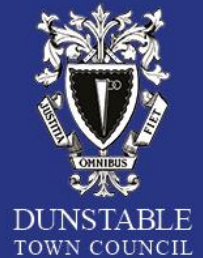


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Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: **Thursday, 21 May 2026**

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Community Services Committee** will be held on **Monday 1 June 2026**, at Grove House in the Council Chamber at **7 pm**. To view the meeting live or afterwards use this link: [livestream](#). Members of the public and press are also welcome to attend in person. Members of the public may ask a question during the public session, either in person or online via MS Teams. If you intend to raise a question, it is helpful to let us know beforehand to give councillors a chance to prepare an informed answer. Please contact the Council via democratic@dunstable.gov.uk or 01582 513000 by 4 pm on Friday **29 May 2026**.

This meeting will be filmed by the Council and broadcast live and will be capable of repeated viewing. If you are seated in the Council Chamber it is likely that the cameras will capture your image. By your presence you are deemed to consent to be filmed, and to the use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting or training purposes.

If you address the committee in person or via Teams, your contribution will be recorded and broadcast, unless this is during a private session, as permitted by the Access to Information provisions.

Please see the below QR code to access the full agenda:



Yours faithfully

Paul Hodson
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Members are reminded when making decisions that the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 requires Members to have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't, and to foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.

To: All Members of the **Community Services Meeting:**

Cllrs Richard Attwell (Town Mayor), Robert Blennerhassett (Deputy Town Mayor), Kenson Gurney (Chair), Trevor Adams (Vice-Chair), Trevor Adams, Gregory Alderman, Wendy Bater, Philip Crawley, Mark Davis, Sally Kimondo, Nicholas Kotarski, Matthew Neall, Steve Collins and other member of the council or information

AGENDA

150/26 Apologies for Absence

151/26 Declarations of Interest

152/26 Public Question Time

153/26 To agree the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 2 March 2026 as an accurate record

154/26 Town Centre Services

155/26 Service Level Agreement Decision Report

156/26 Ear Marked Reserves

157/26 Grove Corner and Community Engagement

158/26 Older People's Services

159/26 Events

160/26 Priory House

161/26 Reports from Outside Bodies

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee - Cllr Peter Hollick

Dunstable Town Band - Cllr Robert Blennerhassett

Men in Sheds - Cllr Richard Attwell

Dunstable Pride - Cllr Matthew Brennan

162/26 Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 7 September 2026 at 7 pm

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee

held on Monday 2 March 2026 from 19:00

- Present:** Councillors Matthew Neall (Chair), Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor), Trevor Adams, Robert Blennerhassett and Gregory Alderman
- In attendance:** Councillors Peter Hollick and Shaun Moulster, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk & Chief Executive), Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager and Gina Thanky (Events Officer)
- In attendance: (remotely)** Councillor Nicholas Kotarski and Annette Clynes (Town Centre Manager)

Public: One

071/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Nicholas Kotarski, Wendy Bater, John Gurney, and Mark Davies

072/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

073/26 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None

074/26 TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 12 JANUARY 2026 AS AN ACCURATE RECORD

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2026 were agreed upon as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

075/26 ACTION TRACKER

The action tracker was reviewed, and Members noted the updates provided.

076/26 EVENTS

The Events Manager summarised the report. 13 teams had enquired about the Soapbox Derby and two applications had already been submitted. It was explained that no maximum number of teams had been set, and more applications would be welcome.

Councillor Hollick declared a non-pecuniary interest as President of the Dunstable Musical Theatre Company and did not take part in the vote.

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

077/26 TOWN CENTRE SERVICES

The Town Centre Manager updated Members that the markets planned for both 14 and 21 March had 31 stalls booked already. The premises of concern tasking group was addressing shops suspected of selling illegal products, working in partnership to ensure appropriate action was taken.

078/26 PRIORY HOUSE

The Head of Community Services summarised the report. Members discussed the logistics of hosting weddings at Grove House during major events; it was noted that events are planned a year in advance and anyone seeking to arrange a wedding would be informed of event dates before making a booking.

079/26 GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Community Engagement Manager summarised the report. Members acknowledged the positive impact of youth engagement efforts and encouraged councillors to visit sessions to see the work firsthand.

080/26 OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES

The Good Companions Club had expressed interest in a seaside trip, and efforts were underway to explore how this could be facilitated.

The upcoming Big Lunch event would be advertised in "Talk of the Town," with tickets available via telephone only to ensure fairness. Members expressed appreciation for the team's efforts to continue to develop services to support older people.

081/26 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee

Councillor Peter Hollick reported concerns over the issue of blue badges for the organisation's buses. Discussions with Dial A Ride were ongoing. A new second hand bus was to be purchased in line with the Dial-a-Ride's vehicle replacement policy.

Dunstable Town Band

Councillor Robert Blennerhassett reported no update.

Men in Sheds - Councillor Richard Attwell noted that the group is taking on new members and settling down with a new secretary and chair.

082/26 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 1 June 2026 at 7.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 7.38 pm

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 1 JUNE 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 20 stalls.

1.2. Market bookings to date:

16 May	41 booked
13 June	31 booked
20 June	17 booked
5 July	26 booked

1.3. Event markets are booked for Saturday 13 June – Dunstable Classic Motor Rally, Saturday 4 July – Young Traders Market and Friday 14 August, Saturday 15 August – Ashton Square Day. Middle Row Markets will also be showcased at Dunstable Live and Party in the Park, further increasing its visibility and community engagement.

2. ASHTON SQUARE TOILETS

2.1. As part of the Loo of the Year Awards 2026 recommendations, officers will be installing additional shelving within the baby changing facilities and fitting hooks to the doors. Further enhancements to improve the overall standard of the toilets will also be introduced, including shelving on toilet roll holders and the provision of new steps for children to use the sinks and new baby-changing units, all to be completed prior to the judging period.

2.2. A structured Sunday deep-cleaning programme has now been implemented by the Town Rangers and is already demonstrating a positive impact on the condition of the facilities. In addition, a QR code system has been introduced to record and monitor daily cleaning activities undertaken by the Town Rangers.

