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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**14 JANUARY 2015**

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Present -

**MEMBERS:**

Councillor Lawson (Mayor); Councillors, Adeleke, Adshead, Anderson, Ayling, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, Bhinder, B Chapman, Collins, Conway, Doole, Douris, Elliot, Fantham, Mrs Green, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, Harris, Hearn, N Hollinghurst, R Hollinghurst, Killen, Link, Mahmood, Marshall, McLean, Peter, Mrs Rance, Reay, Ryan, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Tindall, Townsend, Williams, and W Wyatt-Lowe (39).

**OFFICERS:**

The Chief Executive, The Assistant Director (Finance & Governance), The Corporate Director (Housing & Regeneration), The Assistant Director (Legal Democratic & Regulatory), The Group Manager (Democratic Services), L Collins and T Coston (Minutes).

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

**42. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2015 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Mayor.

**43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**44. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**1. By the Mayor**

The Mayor had nothing to announce.

**2. By the Chief Executive:**

The Chief Executive had nothing to announce.

**3. By the Group Leaders:**

Councillor Williams gave apologies for absence on behalf of Councillors G Chapman, Clark, Flint, Laws, Macdonald, McKay, Tiley, Wood and C Wyatt-Lowe.

Councillor Mrs Rance had nothing to announce.

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

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

The Leader of the Council spoke to Members about the development of the Water Gardens.

There were no questions for the Leader of the Council.

##### Questions and answers:

Councillor Adshead referred to the number of vacant units in Hemel Hempstead Town Centre now being occupied and said that he was pleased to see the changes made by this Council were for the benefit of Hemel.

The Leader of the Council agreed with this.

Councillor N Hollinghurst made reference to Moor End Road and asked the Leader of the Council if he could assure Members that the County Council would get signage rights over this.

The Leader of the Council assured Members this would take place.

Councillor Tindall asked the Leader of the Council if it would be possible for him to liaise with Highways with regards to the traffic lights on the Leighton Buzzard Road as this was becoming increasingly a hot spot for large amounts of traffic.

The Leader of the Council said that he will liaise with Highways to discuss this matter.

There were no more questions for the Leader of the Council.

##### **Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing**

“Tenant and Leaseholder Services:

Christmas Rent Campaign - January saw the end of latest Christmas rent campaign ‘catch up this Christmas’. You may have seen posters on buses and in the three town centres. Although levels of tenant rent collection is slightly lower at this stage of the year than the previous year, by the year end rent collection will again exceed 99.5%. We will continue to utilise rent collection campaigns to maintain with tenants the importance of keeping up to date with their rent and to support those people who are having difficulty in maintaining a clear rent account.

Tenders in Sheltered Housing - We are currently tendering two contracts which directly affect residents of our sheltered accommodation. The first which is already being tendered is for the alarm system hardware maintenance and replacement programme (the contract is currently with a company called Cirrus, although the current contract hasn't allowed for replacement of existing alarms).

The second is for the alarm call response service (currently being delivered by an organisation called (Senior link Eldercare). This contract will be tendered early in the new financial year.

Campaign to tackle housing fraud – after May - We will be running a campaign to highlight the scale of social housing fraud, its impact on the availability of accommodation and how individuals can support us to tackle it in May 2015.

Dacorum Borough Council was successful in bidding for a grant from central government (the Department of Communities and Local Government) to provide additional resources to tackle social housing fraud. Within the grant application we committed to running a high profile campaign to tackle social housing fraud.

This campaign will be run in conjunction with Hightown Pretorian Housing Association

Strategic Housing:

New Build Programme – The programme is still on track – The Nokes, Farm Place and The Elms are progressing and expected to complete at the end of March 2015. The Nokes has been renamed to St Peters Court. Dens have been awarded the contract to manage The Elms and work has begun on mobilisation.

Property and Place:

Summer Court – Today I visited the works to refurbish Summer Court and confirm they are making good progress. The majority of the External Wall Insulation has been installed and we now await suitable weather to apply the final coat. The new district biomass boiler house is in place and pipework is being laid underground to serve all of the properties. Solar PV Panels have been installed and are generating electricity, plus new bin stores are ready to receive wheelie bins that will encourage our tenants to recycle. Further improvements to communal stairways as well as drying areas and shed blocks near completion.

This scheme will reduce our carbon emissions and provide an alternative fuel source to gas. Additionally we are increasing the value of our asset and helping our tenants stay out of “Fuel Poverty.”

Seaton Road refurbishment has been shortlisted for a Housing Award - The refurbishment of 64 houses in Seaton Road designed to improve the energy efficiency, has been shortlisted for a Housing award. A holistic approach was taken with roofs replaced incorporating integrated Solar Photovoltaic Panels, loft insulation was upgraded, boilers replaced and external wall insulation installed. The programmes were undertaken simultaneously providing value for money and consolidating disruption to tenants. The works resulted in the aesthetics of the street being improved and the value of the asset increasing. Tenants benefited with a reduction in fuel bills and our carbon emissions have been cut significantly.

Osborne Total Asset Management Contract - The Open book audit has been undertaken and the figures are currently being finalised. Preliminary indications show that there will be a shared saving, which will be reinvested back into the project and that the site based costs are substantially lower with a single service provider.

The tenant representatives will be consulted at the next Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee meeting, on the performance indicators used to monitor the contract, to ensure these are understood and relevant.

Performance overall has been positive, however there were some issues with the length of time some of the works streams were taking. The appointment of a new sub-

contractor and tighter supervision has addressed these problems and this is being closely monitored.

Balconies and Walkways - The excavations to install the footings for the new steel supports have been referred to Building Control with alternative designs due to the location and extent of underground services. This has caused a slight delay to the programme but once the design has been agreed the works will be progressed.

Longlands - The site compound has been set up and the site preparation has been undertaken ready for the scaffold to be erected.

There has been ongoing consultation with the residents on the final designs and one to one meetings have been offered to all of the residents. A dedicated resident liaison officer will be based on site to address any issues and support the residents.”

#### Questions and answers:

Councillor Marshall thanked the Portfolio Holder and the Housing department for the development of the site and St Peters Court. She highlighted that the residents and the parishioners will be pleased it will continue.

Councillor Griffiths said that she would pass on Councillor Marshall’s thanks to the Housing department.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

The Leader of the Council made a statement on behalf of Councillor Mrs Laws in her absence.

“The popularity of Christmas tree recycling has grown again this year with a total of 2,692 trees being shredded, 642 more than last year. We had tree chipping sites – Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and in Tring. Any unclaimed chippings which are not bagged up for residents to use against weeds in their gardens are sent away for composting. This year we worked again in partnership with 1st Berkhamsted Scouts and 1st Tring Scouts groups who collected trees from residents’ homes for a small donation and transported them to the shredding sites.

We successfully rolled out our new waste and recycling collection scheme called Recycle for Dacorum on week commencing 24 November. The food waste tonnage has increased week on week since we started the new arrangements from 68 tonnes, 75 tonnes to 91 tonnes. The tonnage for mixed recycling (from the blue lidded bin) has increased also too from 316 tonnes in the first week to 600 tonnes in the third week. The facility which accepts the mixed recycling for sorting has applauded us on the excellent quality of material that they are receiving from the Dacorum borough – 99% of the material received was recyclable.

The Council’s second social media takeover was on the new Recycle for Dacorum on Thursday 18 December. We answered questions from many residents about the new service and the type’s items that are acceptable in the new bins.”

Questions and answers:

Councillor Adshead mentioned that residents expressed their thanks to Cupid Green for the bin and recycling collections over the festive period.

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked the Leader of the Council a question about the car parking investment in Berkhamsted. He asked when residents would see a planning application for the multi storey car park they had been promised some time ago.

The Leader of the Council said that this question had been raised at the previous Council meeting with Councillor Tiley. He said that they were making good progress on the scheme and the timescale that they are working towards would hopefully allow them to complete later in the year.

Councillor Collins also passed on his thanks from the residents in Berkhamsted to Cupid Green for their help in resolving the problems surrounding the blue bin service. He said that action was taken promptly reassuring residents.

Councillor Collins referred to Councillor N Hollinghurst's earlier question regarding the multi -story car park. He pointed out that both County Council and Borough Council are working together to ensure this scheme takes place.

There were no more questions for the Leader of the Council.

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

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

Questions and answers:

Councillor Tindall made reference to the Council Support Tax Scheme document that was discussed at a previous Full Council meeting. He mentioned that it would be helpful if Members could have the document to support the scheme earlier than it has been previously handed out.

The Leader of the Council replied that he would pass on this comment.

Councillor N Hollinghurst made reference to the financial pressures that people are facing in this current climate. He asked if it would be possible to have sufficient staff in Revenues and Benefits to manage the demand from the public.

The Leader of the Council reassured Members that Revenue and Benefits have sufficient staff in place to cope with the ever growing changes taking place this year.

There were no more questions for the Leader of the Council.

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

“A successful prosecution of Royal Mail by the Council's legal department followed an investigation by Environmental Health Officers after an accident on 28 January 2014 where an employee from the Royal Mail Hemel Hempstead site suffered severe chemical burns to his leg while involved in a cleaning task.

The company had failed to carry out risk assessments which may have shown that the dispensing pump for the cleaning chemical was defective. The employee received immediate hospital treatment and skin grafts and required eight months off work to recover.

The Royal Mail pleaded guilty to two offences s2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. 1974 and Regulation 6(1) of The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 at Watford Magistrates Court on 9 January 2015.

The Court awarded fines of £40,000 (£20,000 per offence, and the maximum the Magistrates could order) and gave costs to the Council of nearly £4,000.

First call – Nurse led / management system has been approved by senior management. This will see a different way to report absence, by contacting a qualified nurse rather than your manager. Organisations that have used this approach have seen sickness absence reduced by up to 20%. This has been achieved by better management information, more robust challenge on absence, quicker/better health advice, more alerts for managers to assist with procedure compliance etc.

Arts Project - Director of Public Health Hertfordshire has agreed to support the council's Arts project around mental health & related issues which we proposed for 2015/16. They have agreed to give us £45,000 to add to the £45,000 already budgeted by the council.

Neighbourhood Action pilot - Highfield Love your Neighbourhood half term event.

Games • Workshops • Competitions • Family Activities • Advice • Cooking • Interviews • Bouncy Castle • and much more!

We will be holding a prize draw each day; to enter you must register each day you attend. Prizes include; XC experience voucher, £50 Tesco voucher, three Hudl tablets (primary school aged children only) and restaurant vouchers.

Monday 16 Feb: Health and Wellbeing:  
Hemel Stags workshop, healthy eating, sports games, apple pressing, general health advice and maintaining healthy weight.

Tuesday 17 Feb: Making Ends Meets  
Citizens Advice Bureau. Drop in appointments available for all. The Big Swap – swap up to five unwanted items at our community swap shop plus money and budgeting workshops, financial advice, Credit Union Christmas Club, banking and borrowing advice, and free family cooking event.

Wednesday 18 Feb: Community Safety / Clean Safe Green  
Free dog micro-chipping, Learn about the local services helping to keep your community safe, personal safety advice, and vote on an area in your Community you would like to see improved, plus face painting and junk modelling.

Thursday 19 Feb: Employability and Upskilling

“When I grow up I want to be...” competition for your chance to win one of three Hudl Tablets. Speak to local recruiters; get CV and interview advice, training opportunities, volunteering roles and hear about career development and further education advice.

Friday 20 Feb: Community Celebration

Community Walk around Highfield, starting and finishing at the Yewtree Primary School with Hertfordshire Health Walks. Stalls, games and activities for all of the family, including glitter tattoos, Mask making, free rides, bouncy castle, stay and play.”

Questions and answers:

Councillor Rance made reference to the sickness monitoring and agreed that although it was going down still had concerns. She asked the Portfolio Holder if “stress” was considered as a factor.

Councillor Harden said that he was aware that stress levels in work can be a factor for sickness. But reiterated that there has been work done with the managers to help reduce the stress levels within the workplace and lots of advice is available.

Councillor Harris pointed out that there are no evening or weekend events in place for those people that work in the day. He asked the Portfolio Holder if this was likely to change and how he is promoting the events.

Councillor Harden agreed that it was a shame that no events were taking place in the evening and weekend. He mentioned that this was a pilot to see where the needs were in the community. With regards to the promotion of the events, flyers will go out advertising the events and the local media will be notified prior to the half term holidays.

Councillor Fantham asked a question relating to Air Quality Control and invited Councillor Harden to visit Northchurch.

Councillor Harden accepted the invitation.

There were no more questions.

#### **45. CABINET REFERRALS**

The referrals from Cabinet on 25 November 2014 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

#### **25 November 2014**

##### **1. BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 2 2014/15 (CA/139/14)**

The supplementary budgets set out below. Details for these supplementary budgets are set out in the detail of the report and have a net nil impact on the General Fund Balance:

- Increase Performance and Projects Supplies and Services by £85k  
Increase use of Management of Change Reserve by £85k

## **2. MEETING TIMETABLE 2015/16 (CA/140/14)**

The Meeting Timetable for 2015/16 as set out in Annex A to the report.

### **16 December 2014**

## **3. HOMELESSNESS REVIEW PROCEDURE (CA/158/14)**

The delegation to the Appeals Committee to determine section 202 homelessness reviews be amended so that this power is delegated on an interim basis to the Assistant Director Housing or the Group Manager (Strategic Housing) or Strategic Housing Team Leader (Property).

Councillor Rance raised her concerns with the homelessness review.

Councillor Marshall pointed out that this item had previously been debated twice at the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and sympathised with Councillor Rance's point.

The Leader of the Council said he didn't have the power to make the decision and that it would need to go to Cabinet for approval and then onto Full Council for Members to agree.

Councillor Rance asked the Leader of the Council if he could guarantee that the decision would be back in time before the election.

The Leader of the Council said that he was confident that it would take place before the election in May 2015.

## **46. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

## **47. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES**

None.

## **48. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

None.



**49. LOCAL SUPPORT TAX SCHEME 2015/16**

Council approved the Local Support Tax Scheme 2015/16 which incorporates the prescribed changes, and also updates the working age calculations in line with the housing benefit uprating.

**50. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the item in Part 2 of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating:

1. the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Agenda Items 13 and 14)

Local Government Finance Act 1972, Schedule 12A. paragraph 3.

2. An individual and which is likely to reveal the identity of that individual (Agenda item 14).

Local Government Finance Act 1972, Schedule 12A. paragraph 2.

**51. PART 2 CABINET REFERRAL – COUNCIL NEW BUILD DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (CA/142/14)**

Full details are in the Part II Minutes.

**52. CALL – IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURE**

Full details are in the Part II Minutes.

The meeting ended at 8.12 pm.