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## **DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**26 FEBRUARY 2020**

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Present:

#### **MEMBERS:**

Douris (Mayor), Allen, Anderson, Arslan, Banks, Barrett, Barry, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Bhinder, Birnie, Bowden, Chapman, Claughton, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Griffiths, Guest, Hearn, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Johnson, Link, Maddern, So Mahmood, McDowell, Peter, Pringle, Ransley, Riddick (Deputy Mayor), Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, Stevens, Symington, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Tindall, Timmis, Townsend, Uttley, Williams, Woolner, Wyatt-Lowe (47)

#### **OFFICERS:**

The Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration), Assistant Director (Corporate and Contracted Services), Group Manager (Legal & Corporate Services) S Donaldson (Communications and Consultation Lead Officer) and T Angel (Minutes).

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

#### **1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 November 2019 and 22 January 2020 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**

There was no public participation.

#### **4 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

The Mayor announced the sad passing of former Dacorum Councillor Terry Eastman, former Mayor Ann-Marie Barling, and former Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council, Keith Emsall. One minutes silence was held in remembrance.

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

None.

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

Councillor Williams confirmed that apologies had been received from Councillors Adeleke, Imarni, Oguchi and Suqlain Mahmood.

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

##### **Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council**

Councillor Williams had nothing to report but welcomed questions.

##### **Questions:**

Councillor Townsend asked if we were on top of preparations for Coronavirus. The Leader said he wasn't aware of any specific advice beyond what the NHS had already advised.

Councillor Uttley referred back to the minutes from the meeting in November and asked if we had missed an opportunity in October 2019 to change energy contracts. The Leader advised that we hadn't missed an opportunity as we usually buy up to a year in advance to secure the price. He added that we had consciously gone for a green energy supplier this year.

##### **Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

##### **SOUTH WEST HERTS JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN**

- As Members may be aware, this is a joint initiative between Dacorum, St Albans, Hertsmere, Watford and Three Rivers and Hertfordshire County Council to look at the future shape and extent of development that may be needed in South West Herts, and how we can work together to secure the best locations for development and address wider infrastructure needs in the long term, to around 2050.
- Members should be aware via Member News that there is a current live consultation underway. Under the banner of 'SW Herts – Your Future' this is a very simple online survey that asks people what they like about SW Herts, and what they think are the biggest issues the area faces.
- Although aimed at the under-25 group through promotion on social media and an easy-to-use format (the under 25's are a hard to reach group), the survey is open to all. Respondents are asked to select their age group, and the District or Borough where they live or work, so we will be able to analyse the demographic spread when the consultation closes.
- I would encourage all Members to complete the survey and indeed to forward the access details to your contacts, family and friends so we can maximise exposure and responses. All six Councils are actively promoting the survey through their communications teams, social media accounts and websites.
- You can access the survey at <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/consultation-feedback/current-consultation>

##### **DACORUM'S GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**

**CHAIRMAN**

- Last year the Council approved a strategy to address the challenges of major growth in the Borough to 2050.
- To remind Members, the strategy is based on the vision of “we want Dacorum to be known as a place where: everyone has the best start in life; both residents and businesses have the opportunity to achieve their hopes and expectations, and; families and young people are welcome, where older people are valued, and where the vulnerable can get the help they need.”
- Proposals around six agreed themes will help to realise this vision. They cover housing, our local economy, transport and travel, our environment, health and wellbeing, and developing the digital future of the area.
- Whereas the new Strategy sets a long term approach, Officers are working on a short term action plan to cover the things we need to do over the next two years. This will be brought to Cabinet first and then to Full Council for consideration and approval.
- We have had the strategy produced into a colour document and a copy has been placed in every Member’s pigeon hole. It will be available on the Council’s website shortly.

## **HOUSING DELIVERY TEST SUCCESS**

- In its efforts to significantly boost the supply of new housing across the Country, the Government is closely monitoring the delivery of new homes in each Borough and District.
- To do this, it has set up the ‘Housing Delivery Test’ which sets construction of new homes on the ground against each Council’s annual requirement.
- The week before last, the Government published the 2019 results of the Housing Delivery Test. It measures a delivery rate over the past three years and I am pleased to say that Dacorum achieved the highest rate of performance in Hertfordshire, delivering new homes at a rate of 138% over our stated requirements. Dacorum was only one of three Councils, alongside Hertsmere (124%) and Stevenage (113%) to record over 100% of delivery.
- The results for all Councils in England and Wales can be found here [https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-delivery-test?utm\\_source=a6da9cfb-4b7d-4a48-86b9-addfc6c95f9c&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-delivery-test?utm_source=a6da9cfb-4b7d-4a48-86b9-addfc6c95f9c&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)
- The results, in my opinion, reflect well on Dacorum. We have been proactive in identifying new sites for housing, accepting that this is not always an easy process. We have supported regeneration proposals across the Borough with success. And with our ambitious Council housing new build programme, we are ensuring that new homes are built to meet local needs.
- The Housing Delivery Test will get tougher in the years to come as our development requirements rise. Later this year we will be bringing forward our new Local Plan, which sets out to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Questions:

Councillor Stevens said it had been brought to his attention that planning consent had been given for change of use for a building to accommodate 85 dwellings in Maylands and was now subject to judicial review. He asked if the Portfolio Holder was able to disclose anything on the matter. The Portfolio Holder said he was discussing the matter closely with his team and that it was a premises that came through development rights. He advised there were two companies either side of the building

that have brought forward the judicial review as they don't think it is a suitable site. He understood that the judicial review was likely to be heard in June. He finalised by saying he would discuss this with his team and send a written reply of the latest position.

Councillor Tindall noted the Portfolio Holder had referred to the housing delivery test earlier. He asked if the Government had given Councils any guidance or money towards improving homes in terms of climate change, such as charging points, solar panels, insulation, etc. to reduce our footprint. The Portfolio Holder said he would need to investigate and let Councillor Tindall know. Councillor Tindall made a passionate request that we lead the way with footprint saving measures with our Local Plan and that future developers have to do something to help the climate. The Portfolio Holder said they both sit on the task and finish group for the Local Plan and things like the environment and housing have been discussed. He said there would also be a visit to BRE at some point to pick up some ideas on environment and carbon savings.

### **Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services**

Councillor Williams advised that the main construction work on the Berkhamsted multi-storey car park was broadly completed and should be done so by the end of the month. Due to other highway works in the Berkhamsted area we had been unable to get a permit to commence our works until early April and we anticipate those works to take around three weeks. The completion and opening of the multi-storey car park should be towards the end of April/early May. Prior to that we had planned to commence works to reinstate The Moor temporary car park but unfortunately a local individual removed the safety fencing and that became an opportunity for drivers to park in there free of charge as the pay and display machines are covered up. As of today we had contractors on site to reinstate the fencing so hopefully that won't be removed again. We aim to start reinstatement works late March/early April subject to ground conditions and we expect that to take 3-4 weeks to complete. Following that, it'll take approximately three months to take hold and during that period the fencing to remain to protect new planting.

