
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

10 JULY 2013

Present -

MEMBERS:

Councillor P Hearn (Mayor); Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Ayling, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, Bhinder, B Chapman, Mrs G Chapman, Clark, Conway, Douris, Fantham, Flint, Mrs Green, Mrs Guest, Harden, Harris, N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Killen, Laws, Lawson, Link, Macdonald, Mahmood, McLean, Organ, Peter, Mrs Rance, Reay, Ryan, G Sutton, Taylor, Tiley, Tindall, Townsend, Williams, Wood, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (41).

OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive, The Corporate Director (Finance & Governance), The Corporate Director (Housing & Regeneration), The Director (Legal Democratic & Regulatory), The Group Manager (Democratic Services), L Collins, P Bowles.

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

10. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2013 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe drew Members attention to the fact that the minutes of 15 May 2013 (Minute 3) were incorrect concerning the nominees of the Deputy Mayor. The Mayor confirmed that this error had now been corrected.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor

The Mayor made no announcements.

2. By the Group Leaders and members:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Anderson, Collins, Doole, Elliott, Griffiths, McKay, Marshall, R Sutton and Whitman and Councillor Wood who would be late.

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3. Members of the Cabinet:

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

“It’s been many years in the making but I am pleased to advise that the Council that we have had confirmation from the Planning Inspector that the new Dacorum Core Strategy has been found sound. The Core Strategy forms the bedrock of our Local Planning Framework and Council will be invited to formally adopt it at the September meeting.

The Core Strategy is subject to a series of modifications which the inspector has confirmed as acceptable. Of key importance is making sure that we are making adequate provision for housing needs for current and future needs. To this end we have committed to carry out an early review of the Core Strategy by 2017/18.

In the meantime the adoption of the Core Strategy provides a formal endorsement of our approach to new development in Dacorum, making Hemel Hempstead the centre of growth whilst allowing for a modest increase of building in our market towns of Berkhamsted and Tring, and in our large villages.

Crucially, in support of our growth and regeneration programmes, our proposals for revitalising Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, and making Maylands Business Park a first choice location for commerce, have been supported.

This brings me to my next update, on our plans for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre where significant progress has been made.

Works for the new one way system and new public realm commenced in the Old Town last month. The works will progress through to the autumn with closures and disruptions kept to a minimum.

At the northern end of the town centre, the planning application for the new Morrison’s foodstore and West Herts College campus was received by the Council last week. Our Development Management Service is currently in the process of validating the application and consideration of the proposals will no doubt keep officers very busy over the coming weeks before the proposals are brought to the Development Control Committee for decision.

As Council is aware, if the scheme is acceptable, the grant of planning permission for Morrison’s and the College will trigger the decant of the Council into our newly acquired premises at 39/41 Marlowes and the former Magistrates’ Court. In connection with this, Councillor Douris announced at the April Council the commencement of the procurement process for the new Public Sector Quarter, new leisure uses, family restaurants and other development in the town centre on land owned by DBC and other public sector organisations.

The first stage of this process is now complete, with a number of initial proposals from developers now submitted. Dialogue with the bidders will commence shortly, with the aim of selecting a development partner by the end of the business year in March 2014.

Elsewhere in the town centre, the design of major improvements to the pedestrianised area is being made up by our retained consultants, who will be running the consultation events in the town centre in July and August. We are on the point of

confirming our appointed design and development consultancies for both the bus interchange and Water Gardens projects, both of which are of great significance to the future success of the town centre, and I look forward to providing successive updates over the next few months.

Finally, Members may be aware that the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership recently published its new Growth Plan for consultation. This recognises the great strengths of Hertfordshire as a place of business, but acknowledges that its economic performance, as a whole, has lagged behind other areas. The plan seeks to make Hertfordshire the leading economy at the heart of a “golden triangle” between London, Oxford and Cambridge. The plan recognises the importance of Hemel Hempstead as one of the County’s key locations. I will be issuing a response to the LEP in the next few days which seeks to ensure that this Borough, and the opportunities it has to offer, is fully and properly represented in the plan’s proposals”.

Councillor Mrs Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability

“The Clean Safe and Green Team and Astley Cooper School’s Interact Club, (a young Rotary Club), came together to install three natural oak benches made from a felled tree on Chipperfield common, in Woodhall Woods. The students, aged between 15 to 19 years old, learned about sustainability and the importance of trees.

