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Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Notice of a Meeting of the **Full Council**

Date: **Friday 22 November 2024**

Dear Councillor,

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of Dunstable Town Council which will be held on **Monday, December 2, 2024**, at **Grove House; Council Chamber** at **7:00 PM**. To view the meeting live or afterwards use this link: [livestream](#). Members of the public and press are also welcome to attend in person. Members of the public may ask a question during the public session, either in person or online via MS Teams. If you would like to ask a question, please contact the Council via democratic@dunstable.gov.uk or 01582 513000 by 4 pm on Friday 29 November 2024.

This meeting will be filmed by the Council and broadcast live and will be capable of repeated viewing. If you are seated in the Council Chamber it is likely that the cameras will capture your image. By your presence you are deemed to consent to be filmed, and to the use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting or training purposes.

If you address the committee in person or via Teams, your contribution will be recorded and broadcast, unless this is during a private session, as permitted by the Access to Information provisions.

Please see the below QR code to access the full agenda:



Yours faithfully

Paul Hodson
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Members are reminded when making decisions that the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 requires Members to have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't, and to foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.

AGENDA

279/24 Apologies for Absence

280/24 To agree as a correct record the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 30 September 2024

[Minutes Council Meeting September 2024.pdf](#)

281/24 Declarations of Interest

282/24 Chair's Remarks including Civic Events and Mayoral Activities

[2. chairs remarks december.pdf](#)

283/24 Public Question Time

284/24 To receive reports of the following Committees:

284.1/24 Community Services 4 November 2024

[Community Services Committee November - Minutes.pdf](#)

284.2/24 Grounds and Environmental Services 11 November 2024

[Grounds and Environmental Services November - Minutes.pdf](#)

284.3/24 Finance and General Purposes 18 November 2024

[Finance and General Purposes Committee November- Minutes.pdf](#)

285/24 Action Tracker – to review progress of previously agreed actions

[3. Action Tracker.pdf](#)

286/24 To receive the minutes of the Dunstable Joint Committee held on 19 September 2024 - report to follow

287/24 Draft Budget 2025/26

[5. Draft budget summary report Dec 2024.pdf](#)

[5. Draft Budget 2025-26 - Appendix 1.pdf](#)

[5. Draft Budget 2025-26 - Appendix 2.pdf](#)

288/24 To receive and note the outcome of the External Audit for financial year 2023/2024

[6. Audited AGAR 2023-24.pdf](#)

[6. Completion letter.pdf](#)

289/24 Annual Town Meeting

[7. Annual Town Meeting - Report.pdf](#)

290/24 Mayoral Handbook

[8. Mayoral Handbook.pdf](#)

[8. Appendix 1 - NOTES FOR GUIDANCE OF TOWN MAYOR.pdf](#)

291/24 Legislation Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting

[9. Legislation enabling remote attendance and proxy voting.pdf](#)

[Appendix 1 Draft Consultation Responses.pdf](#)

292/24 Neighbourhood plan

[10. Neighbourhood Plan decision report Oct 24.pdf](#)

[10. Appendix 1 DNP Scoping Report.pdf](#)

[10. Appendix 2 DNP Timeline and Budget.pdf](#)

293/24 Watling House

[11. Watling House.pdf](#)

294/24 Motion from Councillor Richard Attwell

"Given the on-going cost of living crisis which is especially prevalent during the Christmas period when additional severe strains are placed on everyone's budget and cold weather is a prominent feature, I would like to propose that we set up a special Christmas drop in meeting for our residents specifically towards raising awareness with this Pension Credit awareness programme in mind. I would welcome as many Councillors as possible to help me with this charitable gesture. We have the posters and leaflets attached and Grove Corner or other suitable venue could be used for setting this up as a very low-cost initiative that has the potential to help so many of our most vulnerable residents during such a meaningful time."

295/24 To receive reports/updates by Members of Central Bedfordshire Council on matters of interest to the Town Council

296/24 Date of the next meeting - Monday 3 February 2025 at 7.00 pm

To: All Members of the **Full Council**:

Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), Peter Hollick (Council Member), Wendy Bater (Council Member), Kenson Gurney (Council Member), Matthew Brennan (Council Member), John Gurney (Council Member), Philip Crawley (Council Member), Liz Jones (Council Member), Johnson Tamara (Council Member), Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Gregory Alderman (Council Member), Louise O'Riordan (Council Member), Trevor Adams (Council Member), Mark Davis (Council Member), Matthew Neall (Council Member), Michelle Henderson (Council Member), Nicholas Kotarski (Council Member), Richard Attwell (Council Member), Robert Blennerhassett (Council Member), Sally Kimondo (Councillor), Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services (RFO)), John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services), Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services)

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2024 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM

Present: Councillors Louise O’Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Mayor), Trevor Adams; Gregory Alderman; Wendy Bater; Philip Crawley; Mark Davis; John Gurney; Nicholas Kotarski, Liz Jones, Matthew Neall, Johnson Tamara with Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services and RFO), and Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager)

Present

Via Teams: John Crawley (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services)

Apologies: Councillors Richard Attwell, Matthew Brennan, Peter Hollick and Kenson Gurney

Public Attendance: Nil

Before the formal meeting of the Council, John Tizzard the Police and Crime Commissioner of Bedfordshire gave a brief overview of his role and priorities to Members.

210/24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 20 May 2024 and 24 June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

211/24 DECLARATIONS

No declarations were made.

212/24 CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Town Mayor update members on the events attended since the last meeting. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Sally Kimondo gave a verbal update on the events attended on behalf of the Mayor.

213/24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions put to the meeting.

214/24 COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 2 September 2024 be received.

Councillor Jones advised members that card payments and bus passes are now able to be used on South Beds Dial-a-Ride public bus routes.

215/24 GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 9 September 2024 be received.

216/24 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 16 September 2024 be received.

217/24 ACTION TRACKER

The action tracker was noted.

218/24 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE DUNSTABLE JOINT COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 JUNE 2024

Councillor Alderman provided the council with a verbal update from the Dunstable Joint Committee held on 19 September 2024.

219/24 TO APPROVE THE CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2025/26

The Town Mayor noted the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that the new calendar of meetings for the year 2025/26 be approved.

220/24 REFERRAL REPORTS

The Town Mayor summarised the key parts of the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve the release of a further £11,960 from the Open Spaces Improvement Plan Reserve to enable the proposed footpath works at Frenchs Avenue to continue as originally approved.

221/24 REPORTS/UPDATES BY MEMBERS OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Tamara asked members on the Central Bedfordshire Council for an update regarding the flash floods the previous week which affected Dunstable High Street. Councillor Gurney advise that he had written to the Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council to ask what they will doing, and the response was that they are currently dealing with the crisis as it is, with some still experiencing being flooded. They will deal with the immediate issues, and a forthcoming strategy for prevention will be considered for the whole of Bedfordshire.

222/24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items 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.

223/24 PRIORY HOUSE PROJECT MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Members were provided with an update.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To agree that the Priory House Project Management contract be awarded to Bidder 3 for at a cost of £57,530.

224/24 REFERRAL REPORT

Members discussed the key points in the report from the Personnel Sub-Committee.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: Corporate Services
1.1. – 1.4 To agree the recommendations provided.

Community Services
1.5. – 1.7 To agree the recommendations provided.

The meeting closed at 7:53 pm.

Event	Date	Comments
Art viewing - Dr Lorna Moore's exhibition	20.09.24	Dr Lorna Moore's exhibition was deep and powerful – the translation of childhood trauma into art was thought provoking. Other exhibits from the group were. Varied and interesting, I would recommend the course itself to anyone that wants to get to know themselves more deeply.
Mayors Reception - Kempston	21.09.24	A very enjoyable evening with the Kempston Mayor and others raising monies for charity.
Justice Service	22.09.24	An honour and a privilege to attend the Justice Service in full robes and civic dress alongside neighbouring Mayors of Houghton Regis and Luton.
Reception for Organ Donation Week	23.09.24	Powerful personal stories of the need to register for organ donation which literally saves lives.
Awards Evening – Dunstable in Bloom	25.09.24	A very uplifting celebration of all of the local Dunstable in Bloom entrants and winners. Dunstable has much to be proud of.
Championing Women Through Collaboration Event	26.09.24	I was honoured to be a guest speaker at this event among other strong and inspiring women.
Little feet appeal lunch	27.09.24	L&D Hospital work hard to raise money for much needed hospital improvements and facilities. Phil Tufnell was the guest speaker at this event. His speech was funny and educational.
Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament	28.09.24	Local youth Parliament groups exhibiting their

		projects and interest in politics and societal change. Delivering hope for the future of politics.
Celebrate diversity at Caddington Grove Care Home	28.09.24	Always good to see the residents and staff of Caddington Grove. We laughed, chatted and had selfies!
Charity Fundraiser annual Shambles Big Band Show	28.09.24	The Shambles Big Band raise money every year for children's charities. A fun evening delivered by very talented musicians.
Day's Musical Night	03.10.24	Stunning church and music.
Creasey Park lunch club	09.10.24	Many questions and stories. A lovely afternoon.
Kingsbury Site Central Bedfordshire Academy visit	11.10.24	Had a tour of the school, met many of the students and heard about the amazing outcomes the school delivers.
Sweeeeetz Visit	11.10.24	Celebrating 3 years of business in Dunstable.
Good Neighbours event	17.10.24	Informative overview of all that Dunstable Good Neighbours do in our community. A much valued cause.
Circus night	18.10.24	Excellent evening, funny and entertaining with Houghton Regis Mayor.
Community CPR day	19.10.24	Learnt CPR and spoke to many visitors who learnt valuable skills to save the lives of others.
Dunstable Centre - Fun day	19.10.24	Drew the raffle for the event which saw one lucky winner receive a signed David Beckham football.
60th Anniversary Concert	19.10.24	Dunstable Musical Theatre took us through the decades with songs and stories of their 60 years performing in Dunstable

Awards Presentation – Kumon Centre	26.10.24	This years Kumon Awards were bigger than ever! Wonderful to see so many students excelling in their studies.
Poppy Appeal	28.10.24	Selling poppies in Asda
Poppy Appeal	29.10.24	Selling poppies in Sainsbury
Poppy Appeal	30.10.24	Selling poppies in Lidl
Online meeting – Link to Change	30.10.24	Wonderful hearing about the work that Link to Change do in communities.
Poppy Appeal	31.10.24	Selling poppies in Sainsbury
Coffee Morning – Salvation Army	01.11.24	Great to meet with Salvation Army and see and hear about all that do in our community.
Dunstable citizens advice - Positive Mental Health Awareness session	05.11.24	<p>Impact Mental Health Peer Support offers support for residents in Dunstable. You don't need a formal mental health diagnosis to take advantage of their complimentary mental health wellbeing course. You can self-refer or reach out to the Citizen Advice Bureau to connect with Dunstable's local Social Prescriber, Annie.</p> <p>The courses available are practical and conducted online, equipping individuals with techniques they can apply in their daily lives. We discovered that mental health can affect us at various stages, making it crucial to understand how our minds function.</p>
Delivering joy campaign - visit and chat	07.11.24	Saw so many gifts for so many in our communities! This yearly initiative from

		Dunelm literally delivers joy to so many. It was emotional seeing the bags and rooms full of wrapped presents for those in need.
Coffee Morning – Nevilles	07.11.24	Nevilles Charity Coffee morning supporting RBL. Interesting to learn about a local business and how important this service is to our community.
Vantage Abba night	07.11.24	Excellent food, excellent company and great singing!
Visit and speech	08.11.24	Delivered a personal experience speech to those that have experienced DA. Very raw and emotional. A real honour to be asked.
Remembrance Sunday	11.11.24	Was pleased to take the salute with the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and CBC Chair, and then to lay a wreath and attend the service in the Priory Church. It was great to see so many people again taking part.
Reverend Lupi meeting	13.11.24	Great to meet with Rev. Lupi and hear about the work of the Square Methodist Church.
Bedfordshire Honours Celebration and Presentation Ceremony	14.11.24	A real honour and privilege to observe the British Empire Awards to those that contributed to our communities and society at large.
Rock of Ages Concert	16.11.24	A lovely evening with the Mayor of Leighton Buzzard listening to toe tapping songs from the decades.
The Service of Remembrance	17.11.24	Road Traffic Victims Charity celebrates 30 years of service providing support to families and all

		affected by the tragic loss of life in RTAs.
Mayor Meeting - Quinns	18.11.24	Met with local firm Quinns to learn more about their work and their desire to give more to the community.
Ashton St Peter's school visit	20.11.24	Year 6 of Ashton St Peter's school came to visit for Parliament week. We had a mock meeting, heard from the Town Clerk and talked about all things Mayor and council.
One YMCA meeting	20.11.24	Great to hear about the work being done in schools to prevent DA and unhealthy behaviours as well as the work being done to help homeless people and addicts to rejoin society.
Award presentation – Weatherfield Academy	21.11.24	Weatherfield Academy. School Assembly and presentation of Anglia in Bloom awards for Best School Garden 2024 and 3 rd place in Wheelie Fantastic.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2024 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Louise O’Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Mayor), Liz Jones (Chair), Matthew Neall (Vice-Chair), Peter Hollick, Wendy Bater, John Gurney, Gregory Alderman, Trevor Adams, Mark Davis, and Nicholas Kotarski.

In Attendance: Gina Thanky (Events Officer), Gill Peck (Youth and Community Manager), Lisa Stephens (Cultural Services Manager), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager) and Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive).

In Attendance (Remotely): Annette Clynes (Town Centre Manager) and, Becky Wisbey (Head of Community Services)

Apologies: Councillor Robert Blennerhassett

Public: 3

225/24 - Apologies for Absence

Councillor Robert Blennerhassett

226/24 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest

227/24 - Public Question Time

3 members of the public were in attendance.

The Chair of Community Services from Houghton Regis Town Council asked the Town Council to consider stopping licensing markets.

228/24 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of 2 September 2024

The minutes of the meetings of the Community Services Committee held on 2 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

229/24 - Town Centre Services

The Town Centre Manager highlighted the key points of the report to members. Members were advised that since writing the report, the Ashton Square toilets have once again been given the platinum award.

Members discussed the Council's use of the Market Charter Rights. The Head of Community Services explained to members that the Council licences markets to protect the interests of traders and Dunstable's markets.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to continue to apply the Council's Market Rights Policy, and publish the summary documents provided in Appendices 1 and 2

230/24 - Events

The Events Officer summarised the key points in the report.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to agree a £10,000 increase as per Community Services budget report for Party in the Park in 2025

231/24 - Priory House

The Cultural Services Manager summarised the report provided to members and highlighted key information.

The Christmas season has come to Priory House with the Christmas stock now available within the shop.

Priory House works are currently delayed by 2 weeks due to the wall painting conservations. The work at the moment is planned for June 2026 completion. From April to mid June, Priory Tea Rooms is due a planned closure to complete some roof works which will take approximately 6-9 weeks.

232/24 - Grove Corner and Community Engagement

Members noted the report provided which was summarised by the Youth and Community Manager.

A verbal update was provided to members regarding the activities which were held over the October half term: On Friday 25 October a biscuit decorating class was held at the Splashside Café which saw 40 young people attend. Due to the weather on Monday 28 October, the officers decided not to do giant games but did hot chocolate instead which saw 16 young people attend. On Wednesday 30 October there were 29 young people who attended football and boxing at Kingsbury Pavillion. On Thursday 31 October there was a gaming bus and face painting at Ashton Square, which 28 young people attended.

233/24 - Older People's Services

The Youth and Community Manager summarised the report provided to members.

ACTION - Members asked that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive write to Central Bedfordshire Council regarding Bedfordshire Football Associations attitude towards the Community aspect for the use of Creasey Park Community Football Centre for awareness and comment.

234/24 - Community Services Budget Report

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to recommend that the Finance and General Purposes Committee adopt the draft budget proposals and fees and charges for the Community Services Department for 2025/26, as well as indicative budget changes for the following three years outlined within the report.

235/24 - Reports from Outside Bodies

South Beds Dial-a-Ride Management Committee - Cllr Peter Hollick
Councillor Hollick advised members that the next meeting is on 13 November, and he would report further at the next meeting

Dunstable Town Band - Cllr Robert Blennerhassett
No update

Men in Sheds - Cllr Richard Attwell
No update

236/24 - Exclusion of Public and Press

RECOMMENDED In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

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.

237/24 - Priory House - Confidential Report

The Head of Community Services Summarised the report to members. Members discussed all points within the report in detail.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that all recommendations within the report be adopted.

238/24 - Downside Community Centre - Confidential Report

The Youth and Community Manager summarised the report to members. Members discussed all points within the report in detail.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that all recommendations within the report be adopted.

239/24 - Date of the next meeting - Monday 6 January 2025 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 9:10 pm

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

HELD ON MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2024 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Richard Attwell (Chair), Philip Crawley (Vice Chair), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Mayor), Kenson Gurney, Matthew Brennan, Johnson Tamara and Matthew Neall.

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), James Slack (Corporate Performance & Compliance Manager), Katherine Doyle (Parks and Green Space Development Officer), Mary Dobbs (Cemetery Manager) and Dimitrisz Sopisz (Grounds Operations Manager)

Public: Nil

240/24 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Louise O'Riordan (Town Mayor), Trevor Adams and Mark Davis

241/24 - Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest

242/24 - Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public

243/24 - To agree the minutes of the meeting of 9 September 2024 as a true record

The Minutes of the meeting of Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 9 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

244/24 - To receive the minutes of the Meetings of Plans Sub-Committee meetings held on 9 September 2024 and 7 October 2024.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of the Plans Sub-Committee held on 9 September 2024 and 7 October 2024 be received.

245/24 - Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions

Councillor Kenson Gurney entered the chamber at 7:06 pm

Members received and noted the updates on actions from previous meetings.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided members with an update on the planters around the town; there has been an offer from Central Bedfordshire Council for Dunstable Town Council to carry on looking after the plants inside the planters along with other contracted works for 2 years with 3 a year extension. The Town Council is seeking clarity that includes an annual RPI increase.

246/24 - Bennetts Splash – Information Report

The Corporate Performance & Compliance Manager summarised the key points of the report to members.

The build-a-bear workshop held over the October half term was extremely successful with positive feedback provided by attendees. Another workshop will be held for the Christmas period.

A question was asked regarding parking restrictions around Bennetts Recreation Ground for certain times in the year. Members were advised that officers are speaking to CBC about the parking arrangements.

A further question was asked regarding progress of the grill to protect the extraction flue on the café which has been vandalised numerous times. It was confirmed that a bespoke design is currently being progressed with installation imminent.

247/24 - Grounds - Information Report

Members received the report circulated.

Councillor Crawley queried whether potential cost savings could be made on mowing less grass areas within our parks and recreation grounds or to lessen the frequency. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members that the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services was on leave so a full and accurate response could not be provided until his return.

Cemetery

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report.

Allotments

The Cemetery Manager summarised the report. The waiting list is reducing slowly which is positive.

Recreation Grounds – Play Areas

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report. There had fortunately been no vandalism since the last report.

Sports Pitches and General Grounds Maintenance

The Grounds Operations Manager updated members on the key parts of the report.

As of the first of November, the Frenches Avenue Footpath works were completed which has seen plenty of positive feedback from the community.

Town Centre and Town Rangers

The Grounds Operations Manager summarised the report.

A question was asked regarding what would happen if the planters were to get damaged. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised that this matter still belongs to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Green Space Projects

The Parks and Green Space Development Officer summarised the report.

Members were given an update on the Pergola project. Dunstable Town Council has received scheduled monument consent and in accordance with the consent, the Council has commissioned KDK archaeology to support the works of the pergola installation. Since writing the report the written scheme of investigation has been completed which has allowed officers to approach contractors for the installation of the Pergola.

Friends of Priory House and Gardens have since indicated they are willing to donate further funds above the £10,000 they originally committed to. Councillor Attwell requested thanks be passed on to the Friends of Priory House for their donation of extra funds.

Regarding the phone box project, the Council have heard back from local contractors for quotes. These have come in substantially over budget. Officers have since found and approached specialist restorers and are waiting on the quotes to come back.

Members asked whether the Pergola within Priory Gardens fell under the CCTV perimeter. Officers have advised that this is something which will be looked into and

reported back at the next meeting.

Action – Parks and Green Space Development Officer

248/24 - 40th Anniversary Report

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided a summary on the report provided to members.

Councillor Attwell requested for his sincere appreciation to be passed on to all who have worked so hard in making the very impressive savings to that originally stated.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to include the one-off allocation of £7,750 in the draft budget for 2025/26, to cover the costs of the grounds service 40th Anniversary projects, as detailed in the report.

249/24 - Salting and Gritting in Dunstable - Report to follow

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided members with a verbal update. It was advised that The Head of Grounds and Environmental services will be meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council to talk about the possibilities for Dunstable Town Council to do more with Salting and Gritting next winter.

250/24 - Grounds and Environmental Services Budget Report

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive provided a summary of the report.

Councillor Brennan asked if there could be more information provided on the value of the CCTV in Priory Gardens; is it working as a deterrent, i.e. how useful has it been / what benefit do the Council get from it. Councillor Attwell also asked about the use of CCTV to protect the Council's assets including the pergola in Priory Gardens.

Action – The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services and The Grounds Operations Manager

Councillor Tamara asked Officers if an estimate resale cost of vehicles the Council are going to buy next year could be provided to see whether it can be forecasted for some income to slightly reduce the ear-marked reserve for vehicle replacement.

Action – The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services and The Grounds Operations Manager

Councillor Crawley asked if it would be possible to purchase more perennial bedding plants than bedding plants to provide a saving over the next coming years.

Action – The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services and The Grounds Operations Manager

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to adopt the draft budget proposals and fees and charges for the Grounds and Environmental Services Department for 2025/26, as well as indicative budget changes for the following three years outlined within the report.