He then moved on to the Berkhamsted Leisure Centre. They had taken to opportunity to carry out an extensive refurbishment to the existing centre so it is fit for purpose for the next few years. It was reopened on 25<sup>th</sup> January by British Athlete Colin Jackson and the Mayor. He said it was a vast improvement on what it was before and a more pleasant experience.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### **Questions:**

Councillor Guest asked if the Portfolio Holder had received any comments on the design and appearance of the new multi-storey car park. The Portfolio Holder advised that a Berkhamsted resident had sent a glowing letter last week praising the style and design of the car park and that was a pleasure to see.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

#### **Financial Services**

**CHAIRMAN**

The finance service has continued to work on the 20/21 budget papers and council tax declaration. The formal approval of the 2020/21 budget and proposed Council Tax levels will be presented to council this evening and is the culmination of several months of hard work by the finance team in conjunction with budget holders to ensure strategic and operational requirements are financially supported.

Draft budget proposals were presented to Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee again in January with any new comments or feedback fed into the budget papers. The proposed budget details a balanced budget position for 20/21, delivering on the savings target of £800k whilst continuing to protect front line services.

As the Council enters the final quarter of the financial year, the Finance Team is now beginning to focus on the closure of the Council's accounts for 2019/20, and an agreed timetable for publication of the annual accounts.

### **Commercial Assets and Property Development.**

#### **Commercial Assets service**

I would like to provide you with an update on **Bunkers Park Cemetery**. Although the wet weather has continued through January and February the construction programme of the new cemetery at Bunkers Park has continued and is on schedule and progressing well for completion. Final planting will be undertaken in early spring 2020 to hopefully benefit from milder drier weather conditions, and then the new cemetery, will open in late summer.

#### **Revenues and Benefits service**

The Revenues teams are continuing to work effectively, and are in the process of creating and posting out the 2020/21 annual council tax and business rates bills.

In the last 2 weeks we have received full details of the Governments discretionary business rates discount for small retailers and public houses, and the service are busy ensuring these are applied to the 20/21 bills. Although the council is not the responsible body for setting these business rates relief we very much welcome an increase to business rates relief for small retail businesses and the financial support it provides for the local economy of Dacorum.

The benefits service are also processing the 20/21 benefits uprating processes in line with government legislation.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### **Questions:**

There were no questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows;

Tenant and Leaseholder Services

**CHAIRMAN**

- Following approval at Cabinet in February, all new council tenants from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 will be given secure tenancies. Those who have a current flexible tenancy due to end after this date will also be converted into a secure tenancy. This will give more stability to tenants and build stronger communities. Minimum 5 year Tenancy home visits will be started so that all general needs council tenants will have a visit from their housing officer every 5 years. This will provide a more proactive service and help identify any concerns from tenants and ensure the right support is offered. We also expect it to more effectively deal with fraud and tenancy breaches and build stronger relationships with our tenants.
- It has been over a year since Kylna Court was built. In partnership with the development team and contractor, the Housing Officer has recently carried out home visits to all 77 flats to check the condition and carry out an end of introductory tenancy review. Residents gave some really positive feedback on the quality of the homes and how they have been managed throughout this period with any issues being addressed early in the tenancies and fewer defects were identified.
- We are continuing to improve our sheltered schemes. A programme of upgrading the Tunstall alarm systems is continuing with fire and safety improvements taking place at the schemes at the same time to ensure limited disruption to residents. This also allows us an opportunity to replace furnishings like carpet and furniture in communal areas making schemes more modern and improving the safety and quality for existing and new tenants.

### Strategic Housing

- The Council has received additional Rough Sleeper Initiative funding of £115k (previous award of £100k) to deliver initiatives in partnership with St Albans District Council to tackle rough sleeping
- At a rough sleeper count on 14 January Dacorum counted and verified 1 Rough Sleeper, data shows there are currently 6 rough sleepers in Dacorum, a reduction of 19 since the summer of 2019, which is really positive.
- The service is working in partnership to improve pathways for homeless clients and in partnership with Hightown will be recruiting a dedicated Rough Sleeper Outreach and pathways advisor
- Three separate households are currently pending assessment and consideration for the Housing First project, in place to tackle entrenched homeless and rough sleepers
- Our 9<sup>th</sup> household has been resettled under the Syrian Vulnerable Resettlement Scheme and arrived on 11 February 2020

### Property & Place

- Investment in the fire safety of our buildings continues with large upgrade projects completed at William Crook House, Willow Edge and Florence Longman House
- There was some damage caused by the two storms, Ciara and Dennis, however these were responded to and the costs will be contained with the budget
- New kitchens installed YTD 261
- New bathrooms YTD 239
- New windows YTD 26 properties
- New front / back / shed doors 311
- Electrical testing 10,125 completed at the end of December
- Adaptations up to end of Jan;

**CHAIRMAN**

- Major adaptations completed YTD	91
- Minor adaptations completed YTD	272

Community engagement by Osborne From partnership core group January 2020

- As a result of this activity Osborne directly engaged with and benefited 948 local people, given 99 extra staff hours back to the community, and decorated 8 Dacorum Borough Council sheltered scheme communal areas for Christmas. We also helped raise a staggering £1,899.54 for two local charities; Gaddesden Place Disabled Riding Association Centre (GDRA) and Connect Dacorum.
- During December, the team supported 11 community investment and engagement events to benefit Dacorum Borough Council residents and the wider community. We have continued to support Dacorum Borough Council by supporting both the Tenant Engagement team and the Community Partnership team, promoting their services & initiatives.

### Housing Development

Scheme	Comments
Corn Mill Court	The scheme has been nominated for a local award via Berkhamsted Citizens Association.
Martindale	Progressing well on site. Completion July 2020. Show home for the market sale properties due to open in a few weeks' time.
Northend & Westerdale	Progressing well on site. Completion April 2020.
Magenta Court	Progressing well on site. Completion May 2020.
Paradise Fields	Finalising land purchase, design team commenced Stage 2 of plans
Gaddesden Row	Contractor approved, Looking to start on site Feb/Mar 20
Eastwick Row	Adjudication of Pre-Qualification Tenderers for Principal Contractors has been completed and we are Preparing tender documentation. We are working with the Legal team on the relocated leaseholders external brick sheds.
Coniston Road	Planning Approval achieved, preparing tender documents.
Bulbourne	Awaiting Secretary of State approval to relocate allotment
LA1 Marchmont	Architect selected and briefing meeting set up. Design underway.
Cherry Bounce	Submitted for Planning Pre Application
Paradise Depot	Instructed to progress a design and take to Planning. Tenders documents issued for Architect & Employers Agent
Garage Sites	Architect selected, Tenders issued for Employers Agent
Randall's Ride	Commencing site due diligence checks, Tenders issued for Architect and Employers Agent
Climate Change	Workshops being held to review approach to design

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

Councillor Tindall thanked the Portfolio Holder for the update on secure tenancies and thanked the Council for moving in the right direction. He looked forward to when the Government would take action for private tenancies. The Portfolio Holder accepted his congratulations.

