

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 25 MARCH 2019

Present: Councillors John Kane (Town Mayor), Nigel Warren (Deputy Town Mayor), Peter Hollick (Chairman); Sid Abbott, Philip Crawley, Eugene Ghent, Liz Jones, Gloria Martin, Patricia Russell and Pat Staples

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors John Chatterley (Vice-Chairman), Terry Colbourne, Claire Meakins, Mike Mullany and Ann Sparrow

Public Attendance: None

49 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 21 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

51 ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the meetings of the Accounts Sub-Committee held 21 January and 21 February 2019.

52 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented a revenue budgetary control report for the period from 1 April to 28 February 2019. The summary of net expenditure showed a potential for an overall net revenue saving against budget at the end of the financial year. Any such saving would offset the previously agreed unbudgeted expenditure for specific projects. This would result in the end of year financial statements showing a contribution from the General Reserve.

Members also noted the current balance of the Council's allocated reserves as at 28 February 2019 and the estimated end of year balances having taken account of agreed/known commitments to date.

As previously requested by Members, the Head of Finance and Support Services provided the detail of the Council's total loan debt and associated repayments as at 31 March 2019, together with information provided by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) on the premiums payable for any early settlement. Neither the Town Clerk and Chief Executive or the Responsible Financial Officer recommended settling any debts at this moment in time and Members concurred.

53 INTERNAL AUDIT – 2018/19 INTERIM UPDATE

Members received the interim update report of the Internal Auditor setting out the areas examined during the course of his visits on 22 and 23 January 2019.

Members were pleased to note that the conclusions contained within the report raised no issues to warrant formal comment or recommendation.

54 ICT IMPROVEMENTS/UPGRADES

The Head of Finance and Support Services presented a report setting out the requirements and further upgrades required as part of the Council's IT lifecycle planning, including migration to Office 365 and replacement of the current network server which had reached the end of its life and was on an extended level of warranty, expiring in August 2019.

Members noted that migration to Office 365 would accommodate Members' e-mail requirements. Consideration would be given to the provision of hardware for Members at a later date.

RESOLVED: that the sum of up to £17,000 be released from the allocated equipment reserve to complete the necessary ICT upgrades as detailed in the report.

55 VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT RESERVE SPENDING (Minute 47/2019)

The Committee considered a recommendation from Grounds and Environmental Services Committee that approval be given to the release of allocated reserve funding to purchase various new grounds equipment.

RESOLVED: that the sum of up to £9,500 be released from the allocated vehicle and equipment reserve fund for the provision of new grounds equipment, as detailed in the report submitted to Grounds and Environmental Services.

56 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S REQUEST FOR FUNDING

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive presented a report that had previously been considered by Community Services Committee but as that meeting had been inquorate the matter had been referred for decision and formal response to a request from the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for funding of an additional Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in Dunstable.

Members were of the same opinion as Community Services Committee in that it was unlikely that an additional single PCSO in Dunstable would have much impact on local crime and anti-social behaviours. For such a scheme to have an impact would require a number of additional PCSOs and there were no guarantees that PCSOs would be dedicated to Dunstable only. The request had also arrived after the Council budget had been set for 2019/20.

Councillor Martin suggested that early discussions be held with Central Bedfordshire Council regarding their proposals for Community Safety Officers, which may be more beneficial to the local community.

RESOLVED: that the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner be advised that Dunstable Town Council would not provide funding for an additional Police Community Support Officer at this time.

Councillor Jones urged those Members who are re-elected in May to attend the Dunstable and Villages Priority Setting meeting with the Police to be held on 15 May at 6.30 pm at Dunstable Police Station.

57 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- a) CAB Management Committee – Councillor Meakins had advised she had no update to report, however Members were aware that CAB would be vacating Grove House towards the end of April.
- b) DITA – Councillor Hollick had attended the AGM the previous week and consideration was to be given as to how to celebrate 60 years twinning with Porz-am-Rhein, 15 years with Bourgoin-Jallieu and 50 years of DITA.
- c) Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Jones reported that the organisation currently supported 35 patients with 25 volunteers. Volunteers had also attended training in connection with Keech Hospice.

The Trustees continued to look for ways to bridge the gap in lost funding and a fundraising event was to be held on 27 March at 7.00 pm at Cocunut Garden.

- d) Ashton Schools Foundation – no update to report
- e) Ashton Almshouses – no update to report
- f) Chews Foundation – next meeting would be in May
- 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.

Members considered a suggestion by Councillor Jones that representation on outside organisations be reviewed, particularly having regard to the end of term of this Council and its reduction in membership. It was agreed that historic representation on local organisations be reviewed and the Charities be asked to advise of their requirements for future representation and the expectation of the role.

58 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.

59 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee considered proposals for a change of job description and the subsequent re-evaluation and potential re-grading of one post.

RESOLVED: that that the recommendation as set out in the report be approved.