
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

18 APRIL 2012

Present -

MEMBERS:

Councillor G Chapman (Mayor); Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, H Chapman, Clark, Conway, Doole, Douris, Elliot, Flint, Mrs Green, Griffiths, Mrs Guest, Harden, Harris, Hearn N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Holmes, Laws, Lawson, Link, Lloyd, Mahmood, Marshall, McKay, McLean, Organ, Mrs Rance, Ryan, Sutton, Taylor, Tiley, Townsend, Whitman, Williams, Wixed, Wood, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (43).

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), M Taggart-Smith, P Bowles, L Dolphin and L Stone.

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

53. MAYOR

The Mayor made the following statement:

“It was agreed that the Part II agenda item (13) to report a Call-In & Urgency Procedure concerning a Part II Portfolio Holder decision did not in itself contain exempt information and should therefore be reported to Council as a Part I item.

Before we consider the minutes of the previous Council meeting I would like to make the following announcement-

Firstly, I would like to welcome to the meeting Mrs Shelley Savage who, as you know is the Chair of the Standards Committee, and Mrs Eileen Heylin who is an independent member of the Standards Committee.

Secondly, I would like to say something in relation to the unfortunate events that occurred at the last Council meeting during the discussion on the Council’s budget. I would like to remind Members present that we are required under the Code of Conduct, which we have all signed up to, to treat one another with respect. .

All contributions should be through the Chair, and I hope that this reminder will encourage Councillors to behave in a courteous manner towards one another

and prevent the scenes that occurred last time being repeated at future meetings of the Council.

Under the Council's Constitution the only part of the minutes of the previous meeting that can be discussed is their accuracy and I do not want any discussion on the minutes to be used as an opportunity for a repeat of the scenes which occurred at the last meeting.

If there are any Members who want to pursue matters further as a result of what happened at the last Council meeting then they must do so outside this meeting through the appropriate channels”.

54. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2012 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor subject to the following amendments:

- Minute 50.3, within Councillor Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability, statement, the sixth paragraph should have stated ‘the relevant County Councillor’ rather than ‘reasonable’.
- Minute 51.6, Budget 2012/13 - Councillor Adshead made a statement in support in which had not been included in the minutes.

Cllr Williams asked the Mayor if she would allow him say a few words in relation to the last Council meeting on 29 February which she referred to in her opening remarks. He said that the meeting started off fractious and continued through to the Budget debate where the situation worsened. He said that he felt the contribution made by Cllr Harris had not been accurate but he was happy to accept that the contribution was not intended to be dishonest and was therefore happy for the record to withdraw that particular comment. He said he also wanted to take this opportunity to apologise to the Mayor for the aggravation that this had caused her.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

56. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Group Leaders and members:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ayling, Bhinder, Collins, Fantham, Macdonald, Peter, Reay and White.

23. Members of the Cabinet:

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

The Leader referred to the success of the Housing Self Financing and said that the Council had taken on a debt of £354 million in return for ownership of the housing stock. He reported that it was a big opportunity to shape the future housing in the Borough and affordable housing delivery. It would be possible to invest in the stock in ways not seen before as in the last 10 years, the level of repairs had been few and far between. The Leader announced that the Council had managed to secure an interest rate on the loan of 3.2% which was fixed for the 30 year life of the loan. During the first

year, this would result in £7 million less in interest payments than would have been paid into the national pool. The Leader gave thanks to all of the officers involved.

The Leader offered to take questions from Councillors.

There were no questions for the Leader.

Councillor Ayling, Portfolio Holder for Service and Performance Improvement

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Service and Performance Improvement, the Leader of the Council offered to take questions.

Councillor Rance expressed the concerns of a resident regarding the Planning section on the Council's website. A comment had been made that residents were finding it difficult to navigate around the site along with finding some inaccuracies and omissions. She asked if the Council's website could be improved generally and particularly the planning portal.

The Leader said that he had also received comments regarding the planning section of the website. There were significant issues on the planning portal in its functionality and availability. He said that different parts of the system did not communicate with each other. The real solution would be to replace the system and that a project was under way to improve the situation in the interim.

Councillor Rance asked the Leader to send an e-mail to all Councillors once the problems had been resolved.