251/24 - Reports from Outside Organisations:

CBC Development Committee – Cllr Nicholas Kotarski

No Update

252/24 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 13 January 2025 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 8:36 PM

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE**

HELD ON MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2024 FROM 7:00 PM

Present: Councillors Louise O’Riordan (Town Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Town Mayor), Gregory Alderman (Chair), Nicholas Kotarski (Vice-Chair), Matthew Brennan, Philip Crawley, John Gurney, Michelle Henderson, Peter Hollick, Liz Jones, Johnson Tamara and Richard Attwell

In Attendance: Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager), Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services) and James Slack (Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager)

Public: Nil

265/24 - Apologies for Absence

Councillors Wendy Bater and Kenson Gurney

266/24 - Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jones declared an interest in agenda item 274/24 as a member of the Rotary Club

267/24 - Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public

268/24 - To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 16 September 2024

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 16 September 2024 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

269/24 - Action Tracker – to review progress of previously agreed actions

Members received and noted the Action Tracker

270/24 - Finance Report

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report to members and advised that the national pay award for the current financial year had been agreed at £1,290 or 2.5%, whichever is the higher, and this will be reflected in employees November pay.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the revenue budget position for the period from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.
- ii. To note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as of 31 October 2024
- iii. To note the outcome of the External Audit for financial year 2023/24
- iv. To note the current investments

271/24 - Corporate Services Budget Report 2025/26

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to adopt the draft budget proposals and fees and charges for the Corporate Services Department for 2025/26, as well as indicative budget changes for the following three years outlined within the report.

272/24 - Compliance and Facilities Report

The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager summarised the report to Members.

Councillor Jones expressed concern about the lack of heating within Grove House. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive updated members that the heating was due to be fixed on Thursday 21 November and officers have been given alternative working options within this time.

Councillor Brennan asked whether it could be possible for the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to become a standing item on committee agendas for each committee to review relevant KPIs. Officers agreed to schedule appropriate items.

ACTION: The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager

Councillor Crawley asked whether the corporate plan would be formally published. It was advised that this was planned already.

ACTION: The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager

Councillor Jones asked whether the KPIs poster provided within the report could be made public for residents to see. Officers undertook for this to be added to appropriate editions of Talk of the Town.

ACTION: The Corporate Compliance and Performance Manager

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve the updated Customer Charter as proposed.

273/24 - Marketing and Communications

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report provided to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to set up a Working Group to informally review and comment on the new website's design and use of branding. This Working Group to consist of Councillors Louise O'Riordan, Liz Jones, Johnson Tamara, John Gurney, Philip Crawley and Nicholas Kotarski.

274/24 - To consider the Town Council becoming a corporate member of Rotary Dunstable at a cost of £180 per year

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report.

Members discussed the invitation to become a corporate member of the Rotary Club.

Members asked officers to invite the Rotary Club to send a representative to address the Committee's next meeting to expand on the Club's work, and the benefits to the Council but also to the Club of the Council becoming a Corporate Member.

ACTION: Town Clerk and Chief Executive

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: to defer the decision to a later date

and to invite a member of the Rotary Club to address the next Committee.

275/24 - Reports from Outside Bodies

Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Attwell

Councillor Attwell attended the last trustees meeting on the 7th November, he reported that CA are looking at growth revenue for their budget to help increase the revenue as much as possible for the increase in use of their services.

CA is attended by 1000 clients each month with increasing numbers due to the cost of living crisis.

Dunstable International Town Twinning Association – Town Mayor and Councillors Hollick and Kenson Gurney

Councillor Hollick advised members that at the last meeting there has been an invitation from Portz to visit them. A party of 10 members have been formed to attend this visit.

Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Bater

Councillor Jones gave an update to members. A successful evening was held recently at Vantage restaurant to raise much needed funds. Grant applications are currently being applied for to help the future of the charity.

Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillors O’Riordan and Alderman

Councillor O’Riordan advised members the charity is in good financial health. The gardens will be getting a fence to prevent any falls.

Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillors Hollick and Alderman

Councillor Hollick advised that the funds have really transformed the school and the students’ attitudes.

Chew’s Foundation – Councillors Brennan and Kenson Gurney

No update

Poor’s Land Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones

Councillor Jones advised the next meeting will be in February next year.

Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones

Councillor Jones advised a discussion on the fence installed by the business who holds the lease on behalf of the Old Palace Lodge had taken place. Councillor Kenson Gurney has been asked as a trustee to raise this issue with Central Bedfordshire Council to ensure this fence complies with regulations.

Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive – Councillor Kotarski

Councillor Kotarski advised members that all is going well.

276/24 - Exclusion of Public and Press

RECOMMENDED In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items 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.

277/24 - Reference up from Personnel Sub-Committee

Members received and discussed a reference up from the Personnel Sub-Committee.

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. To accept the outcome of the Pay Review in full, to be applied from 1 April 2025.
- 1.2. To amend the Council's policy to stipulate that pay progression will be suspended during a capability process, and to give line managers discretion, in consultation with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, to allow staff who have performed exceptionally to progress by two salary points where this is possible.

278/24 - Date of the next meeting - Monday 20 January 2025 at 7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 9:10 PM

Full	159/24	24/06/2024	Market Charter	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	Town Clerk and Chief Executive + Head of CS	It was agreed at the September Committee to to 'continue to apply the Council's Market Rights Policy, and publish the summary documents provided in Appendices 1 and 2'	Complete
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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2024

DRAFT BUDGET SUMMARY 2025/26

Purpose of Report:	The purpose of this report is to present to members a draft revenue budget summary for the Council for 2025/26 for comment.
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1 ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 That the Council consider the draft revenue budget enclosed at appendices 1 and 2 with this report and agree adopting a balanced budget as proposed at the meeting of the Council on 3 February 2025.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council's finances have changed considerably over recent years as the Council has grown and developed new services and taken on additional responsibilities. Over the past ten years the Council's gross expenditure budget has increased by over 40%. This increase has been mainly driven by increased income generated from trading activities and expansion of the services the Council offers.
- 2.2 During this phase of growth, the Council has had to identify year on year cost efficiency savings whilst maintaining a focus on 'growing the core business' resulting in continued added value to the Dunstable council taxpayer.
- 2.3 An illustration of the last 6 year's council tax and precept rises is shown below, along with the proposed precept for 2025/26:

Year	Band D Council Tax Charge (£)	Precept (£)
2019/20	179.32 (2.35% increase)	2,297,506
2020/21	£181.11 (1% increase)	2,369,323
2021/22	£182.02 (0.5% increase)	2,393,969
2022/23	£187.66 (3.1% increase)	2,480,490
2023/24	£209.49 (11.63% increase)	2,791,245
2024/25	£219.93 (4.99% increase)	2,933,469
Proposed 2025/26	£255.01 (15.95% increase)	3,400,622

- 2.4 The majority of properties in Dunstable are not band D. The highest number fall within Band C and as a result, most households in Dunstable pay less than the Band D charge shown above.
- 2.5 The draft budget for 2025/26 is submitted as an appendix to this report.

3 REVENUE BUDGET SETTING PROCESS AND EXPLANATION OF DETAIL

- 3.1 Every year the Council's managers and officers prepare their service areas budgets with the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), where all growth, savings, needs and requirements as well as income generating initiatives are explored. The Senior Management Team then hold a full day's budget setting exercise where the Managers attend throughout the day, which results in the preparation of the initial draft budget. This year the budget-setting day was held in early October in order to prepare a draft budget for consideration at the November cycle of Committees and then with this Council meeting.
- 3.2 Having to do this inevitably means that whilst a full outturn of financial figures from 2023/24 is available only a half-year outturn is available for 2024/25. As a result, there is always an element of 'educated forecasting' that is required to establish budget proposals for the following year and therefore budget setting is never an exact science.
- 3.3 The draft forecast summary submitted in the appendices has been based on providing all the usual services, the agreed 40th Anniversary activities as well as the impact of the ongoing works at Priory House and the loss of Creasey Park Community Football Centre. Also included is the staff pay review as well as the recently announced National Insurance increase which comes into effect on 1 April 2025.
- 3.4 In addition to the normal exercise undertaken by the Senior Management Team, the Finance and General Purposes Chair and Vice-Chair, Councillors Gregory Alderman and Nicholas Kotarski, have met with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Services and RFO throughout the past few weeks, looking at each line of the budget and discussing the full process. A number of questions and queries were submitted and responded to on the budget proposals detail.
- 3.5 Every line of the revenue budget is challenged in this process and as this Council relies more and more on revenue gained from non-council tax sources; i.e. income gained from various services, this challenge focuses not only on expenditure efficiency but also on achieving greater levels of trading income.
- 3.6 Members will note that many of the changes illustrated at appendix 1 reflect a fine tuning exercise in budget savings and growth and many of the main increases to the revenue budget are for reasons beyond direct control such as staff cost increases, waste costs, H&S issues and member requests, etc.
- 3.7 Significant budget growth and savings are highlighted below:

Growth

- **Grove House maintenance - £20,000** – known building works required
- **Loss of Creasey Park Service Charge - £10,359** – budget set in 2024/25 based on ongoing management of CPCFC
- **Grove House lettings - £10,500** – Loss of tenant rent (£12,500) less additional forecast room hire (£2,000)
- **Insurance Premium - £10,203** – current policy cost plus inflationary increase
- **Creasey Depot - £10,470** – rent/lease of depot and associated costs
- **Vehicle Reserve - £60,000** – 10-year replacement programme
- **40th Anniversary - £37,750** – 40th Anniversary events/initiatives

- **Bennett's Community Hub - £31,434** – cost of all year opening (including extra staffing)
- **Downside Community Centre - £24,000** – Roof repair works
- **Priory House Reserve - £120,000** – future rebuild/fittings on reopening

Savings

- **Utilities - £30,338** – New contract negotiated on the gas and electricity supply
- **Interest receivable - £30,000** – Investment/bank interest forecast increase
- **Burial Fees - £20,000** – interment fees price increase/forecast
- **Loan - £8,215** – existing loan end of term
- **Bennett's Community Hub - £22,550** – out of splash season sales and lettings/hire forecast
- **HSHAZ - £13,688** – project end

- 3.8 In summary the draft budget shown at appendix 1 shows identified a budget growth of **£274,552** along with the historic shortfall of **£192,631** giving an overall projected deficit figure of **£467,153**.
- 3.9 Central Bedfordshire Council recently provided the Council Tax Base for 2025/26 and, unlike previous years where there was a consistent increase, The Tax Base has reduced from 13,338 to 13,335 resulting in a 0.02% decrease, or 5 pence per band D property.
- 3.10 The deficit, together with the tax base, results in a required budget of £3,400,622. This is made up of £4,088,419 expenditure and £687,797 income. This would result in the annual Council Tax charge on a Band D property of £255.01.
- 3.11 Members are provided with a breakdown of Income and Expenditure against the draft budget at Appendix 2 of this report.
- 3.12 The draft budget also includes the negative impact due to the loss of Creasey Park Community Football Centre in March 2024, as the current year's budget was set based on continued trading. The main impact is growth on the Grounds recreation ground budget for the cost of leasing the depot based in the grounds of Creasey Park, and associated costs; utilities, rates etc. there is also a growth on the corporate budget for loss of service charges set.
- 3.13 At the time of preparing this report, the cost of living pay award had only just been received for the 2024/25 with no indication of the increase for 2025/26. Due to this, Officers are only able to estimate the increase which will be nationally and have therefore based this on the current year's increase at the flat rate of £1,290 per full time employee or 2.5%, whichever is greater. Any increase over and above this would have a knock-on effect to what is being proposed for next year. This figure will not be known until well into 2025.
- 3.14 The figures proposed for Priory House have been calculated based on only the shop trading for the full year with a small offering of catering and workshops to be planned. A portion of the saving, mainly on reduced staffing, has been allocated to the Priory House building maintenance reserve to provide the Council opportunity to ensure the building is able to open in 2026 being fully furnished and with a full exhibition space.

- 3.15 As reported to Finance and General Purposes Committee on 18 November, there is a revenue underspend forecast at the end of the current financial year of £203,835, which takes account of the National Pay Award for 2024/25 agreed on 23 October 2024, resulting in a saving on the budgeted salaries for the current financial year, along with a substantially greater income achieved from interest on the Council's reserves than was budgeted as well as the savings from the Priory House budget during the repair works.
- 3.16 Members will recall that the in-year underspend from Priory House has been ringfenced to the general reserve, which is currently under the recommended minimum of 25% of the annual salary costs. For 2024/25 this should be £522,205. The general reserve is currently £419,830 resulting in a shortfall of £102,375. For 2025/26, 25% of the annual salary costs total £586,135, which leaves a shortfall total of £166,305. The current year's forecast underspend would therefore meet this shortfall, leaving a surplus of £37,530. Members will need to be mindful that the forecasted underspend reported is based on known commitments, and any unknown or unforeseen costs could affect the year-end balance.
- 3.17 Members should note that the proposed budget is only draft at this stage and there may be forthcoming unforeseen budget pressures between now and February when the final Council revenue budget is agreed for 2025/26.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed budget would ensure the Council continues to provide the current level of service while maintaining good governance and treasury management. The provision of indicative budget changes for the following three years enables Members to ensure that plans are in place to maintain sufficient reserves to sustain the Council's current assets.

5 POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposed draft budget continues to support the Council's Corporate Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2024-27.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposed draft budget makes a revenue contribution to the Council's approach to managing health and safety requirements.

7 HUMAN RESOURCE, EQUALITIES AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are none arising directly from this report. The budget includes the previously approved pay review taking effect from 1 April 2025.

8 APPENDICES

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Budget 2025/26
Appendix 2 – Draft Budget Summary including Income and Expenditure 2025/26

9 AUTHOR

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CORPORATE SERVICES

APPENDIX 1

		<u>STAFF COSTS - 100</u>					
Cost Centre	Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
		Expenditure:					
100	4001	Salaries	-505,964	-544,549	-560,885	-577,712	-595,043
			-505,964	-544,549	-560,885	-577,712	-595,043

		<u>CENTRAL SERVICES - 101</u>					
Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29	
		Income:					
101	1003	INC - Service charges	10,359	0	0	0	0
			10,359	0	0	0	0
		Expenditure:					
101	4007	Staff Training	-22,500	-22,500	-23,000	-23,500	-24,000
101	4010	Payroll Services	-5,350	-6,994	-7,344	-7,711	-8,096
101	4021	Telephones / Data Links	-7,200	-16,650	-17,150	-17,664	-18,194
101	4022	Postage	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000
101	4023	Stationery	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
101	4025	Subscriptions/Publications	-6,000	-7,500	-7,875	-8,269	-8,682
101	4037	Equipment Maintenance / Software	-39,370	-46,870	-48,276	-49,724	-51,216
101	4039	Equipment Hire (Photocopier rental)	-7,000	-6,400	-6,400	0	0
101	4058	Professional Services	-20,500	-20,500	-21,525	-22,601	-23,731
			-111,920	-131,414	-135,569	-133,469	-137,920
		Total Net Expenditure:	-101,561	-131,414	-135,569	-133,469	-137,920

		<u>GROVE HOUSE - 102</u>					
Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29	
		Income:					
102	1001	Lettings/Facility Hire	500	2,500	3,500	5,000	6,000
102	1002	Rents and Rates (Tenants)	37,572	25,072	26,326	27,642	29,024
			38,072	27,572	29,826	32,642	35,024
		Expenditure:					
102	4011	Rates	-14,100	-16,100	-16,422	-16,750	-17,085
102	4012	Water	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000
102	4014	Electricity	-15,400	-9,000	-9,000	-9,000	-9,000
102	4015	Gas	-16,188	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000
102	4016	Cleaning	-11,130	-11,464	-11,808	-12,162	-12,527
102	4017	Waste disposal	-950	-979	-1,008	-1,039	-1,070
	4018	Security	0	-200	-200	-200	-200
102	4021	Telephones/data links	-300	0	0	0	0
102	4036	Building Maintenance Contracts	-2,870	-3,708	-3,819	-3,934	-4,052
102	4038	Repairs and Maintenance	-7,000	-7,000	-7,210	-7,426	-7,649
102	4040	Equipment/Materials/Tools	-3,750	-3,863	-3,979	-4,098	-4,221
			-72,688	-63,314	-64,446	-65,610	-66,804
		Total Net Expenditure:	-34,616	-35,742	-34,621	-32,968	-31,780

CORPORATE SERVICES

		<u>CORPORATE MANAGEMENT - 106</u>				
Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
		Income:				

106	1096	Investment/Bank Interest	71,000	101,000	101,000	101,000	101,000
106	1099	Beds FA Buildings and ATP Insurance + recharges	6,150	6,150	6,335	6,525	6,720
			<u>77,150</u>	<u>107,150</u>	<u>107,335</u>	<u>107,525</u>	<u>107,720</u>
		Expenditure:					
106	4003	Pension/HR Related Costs	-7,920	-7,920	-7,920	-7,920	-7,920
106	4006	Health & Safety	-10,000	-10,300	-10,609	-10,927	-11,255
106	4019	DBS Checks	-500	-550	-550	-550	-550
106	4021	Telephone	-2,175	0	0	0	0
106	4026	Insurance	-61,500	-71,703	-73,854	-76,070	-78,352
106	4030	Advertising - Recruitment	-2,000	0	0	0	0
106	4032	Publicity / Marketing	-5,500	-5,500	-5,500	-5,500	-5,500
106	4033	Newsletter	-35,000	-36,050	-37,132	-38,245	-39,393
106	4034	Website	-6,500	-4,500	-4,500	-4,500	-4,500
106	4056	Audit Fees - External	-3,440	-3,543	-3,649	-3,759	-3,872
106	4057	Audit Fees - Internal	-2,450	-2,524	-2,599	-2,677	-2,757
106	4061	Annual Report	-2,250	-1,250	-1,250	-1,250	-1,250
		HR Related Costs - (inc Uniform workwear)	-3,500	-3,605	-3,713	-3,825	-3,939
106	4063	Uniform	-3,000	-3,090	-3,183	-3,278	-3,377
106	4096	Bank Charges	-4,500	-2,500	-2,750	-3,000	-3,250
			<u>-150,235</u>	<u>-153,035</u>	<u>-157,209</u>	<u>-161,501</u>	<u>-165,915</u>
		Total Net Expenditure:	<u>-73,085</u>	<u>-45,885</u>	<u>-49,875</u>	<u>-53,977</u>	<u>-58,194</u>

DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION - 107

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	Expenditure:					
107	4007	Member Training	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000
107	4024	Printing Costs (Civic Events)	-1,250	-1,250	-1,250	-1,250
107	4025	Subscriptions	-2,250	-2,300	-2,369	-2,440
107	4501	Mayoral Transport	-3,500	-3,500	-3,500	-3,500
107	4502	Mayoral Allowance	-4,500	-4,500	-4,500	-4,500
107	4503	Civic Hospitality	-8,600	-8,600	-8,858	-9,124
107	4504	Civic Regalia	-500	-500	-500	-500
107	4515	Remembrance Services	-3,000	-3,090	-3,183	-3,278
			<u>-24,600</u>	<u>-24,740</u>	<u>-25,160</u>	<u>-25,592</u>
			<u>-24,600</u>	<u>-24,740</u>	<u>-25,160</u>	<u>-25,592</u>

CAPITAL AND PROJECTS - 110

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	Expenditure:					
110	4051	Loan Interest Payable (Grove House)	-12,015	-10,932	-9,849	-8,766
110	4052	Loan Capital Repaid (Grove House)	-23,567	-23,567	-23,567	-23,567
110	4721	Cont. to Reserves (IT)	-20,000	-20,000	-20,000	-25,000
110	4723	Cont. to Election Reserve	0	0	-20,000	-30,000
110	4724	Cont. to Reserve (Building Maint)	-49,000	-69,000	-69,000	-69,000
110	4730	Cont. to Town Twinning Reserve	0	0	0	0
110	4936	Cont. To Personnel Reserve	0	0	-1,000	-1,000
110	4949	Cont. to Website Development	0	-900	-900	-900
			<u>-104,582</u>	<u>-124,399</u>	<u>-144,316</u>	<u>-158,233</u>
			<u>-104,582</u>	<u>-124,399</u>	<u>-144,316</u>	<u>-158,233</u>

CORPORATE SERVICES **-844,408** **-906,729** **-950,426** **-981,951** **-1,016,125**

GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

STAFF AND VEHICLE COSTS - 200

Budget Proposed Proposed Proposed Proposed

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	
Expenditure:							
200	4001	Grounds Staff	-848,515	-950,318	-978,828	-1,008,192	-1,038,438
200	4005	Grounds Staff Overtime	-12,600	-13,600	-14,008	-14,428	-14,861
200	4045	Vehicle Fuel	-21,000	-22,050	-23,153	-24,310	-25,526
200	4145	Vehicle Maintenance Costs	-24,178	-24,890	-25,637	-26,406	-27,198
			-906,293	-1,010,858	-1,041,625	-1,073,337	-1,106,023

ALLOTMENTS - 201

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29	
Income:							
201	1002	Rent Receivable	10,000	11,150	11,485	11,829	12,184
201	1091	Misc Income	500	500	500	500	500
201	1099	INC - Recharges etc	4,550	3,000	3,090	3,183	3,278
			15,050	14,650	15,075	15,512	15,962
Expenditure:							
201	4012	Water	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000
201	4014	Electricity	-4,550	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
201	4017	Waste Disposal	-1,575	-1,622	-1,671	-1,721	-1,773
201	4038	Repairs and Maintenance	-2,000	-2,060	-2,122	-2,185	-2,251
201	4041	Tree Maintenance	-500	-550	-1,650	-4,950	-14,850
			-12,625	-11,232	-12,443	-15,856	-25,874
Total Net Expenditure:			2,425	3,418	2,632	-345	-9,912

