

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GROVE HOUSE, HIGH STREET NORTH,  
DUNSTABLE**

**ON MONDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Present: Councillors Gloria Martin (Town Mayor), John Kane (Deputy Town Mayor), Andy Whayman (Chairman), John Chatterley (Vice-Chairman), Sid Abbott, Peter Hollick, Anne Kennedy, Liz Jones, Claire Meakins, Patricia Russell, Ann Sparrow, Pat Staples, and Nigel Warren

In Attendance: David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), and Rosemary O'Sullivan (Head of Finance and Support Services)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Terry Colbourne and Eugene Ghent

Public Attendance: None

**162 BY ELECTION**

The Chairman welcomed the newly elected member for Northfields Ward, Councillor Anne Kennedy, following the By Election held on 14 September 2017. Councillor Kennedy had made the Statutory Declaration of the Acceptance of Office prior to the meeting.

**163 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 19 June 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**164 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
Councillor Pat Staples	Pecuniary interest – Dunstable Market	As may arise
Councillor Claire Meakins	Non-Pecuniary interest –Luton Borough Council	9

**165 ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meetings of the Accounts Sub-Committee held on 21 June, 19 July and 23 August 2017.

**166 PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 27 July 2017.

**a) Staff Award Scheme**

In answer to a question from Councillor Sparrow, it was confirmed that 40 members of staff had redeemed their lunch voucher to a total value of approximately £260 which had been spent at the Town Council's Splashside Café.

Councillor Jones reiterated that members of the Personnel Sub-Committee had agreed that the all staff award was deserved and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that it had been well received.

**b) Results of Staff Survey**

In answer to a question from Councillor Chatterley, the Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that the main issue to be addressed arising from the staff survey was dissatisfaction with the opportunities for personal development. Councillor Whayman confirmed that additional comments made in the survey had been discussed at a Group meeting and there would be changing behaviour as a result.

**c) Maternity Cover**

Councillor Abbott expressed his dissatisfaction with the arrangements for cover for the Town Centre Manager role for the duration of maternity leave. However, the Chairman reiterated that the Sub-Committee had been in agreement with the proposals.

**167 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented a revenue budgetary control report for the period from 1 April to 31 August 2017. The summary of net expenditure showed a potential for an overall net revenue saving at the end of the financial year. Any such saving would be allocated to the General Reserve.

Members also noted the current balance of the Council's allocated reserves as at 31 August 2017 and an estimated end of year balance having taken account of agreed/known commitments to date.

**168 GROVE HOUSE GARDENS OUTBUILDINGS REFURBISHMENT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services recommending the release of allocated reserve funding to undertake repair and refurbishment works to the Grove House Gardens Outbuildings.

The buildings had a dilapidated and run down appearance and detracted significantly from the entrance to Grove House Gardens and the floral displays.

Having extended the Town Ranger service in November 2016 to include a new Town Centre Ranger, the newly purchased equipment and vehicles had been stored at Priors Gardens depot building, which had proved problematic as the space is limited and already in use to house existing grounds equipment.

The need to repair the Grove House Gardens outbuildings provided an ideal opportunity to relocate the Town Centre Ranger Service and associated equipment.

Members asked that in undertaking this work, consideration also be given to improving the access to the Gardens and improving the adjacent buildings, including the

Performance Area Store. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that these works were included in the Corporate Plan which was being considered later in the meeting. If the proposals in that report were agreed it may be possible to align the works. However the works to the Grove House Gardens Outbuildings were a priority and it wouldn't be possible to undertake the work all together.

The scope of the proposed refurbishment works were agreed, but Members also questioned the security of the building, following a spate of break-ins at other sites. It was confirmed that provision would be made to install a security alarm.

**RESOLVED:** that up to £30,000 be released from allocated reserves to undertake repair and refurbishment works to the Grove House Gardens outbuildings.

During the discussion regarding recent break-ins the Town Clerk and Chief Executive had met with the police and this would be followed up with a partnership meeting regarding anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Abbott raised the question of alcohol free areas and the Police resources to enforce them in the town. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive encouraged members to raise this at their forthcoming meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner

#### **169 LAND AT WHITE LION BUSWAY STOP**

The Committee considered a proposal for the Council to adopt an area of land at the White Lion Busway stop along College Drive in order to create a small 'pocket park' in line with the associated objective contained in the Corporate Plan 2017-19, including an area for the provision of a catering concession.

In line with discussing the installation of signage at the bus stop with Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils as part of the Market Town Regeneration Funds scheme, DTC officers had also secured agreement from Luton Borough Council (LBC) for the lease of an area of land at the Busway stop.

Luton Borough Council had offered the Council a five year lease arrangement with a £100 per year rental fee on the understanding the Council become fully responsible for the maintenance of the land indicated.

It was agreed that the proposal would help to tidy up an unsightly entrance into the town centre but concerns were raised regarding expenditure on land not owned by Dunstable Town Council. Councillor Kane agreed to approach Luton Borough Council to ascertain whether they may be willing to pay for the project.

On being put to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED:** i) that subject to further negotiations with Luton Borough Council, and establishing the suitability of the land, the Council enter into a five year lease arrangement with Luton Borough Council to manage the area of land at the White Lion Busway stop along College Drive as identified, with a £100 per year rental fee

ii) if agreed, tree planting (including fruit trees) be included in the area.

## **170 COROPORATE PLAN CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented a report advising members of the objectives contained within the Corporate Plan 2017-19 which had capital expenditure implications.

The Committee considered proposals to establish a budget for a capital expenditure programme in order to implement a number of the priority objectives contained within the Corporate Plan 2017-19.

