
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

26 FEBRUARY 2014

Present -

MEMBERS:

Councillor P Hearn (Mayor); Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, Bhinder, H Chapman, G Chapman, Clark, Collins, Conway, Douris, Fantham, Mrs Green, Griffiths, Mrs Guest, 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, Tindall, Tiley, Townsend, Whitman, Williams, Wood, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (45).

OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive, The Corporate Director (Finance and Governance), The Assistant Director (Chief Executive's Unit) (Monitoring Officer), The Group Manager (Democratic Services), M Taggart-Smith, P Duff, C Thorley and P Bowles.

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

57. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2014 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Collins declared a Personal Interest as he is a DBC representative on the Chiltern Conservation Board.

59. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor

The Mayor announced the death of Former Mayor and ex-Councillor Frank Seely. A minutes silence was held in his memory.

The Mayor made the following statement supporting those affected at Oatridge Gardens by the sinkhole in Hemel Hempstead: "Since the sinkhole opened up in Oatridge Gardens in Hemel Hempstead on Saturday 15 February, the Council have given their full support to Hightown Praetorian Housing Association - the owners of the affected site. The Council's role, as one of the organisations working on this multi-agency issue, has been advised on the safety of the building structures, as well as helping Hightown to address the immediate issues faced by the families who had been affected.

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The Mayor said that in addition, the Council had been working with their community partners to organise further support to those affected and had provided some financial support to Dacorum Community Trust to assist the Trust in its efforts to help those affected by the ongoing situation.

The Council are aware of pledges of financial support from some local businesses and had channelled those via Dacorum Community Trust and I hope that the Council's partners, local businesses and the community can pull together to also contribute what they can to help support those whose lives have been impacted in this crisis".

2. By the Group Leaders and Members:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ayling, Doole, Elliot, Macdonald, Wixted and Flint. Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe gave apologies that she would be late.

3. Members of the Cabinet:

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

The Leader provided an update on the sinkhole at Oatridge Gardens.

The Leader said that since the collapse, the Borough Council had been working closely with and supporting Hightown Praetorian and the Churches Housing Association to deal with the wide range of problems the land collapse had caused.

The Leader explained that the sinkhole was filled with 200 – 250 cubic metres of foamed concrete on Friday 21st February as a first step towards making the immediate area around the sinkhole safe and to allow Hightown's appointed geotechnical engineers to carry out a series of dynamic probing tests across the Oatridge Gardens estate.

On Saturday 22 February, teams of engineers began conducting geo-technical probing of the whole estate. This work was expected to take up to a week, and involved around 60 holes being drilled. The results would be analysed, to identify any further work that would be required.

The Leader said that Dacorum Borough Council's Building Control Officers had been in attendance at the site on a daily basis and oversaw the filling that took place at the weekend. Dacorum Borough Council's consultant Structural Engineer had now visited the site on at least two occasions and had provided advice on the structural condition of buildings on the site in terms of how they might affect public safety. The Leader added that the Council was also working closely with the utility providers to reinstate all services to the properties as soon as possible, so that most of the residents could return to their homes.

The Leader said that at present Wood Lane End remained closed to through traffic whilst the structural tests on the land were being carried out. The Council and HCC Highways were monitoring the situation, and would consider whether as a first step, footpath access through the road could be re-opened, subject to the findings of the geotechnical tests.

The Leader commented that at present there was no gas supply to the properties in Oatridge Gardens. The utilities companies would be meeting with Hightown and

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Council officers this coming Monday when it was expected that there would be more information about the structural integrity of the land.

The Leader of the Council said that a large number of households and families were currently in hotel accommodation or staying with family and friends. Limited access had been granted to the occupants of the homes nearest to the now-filled hole to retrieve some personal belongings. The Council, due to the legal responsibilities associated with dangerous structures had to adopt a strict safety first approach as the structural safety of the homes concerned could not be fully known at this stage.

