
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

11 JANUARY 2012

Present -

MEMBERS:

Councillor G Chapman (Mayor); Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Ayling, Mrs Bassadone, Bhinder, H Chapman, Clark, Collins, Conway, Doole, Douris, Elliot, Fantham, Flint, Mrs Green, Griffiths, Mrs Guest, Harden, Harris, Hearn, N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Holmes, Laws, Lawson, Link, Macdonald, Mahmood, Marshall, McKay, McLean, Organ, Peter, Mrs Rance, Reay, Ryan, Sutton, Tiley, Townsend, White, Williams, Wixted, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (46).

OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive, The Corporate Director (Finance & Governance), The Corporate Director (Housing & Regeneration), The Corporate Director (Performance, Improvement and Transformation), The Assistant Director (Legal Democratic & Regulatory), The Group Manager (Democratic Services), L Smith, P Bowles, L Stone.

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

42. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2012 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

44. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Group Leaders and members:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lloyd, Taylor, Whitman and Wood.

3. Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership

Councillor Williams said that following the Cabinet report in November, he was pleased to have attended the signing of the community covenant pledge at County Hall on the 13th December and signed on behalf of Dacorum. The ceremony was attended by representatives of all the services as well as the British Legion, voluntary sector

organisation, health services, job centre plus and a number of other groups a long side the 11 Hertfordshire Councils.

A steering group had been formed which had three Borough members appointed by the Herts leaders and this had already met to progress the six themes which you would have seen in the Cabinet report:

1. Providing help with housing, schooling and family support
2. Providing access to skills training, mentoring and job opportunities
3. Enabling access to health services
4. Access to leisure facilities
5. Access to public transport
6. Celebrating and honouring the contribution of the armed forces by raising their profile in our communities.

It was clear that the armed forces were looking for the covenant to give them equal access to services despite being away a lot of the time.

At the Cabinet meeting in July it had been agreed that the Council would subscribe to the Herts Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and would defer the decision on subscribing to the South East Midlands LEP. Cabinet had since decided not to join this.

At the last Council meeting, a question had been asked on Leisureworld. A new planning application had been submitted for the refurbishment and would in due course go to the Development Control Committee. Councillors and Council officers would continue to meet and discuss with the owners.

Councillor Mrs Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability

One lucky West Herts College student was picked out as random winner for an iPod Shuffle for recycling a can of baked beans. You may remember from my last report Dacorum Borough Council, together with the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, ran a competition to encourage students across Hertfordshire to recycle.

The Christmas catch up of refuse and recycling went well. I would like to congratulate the team and thank them for their efforts.

1,189 residents have signed up to receive waste text alerts to be better informed during changes to their refuse and recycling collection

Dacorum Borough Council along with Herts. Waste Partnership ran a County wide cigarette litter campaign during Christmas to encourage smokers to bin their cigarette butts. Free beers mats and posters with an anti cigarette litter message were issued to ten pubs in Dacorum who have either experienced cigarette butt litter problems outside their pub or who have chosen to support the worthy campaign message. Saracens Head in Kings Langley, Castle Pub in Tring, The Boat in Berkhamsted and The Full House, Hemel, were just a few that supported the cause.

The Waste Services Department have successfully tweeted Christmas reuse and recycling messages everyday from their Waste Twitter Advent Calendar during the run up to Christmas.

A new winter edition of the Waste Wire was issued to all primary schools in the borough. The newsletter keeps schools up to date with local and national activities in encouraging the waste hierarchy and litter awareness and reminds them of taking advantage of the free litter and recycling talks.

From 10 November, the Waste Services Unit installed recycling wheeled bins at eleven Council buildings which are run by Council staff. Places such as Adventure Playgrounds, Cemeteries and Town Councils can now recycle paper, plastic bottles and cans, mixed glass and cardboard.