Over four hundred keen gardeners from across the borough picked up free bags of compost at our Compost Giveaway Event at Cupid Green Depot in May. The depot was set up to hand out 13 tonnes of free compost from 10am till 3pm, however by 9.30am cars were already queuing to get in. Council staff and Community Payback teams worked together to shovel, bag and load the compost bags into cars. It took just three hours for all of the compost to go, which was a phenomenal 1,500 bags.

In June, Dacorum residents celebrated the national month of ‘Love where you live’ by organising clean ups in their neighbourhood. In just one month, 97 volunteers took part in litter picks across the borough they were from:

- St John Ambulance Badger Group
- Apsley First Scout Group
- McDonalds
- Chaulden Infant School
- First Berkhamsted Scouts

In total, 109 bags of litter were collected of which 50 bags were plastic bottles and cans which were recycled.

During the course of national Recycle Week in June, shoppers, business staff and primary school children received a lesson in reducing, reusing and recycling waste. The council gave away 100 kitchen kaddies to shoppers at Sainsbury’s store in Woodhall Farm and Tesco store in Jarmans Park. The Council’s recycling team were on hand to advise shoppers that all cooked and uncooked food waste including meat, poultry, fish, bones and egg shells can be placed in their green wheeled bin along with natural cardboard and garden waste.

Staff at Royal Mail were presented with the Love Food Hate Waste campaign where they were given top tips on how to waste less food and save £164 a year through

simply making shopping lists, meal planning, perfecting cooking portions, understanding purchase dates and being creative with leftover food.

Four schools, Limewalk Primary School, Chaulden Infants School, Haywood Grove School and St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School ran Toy and Book Exchange events, a simple recycling process, where children brought in books and toys they no longer used and swapped it with something else they liked.

There has been a press release, publicising this final item.

Four year Megan King from Nash Mills took part in a competition at the Herts Waste Aware stall at the Herts County Show which encouraged residents of Hertfordshire to make pledges on reducing, reusing and recycling waste. Megan pledged to recycle toilet roll cardboard tubes at home. Megan's pledge was randomly picked from hundreds of other pledges. Megan took up an invitation to visit Cupid Green Depot, she had the opportunity to sit in a recycling vehicle, receive a certificate and a bespoke recycled radio".

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe pointed out that he is the school Governor for the Astley Cooper School in Adeyfield and asked the Portfolio Holder if in the future, other schools will be involved in the scheme because it did appear to be a very good project for encouraging relationships between the Council and future voters.

Councillor Laws said that if the opportunity arose, other schools would be considered for the scheme.

Councillor Adshead asked the Portfolio Holder to pass on his congratulations for the work carried out by the Clean, Safe and Green Team and said that the service in Adeyfield that he had highlighted has now improved.

Councillor Laws said that she would pass on his appreciation.

Councillor Harris commented on the lack of access to Council services over the weekend and said that it is a big problem which needs to be looked at. He mentioned a particular incident where a dead animal had been found near the Nicky Line.

Councillor Laws said that there was no intention to change the hours that are currently on offer.

Councillor Harris asked the Portfolio Holder to reconsider especially when Health and Safety is at risk.

Councillor Laws said that she had noted his concerns and would consider them.

Councillor N Hollinghurst alerted the Portfolio Holder to the fact that there were areas in Tring where the grass was left too long before cutting. He asked The Portfolio Holder to consider flexibility in the schedule of grass cutting to accommodate variable weather conditions.

Councillor Laws said that at present they have a schedule in place, on a 4 - 6 week rota (post Meeting advise) and if the programme were to be altered, it would be at the expense of other work. She asked him to email her the areas of concern and she would ask the Clean, Safe and Green Team to see if these particular areas can be revisited.

Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

The Portfolio Holder informed Members that the draft accounts had been approved by the Audit Committee at the end of June. They are now with the external auditors for approval.

Councillor Harris referred to the Cabinet referral 7.1 CA/058/13 – Electronic Records Management System and asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm what happens to the paper documents once they have been scanned.