The Leader of the Council said that the Council officers would continue to work with Hightown to support the gradual reinstatement of the site, and further updates would be provided on the DBC website.

The Leader of the Council said that in relation to the Local Planning Framework Core Strategy court case there was now a court date set for 26th March and that the Council would be represented by Martin Kingston QC who was a leading barrister in area of Planning and Environment.

Councillor Adshead then asked the Leader of the Council if he would join him in thanking the Friends of the Hemel Water Gardens group in their success in helping to secure a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the Water Gardens.

The Leader of the Council said that he would and that it was a very good example of community involvement.

Councillor Douris also asked the Leader of the Council to join him in thanking the emergency services for helping residents during the emergencies caused by the extreme weather.

The Leader of the Council said that, whilst Dacorum had been relatively lucky with the weather and had not seen some of the devastating flooding seen in other areas of the country, the emergency services along with Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council had done an excellent job of supporting residents where necessary.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services

Anti Social Behaviour

The Portfolio Holder said that following the closure order in Adeyfield on a property that had been used to sell drugs and which had been the cause of significant anti-social behaviour, immediate possession of the property was obtained by the Council. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the successful work of residents, police and the anti-social behaviour team in achieving this.

The Portfolio Holder said that as identified in their action plan, the Dacorum Youth Forum were working to build better relationships with the Police and were meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner on 9th April during his visit to the Community Safety Partnership. The Portfolio Holder said that the Clean Safe and Green team were also meeting with the Youth Forum to discuss their involvement in a litter campaign.

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The Portfolio Holder said that in the Adventure Playgrounds a new staffing structure had been in place for 6 months and that attendance figures were increasing – for example Grovehill reported that numbers attending the playground were 22% higher than last year; the numbers of children aged 11 and above had increased dramatically. In previous years the majority of those attending had come from Grovehill, but since September 2013 at least 50% of those attending had come from Woodhall Farm, initially due to the skateboard ramp donated by the Billy Dove Foundation.

The Portfolio Holder said that at the Old Town Hall the film programme had continued to develop well and that Valentines night had seen an audience of 79 attend to watch 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' with large audiences also attending screenings of Philomena and Captain Phillips. The Portfolio Holder added that the Theatre was also doing well with the first two events of Spring 2014 season selling out.

The Portfolio Holder had now published the first revision of the Corporate Plan which was available on the DBC website and would be made available in hard copies. The Portfolio Holder said that the Council had ordered 200 copies of the full plan and the summary version (which was the version published in the Digest last week).

The Portfolio Holder said that there had been a recent "PSN transition" which had passed smoothly. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the key changes associated with this; the firewall & DTA server had been physically moved from Civic Centre to Amersham which further reduced dependency on the Civic Centre server room. The Council's provider was now Udata rather than Vodafone (although Vodafone did still control the network on the government side). The Council would now access government services directly through the PSN. From a user perspective there was no visible difference to the system. The Portfolio Holder highlighted that this was a positive change for the Council and that they were the 101st authority to be connected to the Central Government network out of approximately 800.

Councillor R Hollinghurst said that she had recently tried to direct a resident to a set of published minutes on Dacorum Borough Council's website and had found that the new format of the website was difficult to navigate and that she felt that the system needed to be simplified. The Portfolio Holder said he would look into this.

Councillor Tindall asked a question in regards to the leasing of the Durrant's Lake to the scouts. The Portfolio Holder said that this is still in the process of drawing up terms between relevant parties and offered to update Councillor Tindall when he has further news.

Councillor McKay commented that he was pleased to see that the Old Town Hall was proving successful following its refurbishment and that it was continuing to attract top class talent. The Portfolio Holder agreed with this and said that he believed the appointment of a marketing officer dedicated to the Old Town Hall was helping facilitate this success.