The *Save a Space for Me* online voting closed at the end of November and Bovingdon Green and Gadebridge Park who received Queen Elizabeth II Field status. will have a plaque to celebrate its new status. They have also been awarded £2,500 each for improvements

Finally Christmas tree recycling - hundreds of Dacorum residents recycled their real Christmas tree at shredding sites in Berkhamsted's Water Lane car park, Tring Garden Centre and Hemel Hempstead's Cupid Green Depot. In total 1,750 trees were shredded.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe said she had been pleased to hear that over 1,000 residents had taken up the text service. She asked if these new methods of communication would keep being promoted. Councillor Laws said that it would continue.

Councillor Rance said that the Christmas collections leaflet had been useful. She said she had read in the newspaper that Christmas Cards could not be recycled with the paper. Councillor Laws said a lot of work had gone into the hangers which had been to the Overview and Scrutiny meeting. She added that if there was too much information on the hanger, people did not read them. Press releases had been issued around recycling Christmas cards and trees.

Councillor Anderson asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed that this information had been on the hanger. Councillor Laws agreed.

Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Councillor Tiley said the 2012/13 budget process had run smoothly. He said the Joint Overview and Scrutiny budget meeting had been constructive and useful. Some small items had come out which were being addressed.

There were no questions for Councillor Tiley.

Councillor Ayling, Portfolio Holder for Service and Performance Improvement

Recently some Councillors and staff had had difficulty in accessing both the Council website and email accounts. This was traced back to work undertaken in reinforcing the Council's ICT firewall to ensure its compliance with our relevant security standards. This had now been rectified but had resulted in some speed issues which were being worked on and would be resolved by the end of the month.

Furthermore, within the ICT service, a number of actions were underway to strengthen both the skills levels and the responsiveness of the services availability. It was anticipated that the Council would be appointing two temporary technical support officers to cover the helpdesk backlog and other business critical projects, plus a temporary service delivery manager to establish a rounded action plan to stabilise the service and move it forward. These appointments were within budget.

I have a personal message for you all with reference to a scam that invaded my home computer system which then sent out spam emails to about 250 of my address book contacts, as well as using my account to send to addresses not in my address list.

Ultimately, I had to work with MSN to eradicate it from my Hotmail network and had to close my account with MSN and then re-register. If you are unfortunate and have received one of these emails from me or another source, it had no text message and appears to be a link to either a video or a set of photos, please delete it without opening it. It is a scam.

Councillor White arrived at 7.45pm.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Tenant and Leaseholder Services

The Housing Landlord Service in conjunction with Council Tax launched its Christmas rent and Council Tax collection campaign at the end of October, entitled *the best present at Christmas is peace of mind*. The campaign was advertised on bin lorries, via Three Counties radio, within the Gazette, Digest and News and Views, at the Customer Reception Areas, in the rent statements among other things. A formal review of the campaign is yet to be conducted, although anecdotal evidence indicates that it led to an increase in the percentage of rent collected over the Christmas period.

In December, the Housing Landlord Service conducted the second 'Customer Consultation Week' of the year. Speaking to over 200 tenants and leaseholders about such things as incentives to improve rent payments, the content of the tenancy agreement and the standard of work undertaken in empty homes before they are let. The results of the consultation exercises will be fed into the review of the tenancy agreement, the work being undertaken to review the 'Lettable Standard' and work designed to improve the percentage of rent collected.

The Housing Landlord Service is about to commence its largest consultation exercise to date. In January all tenants and leaseholders will receive a short questionnaire asking people to comment on the quality of the service they receive from their Landlord. The survey methodology has been developed by Housework (a housing benchmarking service linked to the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation) and enables landlords to compare the results with hundreds of other social landlords. The survey is called STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents). The results are due in March and will be used to inform the Housing Landlord Service's Service Improvement Plans from 2012/13.

Property and Place

Repairs and Voids – Void performance has shown a good improvement as a result of the work undertaken by the project improvement team. There has been a reduction in the average re-let time from 36 days in quarter 2 to 28 days in quarter 3. A further review of the re-let standard has been undertaken in conjunction with tenants to improve the standard of our properties.