**CHAIRMAN**

## **Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

### Environmental Services

- All 160 + front line staff have completed the 1 day annual refresher training including manual handling.
- All HGV drivers have completed their annual CPC training. 2 x staff undertaking LGV training
- Completed Splash Park accredited training, course work to be actioned.
- Building works still in progress - Fleet Workshop 'Bays 3 & 4' (HGV lifting bays) now finished, contractor now working in Bays 1 & 2 (LGV bays). Training now received by Technicians and more to follow

### Clean, Safe and Green and Trees

- Under 2 weeks left until bird nesting season so wrapping up last of the hedge cutting.
- Extremely busy dealing with emergency works due to two recent storms but no quietening down.
- One Tree contractor has now stepped down from taking any more work instructions so an alternative service provider has been commissioned

### Environmental Projects

- Flats food waste recycling now on its last block – to be completed by end of March
- Preparing for the Great British Spring Clean which will run March – Mid April
- Promoting Additional Garden Waste Subscription Service to residents
- Delivered reusable drinks bottles to frontline crews as part of the council's initiative to reduce single-use plastic and lead by example (bottles provided by WasteAware).

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

### Questions:

Councillor Hollinghurst asked if the Portfolio Holder was aware of the difficulties caused by not providing the collection calendars on the bins. He said the Information Centre and Victoria Hall in Tring had run out of copies of the Dacorum Digest. He felt we underestimated how many residents were unable to use or access the internet to access the information. The Portfolio Holder felt they would have to agree to disagree. He said when they first considered the change he was mindful of those without internet access and he ensured everything possible was done to reach all residents. If people want a calendar they can ring the Council to get one. Only 130 requests were received and those calendars were delivered.

Councillor Chapman said they had a lot of fly tipping in Watling ward recently and he was impressed by how quickly the Enforcement Officers acted on it. The Portfolio Holder noted his comments.

Councillor Tindall asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed that part of the problem for our declining wildlife was the lack of insect species. He asked that we do everything we can to prevent the decline. The Portfolio Holder said he agreed and the Parks and Open Spaces Officer worked really hard and had it all in hand.

**CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Symington referred to the letter from the Environment Agency. She said it was wonderful to see the chalk streams flowing again but noticed that the letter said it was best not to clear the chalk streams. She said she had noticed that the River Gade was cleared. The Portfolio Holder advised that the River was on privately owned land so it was done by the owner. He personally felt it should have been cleared but you can't argue with the experts at the Environment Agency.

Councillor Symington advised that the Dacorum Digest wasn't delivered to all residents. The Portfolio Holder said he wasn't aware and he would look in to it.

Councillor Guest asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed that the installation of swift boxes and the development of the Martindale site will help to address the decline in swift numbers that he touched upon earlier. The Portfolio Holder agreed. Councillor Guest asked if the ward members could be notified when swift boxes are installed. The Portfolio Holder said he would collate a written response with his Cabinet members.

### **Councillor Banks, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services**

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

**Turning first to People and Communities Group Service Customer Services** I am pleased to report the CSU is now fully staffed as evidenced in the improving performance.

### **Q3 2019/20 – CSU performance**

Over the quarter 13,033 calls were answered in the Call Centre, with 28,312 calls being managed through the automated phone system. 4,285 customers were served in our Customer Service Centres (face to face). In addition to this 2,739 emails were responded to and 1,423 Social Media responses were provided.

KPI's were achieved for all 3 months

Throughout the quarter 2,612 customers chose to use the Callback facility rather than waiting on hold, of these 2,609 were answered when rung back. This facility reduces wait times and allows customers to continue with their day to day activity rather than waiting on hold. Their call is queued with the incoming calls and is returned the same day.

### **Communications and Consultation**

Through our communications team we have continued to support and delivery for external campaigns and projects such as Herts Year of Culture 2020 and over 40 other campaigns and projects.

I would like to remind members the **Annual Staff Recognition Scheme** – is still open please go on line and consider nominating staff.

**Staff survey** – Highest response rate for some time 57%. Proposal sent to CMT for next steps in creating an action plan

### **Community partnerships and Leisure**

**CHAIRMAN**

- Funding success - £65k from Royal Opera House Bridge for the HCEP investment programme. Total funding and investment for the project is £145k. Project partners: DBC, Letchworth, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield, Watford Councils, West Herts College and Herts Uni. This will fund a needs analysis in partner areas, focusing on areas of deprivation to inform and develop a creative programme of projects/activity in each area for young people addressing identified needs.
- Active Together funding through The National Lottery and Awards for all was successful, just under £10,000 to run x3 dance style sessions targeting older adults, working with Dacorum Community Dance.
- Wellness Festival Funding bid was submitted in November in partnership with Apex and Herts Year of Culture. Waiting to hear outcome.

### **The Old Town Hall**

- **Ticket sales and Hires** – On target and will surpass last year's numbers.
- In the last quarter, The Old Town Hall team delivered 42 live performances, ranging from contemporary dance through to children's theatre. In addition, the venue facilitated 32 private hires.

### **Turning to Environmental Community Protection- Operations**

I am delighted to inform you that Paul Coats, Environmental Enforcement Officer from the Operations Team was presented with an Excellence in Enforcement Award from 'Keep Britain Tidy'

January was a fantastic month for the Operations Team, I am pleased to inform you Mr Mayor

The figures for Hertfordshire Fly-tipping Groups continue to show Dacorum's proactive approach to environmental enforcement. With the authority serving the most Fixed Penalty Notices and having the second highest number of prosecutions across all ten districts for the year to date.

In January, Environmental Community Protection Service had received 313 service requests and undertook 62 inspections – food, permitted process, health & safety.

For example, 6 stray dogs were seized, a Community Protection Notice was served on the owner of a dog dangerously out of control in Markyate and a warning letter served on an owner in Flamstead.

### **Environmental Health Team**

Following a 4.5-year investigation Tesco Stores Limited was fined £733,333.33 on 24 January 2020 for breaching health and safety laws after a rigorous investigation by Dacorum Borough Council's Environmental Health Officers.

This concludes an investigation that has lasted more than four years and reflects the hard work and dedication of the Council's Environmental Health Officers who investigated this case. We take action where we deem it necessary to protect the public.

**CHAIRMAN**

The council's environmental health team is employed to investigate serious accidents and ensure that businesses in Dacorum comply with health and safety law and are authorised to take action where they find non-compliance.

### **Corporate, Health, Safety and Resilience**

Corporate, Health, Safety and Resilience Team advises managers and staff on how to comply with Health and Safety Legislation, when going about Council business.

The Council uses Safety Policies to guide and instruct staff on how to comply with Health and Safety Legislation.

The Team with the assistance of Rosherville Safety Solutions has drafted an events policy to advise staff on the safe running of events. This is progressing through the approval process within the organisation.