CEMETERY - 202

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29	
Income:							
202	1021	Burial Fees	155,000	175,000	180,250	185,658	191,227
202	1022	Book of Remembrance	1,200	600	600	600	600
202	1023	Memorials	54,450	54,450	56,084	57,766	59,499
202	1027	Kerb Blocks	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
202	1028	Sanctums	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
			214,150	233,550	240,434	247,524	254,826
Expenditure:							
202	4001	Staff Costs	-86,150	-96,865	-99,771	-102,764	-105,847
202	4011	Rates	-9,100	-9,100	-9,282	-9,468	-9,657
202	4012	Water	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000
202	4014	Electricity	-10,100	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000
202	4015	Gas	-3,125	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200	-2,200
202	4016	Cleaning	-6,300	-6,489	-6,684	-6,884	-7,091
202	4017	Waste Disposal	-8,610	-8,868	-9,134	-9,408	-9,691
202	4018	Security	-3,550	-3,550	-3,657	-3,766	-3,879
202	4021	Telephones/data links	-2,515	0	0	0	0
202	4023	Stationery	-400	-600	-600	-600	-600
202	4036	Building Maintenance Contracts	-1,600	-3,000	-3,090	-3,183	-3,278
202	4037	IT Licences and Support	-4,770	-5,520	-5,520	-5,520	-5,520
202	4038	Repairs and Maintenance	-8,000	-8,240	-8,487	-8,742	-9,004
202	4040	Equipment/Materials/Tools	-7,000	-7,210	-7,426	-7,649	-7,879
202	4041	Tree Planting/Surgery	-1,500	-1,650	-1,700	-1,750	-1,803
202	4047	Green Flag	-350	-400	-400	-400	-400
202	4127	Kerb Blocks	-500	-500	-500	-500	-500
202	4128	Sanctums	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500
202	4201	Book of Remembrance	-800	-400	-400	-400	-400
202	4743	New Cemetery Development	0	0	-100,000	-120,000	-150,000
			-159,870	-165,092	-269,350	-293,735	-328,248
Total Net Expenditure:			54,280	68,458	-28,917	-46,211	-73,422

GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

RECREATION GROUNDS - 205

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Income:						
205	1009	6,700	7,500	7,725	7,957	8,195
205	1024	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
		<u>9,100</u>	<u>9,900</u>	<u>10,125</u>	<u>10,357</u>	<u>10,595</u>
Expenditure:						
205	4011	-1,200	-4,110	-4,233	-4,360	-4,491
205	4012	-1,000	-3,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
205	4013	-11,440	-17,000	-17,000	-17,000	-17,000
205	4014	-11,800	-11,800	-11,800	-11,800	-11,800
205	4016	-1,710	-2,000	-2,060	-2,122	-2,185
205	4017	-9,240	-9,517	-9,803	-10,097	-10,400
205	4018	-7,650	-10,440	-10,753	-11,076	-11,408
205	4021	-2,000	0	0	0	0
205	4036	-750	-2,750	-2,833	-2,917	-3,005
205	4038	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000
205	4040	-9,000	-5,760	-5,933	-6,111	-6,294
205	4041	-1,500	-1,650	-1,700	-1,750	-1,803
205	4046	-19,000	-19,000	-19,570	-20,157	-20,762
205	4047	-375	-400	-400	-400	-400
205	4834	8,000	8,000	8,000	6,000	0
		<u>-83,665</u>	<u>-94,427</u>	<u>-92,084</u>	<u>-95,791</u>	<u>-103,548</u>
Total Net Expenditure:		-74,565	-84,527	-81,959	-85,434	-92,953

TOWN CENTRE AND GARDENS - 403

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Income:						
403	1009	2,720	2,500	2,575	2,652	2,732
403	1051	36,900	38,007	39,147	40,322	41,531
		<u>39,620</u>	<u>40,507</u>	<u>41,722</u>	<u>42,974</u>	<u>44,263</u>
Expenditure:						
403	4012	-800	-800	-800	-800	-800
403	4014	-10,800	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000
403	4016	-1,260	-1,500	-1,545	-1,591	-1,639
403	4017	-9,135	-9,135	-9,409	-9,691	-9,982
403	4021	-2,000	0	0	0	0
403	4036	-7,520	-7,746	-7,978	-8,217	-8,464
403	4038	-4,000	-4,120	-4,244	-4,371	-4,502
403	4040	-2,000	-2,060	-2,122	-2,185	-2,251
403	4041	-1,500	-1,650	-1,700	-1,750	-1,803
403	4043	-27,000	-34,750	-34,750	-34,750	-34,750
403	4047	-800	-800	-800	-800	-800
403	4075	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
403	4540	-2,000	-2,060	-2,122	-2,185	-2,251
		<u>-71,815</u>	<u>-72,621</u>	<u>-73,469</u>	<u>-74,342</u>	<u>-75,242</u>
Total Net Expenditure:		-32,195	-32,114	-31,747	-31,368	-30,979

TOWN RANGER SERVICE - 206

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Income:						

206	1024	Maintenance / Contracts	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
			<u>6,000</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>6,000</u>
		Expenditure:					
206	4017	Waste Disposal	-1,260	-1,298	-1,337	-1,377	-1,418
206	4021	Telephones/data links	-1,000	0	0	0	0
206	4036	Maintenance Contracts	-600	-618	-637	-656	-675
		Repairs and Maintenance (inc Town Centre)	-4,400	-4,532	-4,668	-4,808	-4,952
206	4040	Tools and Equipment	-3,000	-3,090	-3,183	-3,278	-3,377
206	4045	Vehicle Fuel	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000
206	4145	Vehicle Maintenance Costs	-4,500	-6,500	-6,500	-6,500	-6,500
			<u>-18,760</u>	<u>-20,038</u>	<u>-20,324</u>	<u>-20,619</u>	<u>-20,922</u>
		Total Net Expenditure:	<u>-12,760</u>	<u>-14,038</u>	<u>-14,324</u>	<u>-14,619</u>	<u>-14,922</u>

GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

BENNETT MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND SPLASH PARK - 115

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	
	Income:						
115	1001	Lettings/Facility Hire	450	4,500	4,635	4,774	4,917
115	1032	Catering	37,000	55,500	57,165	58,880	60,646
115	1092	Concession	5,000	5,000	5,150	5,305	5,464
			<u>42,450</u>	<u>65,000</u>	<u>66,950</u>	<u>68,959</u>	<u>71,027</u>
	Expenditure:						
115	4001	Staff costs	-12,707	-44,412	-45,744	-47,117	-48,530
115	4002	Wages	-19,962	-37,874	-39,010	-40,181	-41,386
115	4011	Rates	-2,670	-2,670	-2,750	-2,833	-2,918
115	4012	Utilities-Water	-1,250	-1,250	-1,250	-1,250	-1,250
115	4014	Utilities-Electricity	-11,150	-6,300	-6,300	-6,300	-6,300
115	4016	Cleaning	-2,500	-2,575	-2,652	-2,732	-2,814
115	4017	Waste Disposal	-2,310	-3,000	-3,090	-3,183	-3,278
115	4021	Telephones/data links	-500	0	0	0	0
115	4027	Licences	-220	-220	0	0	0
115	4032	Publicity/Marketing	-300	-300	-300	-300	-300
115	4036	Maintenance Contracts	-8,400	-8,652	-8,912	-9,179	-9,454
115	4038	Repairs and Maintenance	-500	-1,500	-1,545	-1,591	-1,639
115	4040	Equipment/Materials/Tools	-500	-1,000	-1,030	-1,061	-1,093
115	4059	Catering Expenses	-2,600	-2,600	-2,678	-2,758	-2,841
115	4060	Catering stock	-14,800	-22,000	-22,660	-23,340	-24,040
			<u>-80,369</u>	<u>-134,353</u>	<u>-137,921</u>	<u>-141,824</u>	<u>-145,843</u>
	Total Net Expenditure:		<u>-37,919</u>	<u>-69,353</u>	<u>-70,971</u>	<u>-72,865</u>	<u>-74,816</u>

CAPITAL AND PROJECTS - 210

Nominal Code	Nominal Description	Budget	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	
	Expenditure:						
210	4051	Loan Interest Payable	-11,205	-10,098	-9,285	-8,473	-7,708
210	4052	Loan Capital Repaid	-23,170	-16,062	-16,062	-15,531	-15,000
210	4712	Cont. to Vehicles Reserve	-15,000	-75,000	-45,000	-47,000	-55,000
210	4719	Cont. to Cem Memorial Safety	-1,575	-1,655	-1,656	-1,739	-1,826
210	4728	Cont. to Priory Churchyard	0	0	-5,000	-10,000	-12,000
210	4731	Cont. to Tree Reserve	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000
210	4732	Cont. to Open Spaces Improvement Plan Tfr to Pavilions Building Maintenance	-30,000	-30,000	-30,900	-31,827	-32,782
210	4734	Res	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000	-15,000
210	4738	Cont. to Allotment Reserve	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000
210	4741	Cont. to Splash/Skate/BMX	-12,000	-12,000	-12,360	-12,731	-13,113
210	4743	Cont. to Cemetery Building	-5,000	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000	-10,000

210	4744	Cont. to Fencing Renewal	-7,000	-7,000	-7,000	-7,000	-7,000
			-139,950	-196,815	-172,263	-179,301	-189,428

GROUPS & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES **-1,146,977** **-1,335,829** **-1,439,174** **-1,503,479** **-1,592,454**

COMMUNITY SERVICES

STAFF COSTS - 300

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
	Expenditure					
300	4001	-335,990	-351,165	-361,700	-372,551	-383,727
300	4000	0	-81,722	0	0	0
		-335,990	-432,887	-361,700	-372,551	-383,727
	Income:					
300	1071	25,172	81,722	0	0	0
		25,172	81,722	0	0	0
	Total Net Expenditure	-310,818	-351,165	-361,700	-372,551	-383,727

OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY CARE SERVICE - 209

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
	Income					
209	1004	1,560	1,640	1,640	1,640	1,640
209	1006	9,156	9,156	9,156	9,156	9,156
209	1007	16,650	14,000	14,000	14,000	14,000
209	4834	1,200	0	0	0	0
		28,566	24,796	24,796	24,796	24,796
	Expenditure					
209	4001	-24,881	-28,064	-28,906	-29,773	-30,666
209	4021	-900	0	0	0	0
209	4064	-5,525	-5,525	-5,525	-5,525	-5,525
209	4065	-9,900	-11,000	-11,000	-11,000	-11,000
209	4066	-4,200	-4,200	-4,200	-4,200	-4,200
209	4313	-11,000	-7,500	-7,725	-7,957	-8,195
		-56,406	-56,289	-57,356	-58,455	-59,587
	Total Net Expenditure	-27,840	-31,493	-32,560	-33,659	-34,791

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - 303

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
	Income					
303	1001	8,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000
303	1004	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200
		10,200	9,200	9,200	9,200	9,200
	Expenditure					
303	4032	-300	-300	-300	-300	-300
303	4040	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000
303	4066	-18,507	-28,507	-18,507	-18,507	-18,507
303	4067	-8,100	-8,100	-8,100	-8,100	-8,100
303	4321	-13,500	-13,500	-13,500	-13,500	-13,500
		-41,407	-51,407	-41,407	-41,407	-41,407
	Total Net Expenditure	-31,207	-42,207	-32,207	-32,207	-32,207

COMMUNITY SERVICES

GROVE CORNER - 304 (and outreach work)

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
Income						
304	1001	10,000	11,000	11,330	11,670	12,020
304	1032	750	750	750	750	750
		10,750	11,750	12,080	12,420	12,770
Expenditure						
304	4001	-8,679	-9,549	-9,835	-10,131	-10,434
304	4002	0	-4,000	-4,120	-4,244	-4,371
304	4011	-2,350	-2,510	-2,585	-2,663	-2,743
304	4012	-1,000	-1,200	-1,200	-1,200	-1,200
304	4014	-4,500	-2,500	-2,500	-2,500	-2,500
304	4015	-3,125	-3,125	-3,125	-3,125	-3,125
304	4016	-600	-618	-637	-656	-675
304	4021	-2,150	0	0	0	0
304	4027	-400	-500	-500	-500	-500
304	4032	-300	-400	-400	-400	-400
304	4036	-2,900	-2,987	-3,077	-3,169	-3,264
304	4038	-1,386	-1,428	-1,470	-1,515	-1,560
304	4040	-950	-979	-1,008	-1,038	-1,069
304	4060	-750	-750	-750	-750	-750
304	4066	-2,000	-2,000	-2,000	-2,000	-2,000
		-31,090	-32,545	-33,207	-33,889	-34,592
Total Net Expenditure		-20,340	-20,795	-21,127	-21,469	-21,822

EVENTS PROGRAMME - 401

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
Income						
401	1092	12,500	13,000	13,390	13,792	14,205
		12,500	13,000	13,390	13,792	14,205
Expenditure						
401	4001	-45,488	-48,392	-49,844	-51,339	-52,879
401	4002	-4,053	-4,147	-4,271	-4,400	-4,532
401	4014	-2,750	-2,750	-2,750	-2,750	-2,750
Events infrastructure (waste management, etc)						
401	4017	-16,500	-18,150	-18,695	-19,255	-19,833
401	4021	-640	0	0	0	0
401	4032	-6,000	-6,000	-6,000	-6,000	-6,000
401	4035	-10,395	-10,915	-11,242	-11,580	-11,927
401	4036	-200	-300	-309	-318	-328
401	4040	-1,000	-1,030	-1,061	-1,093	-1,126
401	4055	-6,794	-7,134	-7,348	-7,568	-7,796
401	4511	-4,620	-4,851	-4,997	-5,146	-5,301
401	4512	-15,593	-25,593	-26,361	-27,152	-27,966
401	4514	-9,240	-12,202	-12,568	-12,945	-13,333
401	4518	-3,465	-3,465	-3,569	-3,676	-3,786
401	4522	-10,395	-10,915	-11,242	-11,580	-11,927
401	4523	-11,550	-12,128	-12,492	-12,867	-13,253
401	4524	-13,860	-14,553	-14,990	-15,439	-15,902
401	4525	-2,888	-3,032	-3,123	-3,217	-3,313
401	4525	-10,000	-30,000	-20,000	-20,000	-20,000
		-175,431	-215,557	-210,861	-216,325	-221,952
Total Net Expenditure		-162,931	-202,557	-197,471	-202,533	-207,746

COMMUNITY SERVICES

PRIORY HOUSE - 402

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29	
Income							
402	1001	Letting/Facility Hire	-249,741	-72,305	-214,283	-294,282	-303,111
402	1004	INC - Activities	-30,658	-6,802	-7,006	-7,216	-7,433
402	1030	Shop Sales	6,000	0	4,500	6,000	6,000
402	1032	Tea Rooms Sales	500	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
			-273,899	-77,907	-215,589	-294,299	-303,344
Expenditure							
402	4001	Staff Costs	17,000	20,000	20,600	21,218	21,855
402	4005	Overtime/Additional hours	135,000	8,000	101,250	135,000	135,000
402	4011	Rates	-22,700	-7,200	-23,000	-23,690	-24,401
402	4012	Utilities-Water	-2,500	-2,500	-2,500	-2,500	-2,500
402	4014	Utilities-Electricity	-27,500	-17,000	-17,000	-17,000	-17,000
402	4015	Utilities-Gas	-8,675	-5,500	-5,500	-5,500	-5,500
402	4016	Cleaning	-15,500	-600	-16,275	-16,763	-17,266
402	4017	Waste Disposal	-2,300	-2,300	-2,369	-2,440	-2,513
402	4020	Sundries and Office Costs	-2,000	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	-1,500
402	4021	Telephones/data links	-2,400	0	0	0	0
402	4027	Licences	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
402	4032	Marketing	-7,500	-1,000	-7,500	-7,500	-7,500
402	4036	Maintenance Contracts	-14,200	-10,000	-14,200	-14,626	-15,065
402	4038	Repairs and Maintenance	-7,500	-5,000	-7,500	-7,725	-7,957
402	4039	Equipment Hire	-3,300	-4,700	-4,700	-4,700	-4,700
402	4040	Equipment/Materials/Tools	-3,500	-1,500	-3,500	-3,605	-3,713
402	4059	Kitchen/Catering Expenses	-8,500	-2,000	-6,375	-8,500	-8,500
402	4060	Catering Stock	-65,000	-8,000	-48,750	-65,000	-65,000
402	4601	Shop Retail Stock	-7,800	-9,000	-9,000	-9,000	-9,000
402	4611	Education/Events	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000
			-55,875	-56,800	-54,819	-40,831	-42,260
Total Net Expenditure			-329,774	-134,707	-270,408	-335,130	-345,604

TOWN CENTRE SERVICES - 405

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29	
Income							
405	1011	Hire of stalls and pitches	13,800	12,000	12,360	12,731	13,113
405	1093	INC - Advertising/Sponsorship	0	800	800	800	800
405	1094	INC - Licences	0	1,000	1,030	1,061	1,093
			13,800	13,800	14,190	14,592	15,005
Expenditure							
405	4001	Staff Costs	-68,914	-73,072	-75,264	-77,522	-79,848
405	4002	Staff Costs - Themed Markets Portering	-4,202	-4,458	-4,592	-4,729	-4,871
405	4021	Telephone/data links	-370	0	0	0	0
405	4032	Town Centre Marketing & Initiatives	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000
405	4040	Equipment/Materials/Tools	-5,220	-5,220	-5,220	-5,220	-5,220
405	4066	Town centre events	-30,000	-30,000	-30,900	-31,827	-32,782
405	4520	Christmas Lights and Decorations	-19,000	-19,000	-19,000	-19,000	-19,000
405	4602	Pop Up Shop	-12,000	0	0	0	0
405	4715	Street Dressing	-5,000	-6,800	-6,800	-6,800	-6,800
			-145,706	-139,550	-142,776	-146,099	-149,521
Total Net Expenditure			-131,906	-125,750	-128,586	-131,507	-134,515

HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (HSHAZ) - 306

Nominal Code		Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
Total Net Expenditure		-13,688	0	0	0	0

COMMUNITY SERVICES

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES (Ashton Square) - 407

Nominal Code	Expenditure	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
407 4016	Cleaning	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
407 4036	Maintenance Contracts	-775	-1,575	-1,575	-1,575	-1,575
407 4038	Repairs and Maintenance	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
	Total Net Expenditure	-6,775	-7,575	-7,575	-7,575	-7,575

CAPITAL AND PROJECTS - 310

Nominal Code	Expenditure	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
310 4051	Loan Charges (Priory House)	-21,287	-19,666	-18,045	-16,423	-14,801
310 4052	Loan Capital Repaid (Priory House)	-31,792	-31,792	-31,792	-31,792	-31,792
310 4714	Contribution to Reserve (Christmas Lights)	-7,000	-7,000	-7,000	-7,000	-7,000
310 4716	Contribution to Reserve (Downside Building Maint)	-3,000	-27,000	-5,000	-5,000	-5,000
310 4717	Contribution to Reserve (Grove Corner)	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000	-4,000
310 4720	Cont to Tea Rooms Equipment Reserve	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000	-3,000
310 4733	Contribution to Reserve (PH Building)	-29,357	-149,357	-50,000	-51,500	-60,000
	Total Net Expenditure	-99,436	-241,815	-118,837	-118,715	-125,593

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Precept	-2,933,469	-3,400,622	-3,560,071	-3,740,775	-3,902,160
Reserves used	-192,631				
TOTAL BUDGET / PRECEPT REQUIRED	-3,126,100	-3,400,622	-3,560,071	-3,740,775	-3,902,160
Budget Increase		-274,522	-159,449	-180,704	-161,385
TOTAL PRECEPT INCREASE		-467,153	-159,449	-180,704	-161,385
		15.92%	4.69%	5.08%	4.31%
Band D Council Tax	-219.93	-255.01			
Tax Base	13338	13335			

CORPORATE SERVICES

APPENDIX 2

Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
Staff Costs	-505,964	-544,549	-560,885	-577,712	-595,043
Central Services	-101,561	-131,414	-135,569	-133,469	-137,920
Grove House	-34,616	-35,742	-34,621	-32,968	-31,780
Corporate Management	-73,085	-45,885	-49,875	-53,977	-58,194
Democratic Management	-24,600	-24,740	-25,160	-25,592	-26,037
Capital and Projects	-104,582	-124,399	-144,316	-158,233	-167,150
	-844,408	-906,729	-950,426	-981,951	-1,016,125

Proposed 2025/26 breakdown:		
Income	Expenditure	Total
0	-544,549	-544,549
0	-131,414	-131,414
27,572	-63,314	-35,742
107,150	-153,035	-45,885
0	-24,740	-24,740
0	-124,399	-124,399
134,722	-1,041,451	-906,729

GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Description	Budget 2024/25	Forecast 2025/26	Budget 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
Staff & Vehicle Costs	-906,293	-1,010,858	-1,041,625	-1,073,337	-1,106,023
Allotments	2,425	3,418	2,632	-345	-9,912
Cemetery	54,280	68,458	-28,917	-46,211	-73,422
Recreation Grounds	-74,565	-84,527	-81,959	-85,434	-92,953
Town Centre & Gardens	-32,195	-32,114	-31,747	-31,368	-30,979
Town Ranger Service	-12,760	-14,038	-14,324	-14,619	-14,922
Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground					
Splash Park	-37,919	-69,353	-70,971	-72,865	-74,816
Capital and Projects	-139,950	-196,815	-172,263	-179,301	-189,428
	-1,146,977	-1,335,829	-1,439,174	-1,503,479	-1,592,454

Proposed 2025/26 breakdown:		
Income	Expenditure	Total
0	-1,010,858	-1010858
14,650	-11,232	3418
233,550	-165,092	68458
9,900	-94,427	-84527
40,507	-72,621	-32114
6,000	-20,038	-14038
65,000	-134,353	-69353
0	-196,815	-196815
369,607	-1,705,436	-1,335,829