The Leader agreed to this.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Tenant & Leaseholder Services

Rent Campaign – Dacorum Borough Council have been nominated and shortlisted for a national award. The Christmas rent recovery campaign entitled "the best present at Christmas is peace of mind" has been shortlisted in two categories of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Excellence Awards, Public Sector and Integrated Campaigns.

The campaign enabled an additional £101,502.96 of rent to be collected over the Christmas period compared to the previous years and enabled the 99.82% of the rent due to be collected over the course of the financial year.

Star Survey – Over 4,500 responses to the Survey of Tenants and Residents (Star survey) have been received. In February survey forms were sent to every tenant and leaseholder living within the Borough asking them their view of the quality of service they receive from Dacorum Borough Council Housing Landlord. Results indicate that over 90% of tenants are satisfied with the quality of service they receive; over 80% of tenants consider their rent "value for money" and over 80% of tenants are satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service.

Details of the results will be presented to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee, published on the Council's website, within Review (the Council's internal newsletter) and within News and Views (the newsletter for tenants and leaseholders).

Property and Place

Repairs, Maintenance & Improvement Procurement Project – A project Group has recently been set up involving officers, tenants and Councillor Margaret Griffiths to work towards a procurement strategy for the Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements to the Housing Stock. The new contract or contracts would start in April 2012 and the first stage is for Cabinet to agree a procurement strategy and a preferred model of delivery by July 2012.

New “Lettable Standard” – April saw the launch of a new “lettable standard” for tenants moving into a Dacorum Council Property. The standard takes into account tenant priorities, value for money and has been agreed by the Maintenance Focus Group after extensive consultation.

Strategic Housing

Affordable Housing Delivery – 149 new builds were developed in the period 2011-2012.

Choice Based Lettings – 5000 applicants have been processed since Nov 2011. The waiting time for new applicants has reduced and most are now registered to bid in 72 hours, with most customer enquiries/emails responded to in 24 hours.

Councillor Guest arrived at 7.42pm.

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

Jubilee Celebrations.

Dacorum will be celebrating the reign of Her Majesty the Queen in style on June 4th. The Carnival procession will start off at 11am, from the town centre up to Gadebridge Park.

The lead float will be winners of a Gazette competition for children of courage; they will be our Carnival Prince and Princess.

There will be six floats depicting Her Majesty through the decades:

- The 50's will be manned by the Junior Wardens
- The 60's by the Children's Centres
- The 70's by ARAZZAMATAZZ and the Blue Majorettes
- The 80's by Radio Dacorum
- The 90's by The Town Centre Partnership
- The 00's by The Scouts

There will be lots of dancers and other groups walking along with the floats.

The fun starts at Gadebridge Park at 12 noon, we have a community stage showcasing our local talent, there will be several charity stalls, arts and crafts, children's rides, face painting, balloon modeller, a mobile zip wire and much more. There will be a picnic and food outlets areas.

The Council will be supplying a Secret Cinema to encourage residents to recycle more.. A to visit the Secret Cinema will get you a half price zip wire voucher.

From 5.30pm the Community events will finish and the Concert stage will take over as well as several professional bands playing on stage, we have a large outdoor screen which will live stream the concert from Buckingham Palace.

We have one of the 2012 Jubilee Beacons that will be built and lit by the scouts on the Field of Hope at 10.30pm. As the beacon is lit there will be a magnificent Fireworks display to music and this will signal the end of our celebrations.

Our Diamond Jubilee commemorative programme will go on sale for 50p from mid May.

Each programme will have a unique number for a prize draw. Some of the prizes donated so far include:

- *Haven holiday for up to six people*
- *Pendley Manor – Sunday lunch for two*
- *Watford FC – family match day ticket*
- *1 x Adult Sportspace Annual Membership*
- *1 x Round of golf for 4 people at Little Hay Golf Complex*
- *1 night bed and breakfast accommodation at the Holiday Inn*
- *Bobsleigh Inn dinner for two*
- *Shendish Dinner for two*

The brochure content will include lots of pictures of Her Majesty when she visited Adeyfield in 1952 and of Her Majesty through the decades, also an interview with the Mayor and Deputy. It will also include an article about our new QE11 fields and a map of what's going on where including all the Town and Parish Council events.

