

## **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 20 NOVEMBER 2017**

Present: Councillors Gloria Martin (Town Mayor), John Kane (Deputy Town Mayor), Andy Whayman (Chairman), John Chatterley (Vice-Chairman), Sid Abbott, Terry Colbourne, Eugene Ghent, 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: None

Public Attendance: 32

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting. Before the meeting started, the Chairman read out a statement advising that the meeting would be considering options for the Council's future provision of the General Market in Dunstable. He explained that this item was in Part 2 of the agenda because of the confidential and sensitive nature of the information contained within the report regarding current staffing arrangements and the public would be asked to leave at that juncture.

#### **202 DUNSTABLE MARKET**

The Chairman stated that following a consultation meeting held with a number of current regular General Market Traders on Monday 13 November, claims were being made through the local press and social media that the Council were going to close the market. He explained that at no time was this mentioned and this possibility was not being discussed later in the meeting. The Council was merely considering a different way in which to ensure that a General Market still takes place in Dunstable. He was aware that members of the public had requested the opportunity to make representation regarding the market and invited them to speak.

Roger Pepworth thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and thanked the Town Clerk and Chief Executive for a helpful exchange of e-mails and telephone conversation before the meeting. Having referred to the history of the market Mr Pepworth asked the Town Council to consult more widely before any decision was made. He expressed his view regarding the matter being discussed in private session and questioned how traders could consider proposals without knowing what was being discussed. He also commented that the Town Council's record was one of constant failure in regards to the market; losing the footfall, customers and traders.

Tyrone Bird thanked the Chairman for allowing him to speak on behalf of the traders. He seconded everything the Labour Party had said. He referred to the consultation meeting held on 13 November at which he had made it clear that the traders would pay the current rates to ensure they could work with the Council. He proposed that traders would like porters to put up stalls and would like bins to be provided. Traders would like

to work in a co-operative to ensure the market runs smoothly. Mr Bird made reference to the Market Traders Facebook page which had 200 supporters who wanted the market. He also expressed his view regarding the matter being discussed in private session, given that the discussion was about people's livelihoods.

Three other individuals made representation. One spoke of her full support for the market traders and how she valued the market and the heritage of the town. She wondered whether there was any leverage with Central Bedfordshire Council to make the market more visible to help the traders. Two market traders spoke of their desire to work with the Council and the help they needed and felt by working together it wasn't too late to turn the market around.

Councillor Whayman thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and making their representations. They were welcome to stay for the remainder of the meeting, however he reiterated that members of the press and public would be asked to leave when the Part 2 item was being discussed. He agreed that a recorded vote would be taken and any traders who wished to wait would be told the final decision at the end of the meeting.

Councillor Kennedy noted that the exclusion of press and public was a recommendation and therefore a vote would be taken. However, it was reiterated that the report was inextricably linked to current staffing arrangements and would be considered in private session.

## **203 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.

## **204 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
Councillor Pat Staples	Pecuniary interest – Dunstable Market	Part 2 Item 1

## **205 ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meetings of the Accounts Sub-Committee held on 20 September and 18 October 2017.

## **206 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented a revenue budgetary control report for the period from 1 April to 31 October 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 October 2017 and an estimated end of year balance having taken account of agreed/known commitments to date.

## **207 INTERNAL AUDIT – FIRST INTERIM REPORT 2017/18**

Members received the first interim report of the Internal Auditor and were pleased to note that there were no issues arising which warranted formal comment or recommendation.

## **208 DUNSTABLE WAR MEMORIAL**

The Committee considered a recommendation from Grounds and Environmental Services Committee who had noted the preferences of the War Memorial Working Group and the potential for crowd funding to support the cost of the project.

**RESOLVED:** that the recommendation be adopted and financial provision be made to underwrite any shortfall in third party contributions to deliver Option 2 (stabilisation and refacing with stone) as detailed in the report, at a cost in the order of £50,000.

