

Dunstable Town Council

Minutes of the Community Services Committee

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

On Monday, 7 September 2026

Attendance

Present: Councillors K Gurney (Chair), Adams, Bater, Collins, Hollick (substitute for Blennerhassett), Tamara (substitute for Kimondo)

Apologies: Councillors Alderman, Attwell, Blennerhassett (substituted by Hollick), Davis, Kimondo (substituted by Tamara), Kotarski

Also present: Paul Hodson, Georgia Pearson, Becky Wisbey, Annette Clynes, Gill Peck, Kelley Hallam, Lisa Stephens

Public: None

Apologies for Absence

Councillors, Alderman, Attwell, Blennerhassett (substituted by Hollick), Davis, Kimondo (substituted by Tamara), Kotarski

223/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest.

224/26 Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

225/26 To agree the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 1 June 2026 as an accurate record

It was raised that an amendment was required to minute 157/26, to read Bennetts Cafe in place of Priory House.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 1 June 2026 were approved, subject to that amendment, and signed by the Chair.

226/26 Gateway Christmas Lighting Scheme Decision Report

The Town Centre Manager provided an update to members and outlined the options set out in the report for the town Gateway Christmas Lighting Scheme. Members discussed the options in detail.

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED: To extend the lighting scheme within the existing budget by relocating the additional lights to the entrances to the town centre.

227/26 Town Centre Services

Members were provided with the report and discussed all points in detail.

An update was provided on the Soapbox Derby market held on Saturday. Approximately 21 stalls attended, with traders remaining in the square throughout the event. The event was well attended and successful, with traders experiencing strong sales. Members noted the current booking numbers for forthcoming markets as follows:

Heritage Open Day: approximately 26 stalls booked.

United Charities Day: over 37 stalls booked.

10 October Market: approximately 20 stalls booked.

17 October Market: approximately 18 stalls booked.

24 October Halloween Market: approximately 37 stalls booked to date,

Members noted that the Town Ranger Team had undertaken extensive cleaning of the ceilings in the Ashton Square public toilets. Judging for the Loo of the Year was expected to take place before the end of September, with the final grading anticipated by the end of October.

An update was provided on the Young Traders Market. Skye of Country House Treats was recognised as the overall East of England winner.

The Committee noted a slight increase in town centre vacancy rates. Officers advised that this reflected ongoing work with landlords through the Premises of Concern Tasking Group to encourage suitable long-term tenants that would positively contribute to the town centre.

Members congratulated the team on the positivity and inclusivity of market events.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To give a vote of thanks to Becky, Annette and the team for all they do.

228/26 Service Level Agreement Decision Report

The Youth and Community Manager provided the report to members in detail, highlighting the reasons for supporting the Foodbank via a four year SLA Agreement.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To enter into a four year Service Level Agreement from budget 4321/303 with Dunstable Foodbank; for £2,000 per year, totalling £8,000 over the four years.

229/26 Grove Corner and Community Engagement

The Youth and Community Manager summarised the report to members.

It was noted that Grove Corner recorded 252 visits by young people between May and August. Attendance at Pokémon and SEND-friendly sessions remained strong, generating 156 visits and six new registrations. The summer activities programme for children was reported to have been highly successful, with attendance exceeding previous years at several events. SENDfriendly sessions were introduced and received particularly positive feedback from families, highlighting the value of accessible provision.

Bennetts Splash Café and Community Hub's summer season was reported to be successful, with income between May and July exceeding the previous year by approximately £6,500, supported by favourable weather and strong social media promotion. Members noted ongoing efforts to increase community use of the café during the off-season, including discussions with local groups and potential new hirers.

Members were advised that the Action and Adventure Day had attracted 350 attendees, compared with 220 attendees in the previous year and the Art and STEM Day attracted 254 attendees.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To give a vote of thanks to Gill and the team for all they do for the young people of Dunstable.

230/26 Older People's Services

The Youth and Community Manager summarised the report to members.

It was noted that the Good Companions Club currently had 20 registered members, with approximately 15 attending regularly. Due to the nature of the group and the impact of ill health and bereavements, attendance levels fluctuated. To support future membership and reduce social isolation among older residents, officers had discussed lowering the minimum age for attendance from 75 to 70 years with Central Bedfordshire Council. Members were advised that this change would not affect existing funding arrangements.