We are committed to enabling events within the borough and recognises that a diverse programme of varied and well-managed activities contributes to the promotion of a vibrant multi-cultural community. This policy sets out the key principles by which DBC approaches the application and processing of both internal and externally run events, and the required risk management.

Likewise, a Fire Policy and procedure is in development.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

Councillor Tindall asked how many calls were misrouted by the voice recognition service. The Portfolio Holder wasn't sure if the system had the capacity to do that but she would find out.

Councillor England asked how many calls there were where people are waiting over 300 seconds. The Portfolio Holder advised that during quarter 3, 3877 calls waited over 300 seconds.

## **5        QUESTIONS**

### 1. Question to Councillor G Sutton from Councillor Symington:

"A recent FOI request by a Berkhamsted resident has revealed that £223,563 out of £3,286,091.73 of unspent S106 monies held by Dacorum Borough Council has come from Berkhamsted developments. Of this, just £14,235 is allocated for projects in Berkhamsted and is earmarked for improvements to playgrounds.

Please can the portfolio holder confirm these figures and detail which developments the monies arose from; the dates the monies were received and the time at which the funds expire?"

Councillor G Sutton's response:

A total of £223,563 s106 receipts is held for various projects in Berkhamsted. Of this, £19,398 is currently committed so the available balance is £204,165.

**CHAIRMAN**

The details of the cases, twenty in total, are given on the spreadsheet which accompanies this response and shows the developments and sites from which the receipts arose, and the expiry dates for spend.

For most of the cases – fifteen – there is no expiry date specified on the s106 obligation. The remaining five expire in either 2023 or 2024.

For all cases, our internal management systems for s106 receipts provide monthly alerts for officers across the Council to help ensure that deadlines are not missed. Where no date is specified, a default timescale of five years from receipt is used.

With reference to the available balance of £204,165, the details on spend will be defined in the s106 obligation.

Councillor Symington asked if it would be possible to reinvoke publication of the developer contributions.

Councillor G Sutton replied he would speak to the team and see if that was possible. He advised in Berkhamsted they had around 20 but for the whole Borough it would be considerably more. He added that he could provide Councillor Symington with a copy of the case spreadsheet she was referring to.

Councillor Symington asked for confirmation that the council adopts the premise that the S106 monies are for benefit of local community from which they derive and asked for assurance that local representatives have a say in how those monies are spent.

Councillor G Sutton confirmed that local communities and representatives are consulted on this. He advised each s106 monies may contain its own terms and conditions on how it can be spent and what it can be used for.

Councillor Symington advised that planning permission was recently granted for a development in Shooters Way and attached was a £75k s106 award. She asked what assurance the Portfolio Holder could give to the residents of Berkhamsted that these monies will be collected and spent on the sports facilities on which they were intended.

Councillor G Sutton advised that if those are the terms and conditions of the planning application then the team will definitely collect the money and send in the right direction.

## 2. Question to Councillor Banks from Councillor Symington:

Would the portfolio holder agree that Council contractual procedures should not impede local organisations or clubs from applying for grants to improve community assets, such as poorly maintained and consequently underused football pitches, especially when -

- (a) this is for the benefit of the local community,
- (b) where there is a demonstrable public benefit,

- (c) where it is in line with the stated DBC policy to promote sport in the community, and
- (d) where it is without detriment to the public asset?

Councillor Banks advised that for this specific case they hadn't been able to support the application for funding as the football fields are a shared resource.

Councillor Symington asked how we can help the community to avoid missing out due to small technicalities. Councillor Banks said she had sought advice from officers and it was her understanding that the current funding doesn't allow these clubs to apply on behalf of DBC and pass the money on to us to invest in to these sites. She advised that due to the guaranteed use of pitches, health and safety controls and the risk of chemical use on the pitches, it was the wrong grant pot to apply to.

Councillor Symington asked the Portfolio Holder to agree that the subject should be raised with the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and properly examined.

Councillor Banks agreed she would discuss the matter with the relevant OSC Chairman.

Councillor Symington asked if the Portfolio Holder had actually read the agreement between the Football Club and the Football Foundation.

Councillor Banks advised she hadn't read the document Councillor Symington was referring to but she had done some research into the grant pot and it appeared to her that it was necessary for them to have at least a ten year guarantee use of the pitch and choose own contractors to maintain those pitches and there was nowhere in Dacorum that we have arrangement.

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

None.

## **7 CABINET REFERRALS**

That the following be approved:

**11 February 2020**

**7.1 CA/018/20 Budget 2020/21**

### **MOTION**

The following Motion was proposed by Councillor Tindall and seconded by Councillor England:

**LIBERAL DEMOCRAT BUDGET PROPOSAL 2020/2021**

**Table 1, General Fund one-year expenditure initiatives:**

**CHAIRMAN**

		2020/21 £000's	2021/22 £000's
1.	Increase the Strategic Planning and Environment Budget by £100k to fund new, one-off initiatives to improve air quality, particularly around schools, evaluation on site, and investment in public Electric Charging Points.	100	0
2.	Increase the Strategic Planning and Environment Budget by £50k to fund a trial of 10 solar powered compactor litter bins across the borough, at a cost of c£5k each.	50	0
3.	<p>In recognition of the urgency of the work, increase the Strategic Planning and Environment Budget by £100k to fund the catch-up in outstanding tree work including the assessment of sites for additional planting.</p> <p>It is also envisaged that this will include an overview of Development in Dacorum in order that the right number and in particular the right species of trees are planted as a contribution towards the work of reducing the Borough's carbon footprint.</p>	100	0
4.	Addition to the Housing and Communities Budget to fund four additional Enforcement Officers for a trial period of one year.	120	0
5.	Addition to the Finance and Resources Budget to fund a comprehensive study of the present communication methods of the council including improvement of the telephone system.	100	0
6.	<p>Increase the contribution to the Climate Change Reserve by a further £700k, over and above the £300k proposed in the Budget Report to deliver a total reserve contribution of £1m.</p> <p>These funds would be available to the Strategic Planning and Environment Budget to provide one-off finance for climate change measures to reduce the Council's carbon footprint, including a Community Climate Change Fund available to residents and community groups. Although the reserve contribution would be made in a single year, it is anticipated that it would fund projects over a two- to three-year period.</p>	700	0
	<b>Sub-Total of A</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>0</b>

**CHAIRMAN**

**Table 2, General Fund two-year expenditure initiatives:**

		2020/21 000's	2021/22 000's
7.	Addition to the Finance and Resources Budget for a part-time fixed-term post, the holder to advise and coordinate councillors, towns and parishes to use Community Infrastructure Levy funds for the benefit of local residents in accordance with agreed local protocols. Subject to review for the second year.	50	50
8.	An addition to the Housing and Communities budget to fund community facing Sports and Leisure Projects for an initial trial two-year period. Subject to review for the second year.	50	50
9.	An addition to the budget of Clean, Safe and Green to enhance the appearance of the Borough by work on verge maintenance, graffiti removal and clearance of growth from paths. Second year subject to review.	80	80
Sub-Total of B		180	180
<b>General Fund Total Budget Amendment</b>		<b>1,350</b>	<b>180</b>

**Housing Revenue Account****Table 3, HRA one-year expenditure initiative:**

		2020/21 000's	2021/22 000's
10	An addition of £1m to the Housing Revenue Account to provide for the introduction of energy saving measures on the council's housing stock.  In order not to detract from the current new build programme or the investment in existing stock already outlined in the HRA Business Plan, this will be funded by borrowing £1m over a period of 20 years. The repayment will be made as a single amount at the end of the 20 year period.	1,000	

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## **S151 Officer Comments**

### **General Fund**

The proposed spending plans are all for a fixed term and therefore can be funded through one off funding streams without additional risk to the Council's financial sustainability in the medium-term.

The £180k required to fund the second year proposals, if progressed, would still be funded through the New Homes Bonus received in 20/21, and would need to be ring-fenced within reserves in case required in 2021/22.

### **Housing Revenue Account**

The duration of borrowing should not exceed the life of the asset it is funding. Therefore in order to borrow £1m for this initiative over a 20-year period, the expenditure would need to meet the following criteria:

- The individual elements of expenditure would need to be in excess of £10k; and,
- The council would need to benefit from the expenditure for a period of 20 years.

Assuming that these conditions were met, and that the repayment of principal was made on maturity of the debt, the financial implications for the HRA Business Plan would be:

- Additional interest costs of c£30k per annum, which could be funded through a reduction in the annual Revenue Contribution to Capital – this would not have a material impact on the planned capital programme; and,
- A repayment of £1m in 2040/41, which at today's prices would equate to roughly £600k. This amount is low enough that a decision on whether to refinance or repay could be made nearer the time, informed by an updated HRA Business Plan.

Councillor Tindall made the following statement to propose the Motion:

"In rising to propose this motion, I need to stress that the Liberal Democrat proposals are not amendments to the council's budget, but fully costed additions which are intended to enhance the council's programme over the coming year, with the emphasis on climate change and reducing the council's carbon footprint."

Last year, we made a start with a number of motions jointly agreed. But in our opinion we need to speed up the process by which we acknowledge the climate emergency, and do what we can to eliminate the risk to the planet. It is a strange world where the financial failings of the government led to the rollover of local government financial arrangements which has in turn provided Dacorum with windfalls in respect of the negative revenue support grant and other payments which may, in the future, not survive the fair funding review, expected in the next financial year.

The question was should we save that money for a rainy day, or use it for the benefit of our communities. Given recent global and local events, from the Australian bush

fires to the consecutive weekend storms in Britain to our minds, the rainy days have arrived, and we need to use whatever available resources we have, without putting at risk the sound financial future of this Council as it faces the uncertain future of this country with a questionable government led by an unstable prime minister with the attention span of a gnat and a Chancellor still wet behind the ears.

We applaud this Council's administration in wanting to have money in the bank and take precautions to ensure that we can weather the economic storms that will come when Boris flounders, but having looked at the actual storms we can expect as climate change rushes towards us, we have come to the conclusion that not to make use of the opportunities afforded us by the financial windfalls would be not taking the opportunity to protect the futures of our children and grandchildren.

I will only speak directly to some of our proposals as speakers will follow -

In noting the administration's intention to appoint a Climate Officer which is welcomed, we feel it is important that that individual whomever they be has sufficient resources to get on with the job, hence the major part of our additional budget is to boost the funds available to spend on this important work."

Councillor Claughton said he hoped members of the council would support the addition of these items in the budget given the importance of the climate emergency, in particular item 3; an increase in strategic planning and environment project of £100k to fund catch up in outstanding tree work including assessment of sites. He welcomed the councils plan to plant 1000 trees by the end of 2020. Councillor Anderson announced at the last council meeting that DBC had or planned to plant 70 trees in January and 70 in February. Whilst this is good news, he felt Dacorum's ambitions were relatively modest compared with other councils and he shared some statistics from other councils. He welcomed the council planting 21 new street trees in Berkhamsted of which 13 in his own ward of Berkhamsted Castle. However 21 trees were felled in his ward alone in 2018/19. Although the council has a policy of replacing trees where we are able, the definition includes financial and physical constraints. This has been a problem for some time. A FOI request to the council revealed that in 2012-17, 43 trees were removed and only 22 were planted in the whole of Berkhamsted. He finalised with a quote from George Orwell "*the planting of a tree is a gift which you can make to posterity at almost no cost and with almost no trouble, and if the tree takes root it will far outlive the visible effect of any of your other actions, good or evil.*"

Councillor Griffiths said she wouldn't be supporting the motion on the basis that all seems to be plucked from the air. She said there was lots of work going on in the council and they had been using APS (Association of Public Services) base line of corporate buildings, and using Shift for baseline of housing stock. They are also looking into what they can do with new builds. She attended a training session on 18 February called 'moving to zero carbon' with the housing and planning departments and any other interested officers. She said it was a very interesting conversation and the expert was explaining that if we all converted over to charging and using electric vehicles, we need to cut down on gas heating as gas is the biggest polluter and all went to electric, the system would fall over. We do not have the infrastructure to deliver, we should have it by 2050, by not by 2030. They were looking at air source pump heating but that was now old hat. They are now looking at ground source heating pumps but they are very noisy. What about district heating plan? There is all new stuff being investigated. Apparently the city councils are doing a lot of the work becoming exemplars. There is also talk of doing hydrogen and gas mix which is better than total hydrogen because of health and safety. There will be a report going to Cabinet later in spring baselining information to take forward. There is lots of work

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going on already in housing. We can't restrict money to one area for climate change initiatives because we work on basis of fabric first and doing a whole property. She said it wouldn't fit in to our plan but we do have a plan, it is being rolled out and we have a baseline.

Councillor Birnie said Councillor Griffiths made some interesting points but it seems that council was not the place to make new policy. He said Council meetings were to approve or reject policies that have maturely developed through the committee system and our opposition colleagues have the right to participate. The opposition seeks to rush us into populist measures, none of which has been through the scrutiny committee. For example there is a new local plan Task & Finish group which includes the leader of the opposition amongst others and some of these proposals have been discussed there, yet no member of the opposition have pressed in budget scrutiny's to include these measures when they had the opportunity. He said he recently attended Cabinet for the budget consideration which is usually the last chance for changes. He proposed some reserves to deal with problems with our communication system and both the leader of the opposition and his deputy were present yet neither of them supported him. In addition he mentioned Air Quality which he was passionate about and the positive action in the Boroughs air quality management areas, however all the opposition have offered is the tired and impractical mantra of getting residents out of their cars. At the Air Quality action plan steering group, it was left to the Portfolio Holder of Community and Regulatory services, Councillor Banks, to lambast the refusal of the County Council to help our residents in Apsley to change the road layout around Durrants Hill the opposition member on that committee remained silent. This Conservative council has great respect throughout the County and at Central Government level for its financial prudence. We shouldn't jeopardise this reputation by blowing money on this "vote catcher" wish list. He finalised that he wouldn't be supporting this motion.