Councillor Harris asked the Portfolio Holder to elaborate on the changes associated with the PSN and the move of IT servers to Amersham. The Portfolio Holder explained that following Government demands for all Councils to be on the same .gov.uk network new arrangements regarding the servers had been made with other Councils which meant that the new system was part of a larger network 'triangle' which meant that if one location went down access to the network would not be lost as other servers within the network in other locations would still be functioning. The Portfolio Holder added that it meant that there were no longer third parties involved in the process.

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Councillor Mrs Laws, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Sustainability

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the Christmas tree recycling event. The event was held at three locations, Hemel Hempstead, Tring and Berkhamsted and local scout groups helped by collecting trees from resident's homes.

The Portfolio Holder said that Dacorum Borough Council had chipped 2,050 trees during the event. The Portfolio Holder said that this was very impressive and thanked the residents who made the effort to bring their trees to the centres and the scouts for their sterling work and also the Cupid Green staff for their hard work on the day of the event.

The Portfolio Holder said that there was a New Year Gift Exchange held in Hemel Hempstead's Civic Centre to promote reuse of unwanted gifts. A total of 25 unwanted or duplicate Christmas gifts were donated and swapped, with the majority of those attending taking a new gift home.

The Portfolio Holder also pointed out that the Environmental Services team had also worked with a group of sixth form students from John F Kennedy School to put on a swishing event to promote the re-use of clothing. There were over 100 garments donated for the swap that filled seven rails at the lunchtime event, which was one of the first of its kind in Hertfordshire.

The Portfolio Holder said that a local reporter from the Gazette became a crew member with the Clean Safe and Green team and emptied refuse bins and recycling boxes for a morning. The Portfolio Holder said that a video documenting this was available to view at <http://www.hemeltoday.co.uk/>

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

The Portfolio Holder said that the Council's Christmas rent and council tax collection campaign had recently finished – and that members may have seen the posters on bin lorries, in the town centres and around the borough. The Portfolio Holder said that it had been another successful campaign which had improved rent collection over the period to 100.07%. The Portfolio Holder explained that this meant that by the end of the year the Council would be collecting all the rent that was due within the year plus an extra £80,000 approx. by reducing rent arrears.

The Portfolio Holder said that the STAR survey (Survey of Tenants and Residents) was sent to tenants and leaseholders on 31 January 2014 and that it had a return date of 28 February. The Portfolio Holder said that they had already received over 2,500 returns and were anticipating receiving over 3,000 in total. The results of the survey would be due in April and would help inform the improvement plans for the Housing Service.

The Portfolio Holder said that the year-end letters were due to be sent out imminently and that these would advise tenants of their rental charge for the new financial year in 2014/15 and that these new charges would be commencing from 7 April 2014.

The Portfolio Holder said that following the evaluation and validation checks of both the 6 specialist consultancy lots and the Total Asset Management bids, ten firms had been recommended. The Portfolio Holder explained that both the consultancy and

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Total Asset Management contracts were evaluated based on criteria to assess which organisations provided the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT).

The Portfolio Holder said that the unsuccessful consultancy firms and the other two contractors left in the process, Mears, and the incumbent planned works provider, Keepmoat, had been advised and that the Council were working with Keepmoat to ensure a successful demobilisation of their contract.

The Portfolio Holder said that the recommendations were subject to a 30 day leaseholder consultation which was currently underway and that a report would be taken to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on the 19th March for their review and comments. Following this the recommendation to award the contracts would be presented to Cabinet on the 25th March and the formal contract award could be made following the 5 day call in and a 10 day standstill period, which would conclude on 11th April.

The Portfolio Holder said that with the help of a government run funding programme (Energy Company Obligation) the Council had applied external wall insulation to 16 council homes in the Gaddesden area. The properties were not on the gas grid and were also of solid wall construction, meaning that they would not have benefited from cavity wall insulation. These things combined to make them some of the least efficient council homes and consequently heating bills could be high. The Portfolio Holder said that the external wall insulation reduced the amount of heat passing through the walls and in turn would ideally reduce tenants' heat bills. The Portfolio Holder said that they had received feedback to this effect.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Council had also installed an air source heat pump heating system at six council properties. This renewable form of heating offered a more modern and affordable solution when compared to the electric storage heaters that previously existed in the properties. The Portfolio Holder commented that again, coupled with the external wall insulation, this would reduce fuel bills and contribute towards the Council's goals of tackling fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions. The Portfolio Holder said that as of April the government plan to launch the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme which would provide the Council with payback on renewable heating technologies, such as the air source heat pump.

