

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

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

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

ON MONDAY 15 JANUARY 2024 FROM 7 pm

Present: Councillors Liz Jones (Town Mayor), Louise O’Riordan (Deputy Town Mayor), Matthew Brennan (Chairman), Richard Attwell (Vice-Chairman), Trevor Adams, Phillip Crawley, Kenson Gurney, Michelle Henderson, and Matthew Neall

In Attendance: Councillors Gergory Alderman and Nicholas Kotarski, Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Dimitrisz Sopisz (Grounds Operations Manager), James Slack (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), Kathy Doyle (Parks and Green Space Development Officer) and Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillor Mark Davis

Public: Nil.

12/24 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no specific declarations of interest.

13/24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 6 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14/24 PLANS-SUB COMMITTEE

Councillor Jones noted that the Plans Sub Committee which will be held on 5 February would be held before Full Council and would include consideration of an application which could potentially cause a lengthy discussion. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive informed Members that Full Council will commence once the Plans-Sub Committee has completed. Any applications with a suitable response date will be delayed until the following meeting.

ACTION – Democratic Services Manager

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Plans Sub-Committee held on 30 October 2023, 13 November 2023, 4 December 2023, and 2 January 2024 be received.

15/24 ACTION TRACKER

Members received the Action tracker provided.

Cllr O’Riordan requested that officers investigate the possibility of signs to be placed up around the skate park so users are aware of the toilet facilities at the Hub.

Action – Grounds Operations Manager

Officers had requested that CBC repair the outside of some of the Urbis planters in town. Cllr Kenson Gurney advised members that he will investigate further with Central Bedfordshire Council to see if they could extend their contract to maintaining planting beyond March 2025. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services advised members that he has been in contact with the client officer at CBC to ask that very question and will provide an update once known.

Action – Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

Cllr Crawley entered the Chamber at 7:09 pm

16/24 CREASEY PARK COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CENTRE AND SPLASH PARK

The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager summarised the report to members. Function bookings are very popular and bookings for Saturday are full right up to March.

The splash park now holds a premise licence to serve alcohol to enable the Priory House team to develop options for their functions.

The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager provided members with an update regarding the parking/driveway around Creasey Park. The parking enforcement team at CBC have now advised they can enforce parking permissions on the road to the Centre. There are now talks within CBC as to how they can add double yellow lines on the other side of the road.

17/24 GROUNDS – INFORMATION REPORT

Cllr Tamara raised issues regarding Frenches Avenue. The Grounds Operations Manager advised members they are aware of the immediate issues and subject to funding they will be able to provide a permanent solution in the future for residents.

Members received the report provided.

Cemetery

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services summarised the report giving details about various activities and works completed in the cemetery. Members were advised that a further 10 ashes sanctums have been added to the Cemetery. The first and most recent 10 sanctums were placed at the Cemetery in 2016.

Allotments

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services summarised the report and highlighted that the waiting list for allotments has decreased a little since the last report was provided.

Recreation Grounds – Play Areas

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report given to Members.

Since the last report there have been no further incidental vandalism.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Members received the update provided. It was reported that the Town Council has been awarded £40,000 for the installation of inclusive play equipment in Grove House Gardens and the additional tarmac path in Kingsbury Recreation Ground leading from the existing path to newly built MUGA.

Town Rangers

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report given to Members. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services advised Members that a new plan is being created for the whole year in order to inform Members and residents when the Rangers will be in specific wards so that issues can be raised ahead of time for inclusion within the ward work plan where appropriate.

Cllr Kotarski raised a point regarding the Urbis planters in town and the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services advised that one planter had previously been hit by a vehicle; it is not immediately dangerous but will need to be replaced as soon as possible by CBC.

Green Space Projects

The Parks and Green Space Development Officer summarised the report given to Members. For Mentmore Recreation Ground, the Sustainability Team at CBC have awarded the Council just over £4,000 to carry out the planting of 30 more trees. It is planned to carry out the planting of these trees with volunteers, Council officers and Councillors.

A memorial tree planting was held at Mentmore which in turn replaced 3 oak trees which were lost along the hedgerow.

There is now 1 space available for a volunteer on the Dunstable Urban Gardeners scheme.

Cllr Attwell advised Members that the tenant farmer using the field adjacent to Mentmore Recreation Ground is happy to work with the Council on his concern over the area adjacent to the entrance.

18/24 OPEN SPACE LITTER AND DOG WASTE BINS – DECISION REPORT

Members received the report provided which was summarised by the Grounds Operations Manager. It was explained to Members that the change of bins will still allow all dog waste to be disposed of via the general waste stream rather than as separated waste. All dog bins will be removed, and 30 new general waste bins will be provided giving an overall increased capacity of waste volume. A concern was raised regarding recycling. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services explained that to his knowledge when all waste is taken it gets separated at the point of disposal, which means measures are still taken to allow recycling to happen.

Members were advised that signage will be placed onto the bins to make it clear to everyone that these bins can be used for bagged dog waste and social media will be used at the time of launching to make residents aware of the change.

Councillor O’Riordan raised concerns regarding Dog Kennel Walk and the lack of bins along this route. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services has offered to contact Central Bedfordshire Council regarding this matter as this land belongs to them.

ACTION - Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. To approve the rationalisation of waste bins summarised in section 3 and detailed in full in Appendix 1.
- 1.2. To recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee the release of £5,700 from the Parks and Play Improvement Reserve to purchase 30 new general waste litter bins.

19/24 GREEN FLAG MANAGEMENT PLANS – DECISION REPORT

Members received the report provided and noted in particular the inclusion of the Carbon Neutral objective within both action plans prompting a question about energy champions. The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services advised that the Carbon Neutral working group will be reactivated shortly to consider progress to date including the appointing of staff energy champions during 2024.

ACTION – Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

It was proposed, seconded and,

RESOLVED:

- I. To approve the adoption of new management plans for both Priory and Grove House Gardens to support applications for Green Flags in 2024.

20/24 BUDGET 2024/25 – REPORT

Members received the report provided. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised key points of the report. Members were encouraged to ask questions or make recommendations to officers for referral to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

There was a lengthy discussion with Members. Cllr Tamara had expressed interest for officers to identify options to enable the precept to be brought down to 5% instead of the 5.7% proposed.

It was Proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. That the proposed budget be amended to remove the creation of an ear-marked reserve of £20,000 towards the cost of a Neighbourhood Development Plan, and the budget for 2024/25 be reduced by that amount.
- 1.2. That with the above amendment the draft budget proposals and fees and charges for the Grounds and Environmental Services Department for 2024/25, as well as indicative budget changes for the following three years, be recommended for approval by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

21/24 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

CBC Development Committee – Cllr Nicholas Kotarski

Nothing to report for the last period as there have been no rejections by DTC requiring attendance at DMC.

22/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following item will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and therefore, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

23/24 UPDATE ON FUTURE USE OF KINGSBURY RECREATION GROUND PAVILION BY DUNSTABLE TOWN BOWLS CLUB – DECISION REPORT

The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services summarised the report to Members. Members discussed many of the points raised.

RESOLVED: Not to spend time exploring the third option outlined and to continue to only explore the first two options as previously agreed.

**24/24 FUTURE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CREASEY PARK
COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CENTRE**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive updated Members that there has been a delay in the decision until 6 February 2024.

The meeting closed at 9:33 pm