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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**23 APRIL 2014**

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Present -

**MEMBERS:**

Councillor P Hearn (Mayor); Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Ayling, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, Bhinder, H Chapman, G Chapman, Clark, Conway, Doole, Douris, Elliott, Flint, Mrs Green, Griffiths, Harden, Harris, N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Killen, Laws, Lawson, Link, Mahmood, Marshall, McKay, McLean, Organ, Peter, Mrs Rance, Reay, Ryan, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Tiley, Tindall, Whitman, Williams, Wixted, Wood, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (46).

**OFFICERS:**

The Chief Executive, The Corporate Director (Finance and Governance), The Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration), The Assistant Director (Chief Executive's Unit) (Monitoring Officer), The Group Manager (Democratic Services), Leida Smith, M Anderson and C Thorley.

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

**63. MINUTES**

Councillor Adshead pointed out in relation to the minutes of the previous meeting that on page 21 he had supported the Liberal Democrat's amendment to the budget in regards to road nameplates within the borough.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2014 were then agreed by the Members present and were signed by the Mayor.

**64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Wixted declared a personal interest in relation to the Cabinet member's announcements as she works for Affinity Water company.

**65. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

**66. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**1. By the Mayor**

The Mayor announced that she had recently attended RAF Halton's graduation parade at which she had received a picture of '100 years of flight' from the RAF and that this was to be put on display at the Civic Centre.

The Mayor also mentioned that she had visited Hemel Hempstead hospital's urgent care unit with the Chief Executive and had found it to be a very interesting visit.

## **2. By the Group Leaders and Members:**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Collins, Fantham, Guest, Macdonald, and Townsend.

## **3. Members of the Cabinet:**

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

The Leader gave an update on the Dacorum 'Look No Further' campaign. The Leader explained that the next Dacorum Business showcase was now finalised with the Taste of Dacorum Marquee at Shendish Manor from 1.30pm to 4.30 pm on Friday 11 July showcasing local food producers in an effort to try and promote local supply chains.

The Leader said that the next Dacorum's Den was underway with judging due to take place on the 30 May. The Leader said that so far the council had received 18 applications for the Den and were in a position to give out 10 grants to the successful applicants. The Leader explained that these entries would go through an initial sift with the Economic Development team to look at their viability. The Leader stated that the money for the grants was provided by both the Mayland's Partnership and the Mayland's Business Centre.

The Leader said that the Economic Development team had recently attended the Shoreditch Business Show to promote Dacorum for inward investment and also to help increase awareness of Dacorum and what it has to offer. The Leader said that Dacorum's stand at the show was very well visited with over 150 tourism maps distributed and also 2 leads of possible office relations which were now being worked on.

The Leader also highlighted that a taster trip to Dacorum had been arranged for Group Travel organisers to come to the area to see what Dacorum has to offer. On the taster trip the organisers would visit Apsley Paper Mill, Berkhamsted Castle and finish in Ashridge Estate. The Leader explained that this trip was offered through a group travel organiser's magazine and that there were 26 confirmed attendees for the first date and a waiting list for the second.

There were no questions in relation to this portfolio.

### **Councillor Mrs Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability**

The Portfolio Holder said that 189 computers and other electrical items had been recycled by schools in Dacorum as part of a countywide WasteAware scheme. Dacorum Borough Council had worked with the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and had helped local schools dispose of their old and unwanted electrical equipment by arranging to have them recycled.

The Portfolio Holder said that two small electrical appliance banks had been installed at Tring Forge car park and Markyate Village Hall car park to encourage and make it

easier for residents to recycle small electrical items such as broken irons, radios, kettles etc.

The Portfolio Holder said that Dacorum Borough Council's Clean Safe and Green team picked up 11 tonnes of bulky rubbish and litter dropped out of cars in a six-day targeted litter pick of the A41 in February. The Clean Safe and Green team cleared litter from the slip roads, junctions and grass verges of the A41 from the junction with the M25 at Kings Langley through to Tring and back on the opposite carriageway.