The report identified those projects which were considered to be deliverable within the short to medium term, some of which could attract Section 106 payments, subject to planning negotiations with Central Bedfordshire.

It was considered that some of the General Reserve, which at 1 April 2017 stood at £585,175, could be allocated to a capital expenditure programme and the Council could also budget for additional debt through the budget setting process for 2018/19.

Consideration was given to establishing a capital expenditure programme of, for instance £250,000, using £100,000 from the General Reserve and budgeting for £10,500 per annum to take out a 20 year loan of £150,000. This would enable a range of the objectives to be delivered over the next two years.

Members would consider the list of objectives at their next Group meeting and determine which of them they wished to prioritise.

On being put to the vote it was

- RESOLVED:**
- i) that in principle support be given to the establishment of a capital expenditure programme of £250,000
  - ii) that officers be instructed to budget accordingly
  - iii) that members give further consideration to the detail of projects to be included in the capital programme at the meeting of this Committee in November
  - iv) that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive obtain clarification in respect of S106 funding available to support the programme.

## **171 DUNSTABLE TRUCK CONVOY**

The Committee considered a request from the organisers of the Dunstable Truck Convoy for financial assistance towards running the event to be held on Saturday 9 June 2018, which as in previous years, would coincide with the Council's Classic Motor Rally. It was estimated that some 2,000 to 3,000 people gather along the A5 (mostly in the town centre) to watch the convoy. The convoy starts at the M1 Junction 9 Truck Stop and travels north on the A5 through Dunstable, terminating at the Billington showground. The organisers were currently in discussion with CBC Highways, Bedfordshire Police and Leighton Linlade Town Council to consider extending the route through Leighton Buzzard.

Members noted that the Council does not currently operate an annual grant funding programme and the Truck Convoy do not comply with the Council's previous guidance for approving grant funding as they are not a fully constituted organisation.

**RESOLVED:** that the Town Council support the Truck Convoy by making a financial contribution of up to £750 towards policing the 2018 event through the Dunstable section, payable directly to Bedfordshire Police.

## 172 MARKET TOWN REGENERATION FUND PROJECTS

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented an update report on Market Town Regeneration Fund projects that related to this Committee.

### a) Architectural Lighting Scheme

The first phase of this project had now been completed and lighting had been installed on Grove House, Priory House and the Dunstable Conference Centre. Phase two of the project had now been commissioned. This included completing lighting to Grove House, including up lighting the main entrance to Grove House Gardens (for which planning permission should be achieved shortly) and completing the lighting scheme at Priory House.

The Grove House element includes a requirement for works on the highway and there was a 6 week application process for the civil engineering works, following which there was an indication of an 8 week lead in time before works could commence. It was therefore unlikely that the work would be completed before Christmas.

The Priory House element includes lighting the proposed new overthrow for the entrance to Priory Gardens and as a result will not be completed until early in the New Year. The lighting specialists were liaising with the retained architect for the overthrow on this aspect of the project.

### b) Quadrant Shopping Centre

At the last meeting of this Committee, Members were advised that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive and Councillor John Kane had met with a representative from Edinburgh House, who own the Quadrant Centre, to further discuss the possibility of re-opening the public toilets. Edinburgh House had intimated that they were now prepared to have the toilets re-opened but would want the Town Council to pay for the revenue costs this would incur. It was estimated that this could cost the Council approximately £20,000 per annum.

Edinburgh House had been requested to approach the Council in writing with a costed proposal. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive had followed up this request on numerous occasions but as yet no response had been received.

Advice as to the legality of the Council revenue funding this scheme as proposed by Edinburgh House had been received from the National Association of Local Councils, a copy of which had been included with the report. Whilst the advice given was not overly helpful, it was the view of the Town Clerk and Chief Executive that the Council could revenue fund the operation of the toilets in the manner described if it so wished.

c) New Town Centre Signage and Street Furniture

The bulk of this project would be carried out in conjunction with the de-trunking of the High Street and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) designers had been issued with a list of attractions and services that should be signed from the town centre. Officers had met with representatives from CBC and Luton Borough Council to discuss possible signage installations at the White Lion Busway stop. A scheme had been agreed and signage designs and costings had been commissioned and should be ready for installation shortly.

d) High Street Improvement Scheme

Officers were still working on this scheme with colleagues from CBC and 14 retail units were currently progressing to stage two of the application process. Three planning applications were currently being considered by CBC and as a result it was anticipated that the first of the projects could be started before the end of this year.

e) Financial Implications

Officers continued to submit payment schedules to CBC.

**173 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

a) CAB Management Committee – Councillor Meakins reported that the last meeting had been held on 3 August. The Bureau still had staffing issues following the resignation of one experienced member of the team and loss of student volunteers going back to University. Recruitment was being undertaken. There had been an increase in requests for debt advice. With the planned relocation to the Leisure Centre the aim was to open for additional hours. The AGM would be held the following week.

b) DITA –Councillor Warren advised that only two people had attended the last meeting.

c) Hospice at Home – Councillor Jones advised that the next meeting would be held the following week. The organisation had been chosen as the collection charity at the Grove Theatre pantomime this year.

d) Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillor Sparrow reported that the next meeting would be held in November and would revert to two meetings per annum now that the sale of Ashton School site had been completed.

e) Ashton Almshouses – Councillor Russell advised that all accommodation was occupied.

e) Chews Foundation – Councillor Chatterley advised that the last meeting had been held in June and had discussed domestic issues and building repairs.

f) Poors Land Charity – Councillor Staples advised that the next meeting would be held in January.