Councillor Tiley said that he would assume that all paper documents would be destroyed, but he would get back to Members for clarification.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

In the absence of Councillor Griffiths, the Leader made the following statement:

“Procurement Project Update

Gas Servicing and Installation Contract

The four shortlisted bidders tenders were returned on the 21st May and interviews took place on the 12th June in support of their tender submissions. The final evaluated scores have been compiled and validated and report will be presented to Cabinet on 23rd July, making a recommendation to award the contract to the preferred bidder. The evaluations were undertaken in accordance with the Public Procurement Contract Regulations 2006 (as amended) and based upon the Most Economically Advantageous Tender principles with the weighting split 60% quality and 40% Price.

Subject to Cabinet approval and compliance with the statutory Call in and Alcatel periods, the contract will be awarded in August and the new Service Provider will have two months to mobilize the contract with the date for commencement set for the 1st October 2013.

The interim provider, Orion continues to work collaboratively with the Council and has been able to maintain gas servicing compliance at 100% for the past 7 weeks, which should be commended.

Total Asset Management Contract

The 11 PQQ's that were returned have been evaluated and 5 bidders have been shortlisted to participate in the first stage of dialogue, which is scheduled to take place between the 25th July and the 31st July.

The incumbent repairs provider MITIE were not successful at the shortlisting stage and the Core Group have met to agree how best to manage the exit strategy, so as not to impact detrimentally upon the quality of service delivery or customer satisfaction.

It is envisaged a number of staff within the current Property and Place Team and those involved in the cleaning and clearance of void properties, will be subject to a TUPE (Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment) transfer. Initial meetings have been held with the effected teams and fortnightly meetings are being held with the Unions to update them on the status of project.

Update on Council New Build Programme –

London Rd, St Peters Church and Farm Place all have new hoarding around sites. Prices have been requested for the demolition of The Elms bungalow and the erection of hoarding to match the other sites. This work should be undertaken in August/September.

The 2nd stage tender for Farm Place and Galley Hill are both being issued this week, with build prices expected back in six weeks.

The 1st stage tender for London Road and the Hostel are currently being completed, with the second stage tender for both sites to be issued at the end of the month.

Planning permission has already been obtained for Farm Place and St Peters. The planning application for London Road is being determined at the August Development Control Committee. The planning application for the new Homeless hostel is being submitted this week and is expected to go to the September Development Control Committee.

The Development Team are currently looking at a range of sites that could be suitable for phase 2 of the new build programme for a further 100 new Council homes, and an item has been requested on the September Cabinet to seek approval to take some of the sites forward.

All development plans can be viewed on the Council website (at www.dacorum.gov.uk/newbuild)

Update on New Homelessness Strategy –

A new draft Homelessness Strategy will be discussed by H& C OSC and Cabinet over the next couple of weeks prior to public consultation during August and September.

Earlier this year, the Housing Minister announced a new Gold Standard for local homelessness services, containing Ten Local Challenges. The Council has pledged to strive to meet these challenges.

The Strategic Housing Team has reviewed its service to identify key areas for improvement and investment. These key areas have already been discussed with the Council's partners and from this work, plans to commit to four key strategic objectives:

- To make every contact count in the primary prevention of homelessness
- To secure suitable and affordable accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- To provide support to prevent repeat homelessness and improve outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- To tackle the root causes of homelessness through much earlier intervention and prevention through education.

Each key strategic objective has a number of actions, which together make up the Homelessness Strategy action plan. The action plan shows the required team and financial resources, timescales and responsible officers for each action.

Tenant & Leaseholders

Coronation Event Adeyfield – Joint event with Resident Services. Attended by local people, with the purpose of raising the profile of the Housing Service and to get tenants involved. Very good feedback was received and good contacts made in the community as a result of the event.

Barge evenings – Two events where our tenants met with tenants and staff from other providers of social housing in the area. The events were used to consult with tenants about the Tenants Handbook and the events received very good feedback.

Welfare Reform – New benefit cap comes into place on the 15th of July in Dacorum. 20 Tenants have been identified and visited to discuss the implications for them. Members have been sent some information about this already.

Tenancy agreement – Tenants and Members have been consulted on the document, the final version of the tenancy agreement is about to be distributed to all our tenants”.

Councillor Tindall asked the Leader of the Council if he thought that ‘under occupancy’ was an acceptable reason for the Council to refuse a tenant disabled adaptations. He mentioned that a previous case had now been resolved but he would forward the details onto Councillor Williams for information purposes because the Council could be accused of Disability Discrimination.

Councillor Adshead pointed out that he had been contacted by a Council tenant who had some problems contacting the 24hour emergency housing line and asked the Leader of the Council if he knew why the emergency number was for a time inoperable.