The Portfolio Holder said that the 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign was promoted at the Woodhall Farm Food Festival where recipe cards and tips for being more economical with food were passed out.

The Portfolio Holder said that in celebration of Compost Awareness Week a Compost Giveaway Event had been organised on Sunday 11 May at Cupid Green Depot; 10 am to 3 pm. The Portfolio Holder said that residents could collect up to four bags of compost per vehicle. The Portfolio Holder explained that the compost was being provided by the council's green waste reprocessors; Envar, and was produced from the contents of the green wheeled bin given to each Dacorum Borough resident. The Portfolio Holder said that the event was very popular last year and 10 tonnes of compost were given away for free in just 5 hours.

The Portfolio Holder explained that in March 2014, the council had set itself an objective to cut water usage across all its main buildings with a reduction target of 5% spend on the annual utility cost for the following 18 months. The Portfolio Holder explained that the measuring and monitoring would take place through newly installed Automatic Meter Readers which were at each of the borough's Civic Centres, Adventure Playgrounds, & Cemeteries.

Councillor Rance said that it was good news about the metal recycling scheme but that she had a question in relation to the recycling of computer printer ink cartridges. Councillor Rance asked if aside from the small container available at Berkhamsted tip would it be possible for more recycling points to be made available and also asked if Dacorum Borough Council would make any money on the recycling of cartridges. The Portfolio Holder said that she would look into this for Councillor Rance but that she wanted to point out that the tips in the borough were run by the County Council.

Councillor Harris said that he welcomed the news that efforts were being made to minimise water usage but that he wanted to know if this monitoring of usage meant that leaks would be detected earlier and so the costs associated with leaks could be better managed.

The Portfolio Holder said that to the best of her knowledge uncharacteristic levels of usage, perhaps relating to a leak, could be detected and so could be monitored and a response arranged accordingly.

Councillor Griffiths asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that many charities recycled ink cartridges in order to raise money and this would be recommended. The Portfolio Holder agreed this was a good idea.

**Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing**

The Portfolio Holder began by saying that she had just come from a meeting with local Scout's groups, held at the XC Centre and had seen 450 Scouts renew their promise as it was St Georges day.

The Portfolio Holder said that the Housing Management team and the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CFT) had developed a close working relationship to enable Housing Management to refer any potential tenancy fraud cases to the Corporate Anti-fraud team. The Portfolio Holder said that the teams had worked together to investigate issues such as subletting or abandonment. In order to further support this move the Portfolio Holder explained that two tenancy fraud posts would be advertised imminently in a number of fraud publications and Tenancy Fraud forum websites. The Portfolio Holder explained that this was a joint collaboration between tenancy management and Corporate Anti-Fraud team to effectively tackle Housing Fraud; with one officer sitting with CFT and one sitting with Housing.

The Portfolio Holder said that the final arrears figures for 2013/2014 were as follows: Arrears £1,505,780.65 (2.85%) with a collection rate of 101.41% compared with last year's figures at year end of Arrears £1,572,762.50 (3.13%) with a collection rate of 100.02%. The Portfolio Holder added that there had been five rent free weeks for 2013/2014 but that this was still a significant improvement in collection resulting in a fall in the amount of arrears that were outstanding.

The portfolio holder said that the last two quarters of 2013/2014 had seen the tenant involvement team launch both the Housing Management Committee (HMC) and the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Panel (TLSP). The HMC are undergoing a period of training and familiarisation with Housing Management as a service and the New Year would see them starting to work on some of the initiatives that this area of the service covered such as the Local Improvement Grant and the production of the annual report.

The Portfolio Holder said that the TLSP had undertaken their first scrutiny following a period of training delivered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. The Portfolio Holder said that their first inspection looked at customer satisfaction with repairs carried out and the result of this had been fed back to the Housing Senior Management team, the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee, Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee as well as the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Chair of the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Portfolio Holder said that the findings had also been passed to the new contractor for the Total Asset Management contract to enable them to use these in developing the new satisfaction monitoring section of the contract.