- 2.3 Dunstable Town Council has submitted an application for the Loo of the Year Awards 2026/27. Judging will take place at an unannounced time during August and September. Officers are confident that the toilets will be able to regain a Platinum award.

3. TOWN CENTRE

- 3.1. The two event markets held in March achieved high stall attendance, each hosting an average of 38 stalls and attracting high levels of public engagement. In comparison, the two non-event markets averaged 20 stalls. "Love Your Local Market" also generated a positive response, with over 41 stalls. Free table football successfully encouraged public participation through games and competitions, while craft activities and a themed trail were also available on the day. Looking ahead, the Dunstable Classic Motor Rally Market is scheduled for 13 June and will feature a new attraction, "Brick Racers," where participants can build and race model cars for prizes. Free craft activities will also be available throughout the event.
- 3.2. Bites on the Square has had a positive re launch; a new event will take place on Wednesday 27 May. Officers are supporting the event with free crafts and glitter tattoos. Nine food traders have booked to attend.
- 3.3. Street Food Heroes are on their fourth year in Dunstable. The monthly event is extremely popular with food traders and the public. Street Food Heroes takes place on the third Thursday of each month, March to September.
- 3.4. Supported by the Town Council, Ann Marie's Fresh Caribbean Food is planning a "Reggae and Rum" event on Saturday 25 July on The Square, from 1 pm to 6 pm. The event will feature a range of food vendors and stallholders, alongside free activities for families. This event will raise prostate cancer awareness, with guest speakers and the possibility of providing test kits. Officers are working closely with Ann Marie's Fresh Caribbean Food to support the planning and delivery of this event.
- 3.5. The Town Centre team has re booked a stand at the next job fair at the Methodist Church on Wednesday 14 October, After the success of the last job fair Officers will continue to promote Middle Row Markets as a start-up business opportunity.
- 3.6. Officers distributed the Town Centre Newsletter with the Talk of the Town, to businesses across the town centre. The newsletter highlighted the In Bloom window competition, provided information on lottery-funded support and donations, and promoted opportunities for businesses and residents to participate in the Soapbox event. As part of the Lottery's first birthday celebrations, a social media campaign was launched to support the lottery initiative. Golden envelopes were distributed to shops and businesses throughout the town centre for members of the public to find and have a free spin on the lottery
- 3.7. There has been another breach of the injunction by the associated individual. It was agreed that the council will submit a contempt of court application officers are awaiting a court date.

- 3.8 The Town Centre Manager attended the BedX meeting on Tuesday 28 April, where discussions focused on business opportunities and town growth within the Universal development area, as well as the Luton Airport expansion.

4. VACANCY RATES

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

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
253	30 vacant	11.85%	11.85% count end of Jan 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	27 vacant	12.85%	12.85% count end of Jan 26.

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

No. Units	No. Vacant Units	% Vacant Units	Previous %
43	3 vacant	6.97%	6.97% count end of Jan 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 Jan 26

5. TOWN CENTRE BUSINESS PLAN

- 5.1. Year three of the Business Plan is being implemented. Bites on the Square will host a free half-term arts and crafts event, including glitter tattoos. With a focus on expanding the event and exploring opportunities to attract additional food vendors, this resulted in nine new traders joining the Wednesday market. Middle

Row Markets will host 17 event markets and aims to achieve its third-year target of an average of 35 stalls across both regular and event markets. Officers will support Middle Row traders in expanding their businesses and, where appropriate, moving into town centre units as they become available. Officers will also work alongside community groups to encourage participation in Middle Row Markets and build confidence in using the area for larger community events.

6. THE PREMISES OF CONCERN TASKING GROUP

- 6.1. Officers met with Rochdale BID, which has similarly brought together partner agencies to coordinate and deliver appropriate enforcement action. The initiative implemented in Rochdale has already achieved positive outcomes, with seven premises linked to illicit trade having been issued three-month closure orders to date. Following the meeting, Officers concluded that the existing multi-agency Premises of Concern Group that the Town Council established remains the appropriate approach for addressing similar issues locally.
- 6.2. Officers have also been supporting Trading Standards by providing information relating to two supermarkets and a barber in the town centre. This information has been shared to assist with ongoing enquiries.

7. CHRISTMAS LIGHTING SCHEME

- 7.1 The Town Centre Manager has been working in collaboration with Lamps and Tubes on the scheme agreed by Members to install additional Christmas lights. Four gateway locations have been identified and thoroughly assessed by Lamps and Tubes. As these gateway entrances are situated on or near roundabouts and traffic signal junctions, additional costs have been identified that were not previously anticipated.
- 7.2 As a result of these additional costs and the length of time it is taking for decorations to be transported to the UK due to shipping issues it will not be possible to have these included in the 2026 scheme.
- 7.3 The additional revenue costs due to the complexity of the locations also means that the current allocated budget does not cover the full annual costs of the scheme extension. To enable members to make an informed decision a decision report, including recommendations for the revised 'entrance' schemes, will be presented at the next Community Services Committee Meeting in September.

8. TOWN CENTRE ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR GROUP

- 8.1 The Head of Community Services is now regularly attending the monthly Town Centre ASB group which is led by Bedfordshire Community Police. There are ongoing issues with ASB at the leisure centre with discussions with relevant parties continuing. There were also discussions regarding ASB and criminal activity with the three Town Centre parks owned by Dunstable Town Council. The reporting levels to the Police over the last six months are particularly low showing no patterned or significant cause for concern. Whilst it is anticipated that ASB will increase in these locations over the summer months

the key is to increase the level of reporting so the Police can better direct resources. CCTV at Bennett's has been discussed and scope for the viability of a re-deployable over the summer to be located there is being considered but CBC believe DTC really need to invest in a minimum of three cameras if the park was to have adequate coverage. Issues of pavement parking and blocking of the pavement, particularly on Queensway, has been raised with the Police and CBC, officers will attend when resources allow, but it appears that no other action is possible.

