
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

17 JANUARY 2018

Present:

MEMBERS:

Councillor D Collins (Mayor), R Sutton (Deputy Mayor), Anderson, Armytage, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Bhinder, Birnie, Chapman, E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, England, Fethney, Fisher, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Imarni, Link, Maddern, Marshall, McLean, Mills, Peter, Ransley, Riddick, Silwal, G Sutton, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Williams, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe

OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration), Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Group Manager (Democratic Services), K Soley and K Norval (Communications), T Angel and R Twidle (Minutes).

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2017 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Mayor.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hicks declared an interest as he is a Council proposed Director of Sportspace.

Councillor England declared he is an administrator for the Facebook Group 'Leisure facilities are not for profit.'

Councillor Ransley declared that she is employed by Sportspace for one hour per week.

Councillor Elliot declared a personal interest as he is a member of my Gym.

Councillor Marshall declared an interest as she is a member of Sportspace.

Councillor Imarni declared she is a Council appointed trustee of Sportspace.

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Eight members of the public registered to speak in relation to the referral from the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee Call-in meeting on Wednesday 10 January 2018 relating to the Award of Leisure Contract Decision - CA/125/17, which was discussed under agenda item 8, Overview and Scrutiny Referrals.

1. Mick Dennis:

Mr Mayor, Councillors I'm a Trustee of SportSpace. Speakers tonight are going to address the Scrutiny Committee's 4 concerns. I'm addressing the lack of credit given to our pro bono work to the community. So let's start with your sports policy statement written by Councillor Harden, it's rather good. I love the bit about maintaining a relationship with SportSpace, love the bit as well about the value to local businesses, a destination venue like the XC. So why did we build the XC? Why did our CEO come up with the idea, lead the grant application, and mastermind the whole thing? Why did our board enthuse about it, why did our management staff embrace all the extra work? Why? Because our commitment to our community is the kernel of our ethos. Its why we do everything, its why we try to be good employers, its why we use local suppliers, its why do so much outreach work, pro bono work which the industry calls sports development. The Scrutiny Committee heard the Herts Sports Partnership's Chair, laud our sports development, he particularly praised the Herts Disability Games. He also said that although there are 10 Everyone Active Centres in Herts they do not engage at all the Herts Sports Partnership. He could not understand the bid scoring, nor can we. Glib promises about sports development in Everyone Active's slick tender scored more highly than our bid based on detail knowledge of actual local challenges and opportunities. The new contract will specify some sports development work that is not the same thing as having us always looking for new ways to truly get everyone active. The contract will try to give protection to organisations like the swimming club. You've never needed to tell us to do that, it's in our DNA. You're trying to ensure value for money so please take proper account of the added value that comes from our ethos. We give that value to your community because we are part of it.

2. David Cove:

Good evening Mr Mayor and Councillors. Scrutiny Committee rightly highlighted concerns over financial assumptions. We have given Council Officers our TUPE list and indicative breakage costs. However, our concerns remain because consultants and officers have already twice mis-interpreted our employee data, which they have had since the initial review and the employee list they produced for us to use in the bid included a Gym Manager for Tring Sport Centre which doesn't even have a gym. We would like to know what assumptions they are making this time. In business, the old adage is hope for the best but plan for the worst. Are you confident this is being done this time? I've been asked how we can afford to pay a fee now when before we wanted a subsidy. Firstly, it's not a subsidy you pay us but a grant which we use to do many good things in the local community. It has reduced from £1.4m to £225,000 and we are committed to getting it to zero whilst still delivering all the good things we do. Secondly, the service levels and the tender are not the same as we provide now. You do get what you pay for. Another way of looking at it is, you have paid us £7.5m in grants over the past 13 years, and we have re-invested £8m back into the service. We have also secured £5.3m in external funding. Turning your £7.5m investment into £13.3m. Working to this specification, you will get less investment in sport but the Council will get a fee. In terms of the bid assumptions, SLM have promised capital monies but they will have to replace fitness equipment anyway so if you take out

references to fitness and gym, how much is left as real investment? We also included 1 million pounds worth of fitness kit but we lease it. Was any allowance made for that as investment? We are putting approximately 1.6 million pounds worth of investment into the contract for free. Was any allowance made for that? Was any credit given for our service being re-invested back into the local services rather than paid to shareholders? Was any account taken of our proposal to invest £1m into Berkhamsted Sports Centre and to offer a profit with Dacorum Borough Council? What assumptions have been made as to the ongoing liabilities for the Council as they now underwrite the employee pension contribution over 20.6%. Currently, we take on all that risk. And finally, if someone turned up at your door promising to make all aspects of your life better and then pay you a large sum of money for the privilege, you would rightly be suspicious and want to know what the catch is. Thank you.

3. Brian Leonard, CBE

Mr Mayor and Councillors, I represent the National Association of Sport, Leisure and Cultural Trusts of which our SportSpace is a member. I'd like to first comment on the strategy of procurement, we are at a time when Local Authorities across the country are re-engineering their strategies for leisure and sport to respond to some of their biggest social issues and problems not just way beyond activity, recreation and drama, and through things like social inclusion, social coherence. There are now many examples of around the country of successful innovations by trust in this field being prevalent. Many involved partnerships between Trust and other charities, local charitable bodies. The alternative strategy to this approach is at the other extreme to operate facilities only in a standardised way through a national body for the benefit of people who habitually use them and can afford to do so. Our questions would be on whether the Council has been able fully to consider the range of chances it has in strategic issues. Second we have concerns about the trading structure of the body which has been has won the bid for the contract. As I understand it the company bids for the contract then sub-leases to a charitable body which it has set up. The body is able to claim business rate relief and also VAT concessions for its services. Two other subsidiaries of SLM then work in facilities and make the lion's share of the profit. The recoverable VAT is very low. This is only what we can deduce, SLM want to keep their structure secret. "Sport" has issued 15 Local Authority FOI requests, most, and with most Local Authorities have been persuaded of the need for secrecy and are exempting the details of the work and the structure, some Local Authorities appear not to understand the structure "Sport" are challenging this with the Information Commissioner because in our view any model which uses tax payer funded reliefs and concessions should be transparent. We believe also that the complex structure involves risks in relation to VAT and business rate relief. PWC have produced a checklist for us, which shows that the risk can be real. I sent the checklist to the Council in June. At the Scrutiny Committee an Officer said that the Council has seen an approving letter from the HMRC about the structure. We would ask does this approve the entire set of the inter-company links or simply a part of it. Is the Council happy to give Business Rate relief, most of the benefit of which goes to a private sector company. Thank you.