The Portfolio Holder said that the Alcatel standstill period had concluded on Monday 14 April and that no challenges had been received in relation to the Total Asset Management and Consultancy Contracts. The Portfolio Holder said that the contract award notices had been prepared and the focus is on the mobilisation of the contracts as there would be a requirement to condense the various activities in order to achieve the start date of 1<sup>st</sup> July.

The Portfolio Holder said that a preliminary meeting had been held with Osborne Property Services who had developed a revised mobilisation plan and had introduced Dacorum Borough Council to the members of the team who would be responsible for the delivery of this critical phase. The Portfolio Holder said that the Property and Place team continued to work with MITIE to determine how the de-mobilisation could be undertaken without any delays or work in progress on the handover date and to ensure good continuity of service.

The Portfolio Holder said that the Housing Development programme continued with all four of its phase 1 schemes currently being carried out on site. The Portfolio Holder said that the London Road site was currently being demolished ready for building to commence and that building continued on the old St Peters Church site and Farm Place in Berkhamsted.

The Portfolio Holders said that the Housing Advice and Homelessness Team continued to see an increase in clients; over the last financial year the team had provided housing advice to over 1,800 households; double the number seen in the previous financial year. The team restructure had enabled the service to focus on the homelessness prevention and provide timely effective assistance to an increasing number of residents seeking assistance in Dacorum.

The Portfolio Holder said that the increase in the numbers of applicants seeking housing advice there had been an increase of applicants in temporary accommodation requiring support. The team had now implemented a new computer system to manage support plans for the homeless clients whilst in temporary accommodation and six months in any new tenancy. The Portfolio Holder said that a grant of £54,000 from Herts County Council continued to support this service.

There were no questions in relation to this Portfolio.

#### **Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources**

The Portfolio Holder had no announcements to make and there were no questions in relation to this portfolio.

#### **Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services**

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to announce that the Council now had a third, Primary Authority Partner- Hilton Worldwide. (Existing Partners are Tesco and Empire Cinemas)

Hilton had a very good regulatory compliance and actively sought Dacorum for a partnership. The Portfolio Holder was pleased with this new addition to our well respected Primary Authority Service.

Primary Authority allows businesses to be involved in their own regulation. It enables them to form a statutory partnership with one local authority, which then provides robust and reliable advice for other councils to take into account when carrying out inspections or addressing non-compliance.

The Legal Department successfully prosecuted a Mr Hewitt who converted a property he owned at 101 White Hart Drive from a single property into two joined properties. At no time did he seek planning permission to do so.

Notice under the Town and County Planning Act was served as long ago as February 2011. He appealed that but was unsuccessful.

Despite the notice, he failed to return the property to its original condition. Indeed, he began to rent it out in 2012, generating rental income of something in the region of £28,000 between then and now.

Proceedings were raised in 2012 to prosecute him for failing to comply with the notice. Mr Hewitt sought various adjournments, and therefore the matter did not come to trial until 14th April this year, in St Albans Crown Court.

After a three day trial the jury took one hour to return a guilty verdict.

Sentencing has been adjourned to the 15th September 2014. The judge made it clear to Mr Hewitt that if, by the 15th September, he has complied with the notice, the penalty imposed will be at the lower end of the scale. If he has not it will very much be at the higher end. Penalties can reach fines of up to £20,000.

Failure to comply with a planning notice is a criminal offence. The rents he has generated are therefore proceeds of a crime. In addition to whatever penalty the Court finally impose, the Council is also pressing ahead with a Proceeds of Crime Application (P.O.C.A.). If successful, one third of the criminal revenue is payable to the Council, with the remaining two thirds going to the Crown.

CCTV – The official opening of the new CCTV control room took place on 26th March at Cupid Green and was opened by the Mayor. The new control room is extremely high quality and high technology will provide an excellent quality of evidence. The system has attracted a lot of interest from other authorities and the Team Leader has spoken of Dacorum's project at a national conference

Neighbourhood Action - Over 120 families attended a Food Festival in Woodhall Farm which was delivered in partnership with Worldshapers Childrens Centre and the Dacorum Local Food Initiative supported by the Sunnyside Trust. Families enjoyed apple pressing for juice, dough making for pizza's, fruit basket making, Easter Egg hunt, face painting, seed planting and the project will be revisited in the autumn with the results of the sunflower competition from seeds planted on the day will be judged. This was a really successful event and it follows on from the Love Your Neighbourhood event last summer.

