
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

15 JANUARY 2014

Present -

MEMBERS:

Councillor P Hearn (Mayor); Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Ayling, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, B Chapman, G Chapman, Clark, Collins, Doole, Douris, Elliot, Fantham, Flint, Green, Guest, Harden, Harris, N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Killen, Lawson, Link, Mahmood, Marshall, McLean, McKay, Organ, Peter, Mrs Rance, Reay, Ryan, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Tindall, Tiley, Whitman, Williams, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (43).

OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive, The Corporate Director (Finance & Operations), The Corporate Director (Housing & Regeneration), The Assistant Director (Chief Executive's Unit) (MO), The Group Manager (Democratic Services), L Collins, P Duff.

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

45. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor, subject to the following amendments:

- 45.1 Councillor Wood to be added to the attendance list.
- 45.2 Councillor Elliot to be added to the apologies for absence list.
- 45.3 Minute 34, Hemel Evolution questions and answers. The 1st paragraph to amended to read:

Councillor Guest raised a question relating to the predicted housing needs in Dacorum. Councillor Guest asked if anyone had questioned the Office of National Statistics regarding the predicted need in Dacorum as, under Localism, surely it is up to local authorities to set their own figures in the Core Strategy.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

47. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

48. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor

None.

2. By the Chief Executive:

None.

3. By the Group Leaders and members:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bhinder, Conway, Griffiths, Laws and Macdonald.

Councillor's Townsend, Wixted and Wood were absent.

4. Members of the Cabinet:

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

The Leader of the Council had no announcements.

Questions and Answers

None.

Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Councillor Tiley made the following statement.

"The budget preparations for 2014/15, with some minor amendments following the first scrutiny, continue well and new papers will be ready for the next Joint scrutiny meeting of Members on the 5th February".

Questions and Answers

Councillor Tindall asked for assurance that people in hardship would be aware of the Council Tax Support Scheme. No information brochure was produced last year, although this was on the Council Tax bill. Could a brochure be produced this year for distribution throughout the Borough. The 209 page document would not be much use to those in hardship.

Councillor Tiley replied he would be happy to look at this. On the back of the Council Tax bill there was a paragraph inviting people to contact the Council if they had difficulty paying. Councillor Tiley said he would take the suggestion back to officers. Rather than include it on the Council Tax bill a brochure could be made available in libraries and community centres.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

Councillor Harden made the following statement.

Resident Services:

In December young people from Adeyfield Adventure Playground Youth Club completed the work on a garden for the elderly residents of Mountbatten Lodge – funding was secured from the County Councillors locality budget and the garden was opened by the Mayor

Regulatory Services:

- ◆ Desktop Emergency Planning Exercise which took place on the 18th December, served to validate Dacorum's emergency plans and procedures, rehearse key staff, and review resilience arrangements.

The desktop exercise involved a plane crash scenario in Kings Langley and syndicates were required to give feedback on actions as the incident progressed. The purpose of this multi-agency event was to test the Council's preparedness in dealing with a major incident, in particular to highlight the key roles and responsibilities of key personnel involved should a serious emergency happen in the future. It was very useful to have representatives from police, ambulance and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue present.

People:

Community Sport Activation Fund

The Community Partnerships team met with Sport England and they were supportive of the Council's suggestions. They have strongly recommended that we apply during the current round (**closes on 27th January**) we have has agreed to do this.

Communication

Dacorum Borough Council Communication team and Kings Langley Parish Council are working closely with HBO Home Entertainment to change the village name for one week only in February. Kings Langley will be re-named 'Kings Landing' - the main city featured in the Game of Thrones series to mark the DVD release of Season 3.

- ◆ The third season saw the number of viewers rise to 14.2 million, making the season the second-most viewed of any HBO series. With the clever play on words with the town's change of name will delight the millions of fans of the show, and is sure to drive tourism to the local area and businesses.
- ◆ I would personally like to thank Cllr Anderson for his energy and drive to steer this project for the benefit of the residents of Kings Langley.

Questions and Answers

There were no questions.

Councillor Mrs Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability

The Leader of the Council said he had no statement but would take questions on behalf of Councillor Laws.

Questions and Answers

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked a question regarding the operation of the new waste and refuse vehicle site in Tringford Road. Access was via a canal bridge and Councillor Hollinghurst asked if the Leader of the Council would consider making a contribution towards traffic control by traffic lights on that bridge. There were a number of residents who were being disturbed by vehicles hooting as they could not see across it. The planning application was due to be heard.

The Leader of the Council said DBC was no different from any other applicant and the decision would be guided by Highways. The Leader of the Council understood that this use of the site would reduce the traffic from its previous use. There was a mention in the report of the size of vehicles and the weight limit to be observed using the bridge. In light of the fact there will be less vehicles, the Leader of the Council did not feel there would be a need to contribute to this.

Councillor Mrs Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

The Leader of the Council read out the following statement in the absence of Councillor Griffiths.

Tenant & Leaseholder Services

Catch up this Christmas – the Christmas rent campaign has now ended (did you see the posters on the bin lorries and in Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring town centres?). It has been another successful campaign taking our predicted rent collection performance for the year to over 100%.

This means that the overall level of rent owed by the Council in arrears will be reduced if our collection performance is retained until the end of the financial year. Our collection target is 98.5% for the year – so 100% performance significantly exceeds this (in real terms this improved performance equates to approximately £750,000 of additional income).

Flexible tenants – for the information of Members our first flexible tenancies will be commencing in April 2014. The first year of any “flexible” tenant’s time as a Council tenant is spent as an introductory tenant.