Gas Servicing – Since the takeover of AFR by Carillion, the gas servicing compliance rates have steadily improved with last week 99.76% of properties had a valid gas safety certificate. Carillion have introduced two lead engineers to supervise the contract and troubleshoot those hard to access properties.

Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels – Breyer are mobilising their project team to survey and carry out the installations of PV on the roofs of seven sheltered schemes in Dacorum. The schemes have been chosen due to the orientation and condition of their roofs and are located in Tring, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead. The work is due to be

completed by the end of March and will generate revenue in the form of a Feed in Tariff and reduce the communal electricity bills.

Strategic Housing

3,585 housing applications have been received to date since the Abrisas online Housing register opened on 1st November. We are seeing more people actively bid for properties since the introduction of the online system.

Work continues on developing the Strategic Tenancy Policy with both Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet receiving reports on the direction of the policy in the next couple of weeks. Work continues on the Affordable Housing SPD which links to the Core Strategy.

A new Housing Needs update has been commissioned to be completed by March, to underpin all the housing policy work underway.

Homelessness and DIGS applications have seen a steady increase in line with the rest of the County.

Councillor Marshall said she was pleased to hear that Solar PV panels would be installed on sheltered accommodation. She asked which places would be included. Councillor Griffiths said that Oaklawn, Langley House, Dudley House, Holly Tree Court, Compass Point, Cranford and William Crook House would be included.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe asked if there were measures in place to stop people sub-letting Council properties. Councillor Griffiths said it was a countrywide issue; the Council took action and followed up on any information received.

Councillor Adshead said that at the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30th November, it had been reported that some Council properties were returned to the Council in poor condition and required a lot of money spent on them to bring them up to standard. He asked if anything was done to pursue the tenants who had left them in this state. Councillor Griffiths said it largely depended on the tenancy agreement. Those made in the last six months had a clause in that the property must be returned to the same standard. She added that where they could be pursued they were.

Councillor Adeleke asked if the problem of sub-letting was widespread. Councillor Griffiths said it was no bigger a problem in Dacorum than anywhere else.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

Electoral Registration:

The final register was published in December and the statistics for it are as follows:

- A response was received from 57,924 households, making a 95% return of all canvass forms.
- Of the No Changes; 9,941 were by phone, 12,396 by internet, 2,668 by text, 14,361 by post and 3,574 collected by canvassers.
- Of the Changes to details 11,653 were by post and 2,751 were collected by canvassers.
- The final number of electors on the register is 110,040
- 120,202 electors have been processed and 10,178 electors have been removed.

Thanks should be given to the electoral registration team for the smooth running of this process and its completion by the deadline required.

Residents Services:

- Successful Freedom and Remembrance Parades held on the 13th Nov.
- Enjoyable Christmas lights switch on events in Hemel Town Centre with a superb Firework display and in the Old Town. For the first time under the Neighbourhood Action Groups banner at Grovehill, Henry Wells Square and Warner's End, Stoneycroft.
- A Neighbourhood Action Christmas gathering was held of Neighbourhood Action leaders, Neighbourhood Action Groups, Communities Together and Interfaith Groups to share each other's experiences.
- We have now appointed the 2012 events Officer to coordinate our Olympic and Diamond Jubilee projects and legacy.
- Awareness sessions for vulnerable adults have been held to inform them how to report incidents to agencies. Hate incidents in which a person's vulnerability is a factor are increasing, however records do not show this as vulnerable people sometimes do not know how or who to report incidents to. Considerable work is underway in this area in partnership with Police.

Environmental Health:

On 29th Feb we will be officially launching our participation in the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

This will involve presentations to local businesses of framed food hygiene certificates and stickers to those businesses who would have consistently achieved a food hygiene rating of 5, if the scheme were already in place. I understand the Mayor will be in attendance along with a representative from the Food Standards Agency, Members, food establishment representatives and the press.

Councillor Townsend referred to residents making no changes on the internet for the electoral annual canvass. Councillor Harden said he would let Councillor Townsend know.

Councillor Douris asked if the Portfolio Holder if had completed his 360 degree feedback. Councillor Harden said he had along with a pilot of 10 Councillors. It was based online and Councillors rated themselves and then nominated others to complete the same rating. The Councillor would then receive the feedback. He said it was very beneficial and that if any other Councillor wanted to take part, they could contact Michelle Anderson or Lucy Stone.

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed that Councillors had a 360 assessment every four years at the ballot box.

Councillor Williams referred to the inspection certificates for food premises. He said if premises scored less than four to five points they would not want to display the certificate. He asked if there was any way displaying it could be made compulsory. Councillor Harden said at the moment it was voluntary but that there were discussions to make it mandatory.

Councillor Holmes, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

The Town Centre Masterplan continues on course with a Stakeholder Workshop on the 19th January. The Masterplan is due to complete in November this year, following a final public consultation planned for the summer.

In preparation for the Neighbourhood Plan for Grovehill, Grovehill Future Day took place on 10th December and 100 people attended the event in order to highlight the Grovehill projects around neighbourhood planning and potential regeneration of Henry Wells Square. Analysis of the surveys will now take place and a formalised committee will take forward these ideas into a plan.

A new officer will be in post from Feb 1st to take forward Infrastructure Delivery, aligning the S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy to meet our strategic infrastructure needs. I am hopeful that following members comments at the October SP&E committee councillor involvement in S106 and CIL contributions will be possible earlier in the cycle.

On the 15th December the Development Control Committee agreed to a major development in Markyate. When complete it will deliver an attractive regeneration of the village with much needed new homes, new business space and new health facilities. This is another example of how DBC is working proactively with the development community to deliver the development and regeneration that the Borough needs.

Members may have noticed that Britvic has announced its move from Essex to Maylands and will employ up to 2500. Local recruitment will start this summer. Maylands, I believe, has reached a point where major firms are attracted by what Dacorum has to offer for their employees.

45. CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 29 November and 13 December 2011 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

29 November 2011

1. **RELEASE OF A RESERVE FOR THE OLYMPICS AND DIAMOND JUBILEE PROJECTS (CA/125/11)**

The release of £160,000 to support the delivery of the Diamond Jubilee and Olympic Projects.

2. **PARTNERSHIPS AND THE DACORUM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (CA/126/11)**

The revised Partnerships Framework.

3. AMENDMENTS TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (CA/129/11)

The proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations.

4 CAPITAL STRATEGY STEERING GROUP REPORT – REQUEST FOR CAPITAL APPROVAL AND USE OF S.106 RESOURCE (CA/130/11)

The amendment of the Capital Programme to include the following schemes:

Affordable Rented Homes – Berkhamsted (S106 Monies)	£60,000
Pennine Way Footpath (S106 monies)	£2,727

13 DECEMBER 2012

5 REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL 2011 – MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES FOR DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL (CA/143/11)

The changes to the Members’ Allowances Scheme as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel in its report.

6 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS – ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS, NOVEMBER 2012 (CA/144/11)

That Council be recommended to agree the revised dates for the Council and Committee Meetings scheduled to be held around the period of the proposed election.

A revised copy of the Timetable for 2012/13 is attached at Appendix A

Councillor White asked if he could be informed how much the Police and Crime Commissioners election would cost and how much would be refunded. Councillor Williams said he would provide whatever information was currently available.

7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT (CA/149/11)

- 1. Noted the half-year report on targets and performance Sections 4 – 7;**
- 2. A review of the Council’s underlying borrowing requirement ahead of the HRA self-financing transaction;**
- 3. Authority delegated to the Corporate Director (Finance & Governance) to open discussions with the PWLB with a view to arranging borrowing for the above transaction.**

46. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following change to the 2012/13 Committee timetable be made:

Finance and Resources OSC
20 March 2012 cancelled
23 February 2012 added

47. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Williams said that Councillor Collins would be removed from the JNC.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm.