
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

24 FEBRUARY 2021

Present:

MEMBERS:

Douris (Mayor), Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Arslan, 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 (49)

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), K Soley (Communications and Consultation Team Leader), 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 13 January 2021 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

Question 1 from Graham Bright (Grove Fields Residents Association) to Councillor G Sutton;

The Grove Fields Residents Association is a member of the **One Voice** alliance of organisations, united to oppose the Local Plan. I'd like to read out a joint statement from the One Voice alliance.

We the Chiltern Society, Chiltern Countryside Group, Grove Fields Residents Association (GFRA), Berkhamsted Residents Action Group (BRAG), Kings Langley &

District Residents Association (KL&DRA), Berkhamsted Citizens and Tring in Transition as the 'One Voice' alliance, oppose the 'Dacorum Local Plan - Emerging Strategy for Growth' because:

- 1. Whilst the policy on biodiversity is clear, the emerging plan is not explicit enough in terms of **how** Dacorum Council will work with developers and other stakeholders to mitigate Green Belt loss, increase biodiversity and meet National and Hertfordshire's goals for climate change and carbon reduction*
- 2. The proposed number of houses to be built should be significantly lower than the target to reflect **actual demonstrable need** for housing and the high proportion of Green Belt and AONB land in Dacorum, with a primary focus on affordable starter homes*
- 3. A higher proportion of the houses should be built on brownfield land, or established through conversions, in the existing urban areas of Hemel Hempstead, Tring, Berkhamsted and Kings Langley, and **away from areas located in the Green Belt** (which should only be used in exceptional circumstances) and the Chilterns AONB and its setting.*

While not members of the alliance, the Chilterns Conservation Board and CPRE Hertfordshire are working closely as advisors to the One Voice alliance."

Each member organisation of the alliance will respond individually to the public consultation, however, we are united to oppose the Local Plan during and after the consultation.

We are very concerned by the robustness of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Sustainable Transport Strategy for Tring because these key documents appear to have been rushed in their development and propose solutions that will not work. Our reasons for this concern are as follows:

1. Due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, on-site observations have not been possible and have been replaced by desktop checks.
2. It was stated that it is not feasible or cost effective to address sustainable strategy issues identified because of the historic and physically constrained network of roads in Tring
3. It was stated that the locations of the 1,800 houses to the east of Tring will make it a significant challenge to encourage sustainable travel behaviour
4. The solution puts forward zero large-scale, expensive and complex infrastructure such as new road links and junctions, and major new public transport routes
5. If the Local Plan was proposing a 5% increase in houses, people and cars then we would be more accepting that changing behaviours by moving people out of their car and on to bicycles and walking was a reasonable strategy, however, with a 55% proposed increase in houses, people and cars I do not see how this will lead to anything other than gridlock in Tring

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We believe the Local Plan should be redeveloped to deliver a 9% growth in housing in Dacorum and focused on brownfield sites and settlements where the infrastructure can support population growth.

However, if DBC won't halt the consultation and redevelop the local plan then would it be possible to extend the consultation by 10 weeks so the GFRA can commission a transport consultant to carry out an independent assessment of the robustness of the road infrastructure plans and the sustainable transport strategy?

Councillor G Sutton response: Publishing a detailed emerging Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support a Regulation 18 consultation is not a legal requirement but the Council felt it important to publish this work to provide as much information for residents as possible to inform representations.

The IDP was produced following extensive consultation with key organisations, including the County Council and utility providers. Through this work the Council has identified £76m of new infrastructure for Tring to support growth, including new schools, open spaces and transport.

Although the consultation ends on the 28th February (following 13 weeks) the GRFA are at liberty to produce any further technical work it feels necessary to support its case and to submit this to the Council for consideration.

The IDP is only an emerging document and the Council will continue to develop this as the Local Plan develops.

The Government has made it clear that local authorities should follow the standard methodology for housing when preparing their Local Plans, and on that basis the growth levels contained in the draft Plan are based on this approach.

Question 2 from Graham Bright to Councillor G Sutton:

On the question of the £76m identified for new infrastructure, I saw that in the report and welcome that but my only concern about that is that it represents not what it would cost to implement the infrastructure but rather what is being made available from developers towards the infrastructure which are two different things. Can Councillor Sutton confirm that is the case?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: I will come back to you on that so I can confirm the correct breakdown with the responsible officers.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1 By the Mayor:

The Mayor highlighted that 2020 was the year of Culture across Hertfordshire. There were various items planned in the various districts and boroughs but unfortunately most had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. A short video was presented of some of the events that did go ahead and the Mayor said he hoped it offered some joy from what was a very difficult year.