We will also be running a photographic competition to see who can best capture the spirit of the Diamond Jubilee, with three age categories:

Under 13

13 – 19

19 +

Kodak has kindly donated fantastic prizes for each category.

Street Champions.

Street Champions will be clearing Maylands Wood in Adeyfield. All residents are welcome to come along this Saturday, where the 22 volunteers who have already signed up to the project will be joining the Council's Neighbourhood Action team. The event will be taking place from 12-2pm. They will be meeting at High Street Green play park at 12 noon before moving on to Maylands Wood. The volunteers will be taking part in a litter pick of the woods and tidying the woods' natural walkways to make them more accessible for everyone.

Dacorum Festival of Culture programme.

A brochure for the event was placed in Members pigeon holes and an email copy was also sent. This is a fantastic events programme including Free Taster sessions for various sport activities or other cultural events, hopefully something for everyone. Councillor Harden asked Members to please let their communities know about this.

Personal Development Plans.

Councillor Harden thanked everyone for responding to Derek Lamb's request to return your PDP's. Derek is now starting interviews which are hoped to conclude by the end of May.

In House Training questionnaire.

A number of Members will have received a Training feedback questionnaire, looking at ways to improve training at the council. Councillor Harden said he would be grateful if as many Members as possible could return these forms.

Councillor Lawson asked the Portfolio Holder how much funding had been put in place for the events taking place on the 3rd June in Adeyfield, Queen's Square.

Councillor Harden said that the events taking place in Queen's Square were community events and therefore was not sure how much funding was being spent. He added that as well as the events organised by the Council, there would be lots of other events and street parties taking place across the Borough.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe congratulated the Portfolio Holder on the £100k Olympic Fund. She asked if he could give a brief description of the highlights and to explain in what areas the money had been spent.

Councillor Harden said that over 30 clubs and sporting organisations had benefited from the fund which had now all been allocated. He added that there would be a press release in the next month with all of the details.

Cllr Douris asked if the Police and Crime Commissioners Election in November would have any affect on the Dacorum Community Safety Partnership.

Councillor Harden replied that the DCSP were meeting on 25 April and all Members were welcome to attend. An update on local policing and funding will be given at the meeting and he encouraged Members to attend.

Councillor Holmes, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

National Planning Policy Framework

The final version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published on 28th March and became law with immediate effect. The NPPF replaces all existing planning guidance and policy statements, the PPG's and PPS's. A copy of the framework has been placed in members group rooms. Over 1000 pages in the previous document as well as 44 other planning documents have been replaced with the NPPF, which has only 47 pages.

Officers are still considering the impact of the NPPF on our existing and emerging planning policies. There may be minor wording changes to the Core Strategy as a result and there is time to incorporate these before approval by Full Council should any be necessary.

Core Strategy

Consultation on the Pre-Submission Core Strategy was held during November/December 2011, with a small 'omissions' consultation during February/March 2012. Over 1,000 comments were received.

A report summarising the key issues raised through the consultation and the changes proposed to the plan as a result will be considered by Cabinet on 24th April, before being referred to Full Council. Subject to the agreement of Cabinet and Full Council, the target is to formally submit the Core Strategy to the Planning Inspectorate at the end of May.

The timetable following Submission will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate. However, it is hoped the Examination will be held in early October.

The final Core Strategy, including the Inspector's recommended changes, will be brought before Council for adoption. Provided the Inspector finds the Core Strategy 'sound,' it is hoped that this will be in early 2013.

Hemel Evolution

Consultation exhibitions are being planned for May 3rd and 5th to promote key proposals set out within the Hemel Evolution leaflet and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Water Gardens. The consultation period for this will run from 30th April to 25th May.

A Member's briefing is being planned for 26th April at 6pm in the Council Chamber.

The consultation exhibitions will include proposal updates for each of the seven Character Zones that make up the Town Centre and a consultation questionnaire targeting the Old Town, the Water Gardens and the Heritage Improvement Strategy.

The Saturday exhibition will also include family-friendly activities and an opportunity to record your views and memories in the 'interview room' in the Water Gardens between 11am and 3pm. Councillors will be asked to come along and take part in this. Further details will be circulated soon.

Maylands Improvements

Major landscaping to the corner of Green Lane and Breakspear Way commenced last week. The works are due to last 5 weeks and involves hard and soft landscaping to the Phoenix Roundabout and adjacent verge, which will include a new feature entrance sign to the town. Some planting will need to be completed in September due to the hosepipe ban.

Improved lighting of the Phoenix Artwork using low energy LED spotlights will impress visitors and residents entering Dacorum from the M1.

The works are funded through a mixture of Growth Area Fund and S106 contributions.

Maylands Business Centre

Success continues at the Maylands Business Centre as all 14 Offices are now taken with a waiting list of 4 and only 3 light industrial units remain unoccupied at this time, with interest in all of them, which may convert into lettings in the near future.

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Mrs Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability

The Clean Safe and Green teams in February embarked on a two week clear up of the A41 which mainly consisted of litter that had been tossed out from vehicle windows. A team of seven staff with two vans collected over 10 tonnes of rubbish covering both sides of the dual carriageway from the M25 roundabout at Kings Langley up to the Icknield Way junction at Tring. We carry out two litter picks along the dual carriageway each year – at the end of the winter and mid-way through the summer.

Over 3 days at the end of February we encouraged schools across Hertfordshire to recycle electrical and electronic waste as part of Hertfordshire Waste Partnership's countywide scheme. We offered a free collection service to all local authority schools in the borough. 24 took part recycling 605 items. In total 128 other schools throughout Hertfordshire got on board too, with a total of 34.12 tonnes of electrical equipment being collected – that's the equivalent weight of nearly 14 polar bears.

In March Envar, green waste composters, used by this council for the processing of Green waste visited Cupid Green to give a short presentation to crews about the composting process and why contamination of green waste in the recycling process causes problem.

In March, a Diamond Jubilee Wood off Galley Hill, was planted with the help of residents, Councillors and Hemel Hempstead Conservation Volunteers. The trees had been donated by the Woodland Trust.

Also in March Flaunden Parish Council participated in our 'love where you live campaign', by carrying out a litter pick and they collected 21 bags of litter including 4 bags of recyclable litter

In April McDonalds store branches from Apsley, Jarman Park and Bourne End took part in the same campaign, they litter picked Hemel Town Centre. 20 staff including 3 branch managers collected 20 bags of litter and 3 bags of recyclable litter.

Officers attended a 'Go Green' day at the Royal Mail Home Counties Mail Centre in Hemel Hempstead, which gave the opportunity to promote the councils recycling services. The event afforded us the opportunity to engage with hundreds of county wide Royal Mail staff.

Councillor Flint asked if the Portfolio Holder was aware of an alleged incident where a DBC staff member had dropped litter from a DBC vehicle.

Councillor Laws said she was not aware but would request the details.

Councillor Harden thanked the team which took part in the A41 clean up and said that he was pleased with the results. He asked if other neighbouring authorities could be encouraged to clean up the parts of the A41 outside of Dacorum.

Councillor Laws said she would pass on the thanks and said she would write a letter to the neighbouring authorities.

Councillor N Hollinghurst pointed out that the northern end of the A41 in Tring had not been cleaned up and asked if this could be looked at.

Councillor Laws said that she would pass on his comments.

Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

"I would like to repeat the apology I have made to taxpayers via a press release, Scrutiny, Cabinet and now members of the Council for the proof reading error in table 4, page 4 of the Council Tax explanatory leaflet. The cost to remedy the repair is about £16000.

In future proof reading will be done both in Communications and the originating department and proof readers will sign their checking to ensure greater care. A valuable lesson has been learned.

I would like to put the mistake in context as someone in the Gazette said that heads should role. The Portfolio for which I am accountable, Finances and Resources, as well as making this mistake this year has:

- Saved £89,000 retendering our Insurances
- Saved £25,000 retendering our Banking Services
- Saved £60,000 retendering our Payroll Services
- Saved over £100,000 tendering our Facilities Management
- Saved £60,000 restructuring Finance and Asset Management
- Saved £61,000 in our Audit fee
- Increased Commercial Revenues by over £100,000
- Increased our investment income by £100,000 over budget

By my reckoning my team is "in" over £600,000 and "out" £16000. Heads will not role, not even mine. Yet, we are proud of our record serving the Borough".

Councillor Harris referred to the recent acquisitions of property and asked if the Portfolio Holder could confirm whether this had any effect on the recent Budget passed.