9. AUTHOR

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

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE****MONDAY 1 JUNE 2026****SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT DECISION REPORT****Purpose of report:** To approve four-year Service Level Agreements.**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1. It is recommended that the Council enter into the 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

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Dunstable Town Council have awarded service level agreements to eight organisations within the town for the last four years. These organisations needed to evidence the difference the funding would make to their delivery, and to enhance the offer their organisations provided to residents with the town. Seven of these organisations have come to the end of their four-year SLA and of these six have expressed interest that they wish to reapply for a new SLA to begin.
- 2.2. Officers have met those organisations who have identified that they wish to have a further four-year SLA. The current SLA holders who wish to reapply, have discussed with officers 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.
- 2.3. Dunstable History Society has decided not to reapply for an SLA. Sorted Counselling Service's current SLA runs until 31 March 2028.
- 2.4. Dunstable Foodbank indicated they wish to reapply, however, despite several emails, officers did not receive the documents required to be able to issue the 2025 SLA. The Foodbank has since provided officers with an update regarding staff sickness, and officers will arrange to meet with Dunstable Foodbank in the coming weeks.

- 2.5. Officers will be meeting with Hospice at Home on Friday 15 May and therefore will provide a verbal update at committee.
- 2.6. Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity met with officers and indicated that they would like to reapply, and increase their amount from £1,500 to £2,000, however, noted that any level of funding is appreciated and their relationship with the council is highly valued. BRCC highlighted that their previous SLA covered a wide range of activities, and therefore, if successful in being issued a new four-year SLA, would like to focus on Manchester place. This would mean that the SLA funding would support increased activity delivered from the Community Halls, which includes the Thursday drop-in-café. Dunstable Good Neighbours Scheme is supported by BRCC to ensure their safeguarding, governance and committee support are appropriately managed. BRCC wishes to use the SLA towards free community wellbeing walks to encourage social interaction and are currently recruiting additional walk leaders. Finally, the social prescribing service continues to expand and supports individuals with mental health and wider wellbeing needs, which is delivered from Dunstable Community Halls, and therefore, the SLA would help to maintain and develop these services.
- 2.7. Dunstable Citizens Advice would like to reapply for £2,000. They explained that without the SLA the additional one evening per month, would not be able to take place. This funding has allowed for working residents to be able to access the service that CAB provides, which otherwise would be a barrier. Sessions run once per month, for three hours and demand is high – with a waiting list operated. By having the evening provision, that is funded by the SLA it has been effective in reaching a previously unserved group. CA do not propose any significant change to their model if awarded a new SLA and it is worth noting that DTC is currently the only funder supporting the evening session.
- 2.8. Dunstable Town Band would like to reapply for the continuation of £1,000. The band met with officers and explained that the SLA would continue to support them with providing three performances at DTC events, along with essential core costs, such as insurance, PRS for music license fees, Musical director fees, general running costs and replacement of instruments. The Town Band has aspirations to form a Junior Town Band, however, are not yet at the stage to be able to do so, and therefore, officers have advised that once they are, the CVS would be beneficial to contact for support.
- 2.9. Dunstable Town Guides wish to reapply for £800 as the SLA has helped to keep ticket prices affordable, cover core running costs, such as insurance leaflets, refreshments and meeting costs. The Town Guides identify that the SLA supports volunteers and reduces pressure on them by having the SLA to cover these costs and allows the group to focus on delivery instead of constant fundraising. Without the funding, the Town Guides have identified they would need to either increase ticket prices further or undertake more fundraising, which they feel would put a strain on their volunteers. The Town Guides stressed that bringing visitors and footfall into Priory House is a key benefit, and they do not wish to request more than £800 as they do not want to become reliant upon grant funding. In 2025, they engaged with over 770 people from Dunstable and surrounding areas for their walks, and Tea Time Tales has sold approximately 2,000 tickets in 2025 – which the group has seen not only an increase in footfall but also social opportunities for attendees and the formation of smaller friendship groups as a result, not only

providing a service but indirectly supporting wellbeing. The Town Guides are aware over the next couple of years they will need to increase tickets slightly, along with a continued focus on volunteer recruitment, which is currently their greatest concern.

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 with those who wish to reapply (BRCC, DCA, Dunstable Town Band and Dunstable Town Guides), this has provided officers with a deeper understanding of the project and how the SLA supports the delivery of this. Officers can confirm to members 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 the town, 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.
- 3.3. It is at the discretion of the committee to agree to increase the funding for BRCC as stated in 2.4 of the report.

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) is committed, leaving £1,000 available for seedcorn funding and £11,900 available for SLAs. If members were to approve the four SLAs presented in this reports this would total £5,300. The remaining other SLA renewals (if approved later) total £3,000. If all SLA renewals were to be approved this would total £8,300 leaving £3,600 still 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 be 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**

Gill Peck, Youth and Community Manager
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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 1 JUNE 2026

EAR MARKED RESERVES

Purpose of Report: i) For Members to approve the release of specific ear-marked reserve within the Community Services' service area.

1. ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. To approve the release of Community Services specific ear-marked reserve for expenditure due to be incurred specifically for their purpose.

2. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1. At the meeting of the Full Council on 9 February 2026 members approved the creation of new earmarked reserves as well as the contributions to existing reserves for financial year 2026/27.
- 2.2. To enable officers to work more efficiently, Members are requested to approve the release of specific earmarked reserves, created for a particular purpose as detailed in the table at 2.5, ongoing for the duration of the requirement of the reserve.
- 2.3. This committee are asked to consider and approve the reserve for the Older People's Service, as this is specific to Community Services. Other earmarked reserve approvals will be requested to their relevant committees.
- 2.4. Should Officers require the use of any reserves for anything other than their specific purpose, approval will be required through Committee in the usual way.

2.5.

Reserve	Balance at 30.04.2026 (excluding commitment)	Detail
322 – Older People's Day Care Service	£12,325	For assisting in in-year cost increases to run lunch club (food, room hire and transport), to avoid increasing costs to the Members attending

- 2.6. This is a historic one-off reserve which is not added to annually and can only be used for the Good Companions lunch club. There are on occasion fluctuating in year costs for this service delivered to some of our most vulnerable members of the community who may not be able to manage increase membership increases, this reserve allows the group to continue regardless of any in year cost increases.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The financial implications are detailed within the report. The proposals ensure that plans are in place to maintain sufficient reserves to sustain the Council's current assets and service delivery.

4. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The proposals are in line with the Council's Financial Regulations.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS - none.

6. HUMAN RESOURCE, EQUALITIES AND LEGAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS - none.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. Council Minutes 11 April 2024 – Council-Minutes-11-04-2024
7.2. Council Minutes 9 February 2026 - 2026-02-09 - Full Council - Minutes

8. AUTHOR

- 8.1. Lisa Scheder – Head of Corporate Services (RFO)
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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 1 JUNE 2026

GROVE CORNER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Purpose of report: For information

1. GROVE CORNER

- 1.1. Grove Corner received 338 visits from young people between 4 February 2026 and 7 May. 17 new young people have signed up over this time. Grove Corner was closed on Friday 3, Monday 6 April and Monday 4 May due to the bank holidays.
- 1.2. Grove Corner received 323 visits from young people between 10 February 2025 and 7 May 2025.
- 1.3. Pokémon received 219 visits from young people between 4 February 2026 and 05 May 2026, with 9 new signups.
- 1.4. Pokémon received 212 visits from young people between 11 February 2025 and 6 May 2025.
- 1.5. Grove Corner now has 1,579 Facebook followers and Grove Corner's Instagram has 522 followers.

2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- 2.1. Officers have been working with young people who attend Grove Corner, encouraging young people to think about different activities and workshops they would like to happen at Grove Corner. Therefore, a core group of young people have been providing the Youth Apprentice with a variety of ideas, which officers will support young people to make happen. Ideas have included, a talent show, making basic snacks, learning about budgeting, and to create some art for the centre.
- 2.2. Officers are also going to put monthly topic discussions on the display board within the centre, based on current and emerging issues – to provide young people with more information on different topics.
- 2.3. Officers are currently working with young people who attend Grove Corner, to encourage them to take part in the focus group for Priory House, supporting young people to get creative, and be involved in coproducing the exhibition space. Therefore, a workshop will take place, with Core Creative, at Grove Corner on Monday 18 May.

3. DETACHED YOUTH WORK

- 3.1. Between 4 February 2026 and 27 April 2026, officers have delivered 44 detached activities across Dunstable. The Million Hours funding came to an end on 31 March 2026, and therefore, all areas of Dunstable are now covered by the detached team over three sessions per week.
- 3.2. Between 4 February 2026 and 06 May 2026, officers have engaged with 935 young people by headcount. 191 of these young people have been new young people.
- 3.3. Therefore, there has been a total of 1,438 interactions with young people between 4 February and 28 April; through centre-based youth work and detached youth work. 217 of these interactions have been new interactions with young people.
- 3.4. Officers provided young people with a variety of activities over the February half term, which included a Go Karting Trip, a trip to Orbital trampoline park, a visit to Tokko in Luton to use the climbing wall and a visit to The Leisure Centre to take part in their huge inflatable experience. Officers also facilitated the Under 18s Night on Tuesday 31 March and this event proved popular by all in attendance. 168 young people were present, and officers have received requests from young people for this event to become an annual occasion and therefore, officers are currently exploring if this is feasible.
- 3.5. Over the May half term holiday, officers will be facilitating a Skate Jam on Tuesday 26 May, at the skate park, which will be hosted by Team Rubicon, and a Retro Arcade experience, running from Grove Corner on Thursday 28 May. Therefore, a verbal update will be provided at committee.
- 3.6. The funding from Sports England that Everyone Active received, came to an end on 31 March, however, both officers and staff from Everyone Active felt this project had been beneficial to the young people who attended, and therefore, have agreed to continue working in partnership, with officers attending for one hour per week on a Thursday and Everyone Active providing half the sports hall for free. This will be regularly reviewed to see if the arrangement is working for both parties.
- 3.7. Officers recruited for a 16-hour part time Detached Youth Worker and are currently waiting upon the safer recruitment checks to take place.
- 3.8. Officers are now working on the summer activities programme for young people, which will be marketed over the coming weeks.

4. SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. Officers continue to deliver the Wellbeing Project in Priory Academy with Boxing Saves Lives. This project has been well received not only by the school but by the young people who are on the project. Young people have verbally told officers that they did not want the project to end, due to finding their confidence around different topics increase, and therefore, finding not only the boxing element supportive, but also the variety of organisations who have delivered workshops, around sexual health, healthy relationships, managing emotions, understanding mental health,

and real life discussions – and therefore, this project will run for a further 8 weeks, concluding at the summer holidays.

- 4.2. Officers have been contacting schools regarding the Wheelie Fantastic project, encouraging groups to enter and take part in this year's competition.
- 4.3. Officers visited TCHC College, to provide an opportunity for students to attend older people's provision to run workshops, to learn new skills, and take part in some intergenerational work – therefore, the college, along with tutors have attended Lunch Clubs and Breakfast Club to facilitate some activities.
- 4.4. Officers will be hosting some litter picks with schools over the final term before the summer break.
- 4.5. Officers put Beecroft Academy in contact with the Woodside Garden, and the school took some pupils to work on this initiative and will be visiting again, officers from the town council did not attend but helped to form this new partnership.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. As part of the corporate plan work relating the understanding and supporting the needs of the Voluntary and Community Sector better, officers are currently undertaking a desktop exercise - this is the first stage of this 12 month project to assist understand about the CVS in the town and how best the Town Council can offer support. After this desktop exercise has been completed the team will compile a questionnaire and undertake focus groups with a report and recommendations aimed for 2027. At this stage if you are aware of any smaller voluntary and community sector constituted groups that officers may not be aware of please share their details the Head of Service.
- 5.2. Officers are currently planning for summer activities for those aged 10 and under. Officers this year at some activities, will be facilitating a quiet SEND hour, before the main activity takes place. This will allow the events to more accessible to families who require events to be quieter to be able to access them. These will be marketed, and families are encouraged to attend if this would benefit their family:

Date	Event	Location
Friday 31 July	Inflatable Fun Day	Grove House Gardens
Wednesday 5 August	National Play Day	St Augustine's Academy Playing Field
Tuesday 11 August	K-POP Workshop	Grove House Gardens
Thursday 20 August	Action and Adventure Day	Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground
Tuesday 25 August	Art and STEM Day	Priory Garden

- 5.3. Officers have picked the above locations, based on footfall of each location, and experience of where is popular for families to attend for the summer activities programme.
- 5.4. 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.