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the Strategic Housing New Build Programme and said that work continued well on all development sites in Phase 1. The Portfolio Holder said that demolition works would begin at London Road mid-March. The new homeless hostel site on the Redbourn Road had suffered with the recent wet weather but the Housing Development Team were working with the contractors to minimise the mud on the local road on a daily basis.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Strategic Housing Team restructure had been completed, with a significant focus continuing on reducing Homelessness within the borough.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that he appreciated the efforts made by the Housing team in installing environmentally friendly heating methods into Council properties. Councillor N Hollinghurst said that he hoped efforts would be made to ensure that the PSQ would be built with the same methods in mind.

Councillor Harris asked if the Portfolio Holder knew of any council properties with solar panels installed and whether this would be a viable option.

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The Portfolio Holder said that she was not sure about this option and would look into it.

Councillor Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

The Portfolio Holder had no announcements for the Council.

Councillor Townsend asked a question in regards to the future financing of the Council. Councillor Townsend pointed out that the Council was hoping to make cumulative savings over the coming three years of £3 million. He said that last year there was a dilemma whether to raise council tax or accept grants from central government. He asked for more clarity around potential changes related to these issues.

The Portfolio Holder replied by saying there was a more detailed finance forecast for the next five years in the budget packs provided to Councillors. He said that over the last seven years this administration had looked at reducing costs wherever it could while maintaining public services and also investing in the future of the Borough to create prosperity and jobs and wellbeing for residents. He added that the Council was aware that the news coming from Central Government was not particularly good and the officers and the members of the Council were continuing to make every effort to establish a budget plan that would be efficient and effective.

60. CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 21 January and 11 February were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

21 January 2014

1 SENIOR OFFICER PAY POLICY (CA/008/14)

Adoption of the new pay policy for 2014/15.

2 DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL ICT STRATEGY 2014/15 – 16/17 CA/011/14

Adoption of the strategy for the financial years 2014/15 to 2016/17.

3 REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL 2013 – MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL CA/012/14

Adoption of no changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2014/15, except that the hourly rate for 'Child Care' be increased to be in line with the national minimum wage (currently £6.31 per hour), thus it will be automatically updated.

Councillor Williams paid tribute to the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel and the time they put into discussing the issues. Cabinet considered their

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recommendation for an increase of 1% but decided to continue the freeze on Members Allowances and to make a modest increase in child care allowances by linking it to the national minimum wage.

11 February 2014

4 DACORUM LOCAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK – APPROVAL OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (2014-17)CA/022/14

1. The adoption of the Local Development Scheme (2014-17) as set out in Appendix 1 to the report ; and
2. The delegation of authority to the Assistant Director (Planning, Development and Regeneration) to make any necessary minor and non-consequential changes to the Local Development Scheme prior to final publication.

5 BUDGET VARIATION FOR DECANT COSTS (CA/029/14)

The proposed outline timetable and costs for the decant project as set out in the report as part of the budget report 2014/15.

6 BUDGET 2014/15 (CA/030/14)

- 1 That Council:

General Fund Revenue Estimate

- a) set a Dacorum Borough Council General Fund Council Tax requirement of £9.506m and of £10.099m for the combined Borough Council and Parish Councils' requirement for 2014/15 (inclusive of parish precepts of £593k);
- b) agree an increase of 1.75% in Council Tax for Dacorum Borough Council;
- c) set a garage rent increase of £0.45 per week based on a chargeable 48 week year;
- d) approve the revised revenue estimates for 2013/14 and original base estimates for 2014/15, as shown in Appendix A of the report;
- e) approve and adopt the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2014/15 provided at Appendix N of the report;
- f) approve increases in Fees and Charges for 2014/15 (in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges Strategy) and as set out in Appendix L of the report;
- g) approve the forecast balances of Revenue Reserves as shown in Appendix G of the report, subject to the following amendments from Cabinet: the reserve for Rent Aid to be maintained at £15k; the reserve for Rent Guarantee to be maintained at £15k; the reserve for PSQ to be reduced by £30k.

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- h) note that this budget paper, when approved by Council, will form part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendix M of the report.

Capital Programme

- i) approve the revised Capital Programme for 2013/14 and Programme for 2014/15 to 2018/19 detailed in Appendix J of the report, subject to the following amendment from Cabinet: that a contingency fund of £1.2 million be included in the estimated General Fund Programme for 2016/17 and the estimate for borrowing for 2016/17 be increased by £1.2 million.
- j) authorise the funding proposals subject to an annual review of the financing options by the Corporate Director (Finance & Operations), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources, during the preparation of the Statement of Accounts to optimise the use of Council resources.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- k) set dwelling rent increases in accordance with Government guideline rent increase and rent convergence principles, resulting in an average increase of 5.23% which makes the average rent £101.83 per week (based on 52 weeks);
- l) approve the HRA revised estimate for 2013/14 and base estimate for 2014/15 as shown in Appendix H of the report.

Terms & Conditions

- m) approve the introduction of a living wage supplement for all affected employees, in accordance with the Living Wage, for 2014/15; to be reviewed annually thereafter.

Statement by Chief Finance Officer

- n) approve the statement by the Chief Finance Officer regarding the robustness of the budget estimates and level of reserves as set out in Appendix O of the report.

Key points of discussion:

Councillor Williams introduced the report and said that amendments had been tabled. In moving the budget Councillor Williams said he was conscious the Council is still in changing times but this budget continues to build on many years of sound monetary policies made by the administration in savings and efficiencies, protecting front line services, investing for the future benefit of residents in terms of the infrastructure, and service provision and promoting business and enterprise. The Leader of the Council moved the motion to debate.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AMENDMENT

The following amendment to the Budget 2014/15 was proposed by Councillor Rance and seconded by Councillor Harris:

That Council be recommended to Agree the following additions to the expenditure budget to be funded from the General Fund Balances:

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1. £40k for the replacement of street name plates.
2. £100k for the Verge Hardening programme.

Councillor Rance introduced the amendment and said that the Liberal Democrat group would have liked to put other proposals forward but being aware of the current financial situation this has been limited to just two items that residents of this Borough have highlighted. Whilst there were plans for a second round of verge hardening within the borough, more money needed to be allocated for this. In addition the Liberal Democrats felt that financial provisions needed to be made for replacing old and broken street name plates within the borough. Councillor Rance said that she understood the focus on developing prosperity within the borough but that she questioned how many of the jobs available in the borough actually went to local people.

Councillor Harris seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources said he did not have a great problem with the proposed amendment but they should be aware that £0.5m was reserved for verge hardening within the borough over the next 2 years and was not sure that extra was needed. The Portfolio Holder was not aware of a backlog of work to be done in relation to street names. The Portfolio Holder asked for clarification in page 2 of the amendment referring to the removal of the increase in Council Tax and the acceptance of the Governments single payment instead. He said he would be strongly against this.

Councillor Rance said that this was a mistake and should not have been included. This Liberal Democrats are asking for the £140k to be taken from the savings part (Supplies & Services and Revenue Contribution to Capital).

The Leader of the Council said that he was minded to accept the budget amendment concerning the street nameplates but not the changes to the verge hardening project. The Leader of the Council pointed out that money had already been set aside for this and that potentially there was not the capacity to accommodate more work in this area. This could be amended next year or in subsequent years. The Leader of the Council said that he was also not comfortable with the implication of putting this in the revenue budget as it was unlikely to be a recurring revenue item, but was happy to accept that as an amendment to the budget.

Councillor Rance said this was a one off and officers had confirmed there was the capacity over the coming year for both items.

Councillor Harris explained that the Liberal Democrats were proposing both because there was a need for both. Councillor Harris also explained that by increasing the budget for verge hardening more members would be able to have necessary work carried out in their wards with potentially enough money to see another ten roads covered by the project.

Councillor Harris said he supported both parts of the amendments and suggested having a separate vote for each section.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe entered the meeting at 20.19pm.

Councillor Anderson said that said that he could not support the second part of the

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amendment because cannot support using Revenue to subsidise the capital expenditure as proposed by the Liberal Democrat group.

Councillor Marshall said that she supported Councillor Anderson's view on the matter and that, as there was an increasing need for caution around spending given the impending demands on the budget and allocating additional funds to a project that already had funding seemed unnecessary.

Councillor Tindall thanked Councillor Williams for indicating the potential acceptance of the first part of the amendment. Regarding the £100k for verge hardening, it was sensible to use revenue for capital expenditure. If capital was used there would then be interest payments in the future. He suggested that there may have to be a virement from the revenue budget to the capital budget for this to go through without incurring debt for the future.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that it would be valuable to provide residents with as much verge hardening work as possible due to the current issues with wet weather and that this demonstrated that the Council were carrying out valuable work within the borough, which was important in light of the council tax rise.

Councillor Adshead agreed with Councillor Williams in that he had problems with the £100k for verge hardening. There was a Council Tax rise proposed in the budget and asked where this £100k would come from. It may mean more Council Tax rises in the future.

Councillor Townsend said the street name plates would be a one off. They were in a poor condition and there was a need to get them repaired or replaced.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing said she also supported the amendment regarding the street name plates. Regarding the verge hardening, there was already £200k in the budget for this year and if necessary money could be deferred from next year's budget if this year's project went quicker than envisaged. Currently this was a reasonable amount for this project and could be looked at again next year. She said it would be wrong to concrete over all the green areas to provide parking pads.

The Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory services said that the administration acknowledged the lack of parking in some areas by already investing £300k in provision of parking and verge hardening and a further £200k for the coming year. The Council was committed to finding suitable car parking solutions in the borough. The Portfolio Holder also added that in his experience if street name plates were broken in his ward they were always fixed by the council when he called up to report them. In addition the Portfolio Holder said that the Liberal Democrat suggestions could have been made in initial budget discussions or at overview and scrutiny meetings and this may have led to its inclusion in the final budget..

Councillor R Hollinghurst said parking was an issue for a lot of residents throughout the Borough and supported the proposal.

The Mayor put the first amendment to the meeting:

1. £40k for the replacement of Street Name Plates

and declared it to be carried;

42 Voting For, 0 Against and 3 Abstentions.

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The Mayor put the second amendment to the meeting:

2. £100k for the Verge Hardening programme

and declared it to be lost;

7 voting for, 37 against, and 1abstention.

Substantive Motion

The Council reverted back to the debate on the substantive motion.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources said that he felt that the budget was a very positive one and removed no services within the borough and there was a significant capital programme for a Borough of our size that was positively investing in prosperity and jobs through such things as the Maylands Business Centre the Apprentice Scheme. Due to this the Portfolio Holder urged Members to support the budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing said that she wanted to highlight some of the recent work carried out by the Housing team in relation to improving the existing stock in the borough.

- Kitchens completed 2012/13 **456**
- Kitchens completed 2013/14 **493**
- Bathrooms completed 2012/13 **360** + **66** EPD wet floor showers
- Bathrooms completed 2013/14 **333** + **36** EPD wet floor showers
- Front Doors completed 2012/13 **700**
- Front Doors completed 2013/14 **782**

This year the planned maintenance budget had risen by a substantial amount. There was a lot of new build work going on and the Portfolio Holder said she was very proud to be the Portfolio Holder for Housing and recommended the budget.