## **209 COROPORATE PLAN CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME (Minute 170/2017)**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented a report on proposals for the establishment of a £250,000 capital programme from April 2018. The report also set out potential S106 receipts and an associated spending schedule.

As agreed at the last meeting of this Committee, the Chairman had met with other group members to determine their priorities for a capital programme and Officers had met with colleagues from Central Bedfordshire Council to clarify what Section 106 funding could be anticipated over the next few years. These were now reflected in the expenditure programme included with the report.

Six projects had been prioritised with a working budget of £250,000, £150,000 of which could be funded by application for a Public Works Loan. If successful, the projects could then begin to be implemented soon after. Further information was given on a number of these projects:

### a) Dunstable War Memorial

Councillor Colbourne noted the timescale for this project was completion by May 2018 and he suggested a February 2017 deadline for the possible external funding.

### b) Refurbishment of Ashton Square Clock

It was hoped the budget provision would allow for full refurbishment of the clock to include the clock face, repair of the lighting on the structure and repairs to the surrounding paving.

### c) Dunstable Cemetery

Councillor Whayman had recently visited the Cemetery and, as well as improving the depot facilities and parking for Catchacre allotments, it was evident that the entrance to the Cemetery does need some work to improve entry and egress which it was hoped could be achieved within the funds set aside.

Other projects were identified that could attract known Section 106 funding that should become available over the next 2/3 years.

In addition, Central Bedfordshire Council had advised that a sum of £184,000 Section 106 was available for allocation now. Whilst £20,000 of this had notionally been identified for works to the tennis courts at Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground, the bulk

of it still needed to be committed but there were restrictions as to how this money could be spent, specifically for indoor/outdoor recreation play facilities. Officers would put forward suggested proposals but Members were asked to advise of any projects they wished to be considered. Further consideration could be given to provision of a multi-use games area at suitable locations. The possibility of improving the play area at Luton Road could also be looked into.

Members also noted the outstanding capital projects which were part of the Corporate Plan 2017-19 but which were not addressed in the report.

**RESOLVED:** i) that the capital expenditure programme be approved and the sum of £100,000 be allocated from the General Reserve to part fund the capital programme

ii) that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to apply to the Public Works Loan Board for a loan of £150,000 to part fund the capital programme

iii) that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to deliver the capital programme in line with the agreed capital expenditure and report back to this committee on progress with all agreed projects.

## **210 OPERATIONS AND OFFICE CLOSURES OVER CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR**

The Committee noted the schedule of operating hours for all Council operations over the Christmas and New Year periods for this and future years.

**Grove House** – Grove House will always operate as normal over the Christmas and New Year periods apart from the normal Bank Holidays. If Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve fall on a normal working day then the offices will be closed from 2.00pm.

**Priory House** – Priory House will always operate over the Christmas and New Year periods as normal. If Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve fall on a normal working day then the House will be closed from 2.00 pm. A shop stock take will also be undertaken between Christmas and New Year which will result in the shop being closed for that particular day. (This year's stock take would be undertaken on Thursday 28 December 2017.)

**Creasey Park Community Football Centre** – Over the Christmas and New Year period the Centre's opening hours will be dictated by the football demand in order to allow staff to take annual leave etc. This means that depending on what days Christmas and New Year falls will dictate opening times.

**Community and Young People's Services** – All Community and Young People's services will be closed over the Christmas and New Year periods to allow staff to take annual leave.

**Market and Ashton Square Toilets** – The Market and toilets will be open as normal apart from the Bank Holidays.

**Dunstable Cemetery and all parks and open spaces** – All grounds services will operate as normal over the Christmas and New Year periods apart from normal Bank Holidays. If Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve fall on a normal working day then operations will cease from 2.00pm. The Cemetery will operate over and above this

schedule if demand dictates. There will be periodic litter and safety checks for all open spaces during periods of closure.