Property and Place

Procurement Project Update – The second stage of competitive dialogue was completed in November and the three remaining bidders were issued the invitation to submit final bids. The completed bids were returned on the 16th December and the evaluation of the final submissions commenced. A number of clarifications were raised to each of the bidders, which due to the Christmas shutdown period were returned on the 7th January.

Following the return of these clarifications, it has been necessary to re-issue the financial price framework due to the bidders interpreting the requirements differently and it not being possible to assess the returns based upon comparative information.

The documents have been re-issued, however this will have an impact upon the programme and reporting dates due to Cabinet, which will now have to be deferred until March so that the leaseholder consultation can be concluded. The commencement date for the new contract remains the 1st July and the mobilisation activities will need to be carefully planned to ensure that this remains achievable.

The preparation of the mechanical and electrical specialist contracts will commence during the leaseholder consultation, so that once the TAM and consultants contracts are awarded

the procurement can be undertaken and new providers selected to commence these contracts in April 2015.

Strategic Housing

The new Housing Allocations Policy was implemented in early November. The Strategic Housing Team held surgeries for applicants during November, at the Civic Centre, Berkhamsted and Tring. The implementation has gone smoothly and there are currently 4,500 households on the Active register who are able to bid for properties and 3,750 on the deferred register. Training sessions were also held for CSU staff, Councillors and external agencies.

The Council New Build programme continues well with building work continuing on site this year at Farm Place in Berkhamsted, The Nokes – Galley Hill, London Road, Apsley and the new homeless hostel – The Elms.

If any Members have any queries on the new Housing Allocations Policy or the Councils Development Programme please contact Julia Hedger – Strategic Housing Group Manager.

Questions and Answers

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked that the website should be improved so that reporting faults on pathways and lights could be made easier.

The Leader of the Council said he was sure it could be improved.

Councillor Flint asked, in light of a successful court challenge in Exeter, how many DBC tenants would receive a review of their cases regarding bedroom tax. This went back to 1996.

The Leader of the Council said he understood this applied to tenants of more than 17 years. The case would have nation-wide implications and some tenants would be affected by this judgement and this would be looked at.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources said when he asked about this situation he was surprised how little disruption this was causing in the borough. It had not become an issue so far.

Councillor Flint said in light of the fact this affected all Councils, could the Leader of the Council keep members informed of the actions taken.

The Leader of the Council said this information would be fed back.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe asked if the Council was aware of the situation with regard to the bedroom tax. This had been the experience across the country as a whole and the amount of issues arising had been far fewer than anticipated.

The Leader of the Council agreed that this was the case with other authorities.

49. RECEIPT OF PETITION

A petition was received containing 943 signatures asking that the Langley Hill Car Park should remain unrestricted parking.

The Leader of the Council said the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability was aware of the concerns and he was sure should would acknowledge these concerns when she reached a decision.

50. QUESTIONS

None

51. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None

52. CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 26 November and 17 December 2013 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

26 November 2013

52.1 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVEY (CA/157/13)

The content of the Draft Charging Schedule and policies on Discretionary Relief, Exceptional Circumstances Relief from CIL, Instalments, Payments in Kind and Regulation 123 List for public consultation.

17 December 2013

52.2 HEMEL EVOLUTION MAJOR PROJECTS: PROCUREMENT AND FUNDING, WATER GARDENS AND BANK COURT (CA/171/13)

The reallocation of £110,337 underspend from three strands of GAF Funding currently within Strategic Planning and Regeneration (£40,000 – Renewable Energy Provision (BP004); £18,500 – Maylands Business Centre – PV installation (BP005); £51,837 – Neighbourhood Centre Improvements (BP006) to create a new contingency budget for Major Regeneration Projects.

Councillor Rance made reference to page 27, paragraph 2 and asked the Leader of the Council if this should be part of the decision.

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be removed and not be part of the reason for decision:

“To note the appointment of an Employer’s Agent, Cost Manager, CDM Coordinator and Design Monitor to effectively manage the delivery of Hemel Evolution Major Projects”.

52.3 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – NON RESIDENTIAL ASSETS (CA/172/13)

That Housing Revenue Account investment properties be appropriated to the general fund at market value of £2.018m, with land remaining with the HRA where dwellings are situated above commercial units.

Councillor Tiley proposed an amendment to the last paragraph of the Advice section of the Cabinet minute. This was at the request of the external auditors.

It was moved by Councillor Tiley, seconded by Councillor Taylor and

Resolved:

That paragraph 10 under the Advice section of the minute should be amended to:

“The external auditors, Ernst & Young, audited the Council's annual accounts including the investment property portfolio valuation. This includes these properties being transferred, and they agreed that there were no material discrepancies to report to Members”.

52.4 REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (CA/173/13)

The Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014 consisting of the Scheme for 2013 with adjustments as required by the updated Prescribed Regulations, and uprating for working age people in line with that in the Housing Benefit regulations.

53. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

Health in Dacorum

- That the meeting date be changed from 7th May 2014 to 2nd April 2014.

54. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

None.

55. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved:

That, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the item in Part 2 of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relation to the financial and business affairs of the Council and third party company/organisation. (Item 13 (Call-In and Urgency Procedure))

56. CALL-IN & URGENCY PROCEDURE

A decision taken on 30 December 2013 by the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources was confirmed.

COMMERCIAL LEASE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE ICE RINK AT LEISURE WORLD, JARMAN PARK, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD. (PH/055/13) – 30 December 2013

Full details can be found in the Part 2 minutes.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.