Councillor England read the following statement:

"There are several aspects to this Budget Amendment but I want to concentrate on two themes which surely deserve support from across the Chamber:  
The Climate Emergency and the Communications we need.  
We have nine years to provide leadership locally on reducing our Carbon Footprint – that is our Carbon Budget.

We don't have elections until 2023, so really what we are interested in is not the politics, but the compounding effect of the early measures we take, in two ways:  
First the direct effect on CO<sub>2</sub>, air quality, plastic pollution and bio-diversity produced by the actions of the Council in providing services and operating The Forum, Cupid Green etc.

And then the indirect effect; the many incremental changes that will also need to be made by residents and businesses, wise choices which help address the same issues.

That is why we are arguing the case for an extra £1.1m to be allocated to dealing with the Climate emergency. The next year will be crucial; we need to realise that Year One (2020) affects our level of achievement nine times as much as 2028/29.  
2020 is the year when we ensure the funds are available to choose the ways we will act – and ask individuals, businesses to act.

There are proposals in this Alternative Budget that aim to put Dacorum Borough Council in a position to avoid some of the costs that the Climate Emergency can be expected to bring.

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In the next year we need the ability to choose measures and to take early action which can prevent higher Climate Emergency avoidance costs accruing later.

We need to properly fund the Emergency work and bandwidth for planning to avoid the costs of unchecked Climate Change

The envelope for this Budget is the ability to react to Climate Emergency while maintaining control of the council finances in the medium-term. Rather like early braking being designed to dissipate speed even before a manoeuvre is selected to swerve or otherwise avoid a crash.

#### Easing Bottlenecks:

Many of the key measures to be taken and areas to change are subject to bottlenecks, e.g.

- the need to train and re-train heating engineers,
- The need to assess programmes of tree-planting,
- and the need to encourage and lead a local switch to EVs.

#### No regrets about:

- the need to improve air quality for schoolchildren
- Improving Air Quality – what is not to like?

It is this bottleneck type of problem, which manifests in various challenges, which inspires the amendment allowing for the drawing on reserves, in order to help address them.

This could mean the Tree Work, or the training of local people to become Heat Pump Engineers, or Litter-minimising volunteers!

These and the following three items are “No Regrets policies”, since the need for the work is already recognised, and the benefits will not be realised unless these are begun immediately, even if the choices are imperfect.”

Councillor Allen spoke in support of item 4 of the motion. As a new councillor he regularly finds that residents approach him about the reduction in effectiveness and visibility of front line services with the result that allotments, parks, car parks, garage blocks and other public spaces are falling into disrepair. Increasingly there seems to be a feeling that the solution to this is Street Champions and relying on the public's good will. However, we need to have a human scale local responsive and visible set of staff supporting and working alongside residents whilst these schemes pick up momentum so that we can bring the community along and resolve ragged edges that seem to be appearing according to residents in his ward.

Councillor Banks said whilst appreciating climate emergency there was a number of reasons why she wouldn't be supporting the motion. Firstly under the air quality action plan 2019-2024 there was a holistic approach to reduce emissions based on air quality measurements of scientific data. The action plan was approved through the scrutiny process and was working with the County Councils highways services to promote awareness of air quality. Whilst initiatives raise awareness and will have an effect, she suggested they would not tackle root causes but simply raise expectations and lack effectiveness. She said although we need to consider behavioural change, there is not enough lithium in world to produce the batteries for the number of electric vehicles we are planning to be using. The electric vehicle charging points will be considered in context as evidence based strategy but not as an isolated initiative. With reference to the suggestion we should employ four enforcement officers for a trial one year period,

this is not realistic or cost effective. It is doubtful we would attract the calibre of candidates required for 12 months. Enforcement Officers also require extensive training. We already have a strategy in place to strengthen our enforcement by using more effective means by working in partnership with other agencies. With reference to the telephone system, she outlined some statistics. One of the drivers for this system was to reduce calls handled by staff and the automated system to route calls to correct service areas. This resulted in a significant reduction of staff needed in the customer services department. She advised the KPIs had been achieved so that was not an issue and analysis showed we have had three formal complaints and none referred to the telephone system. There were 10 service requests; 6 were for the time taken to answer the call which equates to 0.001% of calls. She said the issue was not with the telephony system and any members and public should be reporting issues to Tracy Lancashire by email.

Councillor Anderson said it was good to have the opposition budget in advance of this meeting as it usually appears on the night. He said the administration was available months in advance and scrutinised on two occasions before this point. He said he can't support the motion as it contained a great deal of problems. We all want the air quality problem to be resolved and all support what council is already doing but the budget proposal contains no detail and only lasts one year. In terms of charging points, the rapid charge points take 30 minutes or more so the only practical place to charge is at home. With that in mind why should we invest public money in pointless charging points? We already have an air quality action plan we are working to. With regards to solar powered litter bins, he thought we had already covered this in previous years and decided it was a daft idea. He said they were silly, don't work well, particularly lousy value for money; it costs £250 for a normal bin and £5000 for a solar bin. We already have an effective bin emptying network. He referred to Councillor Claughton's comments and reiterated that we can't have additional street trees because of the problems they cause to the tarmac and the underground cables so it wasn't an option. In terms of climate change, anyone would think we were actually cutting the budget instead of increasing it by £300k. In terms of the year 2 proposals there is no Parish Councillor that needs to be advised on how to spend money. He made reference to the £800k on Clean, Safe and Green and pointed out there was no definition on what this involves. So many of these things we are already doing, are daft or have no details.

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe said she hadn't intended on speaking but wanted to address the inconsistencies in Councillor Tindall's remarks, particularly about the current Government of this country. Surely if the opposition is so fearful about the financial future of this country they would be supportive and be urging this administration to continue with its prudent and stable financial conduct. If everything was as bad as Councillor Tindall painted, we would be keeping every penny to combat what the future may hold. She said she won't be supporting this motion even though she finds the ideas interesting.

Councillor Williams said from what he understood from Councillor England's statement we are broadly on the same page with the need to tackle climate change and the issues that arise from that. He said it seemed to be drafted on the basis that the opposition assumed the administration haven't considered how they would fund the work from appointing a climate change officer and create a climate change action plan that they would bring to Cabinet in the spring. That assumption is wrong. It is the intention of the administration to use some of the Dacorum development reserve to fund some of the climate change action we may want to do in the future. This motion highlights the regular difference between Conservative and Liberal Democrat budgets which usually seems to spend more money; to spend money on one off reserves on schemes you wouldn't be able to continue beyond year one because you can't be certain of the funding. Our approach is to put the funding into the budget and come up

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with a plan that is costed and allocate funding accordingly. He felt there was more benefit for a focused headline than a prudent budget process. He said the reason he couldn't support this motion was because it puts the cart before the horse to allocate money to un-costed and unworked projects.

