

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE**

ON MONDAY 13 JUNE 2022

Present: Councillors Liz Jones (Town Mayor), Lisa Bird (Deputy Town Mayor and Chairman), Greg George (Deputy Chairman) Sid Abbott, Matt Brennan, Alan Corkhill, Philip Crawley, Pamela Ghent, Gladys Sanders, and Johnson Tamara

In Attendance: Councillor Peter Hollick, David Ashlee (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Ian Reed (Democratic Services Manager), Dimitrisz Sopisz (Grounds Operations Manager), James Slack (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), Jemma Candy (Corporate Marketing and Communications Officer) and Kathy Doyle (Parks and Open Spaces Development Officer, remotely).

Apologies: None

Public: One

96. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 14 March 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

97. SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

98. PLANS-SUB COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 8 March, 29 March, 19 April, 10 May and 31 May 2022 be received.

99. CREASEY PARK COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CENTRE AND SPLASH PARK UPDATE

The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager presented the report that had been circulated with the agenda. It was noted the football season had now ended. Creasey Park (CP) had hosted four cup finals recently. The Committee noted with interest the main stadium pitch had been used for 118 matches with six teams calling CP home.

It was further noted that secondary spend continued to perform very well due to a large number of games (32 matches) in March and April. During the Easter holidays the centre was very busy with a Luton Town FC holiday course, festivals and the 'Pay and Play' offer. Youth football was very busy with forty-five teams calling CP home.

The contract talks with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) was still unresolved which was of concern to the Committee as there was no explanation from CBC why this was the case with no indication being received on when this would be resolved. The hope was expressed that those members of CBC on the Town Council would continue to press CBC for a swift resolution .

In relation to Bennett's Splash and Splash Side Café it was noted the operation opened in early May. A question was raised about the shortage of chlorine in the country. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager reported he had secured a supply that would cover the season. Action was being taken to publicise the splash park. Daily specials were being promoted through promotions and publicity events. A discussion took place on parking issues.

It was agreed that the Committees' appreciation of the services at Creasey Park be passed on to officers and all the staff based at Creasey Park.

100. CEMETERY, ALLOTMENTS, RECREATION GROUNDS, TOWN CENTRE GARDENS AND RANGER SERVICE INFORMATION AND UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a detailed information report covering all areas of the Council's grounds maintenance responsibilities.

a) Dunstable Cemetery

Members received the burial figures for March to May as well as a comparison with the figures for the same period in 2021. Some 347 burials had taken place in the lawn section since February 2016. The Friends of Dunstable Cemetery met on 20 May and were joined by five American students from the Com Church, Oklahoma. The friends would meet in the Summer every two weeks.

b) Allotments

Members noted that there were 247 people were on the waiting list. The Committee was concerned about the recent incidents of arson at allotments. Discussions had been held with Bedfordshire Police and the CBC Community Safety Team. Action included a request for installation of re deployable CCTV cameras, but these had not been forthcoming .

c) Recreation Grounds – play areas

Since the last report there had been one incident of vandalism to play equipment. One of two trampolines had been set alight at the Bennetts Adventure Playground. Further to discussion between the Head of Service and Chairman of the Committee it had been decided that it would not be replaced. A discussion took place about security in the parks and the safety of play equipment. Following on from the receipt of requests for benches at Mentmore Recreation Ground the Committee was advised that it was likely a couple of benches would be installed in June or July.

The Committee was advised of a trial differential mowing regime. The grass was left longer before it was cut in some areas to encourage biodiversity and wildflowers. Weed control was under review with investigations into a system called 'Foam Stream'

d) New Woodland and Tree Planting

The Committee received an update including securing funding through CBC for the creation of a 'tiny forest' promoted by Earthwatch.

f) Town Ranger Service

The Committee noted that the Rangers were continuing with good works across the town and would be playing a significant part in preparing for the Green Flag, Britain in Bloom and Anglia in Bloom judging. The team was also pressure washing the High Street and cleaning litter bins.

g) Priory and Grove House Gardens and the Town Centre

Bedding plants and floral displays would soon be installed. Dunstable in Bloom would be dead heading some of the displays. The Green Flag award judging took place in Grove House Gardens on 19 May and Green Heritage flag judging would be on 15 June.

It was noted that the Flame elephant sculpture was officially unveiled on 26 May and was considered a great addition to the sculptures in Grove House Gardens.

h) Dunstable in Bloom

The Britain in Bloom Judges would be in Dunstable on 29 July. A draft itinerary was being prepared to showcase the open spaces and environmental projects in the town. Anglia in Bloom judges would be in the town on 15 July prior to the Britain in Bloom visit.

It was agreed that the Committees' appreciation of all the services listed in the report be passed on to officers and all the staff involved

101. ALLOTMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed a report on a proposed five-year programme for improvements to the six allotment sites. The proposed programme included replacement of fencing, stone surfaced access roads, upgraded water supplies, installation of information boards, composting toilets at two sites and tree works at the Hillcroft site. The programme outlined in the report would require the release of earmarked reserves of up to £20,000 in 2022/23 and further earmarked resources of up to £22,800 in subsequent years to deliver the programme in full.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommends to Finance and General Purposes the release of earmarked capital reserves of up to £20,000 in 2022/23 and further earmarked capital reserves up to £22,800 in subsequent years to deliver the approved programme

102. PURCHASE OF WATERING BOWSER

The Committee discussed a report that proposed the purchase of a 1,125 litre watering bowser. The demands on the existing bowser to water floral displays meant there was no longer capacity to water newly planted street trees, newly created rain gardens and new landscape features. It was now evident an additional bowser was required to ensure the Grounds Team could carry out the watering duties in the most effective manner. The purchase of a 1,125 litres Highway Flower watering bowser was £3,727. The allocated reserve balance stood at £50,026

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommends to Finance and General Purposes the release of up to £3,800 from the earmarked Vehicle and Equipment Reserve to purchase a 1,125 litre watering bowser as detailed in the report

103. MUGA KICKABOUT AREA

The Committee received an update report on the findings of the MUGA working Group. As a result of the Working Groups' comments the officer's sought approval for next steps and associated timescales on a proposal to install of a kickabout facility within the Luton Road Recreation Ground. It was estimated such a facility would cost in the order of £40,000 to £60,000. Central Bedfordshire Council had confirmed that there was £70,000 available from S106 funding which could be used to fund improvements to the existing play area. The Committee welcomed the next steps identified by Officers which included preparation of a full design brief for submission to the next meeting of the Committee in September. The plan also identified tender bids being sought in November / December 2022 and consultation with local residents and park users on a preferred design with installation estimated March to May 2023.

104. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

CBC Development Management Committee:
No report.

The meeting closed at 19.45