

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

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

ON MONDAY 25 JUNE 2018

Present: Councillors John Kane (Town Mayor), Nigel Warren (Deputy Town Mayor), Sid Abbott, Lisa Bird, John Chatterley, Philip Crawley, Eugene Ghent, Peter Hollick, Liz Jones, Gloria Martin, Mike Mullany, Patricia Russell, Ann Sparrow, Pat Staples and J 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), Becky Wisbey, Head of Community Services and Michele Markus (Mayoral and Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Terry Colbourne, Jeannette Freeman, Claire Meakins and Jessica Woodward

Public Attendance: 0

Before the commencement of the meeting, the Town Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend Canon Richard Andrews, led the Council in prayer

128 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 May 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

129 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

130 TOWN MAYOR'S REMARKS

a) Mayoral Engagements

The Town Mayor referred to the report detailing his attendances at a variety of events since his election as Mayor in May. Since the report had been written the Town Mayor had also been pleased to attend the Luton Mayor making ceremony, the Mayor of Houghton Regis coffee afternoon and the High Sheriff's Garden Party. He had also started visiting local shops with the Town Centre Manager and had visited about 20 to date.

The Deputy Mayor also reported on events he had been pleased to attend, including opening the first of the Council's Sunday Afternoon Band Concerts.

b) Notice of Casual Vacancy

Members noted that notice of vacancy in the Office of Councillor for Northfields Ward had been served and there had been no call for an election. Advertisement for nominations for a co-opted member would be placed the following day and any such nominations would be reported to Council in October for consideration.

c) Traveller encampment

At the request of the Town Mayor, the Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that notice had been served on the travellers currently encamped at Newton Recreation Ground giving them until 7.00 am the following morning to leave the site.

131 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions put to the meeting.

132 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 16

There were no questions put to the meeting.

133 COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

a) Christmas Tree Carols and Torchlight Procession (Minute 104/2018)

In answer to a question from Councillor Hollick, the Chairman, Councillor Staples, advised that the decision to select Option B for necessary changes to this year's Christmas Tree Carols and Torchlight Procession had been taken in the best interests of the event.

b) Minutes

RESOLVED: that, subject to the foregoing, the Minutes of the meetings of the Community Services Committee held on 21 May and 4 June 2018 be received

134 GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

a) Dunstable War Memorial (Minute 83/2018)

Councillor Martin referred to the refurbishment of the War Memorial and advised that permission had not yet been obtained to use the desired combined services emblem. If permission was not forthcoming she sought agreement that the Dunstable Town Crest be used instead. Councillor Jones advised that officers were still working with the relevant bodies to obtain permission.

RESOLVED: that if permission is not granted for use of the combined services emblem, then the Dunstable Town Council crest could be used as part of the War Memorial refurbishment.

b) Minutes

RESOLVED: that, subject to the foregoing, the Minutes of the meetings of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 21 May and 11 June 2018 be received.

135 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 21 May and 18 June 2018 be received.

136 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2017/2018

The Council considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2018 for submission to the auditor, in compliance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (S1 2015/234)

The Return comprises 4 sections:

a) The Annual Internal Audit Report 2017/2018 was received and the Council noted that the relevant part of the Annual Return had been completed, assigning positive assurances in all areas. This had been completed on 14 June 2018 and in support of the assurances, the final update report was also submitted, confirming that no significant issues had arisen from the Internal Auditor's review work this year.

b) The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) acknowledged the Council's responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. The Statement was evidenced by the Internal Audit Programme, the Internal Audit Reports throughout the year and the final Internal Audit Report referred to above. Other evidence included budgetary control reports submitted to the Accounts Sub-Committee and quarterly Financial Monitoring reports submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive also produced a Corporate Risk Log each year which was reviewed by Council with the Annual Report.

c) Accounting Statements – The Council's statutory accounts had now been prepared by the Council's Consultant Accountant in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 on the basis of an income and expenditure account and a statement of balances in accordance with, and in the form specified in the Annual Return required by proper practice as a "smaller relevant body".

The accounts had been prepared in the form of the Annual Return, a copy of which had been received by Members, together with supporting financial statements, which were not subject to audit but provided background information to the figures declared in the Annual Return.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented a summary of the Council's financial performance for the year, with particular reference to the contribution to the General Reserve, which had been achieved by revenue budget savings. He outlined the most significant variances against budget as included in the report provided. Details of the Council's Earmarked Reserves had been reported to Finance and General Purposes Committee on 18 June 2018 and these were also included in the financial statements and reproduced in the separate Annual Report.

Members noted that the notice for Exercise of Public Rights would be published on 27 June 2018.

Councillor Hollick noted that the Members Training budget had not been utilised and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded Members that information on available training arranged through the Beds Association of Town and Parish Councils was always sent and

Members were encouraged to take advantage of training but rarely took up the option. Councillor Ghent suggested that the Chairmen carry out a training needs analysis for Committee membership and it was agreed this could be discussed at the next group meeting.

Councillor Hollick thanked everyone for their work and gave particular thanks to the Head of Finance and Support Services and her team.

- RESOLVED:**
- i) that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2017/18 be noted
 - ii) that the Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 at Section 1 of the Annual Return be completed in the affirmative and the Town Mayor and Town Clerk and Chief Executive be authorised to sign accordingly
 - ii) that the Accounting Statements 2017/2018 at Section 2 of the Annual Return be approved and the Town Mayor be authorised to sign accordingly
 - iii) that the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2018 be approved for submission to the auditor.

Action: Head of Finance and Support Services

137 ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018 AND REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented the Annual Report for 2017/18 which would be published on the Council's website and made available at other usual public distribution outlets. The document provided an evidence source to residents as to the quality of services provided by the Council, as well as being an important planning tool for the organisation to ensure it could demonstrate continuous service improvement.

The format for the Annual Report was the same as agreed for last year's report and included a summary of the Council's activities and achievements over the last year, illustrated as "A Year in Dunstable". Section 4 set out how the Council is performing in relation to its stated aims contained within the Corporate Plan, the objectives for which are from the Corporate Plan adopted in December 2016. Also included was a report on the annual outturn for the Council's adopted performance indicators.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported on progress made regarding improvements to the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements, which had included an update of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and the adoption of a new process for reviewing Senior Management Team pay and conditions of employment. He also reported on actions implemented in response to the Council's adopted Environment and Sustainability Policy a copy of which was included with the report. Councillor Abbott welcomed the ongoing improvements in the environmental sustainability and expressed his wish to see improvements at Grove House and Priory House in the next year.

The Corporate Risk Log had been updated and Members noted that the main identified areas of strategic risk remained as income generation and property management. Income generation had been identified as high risk because of the current economic downturn and property management arrangements had been identified as high risk due to the high cost of maintaining Council property which included listed buildings.

Members also noted the review of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and had received an updated copy. Councillor Hollick reminded Members that responsibility for Health and Safety rests with Members as a whole and the Council must fulfil its obligation. It was suggested that training for Members in this regard should be considered.

- RESOLVED:** i) that the Annual Report 2017/2018 be approved
- ii) that the improvements to the Council's governance arrangements be noted
- iii) that the Corporate Risk Log be noted
- iv) that the Council's Health and Safety Policy be approved
- v) that the Council's Environment and Sustainability Policy be approved.

Action: Town Clerk and Chief Executive

138 DISPENSATION

- RESOLVED:** that, due to an ongoing illness, dispensation be afforded to Councillor Claire Meakins for non-attendance of Council meetings for a period in excess of six months if so required until the date of the 2019 local elections.