4. Joanna Bussell

Thank you. I'm a lawyer and lead partner in Winckworth Sherwood's Local Government Team. I'm one of the UK's leading advisers in relation to leisure projects. I've established over 50 Leisure Trusts operating successfully throughout the UK and I've acted on behalf of Local Authorities in some of the most exciting leisure procurements. I was appointed to provide advice and support to the Council in relation to the establishment of Dacorum Sports Trust. This followed a vigorous and objective

analysis of the Council's options for the future management of services. The Council determined having regard to the significant benefits the Trust's model, this is the best option for the Local Authority. Dacorum Sports Trust has gone from strength to strength since it was established in 2004 and it is held as an exemplar of a Trust achieving charitable purposes at no or significantly reduced costs to the Local Authority. Elected Members should be hugely proud of the success of Dacorum Sports Trust and the impact it's had on the health and wellbeing of the local community. For the avoidance of doubt the Trust option is not a form of outsourcing its fundamentally different. However, it appears to me the Council has treated Dacorum Sports Trust as though it's outsourced service that should be subject to market testing every 5 or so years. This is evidenced by the Council's open letter to the Sports Network in August referring to the Council's decision to re-tender. The Council did not tender in 2004 and it was under no obligation to tender 2007. The Council's made a fundamental policy change, it's opted for a new delivery model and outsourcing of leisure services without appearing this is the right option for the Council. Clearly why the Council didn't seek to negotiate a revised commercial offer with Dacorum Sports Trust. Use the external consultants to benchmark the Dacorum Sports Trust offer. This is exactly what happens in long term PPP type contracts. This would have saved the Council the time and costs of the exercise and resulted in a win win outcome. Continued management and operation of leisure services by an organisation that delivers first class leisure services and re-invests a 100 percent of every pound back into the local community. Two very specific areas of concern. First the procurement process – the Council adopted an open procedure with an extremely tight time frame. I'm not aware of any other leisure projects in the UK to date that has adopted this approach, the vast majority file competitive, a competitive dialogue approach with an 18 to 24 month time line. The open procedure allows for no dialogue with bidders and is only used where leisure services can be, that are purchased are entirely standard - paperclips, computer paper, not leisure services. For the avoidance of doubt, SLM have been selected solely on the basis of a written submission, there have been no dialogue meeting and as far as I am aware there's been no site visits to SLM sites.

5. Rebecca Hemmant

Good Evening everyone I am Rebecca Hemmant, I am the Operations Director for Dacorum Sports Trust. I am addressing the item to reassess the Health & Safety criteria. The weighting placed on Health & Safety in the tender specification and specifically the method statement that included staffing, safeguarding, and health and safety management had a maximum scoring level of only 5 percent out of the total 60 percent quality mark. Sports facilities require extremely robust and relevant health and safety management systems and this element had been seriously under-rated within the original specification and does not in any way reflect the importance that we, DST place on health and safety within our community facilities. Health and safety is the first item on Dacorum Sports Trust Board agenda at every meeting and is the first item on all of the sites and corporate management team meetings as well. We have an exemplary record of health and safety and have over the past 13 years regularly scored in excess of 90 percent in our external audits. I fail to see how we could have been scored on an equal level to SLM. We were an industry leader in setting up the quality management systems and health and safety procedures for XC. Last year there was an incident that reached the national press, where we successfully defending a claim by having proof that appropriate processes and procedures were in place. Our successful defence has not only become case law but is also used as an example of good practice at the Association of British Climbing Walls. I do not have confidence in the evaluation process as Nick alluded to earlier, at last week's meeting, the Director of the Herts Sports Partnership, questioned the sports development element where we scored less than SLM according to the criteria set. He confirms that

we have given unprecedented support to sports development in Hertfordshire that SLM were largely invisible and have certainly not involved them in their current submission. And finally, at the Cabinet meeting in December, I had explained that I was heavily involved in the tender submission and I was astonished that our overall quality submission scored 39 percent as opposed to SLM's 49.6. I asked how many years' experience the Officer who assessed the quality aspect of our bid had in the day to day operational and strategic management of sports and leisure facilities. And despite not having that reply recorded in the Cabinet Minutes, the reply I did receive on the night was none. Thank you.

6. Andrew Farrow

Thank you Mr Mayor, Councillors, Good Evening. My name is Andrew Farrow, I am the Chair of Hemel Swimming Club. The club was established in 1913, our 240 members, 95 percent of them from Dacorum, use 35 hours of pool and gym time a week. We also promote 15 days of competition a year attracting over 2000 swimmers and their parents to Hemel, and represent Hemel in national and international competitions. We are the largest single source of income for Dacorum Sports Trust and we are managed solely by volunteers, supported by 2 professional coaches. Together with Berkhamsted and Tring Swimming clubs we issued an open letter to the Council last October about the tender documentation. Our concern was that limited consultation and a rushed process would lead to poorly structured contractual terms with unforeseen consequences, regardless of who awarded the contract. To give some examples - The basis on which the Council's sports facilities prioritised between different groups and members of the public is highly complex, it is not clear what impact the Council's new financial and performance criteria will have on the existing arrangements. Council officers have asked us to rely on a commitment to maintain the sustainability of Sports Clubs. Being simply sustainable is no guarantee that we will continue to be the vibrant organisation we are today. Swimming clubs rely on recruitment from swimming lessons, a key tension with centre operators focused on revenue. This wasn't addressed in the tender because of the erroneous assumption that swimming clubs were in fact responsible for lessons in Dacorum which we are not. Council Officers have also told us that market forces will prevent excessive price increases. This might be true for gym or sports halls but the Council is a monopoly supplier of 25 metre pool time in Hemel. Where are those market forces going to come from to protect my club? The Council is being asked to consider the benefit to the local community of the decision to appoint SLM. As a club run by volunteers from the local community, we see a number of risks in a relationship with SLM, against which we are offered no effective long term safeguards and which will almost certainly involve a significant investment of volunteer time in the foreseeable future, which we would prefer to spend investing into the development of our sport. Thank you very much.

7. Lindsey Nash-Simpson

Hello everybody and hello everybody I didn't meet last week. I've been asked to speak on behalf of the community and the 8,000 people who have signed the petition, more about that in a minute. So at Council last week, we listened to hours of debate about the decision to terminate SportSpace and go out to tender. Strong evidence cast doubt on the process and results and we heard about a rushed and secretive project. We also saw passion on both sides and I am sure of everyone's good intent, but one compelling fact remains. None of this should be happening. Certainly not yet. When the Council terminated SportSpace it delivered the corporate equivalent of dumping your partner of 14 years, by text. It came without warning, there were no fundamental issues with the relationship and the Council did not want to talk. Frankly

Dacorum expects more. Terminating a long term partnership that is working without any warning, or dialogue is at best naïve and at worst, negligent. We can only assume that you have been given very poor advice to do this. The current decision will fundamentally alter how leisure services are delivered but without any real community consultation, or an agreed sport strategy, it's incoherent and it's just wrong. Up to now, only 31 residents have been consulted by the Council. The I Love SportSpace work represents over 8,000 people and their message is loud and clear, keep leisure services not-for-profit, abandon this process and open re-negotiations with SportSpace. Why? Because SportSpace consistently shows it is commercial and community focused. So our most vulnerable have leisure services, not just those that can pay. But this option isn't even on the table for you to consider. Your electorate are thoughtful, intelligent and fully engaged in what's happening here. And they are reasonable. We get that if genuine discussions between the Council and SportSpace don't produce the right deal, for both sides, then other options must be looked at. How you vote tonight as our representatives would greatly impact Dacorum's public health, far into the future. Don't be the Council who threw away one of the UK's most respected Sports Trust. Thank you.

8. Brian Malyon

Mr Mayor, Councillors, my name is Brian Malyon, I am the Chair of Dacorum Sports Trust. I am a life-long Conservative voter and have been bitterly disappointed at the way the Trust has been treated by this Council after 14 successful years. We have had inaccurate consultants' reports, a fundamental change in the Council's approach to sports and leisure provision, without any consultation. A tender process with flaws and problems. A dubious evaluation. A Cabinet decision with financial uncertainty, complex tax arrangements, health and safety concerns and no community involvement. I am not surprised this has resulted in a great deal of outcry from local people. None of this needed to happen. We know the Council are under financial pressure, so 12 months ago I met the Leader of the Council and offered to re-negotiate the existing contract. An offer that was refused. So we say again tonight, come and talk to us, we have been partners for 14 years, we want to help and you already know we can deliver. Councillors, you have a choice. Allow our sports and leisure facilities to be managed by a profit-orientated company, an organisation with a complex tax structure and no link to our community or re-negotiate the current contract with a local charitable trust, run by local people, who use local suppliers. A trust that will continue to invest all surpluses back into our community and not into the pockets of shareholders. I love SportSpace and so do the people here tonight and the 8,000, I repeat, 8,000 who have signed the community petition. So I say to you, as our elected representatives, the Council has been badly advised. Do not rush headlong into a 10 year deal on the basis of a flawed process. Do the right thing, take heed of the Scrutiny Committee concerns, listen to your community, and recommend that the tender process is abandoned and the Council re-negotiate the existing contract with Dacorum Sports Trust. Thank you for your time.

The Mayor thanked the speakers for their clarity of speeches and for keeping more or less to the time limit given.

4 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

It was agreed by Members to bring this agenda item forward to be discussed before continuing with the rest of the agenda.

The referral from the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee Call-in meeting on Wednesday 10 January 2018 relating to the Award of Leisure Contract Decision - CA/125/17 was considered:

To refer to Full Council the Cabinet's decision CA/125/17 to award the Leisure Services contract to SLM for further consideration, for the following reasons:

- 1) To review the financial assumptions made in the assessment of bids, with emphasis on employee costs and termination/breakage costs.*
- 2) To investigate SLM's proposed tax regime.*
- 3) To reassess the Health and Safety criteria.*
- 4) To consider the lack of assessment of benefit to local community and local business.*

The Mayor advised Councillors they should keep their comments to the four items that have been referred to the Full Council.

Councillor Tindall made a point of order: *if I could refer to page 192 of the Constitution, 15d, the fact that we're discussing a reference to Full Council, 15f refers to - If the Council does object, it can overturn Cabinet decisions because it is contrary to the policy framework and budget. If you refer to Article 4, which is on page 11, item 4.1.a refers, in bullet point, to any other planned strategy which has borough-wide application and which the Council may decide to be adopted by Full Council. Now, I realise there are some tenuous arguments in that but I do believe that there is sufficient reason within those constitutional points that when I propose a motion, which I would like to do in a moment, the decision on the motion could actually be taken as to overturn Cabinet's decision.*

The Mayor asked Councillor Tindall to open the debate whilst the Solicitor to the Council investigated his constitutional point of order. The normal rules of debate were applied; Councillors had 5 minutes each.

Councillor Tindall:

In rising to speak I have a depressing sense this whole matter has been conducted in indecent haste with little consideration for the community of Dacorum but in a search for an additional income stream, with the local charitable provider being cast aside in favour of the private contractor. I'm not ideologically opposed to privatisation and recognise that it has its purpose but it should not be regarded as the only pathway to the delivery of community services. Such pathways should start from the premise of service to the community with consideration of the strategy needed to achieve the aims and objectives of that service. And yet we have found that there is no strategy, except possibly one of maximising the financial returns. We were told last Wednesday, that this Council does have a policy, but when you look, the policy is to work with Sports Trust, so much for the written policy. For me, the tragedy is that this whole matter has been cloaked in secrecy and rushed. The Sports Trust Board are local, think local and manage for local people. They have on occasions been accused not being commercial, but the Board has taken that decision, not because of the lack of expertise, but because they've always seen themselves as a charitable body, working for the benefit of the community of Dacorum. There are a number of financial considerations that I would have liked to include but I am prevented from doing so because of the secrecy that has been thrown over the whole process. The future of major services to the community should have been given the widest publicity,

discussion and consideration but with much of the procedure and process within Part 2, this was not possible. There has been no public consultation, no serious interaction with partners, nowhere showed the damage this proposal will do to our sports and leisure infrastructure. I ask not what we may or may not gain in the future, but ask all Councillors to think carefully about what we could be losing if we lose SportSpace.

Councillor England:

The corporate objective mentioned in the Cabinet Agenda that went to the 12th of the 12th 2017, states that the leisure provision is central to delivering the Borough that people can enjoy. At the OSC last Wednesday, Chair, Councillor Mahmood, chaired a 5 hour meeting, however, we only saw the draft Minutes of that meeting this afternoon and to be honest I haven't had the time to read them yet. This process is being rushed at break-neck speed. There are hundreds of people here today and many more watching on the Facebook live stream around Dacorum. There was a good discussion on Wednesday 10th of January and we learn that the Cabinet made a major strategic decision on leisure management for Dacorum, without having even gone out to consultation with residents, let alone, formulated any kind of sports strategy for the Borough. The Cabinet, I believe, have been beguiled by a special offer to procure and sign a contract instead of making a considered long-term decision on a key relationship, which our residents will need to be comfortable with. Again, leisure provision is central to delivering a Borough that people can enjoy. The policy as other people have mentioned, actually specifically says, build a relationship with Dacorum Sports Trust and as was so eloquently said, the relationship was ended by text. Then, we have a situation where Dacorum had an expert partner in 2004, who they then farm out to EFC and Officers and the Cabinet of DBC have unbelievably carried out a significant potential re-organisation of leisure management without having any sports industry expertise, because DST is their sports expertise. DBC put their own experts, including Mr Cove into the charitable trust and they seem to have now forgotten this and fallen out with their own experts, treating them just as a commercial contractor and therefore now, just a money tree. Turning quickly to the matrix of scoring the bids, it's been said that this was a 60/40 situation, it's been presented as if price was a secondary factor. All of the criteria besides price are lumped together in the summaries of the process, which have been presented to Councillors and to the public. The evaluation format actually has, as its primary criterion, price at 40 percent. After that is more money, which is programming and pricing at 15 percent. After that, outreach, described as a focus on outcomes but the process ignored the achievements like the HC and DST's record of strong relations with Hertfordshire and national partners. After that you have customer service, event management, marketing, publicity, 12 percent. All of this is meat and drink to a bid writer but DST are not bid writers. They are a local organisation that does something. With 80 percent of the marks taken care of we finally get to something real. Facilities Management, which is worth 10 percent. Things like maintenance and operations, where, in fact, both bidders were scored exactly the same, except we already have a successful relationship with one of them, and a policy, indeed, of keeping it positive. So only after 90 percent do we get to health and safety, as a sub-set of just 5 percent allocated to staffing. At this point the difference between an excellent and an average rating, which in the scheme is a 1 to 5 rating, amounts to 2 percent, in terms of the comparison. So, in fact, even if you have an excellent health and safety rating it's not enough to defeat the huge rate of 40 percent on price. As you noted last week, DST and SLM were scored the same for staffing, despite DST's good record versus SLM's Aylesbury Vale's cryptosporidium outbreak. Nothing on localism. A locally managed community charitable trust which sources locally, ought to be given credit for that in the evaluation, but it wasn't. DST do source locally, that makes them less efficient in pure financial terms but truly local and a better, broader fit for a Borough that wants to be

distinctive. This benefit has not been recognised in the process. Also every pound that's saved in the local economy is multiplied in wages and local spending.

Mark Brookes, Solicitor to the Council, advised the following, in relation to Councillor Tindall's point of order:

The Council have no power to overturn a decision unless it is contrary to the policy framework. The policy framework is set out in the Constitution and that means the Corporate Plan, the Community Strategy, Community Safety Strategy, Development Plan documents, the Council's Corporate Work Programme, any other plan or strategy which has a borough-wide application, on which the Council may decide should be adopted by Full Council and Policy Statements relating to the licensing of alcohol and gambling, required under the Licensing Act. Chairman, there is nothing in the decision which has been proposed which to my mind, is contrary to the policy framework and therefore Council cannot overturn the decision but can refer the matter back to Cabinet.