An update was provided on the Rock and Roll event held in July, which featured live music from a local performer. Members were advised that the next event was scheduled for later in the month and ticket sales were progressing well.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To change the age for the Good Companions Club to 70+

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To give a vote of thanks to Gill and the team for the events put on for the older community

231/26 Events The Cultural Services Manager summarised the report to members.

Members received a verbal update on the Soapbox Derby, which had taken place the previous weekend. The event attracted a larger audience than in the previous year and featured participation from local charities, schools, scouts and businesses. Feedback had been exceptionally positive and officers hoped to expand participation further in future years. 12 teams had entered, but unfortunately one kart failed scrutineering and could not participate.

The Classic Motor Rally was reported to have been extremely successful, attracting the highest number of vehicle applications to date and an estimated 6,000 attendees. Dunstable Live and Party in the Park were both very well attended despite hot weather conditions. Attendance at the Sunday Band Concerts exceeded expectations despite periods of exceptionally hot weather.

Councillor Bater advised members that the truck convoy would be returning next year with the hope that it would again coincide with the Classic Motor Rally.

It was further noted that consultation regarding the theme for Dunstable Live 2027 had been undertaken, with "Through the Decades" receiving the highest number of votes and therefore being adopted as the event theme.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To give a vote of thanks to Gina and the team for a fantastic summer of events with more to come.

232/26 Priory House

The Cultural Services Manager summarised the key points of the report.

Members and officers discussed updates regarding Priory House and the ongoing works currently being undertaken.

Visitor numbers and food and drink sales had increased over the summer period, with officers reporting growth in both repeat and new customers. Members heard that public interest in the refurbishment works had generated positive engagement and increased awareness of the venue.

An update was provided on recruitment for the reopening of Priory House. Key posts, including the Catering Manager, were being recruited, with remaining positions scheduled to

be advertised later in the year. The aim was for all staff to be in post and trained by December.

Weddings at Grove House continue to perform strongly, with 21 bookings secured.

An update was provided on archaeological discoveries and historic wall paintings uncovered during the project. Members were advised that some features would need to be conserved and protected rather than placed on permanent display. However, opportunities are being explored to interpret and showcase these discoveries through exhibitions, audio-visual displays and guided heritage tours. It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To give a vote of thanks to Lisa and the team for continuing efforts and success for Priory House.

233/26 Corporate Plan Update

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report. Members acknowledged and accepted the information provided against the corporate plan as well as the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provided within appendix 2 of the report.

Members noted that, with just over a year remaining in the current Corporate Plan, progress had been reviewed on projects within the Committee's remit. A number of objectives had already been delivered, including weddings at Grove House, improvements to events infrastructure, and additional services for older residents. Other projects remained on track, while some had not progressed due to factors outside the Council's control.

Members were reminded that KPIs are used to monitor and understand service performance and trends rather than as strict targets, with services continuing to be delivered according to community need.

Members noted that response rates to public surveys, particularly those promoted through social media, had fallen and that officers were exploring alternative ways of gathering resident feedback. Members also received an update on Bennetts Splash Park and Café. Although income had been lower than originally anticipated, the facility continued to provide significant benefits to the community through year-round opening and support for local groups. Officers advised that further opportunities to increase income would be explored while maintaining these community benefits.

234/26 Reports from Outside Bodies

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee:

Members noted the ongoing issue of Blue Badge eligibility for community transport vehicles. It was noted that differing interpretations exist between local authorities, with some councils permitting the use of Blue Badges on community transport vehicles while others do not. Concerns were raised regarding the practical implications for Dial-a-Ride users,

particularly when transporting passengers with mobility issues to appointments, including hospitals outside the area.

Dunstable Town

Band: No update

Men In Sheds:

Dunstable Men In Sheds continued to do well as a group with healthy membership numbers and even a few new recruits. They had been very busy making and selling their items throughout the summer markets, shows and events and had also benefited from a few new commissions. They are extremely grateful to Dunstable Town Council for providing the vital outlet on their market stall to sell their items and promote the group, this had been especially helpful when various major Town Council events had brought them good footfall not only in their sale of goods but also in raising interest and recruiting new members.

Dunstable

Pride: No

update

235/26 Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 9 November 2026 at 7pm

The meeting closed at 20:57.

Signed: _____

Chair of the Community Services Committee