6. BENNETT'S SPLASH, CAFÉ AND COMMUNITY HUB

- 6.1. Between 4 February 2026 and 29 April 2026, there have been several events organised. The activities that have been facilitated included:

Over 55s Breakfast Club – 13 sessions
Home Ed – 20 sessions
Adult Craft – 13 Sessions
Sustainable Fashion – 12 sessions
Friday Craft Club – 13 sessions
Dunstable Croquet Club – 2 sessions

- 6.2. Between 4 February 2026 and 29 April 2026, there have been three hirers. These have been the detached youth team facilitating youth café, the over 55s Breakfast Club and Dunstable Croquet Club.
- 6.3. Officers have been supporting a local resident who is facilitating a weekly sustainable fashion project. This has crossed community groups and now linked with the ladies who craft on a Friday morning. As such, the group is going to continue to frequently use the café to continue their project, whilst the café is open for splash season. This is going to be in a customer capacity which should generate income into the café.
- 6.4. The partnership with More than Board games has been paused whilst the group concentrate on growing their charity and reaching an increased number of people. Once it has gained momentum we will resume talks about hosting sessions with the group.
- 6.5. Sprout and Swap will begin hosting meeting here starting in June providing a space for people to come and swap plants and trade gardening tips, marketing for this will start shortly.
- 6.6. The Thursday adult craft group are currently working with Dunstable in Bloom to contribute to their post-box topper scheme, bringing joy and colour to the community.
- 6.7. Officers have been preparing for the commercial season to begin. The Splash Park has had a soft launch during the week of 27 April 2026, with the official launch taking place on Monday 4 May. Officers will be promoting various deals to encourage footfall into the café and will also work alongside community groups who have used the space, to support them during this season.
- 6.8. Officers will be working in partnership with the Chatty Café. The Chatty Café will have a volunteer in the café, once a month on a Thursday and this is to encourage

residents to have someone who they can talk with. As part of this scheme, officers will be promoting the sessions, and will signpost residents, and those on waiting lists for town council projects to attend this provision.

- 6.9. The table below shows a comparison between takings excluding VAT comparing 2025 to 2026 covering February, March and April, up to 29 April:

Month	Dates	2025	2026	+/-
February	3–9	£241.95	£226.03	-£15.92
	10–16	£353.74	£366.74	+£13.00
	17–23	£555.92	£463.91	-£92.01
	24–02	£323.17	£327.36	+£4.19
	Monthly total	£1,474.78	£1,384.04	-£90.74
March	3–9	£421.30	£264.36	-£156.94
	10–16	£389.10	£278.39	-£110.71
	17–23	£551.73	£421.46	-£130.27
	24–30	£456.74	£253.58	-£203.16
	31–6	£698.31	£287.96	-£410.35
	Monthly total	£2,517.18	£1,505.75	-£1,011.43
April	7–13	£688.24	£781.04	+£92.80
	14–20	£499.05	£430.29	-£68.76
	21–27	£266.03	£437.78	+£171.75
	28–4	£1,179.68	£1,050.64	-£129.04
	Monthly total	£2,633.00	£2,699.75	+£66.75
Overall	Total	£6,624.96	£5,589.54	-£1,035.42

- 6.10. The table above shows that there is a real variance in takings. March was not as successful as the previous year. This is due largely to a significant decrease in attendance at Home Education sessions. Officers have spoken to the community regarding this and it has been brought to attention that there has been a significant increase in the Home Education community and consequently provision of activities. Many now are having to choose between activities each day, rather than looking for ongoing sessions.
- 6.11. Officers are continuing to try to recruit and create a Friends group. Dunstable Wombles have expressed interest in wanting to be part of this group, and officers are currently working on approaching different users of the Café, Hub, Splash Park and Recreation Ground, to form this group. The current plan is to focus on the group running a family fun event for a couple of hours in September. It is hoped that the process of planning, securing seedcorn funding and also running the event will bring individuals who are interested in the park together and in doing gain a better understanding of local needs relating to the open space. Such a group (and event) would very much support an expression of interest that the Head of Community Services has submitted to Anglian Water for funding towards a SUD in the recreation ground which would aim to reduce the down flow flooding during times of heavy rain fall.

- 6.12. Officers have promoted the new summer menu. After receiving feedback from the community, the menu has been updated to include a wider variety of iced drinks and to include meal options for adults and children. A few items have been removed to streamline productivity in the kitchen. Prices have been adapted to reflect increases in stock cost.
- 6.13. Officers have also been developing marketing material, working closely with the Marketing and Communications Officer. The Café and Splash Park have new standardised branding, helping to highlight the different sides of the café and splash seasons. Signage around the splash park has been updated, cleaned and old branding removed. New banners and weighted clip frames are also being implemented to promote the café and splash park. The Café and Communications teams continue to work closely in conjunction with each other to promote the facilitates and groups at the café.
- 6.14. A 16-hour Catering Assistant has been recruited for the Café and Community Hub. Having a permanent contracted member of staff is proving invaluable in the service area and providing support to the Café and Community Hub Manager.

7. AUTHORS

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MONDAY 1 JUNE 2026
OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Purpose of report: For information

1. GOOD COMPANIONS CLUB

- 1.1. The Good Companions Club currently has 20 members. Sadly, some of the members of this group are currently off sick due to being in hospital, and sadly three members have passed away. Therefore, there are some spaces, which officers are marketing through social media, and through contacts.
- 1.2. The group have enjoyed several activities since the last report, including their Easter Party, a visit from Bedfordshire Police and a talk from Sight Concern.
- 1.3. C:R Catering has begun to provide food for Good Companions and this has been well received by members. Officers are currently recording how much food wastage there is weekly, to help officers to know how many orders to place each week – however, there is a chance that the demand will exceed the catering budget allocated due to the increase of fees for the catering company, which is currently £8.50 per person per week for a two course hot meal.