The Mayor invited members to continue with the debate.

Councillor Hicks:

I am a Dacorum appointed trustee of SportSpace. I was proud of the history of sport in Dacorum. I was proud to follow in the footsteps of Derek Townsend, a former Town Councillor, and Freeman of the Borough. I learned yesterday of the wonderful works of Herts County Council, Dacorum Council and SportSpace in obtaining grants to build the XC at no cost to the Borough. I didn't know of the background before yesterday. I was disenfranchised because I'm a trustee of SportSpace I did not get involved in the procurement specification or the marketing, marketing procedure. The 2 written criteria have been demolished by the speakers. I have seen the financial summary, I cannot give the numbers but I can say that I think it is too good to be true. In my experience if it looks too good to be true, then it usually is. What I can say definitely, is that the grants obtained for SportSpace to build the XC was over 5 million pounds. If our SportSpace was a private/charity hybrid, like being proposed, it would not have been able to get those grants. Grants like that will change the financials completely. The opportunity will never come again, if we go to SLM. SportSpace is not perfect, but I believe it is best for the residents. The only way that that extra money can be made is by charging the residents more and giving them less. I urge all Councillors to reject this decision and go back to the drawing board on the complete process.

Councillor Imarni:

I am Councillor Imarni and I am also an appointed trustee of Dacorum Sports Trust. I have been very vocal through this whole process as I think I've been, as a trustee, I've privy to some of the documents others haven't. On the 4 points that were raised, I would question the financial assumptions as I mentioned at the last week's meeting, the consultant had to put his hands up quite early in the process and say that his figures had been incorrect. I think at that point for me, from the commercial, that would have forced me to pause and get further clarification. Throughout the process, there have been 285 corrections to the tender documents that were put into the public domain, which, again, gives me concern. I will say that I do understand the reason, to re-look at what we are doing and also the need to ensure that we are as profitable as we can be, but I think the points that I have just raised, show that we were not ready and we do not have our ducks in a row internally, to make this a public tender and there are lots of things that we need to look at. I also concur with some of the other speakers, that health and safety is of paramount importance and I cannot understand with the exemplary international record that SportSpace have on health and safety, how they managed to score equal to other bidders, who have had some tarnishes. I mentioned last week at the Scrutiny meeting that Dave Cove, when a contingent from

South Korea were invited to the UK and asked for 3 examples of best practice, with 100 or so trusts that exist in the UK, SportSpace was 1 of 3 and as a result, they will now be speaking internationally, I believe in Melbourne next year. And I think that highlights that they really cannot have an equal rating to people who have had health and safety scandals in their recent past. The CEO of Herts Sports Partnership, focused a lot of his talk on sports development, which again, I think has not been correctly appreciated or assessed. Members were issued with a document that listed 24 groups locally that benefit from the sports development programme that our current provider allows. I haven't seen any evidence that this was considered in this tender process, as a benefit that will be lost, which, of course, ultimately, at some point will have a financial element to it.

Councillor Maddern:

My question for tonight is really quite simple. Last week about 50 percent of the Councillors attended the Scrutiny meeting and of course there were 12 on the Committee and there were several more of us dotted around the room, some of us at this end and I was looking out for Councillors down the other end in audience, as well. Approximately 50 percent of us were here. Of the 12 on the Committee, 11 of them, voted to refer the matter on based on those 4 points that were discussed and 1 abstained. Those 4 reasons haven't yet properly considered, there hasn't been time to consider them, the Minutes only came out today, and for that reason, I'm hoping that all those 11 Members will vote the same way they did last week, feeling that we do need more time and more scrutiny on this. And I sincerely hope that the other 50 percent of the Council Members who weren't at that meeting last week, will trust the judgement of those 11 that we need more information.

Councillor Marshall:

It's mischievous to complain of secrecy. It is true that a lot of the, or all of the financial data is not in the public domain and that is unfortunate because it is very important in the decision-making of this Council, but as the Councillors who have spoken this evening will know, with their long experience of Council work and with others, and others who will understand business, they will understand that sensitive financial information must be kept confidential. SLM have afforded that confidence, so have SportSpace. There is no difference. There is no bar or inhibition placed on SportSpace preventing them making the winning bid. In fact, you could argue that, perhaps, they had the heads-up because for many years previous, the Council have been urging SportSpace to be more commercial, less reliant on the cushion of Council Tax money. Reference has been made reasonably enough to health and safety, very important, and to the Aylesbury Vale instance in 2014. May I quote you, word for word, a joint statement made by Everyone Leisure and Aylesbury Vale District Council. This is 2014. "On 24th of March Aylesbury Vale District Council's Environmental Health Department alerted Everyone Active to a possible connection between a couple of cases of diarrhoea and the leisure at Aqua Vale Swimming and Fitness Centre. Given that only a possible connection was indicated, it was agreed not to close the pool at that time, however, Environmental Health and Everyone Active agreed upon additional cleansing measures as a precaution. These measures were designed to eradicate any possible bacteria from within the pool. Everyone Active has a stringent water testing policy in line with industry guidelines, but as normal pool testing, as conducted at the Centre does not test for specific strains of bacteria, Everyone Active arranged for further analysis of the leisure pool water to take place the following day. Water quality testing has to take place in a laboratory, which meant that the initial test results were not returned to Everyone Active until the 3rd of April. The test results indicated that levels of bacterium, known to cause diarrhoea was present in the leisure pool. These bacteria can only be introduced to a pool by a swimmer, with a stomach infection. Everyone Active had not reported cases of diarrhoea contamination in the

pool during this period and the regular pool testing regime, did not indicate there were any issues with water quality. If either of these incidents had occurred, the centre management would have implemented special cleansing measures, but they were given no indication that there was any problem at all with the water quality. The centre management closed the leisure pool on the 3rd of April as soon as the test result arrived and the competition as a precautionary measure". Now, I can understand the concerns, reasonable concerns raised about the environmental health but I think the bottom line, the message about the Aylesbury Vale, the Aqua Vale incident is that the SLM followed the advice given by Aylesbury Vale District Council. I did ask, in view of the concerns that had been raised on environmental health, for environmental health officers here to take a further research and they could find no action against SLM either in respect of improvement notices, prohibition notices or convictions. My time is up, but as far as health and safety is concerned can I suggest, that on that point we should be satisfied.

Councillor Fisher:

I was horrified at the idea that conditions for users are only going to be guaranteed for 12 months. Some people might be alright if the prices go up, and they will afford them, if they're forced to use an alternative venue, they may be able to get there but that's not going to be the case for everybody and some of the activities are going to be sorely missed if they don't continue. There's support for heart patients, with exercise, with exercise in sheltered schemes, and I think all of these things ought to continue and if they're not guaranteed, there may not be a financial loss to the Council, but there would surely be a considerable loss to local residents and probably other costs to other public services if people's health and wellbeing decline. I think that is important.