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4.2 By the Chief Executive:

C Hamilton advised that the following elections will take place on 6th May 2021:

The Hertfordshire County Council Election
The Hertfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner Election
The Tring Central Ward, Dacorum Borough Council Election &
The Tring Town Council, Bunstrux Ward Election

4.3 By the Group Leaders:

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillor Oguchi.

4.4 Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council

The Leader presented his update as follows:

At the last council meeting Councillor Tindall asked a question relating to the rollout of full fibre broadband. I have updated Councillor Tindall but didn't give a written answer because there really wasn't much I could add to the information I had. I have done some research on this and I've got back information on the rollout of 5G which I appreciate is not exactly the question that Councillor Tindall asked. In relation to the question around full fibre broadband I haven't been able to get any additional information which relates to the speed of the rollout for Dacorum but I was able to advise Councillor Tindall that the Local Enterprise Partnership is doing work on the rollout across Hertfordshire which will include Dacorum. They are due to report towards the end of this month or early next month and that will give us an update on how that rollout is going for the whole of Hertfordshire.

Happy to take questions.

Questions:

Councillor Pringle asked if the Leader could confirm that following the meeting of the Northchurch Parish Council emergency general meeting on Monday of this week, to which The Mayor had been invited, that he was able to report back to yourself the extremely poor experiences of Northchurch residents in accessing and understanding the consultation on the portal. In particular one resident, Mrs Anne Smith, had reported that she had taken some nine hours last Saturday to submit her response.

The Mayor wished to clarify that he was in attendance at that meeting as the Hertfordshire County Councillor for Bridgewater Division but not as the Mayor of Dacorum.

The Leader replied that he and The Mayor hadn't discussed anything from that meeting so he was not aware of the issues to which Councillor Pringle was referring to. Clearly if people are taking that length of time that is very disappointing but for the majority of people online access was available. He felt there wasn't much more he could add as he wasn't aware of the discussion that took place at that meeting.

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Councillor Pringle said Mrs Anne Smith was well known to her, she was a very intelligent person as many of her residents also were and despite having degrees and jobs in ICT, they have found the process confusing and baffling. She asked the Leader if he had similar communication with his residents or did he not encourage so much feedback?

The Leader felt it was probably more typical of wards within Hemel Hempstead that the feedback is lower than it may be in the rural areas. He said he hadn't received any comments from residents in his ward about access to the consultation. He added that leaflets had been delivered to the whole of his ward in November-December to advise of the consultation but had to stop when it became unlawful.

Councillor Symington welcomed that there was so many members of the public observing the meeting. She asked; to improve access ability, to promote openness and transparency and also accountability, could instructions on how a member of the public can attend this meeting or other similar council meetings be published on the agenda?

The Leader replied; yes they can and he will ensure that people know they need to contact Member Support for the link to meetings and this information will be published on future agendas. Moving forward to when we're able to resume to in person meetings again, the technology had been upgraded at The Forum to webcast meetings live as they happen so people will be able to see them in real time. Councillor Symington queried if it would be possible to not only broadcast our scrutiny committee meetings but to also make them available to the public?

The Leader reiterated his previous answer that we had incorporated the facility to now live stream our meetings when we're back in the Forum and we should be able to do that for all meetings.

Councillor Freedman said, as highlighted by the recent DBC booklet concerning the current consultation, Councillor G Sutton confirmed that Council leafleting incurs an acceptable number of voids, i.e. missed deliveries. He asked what level of voids was deemed acceptable and further asked what advice could be given to residents who are repeatedly excluded from DBC distributions?

The Leader said he didn't have access to the contract during this meeting so couldn't advise on the acceptable void level or to what service level agreement we've got with the delivery company. He advised he would need to submit a written response.

Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

PAYMENT OF GRANTS TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES CONTINUES

The Economic Development service has now verified and allocated payment of over £1m to 570 businesses, and has signposted many other businesses towards other relevant grants available. The service is also speaking to many of these businesses and offering support, advice and referral where possible to help recovery.

HEMEL TOWN CENTRE TO GET NEW APP

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Hemel Town Centre BID, supported by the Council's Economic Development team has moved forward with the development of a smartphone APP for the town centre to help to increase footfall into the town and promote the area and all of its offers.