Anti Social Behaviour - An ASB Victim Support Scheme has been introduced in Dacorum to support victims of ASB who require support. This project is in partnership with Victim Support and St Albans City Council.

The Dacorum Community Safety Partnership meets on 28th April 2014 in the Council Chamber, 7.30pm to review the successful past year and safety within the Borough. All are invited to attend.

The Police and Crime Commissioner visited Dacorum on 6<sup>th</sup> March to see the work of the partnership and met with Dacorum Youth Forum who highlighted the relationship with the police as a priority for them when they presented to full Council in November 2013.

And finally, the Tour of Britain (ToB) is coming to Dacorum!!

Dacorum will be hosting the stage 6 finish of the ToB on Fri 12<sup>th</sup> Sept.

At just over 200 kilometres (125 miles), the stage will be one of the longest of the 2014 Tour.

Final route is yet to be confirmed, but it will be arriving into the borough from Princes Risborough direction and ending Leighton Buzzard Rd / Gadebridge Park.

We are engaging with the cycling community and local schools to make the event an extra special day for anyone interested in cycling.

Unlike the Olympics there is no restriction on local sponsors so we have designed a number of sponsorship packages including the finishing line that businesses can sponsor.

We will be looking at media opportunities over the months prior to the event in order to promote the borough.

On the day there will be over 3 hours of live coverage on itv4 including aerial footage.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe said that she thought the initiatives that were being launched in Woodhall Farm seemed to be a great success and asked why there were not similar events being launched elsewhere too. The Portfolio Holder said that part of the success of the events was down to having very good external partnerships in this area but that the Council was looking to replicate the success of these schemes in other areas.

Councillor Tindall asked about the leasing of Durrant's lake and asked if there had been any more progress on this issue. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that this issue had been ongoing for quite some time but explained that this was due to the involvement of lots of different organisations in regards to the issues of access associated with the land.

Councillor Douris asked if the Portfolio Holder would join him in congratulating Hemel Hempstead Town Football Club on their recent promotion to the South Conference League.

The Portfolio Holder wished the team well for the forthcoming year.

#### **67. QUESTIONS**

None.

#### **68. NOTICE OF MOTION**

The following motion from Councillor Williams given in accordance with Standing Orders was agreed: put forward

"That at a date to be announced, a Special Meeting of the Council be convened to pass the following resolutions:

"That the Council in pursuance of the powers conferred upon them by statute bestow Freedom of Entry to the Borough of Dacorum (the most honourable distinction which it is their privilege to bestow), on The Royal Anglian Regiment."

Resolved:

That this event be carried out at the Full Council meeting on 24 September 2014.

#### **69. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

None.

#### **70. CABINET REFERRALS**

There were no referrals from the Cabinet meeting on the 24 March 2014.

#### **71. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

#### **72. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES REVIEW 2013-2014**

The Chairman of the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Anderson was pleased to introduce the Reviews to Council and highlighted certain aspects of the work carried out by the individual committees:

Finance and Resources – The Chair had continued the predecessor’s action list in order to monitor outcomes of scrutiny reports.

Housing and Community – recognition had been given to the council efforts to increase housing levels and scrutiny of the Sport Space partnership had taken place.

Strategic Planning and Environment – the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had been scrutinised and discussions around how to charge developers had taken place. In addition the Council’s Refuse and Recycling service would be changing in the autumn so the committee had been involved in the process for this.

Health in Dacorum – Congratulations were given on the committees efforts which they had shown for a large number of complicated changes to the health system.

**73. CHANGE IN COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

There were no changes in committee membership.

**74. CHANGE IN COMMITTEE DATES**

There were no changes in committee dates.

**75. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

None

The meeting ended at 8.00pm.