Councillor Williams confirmed that there had been some minor problems with the emergency line that particular weekend due to a significant volume of calls relating to the loss of water services in the Adeyfield area, although this was not the Council’s direct responsibility.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

"Dacorum Borough Council has successfully prosecuted the owner of a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) under the Housing Act 2004, for failing to obtain a licence and for breaching The Management of Houses in Multiple Regulations 2006.

Mrs Shirley Bunker of Hemel Hempstead was fined £7000 for operating a HMO without a licence and an additional £500 for each of the five separate offences under the HMO Management Regulations for renting her property to tenants, without ensuring that the required safety standards were met and sufficient amenities provided. This included inadequate fire safety and food safety provisions. The total fine awarded was £18515 this included contribution towards prosecution costs (£9000) and a victim surcharge (£15).

Resident Services.

CCTV

In recognition of going above and beyond the call of duty, Izrar Ali CCTV Controller, has been made an award from public funds under section 28 of the Criminal Law Act by His Honour Judge Plumstead. This award was presented by Viscountess Fiona Trenchard at St Albans Crown Court.

Town Centre

A summer programme of events has been programmed for the bandstand at weekends. This starts on 13th July with 'A Big Gig' the follow on from the Bandstand Marathon last year. There will be family entertainment every Saturday.

Neighbourhood Action

The first "Love your Neighbourhood" event takes place on 26th July in Woodhall Farm. Between 10am and midday a multi-agency group will be addressing a range of issues identified by local residents through a consultation that has been open for 3 weeks. From midday to 3.00pm there will be family fun day with a range of entertainment and information!

Street Champions to be rolled out to Grovehill at the request of the Neighbourhood Action Steering Group.

Community Safety

Crime figures continue to fall with approximately 16% fall on the same period last year. The Billy's Wish knife crime DVD was launched and will be used in schools across the borough to deliver the anti-knife crime message.

The Old Town Hall

The Look Out Pop Up festival has started and has been very well received at Highfield and Adeyfield. The on-the-road sessions are attracting people who have not been to the Old Town Hall before and they will be in Markyate on 10th August with Three Little Pigs and in Berkhamsted on 13th August with a Pop up Theatre!

Adventure Playgrounds

New structure and opening hours commenced 1st July – this now includes the youth clubs as part of the core service. The playgrounds are open for the same amount of time but budget savings have been made.

Dacorum Youth club sessions are attracting up to 80 young people per session at the playgrounds – very successful. Youth Connexions are also running 3 sessions from the Adventure playgrounds which increase the offer for young people.

The Billy Dove foundation has made generous gifts to all 4 playgrounds. Adeyfield & Grovehill received state of the art disco equipment and lights, Chaulden received a skate ramp and Bennetts End received computers for a much needed homework club. Billy's Mum and sisters unveiled a plaque in memory of Billy".

Councillor N Hollinghurst reported that whilst out canvassing, he had noticed a number of empty properties in the area, despite the huge demand for properties in the Borough. Under the 2004 Housing Act there is power to require home owners to bring empty properties into occupation and he asked if this was a practical measure that could be enforced to solve homelessness within the Borough.

Councillor Harden replied that the Council will always encourage Landlords and property owners to bring their properties back into occupation.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe said that it was always good to hear about awards being given to DBC staff. She asked for further details about the award given to the CCTV operator.

Councillor Harden replied that he was only told that Izrar Ali had noticed something suspicious in the town centre that had alerted his attention. He notified the police and tracked the individual which resulted in an arrest.

Councillor Harris said that Councillor Harden was the Council representative on the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) and he asked the Portfolio Holder if the closure of the front desk at Hemel Hempstead police station had been discussed and scrutinised by the PCP and if the Council had expressed any view about the closure.

Councillor Harden replied that this matter was not discussed by the PCP. The response given by Hertfordshire Constabulary and the PCC was that the closure of the front desk was an operational issue.

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that the PCP use the description of an 'operational issue' to dodge its responsibilities. He said that if we do not get a grip on certain aspects of police practice, we will never achieve the improvements within the County that we all seek.

Councillor Harden replied that the role of the PCP and the PCC was to achieve a more efficient Police service and if the Council or the Police Commissioner had concerns about the closure of the front desk, then these concerns would be raised with the Police.

Councillor Rance asked if consideration had been given to consulting the users of the Police front desk.