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Description	Budget 2024/25	Proposed 2025/26	Proposed 2026/27	Proposed 2027/28	Proposed 2028/29
Staff Costs	-310,818	-351,165	-361,700	-372,551	-383,727
Older People's Day Care Services	-27,840	-31,493	-32,560	-33,659	-34,791
Community Engagement	-31,207	-42,207	-32,207	-32,207	-32,207
Grove Corner	-20,340	-20,795	-21,127	-21,469	-21,822
Events Programme	-162,931	-202,557	-197,471	-202,533	-207,746
Priory House	-329,774	-134,707	-270,408	-335,130	-345,604
Town Centre Services	-131,906	-125,750	-128,586	-131,507	-134,515
Public Conveniences (Ashton Square)	-6,775	-7,575	-7,575	-7,575	-7,575
High Street Heritage Action Zone	-13,688	0	0	0	0
Capital and Projects	-99,436	-241,815	-118,837	-118,715	-125,593
	-1,134,715	-1,158,064	-1,170,471	-1,255,346	-1,293,580
	-3,126,100	-3,400,622	-3,560,071	-3,740,775	-3,902,160
Contribution to/**from) Reserves	192631				
Precept	-2,933,469	-3,400,622			
Band D Council Tax	-219.93	-255.01			
Tax Base	13338	13,335			

Proposed 2025/26 breakdown:		
Income	Expenditure	Total
81,722	-432,887	-351165
24,796	-56,289	-31493
9,200	-51,407	-42207
11,750	-32,545	-20795
13,000	-215,557	-202557
29,200	-163,907	-134707
13,800	-139,550	-125750
0	-7,575	-7575
0	0	0
	-241,815	-241815
183,468	-1,341,532	-1,158,064
687,797	-4,088,419	-3,400,622

TOTAL GROSS = 4,088,419

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £6.5 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 must complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** must be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** must be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority must approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both must be approved and published on the authority website/webpage before 1 July 2024.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, must return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2024. Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities must publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2024 authorities must publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24**, approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2024 authorities must publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24

- The authority must comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments must be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2024.
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) must be approved on the same day or before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) must certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority must in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period as soon as practical after the date of the AGAR approval.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor must be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (Section 2, page 5). An explanation must be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on page 5. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- If the bank reconciliation is incomplete or variances not fully explained then additional costs may be incurred.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, must set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights of 30 consecutive working days which must include the first ten working days of July.
- The authority must publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2024**.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights, been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		✓

*Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

ENTER PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE ADDRESS www.dunstable.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2024, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2023/24 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2022/23, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2022/23 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2023-24 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2022-23 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

24/11/2023 01/03/2024 30/05/2024

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

SF Christopher for Auditing Solutions Ltd

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

SF Christopher

Date

30/05/2024

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed		"Yes" means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			✓
			<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

24/06/2024

and recorded as minute reference:

162/24

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

None Required

Clerk

None Required

WWW.DUNSTABLE.GOV.UK

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i>
1. Balances brought forward	2,196,772	2,860,550	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	2,480,490	2,791,245	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	2,268,793	1,856,248	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	1,987,336	2,200,520	<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	109,364	125,813	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	1,988,805	3,013,403	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	2,860,550	2,168,307	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	2,821,081	2,277,012	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	7,901,976	8,207,590	<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings	998,395	920,242	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	<i>The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

 SIGNED REQUIRED

Date

13/06/2024

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

24/06/2024

as recorded in minute reference:

MIN 162/24

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

 SIGNED REQUIRED

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023/24

In respect of

Dunstable Town Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02 as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2023/24

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

Not applicable.

3 External auditor certificate 2023/24

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable.

External Auditor Name

Forvis Mazars LLP, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1DF

External Auditor Signature

Forvis Mazars LLP

Date

30 September 2024

Mrs L Scheder
 Dunstable Town Council
 Grove House
 76 High Street North
 Dunstable
 Bedfordshire
 LU6 1NF

Direct line: +44 (0)191 383 6348

Email: local.councils@mazars.co.uk

Date: 30 September 2024

Dear Mrs Scheder

Completion of the audit for the year ended 31 March 2024

We have completed our audit for the year ended 31 March 2024 and I have pleasure in enclosing the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The External Auditor's Certificate and Report is given in Section 3.

If there are any significant matters arising from the audit, they are summarised in the External Auditor's certificate in Section 3. If we have identified minor scope for improvement we have recorded this on page 2 of this letter. The Council must consider these matters and decide what action is required. In most cases this will be self-evident. In some instances we have referred to further guidance available, in particular, in the publication "*Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners' Guide (England) 2023*". This can be obtained via your NALC or SLCC branch, or downloaded free of charge.

Action you are required to take:

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what you must do at the conclusion of the audit. In summary, you are required to:

Publish (which must include publication on the authority's website) a statement on or before 30 September to confirm:

- that the audit has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
 - the rights of inspection conferred on local government electors by section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
 - the address at which, and the hours during which, those rights may be exercised.
- Keep copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
 - Ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return remains available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was first published.

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 do not specify the period the Completion Notice needs to be on the council's website but this period must be reasonable.

Minor scope for improvement in 2024/2025

The bank reconciliation was difficult to follow because it did not include cash book figures. In future the Council should use the standard proforma provided in our guidance or in the Practitioner's Guide when preparing the bank reconciliation.

Accessibility regulations

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

Audit fee

Our fee note for the audit, which is in accordance with the audit fee scales set by SAAA, and available at [Audit Fees | Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments \(saaa.co.uk\)](https://saaa.co.uk) will follow.

We would be grateful if you could arrange for this to be paid at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely



James Collins

Director

For and on behalf of Forvis Mazars LLP

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2024
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2025

Purpose of Report: To inform Members regarding plans for the Annual Town Meeting 2025.

1 FOCUS

- 1.1. The meeting will include an opportunity for residents to ask any questions of the organisations present, including the Town Council in the usual way. Residents will also be able to ask questions over Teams.
- 1.2. This year, the meeting will be focus on the work of local voluntary and community organisations, particularly supported by the Town Council through funding, Councillor representation or the Mayor’s fundraising. Groups will be invited to speak and / or bring displays about their work.

2 VENUE

- 2.1 The venue is yet to be finalised for 2025, however the Council is investigating the availability of the Foodbank Building in the old Argos unit. The meeting will be streamed via YouTube. This will enable more people to attend than is possible in the Council Chamber, should the meeting theme attraction additional attendees.

3 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Schedule 12 part 3 of the Local Government Act 1972 stipulates that the parish meeting shall assemble annually on some day between 1st March and 1st June. Unlike Town Council meetings, the meeting is convened by the Mayor (not the Town Clerk). The Mayor chairs the meeting. All electors of the parish can attend the meeting and vote, if a vote is called.

4 AUTHOR

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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2024

MAYORAL HANDBOOK

Purpose of Report:

For Members to adopt the Mayoral Handbook

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Mayoral Handbook detailed at Appendix 1 be formally adopted by the Council.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Dunstable Town Council have had a Mayoral Handbook in place for many years. The Handbook outlines the main expectations and duties of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor during their term. The Democratic Services Manager and Town Clerk and Chief Executive have updated the Handbook, in part, reflecting Shrewsbury Town Council's version, have updated the Handbook to ensure it is comprehensive, relevant and in line with current practice. This updated version aims to provide clear guidance for those considering the role of Mayor and to help officers understand the etiquette and expectations associated with the positions of Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Dunstable.
- 2.2 The Handbook has never been formally adopted by the Council; it is proposed that the Council adopts the Handbook as Council policy.

3 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Handbook is written to ensure the Council complies with the Local Government Act 1972 in regards to the election and role of the Town Mayor.

4 APPENDICES

- 4.1 Appendix 1: The Mayoral Handbook

5 AUTHORS

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NOTES FOR GUIDANCE OF TOWN MAYOR

History of Dunstable Mayoralty

Henry 1st founded the modern town of Dunstable and by a first Charter of 1131 (the oldest in Bedfordshire) granted civil authority to the Prior of the Augustinian Priory of St Peter, which he had recently founded. The Priors continued to exercise civic authority for the next 400 years - not without conflict with the townsfolk. Although the Priory Annals make some reference to “the Mayor” and in one often quoted instance to “that rascally Mayor”, these probably refer to the townspeople’s spokesperson rather than an elected official.

On the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540, control of town markets passed to the Crown and other civil authority was vested in the County Justices. This situation continued into the 19th Century when the threat of encroachment from Luton caused leading citizens to successfully petition Queen Victoria to grant the town a new Charter in 1864 (displayed in the Mayor’s Parlour). This created a modern elected Borough Council headed by a Mayor. Bedford already had a Mayor and Luton followed shortly. In 1866 the town was granted a Commission of the Peace, and the Mayor then became automatically the “ex-officio” Chairman of the town magistrates and entitled to be addressed by the Justices’ form of address “Your Worship” or “His Worship The Mayor”. Although the commission was withdrawn (in common with all other Boroughs in 1964) the Mayor retained the dignity of being addressed as “Your Worship”.

The Local Government Act 1972 dissolved the Dunstable Borough Council and transferred all its rights and privileges to the new South Bedfordshire District Council. The Act prescribed that the Chairman of the District Council had right of precedence over all persons in the town except the Monarch or her representative. As something of a “sop” to the Dunstable Mayoralty the 15 District Councillors were appointed “Dunstable Charter Trustees” with no powers other than to preserve the town’s Charters. They were, however, also entitled to appoint one of their number to a new style of office of “Town Mayor”. Unlike in Luton and Bedford, where they retained the statutory right of precedence in their towns, the Town Mayor had no right of precedence and was not entitled to the “Your Worship” style.

In 1985 the District Council successfully petitioned the Home Office to create a Parish Council for the area of the former Borough of Dunstable. At its first meeting the new Dunstable Parish Council exercised discretion granted by the Act by styling itself “Dunstable Town Council”. This conferred no greater powers on the Parish Council but did entitle the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council to be styled the “Town Mayor” and “Deputy Town Mayor”. The status of the new Town Mayor however remained no greater than that of any other Parish Council Chairman in the District or any other Town Mayor in the County (by 1985 the parishes of Leighton-Linslade, Houghton Regis, Flitwick, Ampthill, Kempston, Sandy, Biggleswade, Potton, Shefford, Stotfold and Arlesey had all opted to be called “Towns” and for their Chairman to be styled “Town Mayor”).

The Dunstable Town Mayor does, however, enjoy some limited privilege over other Town Mayors in the County. The South Bedfordshire Parishes Order 1985 which created Dunstable Parish Council also contained an additional clause “any privileges or rights belonging immediately before 1st April 1974 to the citizens of the former Borough of Dunstable shall belong to the inhabitants of the new parish”. The Town Clerk confirmed in October 1985 with the Secretary of the National Association of Local Councils, John Clark Barrister and Mr Trevor Rix the District Chief Executive that this clause can be interpreted as permitting the Dunstable Town Mayor, exclusively, to be called “His Worship” (for a man) or “The Worshipful” (for a woman), to wear the Mayoral robes and to be preceded by the Mace when so doing. It must be remembered that these privileges do not alter the statutory right of precedence of the Central Bedfordshire Council Chairman. At all events in Dunstable (save for those organised or hosted by the Town Mayor such as the Civic Service or Ball or a Town Council promotion), where the Chairman of Central Bedfordshire is present, the Town Mayor must accord him/her precedence. Nevertheless, Bedford Borough and the diocese of St Albans still accord the Dunstable Town Mayor almost equal precedence to Borough Mayors/District Chairman.

Form of Address

For a man the accepted formal style of address is:

“His Worship the Town Mayor of Dunstable, Councillor X”

For a woman:

“The Worshipful, The Town Mayor of Dunstable, Councillor Y”

In writing or normal conversation, the address is “Mr or Madam Mayor”.

IS BEING MAYOR FOR YOU?

For those chosen or thinking of putting themselves forward, being Mayor is different from being a Councillor; it has different rules, different working hours, different restraints and is a physically and mentally tiring job. It is, however, a hugely enjoyable and rewarding job if entered into in the right spirit.

Councillors should consider the following factors:

Effect on family and friends - The Mayor will inevitably be “out of the house” more than an ordinary Councillor and often at unsocial hours. A Mayor’s social life is disrupted and supplanted with a new social life not of their making and thus keeping up with their own interests and friends may prove difficult. This should, however, not be an excuse for not doing their share of the housework, garden or shopping!

Effect on a Career/Job - Careful discussions will need to take place with the Mayor’s employer to ensure a good balance is maintained. Some employers make provision for leave for employees fulfilling a public role.

Effect on Political Career - The Mayor is neutral and steps back from politics for the term of Office. That is not to say they do not have a vote in Council; they continue to play a role in the decision making of the Council and in the event of an equity in voting is expected to exercise their casting vote. The Mayor must refrain from commenting on party political matters or making political comments, except where these are clearly reflecting policy positions or decisions already agreed by the Council.

Effects on Personal and Religious Beliefs - As Mayor, a Councillor represents all sections of the Council, not merely those who support a particular political, social or religious view. It is the role of the Mayor to acknowledge, celebrate and support diversity in the area. A Mayor will be invited to institutions they are politically opposed to, and church services opposed to their own religious beliefs. It must be remembered that the Office of Mayor belongs to the public and not the individual that occupies it, or for that matter the officers who advise it.

Pomp and Ceremony - Some Mayors may feel uncomfortable with the formality of the traditional Office of Mayor. There are Robes and Chains of Office to wear and numerous protocols to follow. The public want such trappings of Office. Mayors should operate within such constraints but should not be afraid to add their own personality and flair to the proceedings.

Ambassador for the County – Not only is the Mayor seen as an ambassador for the town, he is also an ambassador for the County and must play his part in promoting Dunstable at every opportunity.

Effects on Non-Councillor Interests - The Mayor, as they do in their capacity of Councillor, must act within the Code of Conduct and as such must be conscious of their private activities and any potential impact they might have on their public role.

Effect on the Mayor's Partner - The Mayor's Consort will be expected to play a full part in the Mayoral Role. It must, however, be stressed that whilst a Councillor is in politics because they want to be, it may be difficult for their partner to be pushed into a public role. Look on the bright side – the Consort enjoys the privileges of Office without the need to chair Council meetings!

Mayor's Relationship with other Councillors - The Mayor is amongst, but separate from, other Councillors. They will spend less time on Committee work and there may be some loss of "political" contact. Senior members will undoubtedly seek the Mayor's help in promoting Council initiatives and as such is likely to see a wider cross-section of Council work than before.

Mayor's Relationship with their Constituents - The Mayor is still a Councillor, and their constituents will still need help.

Getting Started

Resist the urge to drastically change the organisation before you know how it really works. Many of the town's Mayoral traditions have evolved over the years through trial and error.

There are, however, a number of things the New Mayor must consider as they start their Term of Office:

- Choose a Consort (to be introduced at Mayor Making)
- Appoint a Mayor's Chaplain (The Town Council can obtain this position if needed)
- Nominate a local Charity/Organisation to raise funds
- Consider when and where to host any events including fundraising activities

The Democratic Services Manager will be able to provide guidance on Council and Mayoral protocol and Civic Etiquette.

Duties of Town Mayor

1. By law, when present, the Mayor must preside at Council meetings and is responsible for ensuring good conduct and interpretation of Standing Orders. A special version of the agenda (the prompt) will be prepared and the Head of Finance and Support Services. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive will brief the Mayor before the meeting.
2. When present, the Town Mayor presides at any Town Meeting.
3. In an equality of votes the Town Mayor has a second or casting vote. Where a casting vote is necessary it is generally regarded that it should be exercised to preserve the status quo.
4. The Mayor can summon a special Council meeting on giving three days' notice.
5. Acting with the Deputy, the Town Mayor may seal documents which must be executed as a consequence of Council decision, e.g. Deeds, Leases, Byelaws etc.

By custom the Town Mayor is regarded as the town's representative (always remembering the statutory position of the Chairman of Central Bedfordshire Council). Outside Dunstable the Council's Policy Document recognises that Central Bedfordshire Chairman has the primary role especially in maintaining relationships with military establishments, etc.

Beyond the above the Town Mayor has no formal functions. However, most Mayors nowadays seek to raise some funds for local charities/good causes during their term of office. **The extent**

varies from year to year, but it is suggested this should always be seen as an ancillary “bonus” to a successful Mayoral year and not its main purpose.

It is often confusing to foreign visitors (particularly civic guests from our twin towns) that the Mayor has no executive powers at all. It is unlawful for a single Councillor, whether the Mayor or a Committee Chairman, to take **ANY** decision on behalf of the Council. The Council can only delegate decisions to Committees, Sub-Committees or an officer.

Every Mayor receives several invitations during his/her year of office some will be unsuitable for the dignity of the offices. It is important that all engagements are accepted or refused on behalf of the Mayor by the Democratic Services Manager. When several invitations are received to attend a function on the same day **priority should always be given to a local event** and the Deputy Town Mayor to attend the other. Mayors are asked to consider carefully each invitation they receive with a view to recognising the “value” of each event to the Council and to the local community. This ensures that the official diary is kept up to date and avoids the embarrassment of the Mayor being expected in two different places at the same time. Invitations are received daily and past practice has been to go through these with the Mayor one day each week. This is an important meeting as it helps to keep both the Mayor and Officer informed about what is happening.

Once the Mayor has accepted an engagement, a Mayoral Attendance Form can be sent to the organisers requesting confirmation of times, names of people presiding and any other information which may be of use in compiling a speech (if one is required).

The Mayor should ensure that the dignity of his/her presence is confined to those occasions that merit it and remember that the office of Mayor is something apart from the individual who happens to fill that office. Regard must be given to creating precedents that place the onus of breaking them upon successive Mayors.

The Mayor should not become involved with advertising in any way. Any invitation to attend a function, perform an opening ceremony or similar, should be considered carefully and, if there is any doubt - decline. The Mayor may have a legitimate role in promoting local businesses, for example by opening new shops or services.

Hospitality conduct: The Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor should carefully consider their image when attending social events.

When the Town Mayor chooses charities for the year it is a good idea that they meet with the Councils objectives and are local to Dunstable.

The Town Mayor/Deputy Town Mayor should complete a civic report sheet for each Mayoral engagement they have attended to assist the Democratic Services Manager in compiling a report for Full Council.

Ceremonial Role of the Mayor

1. To be the representative for the Town Council, the community and local democracy and to work to ensure that the dignity and impartiality of the Office of Mayor is upheld
2. To host all the Council’s civic events and other major Council events as appropriate and to welcome visitors to the town on behalf of its members
3. To act as the Council’s ambassador in promoting the town
4. To attend and host receptions and other events associated with charitable and voluntary organisations operating within the town

5. There may be occasions when the Mayor is invited to events outside the town. If the invitation is received from the Civic Head of that area, the Mayor may accept the invitation. If the invitation is received from anyone other than the Civic Head of that area, permission must be sought to wear Chain of Office.

Civic Role of the Mayor as Chair of the Council

1. To uphold and promote the Council's standing orders and governance documents and to interpret the Standing Orders (Council Procedure Rules) when chairing Council meetings
2. To preside over principal meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interest of the community
3. To ensure that the Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and the place at which members of the public and their elected Councillors can hold the Council/committees to account
4. To promote public involvement in the Council's activities
5. To be the conscience of the Council
6. To call extra meetings of Council, subject to proper procedures being followed as defined in the Council's Standing Orders.
7. To preside over the Annual Town meeting. Though not a Town Council meeting, the Mayor has a duty to Chair the annual meeting of the electors.

A Chair's responsibility is to ensure the proper conduct of meetings and may exercise a second or casting vote in the event of a tie in votes on any question to be decided at meetings; for other matters he has the same rights as other Councillors.

The Chair is required to ensure that the business considered at a meeting is lawful and that the conduct and/or order of the meeting is proper. A Chair's authority in respect of the conduct and procedure of meetings is detailed in the Council Standing Orders. Individual Councillors and the public present at the meeting are expected to respect and ultimately obey a Chair's ruling.

A Chair needs to be fair yet firm. A Chair is required to:

- ensure that motions included in the agenda are lawful and within the remit of the meeting being convened in advance of a meeting
- be satisfied that a meeting has been lawfully convened, properly constituted and is quorate
- ensure the minutes of the previous meeting are duly approved by the meeting
- regulate the conduct of the meeting
- introduce motions in the agenda and direct them to be moved and duly considered
- order discussions and debate
- decide points of order
- put motions to a vote and if necessary, exercise their casting vote
- declare the result of a vote
- adjourn the meeting if necessary
- close a meeting after its business has been concluded

Role of the Deputy Mayor

The Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress/Consort will be expected to attend all the annual civic functions and chains/badge of Office should be worn as appropriate. As a general rule the chain/badge of Office should be worn at all the major annual civic events and for all full Council

meetings and when the Deputy represents the Mayor at official engagements. However, at all other events/receptions attended by the Mayor in an official capacity the Deputy's chain of Office should not be worn unless they have been specifically requested to do so by the Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor will deputise for the Mayor at those functions which the Mayor is unable to attend. (Strictly, all invitations will be received by the Mayor who will contact the Deputy Mayor with any request that he or she attends a particular function.) Under normal circumstances, the Deputy Mayor will be required to provide his or her own transport for attending functions and be responsible for their and the Deputy Mayoress's/Consort's chain/badge of Office.

Democratic Services Manager

The Democratic Services Manager provides day-to-day administrative support for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. During periods of absence from the office other staff members will provide this support.

The Democratic Services Manager will deal with all correspondence addressed to the Mayor. These include mostly invitations to attend various functions throughout the year. If the Mayor does receive any invitations etc. direct, they will need to be passed along to the Democratic Services Manager to handle and record.