Councillor Adshead said the budget protected front line services, provided new Council housing, a new public service quarter providing efficient services to the public, verge hardening provision, better facilities at adventure playgrounds, new refuse vehicles, 24 hour CCTV, a new vibrant town centre to improve the economy in Dacorum. Councillor Adshead supported the budget as amended.

Councillor McKay said that he hoped that the Liberal Democrats appreciated that the council tax raise was modest, it equated to an extra 6p a week per household but that, in line with this excellent services were still being provided by the Council as well as necessary renovations and various improvements to Council owned properties and that he personally fully supported the budget.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe said that he felt the budget supported businesses in the area very well and that this meant that businesses in were more inclined to invest back into the community as demonstrated by businesses from Maylands investing in local schools and helping residents affected by the recent sinkhole.

Councillor Rance said that most of the comments made by the Portfolio Holder for Housing had been made at the Overview and Scrutiny meetings and asked that good

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news should be reported throughout the year. The Overview and Scrutiny reports would be going to Council soon and announcements could be made then.

Councillor Harris said the Council had had to raise Council Tax and rents were going up by 5.23% average. If the Liberal Democrats were running the Council, he was sure a different budget would have been submitted if they had all the officers of the Council to help them. As the opposition party, the Liberal Democrats were limited to putting in amendments without imposing on officer time.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe thanked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources for delivering a good budget.

Councillor Douris said he was sorry there was nobody from the Gazette present. It was easy for the press to knock the Council. The Council should be very proud of Dacorum. It was a good administration and a good Council that produced good results, protected front line services without imposing a big increase in Council Tax. It is a borough to be proud of and this should be recognised. Hertfordshire was a county of opportunity and Dacorum was a borough of optimism. The area had a good heritage that the Conservative administration had built upon and that was why Dacorum was in a better position today than many other councils.

Councillor R Hollinghurst said a survey had been done in other districts and boroughs where the residents had been asked how satisfied they were. The top two councils were Watford and Three Rivers. Dacorum was not in the top two.

The Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services said, as there was no representation from the Labour Party, he would encourage the Liberal Democrats to vote with the Conservatives to give unanimous support for the budget.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe said he was pleased to note the Council was continuing its support for business. The knock on effect of that support was that there were people who were prepared to put money back into the community. There was help coming from a company for the victims of Oatridge and a substantial amount of money from another business to invest in one of the local schools.

The Leader of the Council said there had been a great degree of unanimity around the budget and this could be taken as endorsement of the budget. The Leader acknowledged that it was a challenging time for local government but the Council had a budget that protected front line services, had an ambitious capital programme including verge hardening, childrens' playground improvements and other schemes plus major projects in Hemel Hempstead and capital allocation for the multi storey car park in Berkhamsted. The Council was in this position because the Conservative administration had looked after the Council budgets so well through difficult times.

There had been equal challenges since the phasing out of the negative subsidy in 2000. It is the revenue challenges which would be the biggest challenge and it was for that reason that the one difficult decision was to increase Council Tax by 1.75%. A budget could have been put together that did not increase Council Tax but it was the longer term view that the Council was planning for budgets beyond 2015 when a firm financial footing would need to be established for the authority. It was a difficult decision but for the long term benefit of the residents and services it was an essential part of the budgeting process.

Regarding housing issues, the Council did not like increasing rents but was working to Government target rents. The Council still had rents below that and was probably

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the only Council that has a policy of delivering new affordable housing at social rent levels. Other authorities were charging £200 - £300 more per month for their new homes. The Council had a housing improvement programme and new development programme that would be the envy of councils across the country. The Portfolio Holder for Housing had challenging decisions to make and the Council now had much improved housing for the residents.