Councillor Anderson:

I'm a little unsure as to whether we're speaking on the motion proposed or whether the 4 issues referred from the Scrutiny Committee. Assuming I am speaking on the 4 issues that came from the Scrutiny Committee, I shall proceed on that assumption. I'm going to be pantomime villain number 2 here, I would ask the audience please to wait until the end, before they start booing. I admire all the campaigning that has taken place on this issue. I've listened to all the comments and everything that we've heard. I also attended the first hour and a half of the Scrutiny Committee meeting last week and I was a lucky one, I was able to go and have my tea at 9 o'clock, so I did hear quite a few of the arguments and the speakers on that night but, and I really wish I could actually speak to all the various issues that have been raised, but the sad and regretful situation is unfortunately, we have to deal with the reality of the situation. Now returning to the 4 points that Committee referred to the Council, the first was to do with financial assumptions. Now unfortunately at the start of this process, when Dacorum was drawing up the tender details, the Council did ask SportSpace for various details and those details were not provided. We get to the tender stage and it turns out that there are some minor inaccuracies in it, and SportSpace presents its bid but does not complain about the inaccuracies. The complaints about the inaccuracies only occur after the decision has been taken and I'm afraid for that reason, it doesn't make them very sustainable. The areas, in my opinion, and I have seen are minor and non-material and I think the key point on this point, Mr Mayor, is that both bids were compared on a level playing field. Listening to the speakers, anyone would think that SportSpace had been barred from being allowed to bid. That could not be further from the truth. They were carefully considered on a level playing field.

The second item that was referred from Scrutiny Committee concerned the tax review. Well, I did hear on the night a Council Officer confirming that the, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs Treasury, were happy with the tax arrangements with one of

our bidders. So, but it was very quiet and I don't think it was really got the attention it should have deserved, because it really needs to be pointed out that whilst people are busy trying to throw mud at the competing bids, that particular mud has already been removed as an issue.

The third issue that came from the Scrutiny Committee was to do with health and safety. Now, thanks to research from Councillor Marshall, Members have been aware that there are no convictions against SLM elsewhere, so again, I'm not quite sure what the evidence is, for the mud that's been thrown on that heading. In terms of assessment of local community benefits, well, it turns out SLM use local firms, particularly, as I understand, in Watford. So unfortunately, under that heading, I'd have to say, that, that isn't really immaterial to, to what we're discussing. There are so many other things, Mr Mayor, that I could raise under this and I'm trying to the 4 issues referred from Scrutiny Committee. But what I will say in relation to, one of the concerns I have, and I'll wrap up on this point, is that very early on in the campaign, I had an email from a constituent on behalf of a SportSpace employee, who had been advised that they were going to lose their job as a result of this. Now it's been clear all the way through this, the front line staff are not losing their jobs. In fact, the successful bidder would actually require more front line staff and I do have to take issue with the campaigning that has been used under that heading and I am personally, quite content with the procedures the Council's followed on this decision.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe:

First of all, I'll take slight issue with my colleague, Councillor Anderson, I actually applaud the public campaign that has taken place because it is important that these views are aired. My concern is that those views have been formed on incomplete information. I have to say that many of the emails I received were full of inaccuracies themselves about what people perceived was the true position. So that's the basis for this. I'm not happy to be here this evening, I am a former trustee of SportSpace and was a Cabinet Member who oversaw the transfer of Little Hay. I was heavily involved and proud to be involved, in the bid that enabled the XC and I'm sure that Dave and Mick Dennis will not forget me making everybody go up to Aberdeen with the Council Officer, in one day, because I was not prepared to spend tax payers' money on overnight hotel accommodation in Aberdeen. Right. So, the 4 points raised at the Scrutiny panel have been answered to my satisfaction and I have investigated this thoroughly and probably with my previous knowledge and with a better knowledge than many of my colleagues here and I'm certainly not denigrating their efforts. It is a matter of regret that due to the need for commercial confidentiality, much of the information which has shaped most of my views cannot be put in the public domain at this time. When that information is made public, my decision to vote in favour of the original Cabinet decision, will become clear.

Councillor Elliot:

I will be brief, I was a former trustee council member on the Board and have a lot of respect for the management of that trust and really what concerns me slightly is that the view is that SLM will freeze prices for one year, and people expect no increases thereafter. I would think that would be rather unreasonable to say that to Dacorum Sports Trust that you'll freeze it for one year and you wouldn't look to maybe amend them later on. So that's all I have to say.

Councillor Douris:

Thank you Mr Mayor. I understand that it's the opposition's prerogative to undertake a call in. I was reminded today that a Council which had previously engaged and contracted with SLM had, at the end of their term of contract decided to go out and re-procure and I was also reminded that the company that they contracted, they were very pleased to be able to contract with because they felt that that company, from all

the knowledge that they had, offered an excellent service, a run-run organisation, worked well with the Council and provided excellent value for money. That new contractor is SLM. That Council is Liberal Democrat run, Watford Borough Council.

Councillor Harden:

I've got a short statement I want to read out which, I think from the start I would like to acknowledge the amount of concern that has come within the community and I do appreciate the volume of people here tonight to show that concern. Unfortunately most of it is based on untruths and misrepresentation of issues generated by social media administrators, and not corrected by trustees or management of DST. This has caused immense upset to many staff, Members and users of the facility. This concern was picked up by opposition Councillors at call-in and then presented with the Council tonight. All members have received the answers to these 4 concerns. We take this decision, we do take into account the numbers here tonight but we also have to take into account the 16,000 Dacorum users who currently use SLM facilities and we also have to take into account the 110,000 tax payers of this Borough.

Councillor Williams:

I'll address the points in the form they've been referred in the context of Councillor Tindall's motion. In referring the financial privations back to Full Council, I think we have, as has been explained by colleagues, not had the access to the information in relation to SportSpace's current operations and had to make some assumptions, both through our consultants and through the tendering process. What is clear and has become even clearer in, perhaps, the last 24 hours, now that we have breakage costs and figures from DST, is that our financial assumptions were almost exactly where DST's assumptions are. Almost exactly where DST's assumptions are and that was figures provided to us by DST against the budget figures that we have made. And therefore it shows that our financial procurement process has been perhaps, even more accurate than we had expected. Of course, there's the debate around pensions breakage and the advice we have is that it is not a liability and it's going to fall upon, that there isn't a liability and if there is, it doesn't fall upon DBC anyway.

In the second point, tax law in this country is made by the UK government and it is important that us as a contract, as a letter of procurement contracts, abides by UK tax regulations. It is not the case that we should be setting our own tax arrangements or making a judgement on UK tax law in this process, whether we agree with it or not. And, indeed, much has been made in the last week or two of the charitable status and not-for-profit status of SportSpace. That has never been the remit of SportSpace, it's not a not-for-profit organisation. You can argue over grants or subsidy but it doesn't make a profit, it operates with a subsidy, a grant, it doesn't cover the cost of providing the services it relies on, it provides, it relies on a support from the tax payers of Dacorum to do so. And the reason it is a charitable trust is only for one purpose. The sole purpose we bought in the charitable trust in the first place was to benefit from business rate relief. The rest of the operation effectively, the rest of the business is effectively a business wrapped up in a charitable envelope.

