

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 24 JUNE 2024 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM

Present: Councillors Louise O’Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Mayor), Trevor Adams; Gregory Alderman; Richard Attwell; Wendy Bater; Robert Blennerhassett; Matthew Brennan; Mark Davis; John Gurney; Kenson Gurney, Michelle Henderson, Peter Hollick; Nicholas Kotarski, Liz Jones, Matthew Neall, Johnson Tamara with Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), and Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services and RFO)

Apologies: Councillor Phillip Crawley

Public Attendance: Nil

151/24 MINUTES

Members noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2024 would be considered by the next meeting of the Council.

152/24 DECLARATIONS

No declarations were raised

153/24 CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Town Mayor spoke in support of a report relating to activities and summarised the events her and the Deputy Mayor had attended since the Annual Council Meeting.

154/24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions put to the meeting.

155/24 COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 3 June 2024 be received.

156/24 GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 10 June 2024 be received.

157/24 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 17 June 2024 be received.

158/24 ACTION TRACKER

The action tracker was noted.

159/24 MARKET CHARTER

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report.

Councillor Matt Brennan requested that the group's meetings be recorded. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that any formal sessions would be likely to be held in confidential session due to commercial and legal interests, but offered to provide minutes of the Group's meetings to enable transparency.

ACTION: Town Clerk & Chief Executive

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To form a Markets Working Group

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To agree a representative group of members to form the group to include Councillors Trevor Adams, Gregory Alderman, Wendy Bater, Robert Blennerhassett, John Gurney, Kenson Gurney, Michelle Henderson and Liz Jones

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: For the working group to meet approximately twice, one to receive a briefing on the current use of the Charter by the Council and the projected impact of any changes and then to review the options and agree a recommended approach to provide to Full Council

ACTION: Town Clerk and Chief Executive and Head of Community Services

160/24 TRANSPARENCY REPORT

The key parts of the report were summarised by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

Councillor Liz Jones requested that social media posts for council meetings be more consistent. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that officers would work on ways to encourage public engagement by highlighting agenda items of particular interest due for discussion, whilst acknowledging that posts simply advising of a meeting may be of little interest otherwise.

Members discussed the monthly surgeries in detail, and suggested advertising more widely as well as asking members of the public how they would like to engage with Members. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed costs incurred for room hire over the last year totalled £70 for 3 of surgeries, with others being free of charge as well as using Council owned premises. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive suggested that officers could provide Members with posters advertising monthly surgeries where they see fit.

ACTION: Marketing and Communications Officer and Democratic Services Manager

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To continue to stream Council and Committee meetings live.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To continue to provide social media messages alerting residents when items of particular interest are to be discussed in Council meetings.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To continue to hold monthly surgeries called open public meetings, to be circulated between the five wards.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To include a “public question time” section in the agenda for each committee meeting as well as Full Council.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To amend Standing Orders in regard to public questions at meetings to request rather than require members of the public to submit questions three days in advance, and to allow members of the public to address Full Council on any matter relevant to the Town Council’s services and responsibilities.

161/24 TO AGREE A RESPONSE TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL’S DRAFT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN.

The Town Mayor advised Members that the consultation period would end on 30 June 2024. A response, compiled by the Mayor, along with Councillors Liz Jones, Gregory Alderman and Richard Attwell, had been circulated to Members. Councillor Nicholas Kotarski requested an addition to the response regarding the unreliability of the B bus service serving Downside.

Councillor Liz Jones noted the reference to a possible Hop and Stopper to serve the 3 of 5 wards currently receiving a reduced service and suggested that it would be appropriate for the Council to consider this at a future meeting.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To submit the response provided to Central Bedfordshire Council’s draft local transport plan, with the inclusion of Councillor Kotarski’s addition.

162/24 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer summarised the key areas of the report to Members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To receive and note the Internal Audit Report (Final) 2023/24 at Appendix 1, also presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 17 June 2024.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve a recommendation made by the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 17 June 2024 to appoint the internal auditor for financial year 2024/25.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statement as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2024, 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).

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To authorise the Chair and Town Clerk & Chief Executive to sign the Annual Governance Statement.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To authorise the Chair to sign the Accounting Statements.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To note the Council's loans and Long-term liabilities as at 31 March 2024 at Appendix 4.

163/24 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE DUNSTABLE JOINT COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 MARCH 2024

Councillor Gregory Alderman provided a verbal update from the meeting held on 5 June 2024 and confirmed that he was the new Vice-Chair of the Dunstable Joint Committee and that Central Bedfordshire Councillor Carole Hegley was the new Chair.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Dunstable Joint Committee held on 14 March 2024 be received.

164/24 TO AGREE THE TOWN COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVES AND SUBSTITUTES ON THE DUNSTABLE JOINT COMMITTEE

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to appoint Councillors Trevor Adams and Matthew Brennan as substitutes for the Dunstable Joint Committee, in addition to Councillor Kotarski.

165/24 REFERRAL REPORTS

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to release funds from the Grove House Building Maintenance Reserve of up to £226,550 to allow for essential repair and maintenance works.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the referral report from Personnel Sub-Committee held on 20 June 2024 regarding a staff pay review.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To create an ear-marked reserve of £25,000 for staff review and support

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To release the newly created ear-marked reserve to fund a pay review following the Council's usual procurement process.

166/24 REPORTS/UPDATES BY MEMBERS OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE TOWN COUNCIL

No update.

The meeting closed at 8:23 pm.