Councillor Harden replied that over time, there has been less usage of the front desk and many of its functions are now carried out on-line. There are still a number of people who will need to interact with the police but they find a different way to do this.

Councillor Flint referred to the 2004 Housing Act and asked how long a property had to be empty before the home owner was required to do something.

Councillor Harden replied that he did not know the answer but would find out and inform Councillor Flint.

13. CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 30 April, 28 May and 25 June 2013 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

1. ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CA/058/13)

A supplementary estimate to increase the 2013/14 Dacorum Anywhere budget by £270k, to be financed from the Management of Change Reserve.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Harris said that he had major concerns over the destruction of the paper records. He pointed out that if information was to be accessible only electronically, eventually over a period of time, as computers systems get updated, there is a danger of losing records for ever.

The Leader of the Council made reference to Page 17 of the agenda, stating that the Portfolio for Finance & Resources gave an illustration of the current shelving used,

equating to 8 circuits of a 400m running track, which made the problem more understandable. He said that once an item is scanned into the system, there is no need for a paper copy.

2. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE (CA/059/13)

1. The following supplementary estimates to the HRA capital programme, to be funded through revenue surpluses in the business plan:

- **Estate Improvements, £750k per annum from 2013/14 - 2016/17;**
- **Structural Balcony Repairs, £1m per annum 2013/2014 & 2014/2015;**
- **Strategic Acquisition Fund, £5m, to be financed from HRA reserves to be created as part of the 2012/13 year-end process subject to outturn and Council approval;**
- **£675k increase to the budget for Phase 1 of the Council House New Build Programme to cover the amount of HCA grant funding forgone by the decision to charge social rent rather than the Affordable Rent level stipulated by the HCA as a condition of grant.**

2. Approval of an appropriation of land at London Road, Apsley from the General Fund to the HRA, together with an adjustment of £1.8m between the General Fund and HRA Capital Financing Requirements.

3. HEMEL EVOLUTION: HEMEL HEMPSTEAD MARKET SQUARE AND BUS STATION REGENERATION (CA/061/13)

- **The incorporation of £2.16m into the capital programme to fund phase one of the project;**
- **The removal of the GAF-funded Station Gateway and Maylands Green Energy Centre projects, currently scheduled for 2014/15, from the capital programme;**
- **The estimated revenue costs of £40k for phase one of the project be approved and incorporated into the base budget by supplementary estimate, to be funded from the Planning and Regeneration Projects Reserve;**

The following amendment relating to Hemel Evolution: Hemel Hempstead Market Square and Bus Station Regeneration was moved by Councillor Harris and seconded by Councillor N Hollinghurst:

“To remove the second bullet point of the recommendation, relating to the removal of the GAF-funded Station Gateway and Maylands Green Energy Centre projects, currently scheduled for 2014/15, from the capital programme”

Councillor Harris introduced the amendments. He said the reason behind the amendment was that this Council should be aiming to be one of the ‘greenest’ Councils in the country. He said these particular ‘green’ projects would be sorely missed if they were dropped. He explained that the additional funding could be easily

raised by a prudent mechanism already identified in the Cabinet papers. The land being resealed at the bus station and market square should be of sufficient value to secure the investment and he felt that raising finance by moving money around the balance sheet was unnecessary.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that he was in favour of this amendment. He said that the removal of these two items would give the impression that this authority does not care about environmental issues. Referring to the Railway Station Gateway, he said that a huge amount of money had been spent on the railways over the last decade and another £44m is being spent on improvements to the line. The forecourt at Hemel Hempstead railway station needs refurbishment in terms of accessibility and we need the Station Gateway Fund to go ahead in order to achieve the full benefit from the money being spent on the railways. He asked the second bullet point to be removed from the decision.

The Leader of the Council said that he didn't believe that this decision was negative to green energy and this Council has a strong record on investment in green and renewable energy. He said the Green Energy centre was a project that grew out of the Buncefield incident. It is unlikely to ever be delivered and the money reserved for that project is better spent on current projects. He added that the Station Gateway is not primarily aimed at the station forecourt, it takes in the Harvester restaurant and the adjoining garage and car sales room and is such a capital intensive project that if it did come forward, it would generate such significant revenue in its own right that it would not need Council funding to give the station forecourt a makeover.