The Government's Re-opening High Streets Safely fund has supported this with 50% of the funding for the set-up of the app. This will be delivered through Loyal Free, a provider of apps for town centres, and there will be a marketing campaign to get as many people as possible to download and use the new App.

The Economic Development service is also looking to widen the presence of this kind of information across the whole Borough. This will benefit our high streets in Dacorum and also the wider visitor/tourism offer for the area and the hospitality sector too. We are currently tendering for this work and I hope to give news soon of the outcome.

SUPPORTING OUR HIGH STREETS FOR SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL RE-OPENING

The Re-opening High Streets Safely project managed by the Economic Development team has been working with high street partnerships across the Borough and has agreed new and additional signage for Hemel Town Centre, The Old Town, Berkhamsted and Tring to include safety messages and encourage people to return safely once the restrictions are lifted. There will also be promotional videos prepared and a platform for the businesses to access training and advice on how to operate safely and successfully as things move forward out of lockdown. This will be launched in early March.

INJUNCTION SERVED IN MARKYATE

Officers were alerted to unauthorised works to a grade II Listed Building at 121 High Street Markyate over the weekend 30th/31st January.

Having advised the owner to stop, no further works took place during the following week, but recommenced again for the weekend of 6-7 February. Given this, the Council then applied for and received an injunction to prevent further works to the building. Officers visited the site on 16th February and were able to access to the interior for the first time. Internally they discovered that works had been undertaken without consent that were unacceptable. We are now working towards getting these matters resolved and the building restored.

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION NEARS A CLOSE

A reminder that our consultation on the new draft Local Plan ends at 2359 hrs on 28 February.

As of today, 2,136 comments from 586 people and organisations have been logged, and there have been 5,049 visits to the Local Plan consultation pages of the website accessing 46,132 pages of online consultation material.

Questions:

Councillor Symington thanked Councillor Sutton and referred to a presentation given by the Chief Executive the previous evening in which it was mentioned that consultants had completed a report on Hemel Hempstead Town centre, particularly retail. The Councillor asked; can those sort of consultations be extended to other parts of the Borough where other Town Centres & villages are suffering very similar problems?

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Councillor Sutton responded to advise that we will most certainly be looking at all the towns and villages within the borough and carrying out whatever initiatives there are to reinvigorate those very important areas of the Borough, using whatever means we can to ensure they included in business strategy.

Councillor Pringle referred to Councillor Sutton's response, stating that he referenced a number of villages but he omitted to mention Northchurch, asking if that is an important area or not?

Councillor Sutton responded that he stated 'all towns and villages' and did not mention them all by name, confirming Northchurch is included as one of those important areas of the Borough.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Financial Services

Financial Services continues to lead on the financial reporting and monitoring requirements arising from the coronavirus pandemic to ensure the Council secures the pandemic –related Government funding it is eligible for.

The service is also supporting the payment of national Covid-19 Business grants and test and trace support payments, to ensure funds are distributed promptly and accurately.

Alongside the monitoring of the current financial position, the budget setting process for 2021/22 has been the team's current focus, concluding this evening with the recommendation for council to approve the 21/22 budget.

The role of the accounts receivable service in the collection of debt is becoming more challenging as the pandemic continues. The service is working incredibly hard with our partners to find short and medium term solutions that support the local business economy.

Finance has been instrumental in supporting the payment and processing of over £35 million of business grants to date, with additional grants being announced as part of the Covid roadmap

Commercial Assets and Property Development

The Commercial Assets service is busy liaising, and working in partnership with existing tenants through this difficult financial period, to ensure we support the local economy where possible. The announcement of the Covid road map brings the first positive signs of improved market conditions but the service will continue to liaise with tenants in a positive manner.

The Building services team are continuing to liaise with Health partners and the County Council to support the Covid response in regards to assets and locations for

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vaccination and testing. The production of the Covid roadmap now requires additional asset planning as different facilities will be looking to open in line with the roadmap. The service will now start planning for further council assets to be opened in line with the roadmap projections.

Revenues and Benefits service

The revenues & benefits team continue to respond to government announcements in regards to business grants, test and trace support payments and business rates relief. Dacorum is now part of an additional Hertfordshire wide Test and Trace support payment scheme that is providing additional financial resources to support the most financially vulnerable, when and if they are required to isolate.

At present the service is managing 8 open Business grant schemes with differing criteria and policies and has paid over £35m of business grants to over 3000 businesses to date. The new roadmap means additional closedown grants will be allocated to business up to the end of the financial year and next month's budget is expected to deliver additional business support payments and policies for the service to implement going forward.

Questions:

Councillor Silwal asked; with regard the commercial assets that DBC own, what is the percentage that are fully let against targets?

Councillor Elliot responded that 95.24% of our commercial assets are fully rented, against the target of 95%. The Portfolio Holder commented that in his time as Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources he has not seen such a good figure. He further commented that, however, many of our tenants are currently closed due to COVID-19 restrictions and we will have to wait to see what the impact is on those businesses once the roadmap to opening progresses.

Councillor Silwal asked; what is the demand in the Borough for commercial properties?

Councillor Elliot responded that the Estates department have indicated that there is a very high demand for commercial properties, particularly in the start-up and small business area; we could rent small industrial units to around 5x the volume we have.

Councillor Rogers thanked the Portfolio Holder for the update and commented that it sounds very positive given the pandemic. He commented, with regard to business, he is interested to see what the commercial market looks like with regards rent and demand in current position and what the forecast might be for future.

Councillor Elliot commented that of the current unlet properties, which equates to 29 vacant properties. Of those, 4 are with legal at this time with leases being drawn up, 1 is being marketed and the other 24 are being refurbished with the view to bringing them to market.

Councillor Symington thanked the Portfolio Holder and commented, picking up on a question asked by Councillor Silwal regarding commercial property; my understanding was that this area had taken quite a hit in last year's budget where the income was not

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being received. The Councillor asked; is the current level due to holiday rents etc. and how do those figures correlate?

Councillor Elliot responded to advise that around 20% of commercial properties are on payment plans, advising that we did forecast for approx. £1m shortfall in commercial rents in our commercial assets due to business not being able to sustain during the pandemic; this was something that was anticipated and budgeted for. The Portfolio Holder further commented that there are varying types of businesses and that it is those such as hairdressers and charity shops that are suffering at the moment due to not being able to open. The Portfolio Holder reflected that in comparison to larger commercial enterprises we are lucky that we have many businesses in our shopping areas that are vital to our local economy that have been able to remain open.

Councillor Symington thanked the Portfolio Holder for his answer.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

Tenant and Leaseholder Services

- The Income and Tenancy Sustainment Teams have continued to successfully supported tenants to claim welfare benefits that they were entitled to, but unsure how to make the claims, such as Universal Credit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Personal Independence Payment (PIP). This totals over £41k since Christmas plus additional Housing Benefit backdates. This extra income makes a huge difference especially where one income officer got a Universal Credit backdate of £3030 for one tenant and £1245 for another. Additionally tenant in Supported Housing was successful for a backdated PIP claim to February 2018 and received £6000. Tenants have also been supported to move to better suited accommodation, freeing up larger homes to be re-let to families who need them.
- Rent arrears are currently at 4.57% compared with 4.05% the same time last year which is due to the supportive and proactive approach by the team. This is an excellent result considering the financial difficulties experienced by tenants because of covid-19.
- A review of the role of the Housing Officers – Tenancy and ASB Officers has been undertaken so that their roles are clearer. Housing Officer – Tenancy will now be known as Tenancy Management Officers and will focus on proactive housing management and visits to new and existing tenants alongside managing aspects of the tenancy agreement. This will align with the 5 years visits we intended to roll out in April but have been delayed until we can safely visit tenants in their homes again. More information about this will be provided to members over the coming month.
- During lockdown the Supported housing team have been working creatively to reduce the impact of social isolation on our tenants. Zoom dance classes, doorstep

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bake off competitions and regular newsletters have all helped to provide a bit of light relief during these challenging times.

Strategic Housing

- £5k Protect plus funding obtained from MHCLG to provide support to those at risk of rough sleeping – funding has been used to extend Crash Pod provision at the Elms
- Full stakeholder consultation commencing in relation to the review of the council's Housing Allocations Policy
- Compilation of evidence following illegal eviction of 2 private sector tenants – consideration of enforcement action against relevant PRS landlord
- Currently providing advice and support to 45 households under threat of losing current accommodation in the private rented sector