2. LUNCH BUNCH

- 2.1. The Lunch Bunch continues to operate a waiting list, with the group currently having 38 members. Therefore, officers will call those who meet the criteria for Good Companions Club and offer those on the waiting list to join this group instead.
- 2.2. The Lunch Bunch enjoyed their annual Easter Party, with live entertainment from Joe Corrigan. The group have also enjoyed some in house activities and visits from Dunstable Connect Club, Sweet Rose Care, a meal to the Halfway House and a visit from Beds Fire.

3. OVER 55 BREAKFAST CLUB

- 3.1. The over 55s Breakfast Club continues to be popular and is currently full. There are currently 22 members. Officers are aware there is still a need, and Chatty Café will be running from Bennett's Splashside Café and Community Hub weekly from May, and therefore, officers hope this will provide those who have expressed interest in the breakfast club or Lunch Bunch with an alternative option.

4. FOOD CLUB

- 4.1. The Food Club is well established and is now ran by those who attend. The group continue to keep the team informed about how their meet ups go, but this group is now running without the support of the Town Council.

5. COFFEE MORNINGS

- 5.1. Officers have run two coffee mornings since the last update, and both have been well attended. Those who come, who expressed they prefer the coffee and chat event to take place in a morning, and 10.30 am to 12 noon has proved a popular time to run these.
- 5.2. A lady who came to a recent coffee morning for the first time, expressed to officers at the start of the coffee morning, how she was isolated, lonely and looking for things to do – Dunstable Connect Club were at the session delivering a talk on their services, and spoke with the lady and invited her to attend their group, which the lady agreed to and expressed this would help with her feeling lonely.
- 5.3. 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 2 June – Priory View
Tuesday 7 July – Dunstable Cemetery Chapel
Tuesday 4 August – St Mary's Church Hall
Tuesday 15 September – Beecroft Community Centre
Tuesday 20 October – Peter Newton Pavilion
Tuesday 17 November – Grove Corner
Tuesday 22 December – Priory View
Tuesday 19 January – Dunstable Cemetery Chapel
Tuesday 2 March – St Mary's Church Hall

6. BIG LUNCH

- 6.1. Tickets were released for Big Lunch on Monday 20 April, and within several hours, all 175 tickets were allocated. There is now a waiting list in place for this event.

7. ROCK AND ROLL

- 7.1. Rock and Roll will be taking place in July; officers will be marketing this event shortly with tickets going on sale at the end of May.

8. AUTHOR

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 1 JUNE 2026

EVENTS

Purpose of report: For information, and to approve the proposed events programme for 2027/28.

1. ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. Members are asked to approve the events programme for 2027/28 as detailed in section 4 of the report.

2. PAST EVENTS

2.1 St George's Day Celebrations

The St George's Day celebrations were very well attended, with over 4,000 visitors attending throughout the day, representing the highest footfall to date. New attractions introduced this year included the Walkabout Dragons, Dragon 101 show, children's jousting activity and have-a-go archery. These proved particularly popular with attendees. Feedback received via Facebook and SurveyMonkey has been very positive. In addition to the programme of entertainment and activities, the event featured seven local business stalls, two catering vendors and three community groups/charities, all of whom reported strong public engagement throughout the day.

2.2 Around the World

The Around the World event went well, with an estimated attendance of over 3,000 throughout the day. Despite cold weather and intermittent rain, visitors continued to engage with the activities, performances and workshops, helping to maintain a fun and relaxed atmosphere on site. Feedback received through surveys has been very positive, with visitors particularly enjoying the wide range of free activities and diverse cultural displays, which encouraged families to remain on site for longer periods.

The Wild West Fest, facilitated by BBB Group, proved especially popular, with over 500 prizes awarded within the first two hours of the event. Strong participation was also seen across the interactive dance, drumming and cultural activities delivered by community groups and performers throughout the day. Stallholders, caterers, community groups, charities and performers all reported positive engagement with visitors and enjoyment of the event. The *Around the World Doll* trail and the *Love Our World Trail* also helped create a flow of visitors between Priory Gardens and Middle Row Market, which was celebrating the Love Your Local Market Campaign on the same day.

3. **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR 2026**

3.1 **Dunstable Classic Motor Rally - Saturday 13 June (10 am to 4 pm)**

To date 275 vehicles have registered to enter the Dunstable Classic Motor Rally. As the maximum vehicle capacity has now been reached, entries closed on Thursday 30 March. Any cancellations will be offered to applicants on the waiting list should spaces become available. The event has also now been sponsored by *Regtransfers*, marking their third consecutive year sponsoring the event.

As in previous years, the event will consist of live music with performances from The Memphis Belles, Kiah Shah and Lulu and the Hullabalooos, performing a range of genres from the 1940s, jazz to present day music. In addition, themed activities have also been booked, including:

- Children's transport themed assault course
- Children's arts and crafts
- Teaching Talons animal encounter
- Small children's rides
- History Alive - living history character trail
- Vision VR Road Safety Vehicle - Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- 'Wind in the Willows' - Unbound Theatre shows

There will also be a number of stalls and catering units, including seven business stalls, seven charity/community groups, an outdoor bar and four catering units.

3.2 **Dunstable Live - Saturday 27 June (2 pm to 8 pm)**

This year's theme for Dunstable Live is '*Queens of Sound*', celebrating iconic female artists, with the line-up voted for by the public's top five acts. With over 1,500 votes received, the line-up for the event is as follows:

- 2 pm - Amy Alive (Amy Winehouse tribute)
- 3 pm - The One & Only Adele (Adele tribute)
- 4.15 pm - Taryn Charles as Simply Whitney (Whitney Houston tribute)
- 5.30 pm - Kinisha as Simply the Best (Tina Turner tribute)
- 7 pm - Spice Forever (Spice Girls tribute)

A new addition to this year's event is a large screen. Using a large screen at Party in the Park has proved successful in recent years. The screen will provide a better watching experience for those further away, including viewing from the accessible platform. It isn't possible to raise the height of the stage, so a screen will improve visibility for those further back from the screen. The event will also include the attendance of Middle Row Market stalls for the first time. The accessible viewing platform will be available on a first-come, first-served basis alongside catering concessions, an outdoor bar, and children's rides.

