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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**18 NOVEMBER 2020**

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Present:

**MEMBERS:**

Douris (Mayor), Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Banks, Barrett, Barry, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Bhinder, Birnie, Chapman, Cloughton, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Griffiths, Guest, Hearn, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Imarni, Johnson, Link, Maddern, Sobaan Mahmood, Suqlain Mahmood, McDowell, Peter, Pringle, Ransley, Riddick (Deputy Mayor), Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, Stevens, G Sutton, R Sutton, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Townsend, Uttley, Williams, Woolner and Wyatt-Lowe (48)

**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), C O'Neil (Corporate and Democratic Support Team Leader) and T Angel (Minutes).

The meeting began at 6.30 pm

**1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2020 were agreed by the members present and will be signed by the Mayor at the next available opportunity.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

1. Questions from Graham Bright (Grove Fields Residents Association) to Councillor Williams:

Q1: I note that the Leader of the Council is being requested to write to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government asking that the figure of 922 houses per annum for Dacorum be revised downwards. You state that this because this Council believes that the Government's centrally-determined targets for housing development in the Borough will adversely affect the development of the Dacorum Local Plan, forcing high levels of new housing onto green belt land. If the motion is agreed, please

can you confirm that Dacorum will wait for the central government response to this letter before commencing the public consultation?

Response: I don't believe that the motion and the item before us this evening in relation to the local plan are mutually exclusive and we will consider both of these in due course this evening, and members will contribute to the reasons why they support the motion and/or the consultation. I do not believe that we cannot do both. We currently have a figure, the latest from the government, of 922 as stated by Mr Bright. As you will see from the motion when we discuss it that's not a figure that we necessarily think is appropriate. We don't know the course of the government's reiterations, and not forgetting the ONS figures have not yet been accepted as the figure that should be used. We will still be looking nationally for potentially the 300,000 that has been quoted on several occasions. I still think it's appropriate for us to consult with our residents because I think we need the evidence base if we are to contest the 922, and if that figure is not reduced over time and we need to contest at 922 I think having consulted with our residents will strengthen the argument should our local plan not be in conformity with the numbers required. So in essence, I don't think that agreeing to one includes the other.

Q2: I note that the authority has delegated to make changes to the Emerging Strategy for Growth , including anything necessary to reflect the Cabinet's and/or Council discussions and decision, to the Assistant Director Planning, Development and Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure. Please can you confirm that the FINAL Local Plan, once amended as a consequence of the public consultation, will be voted on by local councillors?

Response: Yes, absolutely. The delegation to the director in consultation with the portfolio holder only relates to minor changes to wording or to reflect any decisions taken by our councillors at this stage in amending our draft consultation. Any final decision will still be subject to the process of the scrutiny committee and the cabinet, and only the full council has the authority to agree a local plan. So yes, the final decision has to be one taken by full council.

## 2. Questions from Malcolm Allen to Councillor Williams:

Q1: How can the ancient Market Town of Berkhamsted cope with 2230 new homes, in addition to the hundreds already under construction, and a possible population rise of 41% when our current infrastructure is inadequate? In particular how will the southern side of Berkhamsted, which carries the bulk of this expansion handle the enormous increase in traffic flow primarily along Shootersway which is already a rat run for the sole access to the A41 and which suffers large back up of traffic at rush hour even now. Backups which pollute the air as children walk to the four schools served by this route. A further hazard is the narrowing of the road between Kings Road and Crossoak Road causing a hazard when two HGVs pass with their wing mirrors hanging over the pavement thus endangering pedestrians. This plan detracts from the character of the area, destroys Green Belt, damages bio-diversity and converts a sorely needed playing field, Haslam's, into a housing estate. We will need new signs for our town stating 'welcome to Berkhamsted, a modern example of inglorious sprawl.' Are you happy taking responsibility for that?

Response: I'm happy to take responsibility for the fact that this council needs to go out and consult on the local plan. I'm under no illusions that Berkhamsted like many parts of the borough is under considerable constraint in terms of the amount of development it can take, and this consultation will inform that level of development which is appropriate for a particular area. All of the local plan process will be backed up by transport infrastructure studies which will give a very clear indication of the level of development that can be taken in a particular area given the amount of infrastructure that is either affordable or possible to provide given the constraints of any particular location. As an authority we take responsibility for the plan and as we develop the plan we will ensure that the constraints of a particular area, the infrastructure requirements of an area, or indeed the infrastructure limits of an area are taken into account when coming to a final figure for any particular level of development.

3. Question from Antony Harbidge to Councillor Williams:

Q1: How is it in the best interests of the public, specifically the residents of Dacorum who you represent, to put the Draft Local Plan out for consultation during a pandemic when there is no reasonable prospect of engaging in normal democratic processes?

Response: We recognise that additional restrictions will be in place until 2 December and the current health situation does make consultation different to what it would be previously, but the fact that we're all here this evening using this different form of technology to hold his meeting and have more people engaged in this meeting than normally would be is an indication that there are ways in which we can consult and engage the public other than by direct meetings, which of course I recognise during this consultation we will not be in a position to have more traditional public meetings in halls and community centres etc. and we have very clear government advice that we should not allow the current situation to stop the progress of local plans. There is an expectation from government that the planning process will continue and that we make use of available technologies in order to do so. The council is seeking to start the consultation in late November, and traditionally these consultations run for six weeks. We planned this one for eight weeks and as we will come on to later we intend to extend that further to be well clear of the Christmas and new year period and allow people to engage. The Council is seeking to make the consultation as accessible as possible and will be undertaking the following activities:

- Extending the consultation for 10 weeks, instead of the statutory 6 weeks
- Hosting a permanent 'virtual' exhibition on our website throughout the consultation. The exhibition will allow people to leave questions for Officers.
- Providing copies of the documents for inspection at the Forum (where an appointment can be made to view the document)
- Providing copies of the documents to libraries where these will be available for loan.
- Produced a video advertising the consultation
- Published articles in both the Dacorum Digest (63,000 copies) and the digital digest (11,400 subscribers)

Q2: Why can't you afford your constituents that you represent by equal respect that delaying consultation to a post pandemic time which will also allow correspondence with government MP's as well as allowing the latest ONS data to be incorporated into the evidence base which is isn't at present.

Response: The decision to go for a full review is not a decision taken solely by the assistant director but by the council. The plan was approved in 2013 as I'm sure Mr Harbidge who I know takes a keen interest in these matters is aware. This plan was challenged through the courts and the judge came to a view that he would support our plan as did the inspector subject to us understanding an early partial review. Although the plan runs until 2031 the government requirement is that the plans are reviewed every five years. So whilst we could have gone for a partial review we would have been straight into a full review almost before we finished the partial reviews so the view was taken that it would be better to do a full review because by 2018 we would have been well in to doing that anyway. Similarly if we got to the point where this plan, which we're currently at the draft stage, was adopted and takes us through to 2038, we will still be doing a full review of that plan in 2026/2027 assuming we adopt in 2022. We are required to do a full review every five years. So once we got to 2017 and we have delayed this process because of confusions and uncertainties over government numbers and there's no uncertainty that the latest ONS figures will be embedded in the governments requirements. The ONS figures as I'm sure you're aware are considerably lower than the manifesto commitments of all the major political parties to deliver an increasing number of homes. It's possibly the case that the government may, through looking at reconfiguring the algorithm, redistribute that requirement elsewhere. It is not yet clear that requirement is going to reduce and I, as leader of this council, want us to get to a position where we are in the best possible shape to defend our plan should we come under a requirement to produce more homes than we think is acceptable. I'm sure you're aware our figure a while ago was 1025 and is being reduced to 922. There's no guarantee when the government reconstitute those figures that it won't go up or down, so we need to be in a position to be absolutely resolute in our defence of that position.

## **4 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

Welcome to the new Chief Executive of Dacorum Borough Council, Claire Hamilton.

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

The Chief Executive thanked the Mayor for the introduction and welcome and said she looked forward to meeting everyone in person as soon as she was able to.

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

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillor Arslan.

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

**Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council**

The Leader said he had no updates to report but was happy to take questions.

Questions:

Councillor Hollinghurst said at the last meeting he asked if DBC had received a questionnaire from the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the climate emergency and Councillor Williams had agreed he was going to circulate the completed questionnaire to all members. He asked if this had been done as he didn't recall seeing a response from Councillor Williams.

The Leader apologised as he had chased this up but hadn't responded to Councillor Hollinghurst. He advised that the questionnaire wasn't sent to DBC; he believed given the nature of the questionnaire which focuses on transport, social and care matters that it was sent to the upper tier authorities so DBC weren't sent a copy or invited to complete it.

Councillor Hollinghurst was grateful for that answer. However he suggested that we could complete the questionnaire anyway to show the direction of travel of our evolved thinking on the matter.

The Leader said he was sure that could be arranged.

Councillor Tindall noted from the forward plan that it was the intention of Cabinet to receive a report on equality and diversity and ask for confirmation that anti-Semitism and the adoption of the IHRA definition will be included in the report.