In 2004, the goal, the prize for this Council in setting up DST as a charitable trust was £600,000 business rate relief. Not a saving by DST as saving as a consequence of DST. The health and safety issues have been well covered by my colleagues. We have this constant reference to the Aylesbury Vale situation. An issue which SLM were completely open and transparent about in consultation with Aylesbury Vale Council. They operate facilities in 43 other authorities at over 150 sites. I think if we continually refer to one over 3 years ago, I don't think you can take that as a reason not to award a contract not to award a contract to a particular contractor. I will accept in relation to 2.4 in part, that this Council doesn't, through its procurement criteria,

particularly specify the use of local suppliers in terms of its contract. Now that may be a concern to Members, it may be a concern to DST, but you can't, because we have never chosen to write that requirement into our contracts before, you can't judge this contract by that. If Members want to revise our future procurement criteria, that is open for us to do so and that is a process that through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee we can do. We know that SLM use a number of local contractors within their contract in Watford and we know over 1,000 residents of Hertfordshire and Aylesbury work for SLM, so are therefore local employees of the organisation. On that basis, I am content that the concerns raised by the Scrutiny Committee fuelled by the campaign against this, the award of this contract have been satisfied. I do pay recognition to the pace at which the campaign against this, the SportSpace campaign, has grown, but as colleagues have said and people can dismiss it, and they can boo, a lot of that information is not accurate. I don't and haven't had the chance to go through all the things in the petition, if you pick up one point, for example, it says that in the heading for the petition people were asked to sign, this contract means no new investment in sports facilities for the next 10 years. How can you possibly say that? That cannot be categorically stated as accurate. The investments in sports facilities, or the infrastructure of those facilities, regardless of who the contractor is, SLM or DST, are a decision of this Council. With this contract, in the current arrangement and the future contract they are a decision for this Council, so no-one can say, over the next 10 years this Council is categorically not going to invest in sports facilities and put that as a heading on a petition. Simply inaccurate. I urge Members to reject Councillor Tindall's motion.

Councillor Tindall:

In response, first of all to Councillor Marshall, I do appreciate Part 2 and the need for confidentiality when figures and financial statements are recorded, but there has been secrecy virtually from the start of this process, from the moment that SportSpace were given notice. Thereafter it was clouded in secrecy. The secrecy should not really have started until the tender documents were being prepared and then the process gone into, so there was a considerable period before the actual tender when it could have been open, where there could have been public consultation, in the same way that the Council actually went out to public consultation on the Public Space Protection Order, before the Order had actually even been written and it received a considerable number of responses. I would have expected the same with this. Councillor Anderson, yes, SportSpace were asked for details but post the decision to terminate them. They were, therefore, put in the place not of their choosing, of being a bidder. Therefore when the Council came to them for requests for information, they also treated their information in confidence in the same way that the Council treated its information in confidence as one would have expected, in the way the Council had treated them. So, there were considerable inaccuracies in the documentation, as I understand it, and these were corrected as they went along by SportSpace, so that the final tender document was a lot more accurate and a lot better than when it was started.

Again, I am repeating what others have told me, as far as tax arrangements, I have no idea about that at all. I have never been critical of Everyone Active, I have no reason to suspect they wouldn't give us reasonable concerns, except for the fact that they won't give the added value that SportSpace would. So, I am in no position to criticise them as a provider and I don't believe either that on record, I have done so.

Health and safety, convictions are not just the judgement. There is also the fact is, can they give the same level of health and safety service as SportSpace?
Community benefits – I think that's been covered by the fearful.

Lost jobs – There are a considerable number of self-employed people working within the SportSpace family. They will not be covered by TUPE. The moment that they are taken over by a private provider, they could well be shown the door, so therefore there will be lost jobs but I don't know how many.

Councillor Elliot mentioned the freeze for one year. This contract is lasting for 10 years, so therefore, what's going to happen in the other 9? And once, of course, we have lost SportSpace, we can't get it back.

Councillor Douris is interesting because he did make the fact that Watford is Liberal Democrat controlled and that's always to be pleasingly announced at events and procedures but in actual fact, they checked out beforehand. The reason the extension has been given is that when the contract was first awarded to Everyone Active, they were moving from a Council based provision to a private provision. They did not have a charitable trust in between them. The charitable trust that, over 14 years, has actually shown how good a job it has done, so, therefore, the fact that Everyone Active has done a reasonable job in Watford, and if you remember, I did say earlier, I've never been critical of their performances, means that they, you cannot really compare Watford with ourselves, totally different animals, and so, therefore, shouldn't be.

The fact that the subsidy in part was mentioned, whichever it was, it was a financial arrangement between the 2 bodies. It should be pointed out that SportSpace has reduced that from 1.4 million down to about £225K and I'm sure if the Council entered into active negotiations before they pulled the plug on SportSpace, they could have got it down into a plus figure and therefore actually ended in a very healthy relationship with SportSpace.

The inaccuracies, I'm afraid, about Face Book and Twitter and all the others, I can't comment on, I don't use it myself. I avoid it like the Plague, because I think a lot of it is false and misleading and that includes anybody who advertises on it, including the Council. So all I will say is that I repeat my request. This is a bit iffy, and should be recommended to Cabinet that they think again because we have an organisation here that has served this community well over the 14 years. Once it's gone, it can't come back and we are, therefore, left for ever more in the hands of private providers. Thank you.

The Mayor thanked members for their contributions to the debate, and then asked Councillor Tindall to proceed with his motion.

A motion was proposed by Councillor Tindall and seconded by Councillor England as follows:

"I ask this council to vote to ask the Cabinet to halt the process and enter into serious discussion with Sports Trust and our Educational Partners in order to secure a future for sports and leisure provision in Dacorum."

Voting:

10 For;

Councillors: England, Fethney, Fisher, Hicks, Imarni, Maddern, Link, Mills, Ransley, and Tindall (10)

25 Against;

Councillors: Anderson, Armytage, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Bhinder, Birnie, Chapman, E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, Guest, Harden, S Hearn, Howard, Marshall, Peter, Riddick, Silwal, G Sutton, Taylor, Williams, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (25)

and 5 Abstained:

Councillors: D Collins (Mayor), R Sutton (Deputy Mayor), P Hearn, Mclean, and Timmis (5).

The motion was declared to have been lost.

The following motion was then proposed by Councillor Williams, and seconded by Councillor Harden:

“Having been provided with further information on the four points referred to Full Council by the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 10th January 2018, Council is content with the responses, decides to take no further action and to award the contract to SLM.”

Voting:

25 For;

Councillors: Anderson, Armytage, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Bhinder, Birnie, Chapman, E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, Guest, Harden, S Hearn, Howard, Marshall, Peter, Riddick, Silwal, G Sutton, Taylor, Williams, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (25)

10 Against;

Councillors: England, Fethney, Fisher, Hicks, Imarni, Maddern, Link, Mills, Ransley, and Tindall (10)

and 5 Abstained:

Councillors: D Collins (Mayor), R Sutton (Deputy Mayor), P Hearn, Mclean, and Timmis (5).

The motion was declared carried.

5 ANNOUNCEMENTS

5.1 By the Mayor:

A one minute silence was held in remembrance of Borough and Parish Councillor Alan Fantham, and former Mayor Charles Barling.

5.2 By the Chief Executive:

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

5.3 By the Group Leaders:

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Adeleke, Adshead, Bateman, Brown, Clark, Griffiths, Mahmood, Matthews, Ritchie and Whitman.

5.4 Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet:

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

The Leader had nothing to announce but welcomed any questions.