**RESOLVED:** that the schedule of Christmas operating hours be approved.

## **211 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

a) CAB Management Committee – Councillor Meakins gave an update on the number of client contacts during July to September. She advised that in a recent national Client Experience Survey, Dunstable CAB had been credited as very good. The Bureau had recruited two new staff members and two new volunteers and had received funding from Beds and Luton Community Foundation.

b) DITA –Councillor Warren advised that the next meeting would be held the following day.

c) Hospice at Home – Councillor Jones advised that the next meeting would be held the following week. The organisation continued to seek alternative sources of funding.

d) Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillor Sparrow advised that the next meeting would be held the following week.

e) Ashton Almshouses – Councillor Russell advised that the refurbishment had been completed, rent reviews were in progress and money had been put by for a number of future improvements.

g) Chews Foundation – Councillor Chatterley advised that the next meeting would be held in December.

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

## **212 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** that, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting.

## **213 ADJOURNMENT**

**RESOLVED:** that Standing Order 6g be waived to allow the meeting to continue beyond two and a half hours.

## **214 DUNSTABLE MARKET**

Having already declared a pecuniary interest, Councillor Staples remained in attendance at the meeting for this agenda item but took no part in the vote thereon.

Members expressed their concerns that a recorded vote was to be taken and individual members could be subject to reprisal. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive understood the concerns but explained that there was no reason why the vote should not be recorded. If any Member was subjected to abuse they should report the matter to the Police.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive then presented a detailed report that provided information on the outcome of the recent Community Services Committee's at which Market traders had made representation. That Committee had agreed that a consultation meeting should be held with the regular General Market traders to consult on the possibility that the Council stop managing the General Market and instead encourage the regular General Market traders to apply to Central Bedfordshire Council for a licence to become street traders. Any decision regarding the Council's future management of the Dunstable General Market was deferred to this Committee.

Council representatives had held a consultation meeting to which all General Market regular traders were invited, 6 of whom attended and the other 3 contacted separately. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive's report included the outcome of that consultation meeting held on 13 November 2017. Those Members who had attended that meeting also expanded on some of the discussion and the differing views expressed by the traders present.

Councillor Kennedy raised a question regarding the Market Town Regeneration Fund and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that this Fund had been established by Central Bedfordshire Council and funding had been approved for a number of specific projects but not Dunstable Market.

Members discussed at length the future management arrangements for the provision of a General Market in Dunstable. Consideration was given to the views expressed by the public and market traders, together with options to provide assistance.

On being put to the vote, with 13 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention, recorded as follows:

In Favour: Councillors Abbott, Chatterley, Colbourne, Ghent, Hollick, Jones, Kane, Martin, Meakins, Russell, Sparrow, Warren and Whayman

Against: Councillor Kennedy

Abstention: Councillor Staples (having declared a pecuniary interest)

It was

- RESOLVED:**
- i) that the Council stops managing/providing the General Market from 1 February 2018 and notifies all existing regular General Market traders accordingly
  - ii) that all existing regular General Market traders are encouraged to apply to Central Bedfordshire Council for a street trading licence
  - iii) that the Council determines not to exercise its' Charter Market Rights in terms of licencing any General Market traders trading as licenced street traders in the Ashton Square/Middle Row area of the town centre
  - iv) that the Council continues to manage/provide/develop special markets (craft, themed etc.) on pre-determined Saturdays each month from April 2018

v) that the Council continues to budget for and provide a free waste disposal service for street traders trading in and around the Ashton Square and Middle Row area of the town centre

vi) that the Council gives those current regular traders who make a request and who are issued with a new street trading licence a free market stall (1 only) from the Council's current stock of used market stalls

vii) that the Council allows all street traders operating in and around the Ashton Square and Middle Row areas of the town centre who need storage for their market stall free use of the Council's existing market compound to store their market stall

viii) that the Council provides support to all existing Regular General Market traders in the application process to Central Bedfordshire Council to become a street trader and continues to promote a General Market of street traders in Dunstable after February 2018

ix) that the posts detailed in the report be deleted from the Council's establishment and that the Council's 'Staff Affected by Organisational Change Policy' be invoked for those staff affected by this decision.

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