The Leader confirmed he was the portfolio holder responsible for that report and he had already discussed it with officers to be certain that the item is included in our equality and diversity strategy.

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

The Portfolio Holder firstly paid tribute to the staff that have managed to keep our refuse collection service going despite the ongoing covid-19 crisis. The Health and Safety Executive and Covid authorities have checked our activities ensuring that we are keeping to national rules that have been set. It means we've had a large increase in costs and therefore will go over budget this year, but the bottom line is that the council can be very proud of actually managing to keep all our refuse services and other services based at Cupid Green going and he was very grateful to everyone involved for that.

He highlighted the revised arrangements for refuse collections over the Christmas period. This information can be found on the website. If individuals do not have access to the internet they can phone the council to request a printed refuse calendar. We are trying to encourage people to use online services rather than have printed copies where possible. It's important to bear in mind that the week running up to Christmas, refuse collections will be one day early with the exception of the Monday which will be two days early (Saturday) and that allows keeping disruption to a minimum and back to normal in early January.

He was pleased to report the roll out of food recycling in flats has been completed.

71 residents are participating in our Love Food, Hate Waste challenge throughout November.

The Windmill Road allotment has been refurbished.

The Portfolio Holder had been advised by Councillor Stevens that the grass on The Moor in Berkhamsted which was used as the temporary car park has been seeded so hopefully by next spring that will be back to how it should look.

Finally, the project to plant 1,000 trees is on track. Hundreds of trees will be planted in the next few weeks. We had hoped to organise some public tree planting events but sadly due to Covid that isn't possible.

Questions:

Councillor Hollinghurst addressed the Portfolio Holder and commented that in general he is very pleased with way refuse collection is proceeding. However, he noted that he was disturbed to see on a Dacorum Borough Council Facebook page a picture of fabric bins with textiles piled up next to them. The councillor expressed his opinion that the message next to it was a bit threatening, quoting, 'this is fly tipping and you will be prosecuted'. Councillor Hollinghurst asked; does the Portfolio Holder agree that people trying to get material into the bins are at least trying to recycle and it is therefore not appropriate to threaten them in this way, particularly when charity shops are closed.

Councillor Anderson responded that he has not seen the post in question and asked if the Councillor could provide details to enable him to look into the matter and respond.

Councillor Hollinghurst advised he has sent details to officers and suggested the Portfolio Holder gets the information from them. He further commented that the design of the bins is inadequate and they also need to be emptied more regularly. He asked; will you please look at the detailed comments made to the officers.

The Portfolio Holder responded that he will willingly speak to officers and will respond to Councillor Hollinghurst.

Councillor Ransley addressed the Portfolio Holder and commented that she understands there have been problems with getting the refuse trucks around Tring and the issue for them has been the small trucks are off the road. The councillor said she understood that new trucks have been ordered and can it be confirmed that smaller trucks that can access the narrow roads have been purchased.

The Portfolio Holder responded that he will need to look into that specific details and provide a written response but commented, as he did earlier in the year, that the lockdown has increased the number of people working from home. The increase in traffic parked on street is causing some issues with blocking access and the crews do try to return. The Portfolio Holder took the opportunity to ask the public to help the crews by being mindful of their parking.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed to the Mayor that a written response to Councillor Ransley's question will be provided.

Councillor Mahmood addressed the Portfolio Holder and asked what plans are in place for the Christmas refuse collection and if the information was on the website.

The Portfolio Holder referred back to his update and advised the information is on the website, for those who do not have access to internet they can call the Council and ask for a printed version. We encourage using internet access as that enables residents to get the most up to date information available and live updates (particularly with severe weather events such as snow & ice). As set out, the bins will be collected 1 day earlier in the week running up to Christmas.

Councillor England addressed the portfolio holder and enquired if it would be acceptable for a member of the public to email on behalf of a third party in order to obtain a printed copy of a bin calendar.

The Portfolio Holder responded that if the person is unable to phone the Council themselves, it would be judged on an individual basis. The Portfolio Holder invited an email enquiry from Councillor England.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

#### **Environmental and Community Protection**

Members, in these challenging times for our communities and business in the throes of the global COVID pandemic and its impact of our lives, I welcome the opportunity to highland the work of our staff in Environment & Community Protection.

As you will be aware, the number of cases of infection continues to rise across England and this is likewise reflected across Hertfordshire and here in Dacorum. Although not to the extent elsewhere in England. As we are in lockdown hopefully when restriction are lifted in early December the measures in place will ensure that we emerge at the medium alert level or lower.

At the front line are the Environmental Health Team, who are heavily involved with advising businesses, inspecting for COVID secure compliance, enforcing, responding to residents' queries in these difficult times. Working in partnership with other Hertfordshire Districts & Boroughs Councils and a wide range of other agencies to prevent the spread of infection and prioritising higher risk businesses. Based upon data analysis from the Director of Public Health, EHOs have focused their attention on licensed premises, Hairdressers & Barbers (94) and currently Supermarkets (to date 25), Grass roots sports (100 mailings) for COVID compliance. Letters (1450 of which 500 hand delivered) have been sent and visits (322) made with enforcement action taken where necessary. 226 food premises were assessed for COVID compliance during food inspections being carried out. A wealth of posters and beer mats have been distributed.

The majority of businesses are compliant.

During October & November, the Team also investigated 34 positive cases in the community that the National and County Track and Trace scheme could not reach and 8 business related COVID cases to identify contacts and ensure COVID compliance.

To be more effective locally on tracking, tracing and isolation, a Dacorum service will go live on 1<sup>st</sup> December operated within the team with calls and visits. This may be in the region of 50 cases per week on average that will be dependent upon the rate of spread of the infection after this second lockdown.

Additional resources have been drafted into the service to help cope with increasing workload and pressures, funded by the Government via HCC.

In conjunction, the Corporate Health & safety Team are immersed in supporting Authority wide services to provide COVID advice and guidance to safe guard our own employees. Ranging from risk assessments, advice to staff with positive COVID tests and associated contacts with self-isolation. Furthermore, the team is the conduit for emergency planning and resilience within the Authority and linking into our Incident Management Team.

Not forgetting that wherever possible it's business as usual, the Environmental Enforcement Team continues with pest control, animal welfare, environmental crime, fly tipping, filthy and verminous premises and more.

An increasing number of Filthy and Verminous properties have been identified (8) and following service of Public Health Act notices, works have been undertaken to clear some of these. One property has been cleared of over 6 tonnes of waste; this will be recharged to the homeowner. Work continues with homeowners and tenants to help resolve these issues and to help prevent reoccurrence.

Kimps Way, Bennetts End. Fly tipping hotspot identified at rear of houses fronting Bennetts End Road/Howe Road. Large clear up carried out by CSG, 2 CCTV deployable enforcement cameras installed in the area to be monitored by CCTV and new signage erected.

Members will appreciate the sterling effort across the Authority whilst the COVID pandemic outbreak continues. ECP service delivery will continuously be reviewed and resources directed to areas of great risk, priority and need to safe guard our residents and businesses. I hope you offer your support and thanks to the ECP team trying to keep our residents safe and healthy.

Questions:

Councillor Hollinghurst addressed the Portfolio Holder and expressed his view of the draconian restrictions on the use of cycles in the Marlowes and asked; can it be confirmed that a valid and appropriately worded traffic regulation order has been sealed and is in force prohibiting the use of bicycles or other vehicles in the Marlowes?

The Portfolio Holder responded that she was unable to confirm but would come back to the Councillor on that matter. The Portfolio Holder added that it is not cycling that is being prohibited, it is the anti-social cycling behaviour that has been raised as an issue and this is the matter being addressed.

Councillor Hollinghurst thanked the Portfolio Holder for the response and asked; would she agree there is nothing now stopping us from putting safe cycle routes in the Marlowes to enable safe cycling in the without endangering pedestrians?



The Portfolio Holder responded that she would not welcome cycling in the Marlowes but agreed that she would continue the discussion outside of the meeting with Councillor Hollinghurst.

Councillor Guest referred to November lock down and asked how are the Christmas Light Switch On at the neighbourhood shopping centres going to be managed?

The Portfolio Holder responded that the lights will be switched on but there will be no big events for this to happen, but the lights will be illuminated for everyone to enjoy.

Councillor England addressed the Portfolio Holder and asked; does she feel the first year of the PSPO been successful, and if so, how is this success quantified?

The Portfolio Holder responded that there have been 4 successful campaigns in the precinct that engaged with people there. There have been a number of opportunities to use the TV in the Marlowes to advertise the public space protection orders. There has been a reduction in the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour by cyclists in the Marlowes. The Portfolio Holder commented that if the Councillor is looking for figures, she would be happy to seek from officers and discuss outside the meeting.

Councillor England asked, when looking at those figures, can you ask if there has been a change in behaviour and are people less likely to want to cycle in the Marlowes now?

The Portfolio Holder responded that she would ask officers to quantify and provide the information to them both.

Councillor Birnie addressed the Portfolio Holder and expressed his gratitude that the Council is now using cameras to try and control the amount of fly tipping, particularly in rural areas and asked; in your opinion have they been successful?

The Portfolio Holder responded that a number of covert cameras have been installed, which have been hugely successful in providing evidence in a number of prosecutions.

Councillor Barry referred to the last meeting of Full Council and the question around potential funding for Tring Skate Park and asked; has that been looked into at all as no answer has been provided.

The Portfolio Holder responded that a response was sent to Councillor Hollinghurst from by an officer outlining some avenues for funding and that to the best of her knowledge Councillor Hollinghurst has not yet responded.

Councillor Barry referred again to skate parks and advised that the Berkhamsted Skate Park lighting appears to not be working, could this be considered or looked at?

The Portfolio Holder responded that she was not aware of the issue or whether it is has been formally reported. However, she advised she would look into this and provide a response.

Councillor Griffiths raised a question regarding the Hemel Rotary Club Santa Sleigh. The Mayor advised that time on this agenda item had now expired and it was agreed that Councillor Griffiths will take this up with the Portfolio Holder outside of the meeting.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

### **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT AND CONSERVATION SUCCESSES**

#### **NCP car park, Hillfield Road, HH**

- Designed by Fuller, Hall and Foulsham in collaboration with H Kellet Ablett, the car park was built at a cost of £70,000 and opened in November 1960. Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation commissioned Rowland Emett, an eminent cartoonist and constructor of whimsical kinetic sculpture, to design a mural for the exterior of the car park.
- The mural was given grade II listing in October 2018.
- Due to poor condition of car park and the impact of this on the mural and the wider town centre, Dacorum attempted to negotiate a scheme of repairs. Unfortunately this was unsuccessful and so the council served a section 215 notice to tidy up the appearance of the building.
- This involves repair to concrete, painting principle elevations, the repair and painting of metalwork, removal of redundant fittings and steam cleaning of the listed Mural.
- This should return this imposing 'modern' early car park to something similar to its original appearance and give a visual lift to the Marlowes.
- Work is now well underway and already the building is looking much improved.

#### **Green Dragon PH, Flaunden**

- The 17<sup>th</sup> century Green Dragon in Flaunden is the only pub in the borough to feature in *Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs*, a CAMRA publication that highlights pub interiors of outstanding historic interest.
- Working with the council's conservation team, the owner has undertaken a programme of restoration to the timber-framed structure, rare Victorian tap room and the iconic Dragon 'totem'.
- Following a prolonged period of closure this characterful pub has a new lease of life.

#### **Nash Mills War Memorial**

- Constructed shortly after WW1 to commemorate the workers of John Dickinson and Co, this stone and bronze memorial had deteriorated and was in a poor state by the early 2000's.
- It was due to be repaired as a condition of the construction of housing on the site.
- Instead poor quality repairs were undertaken in cement and an unknown filler then covered in non-breathable paint which further damaged the memorial.
- The council took enforcement action and despite a number of setbacks and delays the memorial was carefully dismantled and taken off site for conservation in September by the *War Memorials Restoration Company*. The

bronze plaque repaired and new sections of stone carved to replace damaged sections. Modern non breathable paints removed from the surviving original stone work and repointing in lime mortar.

- Work has recently been completed, and in advance of Armistice Day 2020.

## **CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN CENTRES**

- Preparations are in place for our town centres this Christmas.
- For Hemel Hempstead, this is being organised under the 'Hemel Together' brand, which is supported by the Borough Council, Hemel Hempstead Town Centre BID, and the Marlowes and Riverside shopping centres.
- Trees and lights ordered and ready to go in for Marlowes and the Old Town along with Tring and with funding to Berkhamsted Town Council to contribute to their Christmas festivities.
- Given the current lockdown arrangements due to Covid19, there will not be the usual switching on of the Christmas lights event.
- We have put in place some arrangements for when lockdown ends.
- There will be a Radio & Social Media Campaign on the basis that "Hemel Hempstead is open for Christmas"
- A children's train will run in the Marlowes.
- There will also be a "Daily advent calendar" with Heart Radio through December with prizes from local retailers

## **CREMATORIUM PROPOSALS PROGRESS**

- Members will recall that the proposals for a new crematorium to be located in the Bunkers Park area to the south of Bedmond Road, HH were considered by the DM Committee recently.
- As the land is in the Green Belt, we had to first refer the decision to the Secretary of State. He has now decided not to 'call-in' the application, and consequently planning permission was granted on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020 for the crematorium.
- The scheme provides a chapel, cremation facilities and associated parking and landscaping.
- The chapel will allow up to 150 people to attend 60 minute funeral services in the town reducing the funeral drive times for approximately 100,000 people per year.
- This will also significantly reduce the stress upon existing cremation services at the West Herts Crematorium in Garston.
- Some 35 specimen trees and 13,800 whips will be planted within woodland planting areas.
- We are advised that once tenders have been let and agreed, construction is anticipated to start in early 2021, with a build out time of 12-15 months.

Questions:

Councillor Hollinghurst thanked the Portfolio Holder for the news about the crematorium. He referred to the development of the borough and asked; what role did the Dacorum Community Review of Development Panel play in the formulation of the draft Local Plan?

The Portfolio Holder responded that it is something that has been purely for outside of the council, advising he would therefore need to check with officers what input there has been.

Councillor Hollinghurst followed up by asking; why was it organised and kept separate from the Council and the Councillors?

The Portfolio Holder responded that it was done to show democracy was involved in the decision making.

Councillor Tindall addressed the Portfolio Holder and asked; what are the purpose of recent meetings with Parish and Town Councils, particularly as, to his knowledge, there has been no report to the Development Management Committee on such meetings?

The Portfolio Holder asked the Councillor to clarify the nature of the meetings.

Councillor Tindall clarified that he is referring to meetings in respect of changes to applications.

The Portfolio Holder responded that this is yet to be decided, explaining there has been consultation with Parishes and there is to be meetings with the Chair & vice Chair of Development Management Committee to discuss the feedback.

Councillor Tindall asked; were the Development Management Committee not advised that this consultation was taking place?

The Portfolio Holder advised he would have to come back to the Councillor with a response.

Councillor Allen referred to an email from Bourne End Village Association and asked, how are the alleged discrepancies in planning procedures going to be addressed?

The Portfolio Holder advised he did not recall having seen an email.

Cllr Allen responded that it relates to a decision in 2016 that the land be released from green belt.

The Portfolio Holder advised he would come back to the Councillor with a written response.

Councillor England referred to the mural that the Portfolio Holder mentioned and asked; would the Portfolio Holder arrange to have the lamppost moved so the mural is no longer partially obscured?

The Portfolio Holder responded that he would investigate the possibility or come up with an alternative, commenting that he suspects the matter will come under Hertfordshire Highways, but confirmed he will look at it.

Councillor England suggested spot lights to retain illumination but to also highlight one of the 'gems' of Hemel Hempstead.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed he would look at this suggestion.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

#### **Financial Services**

The Financial Services team continues to lead on the financial reporting and monitoring requirements arising from the coronavirus pandemic. This covers both internal reporting and the external reporting requirements necessary to ensure the Council maximises the relevant pandemic related Government funding that we are eligible for.

The Service has overseen the conclusion of the external audit of the council's financial accounts for 2019/20, and the council has achieved yet another unqualified opinion on the accounts from the independent external auditor. Members should take assurance from this outcome of the strength of the Council's finances and financial processes.

During this busy period the service have continued to deliver additional service improvements and during November are finalising the implementation of a new payroll system and are leading on the move to a new payroll provider.

Budget setting for 2021/22 is the team's current focus and will be for the next couple of months. The first stage in this process will be the first formal Member scrutiny of budget proposals in early December.

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

As you can imagine the impact of Covid lockdowns and uncertainty have had a significant impact on the financial sustainability of our commercial partners. In 20/21 the council is projecting a loss of income from commercial rents of circa £1m, and with an uncertain impact in the medium term.

The commercial property team is continuing to work closely with our commercial tenants to provide support and guidance where possible, to improve the outcomes for the council and businesses alike.

The commercial assets team have also been overseeing the completion of the demolition of the Ex civic centre, and with the demolition of the existing towers the end of the project is imminent.

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

The team are continuing to play an important role in the administration of Government support during the pandemic, in addition to their normal roles.

Working with Finance colleagues the service has implemented and is overseeing the £500 payments of the governments Test and Trace scheme. This provides payments to those residents that are on low incomes and instructed to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace.

In early November the Revenues Service has rolled out the application process for businesses to claim additional government support grants to cover the present 4 week lockdown and are at present working with officers across the council to develop further business support grant policies, to support local businesses through these uncertain financial times.

Questions:

Councillor Guest asked; what is the Portfolio Holder's view on the next six months for the local economy?

The Portfolio Holder responded that we are in quite an affluent area of the Country, primarily a services based economy, and a lot of people commute in to London and are now working from home. From the statistics coming in, our businesses on the whole are holding up quite well. The grants and furlough scheme has helped businesses keep their head above water. The next six months are unknown, it will depend on the roll out of a vaccine and central government grants. The Portfolio Holder expressed that he is not as pessimistic as he was in March, feels have robust businesses here.

Councillor Allen referred to a question he raised a year ago; what is the process and timing for using the capital set aside for works to Durrants Lakes, Apsley?

The Portfolio Holder advised he would have to come back to the Councillor with a written answer.

Councillor Allen expressed that the residents of Apsley have been waiting a long time and encouraged the Portfolio Holder to reach out to willing partners who are waiting in the wings.

The Mayor commented that there are a number of offers of written answers to questions tonight and asked that those are provided in a timely manner and reminded Portfolio Holders that when responding emails should be circulated to all Council Members to replicate that when verbal answers are given within the meeting they would be heard by all Members.

Councillor Silwal asked; with regard to Business Rate relief; how much have we provided?

The Portfolio Holder advised we have given relief of just over £26m.

Councillor Tindall referred to the old Civic Centre demolition and asked if the Council incurred any costs due to the delays that were not the Council's responsibilities.

The Portfolio Holder responded that his understanding is that there were no additional costs, advising he would check and confirm back to Councillor Tindall.

Councillor Beauchamp asked the Portfolio Holder to advise how much we have paid in Local Authority Discretionary Grants to businesses?

The Portfolio Holder advised that we have now paid out £1.4m in grants to businesses under this scheme.

The Leader of the Council responded to the earlier question from Councillor Allen regarding Apsley lakes and advised it is not a finance issue so the Portfolio Holder would not have this information. However, he is able to update that he recently walked area with Dave Kirk of Boxmoor Trust and they have reached an agreement to take forward items which will involve using some of the funds that Councillor Allen refers to. The Leader commented that given the current constraints on meetings and on-site visits it is a challenge to take forward, but it is something that is in hand.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

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

The supported housing service is currently accredited to the Emerging Code of Sheltered Housing's (Erosh) code of practice, a set of service standards that are assessed on a three yearly basis. Following three days of remote assessment, the service has retained its 'Outstanding' award, which is really positive.

The full report is due to follow however leadership, safeguarding and team performance were all highlighted as strengths. This is particularly pleasing due to the fact that services have been impacted greatly due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **Strategic Housing**

- Service continuing to deal with response in relation to Covid-19 and ensuring that all households at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping irrespective of eligibility or priority need are protected and given accommodation;
- October Rough Sleeper Court validated by Homeless Link and MHCLG, with 7 rough sleepers reported in Dacorum, interventions with Outreach ongoing;
- Cold weather and rough sleeping plans in development with partner agencies, which will include claim for £10k of cold weather funding to MHCLG;
- Increasing challenges within the service due to volume of complex clients being supported in temporary accommodation and within the service, engaging with relevant services and partner agencies to ensure appropriate support is in place.

- Full review of the Allocations Policy to commence from November 2020 with Tenant & Leaseholder Committee and Member engagement taking place in November and December

## Property and Place

Due to the current pandemic the repairs service as a whole has been significantly affected. Measures have had to be put in place in line with government guidelines to ensure all stake holders safety. All work streams have been effected and expenditure reduced accordingly but not to the detriment of residents safety. Examples of reduced work activity are the suspension of non-essential capital refurbishment within tenant's homes. (K&B's)

Bespoke risk and method statements (safe systems of work) have been produced and we are now undertaking a full resumed responsive repairs and empty home service, and are reducing the backlog of responsive repairs.

We have continued to achieve high levels of gas servicing during these difficult times, and even achieved 100% access during September.

The cleaning service is continuing to work tirelessly to undertake its function and apply additional cleaning to areas such as supported housing.

## Housing Development

Kylna Court	This project is shortlisted in the Construction News 2020 Awards and featured in a RIBA publication promoting high quality affordable housing schemes.
Martindale	Practical completion achieved 21/10/20 and provided the 300 <sup>th</sup> social home since the start of the programme in 2014. The majority of the market sale units are under offer, with only 2 remaining for sale
Magenta Court	Completed and fully occupied
St Margaret's Way	Site investigations underway and a resident newsletter is being developed to provide an update on the next steps
Paradise Fields	Planning to go to November's DM Committee, consideration of a suitable road name underway (Mountbatten Way/View front runner) Procurement of the Contractor will be via an existing framework to reduce the timescale.
Gaddesden Row	Rural site completion scheduled for December and incorporates use of renewable technologies.
Eastwick Row	Cabinet approved appointment of Contractor. Mobilising project to start in 2021.
Coniston Road	Cabinet approved appointment of Contractor. Mobilising project to start in 2021.
Wilstone	Design commenced and engagement with Town Council to obtain their views has taken place. Planning Application to be submitted before end of the year.
Bulbourne	Instructed to progress design. Site purchase still with Tring parish.
LA1	Design completed to stage 1 but awaiting confirmation on the location of an access road to the Homes England site.



Cherry Bounce	Architect and Employers Agent appointed, kick off meeting to be held. Consideration of units for market sale underway.
Paradise Depot	Outline designs have been worked up and finalising details for the DENS facility is required before these can be completed.
Garage Sites	8 No sites - Initial design complete and ready to submit for pre application with Planning Dept. Resident communication starting to go out. Planning application to be submitted before end of the year.
Randall's Ride	Planning application to be submitted before end of the year. Solution feature identified as part of site survey, (like a small sink hole) which is being made safe and not considered detrimental to the development of the site.
Stoneycroft	Feasibility work being undertaken to assess options for the redevelopment to improve options for social housing on the site.
Varney Road	Developing a brief and feasibility study for consideration.

Questions:

There were no further questions.

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

Questions:

The Mayor agreed to accept a question to Councillor Williams as Leader of the Council from Councillor Pringle who lost connection earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Pringle asked about the information being provided around the COVID 19 outbreak and asked if the Leader agrees that, as we emerge from the recent lockdown, it is important for schools & businesses to have up to date information to allow them to take appropriate action, suggesting an 'at a glance' report on our website would be useful.

The Leader responded and agreed that the information would be useful. He commented that he is not aware that it is available in ward figures as requested. The Leader further commented on the difficulty in finding a reliable source of data to ensure what we are telling our residents is reliable. Councillor Williams advised he would speak to the Chief Executive outside of the meeting to discuss this further.

Councillor Pringle expressed her gratitude for that response and asked the Leader, would he agree that it is important that people are made aware that a local breakout is in their specific area so they are aware it will actually impact them?

The Leader agreed with Councillor Pringle and advised that the Herts Leaders meet weekly on an Outbreak Board and it is recognised that people do not always recognise ward boundaries and also move around within boroughs, so we need people to realise that those precautions and measures need to be taken across the Borough, not just on a ward by ward basis, so we are being vigilant across the piece.

Councillor Stevens addressed the Portfolio Holder and referred to climate change and noted there is a climate change report update due in February. He asked; can we ask for an update to be provided on plans to install electric charring points in our car park.

Councillor Williams advised that in any climate change review this would need to be included in any case. He added that he recently discussed the supply of power to our car parks with Procurement & Contracted Services Group Manager because we do have an issue, not just with installation of equipment but the situation that in almost all of our car parks there is not sufficient electric capacity. Recognised the ability to install machines is dependent on having sufficient capacity in the network.

Councillor Stevens asked; will they need help with infrastructure plans going forward?

Councillor Williams responded it is not so much an infrastructure issue, there is capacity in the networks, it's about bringing it into our car parks; that is a cost the Council will need to meet.

## **5 MOTIONS**

### **a Local Plan**

A motion was proposed by Councillor Tindall and seconded by Councillor Taylor. An amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Griffiths which was accepted by Councillor Tindall. Therefore, the substantive motion proposed (as amended) was as follows:

#### **Local Plan**

In the 2019 General Election both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Manifestos promised to deliver 300,000 new homes a year to address the national housing shortage.

This Council believes that this target is in excess of the ONS projections of housing need and will lead to higher levels of Green Belt development in the Dacorum Local Plan than is necessary to meet our housing need.

This Council therefore requests

- the Leader of the Council to write to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government asking that the figure of 922 per annum be revised in line with the figures from the Office of National Statistics which project a need for between 170-200,000 new homes to be started per annum significantly below the 300,000 proposed in the manifesto, and
- A copy of that letter be sent to the Borough's two Members of Parliament with a request that they make representations to the Secretary of State in support of the Council's position

A vote was held:

43 for,  
0 against,  
0 abstentions,

Therefore the motion was carried.

Councillor Tindall thanked everyone in the production of this motion and felt it was a good example of how local authorities can work together cross party for the benefit of our residents.

**b Feeding Hungry Children**

The following Motion was withdrawn by Councillor Symington:

**Feeding Hungry Children**

1. This Council notes:

- a. That numbers of pupils entitled to Free School Meals are rising fast.
- b. That every child who is entitled to Free School Meals is a sign of a family under significant financial pressure.
- c. That this picture of increasing child poverty is supported by the rapid rise in the number of families dependent on food banks.
- d. That children who are hungry are less able to learn and thrive at school.
- e. That the extension of the school meals voucher scheme (campaigned for by Marcus Rashford) to cover the period of the summer holiday was incredibly important and valuable to families in food poverty.
- f. The very welcome commitment from Education Minister in the Welsh Assembly, Kirsty Williams, to guarantee free school meal provision for school holidays until at least Easter 2021.

2. This Council recognises that the second lockdown will lead to further increases in child poverty and

- a. supports the calls by the Child Food Poverty Task Force, supported by Marcus Rashford and many leading food suppliers and producers, for the expansion of free school meals provision to every child whose family is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent, or with a low-income and no recourse to public funds.
- b. calls for the provision of food vouchers to cover school holidays and periods of lockdown for all families in receipt of Universal Credit or with low-income and no recourse to public funds.
- c. asks that Healthy Start vouchers should be increased in value to £4.25, and expanded to be made available to all those in receipt of Universal Credit or with a low-income and no recourse to public funds.

3. Therefore this Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for

- a. extend eligibility for free school meals to every pupil whose parents or guardians are in receipt of Universal Credit
- b. food vouchers for every one of those pupils in every school holiday and during any period of lockdown in which schools are closed
- c. extended eligibility for free school meals to pupils from low-income families whose parents or guardians have no recourse to public funds or who are destitute asylum seekers under s4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Councillor Symington made the following statement to support her decision to withdraw the motion:

“Since proposing this Motion, I note the government’s decision to fund a new £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme to be run by councils – in our case, Herts County Council – with at least 80% earmarked to support with food and bills and to cover the period until the end of March 2021.

I would like to thank my Liberal Democrat colleagues at Herts County Council for raising an Extra-ordinary Meeting to discuss extending the provision, which was agreed yesterday.

Despite the reminder by Cllr Elliot that Dacorum is a relatively affluent borough, there are still over 2000 children in receipt of Free School Meals.

Unicef reports that children who are exposed to food insecurity are more likely to face adverse health outcomes and developmental risk. Food hardship among children also predicts impaired academic performance, and is positively associated with experiencing shame at being out of food and behavioural problems.

So, I am delighted that as a society, we are able to recognise the imperative to ensure children do not go hungry in the particularly difficult times, as a result of low incomes.

In the light of the recent actions by the government and Herts County Council, I withdraw my motion, until there is greater clarity about the longer term need and provision after the current scheme expires in March 2021”

## **6 QUESTIONS**

1. Question to Councillor Williams from Councillor Tindall:

Q1: Given the misinformation and falsehoods that abound on Facebook and other Social Media, it would be good for the Council to ensure that residents of Dacorum have the opportunity to access accurate knowledge of the Council’s proceedings and deliberations. Please can the Leader of the Council inform us when video film of those proceedings and deliberations will be made available on the Council’s website, or on other means accessible to residents?

Response: I do agree that there’s lots of misinformation and rumours can start on social media and in some cases that’s not helpful when people who do have access to

that information post stuff which they could research and get more accurate information before posting. But that is the nature of social media. The recording and showing of council meetings and procedure is something which I discussed with the previous Chief Executive and you might recall at the beginning of this year we talked about trying a recording of a council meeting and found that the equipment in the council chamber wasn't sufficient to enable that to be done with any degree of quality that residents would find useful to follow. I agreed with the previous Chief Executive that we would upgrade the equipment in the council chamber and conference rooms one and two. That work has been completed in the last couple of days and we now have the capacity to record and broadcast meetings live. We also have the capacity within the new system to hold hybrid meetings where some members of the council can be in the chamber and some members can be remote. So we are in a position now to broadcast and have the equipment for that but of course that is dependent on us being able to get back into what you might consider to be a more normal routine of proceedings. Whilst we're currently using Microsoft Teams and we're very grateful for this so that we can order some degree of normality and business to proceed, I do not think the quality of nature of these recordings are sufficient for our website as records of our proceedings. It is our intention when we begin to move forward with a more normal cycle of meetings to make use of the newly installed equipment and make those meetings available in both live and recorded forms.

2. Question to Councillor Williams from Councillor Symington:

Q1: Given the recent advice from the Dacorum Borough Council Legal Department regarding the Council's responsibility to maintain the unadopted road at Broadwater, Berkhamsted, could the portfolio holder assure the residents, other landowners and users of the DBC-owned car park that the Council will commit to a clear, transparent and long term resolution to the recurring maintenance issue?

Response: As Councillor Symington has referred to legal advice received from our legal department, advice that she has benefitted from that I haven't, I think it would be inappropriate of me to make any comment upon the situation or the advice which she has received before also seeing that advice. He requested a copy of that document from the legal department so he could be in a position to reply to Councillor Symington in writing.

Councillor Symington advised that she had two supplementary questions that she would also like answered by Councillor Williams once he had sought advice from the legal department, which were as follows:

Q2: Now that the potholes have been fixed and the road is on a good state of repair, would the Portfolio Holder be willing to enter into discussions with Herts County Council about having the road adopted? (the poor state of repair was given by HCC as a reason for not considering adoption).

Q3: What are the Portfolio Holder's intentions for the longer term use of the car park (viz: charges, free parking allowance – currently 4 hours- etc) and how will he work

with other stakeholders (such as the tennis and bowls clubs who need the free parking) to find an inclusive way forward?

3. Question to Councillor Graham Sutton from Councillor Symington:

Q1. What can the portfolio holder do to help expedite the delivery of the now HCC-owned Durrants Lane pitches for use by the community given that DBC was originally taking on the lease and subsequently decided not to?

Response: Councillor G Sutton said he would need to provide Councillor Symington with a written response.

Councillor Symington advised that she had two supplementary questions that she would also like answered by Councillor G Sutton, which were as follows:

Q2. Could the portfolio holder explain the reasons for the council deciding in July 2020 that it would not take the lease from HCC for the playing fields on behalf of the community, thereby failing to provide much needed additional football pitches for youth clubs?

Q3. How does the portfolio holder intend to restore the resident's confidence in the planning process and delivery of Section 106 agreements in light of the failure of this one?

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

None.

## **8 CABINET REFERRALS**

### **Resolved:**

That the following be approved:

### **22 September 2020**

#### **8.1 CA/076/20 Budget Monitoring Q1 report**

### **Decision**

1. Recommend to Council approval of the revised capital programme to move £7.3m slippage identified at Quarter 1 into financial year 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix C.
2. Recommend to Council approval of supplementary revenue budgets as follows:
  - Supplementary budget of £140k in The Forum premises budget to fund the costs of ensuring the building is safe for staff to return under Coronavirus.

- Supplementary budget of £60k in the Premises Insurance budget to fund additional costs of Uninsured Losses, to be funded from the Uninsured Losses reserve.
  - Supplementary budget of £253k in the Building Control service to fund the final settlement of Work in Progress following the transfer of the service to Hertfordshire Building Control. This is to be funded from the Management of Change reserve.
  - Supplementary budget of £33k in the Garage service, funded from the Invest to Save reserve, to fund a specialist project manager to lead on improvements to the garage letting process.
3. Recommend to Council approval of supplementary capital budgets as follows:
- A capital budget of £90k in the Waste and Recycling Capital budgets for new Wheeled Bins.
  - Additional budget of £400k in the Fleet Replacement Budget, to fund additional vehicles.  
Capital budgets of £24k and £19k to fund electrical upgrade works at Berkhamsted Civic Centre and Victoria Hall Tring respectively.
  - Capital budget of £15k for essential roofing improvements at The Denes.

## **8.2 CA/078/20 Loan agreement with West Herts Crematorium Committee**

### **Decision**

1. A £6m loan to the partner authorities of the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee (WHCJC), and a supporting Deed of Contribution and Indemnity and delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Finance and Operations in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources to finalise terms of the required legal documentation.

## **20 October 2020**

## **8.3 CA/087/20 Treasury Management Report**

### **Decision**

The acceptance of the report on Treasury Management performance in 2019/20 and the Prudential Indicators for 2019/20.

## **8.4 CA/088/20 Medium Term Financial Strategy**

## **Decision**

The approval of the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2020/21 – 2024/25, including the recommendations at Section 2 of the Strategy.

## **8.5 CA/089/20 Local Plan Consultation Report**

### **Decision**

1. That the Emerging Strategy for Growth (Appendix 1) is published for consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
2. That authority is delegated to make changes to the Emerging Strategy for Growth , including any necessary to reflect the Cabinet's and/or Council discussions and decision, to the Assistant Director Planning, Development and Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure.

Councillor Williams presented the item containing the next iteration of Dacorum's new local plan; a great deal of work by members and officers over the last 18 months setting up the councils draft policies and proposals for new development to 2038. He fully recognised that the growth proposals put forward in this plan are not without controversy. Indeed there has been lengthy debate by members during two meetings of the SPAE committee in September and there are concerns about the overall number of homes we have to plan for, the amount of Greenbelt land required and the impact this will leave on some of our towns and villages. He thanked the overview and scrutiny committee for their thorough scrutiny of the proposal to this stage and for the work of the member task and finish group which has met for several months now with officers to guide the shape and content of the plan. He had no doubt that this consultation has sparked a great deal of discussion amongst our residents but he reminded them that this was a consultation only and no decision is taken by this consultation. This is a genuine opportunity to comment on the proposals, we will listen to the reviews received and there is opportunity to change the content in the plan before we finalise. Whilst many will be concerns about the total level of growth planned in the next local plan, there are positives in the plan which we wouldn't want to lose as part of the process; new policies that will make sure new developments are as green as we can make them, delivering on our climate emergency aspirations, a new approach to affordable housing that will mean many more genuinely affordable homes are delivered, and for the first time a detailed infrastructure delivery plan setting out what infrastructure we need, where and when, and ensuring this is delivered in order to support any potential growth. We understand the concerns of some members that now is not the time to be consulting on a plan of this magnitude, Covid-19 undoubtedly as indicated earlier has profoundly changed the way we live and work and the governments recently published planning white paper could have a significant impact for how we plan in the future. We understand there is a temptation to hold off but it is important that we get a plan in place and it has been three years since we last consulted the public on the local plan. Despite the uncertainties, government continues to press for plans to be in place and we need a proactive strategy in there to support



our economic recovery. Members will debate this and come to a view on this issue this evening, but as Leader of the Council, the reason he was pressing for us to continue with the consultation and hoped all members would feel able to support that, is that there was lots of discussions we have heard about government targets about the potential for the ministers to make announcements around the algorithms that distribute the houses and the number of potential homes that Dacorum has to accommodate to decrease. I think we all hope that is the case and that the currently suggested 922 is decreased by whatever action the government takes, but we cannot be certain of that and we need to prepare for the fact that all major political parties have a commitment to deliver 300k homes a year and it's very possible that the government will stick to that commitment and it may through its algorithm redistribute that number around the country but it's not certain our number will go down and could potentially as a worst case scenario go back up to near the 1025 as it was before. We have committed in our motion, and this administration, is committed to tackling the government on this and it's very possible that we may come to a view that we may be upset with the government requirement and we may want to produce a local plan next year or whenever it might be that delivers below the governments requirements for Dacorum, and in doing so I think it is essential that we have the evidence to back up what will be a very difficult argument to make. He believed passionately that one of the things that will help in the argument is consulting on the level of 922 and getting what he hoped would be several thousands of letters or comments from residents objecting to that level of development of all sorts of reasons. The proposed consultation will be extended from the statutory 6 weeks to 10 weeks taking us into February, and he hoped it would engage many of our residents. He firmly believed that if we come to a point where we are saddled with such a high number that being able to turn to a comprehensive rejection of those numbers will support us in that argument and for that reason he believed it was the right time to go out to consultation because the planning process and demand for new housing, the pressure we have from our developers and the fact that we've gone beyond the five year plan period, we are going to come under pressure. Therefore he urged all members to support the resolution from cabinet this evening.

Councillor Tindall said he would like to move deferment of the consultation. He found himself in a difficult position proposing deferment of consultation but for him a consultation on an incomplete local plan was not a meaningful consultation. He accepted a lot of what Councillor Williams had said, but at the end of the line we do not have the transport infrastructure studies and the geography of our borough is such that transport is actually quite a large area of concern. Also we are in lockdown because of Covid-19, hopefully ending early December, but then everybody is immediately looking forward to Christmas so he would consider that starting the consultation sometime after Christmas when more facts are known. He felt there were an awful lot of uncertainties in this draft and felt it would be helpful to wait a few weeks/months until everything is in place. He said he had been part of the process in which this local plan had been developed and he thanked the officers involved that devoted an enormous amount of time to it, often under difficult circumstances, and we have been served well by our officers on this one. He believed there were sufficient concerns to take this unusual step and ask for a delay so that all of the various parts of the local plan can be made available to that everybody has the opportunity to go into a full consultation

under perhaps more pleasant times so that the council can be really certain that we have the residents opinions when we look at the results at the end of that consultation. He proposed that members vote against a consultation at this time.

Councillor Ransley said she would like to ask for a delay in this consultation. She felt it's really important that we consult with our residents and whilst Councillor Williams talked about uncertainties there are two certainties; we are in a pandemic at the moment and also Christmas is coming. Some people cannot access the plan in the way they would like to as it's very difficult to look at maps on a computer screen and those that don't have computers are using phones. Therefore she felt when people are able to look at bigger screens, talk to people in person, it's really important for them to be able to do that.

Councillor Birnie said he had sympathy with the views expressed by the opposition but he was more concerned that we get on with this process if possible. He said we were all aware that the numbers could increase or decrease when the government makes a decision, but what concerned him was the comments about a huge amount of extra work relating to such infrastructure matters as school provision would be necessary which will delay the process even further. He wanted to be absolutely sure that despite the delay this complete revamp would cause, the council is preferred to engage in the necessary drastic revamp of the plan however long it may take even if it delays what officers and members would like which is to get to the section 18 review. He appreciated the Leaders urge to get on with matters and in particular to gauge the opinion generally of the public, and he did agree that, for example, if we got a resounding no from the public that it would strengthen our hand in going back to government and asking for a reduction in the numbers of housing required. He wanted to be absolutely certain that the whole process of a complete revamp will be gone through diligently by officers even though it's a huge amount of work. Like Councillor Tindall, he was also part of the task and finish group and helped prepare this draft and he was prepared to go through the whole thing line by line if necessary to make sure that it's perfect and right for all residents.

Councillor Symington supported the proposal to defer this consultation. She paid tribute to all the officers involved and everybody that has contributed so much to the local plan already. The fact is that things have very materially changed and only on Monday we heard the Minister of State say he will be making a statement on revised plans in the weeks ahead, and he told MP's 'the Covid crisis was causing the most substantial change to city centres and town centres since the second world war.' She felt if that was what we were getting from the Minister of State then we should also be pausing for reflection. He went on to say that the government would consider what those opportunities will be for repurposing of offices into residential, for turning retail into mixed use, and that will lead us to a different approach to distributing housing numbers across the country. So this from the very man that we should be taking it from, to be going to consultation with that as our background just two days ago, feels completely wrong. She sympathised for the uncertainty of residents, to be going to consultation about something they fear or worry about when there is so much going on and so much may change. She said we were coming up to Christmas and there may well could be another lockdown after Christmas so the 10 week consultation period doesn't solve the problem. In terms of predatory developers, we have a current plan in

place until 2031 and she said she knew it wasn't the right plan but that doesn't mean we have to go through all of this and the residents of Berkhamsted feel they've already been through a regulation 18 two or three years ago. They came up with a lot of suggestions and those haven't been ignored but to have to go back to them and say we're going to do another regulation 18 and we're only doing it to get negative feedback sends all the wrong messages. She felt we need to go with a positive vision of what we want and not a negative vision of something that we're expecting people to be batted away. She strongly believed that however difficult it is to turn away from all the work that has been done we should be parking it until we have resolution on some of these issues so she fully supported delaying this consultation.

Councillor Taylor said when we were first asked to review the draft local plan in the overview and scrutiny committee the draft plan made reference to a transport plan. When he asked to see this he was told it hadn't been published. If you plan to increase the population of a town by 2030 or 50%, you must first plan the infrastructures to support these people, you must plan the schools and the healthcare, but most of all you must plan the transport, for the transport system ties everything else together. We have discussed the need to get people out of their cars by providing good public transport, but this must be planned in before the houses are built. If not, people would just get back in their cars and in places like Berkhamsted and Tring this will cause gridlock. These plans are incomplete, they have failed to address some of the most basic needs of the town and to ask public to consult on such a plan would be an insult to our voters. What do we expect them to say? Where are the roads? Where are the schools? Where is the healthcare? To publish a plan without addressing these needs is a dereliction of duty. When we were told to review a document where critical information was missing, he felt that we were being treated in contempt, and that the process was not being taken seriously. If we now publish this document for review we are telling our voters that we treat them with contempt, we treat them as fools and that their opinion is not valid. Therefore he asked councillors to vote to reject this consultation at this time and tell our voters we are their servers, not their masters.

Councillor England said first of all we need more properly affordable housing in Dacorum for the people on the waiting list. He looked through the document and couldn't find a mention of the waiting list. Second of all, we're in a position of needing to consult on one of the most important but incomplete documents over Christmas and in the middle of a lockdown. This must be a historically poor choice of time to do a complex consultation, and this is the only chance to change things. As Councillor Tindall has already said, section 19 is not a creative opportunity, it is a take it or leave it. Why is there an urgency at Westminster and why in the Cabinet? Why for anyone of us who actually votes for this draft plan to go to consultation, what is the justification for the urgency. Any delay caused by the government could not put DBC at risk, surely? MP Gagan Mohindra says he wants to get going with the consultation but Hemel isn't ready, MP Mike Penning hasn't even commented to his knowledge, and neither is the plan ready. Notwithstanding the uncertainty about administrative housing communities and local government plans, the government is recommending continued work on local plans, but Dacorum is just at that particular stage. The point at which the public is to be consulted and can actually change things, which makes this a nonsense. It's a nonsense to carry on working on a plan and putting it through the

rigmarole of a consultation when there is so much that can change. Surely the ministry recommendation applies more to preparatory work on options and not the crucible that we're in now. He referred to paragraph 3.7 in the report to cabinet and felt it was a curious statement. It quoted 'the development of the local plan is being informed by various evidence studies. Key documents are listed in appendix 3. Many of the studies have reached an advanced stage but are still in draft form. These will be finalised and published in due course. Finalisation of this background evidence work is not crucial at this stage in the process but will be essential when the local plan is finalised.' So that's saying that this information is not critical for the public but it's essential when the plan is finalised. How can those two things be reconciled? This is disrespectful to the public. They're being given the chance to change the plan but without all the information, information which we say ourselves is going to be essential when we come to the end. He had sympathy for what Councillor Symington was saying about delaying the consultation but he felt that consultation was a good thing and asked if the Leader would give a commitment to allow a repeat section 18 consultation if the government moves the goal post on housing by more than 10%? If not, he would vote against the consultation. There is too much uncertainty as to make this consultation if it is the only change to change things, feel premature and likely unsound. One final thought, for a plan which represents the 27% gross just in Hemel, let alone Tring at 55%, he would want the council to provide a local plan to sustainably meet the current housing list.

Councillor Pringle said she was speaking on behalf of the residents in Northchurch and all of Dacorum because these proposed draft plans are going to have an enormous effect on the character of our area. Northchurch residents in particular are really concerned that what they have always understood to be recognised as a rural village is now being treated as an urban area and an extension of Berkhamsted and actually a significant proportion of the proposed development in Berkhamsted is actually falling in Northchurch. Furthermore it's described as the urban area of Northchurch but it is actually country fields at the moment. This is quite a shocking revelation for our residents that this is even being proposed and therefore I am absolutely certain that all my residents in Northchurch will want to have a full say and those residents are very diverse in their backgrounds, ages and abilities. At the moment we are in lockdown and there are limitations of trying to communicate effectively through I.T. Only people who have desktop computers will be able to properly scrutinise this and we need to think of the number of people who rely only on a phone; they won't even be able to read the local plan, and then there are of course many people who don't own a computer at all; many of those are elderly and disabled. She felt this local plan excluded significant proportions of people and highlighted that over 1200 residents of Dacorum had signed a petition seeking an extension or a postponement on this plan because of lockdown and Christmas. If those residents were prepared to sign a petition they will also be prepared to judicially review whether the consultation was actually valid. She echoed the words of colleagues and thanked officers for the hard work that they had put in to this local plan, and the last thing our officers at DBC need is to deal with the complex judicial review based on the fact that this was launched during lockdown and that may well be something that people will seek to pursue given the number of people that are observing tonight's meeting. It would seem to be a flawed decision to go ahead with consultation at this time regardless of the merits of the plan, knowing that later on perhaps sometime further in the process, this could be

subject to legal challenge. There's a very good case for postponing this plan and whilst postponed there is opportunity to look at the comments made by other councillors earlier and to look at the figures from the Office of National Statistics, the infrastructure problems regarding transport and to actually think about how we might take this forward.

Councillor Uttley referred to the algorithms which was loosely mentioned earlier in the meeting. We have heard how the figure does not reflect the ONS figures but ironically the algorithm does use the latest ONS projections. The average expected growth from 2020-2030 is 355 homes per year and this is used as a starting point, however after this an affordability adjustment is applied to the figure which is calculated from affordability figures in each area from 2009-2019. For Dacorum this results in an adjustment factor of 2.6; 355 homes is multiplied by 2.6 to get our number of 922. Whilst she shared some of the concerns voiced by the Leader regarding the need for a plan to be in place, she was more concerned that this proposed consultation will not in essence be a genuine, meaningful consultation. The local plan document itself is 370 pages and there are several other accompanying documents, some of which, as mentioned, are not finalised. For example the strategic design guide, the detailed design guide, trees and woodlands policy, local transport plan, South West Herts housing needs assessment and sustainable transport strategy, to name just a few. Whilst videos and email information is welcome, it is difficult to see how our plan, amounting to several hundred, possibly over one thousand pages, can be properly reviewed, digested, and understood by the public as it stands. She echoed Councillor Pringle's comments regarding the safety of this consultation.

Councillor Freedman said a lot of his points had been covered well by his colleagues. He highlighted that the petition mentioned earlier had received 1,249 signatures in three days so it showed the local feeling on the issue and it had only been publicised in smaller groups. He gave respect to the officers that had produced this plan but felt in order to fully appreciate the work they put into it they should feel that at least some of the members would be justifying this plan to the public. If we go to consultation and absolutely no one on council has got a voice saying we actually want this plan, which it sounded like from what the Leader was saying earlier he almost hopes that the plan goes to the public and gets rejected, I worry that officers won't feel particularly fulfilled. He said he wouldn't be supporting the consultation as he believed we want to have something that is certain enough that members of the public will feel that they are having meaningful consultation on it and that DBC is listening to what they say.

Councillor Suqlain Mahmood said he had listened to the speakers so far and noticed a few contradictions. Firstly someone had said there was not enough time to publicise the consultation but judging by the number of emails received, the petition people have mentioned and those observing tonight I don't think the argument stands. He felt we should proceed with the consultation and gave a few reasons why. He felt it gauged public opinion from the outset. This is a consultation and not a done deal. Consultation will invite scrutiny from the public and the fact that this is so well publicised already will help when the council start publicising through Dacorum Digest etc. and then it is up to the public whether they provide feedback or not. He said Councillor England made reference to the long waiting list for housing and felt the policy did address that if you read between the lines as it refers to 35% more affordable housing which we

desperately need in the borough. It also gives hope to the young people whether they live in the villages or urban centres like Hemel Hempstead, they deserve to think about their future and to live in a house in a village and we need to help them get on to the housing ladder. We are going out hopefully with the worst case scenario which will invite people's views and opinions and then we go in to the second phase when the detailed plan is developed. He felt members had made some good points today and hopefully these points will be picked up by officers. Revising a consultation after having so much feedback is easier to do than to wait around, we don't know how long Covid-19 will be around so what we need to do as a council is carry on with our business and proceed with this consultation. He said we all voted to address the climate emergency and the beauty of this plan it addresses a reduction in carbon emissions and by 2030 our houses are going to be carbon neutral. We shouldn't stop the consultation of a policy because of threats of legal challenges or action, we should go ahead and give our youths a future. He finalised by saying he fully supported the consultation.

Councillor Hollinghurst was fully in favour of deferring the consultation because there are far too many unknowns. The consultation follows the same pattern as previous ones which in his opinion historically were flawed. They end up being developer driven. They may not be designed to do that but that's how they always turn out because built into the process there are always paused points and at these there is a call for additional sites. So it's guaranteed, the imaginative developers are going to come forward with more sites and even if you reject the majority of them you'll still end up with a few. Not only that, once a site has been put forward it is vulnerable to development from that point on and that's what he means by developer driven. He said at least twice in briefings and discussions in council meetings during this process he's heard it said that HCC say they need more schools. He found that difficult to understand and believe, we don't build the houses to fill up schools requested by another authority. You build the schools to cater for the families in the houses that you feel are needed and the extra schools are contingent on the planned housing numbers, not the other way round. These numbers are being questioned, we're going to write and express our concerns to the ministers in the government and local MP's. That particular point hits Tring and Berkhamsted hard, they've got at least one extra school that we don't need in the equation, in his opinion. There is so much uncertainty around, nobody knows. Let's wait until the fog clears. At the risk of being unpopular, we've got another very large uncertainty looming on the horizon, for better or for worse, like it or not, we have chosen as a nation to move the focus of our trade, our endeavour and our development from facing south and east to facing west. That will affect the whole pattern of our business activities and hence the whole pattern of housing settlements. It's going to shift the pattern of our trade towards the Atlantic and that will have its effect on London and on housing demand in areas like this and we haven't got a clue how that's going to pan out. It might be nonsense but we don't know. It is only prudent that we put this back for 3-6 months or however many months it takes, to get a better situation with Covid-19 and it gives us time to get people to rethink those numbers.

Councillor Hearn said she had listened carefully to the Leader justifying going forward with the consultation now and felt that if we're going to build a defence which

demonstrates to the government that we cannot back their current requirements and we must provide evidence to support this claim. If during the consultation period the government comes forward with a lower requirement then this would be welcome and the council's requirements can be amended. As Councillor for Tring East I am certain that residents will in vast number oppose the current proposals to construct such a large number of houses. Remember, Tring is a small historic market town surrounded by Greenbelt on the edge of Chiltern Hills. Tring voices will be heard whenever the consultation takes place.

Councillor Bhinder sought reassurance from officers or Councillor Williams that if there is information missing or things which aren't complete that this won't be picked up by the inspectorate and the consultation potentially being void.