Councillor Tiley confirmed that no adjustments had been made to the Capital Programmes and no changes were needed as provisions had been put in place.

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that the proof reading error on the Council tax leaflet had been an expensive lesson learnt.

Councillor Tiley replied that it was an important lesson learnt.

57. QUESTIONS

Question by Councillor Flint of Councillor Mrs Griffiths, Portfolio Holder, Housing:

"Will the Cabinet Member for Housing please update the Council on progress on redeveloping the following two sites for housing: -

- Land at the junction of Durrants Lane and High Street, Northchurch - due to be developed for housing by the Aldwyck Group, but no work has been commenced several years after the land was transferred
- The St. Peter's Church site on Galley Hill in Gadebridge, due to be developed by Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association”

Answer:

- "The Land at the junction of Durrants Lane and High Street, Northchurch (also known as Farm Place) has not yet been transferred to Aldwyck Housing Group. Papers to transfer the land have been prepared to be signed by Portfolio Holders (Finance/Housing) when planning permission is obtained. Aldwyck submitted a planning application to the Development Control Committee in March 2012, where a decision was deferred. Part of the reason for delay was that an application was submitted later than expected by Aldwyck (13th December 2011, 4/02208/11/MFA) Which did not allow planning issues identified by the DC Committee to be resolved in time to meet the HCA's deadline for use of grant funding (end of March 2012). HCA have extended the deadline in this case, and Aldwyck have been revising their plans which are expected shortly for consideration by the Committee.
- The St Peters Church site on Galley Hill in Gadebridge was the subject of a request for funding by Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association. The level of funding requested for their proposed development was not considered to offer best value and was therefore rejected. The land has a covenant for the provision of affordable housing and the Council is committed to working with any providers that wish to bring forward this site.”

Councillor Flint thanked the Portfolio Holder for the written reply. She asked if the Council had contractual arrangements in place with Housing Associations to ensure that developments were completed in a reasonable time given the need for affordable housing.

Councillor Griffiths said it would depend from where the grant was received. Most Housing Associations and the Council would start to build as soon as possible. Generally the land was not transferred until planning permission was agreed.

Councillor Flint referred to St Peters Church site and said that there was open access on both sides and that it was a security risk. She asked how long it would be until work would start.

Councillor Griffiths said that the Council had no control over land that it did not own.

Councillor Flint asked if enforcement powers could be used.

Councillor Griffiths said that there were no enforcement issues to be applied. She appreciated that the building was in a state, but added that it was the owner's responsibility to make it safe and secure.

58. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES REVIEW 2011/12

The Chairman of the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Marshall introduced the Reviews and highlighted certain aspects of the work carried out by the individual committees:

Strategic Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Chairman - Councillor Anderson

- Members are asked to note the meeting on 2 May 2012 which would consider the Call-In but would also be attended by representatives from the water industry to look at the current shortages and restrictions.

Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Chairman - Councillor H Chapman

- This Committee had held a particularly interesting meeting in October 2011, where they spent a whole meeting looking at the financial arrangements of Sportspace.

Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Chairman – Councillor Marshall

- There would be an extra meeting on 9 May to deal with the heavy work programme. The Committee including the co-opted Members had appreciated attendance from eldercare and sportspace.

Health in Dacorum – Chairman – Councillor Sutton

- This Committee had been vigorous in its scrutiny of Health issues within the Borough.

Councillor Marshall said that it was clear that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had worked hard and that the recommendations had impacted on the way services were delivered and the decision making process by Cabinet.

All Chairman would like to thank committee members and officers for their input and commitment throughout the year.

Councillor Rance said that it would be helpful if the next Finance and Resources and Strategic Planning and Environment Committee annual reports provided an overview of the discussions held rather than just a list of what was discussed.

59. UPDATE TO COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2012/13

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the Audit Committee scheduled for the Monday 27 September be been moved to Wednesday 19 September 2012.

60. CALL-IN & URGENCY PROCEDURE

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following decisions taken by Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources in Consultation with Councillor Williams, Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership as a matter of urgency under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be noted:

- Acquisition of Property (PH/014/12) – 27 February 2012
- Acquisition of Property (PH/017/12) – 28 March 2012

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.