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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**27 SEPTEMBER 2017**

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Present:

**MEMBERS:**

Councillor Williams (Leader) Councillors, Gbola Adeleke, G Adshead, Anderson, Banks, Bhinder, Birnie, Brown, Herbert Chapman, Clark, D Collins, E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, England, Fantham, Fisher, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Imarni, Link, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, McLean, Mills, Peter, Ransley, Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe

**OFFICERS:**

Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Corporate Director - Finance and Operations, Group Manager - Democratic Services, Chief Executive and Member Support Officer

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

**1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 July 2017 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Mayor.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Lilley made a statement:

As one of the long term residents in the area surrounding the garages in Spring Lane, I would like to put our collective views forward to the full council.

I was sorry and very concerned that the tenancy of my garage that I had held for many years was terminated in the spring of this year.

Re-occurring problems at the chicane between house number 210 on the east side of the road, and number 155 on the west side of Spring lane, are not only dangerous but cause significant problems for commercial and emergency vehicles alike.

Before the garage block was built, I along with other residents that were lucky to own a car at this time, parked on spring lane normally outside our own house without too

much trouble. Unfortunately other drivers are not so thoughtful and have in the past parked in such a way after dark that there is insufficient room for a large car, lorry /fire engine to get through. Some yellow lines at opposite sides of the road at this chicane may go some way to relieving the situation ensuring that access for emergency and other large vehicles is available.

The results of a previous survey some years ago on parking provision at the Galley Hill end of Spring Lane carried out by a local resident, who was acting under the neighbourhood watch scheme was un-successful as some of the residents on the odd numbers side of Spring Lane were at this time considering having paved driveways installed, with a second car owned by the same household more often than not parked on the road outside the house in question or in some cases in the now defunct garages. Myself along with a number of others had a garage in the block now closed and had no need for any change.

There will most certainly be an increase in traffic in this already highly congested area of Spring Lane if or when the area is re-developed, therefore I would also like to raise the following points.

Since the garages have been closed to us former tenants the pathway and grass verge on the east side of Spring Lane (Spring Fields Side) at peak times has become the preferred parking area for up to nineteen cars and vans, unfortunately a large number are parked on the pavement, therefore children walking to school with or without parents are often forced to walk in the road putting lives at danger.

The importance of pedestrian safety in Spring Lane specifically from the Galley Hill end of Spring lane towards the garages for pedestrians is at times severely compromised due to the extensive pavement parking.

At times when there are no more spaces to park in Spring Lane there is indiscriminate parking on the hard standing on Galley Hill towards Boxted Road at the junction with Spring Lane causing a significant blind spot

We have some further proposals for your attention.

We would like to recommend that in a best case the brick buildings in the garage area are removed to floor level and the area used solely or mainly for residents parking with a provision of electric charging posts that will soon be required for electric cars. This would allow the footpath and grass verge from the garage area to Galley Hill to be designated a no parking zone, and so to enable pedestrians to walk along Spring Lane safely.

Councillor Williams responded and thanked Mr Lilley for providing a copy of his statement. The council does not have any control over congestion and safety issues. The disposal of the garage site has been offered for residential redevelopment and so it is not available for parking. Councillor Williams explained that people who owned a garage on the site have been given another garage at a different site. He also stated that a lot of these garages are too small for modern cars - they are mainly being used for storage so did not think this would have a huge impact on current parking issues. The parking survey was undertaken as part of the council's verge hardening programme but this was rejected by a majority of residents for a number of reasons. Councillor Williams reassured Mr Lilley that he would be happy to add Spring Lane back into the verge hardening programme but he insisted that it would need resident support.

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## **4 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **4.1 By the Mayor:**

The Mayor said he was pleased to welcome the new Lord Lieutenant who would be visiting borough on Friday 29th September.

### **4.2 By the Chief Executive:**

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

### **4.3 By the Group Leaders:**

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Bassadone, Bateman, Matthews and Whitman.

Councillor Fisher gave apologies on behalf of Councillor Fethney.

### **4.4. Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet:**

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

The Leader had no announcements to make but was happy to take questions.

Councillor Tindall referred to the recent court ruling in London regarding the decision not to renew Uber's taxi licence. He asked for an update on the council's position.

The Leader said that Dacorum Borough Council do not license Uber. They are licensed elsewhere but can be hired in Dacorum. Some of the Uber taxis operating in Dacorum may be licensed by Transport for London so these could be affected. He said he did not believe that any local authorities that license Uber had made any decisions on granting of future licenses.

There were no further questions for the Leader.

#### **Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration had no announcements to make but hoped to provide an update on lots of on-going projects at the next meeting. He was happy to take questions.

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

#### **Councillor Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Environmental, Sustainability and Regulatory Services**

Members may recall that, in March, police came upon a van in Ledgemore Lane dumping builders' rubble. Alas the two individuals concerned ran off and have not been caught but the vehicle was seized by DBC working with the police. No one claimed ownership of the van and it was duly crushed. The Police & Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire works with local authorities across Hertfordshire on fly tipping and issued a press release on the subject a couple of days ago. The press release incorporates a YouTube video of the crushing entitled "Herts Fly Tippers Feeling Crushed". The Portfolio Holder promised to email the link to members next day

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and recommended that members watch the video, which emphasises that it is a crime to fly tip and there are severe penalties.

Pleased that Bunkers Park, Canal Fields, Tring Memorial Garden and Chipperfield Common had their Green Flag awards renewed in July. Green Flags are given for meeting 8 criteria regarding sustainability, conservation & heritage, community involvement, sound management, marketing and being welcoming, safe, clean & well maintained.

The additional garden waste subscription service now has 618 subscribers, which, with the additional green bins sold, has brought in an income of £34,450.

Cupid Green has carried out a “schools recycling audit & improvement project”. Nearly all schools in DBC have been audited in this respect and, with the information obtained from the audit, each school will be given a pack with suggestions tailored to their particular needs.

Members should be pleased that DBC has broken through the 50% recycling barrier: the figure for 2016/17 was assessed by the Hertfordshire County Council as 51%. This success is due to the partnership of DBC and residents – with DBC making it easier for residents to separate the recyclable waste from the waste which cannot be recycled and residents becoming more aware of the wide range of material that can be recycled. Cupid Green is continuing to press for better figures by promoting and running various campaigns and linking up with national campaigns, such as Love Food, Hate Waste and Plastic Free July.

Congratulations too, to our Dog Warden – DBC’s Dog Warden service has, for the 7th consecutive year, achieved a Gold Award from the RSPCA. The service deals with stray dogs, promotes good practice for dog owners and works with animal businesses. The

Award is given where the local authority has gone above and beyond the basic service requirements by ensuring higher animal welfare standards, demonstrating the importance of information and education and actively promoting schemes and services such as micro chipping. Allied to that, our Dog Warden has been carrying out joint compliance visits with the Licensing Team to various animal boarding establishments. One establishment consequently surrendered its licence – and the team had to find homes for 100 rabbits.

The Portfolio Holder was happy to take questions.

Councillor England congratulated the Portfolio Holder on a full report. He said this week was National Recycling Week and asked the Portfolio Holder if more dual recycling bins could be installed to encourage even more recycling. Councillor England said he has organised several litter picks in the past and finds that about half the rubbish collected is recyclable.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Councillor England for his frequent litter picks. She said the issue of dual recycling bins had been raised before and there are a few installed across the borough. The success of people separating their rubbish properly in these bins is mixed and the recycling bin is often contaminated so it all has to be disposed of as residual waste. The Portfolio Holder said she would keep the issue in mind for the future.

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Councillor Timmis asked if the Portfolio Holder could confirm why a decision had been made to remove more dog waste bins and let dog owners use general bins to dispose of their waste, this makes general bins smell and could be a health and safety issue.

The Portfolio Holder said there will be a review of dog waste bins. At the moment, dog owners do not have to dispose of their dog's waste in the designated dog waste bins – as it is normally in bags, it should not smell. The Portfolio Holder asked if members are aware of any problems, i.e. overflowing bins, to report them straight away so they can be resolved.

Councillor Timmis was concerned that the general bins would smell. The dog waste bins are covered and suggested that the council should be encouraging residents to use the designated waste bins.

The Portfolio Holder said the removal of dog waste bins was common practice among local authorities, Dacorum Borough Council are not leading the way on this.

Councillor Ritchie asked if the Portfolio Holder could explain the management process for deciding small amounts of expenditure. Berkhamsted have had outstanding projects for the last 2-3 years yet there has been a £1 million investment for a splash park in Gadebridge Park.

The Portfolio Holder said there has been considerable investment in Gadebridge Park but there is also investment due at Canal Fields intending to make this the flagship play area in Berkhamsted. There will be further details on this once the funding situation is known at the end of this year. Regarding the planting of trees in Berkhamsted High Street, there have been a few issues and it has not proceeded as smoothly as hoped. The council is the agent for Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) in relation to the maintenance of the trees. The project to replace the trees is in hand and there has been close liaison between DBC and HCC – the council are currently awaiting the plans for the area and afterwards the council will have a better idea of what needs to be planted and how to move forward. The Portfolio Holder said she was thankful to County Councillor Ian Reay for his contribution to fund the replanting of the trees.

There were no further questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

#### **Finance**

The Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 was signed off by Audit Committee on 20th September and the Council was commended by the new auditors, Grant Thornton, for its strong working papers and the high quality of accounts presented for approval.

This was particularly pleasing given that the Council had a change of auditors just weeks before the end of the financial year, and shows that Finance Team were able to adapt well to new working relationships and new demands at what is already a challenging time of year.

This followed the Council having also been named and praised nationally by the Public Sector Audit & Appointment Board in their report on audit work across all Local Government bodies. Focussing on the outcome of the 2015/16 financial year, the

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report highlighted the speed and efficiency of Dacorum's closedown work, and placed the Council in the top quartile of performance, nationally.

This success reflects focused teamwork across the whole of the Finance Team, but in particular I'd like to acknowledge the significant contribution of Yamini Krishnan and Poonam Mehta who were involved in the accounts work far more so than in previous years and were instrumental in the success of the Council.

### Revenue & Benefits

The Council Tax team has been working closely with customer services to introduce new processes to speed up the process of making changes to accounts when residents move.

Benefits have been working with the innovation and improvement team, and are currently piloting the use of email rather than paper to send some documents to landlords.

This will provide a better customer experience and continue to reduce the amount of administration required.

### Commercial Assets & Property Development

The team continues to work with colleagues in the Housing Service in order to increase the supply of affordable homes across the Borough, whilst at the same time securing capital receipts for the Council, through the sale of garage sites to local Housing Associations.

There are currently 12 garage sites in the disposal pipeline for which a sale is likely to conclude in the current financial year. In addition to a sizeable capital receipt which will support the Council's continuing capital ambitions, it is estimated that these sites will deliver upwards of 75 new homes for the borough over the next two years. This is in addition to the 40 new homes resulting from the sale of garage sites in 2016/17, which generated £2.7m in capital receipts for the Council.

Other major projects currently underway include:

- Demolition of the Civic Centre, where the contract has now been let and the contractor is due to commence works in mid-October.
- Multi Storey Car Park in Berkhamsted, where bids have now been received and are being evaluated by the project team. It is anticipated that the contract award will be made around the end of October.

### Commissioning, Procurement & Compliance

The police and Fire Service have concluded using the Civic Centre site for a number of exercises and have been very grateful for the opportunity to use such a suitable building.

The Portfolio Holder was happy to take questions.

Councillor Taylor thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report. As the Chairman of the Audit Committee, the council have come a long way in managing their finances in the

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last ten years in difficult conditions. Councillor Taylor asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that this was a good summary.

The Portfolio Holder concurred with Council Taylor's statement. He said it was very important to keep the council's finances in shape and paid tribute to the officers for all their hard work.

Councillor Tindall referred to the disposal of garage sites and asked if the Portfolio Holder would take into consideration the unintended consequences as well as how development of these sites could create additional problems.

The Portfolio Holder said that ward councillors are consulted on any plans to dispose of garages sites and to see if they would be suitable for sale. The council is mindful of parking issues but many garages are empty or used for storage. Garage tenants are offered an alternative site in their area. The Portfolio Holder asked members to take notice of any garage sites that come up for sale.

Councillor Birnie asked why the council changed their auditors.

The Portfolio Holder said that a conflict of interests arose.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Guest arrived at 8.07pm

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

#### **Tenant and Leaseholder Services**

Supported Housing Officers continue to perform well in terms of completing visits and safety checks within their agreed frequency and supporting tenants to access a range of specialist services. This is a good achievement considering the rate of staff turnover experienced recently but a recent recruitment drive has seen 5 new members of staff join the team. We have experienced a rise in Safeguarding cases in the last quarter, while this may seem concerning it shows we are effectively identifying and working with other agencies to protect vulnerable adults from the harm or potential harm caused by abuse. Of particular focus is scamming in Dacorum where we have recently seen a spike in the amount of phone, mail and doorstep scams. We are working with Herts trading standards to improve our understanding of scams so we can identify at an earlier stage and develop more effective referrals pathways to trading standards.

We are working towards Centre for Housing and Support (CHS) accreditation which has involved the whole Supported Housing staff team and the supported housing tenant's forum. Assessment days have been taking place for the last 2 weeks with an outcome expected by the middle of October.

The percentage of our tenants in rent arrears continues to be comparable to this time last year which is good considering the various policies which are proving a challenge including the Benefit Cap and Universal Credit. Considering the more complex cases that the Tenancy Sustainment Team were involved with, 91% of cases closed in August 2017 had reduced their rent arrears while being supported by the team. Additionally 100% of cases that were closed by the Sustainment Team 6 months ago are still sustaining their homes showing the lasting improvements made by this team.

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## Strategic Housing

Strategic Housing are currently working hard to prepare for the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and the introduction of a new Housing Allocations policy, several papers have been presented to CMT, OSC & Cabinet on these areas and project plans are currently in development. Most notably in this period was a hugely successful launch of the Tenant Academy, with an event that was well attended by tenants, partners and Members. Feedback about the programme has been extremely positive and the soft launch that has been undertaken, indicates that the programme is already proving successful, with a number of tenants being involved in opportunities that will enable them to develop new skills and be involved in a range of activities.

## Housing Development

Able House – Practical Completion took place on 6th June and all units have been let. Cladding has been replaced with render post Grenfell concerns.

Wood House – Works are progressing on site and we are up to second floor with the concrete frame. The fire services used our site this week to practice a crane driver rescue. The tenure mix will now be all affordable as opposed to some shared ownership.

Swing Gate Lane – On site undertaking ground works.

Martindale School site – The Planning application has been submitted for this development.

Stationers Place – A delay to starting on site due to resolving issues with the Environment Agency and opening up a culvert that is at the rear of the site.

Northend and Westerdale garage sites – Planning applications due to be submitted next month.

## Property and Place

Gas Safety Servicing - The compliance rates for gas servicing have been consistently high over the summer months, which is traditionally a difficult time for access. 100% compliance was achieved in June, July and August.

Osborne - Total Asset Management

The key performance indicators remain at a high level and there have been some validation surveys undertaken by the Policy and Participation team to ensure the reported figures are accurate.

The kitchen and bathroom work strands have a new sub-contractor, Shadbolts, who are delivering a very high level of quality with excellent customer satisfaction rates.

## Fire Safety

Additional fire safety checks have been undertaken to flats in the six high rise blocks in Dacorum and all fire risk assessments are currently being uploaded into a format so that any priority items identified in the medium to low rise blocks can be addressed.

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## Health and Safety

Advisory health and safety information for tenants has been included in the forthcoming edition of News and Views and this will be a regular feature in the publication.

The Portfolio Holder was happy to take questions.

Councillor Tindall asked why there was such a high turnover of staff and if the exit interviews revealed a common reason for leaving.

The Portfolio Holder said she had not received any detail on this issue. She said exit interviews do take place but she was not aware of any major issues.

Councillor England congratulated the Portfolio Holder on the Tenant Academy. He asked if the housing team were well resourced and had the correct IT systems to cope with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The Portfolio Holder said this was currently being worked on and a review of team workings is being undertaken to ensure a smooth transition. She said she was relatively confident that there would be no issues.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

### Resident Services

The Anti-social behaviour team successfully obtained an injunction on an aggressive beggar that used to be outside KFC and WH Smiths back in February 17. The injunction prohibited them from entering certain parts of the town including the old market square, which they breached and have been taken into custody. The judge has advised that sentencing will start with at least 26 weeks in prison.

Following a noise nuisance complaint, the Anti-social behaviour team served a community protection notice on a private resident in Grove Hill, which was breached. Following a successful prosecution of CPN 13 breaches, the resident was fined £520 and a £30 witness surcharge. This case is ground breaking and the Anti-social Behaviour Team Leader will be speaking at a regional Environmental Health conference and Police Accreditation trainers are using this as an example of how community protection notices (CPN's) can be successfully used.

The Tour of Britain cycle race was very well received with minimal interruption to the town centre. Thousands of people attended the start at Bank Court in Water House Street, which showed the Water Gardens at their best. Visitors enjoyed the interaction with the riders and lots of photographs and selfies with top riders like Mark Cavendish.

### People & Performance

The Shopmobility Service is out to tender and closes in the first week of October. The Community Grants team are trialling a fast track application for grants of £500 or less. New induction programme has been devised with HR based on staff/managers feedback. The Recruitment and Selection Project is currently in consultation with staff on proposals to improve our approach to recruitment and selection.

### ICT

The PSN Accreditation process under way with submission to Cabinet office due in early October. Good progress has been made on development of portal for residents, with internal testing planned for October

### Electoral Registration

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The Annual Canvass is underway and 63,729 forms have been sent to every property. The total number of properties processed is 32,958 which is 51%. Returns via Individual Voter Registration as of 27.09.17:

	Households	by internet	by phone	by text
TOTALS	22,424	12,949	6,419	3,056

To date there has been around 10,400 forms which were returned with no changes, which could have been done online, via telephone or text.

The next DCSP meeting will be held on Wednesday 18 October 2017 at 7:30 pm in the Council Chamber.

The Portfolio Holder was happy to take questions.

Councillor Ritchie asked about the possible change in facility operator for sports – would the continuation of the dry sports pitches and swimming pool stay in Berkhamsted?

The Portfolio Holder responded that the council is committed to delivering a high quality-sporting environment and we recognise the importance of the leisure facilities for residents at Berkhamsted. The new leisure contract supports this as it allows the Council to put in place controls and conditions, which will ensure that the operator manages all facilities in the way we want. However, it is important to note that decisions about the future of facilities and their use remains the responsibility of the Council. The Council has never discussed or considered the introduction of school-owned leisure facilities in Berkhamsted and we accept that it would not be appropriate. Nevertheless, as part of the leisure review we are commissioning a feasibility study to consider options for delivering improved facilities in the area. This includes possible capital work to the existing leisure centre or the building of a replacement leisure centre.

There were no further questions for the Portfolio Holder.

## **5 QUESTIONS**

None.

## **6 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

None.

## **7 CABINET REFERRALS**

That the following be approved:

**25 July 2017**

### **7.1 CA/076/17 FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT FUNDING**

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1. The supplementary estimates for 2017/18 to establish budgets as detailed in the body of the Cabinet report and Table 1 & 2 (as amended pursuant to recommendation 1) be incorporated into budgets for 2018/19.

#### **7.2 CA/077/17 CREATION OF ADDITIONAL UNITS IN SUPPORTED HOUSING SCHEMES AND THE UPGRADE OF COMMUNAL FACILITIES**

1. A supplementary capital estimate to create three new homes and refurbishment of communal areas at three Supported Housing sites. The details of the required supplementary estimate is in section 1 of the Part II appendix of the report to Cabinet.

#### **7.3 CA/078/17 BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEMES**

1. To introduce a Supporting Small Business rate relief scheme.
2. To introduce a Support for Pubs rate relief scheme.
3. Consultation with Herts County Council on option 3 of the cabinet report for the Revaluation Relief scheme, and that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Finance & Resources) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources to agree to introduce a scheme based on these principles after the County's response is received.
4. To introduce a 100% rural rate relief scheme.
5. To introduce a Local Newspaper rate relief scheme.
6. That authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources to agree the introduction of future discretionary rate relief schemes which are proposed, fully funded and have detailed guidance provided by Government

#### **7.4 CA/079/17 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW**

1. The revised Financial Regulations as detailed in paragraphs 4 to 15 of the Cabinet report.

#### **7.5 CA/080/17 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

1. The revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2017/18 – 2021/22 be approved.

**19<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

#### **7.6 CA/087/17 Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

1. The revised capital programme to move slippage identified at Quarter 1 into financial year 2018/19 as detailed in Appendix C of the report to Cabinet.

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2. The supplementary budgets.. Details for these supplementary budgets are set out in the body of the report to Cabinet and have a net nil impact on the General Fund Working Balance:
  - Increase the Strategic Planning & Regeneration Employees budget by £60k
    - Increase use of the Dacorum Development reserve by £60k
    - Increase the Regulatory Services legal budget by £95k
  - Increase use of the Litigation reserve by £95k
3. The supplementary Capital budget funded by grant for the Disabled Facilities Grants budget of £66k as per paragraph 9.3 of the report to Cabinet.

### **7.7 CA/088/17 TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

The acceptance of the report on Treasury Management performance in 2016/17 and the Prudential Indicators for 2016/17 actuals.

### **7.8 CA/093/17 STAFF TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Councillor Tindall asked if the Leader would agree that there was a mistake on page 6 of the agenda – it should say carers not careers.

The Leader agreed. He said that he moved the recommendation and the failure of the unions to agree on redundancy pay have been discussed and they have given notice to the Council that they will be in formal dispute. The Leader said these changes gave a better value for money for taxpayers.

#### **Decision**

The changes to staff terms and conditions detailed in section 3 of the report to Cabinet and these changes be implemented subject to 30 days' written notice.

## **8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

There were no overview and scrutiny committee referrals.

## **9 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The following changes to committee membership were agreed:

Councillor Mills to replace Councillor Barrett on the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Birnie to join the Health in Dacorum Committee which will increase the membership by one.

## **10 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES**

The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

To add a meeting of the Health in Dacorum Committee on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October.

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The Meeting ended at 8.30 pm

**CHAIRMAN**