Councillor Anderson said this was obviously going to be a very controversial subject which would exercise minds and hearts considerably. In his ward of Kings Langley it is the number one issue, they had a village poll on the subject and out of 2,000 voters only 13 voted for Greenbelt development and everyone else voted against. It is extremely controversial and he asked that people don't think that anybody proposing we proceed is somehow in favour of developing on Greenbelt as that couldn't be further from the case. As a veteran of at least four local plans he didn't accept that the planning documents are any less complete than usual, contrary to the claims that have been made so far. He made the point that this isn't the last consultation in the process, there are further steps and consultations to undergo and if the situation changes then the plan will change. It's not set in stone. He understood the concerns that members, particularly new members, have in relation to the number of emails that we've all received in the last few days but at the end of the day when it comes to spatial planning process all those emails and even this debate counts for absolutely nothing to the process. What we need is people to participate in a consultation to make their views known so that we have the solid evidence to strengthen our case. In terms of proceeding when we're not certain about the numbers he suggested there is always going to be doubt and in some respects we're in this situation because we delayed this for quite a number of years. At some point you have got to draw a line in the sand and proceed irrespective of the complaints that have been made in the debate thus far, in his view we needed to proceed and gather than evidence. He didn't feel it was disrespectful or undemocratic to ask the public what they think, in fact it would be the other way round. If we denied the public a say in the emerging local plan then that is being undemocratic and disrespectful. We're taking the unusual step of extending the consultation which isn't how the process should be followed and he didn't suspect anybody was going to try and mount a legal challenge off the back of that. If we keep putting things off in the hope they might get better then we run the risk of things getting worse. It is a very delicate situation. He fully understood the objections that people have as he shares the view, he joined the council 20 years ago to fight Greenbelt development and will always do what he can to prevent it. He fully supported proceeding with the consultation and agreed with the comments of the Leader.

Councillor Banks recalled a conversation with a resident many years ago about how she would support no new house building, protect Greenbelt, ensure we had a new hospital, plenty of schools and the infrastructure we needed to live a green and healthy lifestyle here in Dacorum and she still stands by those principles. The resident replied

'where will your children live?' and that question floored her. Inevitably there's going to have to be some house building on green space and although she supported many of the negative comments from members she felt that the democratic process should be followed and we should go to consultation so people could be heard.

Councillor Allen picked up on Councillor Hearn's point that if the numbers are reduced it can be fed in to later iterations of the plan and felt that the concern was a lot of the development is on Greenbelt and once it has gone out in a public document saying that certain Greenbelt is to be deregulated then it is very difficult to put that genie back into the bottle. This is particularly in a climate in which the algorithm that the government has used favours building in the south of England, and particularly in desirable rural parts such as Tring, Berkhamsted and Kings Langley. The concern there is that once these areas ripe for development are out there, developers are going to prefer to build on those areas where the profit is going to be greater for them than in other areas where we need affordable housing. He didn't support this portfolio proposal on the basis that we should not release Greenbelt in a public document until we know we have to.

Councillor Griffiths stressed that she didn't think there was one single member of this council in favour of these figures and felt that was the premise we needed to start from. We are all against building on the Greenbelt. Having been a councillor for a while it's important to stress that everything starts with evidence and we need that evidence. She hoped the numbers would be reduced by government but we have to go with what we have today otherwise we will never go consultation. If guidelines change it can be fed into the process as we go along. We will never have complete information because by definition, when you have the complete information you've adopted the plan. There will always be uncertain information because the world is a moving place, things will keep happening, how long will we delay for? We cannot put the plan on hold because we will get speculative developers. As far as putting Greenbelt in to the public domain, these Greenbelt developments that developers have already land banked this land, they will be pushing for it whether we put it in the open plan or not. This is a legal document, we need to make sure we're following a legal process and we need to make sure that it stays as up to date as it possibly can otherwise we will lose appeals when it goes to the planning inspector. Lockdown is supposedly ending on 2 December and this consultation doesn't start until 27 November and runs through to the beginning of February. That is a much longer period than normal which she welcomed. She requested that everyone that's involved in this meeting tonight talks about the consultation, speaks to all the group they know within Dacorum and feeds into the consultation. We need the evidence. She was thinking about future generations, we all have families in this borough and care about this borough. We could still have a legal challenge if we deferred this consultation. We need to show we've done everything right and done the best we can, step by step.

The Mayor invited Councillor Williams to sum up before a vote was held.

Councillor Williams said he fully accepted that this wasn't a black and white subject and it's quite emotive from people who have strong views one way or the other. He omitted to say, regarding the transport and infrastructure studies that were mentioned, there is the intention to have those reports for Berkhamsted and Tring sustainable



transport strategy which both town councils have been involved with, a draft infrastructure delivery plan which will set out detailed requirements for new infrastructure and the cost of such. These will be available next Friday for the start of the consultation. He felt Councillor Freedman may have misinterpreted his comments earlier in the meeting, suggesting the consultation was to seek to prove that we have got something we don't want. He believed there was a misconception that maybe councils are fully in control of this process but those that have been involved with planning for a number of years will realise that the planning system in this country is very top down and these numbers are handed to us. Potentially one of the consequences of the current consultation on planning is that these numbers won't be something the council can skirt around or be advisory, they're going to be compulsory for each authority. We've talked a lot about ONS figures but they're not what the government is adopting as its number requirement. As mentioned before, they're very much committed to their manifesto pledge for 300,000 homes a year and that produces very high numbers, and there's no guarantee that even with the algorithm being reworked that our numbers will come down. He agreed with lots of comments about affordability and the council has championed building council houses. We've worked hard to retain our stock and are one of the very few councils who builds houses to social rent rather than affordable rents. He agreed that the definition of affordable rents is wide and in his view, in areas such as this where housing is expensive, isn't really affordable but we can only work within the legislation the government puts forward. He reassured members that this was a genuine consultation to seek our resident's views. We will make sure the consultation is very well publicised as we need to do that to get maximum return on it. We will come under pressure to deliver housing and from developers. He has seen the petition that has been mentioned and it is very well intended but it does make assumptions which are not correct. This plan contains excellent work by officers and members and seeks to deliver and demonstrate what the effect on Dacorum would be by delivering to the current governments housing requirements. The evidence we're putting forward is that we can deliver that but it has a consequence for our communities, for our borough, and we want to share that with our residents and get their feedback. It will support us if we, at some point, feel the government hasn't reduced our numbers, the algorithm hasn't changed and we want to go to an inquiry with a plan through regulation 19 consultation. We did that last time with our current plan. He didn't believe that our consultation would fail a legal challenge, it is a robust consultation and even if we wait several months it is unlikely that we would be in a position to hold those sorts of face to face, public meetings. We have many avenues to consult our residents and he believed we will get a firm and robust consultation and that is necessary to strengthen our argument if we are to achieve the best outcome for the long term plan for Dacorum. He appreciated that this was something members will find difficult to come to a view on and he accepted both sides of the argument. He urged members to support the recommendation to go out to consultation.

Councillors England, McDowell and Taylor requested that a recorded vote was held.

A recorded vote was held:

For: Adeleke, Anderson, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Bhinder, Birnie, Durrant, Elliot, Griffiths, Guest, Hearn, Imarni, Maddern, Mahmood (Sobaan),

Mahmood (Suqlain), Peter, Riddick, Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, G Sutton, R Sutton, Timmis, Williams, Wyatt-Lowe (27)

Against: Allen, Barry, Claughton, England, Freedman, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Link, McDowell, Pringle, Ransley, Stevens, Symington, Taylor, Tindall, Townsend, Uttley, Woolner (18)

Abstain: Mayor (1)

Therefore the decision was agreed.

## **8.6 CA/091/20 Car Parking Supplementary Planning Document**

### **Decision**

That the draft SPD is adopted.

## **8.7 CA/092/20 Herts Growth Board – Section 101 Committee**

### **Decision**

- (1) Agree to the establishment of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee and Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Joint Committee and delegate such functions to the committees as set out in the annexed Hertfordshire Growth Board - Integrated Governance Framework and annexed Terms of Reference and Standing Orders for each committee.
- (2) Adopt the Hertfordshire Growth Board - Integrated Governance Framework into the Councils own constitutional framework and delegate authority to the Assistant Director, Corporate and Contracted Services to make any required changes to the Council's constitution to give effect to the Governance Framework.
- (3) Agree that the Council's nominated representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Committee shall be Councillor Andrew Williams as Leader of the Council and the approved substitute shall be Councillor Margaret Griffiths as Deputy Leader
- (4) Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to nominate the Council's representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Joint Committee and approved substitute.

## **9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

## **10 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

None.

## **11 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES**

An additional meeting of the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 25 November was agreed.

**12 REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY - LICENSING ACT 2003**

That Council adopts and publishes in accordance with statutory requirements:-

The draft Statement of Licensing Policy as the Council's 'Statement of Licensing Policy' for the five-year period from 7 January 2021 to 6 January 2026.

The Meeting ended at 10.14 pm