers were often required to spend considerable time supporting individual clients through the process. It was noted that Ian Porter had retired as Chair and that John Kane had taken over the role.

Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – Town Mayor and Councillors Hollick and Kenson Gurney

It was noted that there was no further information to add beyond the update provided earlier under the Action Tracker item.

Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Wendy Bater

No Update

Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillors Hollick and Alderman

A meeting was scheduled for November, and an update would be provided following that meeting.

Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillors Hollick and Alderman

Councillor Hollick advised that an extraordinary meeting had recently been held to amend the number of representatives serving on the committee. The change had been agreed without issue.

Chew's Foundation – Councillors Brennan and Kenson Gurney

Councillor Kenson Gurney reported that the most recent meeting had been particularly well attended, with approximately twelve people present compared to lower attendance levels in

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

previous years. It was advised that Dunstable Little Theatre had delivered a presentation on its youth work programme and the work being undertaken to encourage greater participation by young people.

It was also reported that 179 donations had been made for School Uniforms.

Poor's Land Charity – Councillors Tamara and Bater

No Update

Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity – Councillors Tamara and Kimondo

No Update

Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive – Councillor Kotarski

No Update

264/26 Exclusion of 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.

265/26 Cemetery Matters - Verbal Update

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive Provided members with a verbal update

266/26 Date of the Next Meeting

23 November 2026 at 7pm

The meeting closed at 20:30.

Signed: _____

Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Date: _____

UNAPPROVED MINUTES