Questions:

Councillor Tindall asked if there was any information on our application for funding of The Bury, in order to convert it into a Museum. Councillor Williams advised they hadn't submitted a funding bid, and were still working on that in conjunction with the DHT. He couldn't give the exact timetable but was happy to provide Councillor Tindall with a written response. He said they would have to submit a preliminary bid or expression of interest by July or August of this year. A full bid will take another year on top of that, and what has happened in the interim, is that previously bids up to £2 million, which is where we were, when we were assessed at a regional level, and bids over that are assessed at national level. He explained that they've reorganised their funding mechanism, which is unfortunate in our case because bids of up to 2 million will now be assessed at a national level. It is likely to be into 2019 before we get to that stage

Councillor England said, as part of the debate in November at Full Council on the Public Space Protection Orders, the Council Leader stated that he was happy to share the results of the consultation by the end of November. He highlighted that it's now January and the report hasn't been circulated, and asked if that meant he's not so happy to share the results of the analysis. Councillor Williams said he was more than happy to share the results, however it wasn't his decision whether the results are shared and it was due to be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees at some stage. He said he would take Councillor England's word for what he thinks he said in November, and apologised if Councillor England had misunderstood what he was saying as he wasn't thinking that we would be circulating that feedback in isolation. He advised that he did have the results but was only briefed on it in the last few days.

Councillor Mills explained that Tring is likely to lose its last bank in June of this year and asked if the Leader would write a letter of concern and support the local inhabitants of Tring that the loss of the bank will not be in Tring's favour. It will be a lot of possible loss of business, because businesses will not be able to bank in Tring, either they'll have to go elsewhere, either in Aylesbury or in Berkhamsted. He said if we can get the bank to withdraw its notice that would be ideal, because this is the last of 3 banks that we had in Tring. Councillor Williams said he was more than happy to write to the bank and ask them to reconsider the decision about closing the bank in Tring. He said he had followed the tales of banking closures over the years; the banks do seem to be fairly thick-skinned and, and not very responsive to these community calls but we can only but try.

There were no more questions.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Finance & Resources

Commercial Assets & Property Development

We have started the demolition of the Civic Centre which will ultimately enable the development of much needed high quality housing on the site. Contractors are currently focusing on the asbestos strip out before starting the structural work.

We have now gained planning permission for the creation of the new cemetery at Bunkers Park and the project for construction will be tendered shortly. We are currently short of burial space in Hemel and the new cemetery should meet demand for the next 75 years.

The garage disposal programme is continuing with 13 sites currently in the disposal pipeline. The majority of these sites are being sold to Housing Associations and will therefore lead to the provision of much needed affordable housing in the borough, as well as providing significant capital receipts for the Council and reducing borrowing for the Capital Programme moving forward.

Revenues & Benefits

Working with all other councils within Hertfordshire, DBC is currently undertaking a review of council tax single person discounts, which will help make sure that everyone is paying the correct amount of tax.

Letters have been sent to around 2,000 residents where additional checks show there is a risk that a change affecting the discount has not been reported to us. We estimate that this exercise will identify just over £20,000 of extra income for the Council.

Finance

The draft 2018/19 budget was presented to joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 December 2018. The final budget proposal will go back to joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6th February, before being proposed to Cabinet a week later.

The budget position for the third quarter of 2017/18 forecasts that the Council should finish the year within budget. This underlines the Council's across-the-board success in finding ever more innovative ways of meeting the financial challenges in order to protect front-line services.

Commissioning, Procurement and Compliance

The team is currently working through the mobilisation and implementation of the new Parking Enforcement Service contract with Indigo Park Services UK Limited, which will deliver savings to the Council in excess of £100k per annum.

In addition to the significant financial benefits, the new service will introduce a range of innovations such as contactless payments for parking and an on-line portal for parking permits, which will deliver improvements to the quality of service for residents and visitors to Dacorum. The contract also provides for closer working with local schools on enforcement issues to improve road safety.

Questions:

Councillor Tindall said he was pleased about the announcement about the parking services upgrade. He asked if the Portfolio Holder could confirm that this will include new parking machines that will actually include the car number of the individual car so that the Council will not suffer losses of revenue because people exchange parking tickets between themselves, when one's leaving and somebody else is coming in. He then asked if this will also be able to give the Council data, as to when the car parks are being used so that if, as is sometimes believed, that the income from Sunday does not meet the cost of the wages of the wardens, then we might actually return to free

Sunday parking. Councillor Elliot said he would have to come back to him on both his questions.

There were no more questions.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Tenant & Leaseholder Services

Councillor Williams made the following announcements on behalf of Councillor Griffiths.

This month the Education Welfare and Support Officers moved from Strategic Housing to the Tenancy Sustainment team. This team offer support to residents in temporary accommodation and in the first 6 months of their new tenancies whether that is with DBC or through the Councils Help to Rent scheme. This move will improve the continuity in support for vulnerable residents transitioning from temporary to settled accommodation and ensure that the start of tenancy process is as smooth as possible.

We also launched 'Friends Together' sessions, named and led by tenants, who meet at Liberty Tea Room in Bank Court. The aim of the sessions is to combat social isolation and bring people together. This is a group for tenants that we are working with, or have worked with in the past, to meet and chat over a cup of tea and a slice of cake in a relaxed atmosphere. The two sessions to date have been a great success with tenants keeping in touch outside of the group. Two of the tenants are now working together to access further education that they wouldn't have felt confident to do alone.

Strategic Housing

The communication of the Allocations Policy changes to our customers commenced on Monday 15 January. The full implementation of the policy will be complete by April 2018.

Roadshows are currently being undertaken by Tenants & Leaseholders services to inform tenants of the changes in relation to the collection of water rates.

Progress is well underway with the development of the Homeless Reduction Act toolkit, which includes production of new procedures, staff toolkits and training documentation to support the implementation.

The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Team is moving into the Housing service from 22 January 2018, with a particular focus on Private Rented accommodation and Houses in Multiple Occupation, energy efficiency and Disabled facilities Grant.

Housing Development

Kylina Court – Works are progressing well on site, concrete frame completed.

Swing Gate Lane (Corn Mill Court) – Works are progressing well on site on the new build. A Planning application has been submitted to convert the 3 existing units into 3 houses rather than 2 houses.

Martindale School site – The Planning application has been approved and we are currently seeking the first stage of tenders to find a suitable Contractor. The aim is to be on site late Summer 2018.

Northend and Westerdale garage sites – Planning applications have been approved and we are preparing tenders to find a suitable Contractor. The aim is to be on site late Summer 2018.

Stationers Place – We are preparing a revised Planning application to deal with challenges around the existing culvert that is at the rear of the site. This will provide approx. 25 / 26 flats. We are carrying out a package of advanced enabling works on site to deal with a number of issues in the ground including boreholes, culverts and relocating some pipes and cables. This will commence during February.

Property & Place

Gas Contract - Sun Realm

The Q2 audit for this financial year is underway and a review of the contractor's books will be undertaken to validate the position. Current projections for the gain share are for a further £90K of savings which will be reinvested in delivering additional installations in this financial year.

The compliance rates remain consistently high at 99.99%, even over the Christmas period, which is very positive.

Total Asset Management - Osborne

Osborne is working closely with the Dacorum Contract team to develop plans for estate improvements, which will be delivered over the next five years.

The Q2 audit of TAM is about to be concluded and current projections are for a saving of circa £130K to be received by Dacorum. There has been extensive work carried out on the valuations to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that any further efficiencies that are identified are implemented by Osborne.

Compliance

A new officer has been appointed to the Compliance team, who will undertake the ongoing management of asbestos within the housing stock and they will be working closely with the contractors to ensure the safety of our tenants, whilst work is being undertaken in their homes.

Questions:

Councillor Tindall asked if there had been any progress with the approach from County to create a local area board in order to work together to produce more housing units for those disadvantaged, learning difficulties and those that need special housing. Councillor Williams said he would need to speak with Councillor Griffiths and provide Councillor Tindall with a written response.