3.3 **Sunday Concerts - Sunday 21 June, 26 July, 9 August (12 noon and 2.30 pm)**

This year the schedule for the Sunday Concerts will feature different genres of music on stage alongside brass bands, including the RAF Halton Voluntary Band, a

volunteer military and community band, and Wayland Smithy Band, a folk group performing a mixture of traditional and contemporary folk music. The table below shows the confirmed line-up of this year's programme:

Sunday 21 June	12 noon	RAF Halton Voluntary Band
Sunday 21 June	2.30 pm	Dunstable Salvation Army Band
Sunday 26 July	12 noon	The Wayland Smith Band
Sunday 26 July	2.30 pm	Dunstable Town Band
Sunday 9 August	12 noon	Beati Vocal Ensemble
Sunday 9 August	2.30 pm	Five Star Swing

This year's concerts will have tea/coffee and cake concessions provided by the Rotary Club of Dunstable.

3.4 **Party in the Park - Saturday 18 July (12 noon to 8 pm)**

Plans for this year's Party in the Park are progressing well. The main stage sponsored by *Penrose Estate Agents*, will showcase a varied line-up of music and performances from local groups and individual artists. A public call-out was held via Facebook inviting local performers to apply for a performance slot at the event.

Acts confirmed to date include The Pad, The Aspects (performing as part of Octave's chosen slot), Avenida (Queensbury School's Battle of the Bands finalists), The Meerkats, Megan Rice, Dubafrique and the Queensway Karaoke, where members of the public will be invited on stage via on-the-day sign-up.

The evening performance of the triple-billed headliners will start with *Black Lace*, followed by a 90-minute set from *Leigh Francis's Record Club*, with the finale performance from *N-Trance* DJ set. The event will also consist of an outdoor bar, catering and activities throughout the day including the free Kidzone area. An accessible viewing platform will be available for attendees alongside a large screen. Middle Row Market will be joining the event once again, bringing over 20 stalls on the day.

3.5 **Soapbox Derby - Saturday 5 September (From 12 noon)**

To date, 12 teams have registered to enter the Soapbox Derby race, including one family applicant submitting three kart entries, totalling double the number of entries received at last year's event. Officers have promoted the event to charities, not-for-profits and community groups via email, social media and direct engagement with local businesses. The Events Officer has also attended local business networking events to encourage sponsorship and team participation, with positive early interest from several organisations. The closing date for entries is Monday 27 July.

In May, officers and contractors met to discuss enhancements to the track design, with plans to deliver a larger and more engaging course featuring additional speed sections and technical elements to improve the overall race experience. Promotion has continued through the Town Council Facebook page, website, Talk of the Town, and the summer events leaflet distributed to 16,600 households across Dunstable.

Stalls, catering and an outdoor bar have already been booked, and licences have been secured for *Zootopia 2* and *F1: The Movie*, which are scheduled to be screened following the race.

4. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR 2027 ONWARDS

4.1 Members are asked to approve the proposed 2027/28 events programme as detailed in 4.2. Due to the wide range of events held across the country, officers have found that when trying to book acts and activities, facilitators have already been booked far in advance. Officers would like to ensure that the best acts/entertainment and activities can be secured.

4.2 The table below details the proposed event dates for 2027. It is proposed that there are no significant changes to the timings of any of the established events:

Proposed Event Programme for 2027:

Event and Venue	Date 2027
St George's Day (PG)	Saturday 24 April 11 am - 4 pm
Around the World (PG)	Saturday 15 May 10.30 am - 4.30 pm
Dunstable Classic Motor Rally (PG)	Saturday 12 June 10 am - 4 pm
Dunstable Live (GHG)	Saturday 20 June 3 pm - 8 pm
Sunday Concerts (GHG)	Sunday 20 June, 25 July & 8 August 12 noon & 2.30 pm
Party in the Park (GHG)	Saturday 17 July 12 noon - 8 pm
Soapbox Derby (PG)	Saturday 4 September From 12 noon
Priory Proms in the Park (PG)	September 11 September (Times TBC)
Christmas Carols and Torchlight Procession (TS)	Friday 26 November From 7 pm

(PG) Priory Gardens

(GHG) Grove House Gardens

(TS) The Square

5 AUTHOR

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 1 JUNE 2026

PRIORY HOUSE

Purpose of report: For information only
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1. UPDATE

- 1.1 Priory House traded well during the Around the World event, with overall performance being positive despite just missing the income target set from St George's Day. Although income was slightly below expectations, the weather was intermittent and trading remained strong throughout the event.
- 1.2 The event menu, which included quick and easy food options such as sausage rolls, hotdogs, and chicken burgers, sold very well and proved popular with customers. The success of these items showed that simple, convenient food choices continue to work well during events and contribute positively to sales.
- 1.3 The new summer menu in the gift shop is proving popular with customers and has been well received since its introduction. Footfall has increased due to the improved weather, with more visitors spending time in the area and making use of the outdoor space. Having tables and chairs set up outside each day has also helped attract attention and create a more welcoming atmosphere. This visible presence of the outside seating is helping to spread awareness that the gift shop is open and serving food again, encouraging both new and returning customers to visit. Overall, this has had a positive impact on customer interest and trading performance.
- 1.4 The internal recruitment for the new Senior Shop Assistant role was completed successfully, with Maria Vinas, who was previously working as a part-time Priory House Assistant, appointed to the new position on a full-time basis.

2. WEDDINGS

- 2.1 Two weddings have already taken place at Grove House, with a further nine arranged so far. Enquiries continue to come through regularly, showing ongoing interest in the venue. Marketing activity through social media channels, leaflets, and Talk of the Town has helped raise awareness and generate interest among couples considering Grove House as a wedding venue.

