

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 19 MARCH 2018

Present: Councillors Gloria Martin (Town Mayor), Peter Hollick (Chairman); John Chatterley (Vice-Chairman), Terry Colbourne, Philip Crawley, Eugene Ghent, Liz Jones, Mike Mullany, 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 John Kane (Deputy Town Mayor), Sid Abbott, Anne Kennedy, Claire Meakins and Patricia Russell

Public Attendance: None

67 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 22 January 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

69 TOWN MAYOR AND DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

The Committee considered nominations for Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor for the municipal year 2018/19.

RECOMMENDED: that Councillors John Kane and Nigel Warren be nominated for election as Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor respectively at the Annual Council Meeting to be held on 21 May 2018.

70 ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the meetings of the Accounts Sub-Committee held on 24 January and 21 February 2018.

Members had given consideration to the purpose of the Accounts Sub-Committee and discussed whether alternative arrangements could be made. Whilst it was acknowledged that the two member signature on cheques or other orders for payment was no longer a statutory requirement, the additional responsibility for budget monitoring and acting as the Council's Audit Committee was also part of the Sub-Committee remit and therefore the meetings would continue in the current manner.

71 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a revenue budgetary control report for the period from 1 April to 28 February 2018. . The summary of net expenditure showed a potential for an overall net revenue shortfall at the end of the financial year, mainly attributable to the unbudgeted cost of the recent by-elections. However, the Town Clerk and Chief Executive had now been made aware that the estimated cost of the by-elections would be considerably less than first advised and therefore a net revenue saving was likely to be achieved at the end of the financial year.

Members noted the current balance of the Council's allocated reserves as at 28 February 2018 and an estimated end of year balance, having taken account of agreed/known commitments to date.

Members also noted the balance of the General Reserve as at April 2017 and were reminded of the allocation for specific unbudgeted items previously agreed but not yet charged which would reduce the balance as at 31 March 2018. It was noted that the current Treasury Management Policy provided that the Council worked towards maintaining a general balance of £300,000 or 25% of the salary budget and consideration was given to increasing this provision.

RESOLVED: that the Treasury Management Policy be amended to provide that "the Council work towards maintaining a general balance of £350,000 or 25% of the salary budget, whichever is the higher".

72 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2017/18 – INTERIM UPDATE

Members received the interim update report of the Internal Auditor setting out the areas examined during the course of his visits on 24 and 25 October and 28 February 2018.

Members were pleased to note that no issues had been raised and Councillor Martin thanked officers for their work. She expressed the view that the report shows again how good the team are at managing the Council's finances and Councillor Chatterley commented that it was always very good.

73 CORPORATE PLAN CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided an update report on the Corporate Plan Capital Programme which had been revised following the Council decision not to increase the Town Council element of the Dunstable council tax for 2018/19.

Six projects had originally been prioritised with a working budget of £250,000, £150,000 of which could be funded by application for a Public Works Loan. However, the full programme could no longer be delivered as there was insufficient revenue funding available for 2018/19 to take out the loan from the Public Works Loan Board.

Two projects which would not proceed at the current time were the refurbishment of Ashton Square Clock and the improved depot facilities at Dunstable Cemetery.

The element of the programme still to go ahead would be funded by a £100,000 contribution from the General Reserve as already agreed.

74 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- a) CAB Management Committee – Councillor Meakins would provide a written report in due course.
- b) DITA –Councillor Warren will ascertain details of the Citizens visit from Porz-am-Rhein over the weekend of 18-21 May and ask the Chairman of DITA to advise the Town Clerk and Chief Executive of the requirement for use of Town Council facilities.
- c) Hospice at Home – Councillor Jones reported on a successful fund raising event the previous Saturday evening which had raised £1,000.
- d) Ashton Schools Foundation – nothing to report.
- e) Ashton Almshouses – nothing to report.
- f) Chews Foundation – nothing to report.
- g) Poors Land Charity – Councillor Staples advised that the Charity were pleased to be able to increase the amount of Maundy money to be distributed this year.

75 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.

76 LAND DISPOSAL (Minute 58/2016 refers)

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented a report, reminding Members that when considering Central Bedfordshire Council's 'call for sites' the Town Council had resolved that both the area of land at Meadway allotments and at the Cemetery be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council for consideration for possible future development, thereby giving tacit consent for the disposal of this land.

Whilst it was unlikely that either piece of land would be specifically referenced within the emerging Local Plan, the submission had alerted the interest of potential developers.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported on the interest shown and Members considered a proposal to dispose of the land for the purposes of enabling housing developments.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive in association with the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Chairman of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee, be authorised to negotiate the sale and disposal of land at Meadway Allotments and Dunstable Cemetery in accordance with the processes set out in the report.