All invitations will be passed along to the Mayor for reference. The Mayor, depending on prior engagements, will either accept, decline or pass the invitation along to the Deputy Mayor to attend on their behalf. It is important to gather as much information as possible regarding the event, so the Mayor/Deputy knows exactly what to expect from the function i.e. timings, consort, duties to perform, dress code, food provided etc. It is practice that once an invitation has been accepted, the Mayoral booking form be sent over to that individual to fill out before the event as this enables all the information needed to be in one place for the Mayor/Deputy to have on hand if needed.

The Democratic Services Manager will keep the Mayor's diary, and the Mayoral log of events kept up to date at all times to ensure both parties have the same information to hand as well as avoiding clashes of accepted invitations.

Public Relations - Press

Dunstable Town Council's press and media policy describes the Council's policy for dealing with the press. In particular:

All enquiries from the press are welcomed as we recognise that the relationship with the press helps communication with residents. The Council seeks to be as transparent as possible, cooperating at all times with the press and using the opportunities of the media to publicise events, projects and works being organised.

Policy

1. Press releases and statements will be prepared and issued by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive in consultation with Members as required. Wherever possible these will include a quote from the Mayor or relevant committee chair.
1. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive is responsible for issuing official press releases on behalf of the Town Council.
2. When the media seeks information on an issue that is, or likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then where necessary advice will be obtained from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.

Precedence

As mentioned above the order of precedence at official events can cause difficulty, particularly where the event organiser is not aware of the correct order and may embarrass a Town Mayor by trying to accord him/her precedence over, say, the Central Bedfordshire Chairman.

Waldram's book "Civic Ceremonial" was once deemed to be "the bible" on such matters, but it is rather out-dated and in any event beyond the precedence of Crown and Central Bedfordshire Chairman or Borough Mayor, the law is silent on precedence.

Based upon custom and practise in Dunstable since 1985, the following rough guide of procession is suggested:

Royal Family
Lord Lieutenant
High Sheriff
Town Mayor (order reversed if the Town Mayor
Central Bedfordshire Council Chair is not hosting)
Mayor's Chaplain
Member of Parliament
Police Superintendent
Luton and Bedford Mayors
Visiting Town Mayors

Pre-Election Period

The guidelines and restrictions on publicity during the pre-election period. From May until the election the Council must comply with restrictions outlined in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986. In addition, the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity published in 2011 makes clear that particular care should be taken in periods of heightened sensitivity, such as in the run up to an election. The Act defines publicity as "any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public."

Generally, the Act says that the Council should "not publish any material which, in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party or promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another." The Code of Practice recommends that authorities should generally not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters, and that publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published unless expressly authorised by statute.

Decision making

In relation to decision making within the Council, the position remains that it is 'business as usual' unless there are very good reasons why this should not be the case. In the vast majority of cases, the pre-election period will have no impact on our normal Council business. I will be working with the Mayor and Committee Chairs to ensure that meetings go ahead successfully, and that all councillors are aware of and adhere to the requirement not to use Council meetings to engender public support for a political party or promote or oppose a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another.

What this means

The primary restriction is on proactive publicity by the Council which particularly relates to candidates and other politicians involved directly in the election.

The council can still issue media releases on factual matters provided that these could not be seen as addressing issues of political controversy.

If the Mayor is standing for election they will not be able to use Council resources (including the chain and robes) or the role to promote themselves during this period. However the Mayor will continue to carry out their role, so far as possible with this restriction in place.

Consorts

There is no official recognition in law of the partner/spouse of the Town Mayor. However it is often appropriate for the Mayor's consort to accompany his/her partner. The consort is however **not** an officer of the Council and cannot act in the place of the Mayor. If the Mayor is not present his/her Mayoress or Consort cannot be recognised in precedence. Only the Deputy Town Mayor deputises for the Town Mayor. Where neither are available the immediate past Town Mayor will be invited to act.

The Mayoress/Consort usually accompanies the Mayor when the invitation specifically asks so - often attendance is requested by the Mayor alone. If a Mayoress/consort is requested and the "official" consort is unavailable, the past practise has been to invite another Councillor to accompany the Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor

The Deputy Mayor, when acting for the Mayor, should be accorded the same precedence as that which would be accorded to the Mayor. It must be emphasised that the Deputy Mayor deputises for the Mayor. Invitations should not be made to the Deputy Mayor but to the Mayor. If the Mayor is unable to attend, he or she may then, by agreement, arrange through the Democratic Services Manager for the Deputy Mayor to attend instead.

Mayoral Allowance

The Town Council makes an allowance to the Town Mayor to meet the expenses of his/her office but not to the Deputy Town Mayor. By custom in Dunstable the Mayor may make a voluntary contribution of 10% of it to the Deputy Town Mayor.

The allowance may be used towards the following:

- Clothing/Partner's clothing
- Donations to charities
- Purchase of Raffle Tickets
- Taking flowers, chocolates or biscuits (on 100th Birthday etc)
- Expenses on foreign visits
- Personal hospitality (drinks in Parlour, private lunches etc)
- Invitations which incur a cost to attend

Facilities for Town Mayor

In addition to unrestricted use of the Mayor's Parlour and support from the Democratic Services Officer, the Council has agreed the Town Mayor may have free use of the Council Chamber for fund raising events and may have free use of the Chamber for an event organised or hosted by him/her. This latter discretion is generally used to assist local groups by allowing them to hold a meeting or awards evening, etc in the name of the Mayor.

. The Council also meets the cost of the official Mayoral Christmas Card.

Mayoral Transport

A chauffeur-driven car is provided for the Mayor for journeys undertaken in respect of official civic duties as detailed in the weekly engagement sheets. Where functions are attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, the Mayoral car would be used to convey both in the interests of economy. There are no obligations to use the Mayoral car if the Mayor or Deputy Mayor wishes to make their own way there.

The Council has contracted with a supplier of driven cars. The Council's contractor is will be provided with all information on where to collect/drop off both Mayor and Deputy Mayor, they will be provided with the location of the event etc. They typically wait at the event for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor however this would depend of the length of the event.

Election of Town Mayor

In a non-election year (3 out of every 4 years) the Council at its February meeting usually approves the nomination of a Town Mayor Elect and Deputy Town Mayor Elect. Both positions are ratified at the Annual Council Meeting in May.

Other matters the Mayor Elect will wish to give consideration to include:

- Appointment of Town Mayor's Chaplain
- Date and venue for Civic Ball (if any)
- Date and venue for Civic Service
- Charities (if any) he or she hopes to support
- Dates for Fund-raising Events
- Design for Mayoral Christmas card

The Election of the Mayor is the first item of business at the Annual Council Meeting (Mayor Making) with the election being decided by a majority of members present and voting at the meeting.

Town Mayor's Chaplain

This is a personal appointment by the Town Mayor, announced at the Annual Council Meeting. The Chaplain naturally gives spiritual guidance/advice to the Mayor; leads the Council in prayer before the meeting starts; organises and usually conducts the Civic Service and supports the Mayor at other appropriate occasions, e.g. Civic Ball, Armistice Day, Christmas Tree Carols, etc. it is suggested that the Mayor Elect discusses these dates with the prospective Chaplain as well as the precise role he/she wishes the Chaplain to take.

The Mace Bearer

The Mace is the emblem of the power of dignity of the Mayor when carried in procession. The Mace is carried at the "slope" on the right shoulder. The origin of the Mace as a weapon of defence is well known and is accordingly the emblem of authority of the Mayor and precedes the Mayor at all Civic Occasions. The Mace is the symbol of the Mayor's authority and as such becomes redundant in the presence of the Sovereign. At Council the Mace is placed in front of the Mayor (with the crown to their right), whilst in Church the crown of the Mace faces towards the altar.

Christmas Cards

The Council will meet the cost of the official Christmas Card of the Mayor's personal choosing. The Council will also meet the cost of postage (this does not include personal postage).

Official Statements

The Press and local radio may invite the Town Mayor to comment on a Town Council matter or generally on an issue of local interest. To help the Mayor keep abreast of current activities the Mayor and Deputy are ex-officio members of all Committees. It is respectfully suggested that the Mayor consults the relevant Committee Chairman or Town Clerk and Chief Executive before commenting. The Mayor's comments should be limited to explaining policies and decisions agreed by the Council, and to comments the Mayor can reasonably believe the majority of Councillors would support.

Town Mayor Appointments

During his/her term of office the Town Mayor is President of:

Dunstable International Twinning Association (DITA)
Dunstable Sea Cadets Unit

Vice-President of Dunstable Cricket Club

All of the above may expect the Town Mayor to offer some special support during his/her term of office.

Council Events

The Town Mayor will usually attend and "preside" at all major Council events. This would normally include greeting/welcoming any principal guests; individually thanking artists and key volunteer helpers as well as occasionally general speeches of welcome/thanks to all attending. Events staff, Heads of Service and the Democratic Services Manager will liaise to provide relevant background information to the Mayor.

Council Officers

At key functions such as the Civic Service, Remembrance Day Parade, etc, it is usual for the Town Clerk and Chief Executive to accompany the Mayor (and Town Clerk and Chief Executives partner would also be invited).

Death of a National Figure

The Council retains live protocols to follow in the event of the death of the Monarch or senior member of the Royal Family. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the discharge of this protocol and advice should be sought from them should anything happen within the Mayor's term of office.

Etiquette

Everyday Wear - It is expected that where the Mayor attends a function and wears Chains of Office, day dress (jacket/suit and tie) shall be worn. This shall apply to a male Consort accompanying a female Mayor.

When To Wear Robes And Chains - Generally speaking the Mayor should only be robed when accompanied by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, who should then also be robed. Visits to schools are an exception to this general rule. There are however occasions when the Mayor may be invited to occasions/events at which there is a request to wear Mayoral robes. Robes should only be worn on high civic occasions similar to those to which robes would be expected to be worn within the Town. Guidance should be sought from the Democratic Services Manager.

Chains should be worn at all formal Mayoral engagements, but NOT when:

1. The Mayor is attending private functions or in a private capacity
2. The Mayor is attending a function outside the Town Council's area, unless they have the consent of the Mayor or Chairman of that Local Authority
3. The Mayor is visiting the Palace of Westminster, where it is deemed to be a Palace of the Sovereign

The Chains and Badges of Office of both Mayor and Deputy and their Consorts are covered by the Council's all risks insurance policy providing that the Council has been made aware and has "authorised" Mayoral attendance. If it is necessary to take them home, they must be kept appropriately. They must not be left unattended in cars or other vehicles.

Etiquette during Civic Parades

A male Mayor of the Town should remove his hat:

- when entering Church
- when the national anthem is being played
- when prayers are being said (or any Blessing or Act of Dedication)
- when "Last Post" is being sounded
- when in the presence of a member of the Royal Family

A male Mayor when laying a wreath at the War Memorial should:

- lay wreath (while wearing hat)
- step back
- pause and give hat salute - i.e. hold hat across left breast
- replace hat then turn and return to his place

A male Mayor when taking the salute at a March Past should:

When the approaching column Commander gives "eyes left" (or right), give hat salute, i.e. hold hat across left breast. If there are a number of columns passing closely, maintain salute until last man is past. In any event, take guidance from the Senior Officer who is also on saluting dais. It is preferable for the Mayor to be on the left of a saluting officer because this avoids the possible embarrassment of the officer sending the Mayor's hat flying.

A female Mayor shall always wear her Mayoral Hat and should acknowledge a salute by inclining her head in a slight bow.

Etiquette – Mayoral Attendance at Funerals of Prominent Persons

The attendance of the Mayor at funerals is often at the discretion of the family and on some occasions, it would be inappropriate to wear the Chain of Office. Guidance will be sought at the time but, unless it is a high-profile event, the Mayor and Mayoress/Consort should generally wear their Badges of Office on a black ribbon.

Family members must be given precedence in churches/crematorium with no centre aisle. After the service the Mayor and Mayoress follow immediately after the family mourners.

Appendix 1: Mayoral Chain

(Notes by John Buckledee)

The creation of a mayoral chain for the borough of Dunstable was initiated by Alderman Fred Garrett and first worn by him in 1898.

He was Mayor a number of times: 1897, 1898, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1918.

He was made a Freeman of the borough in 1921.

He ran a jeweller's shop in Dunstable and used his expertise to ensure that the chain was of high quality.

An advertisement for his shop in 1906 gave its address as 15 High Street North. This is the large building next to the Town Hall Chambers. It now seems to have been split into two businesses: Household Estate Agents (15b) and the Prestige convenience store (15).

Ald Garrett was born in 1848, eldest son of Mr W Garrett of Hertford, He came to Dunstable in 1870 and was first elected to the council, standing as a Liberal, in 1887.

Dunstable Borough Gazette August 1898

Tell it softly! The royal borough has never yet been possessed of a mayoral chain, and successive occupants of the civic chair have on state occasions been compelled to resort to the undignified and expensive custom of borrowing. His Worship (Ald F T Garrett) has, however, hit upon a happy scheme by which future mayors of Dunstable will not be submitted to this unpleasantness. He has approached all the previous mayors (or their relatives) since the restoration of the charter, and has proposed to them that if each one of them will contribute a set of links, he will contribute the central badge with the Corporation arms etc. Fifteen sets of links have already been promised, and the chain will soon arrive in Dunstable. On each set of links the subscribing mayor's name will be inscribed, with date and term of office. The chain, which will be of considerably over £100 value, will be vested in a board of trustees composed of those gentlemen who have occupied our civic chair.

Council meeting report September 1898

His Worship reported that the scheme inaugurated for the acquisition of a Mayoral chain had been entirely successful, and the chain, incorporating 15 links and a central badge, had been delivered to him this week. The 15 links had been subscribed by former mayors or their representatives, and since the chain had been delivered subscriptions had been received for the addition of two more links.

Dunstable Borough Gazette Wednesday October 19, 1898

The Mayor wore the new mayoral chain at the ball given by the Lord Mayor of London last night at the Mansion House.

The chain is a splendid piece of workmanship. The badge and the centre link (given by the Mayor) consist of an English rose for the centre link, surmounted by a royal crown, emblematical of the fact that Dunstable is one of the few royal boroughs now in existence, and from the link is suspended the badge, a splendid piece of goldsmith's handiwork, of a somewhat oval shape, and bearing on it in the centre a raised shield with the arms of the borough beautifully enamelled in colours.

This is surrounded by a wreath of oak and laurel leaves, and beneath is an enamelled and shaded ribbon bearing the Corporation's motto Ju. Titia Omnibus Fiet. At the bottom of the design is another ribbon bearing the name of the donor and the date 1897 in blue enamel. There are 17 sets of links, exactly like, each set consisting of a shield the exact shape and design of the borough

coat of arms shield, engraved with the name of the mayor whose year of office it commemorates, with the date or dates of the period he occupied the civic chair. The shields are connected together with figure of 8 and cable links, as shaped as to allow the shields to sit gracefully upon the shoulders of the wearer. Every part and link of the chain is of fine gold and hall marked, and altogether it is a magnificent addition to the Corporation insignia. The engraving and finish is of a high class character and a credit to the manufacturer.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2024

LEGISLATION ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING

<p>Purpose of Report: To agree the Council's response to the current government consultation</p>

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Council agrees the response laid out in Appendix 1.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since temporary COVID-19 powers which allowed for online Council meetings ended in May 2021, the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks have been at the forefront of a national campaign to change the law to enable Councillors to attend meetings virtually.
- 2.2 The government has published a consultation paper seeking views on introducing remote attendance and proxy voting in local authority meetings in England, which closes on 19 December 2024. (Online attendance is already allowed in Wales).
- 2.3 The consultation is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-at-local-authority-meetings/enabling-remote-attendance-and-proxy-voting-at-local-authority-meetings>

3 PROPOSED RESPONSE

- 3.1 Councillors were invited to meet with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive to draft a response. Accordingly, Councillors John Gurney and Liz Jones have drafted the proposed response below with the support of the Town Clerk and Chief Executive. Only questions relevant to a Council are included. **Councillors are asked to indicate whether they would individually want to attend from home on occasion to enable the completion of Question 5.**

4 APPENDICES

- 4.1 Appendix 1: Proposed response

5 AUTHOR

Paul Hodson Town Clerk & Chief Executive
paul.hodson@dunstable.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Proposed Consultation Response

NB the writing in red represents the Council's proposed responses

Question 2

Do you agree with the broad principle of granting local authorities powers to allow remote attendance at formal meetings?

Yes/No **Yes**

If you answered No to the above question please go directly to question 4.

Question 3

If you answered Yes to the above question, do you think that there should be specific limitations on remote attendance?

Please tick all the options below that correspond with your view and use the free text box for any other comments.

- a) Any formal meeting allowing remote attendance should have at least two thirds of members in physical attendance. **No**
- b) Members should only be able to attend council meetings remotely in exceptional circumstances, such as those who are medically or physically unable to attend, or for reasons of local or national emergencies. **No; this has merit, but would raise too many pragmatic difficulties to make this workable.**
- c) There should be no limitations placed upon councils with regard to setting arrangements for remote attendance of council meetings, up to and including full remote attendance. **This should not be the norm, but the legislation should allow for it. Councils should however be able to make standing orders requiring attendance at at least some meetings each year if they so choose.**
- d)[Free Text Box] **National legislation should be as flexible as possible; local councils should be able to set their own standing orders appropriately. Except that attendance at the Annual Council Meeting should be physical attendance**

Question 5

If you are responding to this consultation on behalf of a council as a whole, what proportion of the council's current elected members are likely to seek to attend council meetings remotely over the course of a year?

- less than 10%
- more than 10% but less than 50%
- more than 50% but less than 90%
- most of them 90% to 100%

Question 6

The government recognises that there may be cases in which it is necessary for councils to hold meetings fully remotely. Do you think there should be limitations placed on the number of fully remote meetings councils should be able to hold?

- a) Councils should be able to allow full remote attendance at up to half of council meetings within a twelve-month calendar period. **Yes**
- b) Councils should only have the flexibility to change a meeting from in-person to online, or vice versa, due to unforeseen and exceptional circumstances. **Yes**
- c) Councils should not have the flexibility to conduct fully remote meetings to ensure there is always an in-person presence.
- d) **Each Council's Standing Orders should be able to specify what is appropriate locally**

Question 7

Do you think there are there any necessary procedural measures that would help to ensure a remote or hybrid attendance policy is workable and efficient?

Please tick all the options that correspond with your view and use the free text box for any other comments.

- a) Councils should be required to publish a list of attendees joining the meeting remotely and give notice if a meeting is being held with full remote attendance. **Yes**
- b) Councils should be required to ensure that standard constitutional arrangements are followed for hybrid and fully remote meetings. **Yes**
- c) Councils should be required to make arrangements to ensure restricted items (where a council decision is taken in private to protect confidentiality) are managed appropriately and to require remotely attending members to join from a private location. **Yes, with allowance for carers of under 16 year olds**
- d) Other [Free text box]

Question 8

Do you think legislative change to allow councillors to attend local authority meetings remotely should or should not be considered for the following reasons?

Tick all the statements below that apply to your point of view.

Should be considered because

Should not be considered because

It is a positive modernising measure. **Yes**

Councillors should be physically present at all formal meetings. **No**

It would likely increase the diversity of people willing and able to stand for election

It could lead to a significant number of councillors habitually attending remotely

Should be considered because

Should not be considered because

in their local area, making councils more representative of the communities they serve. **Yes**

and ultimately reduce the effectiveness of councils. **This is a concern**

Councils would be more resilient in the event of local or national emergencies which prevent in-person attendance. **Yes**

It would be more difficult for councillors to build personal working relationships with colleagues, and engage with members of the public in attendance at meetings. **This is a concern**

Free text box – please state any other reasons

Free text box – please state any other reasons

Question 9

In your view, would allowing councillors to attend formal local authority meetings remotely according to their needs particularly benefit or disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics, for example those with disabilities or caring responsibilities?

Please tick an option below:

- it would benefit members **Yes, ✓**
- it would disadvantage members
- neither

Please use the text box below to make any further comment on this question.

[Free text box]

Proxy voting

Proxy voting is a form of voting whereby a member of a decision-making body may delegate their voting power to another representative to enable a vote in their absence.

It is possible some members may find that, due to their personal circumstances, they are temporarily unable to participate in meetings even if remote attendance provisions are in place. Provisions for proxy voting could provide additional flexibility to those who really need it on a time-limited basis, allowing affected members to indirectly exercise their democratic duty, participate in their local authority's governance, and ensure that their views are taken into consideration. In the context of local authorities, the representative would have to be another elected member of the local authority.

Question 10

In addition to provisions allowing for remote attendance, do you consider that it would be helpful to introduce proxy voting?

- yes
- no **No**
- unsure

Question 11

If yes, for which of the following reasons which may prohibit a member's participation in council meetings do you consider it would be appropriate?

Please select all that apply:

- physical or medical conditions **No**
- caring responsibilities **No**
- parental leave or other responsibilities **No**
- other [Free text box]

Question 12

Are there circumstances in which you feel proxy voting would not be appropriate?

All circumstances; it is a point of principle that the Council receives a motion or recommendation, and then Councillors take care to debate and listen to other views before making a decision. Proxy voting would mean decisions being taken when councillors have not heard all views.

Question 13

If you think proxy voting is appropriate, are there any limitations you think should be placed upon it?

[Free text box]

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2024

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Purpose of Report: For the Council to consider the findings of the scoping exercise and to make a decision on whether to commence the process for a full Neighbourhood Plan.

1 ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 For members to review the consultant's report and Town Council Officer recommendations regarding understand the full implications and limitations of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 To decide not to progress further with a Neighbourhood Plan for Dunstable at this stage.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Full Council meeting on 15 April 2024 members agreed to spend £7,000 from the allocated reserve for a scoping exercise to be carried out to examine the options and potential scope of a Neighbourhood Plan for Dunstable. This funding was used to instruct the consultant Neil Horner to assist the Council in this exercise.
- 2.2 Subsequently a working group of members met to agree governance arrangements and the process of the scoping exercise, including the community engagement.
- 2.3 Since May the working group have met regularly with officers and the Planning and Development Manager/Consultant to clarify issues facing Dunstable which a Neighbourhood Development Plan may be able to address.
- 2.4 In July 2024, the Council undertook a three week consultation which saw online and face to face engagement, including engagement led by Members during Party in the Park. This returned only 124 responses, which the working group had to then use to try and ascertain the potential relevance and impact of a Neighbourhood Plan for the town.