Councillor Hollinghurst said he had been a Councillor for a long time and he remembered an occasion in the 1980s when Peter Benson was the Portfolio Holder for Housing and he warned us then about climate change. We have no reason to think that climate change is anything new and it has been known to us for about for 50/60 years. It has been a long time coming and we have done very little. Peter Benson said we should look carefully at our building regulations and our designs as he was an architect. Warmer air produces stronger winds and warmer seas produce more water vapour, a combination of that would be powerful storms and floods impacting on buildings. Nobody has been taking action fast enough to head off the disastrous consequences arising from extra energy in the atmosphere. People have spoken about inability to mitigate the present situation by current technology. This is wrong and we can do an awful lot. 30% power from wind turbines goes to waste because we haven't got the storage capacity to store it for future use. We are in an emergency and must act quickly. That is why trees are so important. It is important that we try and mitigate some of the disastrous effects for our grandchildren. Please support the amendment.

Councillor Uttley said Councillor Hollinghurst passionately covered some of what she wanted to say. She reiterated that there were complex technological opportunities that may be considered but that can't be used as an excuse for not taking advantage of simple solutions, such as planting trees. This is an emergency and discussion about saving money for later doesn't really acknowledge the emergency situation. In terms of the discussions about the telephone system and clearly there is a problem with understanding what the issues are. Personally if she is put through to the wrong department she puts the phone down and starts again. In terms of sports and leisure, Dacorum figures have slipped below baseline measure. We need to get our residents active and that is why it is included in the amendment. She supported the motion.

Councillor Tindall said the experts say we only have 10-15 years to do something. He said they hadn't made specific demands about where the money is spent because this is an emerging field and technology is advancing at a great rate so what we propose now might not be suitable in a years' time. He referred to the comment of source of funding and said we are not spending reserves but taking from grants or bonuses instead of putting money away for a rainy day as we need to act now. He hoped members were inspired to change their minds and he thanked the whole chamber for the conduct and level of debate. It is to be welcomed and casts a merit upon all Councillors for the way they have spoken.

A recorded vote was held:

19 For and 28 Against.

Therefore the Motion was lost.

The Council then proceeded to the preliminary budget proposal.

Councillor Elliot moved the item CA/018/20 - Budget 2020/21 and made the following statement:

**"The Budget Context**

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Over the last 9 years, this council has successfully risen to the challenge of saving over **£7m** whilst simultaneously protecting and improving the services we provide to our residents. This budget outlines plans to save **a further £800k** in 2020/21.

The medium-term future of local authority finance will remain uncertain until the outcome of Government's Fair Funding Review, which will determine how funding will be allocated to local authorities beyond 2021.

That is why this council has proposed a budget for 2020 with a strong focus on sustainability, and continuing to deliver its corporate priorities into the medium-term. We have already made significant strides towards balancing the budget in future years, having identified initiatives of over **£500k** to address MTFS savings targets beyond 2021.

### **Continuing to invest in the Borough**

Despite the extent of the financial challenges we have faced, this council's history of prudent financial management means that we are in a position to propose a highly ambitious capital investment programme in excess of **£280m** over the next 5 years to further enhance the services we provide to our residents, and the environment in which they live.

Some of the areas identified for capital investment include:

- **£90m** investment in our existing housing stock, which continues to provide high quality homes for tens of thousands of people across our borough
- **£115m** investment in our ambitious and successful housing new-build programme ... helping more people to live affordably in an area which has some of the highest house prices in the country
- **£50m** investment in various ventures which combine social benefit with financial return, including significant investment in a new sports centre in Berkhamsted and plans to develop out the former Civic Centre site in Hemel Hempstead
- **£4m** investment in working with Housing Association partners to facilitate affordable housing developments, and the delivery of additional temporary accommodation for some of our most vulnerable residents
- **£7m** investment in community facilities including car parks, cemeteries, and leisure

### **Maintaining our front-line services**

Protecting and improving our front-line services has been a central objective for this Council throughout the last 9 years of unprecedented financial challenge.

I am proud that this Council has overcome **70% funding reductions** to successfully deliver this objective, and once again I can announce that this budget will maintain our front-line services in 2020/21.

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The Council has worked hard to deliver its savings targets through efficiencies rather than cuts, and has developed a culture of innovation and a strong focus on continuous improvement.

This has enabled us to deliver savings through a range of initiatives including:

- more efficient staffing structures linked into better ways of working and improved use of technology; and,
- a more commercial approach to contract negotiation and the provision of good quality services that also deliver increased income generation, recent examples of which include:
  - An innovative approach to Temporary Accommodation within council-owned property, which will generate additional income of **£300k** next year;
  - The recent leisure contract which will also deliver a further **£300k** of income in 2020/21;
  - Successfully leasing part of The Forum to the CCG, which has not only fed a continued focus on efficient working for council staff, but has contributed over **£250k** of income over the first year.

## Council Tax

As part of the budget for 2020/21, the Council is proposing to increase Council Tax by **£5** for a Band D property, which equates to less than **10 pence per week**.

Central government is likely to consider each council's ability to raise tax when deciding how much funding it will provide in the future in simple terms. Government is likely to reduce future funding by an amount that it **expects** the council to raise through increasing its council tax.

Proposing this increase in line with government expectation means that we have done all we can to protect Dacorum's overall funding position for future years.

This approach was strongly endorsed through the Council's budget consultation process, with 90% of residents involved supporting the decision to increase Council Tax by the maximum permissible amount in order to protect front line services.

## Housing

Following an end to the statutory requirement for local authorities to reduce housing rents, the Council is next year proposing to increase rent levels for the first time in five years. The average rent for a council property next year will be £103.12 per week, which is **£3 per week lower than it was in 2015**.

Despite the 4-year period of enforced rent reductions, the Council has continued to make housing delivery one of its key priorities, and this summer we are on target to complete our **300<sup>th</sup> new home**.

This trend will continue in 2019, the Council approved plans to make use of newly available borrowing within the HRA to **deliver a further 370 homes** across the borough over the next 4 years.

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We are also investing in the infrastructure that will enable us to deliver our housing obligations to the most vulnerable in our community in the best way possible.

A further **12 new build Temporary Accommodation units** are scheduled for completion in spring 2020, to **add to the 44 TA beds** already available in the council's purpose built hostel, The Elms.

### In Conclusion

Unquestionably, the Council faces significant financial challenges in the years ahead in particular beyond 2021 with the outcome of the Fair Funding Review due to be announced in late 2020.

However, I remain confident that with the processes this council has in place, the culture of innovation we continue to develop, and most of all with the continued commitment of Officers and Members we will continue to deliver for our residents.

I would like to thank all officers across all Council services for all their hard work over the year.

Mr Mayor I have no hesitation in recommending this budget to the Council."