3. PRIORY HOUSE REFURBISHMENT

- 3.1 The exhibition project is progressing well and has now reached the RIBA Stage 3 phase. At this stage, work is focused on developing and refining the overall concept, including the hands-on interactive experiences, exhibition designs, colour schemes, patterns, and the overall layout of the space. This phase is helping to shape the final vision of the exhibition and ensure all elements work together to create an engaging visitor experience.
- 3.2 The Creative Core group attended the St George's Day event to engage with members of the public and gather feedback on the exhibition project. They received a great deal of positive feedback and valuable insights from visitors. However, a noticeable gap was identified within the community regarding awareness of what Priory House actually is. This appears to be linked to the length of time the house has been closed, as well as younger families who have never had the opportunity to visit. Addressing this gap has now been identified as a key priority for officers, with a focus on strengthening awareness through targeted marketing, community engagement, workshops, and events in the lead-up to reopening.
- 3.3 The feedback gathered has been extremely valuable and highlights the importance of strengthening awareness and understanding within the community. These findings will play an important role in shaping future marketing activity and communication plans moving forward.
- 3.4 Creative Core also attended a youth session at Grove House to engage with young people as part of the exhibition project. The aim of the session was to involve a group of young people in the design process, specifically around one of the audio visual elements within the exhibition, while also gaining a better understanding of how the exhibition can appeal to and encourage more young people to visit.
- 3.5 The session was very successful and generated really positive engagement from those who attended. The young people shared ideas and feedback that will help shape the exhibition and ensure it reflects the interests and views of a younger audience. Creative Core stated that the level of participation and enthusiasm shown during the session was particularly encouraging.
- 3.6 *"Leo and I had a great time with the young people. We received a lovely welcome and by the end of the evening had six young people who really meaningfully engaged. We created some cool art, had some thoughtful conversation and got some good insights into how they see their hometown."*
- 3.7 The National Lottery and Historic England have agreed a communications plan that will allow more images and video content to be shared across our social media channels over the coming months to provide updates and information on the project. The aim is to increase community engagement, raise awareness, and encourage continued support for Priory House ahead of its planned reopening in January.

- 3.8 Creative Core are also leading on elements of the internal decoration, working alongside officers to review and select wall colours, flooring, tiles, and a new design for the servery area. The aim is to create a modern and welcoming space while ensuring the design remains in keeping with the heritage and character of the building.
- 3.9 Careful consideration is being given to the overall look and feel of the interior to ensure the updated design complements the historic nature of Priory House while creating an attractive and functional environment for visitors.
- 3.10 The restoration programme is continuing to progress according to schedule, with no known delays identified at present. Work remains on track and key milestones are being achieved as planned. The next phase of the project will involve the removal of the railings at the front of the building, which will be taken to a local blacksmith for restoration.
- 3.11 Community engagement remains an important part of the project, and the contractors will be attending the Motor Rally and taking part in Heritage Open Days to engage with members of the public. These events will provide opportunities to share information about the restoration project and answer questions from the community.
- 3.12 The aim is to increase awareness and understanding of both Priory House and the wider project, while helping to build excitement around its future reopening. It is hoped that this engagement activity will encourage greater interest in the building and inspire people to visit and make use of Priory House in the future.

4. FINANCIAL

GIFT SHOP TAKINGS (EX VAT)

	2024/25	2025/26	Variation 2024/25 to 2025/26
April	£1,759.75	£267.05	-£1,492.70
May	£2,426.56	£180.48	-£2,246.08
June	£2,667.56	£174.70	-£2,492.86
Total 1st quarter	£6,853.87	£622.23	-£6,231.64
July	£1,596.00	£121.12	-£1,474.88
August	£2,146.28	£134.69	-£2,011.59
September	£2,098.07	£580.97	-£1,517.10
Total 2nd quarter	£5,840.35	£836.78	-£5,003.57
October	£1,375.27	£501.76	-£873.51
November	£1,603.30	£2,742.14	£1,138.84

December	£2,566.04	£2,763.79	£197.75
Total 3rd quarter	£5,544.61	£6,007.69	£463.08
January	£1,234.43	£692.56	-£541.87
February	£651.23	£928.84	£277.61
March	£1,356.06	£1,198.92	-£157.14
Total 4th quarter	£3,241.72	£2,820.32	-£421.40
TOTAL	£21,480.55	£10,287.02	-£11,193.53

- 4.1 Shop income is currently 52% down; however, this reflects the impact of the gift shop being closed for seven months and only reopening in November. Considering the extended closure period, overall sales performance since reopening has been positive and encouraging.
- 4.2 Officers are continuing to work hard to increase income through the introduction of new stock items and an improved menu offering. These changes are helping to attract customers, increase footfall, and support the continued growth and recovery of the shop.

TEAROOMS TAKINGS (EX VAT)

	2024/25	2025/26	Variation 2024/25 to 2025/26
April	£1,697.99	£418.76	-£1,279.23
May	£2,418.64	£792.88	-£1,625.76
June	£1,990.93	£709.94	-£1,280.99
Total 1st quarter	£6,107.56	£1,921.58	-£4,185.98
July	£2,932.83	£196.00	-£2,736.83
August	£2,575.21	£0.00	-£2,575.21
September	£1,746.55	£522.34	-£1,224.21
Total 2nd quarter	£7,254.59	£718.34	-£6,536.25
October	£1,126.12	£355.87	-£770.25
November	£839.05	£756.73	-£82.32
December	£101.19	£898.18	£796.99
Total 3rd quarter	£2,066.36	£2,010.78	-£55.58
January	£0.00	£477.98	£477.98
February	£0.00	£644.91	£644.91
March	£0.00	£283.32	£283.32
Total 4th quarter	£0.00	£1,406.21	£1,406.21
TOTAL	£15,428.51	£6,056.91	-£9,371.60

- 4.3 The tearooms income is generated through food and cake sales in the gift shop, compared to previous years the income is down by 60%. However, as mentioned, this reflects the impact of the gift shop being closed for seven months, and it is taking time for awareness to rebuild and for customers to realise that food is once again available following the reopening.
- 4.4 Recent community events in Priory Gardens have helped increase awareness, and the addition of outdoor furniture has had a positive impact on food sales, particularly with the arrival of warmer weather. The outdoor seating has created a more visible and welcoming environment, helping to attract passing visitors.
- 4.5 Customers are consistently visiting for lunch each day, and officers are increasingly seeing new customers purchasing food, cakes, and coffee in the gift shop for the first time, which is very encouraging. There is growing confidence that awareness will continue to increase, and officers remain optimistic about a positive and successful summer period.

4. AUTHOR

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