The Leader finished by saying that he felt the budget was strong and would benefit the area by facilitating the development of new social housing, whilst supporting the environment and local business. The Council wanted the support of the residents of Dacorum in the future.

The Mayor put the substantive motion with the agreed amendment to the meeting and declared it to be carried:

44 Voting For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention.

At the request of three members of the Council, the names of the Members voting for and against the recommendation were recorded as follows:

For: The Mayor, Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, Bhinder, H Chapman, G Chapman, Clark, Collins, Conway, Douris, Fantham, Mrs Green, Griffiths, Mrs Guest, Harden, N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Laws, Lawson, Link, Lloyd, Mahmood, Marshall, McKay, McLean, Organ, Peter, Mrs Rance, Reay, Ryan, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Tiley, Townsend, White, Whitman, Williams, Wood, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (44)

Abstention: Councillor Harris (1).

Council Tax Declaration 2014/15

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

Council Tax Declaration 2014/15

- 1) Noted that the Cabinet, at its meeting on 17 December 2013, calculated the following amounts for the year 2014/15 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), as inserted by Section 74 of the Localism Act 2011:-
 - (a) 53,809.2 being the figure calculated by the Council in accordance with regulation 3 of The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 as its Council Tax base for the year;
 - (b) the amounts in Table 1 of this report (Tax Base for each part of the Council's area to which one or more special items relate) being the amounts calculated by the Cabinet in accordance with regulation 6 The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 as the amounts of its Council Tax base for the year for dwellings in such parts;

Chairman

2) the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2014/15 in accordance with Sections 31A and 31B and Sections 34 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) (referred to as “the Act”):

- (a) £146,129,931.63 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act, taking account of all precepts, and including the amount which the Council estimates as Council Tax deficit which will be transferred in the year from its General Fund to its Collection Fund;
- (b) £135,996,530.98 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act, including the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its General Fund in respect of redistributed Non-Domestic Rates and Revenue Support Grant ;
- (c) £10,133,400.65 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2)(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its **Council Tax requirement** for the year;
- (d) £188.32 being the amount at 2)(c) above, divided by 1)(a) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;
- (e) £628,005.47 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act;
- (f) £176.65 being the amount at 2)(d) above, less the result given by dividing the amount at 2)(e) above by the amount at 1)(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates;

(g) Part of the Council’s Area	Band D Equivalent Combined £
Hemel Hempstead	176.65
Aldbury	187.78
Berkhamsted	195.83
Bovingdon	202.56
Chipperfield	212.62
Flamstead	230.21
Flaunden	206.59
Great Gaddesden	195.42

Chairman

Kings Langley	217.36
Little Gaddesden	202.26
Markyate	207.99
Nash Mills	199.81
Nettleden	198.78
Northchurch	187.60
Tring Rural	205.12
Tring Town	200.84
Wigginton	189.80

(Band D charge for Parish and District combined), being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 2)(f) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 1)(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in parts of its area to which special items relate;

- 3) that for the year 2014/15 Hertfordshire County Council have stated the amounts in precepts issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the categories of dwellings as set out in table 3(a) of the report;
- 4) that for the year 2014/15 Hertfordshire Police Authority have stated the amounts in precepts issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the categories of dwellings as set out in table 3(a) of the report;
- 5) that having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2)(g), 3) and 4) above the Council in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby set the amounts set out in Table 3b of the report as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2014/15 for each part of the area and for each of the categories of dwellings shown;
- 6) that in setting the Council Tax for 2014/15 the Council is required to have taken account of the report of the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of the budget.

61. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES

It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

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

Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Additional meeting of the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24 April 2014.

62. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Resolved:

Chairman

That the following changes be agreed:

Development Control Committee

- Replace Councillor Adshead with Councillor Elliot as a Substitute Member

Member Development Steering Group

- Remove Councillor Wixted
- Add Councillors Adshead, Douris and G Sutton

Strategic Planning and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Add Councillor Bateman as a Substitute Member

The meeting ended at 21.05pm.

Chairman