3 REVIEW OF PROPOSED OPTIONS

- 3.1 The scoping review provided by the Council's consultants provides 12 options which could be included in the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan for Dunstable. The

12 options are listed below, with a brief assessment of the potential for each to make a difference to the town:

	Proposed Element	Officer assessment of proposal
DUN1	Spatial Strategy	Unlike many Neighbourhood Plans, there would be no opportunity to influence new or green field development. CBC are currently consulting on brown field sites so that work will be done. There may be an opportunity to specify the character of town centre (although it could be argued the existing Conservation Area Appraisal delivers this) and suburban development. However, it is unclear if the plan would have any influence over “key public realm investment opportunities”.
DUN2	Design Principles (inc. energy efficiency & performance and infilling)	A Dunstable Wide Design Code could be developed with a funded package (only though if the Council agreed to a full Neighbourhood Plan). It may be possible to specify that “detailing how garden/outdoor space should be incorporated wherever possible”, although it is unclear how much impact this would have on developments.
DUN3	Brownfield Opportunities	CBC are investigating Brownfield sites at present. Experience in Dunstable shows that which brownfield sites come forward and what plans are proposed depends entirely on landowners.
DUN4	Employment Locations	There is no evidence that this action would address a current issue of concern.
DUN5	Town Centre Design Coding/Zoning	A review of the Masterplan would show that it has largely failed to be implemented. Which reduces the case for refreshing the Masterplan – why would a refreshed version be any more successful? A policy already exists against ground floor residential development in the town centre.
DUN6	Conservation Area Enhancement (including retrofitting)	There is a Conservation Area Appraisal in place. The High Street Heritage Action Zone project funded some shop front improvements, but also demonstrated the limitations of working with retail unit owners where there is any cost to them. There is no evidence that adding this to the Neighbourhood Plan would benefit the town.
DUN7	Housing Mix and Type	A funded package (if the Council agreed to a full Neighbourhood Plan) could be used to commission a Dunstable Housing Needs Assessment. However, it is unclear that local needs are not already being addressed by CBC’s approach.

	Proposed Element	Officer assessment of proposal
DUN8	Air Quality & Urban Greening	An Air Quality Assessment is in place. There is very limited opportunity for greening streets in the town.
DUN9	Green Infrastructure	The Masterplan sought to create green corridors, but this opportunity has now been lost. It is unclear what this element would achieve.
DUN10	Local Green Spaces	The Town Council owns most open green spaces in the town and so is able to control their destiny without further designation.
DUN11	Active Travel	A Neighbourhood Plan would not be able to increase public transport provision. The local walking & cycling infrastructure plan is already in place.
DUN12	Chiltern Beechwoods SAC	Adding this element would not add additional value to the existing work to create and project the 'zone of influence' of the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area for Conservation (SAC).

4 MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Appendix 1 does not make any recommendations or reach any conclusions from the scoping.
- 4.2 A Neighbourhood Plan works better as a planning tool in some localities than in others, and it has always been questionable as to whether for a town such as Dunstable that is built up to its parish boundaries, only has brown field sites available for development and where the Town Council owns the public open spaces in the town this tool is necessary. This is still the case; the consultants themselves have been unable to recommend that the Council undertake a Neighbourhood Plan and have instead simply offered advice as to the timeframes and topics that a plan could cover. The case has not been made that it is in the best interests of the Council and the town that the necessary resources be spent on producing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.3 No members of the public have requested that the Town Council undertake its own Neighbourhood Plan. The consultation received engagement from just 0.3% of the population, despite extensive use of the Council's social media channels and promotion of the survey during Party in the Park. The majority of the concerns which were raised were to do with matters that a Neighbourhood Plan could not address, e.g. vacant shops and a desire for a wider variety of shops. There was also some contradiction between residents' views and requests which further muddies the priorities a Neighbourhood Plan for Dunstable could address when there is such a split of views.
- 4.4 For a Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted it has to go through a referendum, which would require significant local support. There have been recent examples of

Neighbourhood Plans being voted down at the referendum stage; the Council would need to be confident of wide support before going ahead with a plan.

- 4.5 What the Council must not fall foul of is the fear of missing out just because neighbouring (and very different) parishes have one. Neighbouring Town Councils are much further along on their journey of a Neighbourhood Plan and their experience is something that should be acknowledged when considering whether a Neighbourhood Plan is right for Dunstable. Feedback is that it is costly (both financially and in officer time) with little return. Central Bedfordshire Council's lack of support, and lack of will to link processes for a Dunstable Neighbourhood Plan with CBC's current local plan consultation, would make it harder to achieve a viable Plan.
- 4.6 If the Local Planning Authority has other priorities a Neighbourhood Plan will not be an automatic solution to increase involvement and collaborative working.
- 4.7 A Neighbourhood Plan is not the only option available to the Town Council. The Council can still respond to planning applications using existing planning policy and guidance and engage in the Local Plan process.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is difficult to provide an exact financial cost to the council as there are numerous variable factors. However, the consultant's report at Appendix 2 estimates a cost of £60,000 over the first three years. Some of these could be funded through grants – potentially around up to around £25,000. However, many councils have experienced significant cost rises and over runs during the development of Neighbourhood Plans. Further costs would be incurred with the five yearly review of the plan – there would be an ongoing cost to the Council to maintain and defend the Plan. In addition, significant officer time would be required to ensure effective design and consultation at each of the stages, effectively requiring the recruitment of a part-time Plan Officer, which would be an additional financial cost. Neither of these elements are currently included in the Council's draft budget for 2025/26.

6 POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The creation of a Neighbourhood Plan on the surface would appear to deliver on a number of the Council's corporate objectives, however, in reality officers argue that it is questionable as to the extent that a Neighbourhood Plan could actually achieve any of the following:

Preserve and enhance the history and identity of the town – There is already a conservation area in the town centre and associated planning policy which assist with this, and which does not require a Neighbourhood Plan to achieve and maintain this.

Contribute to the regeneration of the town centre – There is already a master plan which forms part of Central Bedfordshire Council’s planning policy, which has failed to deliver. Whilst a Neighbourhood Plan could create a new master plan this would be even more costly than the figures quoted in this report and continues to carry the risk of not being deliverable as ultimately it is down to landowners and development opportunities. As these are not guarantees all this does is exposes the Town Council to criticism for offering something which is not deliverable, raising expectations and bringing disappointment and thus losing the trust and respect of residents – something which currently the Town Council does have.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8 HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 If members were to go against the officer recommendation and commence a Neighbourhood Plan there would be human resource implications. A part-time position would need to be created to undertake the associated work and inevitably there would be an impact on other officers who have not factored in supporting this process into their current service plan and workloads.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A Neighbourhood Plan would have legal status as a planning document. However, the Plan would have to adhere to current planning policy locally and nationally and not to replace it.

10 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

10.1 Minimal; while the proposed scope would include green spaces, active travel and refer to the Special Area of Conservation, the Plan would not make a significant or tangible difference to any of these areas.

11 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12 APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1. Scoping Report – Client advice note, 11 October 2024.

12.2 Appendix 2. DNP Timeline and Budget

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 Neighbourhood Planning – 15 April 2024.

14 CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The scoping exercise provided an opportunity to understand fully the extent to which a Neighbourhood Plan could assist the town council in meeting the needs of local residents. From meeting and discussing with others in the sector who have undertaken a Neighbourhood Plan, many are questioning the cost in time and money and the effectiveness of it and the long-term commitment it has now placed on the respective town council to refresh and review every five years. Some have said that had they realised and known more earlier on in the process they would not have undertaken a Neighbourhood Plan in the first place because it has not achieved what they and their residents expected, instead it has raised expectations which councils have then had the difficult task of managing.
- 14.2 Dunstable is an already built-up town, with only brownfield sites available for future development, apart from a SSSI site and parks and open spaces within the Town Council's ownership. The response from residents wasn't strong with a limited number choosing to engage in the consultation (something which has been echoed in the residents' lack of engagement with CBC's local plan consultation). This lack of engagement cannot be ignored and has to be acknowledged that for the vast majority of residents in Dunstable a Neighbourhood Plan is not a priority. Of course, there will always be single matter issues which arise over time, but knowing what these could be is almost crystal ball gazing both in knowing where these will be and what residents want to achieve from these sites. Largely speaking this is unknown.
- 14.3 Neighbourhood Planning is a significant commitment in time and money for potentially minimal return. Officers cannot recommend this route as a guaranteed method to address local need. Issues raised by residents cannot be addressed by planning policy because they are outside of its remit (e.g. keep banks on the high street and address vacant units). There are other actions that the Town Council can take on these matters, but if officer resources are directed to a Neighbourhood Plan Members these opportunities may not be able to be taken up due to officer capacity and resources. The recommendation is not to commence a Neighbourhood Plan for Dunstable.

15 AUTHOR

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CLIENT ADVICE NOTE.

Project: Dunstable Town Council Neighbourhood Plan Scoping
Ref: 4024_013
Date: 11th October 2024

Circulation: Becky Wisbey - Communities Manager,
Paul Hodson- Town Clerk,
Charlotte Morris (ONH)

SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Dunstable Town Council (DTC) has engaged ONeill Homer (ONH) to support the Working Party (WP) in the scoping of a potential Dunstable Neighbourhood Plan (DNP). The administrative parish of Dunstable is situated in the local planning authority area of Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). A 5-step process was commissioned in May 2024 to explore the scope of any future DNP. This note captures the outputs of that process and sets out some further thoughts on the context and nature of the project. The note also makes a series of recommendations for how the project may wish to proceed in the coming months. It is for the WP to consider in agreeing how to take the project forward and its recommendations to Full Council.
- 1.2. This specification document sets out the recommended policy scope and outline of ideas for any DNP, informed by the sessions with the WP, responses to early stakeholder engagement, the national and local planning policy landscape and in light of the challenges presented by the recently delivered and planned for growth of the town and its infrastructure. To accompany the document is a simple project plan showing sequenced and calendared task durations and their inter-dependencies.
- 1.3. The absence of a policy idea from this note does not mean that the issue is not important, nor that it cannot be explored as the project proceeds. The paper is not an expression of the final content of any DNP, it simply sets out a starting point to assist the Town Council in defining a manageable project. The action plan may lead to ideas that the WP wishes to explore that is not currently included within this report. Equally, once the evidence has been explored further, it may suggest that the issue is adequately dealt with through existing or forthcoming national and CBC policies.

2. KEY POINTS RAISED

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- i. Managing expectations of what a Neighbourhood Plan can and can't do is important.
- ii. It will be important for the WP to provide regular updates to DTC as the 'qualifying body' who will take the DNP through its formal stages (see Figure 1 below).
- iii. A key difference in preparing Neighbourhood Plans from other development plan documents is the requirement to secure a successful referendum from the local community before the plan can be 'made'.
- iv. A Neighbourhood Plan is tested against a number of basic conditions. In essence, the conditions are:
 - ✓ Has the Plan had full regard to national planning policy?
 - ✓ Is the Plan in general conformity with strategic planning policy?
 - ✓ Does the plan promote the principles of sustainable development?
 - ✓ Has the process of making the plan met the requirements of European law?

The Process and Roles

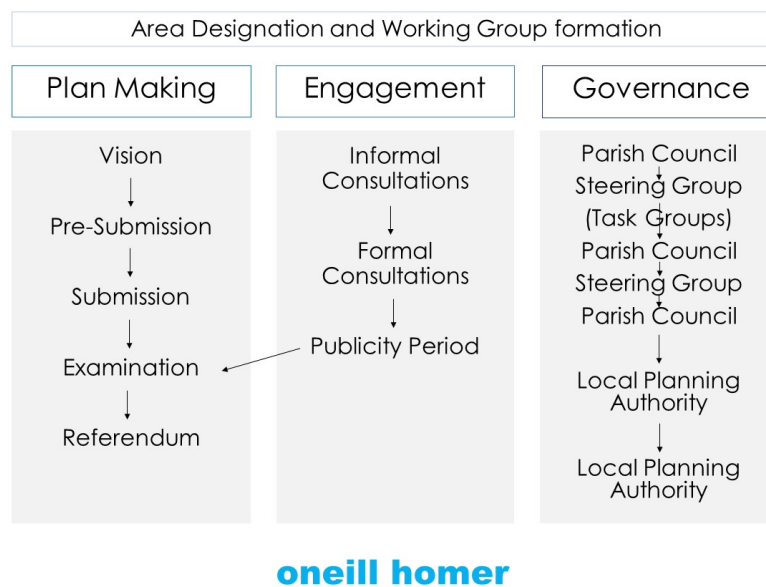


Figure 1: The neighbourhood planning process and roles

BOUNDARY OPTIONS - THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

It is in the gift of the DTC to determine the “designated area” for inclusion within any DNP. During the scoping process the extent of the proposed area to be designated was briefly discussed and whether there was any justification to propose a broader or indeed narrower definition than the current administrative boundary of Dunstable. There was no case to consider extending the remit of the DNP to include areas beyond the current parish boundary and whilst a focus of any DNP was likely be within the Town Centre, the WG were keen to explore policy areas which covered the whole of Dunstable.

Therefore, it is suggested, if a neighbourhood plan is taken forward, that the designated area reflects the current administrative boundary, thus including all wards of the Town Council area.

PLANNING ISSUES

Plan: Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Local Plan

- The current [Local Plan](#) was adopted in 2021 and covers the period 2015 - 2035. It contains a wide range of strategic and non-strategic policies and proposals covering the DNP area.
- CBC announced a review of the Local Plan and published an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) in December 2023. This included early public and stakeholder engagement scheduled for Spring 2024 (delayed, just completed 23rd September), Regulation 18 in Spring 2026, and Regulation 19 in Autumn 2027, with a view to adoption in December 2028.
- Therefore, the emerging Local Plan is a considerable way off publishing any draft proposals, other than consideration of high-level scoping, but progress of the Plan should be monitored for further detail once available.
- The goal for the DNP is to either fill a policy gap, refine an existing CBC policy so that it better suits the plan area and/or update and replace a non-strategic CBC policy where necessary and justified.
- The DNP must avoid repeating or wordsmithing existing CBC (or national) policy as this will add no value, it will take up valuable time and resource, and very likely the examiner will recommend to CBC it is deleted from the referendum version.
- CBC has recently produced a number of [Supplementary Planning Documents](#) that may inform the DNP. These include [vehicle charging guidance](#), [parking standards](#), [design guidance](#), [housing policy technical guidance](#), and [sustainable drainage](#).
- CBC has also produced a range of Technical Documents to provide additional guidance.
[Infrastructure Delivery Plan](#)
[Biodiversity Net Gain](#)
[Green Infrastructure Plans](#)
[Landscape Character Assessment](#)
[Renewable Energy Guidance](#)
[Natural Environment \(Environmental Framework\)](#)
[Air Quality Guidance](#)
[Tranquillity Study](#)
- A [Dunstable Conservation Area](#) Appraisal was prepared in 2010 and a Town Centre [Masterplan for Dunstable](#) was created in 2011

EARLY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Initial engagement work was carried out in early July 2024 as part of the scoping exercise, principally through a stall at Party in the Park and a questionnaire on the Town Council website, advertised in the usual outlets including Talk of the Town. It was successful as an initial step in establishing local opinions on planning (and other) matters. However, there was only a very modest response level with some of the responses not relating to a Neighbourhood Plan such as community activities, public realm

cleanliness, types of shops in the town centre etc. There was a level of contradiction in several of the recurring themes, for example, some respondents felt transport links and access to the town centre were high valued, yet others felt it could be better; some felt access to green spaces was excellent, yet others felt more was needed.

Concern was raised over the engagement level from both the public and CBC during this time. Anecdotally, officers have indicated low engagement levels from the community to the recent CBC Local Plan consultation as well.

It was discussed with the WP that engagement levels are generally lower in larger communities and harder to attain, particularly if there are no policy areas which are perceived as controversial! As such, the Town Council, who are best placed to know their community, will need to draw their own conclusions from the engagement levels and take a view on whether the responses provided give sufficient mandate to seek to progress a Neighbourhood Plan.

A meeting was also held between officers at DTC and CBC as part of the initial engagement which has assisted in informing the scoping process. Feedback from officers indicated that there was limited enthusiasm from CBC to direct involvement in any Dunstable Neighbourhood Plan. This is not unexpected and has been a lived experience elsewhere. We are all aware how resource constrained local councils are currently and whilst CBC does have a dedicated Neighbourhood Plan Officer, with competing priorities across departments (particularly when CBC has a role as landowner of key properties as well as being the planning authority and a housing provider) these add layers of complexity. As such, we discussed with the WP that Dunstable may not be a high priority for the LPA currently so whilst all parties will continue to work in co-operation (and utilise the resource of the Dunstable Joint Committee wherever possible), in order to manage expectations, it cannot be assumed that collaborative project working would arise through the course of the creation of a neighbourhood plan.

At the WP scoping workshop session, we therefore focused on the following areas that were given the highest priority by both the WP and community respondents and are considered to relate to land use and development, therefore falling within the scope of any plan:

- Town Centre (enhancement, focus, public realm)
- Brownfield development/redevelopment opportunities.
- Intensification of uses (including building heights)
- Air quality.
- Protection and enhancement of green infrastructure and local green spaces
- Improving cycling and walking infrastructure across Dunstable but also with a focus on the town centre.
- Protecting local heritage assets and enhancing the conservation area
- Incorporating sustainability in design

SCOPING SESSION DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The following points and observations were noted during the session:

The emerging CBC Local Plan is at a very early stage. Whilst the authority is currently meeting its 5-year housing land supply target, the Local Plan will be out of date from 2026 and is unlikely to be adopted before 2029. The target date on the LDS is December 2027 but the time allowed for examination may

be optimistic given the average Local Plan examination is taking around 2 years so early 2028/2029 may be more likely.

Given that may be the case, any DNP would have a role to play in filling the policy space that will likely exist as well providing longer term control and shaping of the local planning environment. The question for DTC to consider is whether that space is important enough to proactively fill with a Neighbourhood Plan.

Realistically, future development in Dunstable is going to be focused inward and upward, rather than outward. There is a lack of developable land on the outskirts of Dunstable and any land not already developed is almost wholly within the Green Belt. It is however, unlikely, that Dunstable will not have to deliver any housing.

A sample number of potential brownfield sites were identified and discussed to illustrate what may come forward; it is likely that there a detailed capacity assessment would identify more sites but this exercise demonstrated where potential areas for growth may be.

We also discussed the role of CBC within any DNP and the differentiation of its role as Local Planning Authority and that of local landowner. There is nothing to preclude any DNP from setting policy on land owned by CBC, so long as it is evidenced and appropriate. Given there is no clear direction in terms of asset development or disposal, eg the former CBC offices, using a DNP to set parameters for such sites, including type of development, design etc.. would ensure they fit with the overall vision for the town.

There was concern the conservation area is in significant decline, predominately through neglect and it was felt should be classed as “at risk”.

The WP, at a previous meeting, reviewed the principles of the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan (2011) and felt they were still relevant today, with the addition of two further principles

- 1) *A diverse mix of activities to attract people throughout the day and evening*
- 2) *A series of inviting landmarks, views and buildings*
- 3) *An accessible location by all available, sustainable transport modes*
- 4) *A connected network of public streets, spaces and parks*
- 5) *New Objective: Protect and enhance the conservation area*
- 6) *New Objective: sustainable developments including tree coverage etc.*

We discussed how the Masterplan was a supporting document to the Local Plan but could be strengthened through a Neighbourhood Plan if the principles could be translated into appropriate policies so they would then form part of the Development Plan itself.

The Town Centre is clearly a key focus for both the Council and the community, who understand that changing consumer behaviours have impacted retail and caused a shift in the way the town centre is used and that concentrating footfall in the centre is difficult, particularly with issues of connectivity between the “quadrants”.

Early engagement indicated an appreciation of the public realm, ease of access for pedestrians, the heritage and architecture of the town and its parks and gardens but also noted high vacancy rates and a want for a better retail experience and suggested more mixed-use buildings or utilisation of empty units for community uses with a suggestion for a transformation plan to meet future need.

We then focused on a recent town centre planning permission at Vernon Place for a residential led (100% affordable) mixed use scheme we noted the following:

- 5-storey development - is this now a norm, increasing building height?
- Car-free - benefits for the town centre? Bringing additional footfall, not increasing pollution/congestion?
- Weight given by CBC to its importance for commercial use, given located outside boundary of primary shopping area - should a NP review this boundary?
- Felt there was a need for ground floor retail space but only “multi-purpose” commercial space retained ground floor - this allows for a community use of the building but group considered this to be prime footfall / retail area.
- Design constraints and town centre planning

A DNP may decide not to allocate sites and a NP should not be viewed as a means to avoid housing but an assessment of what might come forward would enable a DNP to take an informed view on brownfield locations. There was concern that whilst there is a need for affordable housing, young families don't want flats as they want gardens; the problem being is the lack of brownfield sites with sufficient space to accommodate this, particularly in the town centre, so how could this be worked around?

This naturally moved into a discussion about green spaces, with the WP thinking it be helpful for the community to allocate open spaces as Local Green Spaces for extra protection, even though the council already owns many of them.

In managing expectations, it was acknowledged that a Neighbourhood Plan cannot address all of Dunstable's concerns. Whilst Neighbourhood Plans are the only statutory vehicle to enable DTC to fill the space in terms of the CBC Development Plan, there are other options available to DTC if they decide not to take forward a DNP. These may include:

- Identifying key sites for development, create site briefs of key principles.
- Responding to planning applications as they come forward.
- Engaging and submit responses to the Local Plan consultation process.
- Updating the town centre masterplan as a stand-alone document to prepare for funding. Opportunities e.g Community right to Buy.