Councillor Griffiths supported the motion and said she wanted to highlight some of the work going on in the housing area. Grenfell was a major disaster and they now had requirements coming out from that. Fire safety and ongoing investment in ICT systems to help prioritise expenditure in this area is a key part of the budget. There is also the Environmental Impact Assessment by compiling the data required to establish the CO<sub>2</sub> baseline position using the fabric first approach. There is also smart monitoring and use of AI to assist in reducing the energy consumption. She said there was lots of work going on in the private rented sector and the development of a new strategy.

Councillor Tindall said the opposition didn't intend to change this budget but were just proposing additions. Therefore he supported the budget.

Councillor Williams felt that the views expressed by the opposition was that the administration wasn't taking the climate emergency seriously and he assured Councillors that wasn't the case but just that there is a difference in approach. He referred to the point about public charging points and advised they had already had surveys done and were looking at installation. He said they had also been in discussions with UKPN for advice to support those charging points. He emphasised that we do take the issue seriously but we just approach it in a different way.

Councillor Elliot summarised with the following statement:

"The fundamental difference with the amended budget is that it allocates £1.5m of expenditure to several specific areas whereas the Administration budget is contributing it all to the Dacorum Development Reserve.

The benefit of our approach, as opposed to the amended budget, is:

1. By contributing to reserves, we retain the flexibility to fund our initiatives in the future but at the same time we are also holding a higher reserves cushion in the event that the Fair Funding Review is significantly worse than anticipated. (This is unlikely to be the case because we have a robust MTFS, but the FFR

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is a very significant unknown in terms of future funding and it pays to be prudent until it is announced in late 2020.) If we negotiate the FFR as expected, we might then choose to increase reserves-funded expenditure based on more a more informed picture of our medium-term financial position.

2. The Climate Change Strategy is currently being prepared and is scheduled for Cabinet in late Spring/early summer. This Strategy will inform a sustainable approach to investment in environmental measures that would enable the Council to get maximum vfm from its climate response. There is a risk that investing in climate change initiatives before this strategy is complete could lead to a less efficient approach.

Councillor Allen mentioned frayed amenities in Dacorum, has he not seen:

- The new splash park and new play area in Gadebridge Park
- The new car park in Berkhamsted
- Parks within Dacorum have won many awards
- The Jellicoe Water Gardens
- New sports centre proposed for Berkhamsted

As Councillor Birnie alluded to, the opposition has had ample opportunity to put proposals through two lots of joint overview and scrutiny committees and as usual is ill thought out pie in the sky thinking. Similar to their previous national leader thinking she could be our next Prime Minister! The voters of East Dunbartonshire delivered their verdict on her, I have the same verdict on this Alternative budget.”

A recorded vote was held:

38 For, 3 Against and 6 Abstentions.

### **Decision**

#### General Fund Revenue Estimate

- a) set a Dacorum Borough Council General Fund Council Tax requirement of £12.086m, and a provisional amount of £13.058m for the combined Borough Council and Parish Councils' requirement for 2020/21;
- b) approve a Band D Council Tax increase of £5 (2.48%) for Dacorum Borough Council;
- c) approve the base estimates for 2020/21, as shown in Appendix A1, and the indicative budget forecasts for 2020/21 – 2023/24, as shown in Appendix A2;
- d) approve the forecast balances of Revenue Reserves as shown in Appendix J, and approve section 10 of this report as the updated Reserves Strategy;
- e) approve increases in Fees and Charges for 2020/21 as set out in Appendices C3, D3, and E3;
- f) approve and adopt the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21, attached at Appendix K;
- g) approve and adopt the Capital Strategy for 2020/21, attached at Appendix L;

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- h) note that this budget paper, if approved by Council, will form part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Capital Programme

- i) approve the Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix I and Appendix M respectively;
- j) approve the financing proposals in Appendix I subject to an annual review of the financing options by the Corporate Director (Finance & Operations), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, during the preparation of the Statement of Accounts.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- k) set dwelling rents according to the new MHCLG Rent Standard, which provides for a rent increase of CPI+1% (2.7% in total). The average dwelling rents is proposed to increase to £103.12 in 202/21, from its current level of £100.47(based on 52 weeks);
- l) approve the HRA estimate for 2020/21 as shown in Appendix F.

Employer Terms & Conditions

- m) note that the hourly rate of all Council employees continues to exceed the rate proposed by the rates of the Living Wage Foundation, for 2019/20 (to be reviewed annually thereafter).

Statement by Chief Finance Officer

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

## **7.2 CA/019/20 Q3 Budget Monitoring Report**

### **Decision**

1. Consider the budget monitoring position for each of the above accounts;
2. Recommend to Council approval of the revised capital programme to move £4.956m slippage identified at Quarter 3 into financial year 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix C;
3. Recommend to Council approval of supplementary revenue budgets funded from reserves:
  - Supplementary budget of £40k in the Neighbourhood Delivery service, funded from the Management of Change reserve, to fund interim resource to support delivery of new service initiatives
  - Additional budget of £30k in the Elections service, funded from drawdown of £30k from the Election reserve

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- Supplementary budget in the Planning service of £103k to fund the revenue costs of implementation of new Planning software, funded from the Planning & Regeneration reserve
  - Supplementary budget of £170k to fund costs relating to the Hand Arm Vibration legal case, to be funded from the Litigation Reserve.
  - Supplementary budget of £28k in Waste Services to fund consultancy work to support service improvements, funded from the Management of Change reserve
  - Supplementary budget of £80k in the garages employees budget to fund interim resource, funded from the Invest to Save reserve
  - Supplementary budget of £60k to fund one-off expenditure for a garage stock condition survey, funded from the Invest to Save reserve
4. Recommend to Council approval of supplementary capital budgets required to deliver several service changes as set out below:
- A capital budget of £66k to fund replacement boilers at Berkhamsted Leisure Centre
  - A capital budget of £55k to fund new poolside flooring at Berkhamsted Leisure Centre
  - Additional capital budget of £598k in the Affordable Housing Development fund, funded from Housing one-for-one ('1-4-1') receipts
5. Recommend to Council additional reserves drawdowns as set out below:
- Drawdown of £1,750k from the Vehicle Replacement Reserve to fund capital investment in the Council's waste fleet
  - Drawdown of £8k from Tring Swimming Pool reserve to fund capital works at the site.
6. Approve a capital virement of £900k to reallocate budget for the acquisition of Eastwick Row from the HRA New Build General budget to the Eastwick Row budget
7. Agree the annual update of the Council's flexible use of capital receipts strategy at Appendix D of this report.

### **7.3 CA/021/20 Senior Officer Pay Policy**

#### **Decision**

The adoption of the Pay Policy for 2020/21 as set out in appendix 1 to the Cabinet report.

#### **8 MOTION TO COUNCIL**

**CHAIRMAN**

The Motion was considered under item 7.1.

**9        OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

**10      CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

None.

**11      CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES**

The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

- Additional SPAE OSC meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020
- Move SPAE OSC from 21<sup>st</sup> October to 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**12      COUNCIL TAX DECLARATION 2020/21**

The Council Tax Declaration for 2020/21 was agreed.

The Meeting ended at 9.59 pm

**CHAIRMAN**