There were no more questions.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

Resident Services

The Old Town Hall had a very busy season leading up to Christmas, some of this is a bit dated, because we haven't seen each-other since the end of the year. So new Christmas lights were installed in 5 neighbourhood action areas and the switch on events were all well attended.

ICT – DBC has been certified sufficiently secure to connect to the PSN for another 12 months.

The desktop replacement programme award has been made, selected suppliers. The tender is currently out for renewing the hardware of our data centres and the CRM solution developed in-house will replace the current Northgate product.

The resident portal is about to go out for internal testing.

And to conclude, I would like to put on record my grateful thanks for the career of Julie Still, Group Manager for Resident Services, who has decided to take early retirement. Julie oversaw The Old Town Hall, CCTV, Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbourhood Action, Dacorum Community Safety Partnership, Youth Democracy, Adventure Playgrounds and Community Engagement. With a professional, knowledgeable manner and with a genuine care and compassion for the residents she dealt with, especially those who are vulnerable in our society. I viewed her as a hard working colleague who knew her department and a good friend, who always had time for the concerns of Members. I am sure colleagues will agree with me that she will be missed.

And just on that point of where Resident Services will sit in the future, just to say that CCTV will move from my portfolio and will go under the portfolio of Councillor Elliot, under Procurement and Commissioning. Anti-Social Behaviour will move from my portfolio and go under the portfolio of Councillor Marshall, with Environmental Health and I still have everything else. So, if Members want to get in touch with us on those issues, they know where to get them.

Questions:

Councillor Birnie said he was interested to hear what Councillor Harden said about Julie Still and totally concurred with that but when he approached that section in the Council and asked about the possibility of setting up a new neighbourhood action committee in Bennetts End, the response he got, not from Julie Still, was that the Council no longer support these Committees. Councillor Harden said we do support neighbourhood action still but what we don't do is support new neighbourhood action sites, so the neighbourhood action that we currently have is still in existence, because that is something that Members still appreciate and still value. He explained they were looking at developing the model; the issue they have is that there are areas that don't have neighbourhood action are not being represented, so they are looking at changing the model. He advised we had a meeting last year that a few Councillors attended where we had a theatre group come in and do a presentation for them and did engagement with the community that he thought was very enjoyable, so they are looking at ways of developing how we can communicate with those residents that aren't in neighbourhood action areas.

Councillor Douris started by declaring that he was a shareholder within Aviva, the insurance company. He asked if Councillor Harden would join with him in welcoming the fact that at 18:41 this evening, he received an email from the Aviva Community Fund letting him know that, amongst others, the 2nd Hemel Hempstead Grovehill Scout Group had been awarded £1,000, or up to £1,000 having secured 1,423 votes in the Aviva Community Fund Scheme, so well done to 2nd Hemel Hempstead Scout Group.

Also, well done to Aviva, which also goes to show that larger organisations can have a community at heart. Councillor Harden endorsed the comment of his colleague. He said it's great to see that the Council here also had a fund, in the value of about £70,000 that goes out to communities 3 rounds per year and colleagues totally are aware of that. He said to please encourage your communities to apply for that fund, it's always really rewarding and beneficial to see how far the Council can give, even at £500 or £1,000, to something, how far that goes to benefit the community.

Councillor Maddern explained that the Dacorum Community Fund on behalf of the Collett School, which she was now working at, received a grant for £3,000. She said it was a fantastic scheme and just wanted to say thank you very much.

Councillor Birnie asked if Councillor Harden would please undertake to meet with him to explain what an action list ward like Bennetts End, can look for in the way of decisions from the Council. Councillor Harden said he would be glad to meet with Councillor Birnie.

Councillor Taylor said he wondered if the Portfolio Holder would be pleased to learn that in Gadebridge, we support the Dacorum Headquarters for Home Start, and Amazon gave Home Start £1,250 towards a summer party for the children in the Home Start system. They held that at the Gadebridge Community Association and it was roaring success, and it was good to see Amazon there with their cameras. Councillor Harden said it was encouraging that although we get heckled by the community for decisions we make, you do find that there are successful, commercial organisations in this country that have money available that they can spend on the community, and it is wonderful to hear that tonight.

There were no more questions.

Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

Consultation on the new Local Plan 'Issues and Options', which looks at the future shape of Dacorum, ended on 13 December with a record number of responses being received. The views and comments expressed by residents and organisations will now be considered before the Council starts to make decisions about which sites to select for development, later in 2018.

Dacorum Borough Council has won the award for the best Heritage and Conservation from the National Landscape Institute for The Water Gardens Regeneration project.

The Brownfield Land Register (Part One) was published on December 31 2017 in line with the requirements of DCLG. It is available on the DBC website with a range of information on the previously developed sites that have been identified.

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

As a result of the significant snow fall in the morning of 10 December, there was widespread damage to many trees, healthy trees –mostly evergreens onto whose foliage the wet snow held like glue. The clear up operations on the 190 odd reported incidents should be completed within days. As a priority all evergreen trees and all

trees in prominent and high use areas, for which DBC are responsible for management, are being inspected.

Allied to that, refuse collection was disrupted and refuse crews worked on salting and clearing shopping centres and elderly persons complexes. There then followed the Christmas and New Year break. Nevertheless, with Saturday working on 3 weekends, the refuse service was back to normal by the 2nd week this month.

And to look forward to in the Spring – over 100,000 bulbs have been planted for spring flowering.

Councillor Marshall invited questions.

Questions:

Councillor Tindall referred to the decision by China to reject this country's recycling waste, and asked whether or not the Officers could prepare a statement about the effect on the Council and possibly the financial impact of having to find what the effect will be on the recycling that we do and where it goes. Councillor Marshall respectfully suggested that Councillor Tindall referred to a press release that was issued by the County Council, in with County Councillor Terry Holme, explained that it's nothing to be frightened of or be concerned, there are other markets, there are other countries in the Far East, particularly, and also India, who are continuing to accept plastics. She said when she listened and watched the BBC news, it was exceedingly interesting and concerning, and she made enquiries. Basically the bottom line is, we should not be concerned, and there will be no detrimental impact on us in the foreseeable future.

Councillor Tindall asked that when we are looking at this whole issue and if we have any control over where it goes, we don't add to India's pollution problems, which he believed are far disastrous and that he didn't see why we should export our problems to other countries. He felt we should actually come up with our own solutions. Councillor Marshall understood that the County Council as the waste disposal authority are looking at the issue of disposal of our waste, including incineration. She took Councillor Tindall's point, and need to be assured that where we're sending the waste plastic material or whatever materials, they are being properly treated.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

6 QUESTIONS

None.

7 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None.

8 CABINET REFERRALS

That the following be approved:

28 November 2017

8.1 CA/115/17 Budget Monitoring Q2 2017/18

1. The approval of the supplementary budget details set out in the body of the report to Cabinet, which have a net nil impact on the General Fund Working Balance:
2. An Increase to the Car Parking supplies and services budget by £39k
3. An Increase use of the On-Street Car Parking reserve by £39k
4. An Increase to the Health and Safety Employees budget of £44k and the Health and Safety Supplies and Services budget of £31k
5. An Increase in use of the Management of Change reserve by £75k
6. A supplementary Capital budget funded by "One for One" receipts of £2.573m for the Affordable Housing Development fund.
7. A supplementary Capital budget of £25k funded by grant for Play Area Refurbishment Programme.
8. A supplementary Capital budget of £65k for new Vehicle Wash at Cupid Green on the grounds of health and safety.

9 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes to committee membership.

10 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

To cancel the meeting of the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 24 January 2018 and reschedule for Thursday 22 February 2018.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm.