

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

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

**ON MONDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2019**

Present: Councillors John Kane (Town Mayor), Nigel Warren (Deputy Town Mayor), Sid Abbott, Lisa Bird, John Chatterley, Philip Crawley, Jeannette Freeman, Eugene Ghent, Peter Hollick, Liz Jones, Gloria Martin, Mike Mullany, Patricia Russell, Gladys Sanders, Ann Sparrow, Pat Staples and Johnson Tamara

In Attendance: David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Rosemary O'Sullivan (Head of Finance and Support Services), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services) and Michele Markus (Mayoral and Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Terry Colbourne and Claire Meakins

Public Attendance: 1

Before the commencement of the meeting, the Town Mayor's Chaplain, Dr Johan Schoeman, led the Council in prayer

**24 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held 3 December 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**25 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
Councillor Ann Sparrow	Personal interest – Dunstable Croquet Club	7

**26 TOWN MAYOR'S REMARKS**

The Town Mayor referred to the report detailing his attendances at a variety of events since the last meeting of the Council and reflected on the many Christmas Concerts he had been pleased to attend.

He reminded Members of his forthcoming Charity Race Night and hoped for their support.

**27 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions put to the meeting.

**28 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 16**

There were no questions put to the meeting.

## 29 COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

### a) Town Centre Services (Minute 8/2019)

Councillor Ghent clarified the situation regarding parking enforcement on The Square and confirmed that whilst yellow lines were now in place there were still issues regarding parking enforcement and he had met with Councillor Young and Central Bedfordshire Council's Head of Parking to discuss the matter. Both Councillors Ghent and Hollick had followed up on that meeting and had been advised that the Head of Parking would be looking into changing the shift patterns of parking attendants to improve the situation across the town, not just on The Square.

### b) Minutes

**RESOLVED:** that, subject to the foregoing, the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 7 January 2019 be received.

## 30 GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

### a) Recreation Grounds (Minute 15a/2019)

In answer to concerns raised by Councillor Abbot, the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services advised that quotations for security improvement works at various recreation grounds had now been received and confirmation of the contractor's start date for the work was awaited, with the intention to complete the work by the end of March.

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services would provide an update on progress at the March meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee.

### b) Town Centre Area (Minute 15b/2019)

Councillor Sparrow praised the Community Services and Grounds and Environmental Services staff who had assisted Dunstable in Bloom in the tree planting event at Olma Road as part of National Tree Week and thanked them for making the event such a success.

### c) Minutes

**RESOLVED:** that, subject to the foregoing, the Minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 14 January 2019 be received.

## 31 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

### a) Budget Proposals 2019/20 and Town Council Precept 2019/20 (Minute 19/2019)

With reference to the hire charge for the croquet lawn at Priory Gardens, Councillor Sparrow noted that the annual pre-season meeting had been held between Croquet Club members and the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services when he had given assurances that every effort would be made to improve the condition of the lawn. She put forward a suggestion that when the Croquet Club were using the lawn at the time of any Green Flag judging, Club members be offered refreshments, but this was not discussed.

The Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Councillor Peter Hollick, was pleased to move that the budget recommended be adopted.

He thanked the Mayor, his fellow Chairmen and all Councillors for their support and commitment over the past year. He also thanked all officers of the Council for their hard work and dedication in delivering the goals and objectives of the Council. He was confident in saying that the Council had had another successful year not only in serving the residents of the town but also financially.

The Chairman noted that preparation for the following year's budget began not long after the previous budget had been approved and it was a rule of thumb that savings would be made year on year as the Council works ever more efficiently. The work during the year to keep abreast of keeping the budget in check fell on the Senior Management Team. This was done in a well managed way and was testament to their hard work and creativity. He thanked them all by name for their ongoing work in making sure that the Council continues to delivery high quality, value for money services for the residents of Dunstable. He also recognised the work of all staff.

The Chairman made particular mention of Rosemary O'Sullivan, Head of Finance and Support Services, who would be retiring in the not too distant future, making this the last budget in which she would have played a part. Rosemary joined the Council when it was formed in 1985 and has been a dedicated officer taking on board the changes which had been necessary over time. On behalf of Councillors past and present, he thanked her for her service.

The Chairman then recalled that the council tax charge had not been raised last year as, after a considerable period of growth in the services provided, councillors looked to a period of consolidation. However, the Council had still delivered a varied programme of events and maintained its services to the young and the not so young. It was pleasing that 98% of residents who returned the Council's survey were satisfied or very satisfied with the Council's events programme.

After a period of reasonably sustained house building which had increased the tax base, the Council now had a period when this would inevitably slow down since the larger building sites had been filled. This was important to consider for the future if the Council is to continue to add value through its services.

The Chairman took the opportunity to review what had been achieved, not only over the past year, but also over the past four years, and reflected on a number of the Council's successes, including:

- The successful and varied programme of events which drew record crowds in the summer
- The addition of Priory Pictures and Proms in the Park to the Priory gardens events
- The improved Torchlight Procession with added light display
- Enhanced entrances to town centre gardens, including new oak gates at the Priory Church entrance to Priory Gardens
- Retention of Green Flags at both town centre gardens and awarded a third for Dunstable Cemetery
- The highly successful Spashpark and Splashside Café which had been funded in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council
- The second Big Lunch for the town's senior citizens
- In partnership with Dunstable in Bloom, achieved a gold medal for the town in the Anglia in bloom awards as well as for the two town centre gardens.
- Refurbished part of Priory House to provide a wedding venue in the Jacobean Room

- Succeeded in attracting more customers to the Priory House Tea Rooms
- Completed the refurbishment of the War Memorial, which was a great example of how well the Council works with the local community
- Enhanced the popular Town Ranger service

The Chairman referred to the highways improvement scheme funded through Highways England, and reported that Phase 1 of the scheme was almost complete with planters to be installed, the garden in West Street to be finished and new signage to be erected. Phase 2 would see the removal of many railings and new benches, signage and trees would add to the street scheme. Water tanks would be installed underground to prevent flooding in the town centre.

The Council had ambition for the future, including an Adventure Playground in Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground, development of the themed and craft markets, enhancement of facilities at Creasey Park, a Green Flag for Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground and Heritage Flag for Priory Gardens, as well as continuing to provide well received services for the town's young, elderly and residents generally.

In reflecting on achievements the Chairman thought it worth remembering that the Town Council costs the Dunstable ratepayer £3.45 per week, which he believed showed tremendous value for this charge which would seemingly be supported by residents as they had given a near overall 80% satisfaction rate for the Council's services in a recent poll. He was therefore pleased to recommend a precept to Central Bedfordshire Council of £2,297,506.

Many Councillors would be retiring at the end of term of this Council and the Chairman thanked them all for their years of service. He was sure new councillors would bring new ideas and he hoped they would enjoy their public role and serve the Council and the town in the positive way in which retiring councillors had done.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** i) that the budget for 2019/20, as recommended by Finance and General Purposes Committee, be approved

ii) that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to incur the various items of expenditure detailed in the budget, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

iii) that the revised scale of charges, set out in the report, be approved with effect from 1st April 2019 or the start of the 2019/20 winter playing season, as appropriate

iv) that the Town Council issue a precept upon Central Bedfordshire Council in the sum of £2,297,506 resulting in a Band D Dunstable Town Council Tax at the rate of £179.32 per annum.

**Action: Town Clerk and Chief Executive**

**b) Minutes**

**RESOLVED:** that, subject to the foregoing, the Minutes of the meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14 January 2019 be received and the recommendations contained therein be adopted.

## 32 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented a report setting out the procedure for the adoption of the General Power of Competence which is a statutory power that enables eligible councils "to do anything that individuals generally may do" as long as they do not break the law.

The Power is automatically available to principal authorities but town and parish councils had to evidence that they fulfil the eligibility criteria before the Power could be adopted.

Dunstable Town Council was able to evidence that it fulfils the eligibility criteria as set out in the report.

It was noted that if the Power was adopted, the Council would have to again resolve that it meets the required eligibility to retain the Power at the next Annual General Meeting in May 2019 and then every four years at the same meeting thereafter.

**RESOLVED:** that, having evidenced that it meets the required eligibility criteria, the Council adopts the General Power of Competence