The Mayor put the amendment to the meeting and declared it to be lost:

7 Voting for, 32 Against and 1 Abstention.

4. AUTHORISATION OF VIREMENTS (CA/070/08)

A supplementary estimate for additional ICT support in 2013/14 of £102,000 to be funded from the Technology Reserve.

5. SENIOR OFFICER PAY POLICY (CA/071/13)

The inclusion of the additional sections to the Senior Officer Pay Policy as set out in paragraph 2 of the background report to Cabinet, as amended.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT Q4 2012/2013 (CA/083/13)

- 1. The adoption of the Revised Risk Management Strategy**
- 2. The adoption of the revised Dacorum Guide to Managing Risk**

7. MAYLANDS GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT BRIEF CA/084/13

The adoption of the Maylands Gateway Development Brief – revised May 2013, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, to be used as a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications

Key points of discussion

Councillor N Hollinghurst said he was pleased that the Maylands Gateway Project was going ahead, but he thought that the report highlights his points about the railway station, which represents a green transport system and which is being neglected.

Councillor Williams responded and said that this decision represents economic development and job creation, which is a number one priority for this authority and also the land in question, is under Council ownership.

8. TOP TIER UPDATE CA/085/13

In accordance with the Council's Senior Pay Policy, to appoint the Corporate Director (Finance & Operations) on the following terms as regards remuneration:-

- **annual Salary range £91,661 - £96,336 (inclusive of London Weighting) spinal points 84 to 87 (Band CO4-7)**
- **lease car allowance £4,600 (Band 4)**

9. CAPITAL STRATEGY STEERING GROUP REPORT REQUEST FOR CAPITAL APPROVAL CA084/13

That the Capital programme is updated to include the following schemes detailed within the report.

Structural Works at Bennetts End House (St Nicholas Children's Nursery)	£60,000
Entropy Management System Software	£38,242

14. CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That Councillors Julie Laws and Grahame Sutton be added as substitute Members on the Appointments Committee.

15. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES

The report was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following changes to the 2013/14 Committee timetable be made:

Audit Committee

To change the meeting date from 19th September to 18th September 2013.

Call in Contingency

To change the meeting date from 18th September to 19th September 2013.

16. STANDARDS COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That Councillor Robin McCarthy of Aldbury Parish Council and Councillor Mrs Elaine Collins of Berkhamsted Town Council be appointed as non-voting, co-opted members of the Standards Committee to serve as the two representatives of the Parish and Town Councils for a term of one year.

Councillor Wood arrived at 8.20pm

17. DECISION TAKEN BY CABINET UNDER THE URGENCY PROVISIONS

The Leader of the Council informed Members that it was not necessary to consider this item under Part 2.

Members were notified of a decision taken by the Cabinet under the Council's urgency provisions. The decision is required to be reported for information to the next meeting of the Council.

Cabinet Decision (CA/075/13) on 28 May 2013

Approval of Supplementary Estimate for the Highbarnes Land Stabilisation Project – It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Townsend said that following the notification, he had raised four technical questions with officers on the estimates and funding of the Highbarnes project and has not yet received answers. He also asked if there was a contingency in place, if the additional funding for Highbarnes is not forthcoming.

Councillor Williams replied and said that officer time spent on this matter is considerable and already in excess of £1.4m of Council money, but there is no realistic prospect that the Council can continue to afford further funding. This Council will continue to badger and represent our residents as firmly and robustly as we can by cautioning the Homes and Communities Agency and the Department for Communities and Local Government that this is an obligation that they cannot walk away from.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that sometime ago, a survey was commissioned to investigate the Highbarnes land situation and he understood that a detailed investigation of the entire area was not made at that time. Councillor N Hollinghurst asked if this was the reason why the cost was now so much higher than previously expected, because the subsidence is more serious than first thought. He also asked why the partial investigation was accepted in the first place.

Councillor Williams said he was not in a position to give a full answer because he was not involved in the early years of this project. His involvement came in 2010/11 when the Department for Communities and Local Government gave an indication of winding up the funding for the land stabilisation programme. He said he was unaware of the technology first used to predict the extent of the workings. There were no maps and consequently ground radar surveys were used, but there was no guarantee that this would reveal the extent and size of the workings. The material being pumped into the shaft is dispersing at a far faster rate than was estimated.

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked if there was a basis of a claim against the survey company

Councillor Williams replied that this was a legal matter.

The meeting ended at 8.25pm