3. GENERATING POLICY IDEAS.

3.1. The WP reviewed the “vision” in the 2011 Masterplan and suggested it be amended as follows:

Dunstable will become a better connected, vibrant and thriving town. Protecting and enhancing its heritage and green spaces, it will become an affordable, attractive and accessible option for residents, educators, students, employees, employers, investors and visitors alike. The town will bring more to a wider range of people, offering an experience that will make it stand out from the crowd”.

With around ¾ of respondents agreeing with this statement it may provide an appropriate vision for any DNP.

3.2. As a well located and attractive principal settlement within Central Bedfordshire, Dunstable is a popular place to live. Residents place a high value on its accessibility to services and facilities and

its proximity to the surrounding countryside. There has been significant investment in infrastructure since 2011, detailed on the CBC website including: [Luton-Dunstable guided busway](#), [Leisure Centre & Library](#), [Skate Park](#), Refurbishment of Central Bedfordshire College Campus, [De-trunking of Dunstable High Street and completion of phase 1 works](#), [A5-M1 Link Road and Woodside Link](#), [Market Town Regeneration Fund](#), Splash Park, [Priory View - Housing for older people](#)

- 3.3. Market towns, such as Dunstable have traditionally thrived around their blend of history and heritage, culture and vibrancy of their communities, drawn together through the provision of goods and services which could be procured from the town centre.
- 3.4. Dunstable Town Centre retains the traditional values of a market town, providing a central place to bring people together. However, in responding to changing shopping habits, increasing town centre residential development and potentially a change of focus for footfall for community and retail facilities, a DNP could consider a focused policy to codify particular areas and spaces (zones) in the town centre as well as revisiting the defined primary shopping area.
- 3.5. In managing expectations, it is accepted that in some areas the DNP can be used to directly control land use through policy, in other areas it will need to use the policies to seek to influence and shape development.
- 3.6. Due to its position as a first-tier settlement within Central Bedfordshire, whilst any DNP would not seek to make greenfield allocations for development, its capacity to do so is classified as medium/low (low without greenbelt release)¹ it would be prudent to recognise that the town may be required to bring forward additional sites as part of the emerging Local Plan through brownfield redevelopment so understanding where such opportunities may exist across the Dunstable area.
- 3.7. In undertaking a brownfield opportunities/capacity assessment across the Dunstable area, not only may potential development sites be identified but would also highlight which areas in active employment use should be protected from change of use to residential in order to ensure the commercial viability of the area is maintained. (Where they are not already protected through designation in the current Local Plan.)
- 3.8. Green spaces are incredibly important to local people, both in the open countryside and within the town itself. Whilst the opportunities for creating large parcels of new green spaces is very limited, new development, particularly in the town centre, can respond to the desire for local people to see improved green infrastructure, by offering opportunities to improve the local environment through urban greening, measures to reduce air pollution and creative street scene enhancements as well as improving connectivity between the two main parks.
- 3.9. From the outputs of the WP scoping meeting, the objectives for any Neighbourhood Plan for Dunstable are:

¹ [CBC Settlement Capacity Assessment 2017](#)

- Revisit the Dunstable Masterplan, consider what has changed and how the town centre can respond to those changes through planning policy.
- Understanding how the Town Centre functions today in order to promote commercial viability and understand where a mix of uses including residential can help maintain and increase footfall, vibrancy and sustainability of the defined primary retail area.
- Identifying the capacity of potential brownfield opportunities for residential development to understand where redevelopment may be appropriate.
- Identifying any land in employment or community uses not currently safeguarded, where they are not appropriate for redevelopment to residential uses.
- Seeking to ensure the right mix of housing is delivered, not just flats. Where flats are considered, ensuring they have access to high quality amenity and green spaces.
- To protect and enhance the local green spaces that are highly valued by the community.
- Defining a green infrastructure network for the purpose of providing an environmental support system for the community and wildlife to protect and improve.
- Defining a sustainable travel network to promote active travel and secure investment in traffic management schemes which prioritise these methods of moving around the town.
- Define local design principle to nuance the CBC Design SPD, for use across Dunstable ensuring new development is energy efficient and contains appropriate amenity spaces.
- Creation of a Town Centre Design code, which considers “zone” in terms of uses, how to respond to intensification of town centres through increased building heights and addresses how the town centre functions are changing.
- Seeking to respond to the erosion of the Conservation Area and to encourage improvement/enhancement.

3.10. In distilling both the responses to early engagement and the outputs of the scoping session with the WP, the proposed possible policy areas for any DNP are as follows:

- DUN1 - Spatial Strategy
- DUN2 - Design Principles (inc. energy efficiency & performance and infilling)
- DUN3 - Brownfield Opportunities
- DUN4 - Employment Locations
- DUN5 - Town Centre Design Coding/Zoning
- DUN6 - Conservation Area Enhancement (including retrofitting)
- DUN7 - Housing Mix and Type
- DUN8 - Air Quality & Urban Greening
- DUN9 - Green Infrastructure
- DUN10 - Local Green Spaces
- DUN11 - Active Travel
- DUN12 - Chiltern Beechwoods SAC

3.11. The list is not exhaustive but provides definition for formulating the Action Plan, below. It is at the discretion of the WP and the DTC to agree the scope of the plan and add to, or remove, any policy ideas as it sees fit.

4. ACTION PLAN

- 4.1. Each of the proposed policy areas have sufficient planning issues to warrant further investigation as to how any DNP might help address them and further investigations may be well suited to smaller, focused policy idea groups (task teams), bringing the outputs back to a main Steering Group.
- 4.2. The current WP should consider the action plan set out below to discuss and agree the preferred approach in taking the policy ideas forward should they so choose.
- 4.3. In managing any subsequent DNP, it is suggested that progress reports should be presented to each Steering Group meeting, to enable identification of any crossovers or tensions between policy areas (and to prevent two groups searching for the same data for example). The Teams may be drawn from the existing WP membership and from others in the local community with an interest or expertise in the subject.
- 4.4. We also strongly recommend the setting up a small sub-group to plan and manage community engagement work throughout the project to reduce the resourcing required from DTC officers. The sub-group should decide what form each 'conversation' should take: events, leaflets, social media content, surveys/questionnaires, exhibitions etc. Each will be designed to suit the timing and purpose of each 'conversation'. Although the second 'conversation' is framed by the statutory regulations, there is nothing to stop the team from planning actions to publicise and to inform those formal consultations.
- 4.5. Throughout this process, a record of consultation and updates needs to be kept and collated in the final Consultation Statement (prepared by the SG) that will be submitted with the Submission Plan, along with the Basic Conditions Statement (prepared by ONH). ONH can provide worked examples of a Consultation Statement.
- 4.6. Given the early engagement work carried out in July 2024, the proposed project timetable schedules the next informal engagement in early Spring 2025. This should enable sufficient time to plan the exercise. The essential content of each emerging policy idea should be tested with local people, and key stakeholders identified through the Step 2 stakeholder mapping process. Some policy ideas may fall as a result of the feedback and others may emerge.

POLICY IDEA NUMBER AND TITLE	POLICY IDEAS	ACTION PLAN
<p>DUN1 - Spatial Strategy</p>	<p>This policy idea provides a high-level spatial approach to ensuring that Dunstable functions well in accordance with the vision and promotes a healthy, inclusive and resilient community.</p> <p>The policy idea is to set out the main development and land use strategy in both the town centre and the wider Neighbourhood Plan area.</p> <p>The focus for new development in Dunstable will be inward, reusing brownfield land. The principles developed through subsequent policy areas in the plan will shape how the supply of developable land over the Plan period.</p> <p>Across Dunstable, residential development will accord with “Healthy Homes” principles or “Building for a Healthy Life” principles; well connected to their local surroundings with nearby access to green spaces, with good access to active travel options, sustainable and respond to climate change.</p> <p>Outside the town centre, the residential character of the suburban areas of the town will be sustained and enhanced through sensitively designed high quality infill and plot redevelopment which responds to its surroundings.</p> <p>Dunstable is a significant location for industry and development will continue to support the creation of opportunities for new employment and business as well as intensification/expansion of existing businesses where appropriate, to support the local and wider economy, particularly where they positively contribute to the low carbon economy and provide</p>	<p>ACTION 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is this overall spatial approach correct? Is there anything missing? ○ What features and characteristics identify and define the various areas of Dunstable? ○ What should be the definition of the Town Centre? (also see Policy area DUN5) ○ The WP may wish to review the TCPA Health Homes Principles and the Building for a Healthy Life Principles to consider whether these should be a key tenet across the DNP policies and then expanded upon in Policy area DUN2 ○ This policy idea could also define areas where support would not be given to repurpose, infill or change uses classes, or conversely, where support for particular improvements or enhancements to the areas identified would be given.

	<p>improved connectivity to active travel and green infrastructure.</p> <p>Within the Town Centre a focus on renewal and repurposing, through a mix of uses, building heights and gentle densification will contribute to bolstering its vitality and viability as the focus for retail and other town centre uses. Development will reduce reliance on the private car to alleviate congestion and air pollution and promote urban greening and walkable communities.</p> <p>Key public realm investment opportunities will be identified (such as Ashton Square) with enhanced green spaces and planting to promote health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Through conversion of vacant or underutilised brownfield areas to residential in identified locations, there is potential for a mix of types of development including senior living, students, affordable and open market.</p> <p>Within the Conservation area development will support and improve the the historic and heritage assets located within, to enhance the setting of the area.</p>	
<p>DUN2 - Design Principles (inc. energy efficiency & performance and infilling)</p>	<p>This policy idea takes a high-level view of design across the DNP area. The town’s rich history has resulted in generally an urban form of architectural diversity across the town and the policy seeks to respond to this by identifying essential design characteristics, ensuring future development respects and responds to these.</p> <p>Addressing infill development, there could be a focus on individual plots, providing parameters for infilling to avoid overdevelopment through codifying layout, design and density.</p> <p>The WP raised concern that new development is not providing sufficient private and public amenity space, particularly in flatted developments. This policy area can respond to this, detailing how garden /outdoor space should be incorporated wherever possible and how wider landscaping should be approached to maximise green spaces and planting.</p>	<p>ACTION 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are these essential design characteristics of Dunstable? Are they different in particular areas of? ○ Are we right to want to be prescriptive of what design should look like or should we be more flexible and leave it to each scheme to decide? ○ Commission a Dunstable Wide Design Code package from the <u>Locality Technical Support Programme</u> which provides this free of charge for neighbourhood plans. ONH can also provide this service if the Locality programme closes.

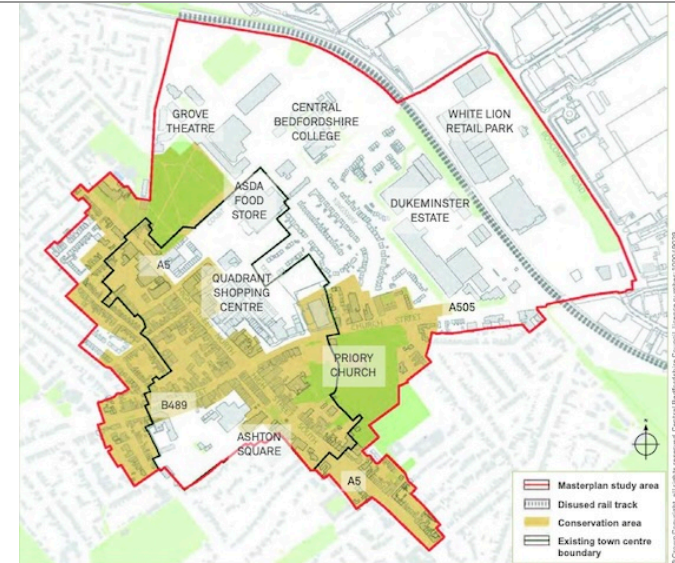
	<p>This policy could also translate the healthy homes principles (See policy area DUN1) into policy. This will include consideration of climate change resilience and energy efficiency standards within new buildings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A smaller task group may wish to review the <u>Design Guide SPD (2023)</u> at CBC to ascertain where additional detailing for Dunstable is required, identify landmark buildings, detailing their importance and obtain good and bad examples of design in recent developments to assist this policy idea. ○ Should we include principles for commercial/industrial design as well as residential?
<p>DUN3 - Brownfield Opportunities</p>	<p>This policy idea recognises that there is likely to be further residential development within Dunstable in the coming years. With very limited greenfield opportunities, the focus for any DNP would be on identifying appropriate brownfield sites which are either vacant (former CBC building), underutilised or in an area where residential development would contribute to improving community cohesion and create sustainable, walkable communities.</p> <p>The policy idea can consider the creation of an allocations policy for specified sites as well as providing a policy lever for their inclusion on part 2 of the CBC Brownfield Register which effectively provides permission in principle, de-risking the sites for developers but providing control and certainty for the DNP in how and where sites come forward.</p> <p>The policy area will also need to explore the current position in respect of employment sites identified within the Local Plan as having potential for non-employment uses as well as other sites not designated in the Local Plan as strategic employment sites.</p>	<p>ACTION 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Both ONH and a task team could each produce a long list of potential sites through an internal identification process. These lists will be mapped and presented to the group to validate prior to a site selection workshop led by ONH, before approaching potential developers/site promoters. ○ Policy EMP2 Local Plan identifies a number of sites within Dunstable as having potential for non-employment uses. WP to review the current active use of each area to consider if location is suitable for residential. These are found in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan - Sidings Way, Woodside Ind Estate, and French's Avenue. Is this correct, what is their current status. ○ The research/evidence gathering in this policy area will also inform policy area DUN4, preventing duplication of work. ○ The WP will also need to consider initial parameters in terms of what is sought to be achieved through site

		<p>allocations to focus the consideration of potential sites, such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) In the Town Centre, increasing density or considering mixed use sites (ground floor retails or community facilities with residential accommodation above)? 2) Provide sufficient development to facilitate and/or deliver infrastructure improvements in the town ? 3) A desire to enhance footfall the town centre and promote public realm improvements? 4) Promote housing to attract different demographics? 5) Preserve and enhance key landmark buildings?
<p>DUN4 - Employment Locations.</p>	<p>The government is keen to ensure previously developed (brownfield) land is considered for residential redevelopment and the technical assessment under policy area DUN3 would consider this. However, not all brownfield sites are suitable for redevelopment. Some sites may support the local economy, provide employment opportunities and contribute to a balanced, vibrant community.</p> <p>Policy idea DUN4 could therefore seek to identify established employment locations in Dunstable, which are not already covered by the Local Plan Strategic Employment policy, to protect them from a change of use to non-employment uses and to support their intensification where appropriate.</p>	<p>ACTION 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The group should start by reviewing the 2017 CBC Functional <u>Economic Market Assessment & Employment Land Review</u> (inc sites) to consider what has changed since the 2016 study; post covid what has changed e.g more logistics parks and reviewing the Local Plan policies map to see which locations are already identified as strategic employment sites. ○ Local Plan Policy EMP1: Small and Medium Employment Sites, allocates the following sites for employment development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arenson Way, Woodside Estate, Dunstable; • Eyncourt Road, Dunstable; <p>What is the current position on these?</p> ○ Alongside this it is recommended to have a conversation with local commercial agents/land interests as to where the market is at.

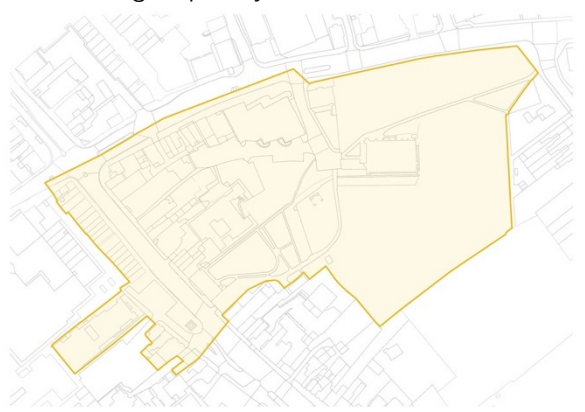
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Once the group has the evidence to hand, they can come to a view based on this information of land in employment uses, making a clear distinction between those locations in general terms which are of more strategic value due to their proximity to highway network and remoteness from residential areas. ○ The policy could then define these locations in order to protect them. It can also identify where sites have the potential for making better use of the land and premises for infill, redevelopment and refurbishment to create new jobs in modern, flexible business units at higher job densities (i.e. FTE jobs per sq.m. floorspace). This intensification of use will mitigate the loss of other brownfield sites for residential re-development (policy area DUN6)
<p>DUN5 - Town Centre Design Coding/Zoning</p>	<p>This policy idea seeks to tightly focus on the town centre of Dunstable from the high-level spatial strategy in DUN1. It will consider how it functions as a place to live, work, study, visit and enjoy.</p> <p>Where is the town centre core focus? The crossroads, the Local Plan defined boundary, the Masterplan boundary or something else? has the town centre evolved in a particular direction?</p> <p>It would then seek to define a clear set of rules which will guide future development.</p> <p>It can identify key opportunity areas (eg Ashton Square) and set specific parameters around new development including uses of spaces, heights of buildings and types and mixes of building within specified character areas within the town centre. This could include “zones” where inclusion on part 2 of the CBC brownfield register would be supported for</p>	<p>ACTION 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the WP wish to consider this policy area, it should start with a review 2011 Town Centre Masterplan .

residential (see policy area DUN3 above) or where particular commercial activities are encouraged or where proposals which highlight landmark buildings or protect the historic fabric of the town are encouraged. A shop fronts policy within the conservation area can support the visual aspect of the town centre as an attractive destination.

The idea is to guide development, including public realm in accordance with the original and new masterplan principles. It could also discourage certain changes of use, where they do not accord with the vision, such as ground floor residential in the primary shopping area.



- Consider what has been delivered, what has not and what still could be? The masterplan brief was a response to a number of issues at the time, including traffic congestion, air quality, high vacancy rates, and a declining retail offer.
- Consider the currently defined primary shopping area (Local Plan policy R1) - is this boundary still appropriate or should it be revisited and potentially altered to include/exclude other areas and why?
- The group will need to establish the current health of the retail offering across the town. Liaise with CBC to ascertain when they will commission of an updated [Town Centre Retail Study](#) (2016) or liaise with the economic development team to consider the current position in relation to retail and commercial, vacancy rates etc..

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider the commissioning of a Town Centre specific Design Code/Masterplanning technical support package from Locality to identify the key opportunity areas and set design rules for areas such as building heights and shops fronts.
<p>DUN6 - Conservation Area Enhancement (including retrofitting)</p>	<p>This policy area responds to the concern over the erosion of the Conservation Area (CA) and a new objective identified by the WP to protect and enhance it. A DNP is not able to play an enforcement role in respect of the current state of some of the buildings within the CA but can encourage the re-development of buildings which make a negative contribution to their character and appearance and identify opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>The CA appraisal in 2010 stated <i>“The crossroads, the historic and physical heart of the town, ought to be a visual focal point; instead it is a hostile environment. The buildings at three of the four corners here are poor in quality, and the end of the important historic and townscape group of Middle Row is disfigured by advertisement hoardings and insensitive modern shop fronts.”</i></p> <p>The Dunstable High Street Heritage Action Zone focus has been on Middle Row and the north end of High Street South. Is this still the correct focus? Alongside policies DUN3 and DUN5, this policy can also identify development opportunities which would have a positive impact of the conservation area as well as detailing a short fronts policy to seek to control future changes.</p> <p>Repair and refurbishment should have a positive effect on the CA, particularly around the crossroads where the “quadrants” or character areas (as defined in the CA appraisal) come together at the heart of the historic town. Are the defined characteristics of the quadrants still correct?</p> <p>Buildings can fall into disrepair due to the perceived inability to retrofit to modern standards within a conservation area. This policy can guide effective promote and retrofitting, so it can be undertaken sensitively</p>	<p>ACTION 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The group should review the <u>Conservation Area Appraisal</u> from 2010. What has changed since - have the proposed boundary changes been implemented. If not, is there a case for the creation of Areas of Special Character in any DNP to include the proposed western, south-eastern and south-western extensions? (Note a DNP cannot change the boundary of a CA but can introduce non-designated heritage assets to highlight their importance - See Historic England Guidance) ○ The WP should meet with the CBC Conservation/Heritage Officer to discuss any proposed changes to the Conservation Area in the emerging Local Plan. ○ How has the Heritage Action Zone helped enhance the area? The group may wish to review its work to date. 

	<p>within the conservation area, enabling fit for purpose refurbishment which is climate resilient and reduces energy costs.</p>	<p>High Street Heritage Action Zone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WP might like to read the Climate Emergency Conservation Area Toolkit Dec 2022 by ACAN and then work through the toolkit to establish whether there are specific opportunities that can be identified to encourage, guide or permit effective retrofitting measures in the Conservation Area
<p>DUN7 - Housing Mix and Type</p>	<p>The SG has confirmed the desirability of the provision of new affordable homes to serve the needs of local people in particular young people and older persons.</p> <p>This policy idea would work alongside policy area D3 which would identify principles for development within brownfield sites.</p> <p>Viability can often be an issue on brownfield sites and as such, whilst the policy would be a material consideration, whatever the housing mix and type specified, it will need to be supported by a Housing Needs Assessment to justify the policy.</p>	<p>ACTION 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meet with the Housing Enabling team at CBC to discuss your housing aspirations and in respect of additional affordable schemes in the town centre. Request the current position for housing need and opportunities to identify land to meet this demand. ○ Commission a Housing Needs Assessment from the <u>Locality Technical Support Programme</u> which provides this as a free package for neighbourhood plans. Ask specifically for an assessment for older persons and younger persons. ○ Confirm with CBC when they will be undertaking the HNA for the Local Plan (although this will not be specific to Dunstable)
<p>DUN8 - Air Quality & Urban Greening</p>	<p>This policy area considers the concern raised by the WP over air quality in Dunstable.</p> <p>The town centre was declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2005 due to nitrogen dioxide levels, principally from road traffic emissions. That designation is still in place, although the most recent</p>	<p>ACTION 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review the CBC Air Quality page and the 2024 status report as well as the CBC <u>Air Quality Guidance (SPD) 2022</u> ○ The Action Plan for Dunstable does not appear on the website; could the WP locate this and review its content to

	<p>monitoring report shows levels are reducing and are within 10% of the Air Quality Objective AQO</p> <p>However, this policy can respond to the desire to seek continue improvement, ensuring that development does not cause or contribute to worsening air quality and includes measures to further improve air quality by contributing to the removal of air pollution at source by encouraging more active travel, more efficient buildings, use of cleaner vehicles etc.</p> <p>It also seeks to mitigate exposure to pollution through urban greening measures in the design of buildings, hard surfacing and landscaping, particularly in the town centre e.g planting trees and other vegetation in the right places to form a barrier between people and pollutants and using planting to remove some particulates.</p> <p>This policy area could also include measures such as increasing the number of trees in streets and tree canopy cover, encouraging the use of green walls and the introduction of pocket parks and where trees are removed through development that they are replaced 2 for 1.</p>	<p>see if any of the actions contained within would be appropriate measures to consider within the policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review the Local Plan Policy T5: Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles - could this be further nuanced for application within Dunstable? ○ Read the Woodland Trust webpage - Tackling Air Pollution with Trees ○ Review the Natural England Urban Greening Factor report and consider whether the creation of an Urban Greening Factor for Dunstable would be appropriate for this policy area.
<p>DUN9 - Green Infrastructure</p>	<p>Leading on from policy idea DUN8, this policy area takes a wider look at the Green Infrastructure (GI) network. GI a term that covers a wide range of natural, ecological and recreational features, including parks, woodlands, water bodies, hedgerows, mature trees, lines of street trees, allotments etc that combine to create habitat networks. In urban areas like Dunstable, they enable those networks to extend from the surrounding countryside into quite densely built-up areas, where open spaces and ecological value is more difficult to come by. All those features need to be mapped to show not just where they are but also to point to where the network may be improved to be better connected if land is developed or redeveloped.</p> <p>The policy idea is to protect the existing green infrastructure from harmful development and to encourage its improvement and better connectivity (e.g between Grove Gardens and Priory Gardens) The policy should also seek to work with Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership and the Bedfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>	<p>ACTION 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review all of the existing publicly available environmental data (e.g. Magic Map, local ecological surveys, talk to and obtain GI data from Bedfordshire Naturally to map all existing green infrastructure assets/designations. ○ Once environmental data mapped, identify opportunities for improvement e.g., potential for defining linked ecological corridors, renewable energy generation, carbon sequestration projects, flood alleviation/re-wilding, biodiversity ‘net gain’ opportunity areas, community orchards, and opportunities to green the urban environment, tree lined streets etc

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note: This policy idea will involve a significant amount of mapping layers of existing and new information to create a single GI Plan which will form the basis of a GI policy map. The SG may wish to speak to the CBC Neighbourhood Plan Officer for the provision of mapping layers if available on ArcGIS. (alternatively these may be available from Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership) ○ If they cannot, please refer to ONH for assistance as we can prepare mapping (at cost)
DUN10 - Local Green Spaces	<p>The green infrastructure network will include some land that may qualify as a Local Green Space. These spaces are particularly special and cherished by the local community for a combination of their public access, tranquillity and recreational value. They would be especially missed if they were to be lost to development. A number of this spaces are owned by DTC and as such have a level of existing protection, albeit not in planning policy terms.</p> <p>The policy idea is to designate Local Green Spaces in the area, but for each space we will need to describe why it is special. Once designated these sites are afforded a high level of protection from development.</p>	<p>ACTION 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assess those candidates of Local Green Space designation against tests set out in §106 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). See Cumnor's Local Green Spaces Report as an example report here and the Locality guide here ○ The landowners of any candidate sites will need to be contacted prior to the Regulation 14 stage of the DNP to advise them of their inclusion and give them the opportunity to comment. ONH can provide a template letter as required.
DUN11 - Active Travel	<p>The WP identified active travel as a key area of focus for improve accessibility of both the town centre and the wider area (ie how easy it is for people to reach and use.)</p> <p>Policy area DUN5 can include principles on use of space and layout to ensure the town centre is an attractive place to visit, but improving how residents and visitors move through Dunstable on foot, by bicycle and by</p>	<p>ACTION 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Map all sustainable travel routes (bus routes, cycling routes and walking routes) and identify opportunities for improvement. See example from Twyford Neighbourhood Plan here. ○ Review the CBC Dunstable LCWIP (Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan) (adopted March 2024) by

	<p>public transport and in particular how they access the town centre, requires understanding the options and opportunities for active travel.</p> <p>This policy idea is therefore to map the existing active travel network (walking, cycling, bus routes,) and to use the status of the DNP to draw to the attention of developers where this network is so that they can take it into account in designing their proposals, and especially how their schemes are accessed if they are located next to the network.</p> <p>The WP felt the Busway is excellent for getting in and out of the town but public transport connectivity within the town is poor. There is also a range of village bus routes coming in and out of the town, which need to be retained. As such, the map can also identify opportunities for improvement for public transport as well as walking and cycling, to encourage a higher uptake of active travel modes of transport and assisting decision makers and developers in prioritising funding when investing in the network.</p>	<p>which has identified and mapped a network of active travel routes for walking and cycling through the area. Its aim is to make sure these routes are protected and improved to encourage more walking and cycling in the future. These should be added to the mapping and the status of any improvement proposals noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Think about how have recent improvements in the town centre helped to prioritise walking and cycling? Are there suitable cycle storage facilities within the town? Are there any barriers to pedestrian movement? ○ Can all residents/visitors/workers access a bus within 400m of their location? In addressing the concern over public transport connectivity are there gaps in the network? ○ Review the Accessible Guide to Dunstable
<p>DUN12 - Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation</p>	<p>This policy area responds to the <u>Mitigation Strategy (2023)</u> formulated by CBC in respect of managing the recreational pressure effects of future housing development within the 12.6 km ‘zone of influence’ of the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area for Conservation (SAC). Part of the DNP area lies within that zone.</p> <p>The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) which will be required for the DNP will need to see that this policy is in place to ensure that the potential for adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC arising from any development provisions within the DNP can be satisfactorily mitigated through the SANG and SAMM provisions in place.</p>	<p>ACTION 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is no action required by the Group for this policy, OHN will produce the draft policy wording and will assist officers in requesting an HRA screening opinion from CBC. ○ It will then be agreed with CBC what information if any CBC needs to inform the Appropriate Assessment before producing its final screening opinion.

5. TECHNICAL STUDIES

- 5.1. As the Plan considers the identification/ potential allocation of brownfield development sites CBC will likely require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which is a parallel process designed to show that the Plan will have no significant environmental effects. Support for this is currently able to be funded at no cost through the Locality Technical Support Programme (with some oversight support from ONH as needed). An SEA Screening Opinion will be required CBC in the first instance, but like most planning authorities, may want to see probable intent and scope of the DNP before issuing a Screening Opinion and ONH can advise how to initiate this.
- 5.2. The DNP also needs to ensure it has taken proper account of the Government's Habitat Regulations of 2010 (as amended). They require that plans like the DNP must avoid or satisfactorily mitigate effects of development on internationally important nature sites such as the Chiltern Beechwoods SPA. CBC will also advise on this requirement, again once it knows more of the intent and scope of the DNP and ONH can also advise how to initiate this.
- 5.3. Other technical packages including Design Code, Town Centre Masterplanning and Housing Needs Assessment may also be required to support the evidence base for the DNP. There are currently technical support packages available from Locality for these pieces of work and if DTC decide to take forward a Neighbourhood Plan, it is strongly advised to promptly proceed in submitting their applications, as the packages can take some time to complete. Please also be aware that Locality may require DTC to prioritise Packages, with ONH able to deliver any which cannot be secured through this funded process.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1. The question posed to the WP meeting, was whether the policy space identified in terms of the Development Plan at CBC together with the likelihood of a policy vacuum arising from an out-of-date local plan in the next couple of years, was important enough for DTC to fill with a Neighbourhood Plan and if not, what the alternative options are.
- 6.2. A neighbourhood plan is the only statutory platform to enable DTC to ensure full policy weight is applied to planning applications, however Members may conclude that the cost/benefit analysis is not sufficiently defined to justify the resourcing required to deliver a plan of this scope. As such the other options discussed included responding to development proposals as they come forward (reactive) or engaging with and making submissions to the emerging Local Plan process in 2026 (pro-active). Alternatively, identifying key sites for development and creating site briefs of key principles or updating the town centre masterplan as a stand-alone document to prepare for funding opportunities, could also be considered.
- 6.3. In a subsequent discussion with officers to consider both governance and resourcing of any future DNP, the question was raised as to whether there was a Neighbourhood Plan "light" option and if so, what this might look like.

6.4. The scope of the Neighbourhood Plan is considered, in our opinion, to represent the ideal breadth of policy areas for any DNP to cover, providing both a wide spatial approach with narrower detail in specified areas. However, if in trying to reconcile the cost /benefit of a DNP with resourcing as a key driver, the Council could choose to consider focusing on a smaller number of key policy areas to articulate the principal requirements of new development in Dunstable - for example building on the Healthy Homes Principals or Building for a Healthy Life Principals.

6.5. We would still recommend producing this as a Neighbourhood Plan to ensure it is robustly tested with the community and becomes part of the CBC Development Plan (consisting of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan) but based more upon the approach of the new Neighbourhood Priority statements (NPS) proposed through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA 2023). These are designed to summarise the principal needs and views of the community in respect of local matters which can include:

- development, or the management or use of land, in or affecting the Neighbourhood area,
- housing in the Neighbourhood area,
- the natural environment in the Neighbourhood area,
- the economy in the Neighbourhood area,
- public spaces in the Neighbourhood area,
- the infrastructure, facilities or services available in the Neighbourhood area, or
- other features in the Neighbourhood area. (undefined)

At this time, we would not recommend progressing any reduced scope Neighbourhood Plan “light” as an NPS but it should remain as a NP. The secondary legislation to bring the NPS into force has not yet been produced and the indication currently is that once they are prepared and submitted to the local authority, the authority ‘must have regard’ to the NPS when preparing a Local Plan, therefore it will not carry the same statutory weight as a Neighbourhood Plan.

6.6. It would be for the Council to determine which of the policy areas included in the action plan would be included in such an approach but as a minimum we would recommend that matters which cover how land is used and buildings designed would be required for any plan to be meaningful.

6.7. Finally, concern was also expressed at whether a DNP may bring with it a reputational risk for the Town Council in being seen to be taking responsibility for development matters and whether they would then be open to criticism should they not be able to deliver on the content of the Plan. Clearly a DNP is putting policies in place to be applied when development proposals come forward, to determine their appropriateness along with the Local Plan and any other material considerations. What a DNP or indeed with DTC cannot control, is if or when those proposals come forward happen. This is therefore a matter for the Council to consider and would need to ensure if a DNP were taken forward that this difference between planning policy and development management is clear to manage public perceptions and expectations.

7. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND TIMETABLE

- 7.1. Step 1 of the scoping process considered the proposed the governance and resourcing of the DNP. The WP first looked to consider the key project governance, based on two models presented by ONH.
- Option 1 – A single Steering Group consisting of Councillors and agreed, co-opted key stakeholders and community representatives, meeting monthly, with officer support. A Steering Group may break off into task groups including a Development Task Team (DTT) and an Environment Task Team (ETT) with smaller groups identified for specific policy areas as needed.
 - Option 2 – A smaller, executive Steering Group of Councillors, providing project governance oversight (meeting every 6 - 8 weeks) supported by an officer driven working group, arranged by the consultants, drawing upon officer support both within DTC and CBC to facilitate and deliver the workstreams and facilitating Stakeholder Forums at appropriate points on particular subject matters with interested members of the community.
- 7.2. It was discussed that Option 2 would be more resource heavy on officers and there remained a question mark over the ability to include CBC officers other than the NP Officer but Option 1 was felt, at this stage, may not attract sufficient stakeholders who would wish to commit to regular involvement in such a structured way, but may be able to be drawn upon for more ad-hoc involvement relating to specific policy areas. Option 1 would also be heavier on Steering Group members to undertake research and gather evidence.
- 7.3. Option 2 also lends itself with more fluid and flexible dialogue than option 1 which requires regular attendance at set SG meetings, which may be difficult to resource for CBC.
- 7.4. On balance the preference was for Option 2, the management of the project is therefore based upon any DNP having strategic oversight from the Council, with an officer & consultant working group effectively undertaking the day-to-day workstreams. This group would also work with appropriate local representatives and stakeholder forums to ensure the developing plan is informed by the community.
- 7.5. Given the concerns over the level of public engagement at the scoping stage, stakeholder forums may provide a more targeted approach to initially securing community support, with a single, wider community informal engagement prior to the Regulation 14 stage, to test the content prior to drafting policy wording.
- 7.6. It is also recommended that a small task group is formed to manage the communications strategy for any DNP, to ensure local people (and key stakeholders identified in Step 2) receive timely updates to the progression of the Plan and to promote opportunities for public engagement and feedback at the appropriate stages.
- 7.7. Based upon the resourcing requirements of Option 2, we have prepared two outline project plans to accompany this report, one for a full Neighbourhood Plan and one for a

Neighbourhood Plan “light” option. It shows the activities across the stages of plan making through to submission to reflect how the project may proceed now that it has been scoped and shows the sequence of activities and their dependencies, so it can be monitored and revised as necessary.

- 7.8. The stages thereafter – examination and referendum – are managed and resourced by CBC. The project plans show how we would deploy our support based on our experience on other similar projects and in discussion with the WP and DTC officers in considering the in-house resource availability in respect of providing additional project management support each month. Both plans show a level of project management support which would require no more than 2- 3 days per month by DTC staff to reduce the dependence upon officers.
- 7.9. The project plan also shows the dependency of some tasks on others to enable the WP to understand and plan for the consequences of slippage.
- 7.10. The goal has been to show how the project may feasibly be completed within 18 months (to submission phase) for a full plan, with a 12-month proposed completion for a reduced scope plan. The plans can be adjusted to provide a slightly longer timetable to work around other Town Council workstreams but should ideally be completed within a further 6-month period. Once the DNP is submitted to CBC it will undergo further consultation and examination before moving to referendum.
- 7.11. Based on these project plans DTC would require the following budgets:

i) Full Neighbourhood Plan. £11,638 for 2024/25 to cover the first 17.5 days of ONH support for the plan and £28,263 for 2025/26 to cover the remaining 42.5 days. (60 days total at £665 per day)

ii) Reduced scope Neighbourhood Plan. £8,997 for 2024/25 to cover the first 13.5 days of ONH support for the plan and £14,963 for 2025/26 to cover the remaining 22.5 days. (36 days total at £665 per day)

In both cases, an allowance of up to £1,300 should also be made to cover expenses including in person attendance at meetings (£100) - there is no additional charge for attendance at on-line meetings. This allowance will also cover any sundries such as mapping fees and would include the provision of a standalone Dunstable Neighbourhood Plan website, built by ONH to provide the DNP with a dedicated location for conducting surveys, communicating with the public and uploading evidence bases.

- 7.12. The Locality grant programme for 2024/25 is currently open [website](#) providing financial support to the end of March 2025. If DTC decide to proceed with a NP, an application should be made as soon as possible as the window is likely to close in January with monies spent by 31st March. In order to take advantage of this current funding, any DNP would need to “hit the ground running” during the first 3 months of the project. Whilst DTC would be entitled to the full £18,000, given the timescales under consideration, grant support may only cover the first £10,000 (maximum single application) at this time.

Should grant funding be available beyond this period, then a follow up application can be made for the remainder of the work (subject to confirmation)

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The WP should review the content of this note, advise of any changes necessary, and agree the approach to moving any DNP project forward (to be determined by Full Council)
- 8.2 If DTC determines that it wishes to progress a DNP, once the final version of the report is agreed send it to the CBC Neighbourhood Plan Officer (Jane Hubbard) to inform a first meeting with her and submit an application to designate the DNP area and apply for the technical support packages as soon as possible as these can take some time to secure. (Please refer to ONH for assistance in determining the appropriate packages depending upon the project scope.)
- 8.3 Put the governance structure in place and start to work through the actions detailed in the plan above.

Dunstable NP

Action	ONH Days		2024/25			2025/26												2026/27			
	Budget	Actual	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
	1.01 Neighbourhood Plan Scoping (completed)	-																			
1.02 NPSG /Full Council approval	-																				
1.03 Follow Up Actions	14.0		4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0															
1.04 NPSG	1.5		0.5	0.5	0.5																
1.05 Draft Policy Ideas	2.0					2.0															
1.06 NPSG	0.5					0.5															
1.07 Informal Engagement	3.0						3.0														
1.08 NPSG	0.5						0.5														
1.09 Draft Plan v1	4.0							2.0	2.0												
1.10 NPSG	1.0									1.0											
1.11 Draft Plan v2	3.0										3.0										
1.12 NPSG	0.5										0.5										
1.13 TC approval for Reg 14	-																				x
2.01 Reg 14 consultation period																					
2.02 Reg 14 review and summary note	2.0																				2.0
2.03 NPSG	0.5																				0.5
3.01 Stakeholder engagement	0.5																				0.5
3.02 Final Plan v1	2.0																				2.0
3.03 NPSG	0.5																				0.5
3.04 Final Plan v2	2.0																				2.0
3.05 Basic Conditions Statement	2.0																				2.0
3.06 Consultation Statement	2.0																				2.0
3.07 Submission document review	1.0																				1.0
3.08 NPSG	0.5																				0.5
3.09 TC approval for Reg 15	-																				x
4.01 Technical package management	2.0		0.5		0.5			1.0													
4.02 Project management	15.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0			1.0	1.0		1.0			1.0	1.0
	60.0	0.0	6.0	5.5	6.0	3.0	3.5	5.5	3.0	3.0	2.0	4.5	0.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	6.0	5.5	4.5	0.0	0.0

Dunstable NP - reduced scope

Action	ONH Days		2024/25			2025/26												
	Budget	Actual	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	
	1.01 Neighbourhood Plan Scoping (completed)	-																
1.02 NPSG /Full Council approval	-																	
1.03 Follow Up Actions	8.0		2.0	3.0	3.0													
1.04 NPSG	1.5		0.5	0.5	0.5													
1.05 Draft Policy Ideas	2.0					2.0												
1.06 NPSG	0.5					0.5												
1.07 Informal Engagement	1.5						1.5											
1.08 NPSG	0.5						0.5											
1.09 Draft Plan v1	2.0							2.0										
1.10 NPSG	0.5							0.5										
1.11 Draft Plan v2	2.0								2.0									
1.12 NPSG	0.5								0.5									
1.13 TC approval for Reg 14	-																	
2.01 Reg 14 consultation period																		
2.02 Reg 14 review and summary note	1.5																	
2.03 NPSG	0.5																	
3.01 Stakeholder engagement	0.5																	
3.02 Final Plan v1	2.0																	
3.03 NPSG	0.5																	
3.04 Final Plan v2	1.0																	
3.05 Basic Conditions Statement	1.0																	
3.06 Consultation Statement	1.0																	
3.07 Submission document review	0.5																	
3.08 NPSG	0.5																	
3.09 TC approval for Reg 15	-																	
4.01 Technical package management	2.0		0.5		0.5													
4.02 Project management	6.0		1.0	1.0	1.0													
	36.0	0.0	4.0	4.5	5.0	0.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	0.5	0.0	4.5	3.5	2.5	0.0	0.0	

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2024

WATLING HOUSE

Purpose of Report: To review the application to list Watling House as an Asset of Community Value, and to agree the Council's response to Central Bedfordshire Council.

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Council amends the proposed response as required and agrees the version to be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) have received a nomination to list the following property as an Asset Of Community Value under the Localism Act 2011, and have invited the Town Council to make, "*any comments in respect of this nomination*":

Asset Name: Watling House
Address: High Street North, Dunstable
Postcode: LU6 1LF

- 2.2 CBC is allowed just 8 weeks from the application being received to make a judgement about whether the asset meets the definition for listing and respond in writing to the community group.
- 2.3 According to the legislation, a building is deemed to be of community value if in the opinion of CBC it is currently used "*to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, and it is realistic to think it will continue to do so in the future*" (whether or not in the same way).
- 2.4 Listing a property as an asset of Community Value would require the owner to delay any sale of the property for six months, to enable interested community organisations to prepare and submit a bid to purchase the property. This does not place any obligation on the seller to sell to a particular buyer or to justify their decision in selling.

3 PROPOSED RESPONSE

- 3.1 *The Town Council strongly supports the application to list the property as an asset of Community Value. The property has clearly provided strong community benefit over many years and has the potential to continue to do so with a viable proposal from one or more community groups.*

- 3.2 *The Council offices at the site provided a hub for community connection, community sign posting, active care and a hub for job creation. All residents had a central place of contact in the heart of the town. Health emergencies, financial emergencies, aid and signposting happened at Watling House. The activity generated at the north end of town by these buildings is massively missed, by locals. There is no longer a catch all central place of care. This hub can be returned in new creative ways.*
- 3.3 *The purpose of the Act is to allow a six-month delay while proposals are put together, so it is not appropriate to expect a detailed explanation of what might be possible at this stage. The Council is aware that one or more community organisations are actively seeking to develop and submit plans for ongoing community use of the property. It is incumbent on Central Bedfordshire Council to make every effort to support and investigate all options for sale or development of the site which would both provide ongoing community benefit as well as providing CBC with a suitable financial return.*

4 AUTHOR

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