Property and Place

- The ongoing pressure of the Pandemic and requirement to work from home where possible to help limit the spread of the virus is continuing to put pressure on all work streams within Property and Place. Where possible staff are working from home with only essential inspections and surveys carried out to ensure residents safety and service delivery.
- All Maintenance activities are continually being reviewed from a health and safety perspective to ensure safe systems of work are in operation in-accordance with Government guidelines. Risk and method statements developed by our supply chain partners are in place and appropriate for the work activities to ensure residents and operatives safety at all times.
- Statutory and cyclical compliance works are continuing, with high performance being achieved to ensure residents safety within their homes.
- The current scope of works being undertaken in terms of maintenance and refurbishment being undertaken has continued suspension of non-essential internal Planned Works.
- The Cleaning Team are using the sterilisation fogging machines to provide enhanced protection in sheltered housing schemes, to help combat the potential spread of the virus. This is being undertake every two weeks and feedback from residents has been positive on this approach.

Housing Development

Martindale	1 No market sale unit to sell, the previous buyer recently withdrew.
St Margaret's Way	Awaiting formal feedback from the DBC Community Review Panel.

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Mountbatten View (Paradise Fields)	Planning Application approved subject to resolving an Ecology issue and the issue of a Section 106. 4 Contractor returns received after Expression of Interest have been issued via the Catalyst Housing Framework.
Bingham Mews	Completed, handover took place on 26 th Feb. Residents have moved in.
Eastwick Row	Mobilising project to start in April with some enabling works taking place in January & February. (namely tree works prior to the nesting season) Awaiting approval from HCC Highways for the construction traffic haul road.
Coniston Road	Mobilising project to start in March with some enabling works taking place in January & February. (namely tree works prior to the nesting season)
Wilstone	Planning Application submitted.
LA1	Design completed to stage 1. Revised brief received to accommodate access road for Homes England. DB presented scheme to Local Councillors, parking issues in the area raised as the primary concern.
Garage Sites	6 No Planning applications submitted. Housewood End and Dione Road are going before Planning Committee this week.
Randall's Ride	Planning Application submitted.

Questions:

Councillor England noted the report and congratulated officers on the way they are helping those suffering difficulties resultant from the COVID-19 pandemic and asked; does the Portfolio Holder agree, as mentioned in her report that it is sensible for some tenancy engagement to be suspended until April, that this should apply to the Local Plan consultation also?

The Portfolio Holder responded to clarify that what she was referring to is not tenancy engagement, it is not consultation; it referred home visits, physically going into their homes and is very different.

Councillor England took the point regarding visiting homes and apologised for the misunderstanding, he commented; residents are being asked to attend public libraries to view these Local Plan documents which are very long, asking, does the Portfolio Holder see an equivalence there?

Councillor Griffiths responded it was not her understanding that the Council is recommending anyone goes to the library as libraries are not open.

Councillor Elliot asked the Portfolio Holder; would you agree the Martindale site sets a template for the council to provide good quality partly funded through homes for sale?

Councillor Griffiths responded that she would agree but emphasised that since taking control of housing in 2021 and being able to build all our social housing homes have been at social rent, this was a conscious effort between herself as Portfolio Holder and the leader; this does make the cost of the build more expensive. When we have a larger site it makes more sense that we sell off some of the houses so that we can maintain the social rent for our tenants, rather than renting at the affordable rent levels which are higher. This is the policy of this Council.

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Councillor Elliot referred to the houses for sale that helped fund the site and asked; did all the houses sell and did they meet the asking price?

Councillor Griffiths confirmed they all received their asking price and advised that the Council had sold all houses however one sale as quite recently fallen through and the property will be remarketed.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

The Chief Executive mentioned at the start of the meeting that Elections will be going ahead on 6th May and I just wanted to expand on the fact that we are working closely with colleagues across the County (as it's a County Council Election) to ensure that these Elections are run COVID secure. There is significant guidance coming from the government on a regular basis about how that should be done and the changes to the process that in particular the candidates will have to undertake as the Elections approach. Details of Election dates will be announced on our website on 19th March, which is when the Elections are officially called.

We have been successful in securing a grant from the government as part of the leisure recovery fund and that will help us to support leisure providers across the borough. He said members would be aware that leisure providers have been struggling quite a lot with the lockdown and the inability to open venues, run events and provide the activities they normally would so hopefully that will give some support to that sector as we begin to come out of lockdown.

With regards to a previous question from Councillor Symington about the survey of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, I just want to point out that it wasn't a survey carried out by the Borough Council. We have no plans to carry out such a survey and haven't contracted for that. The survey relating to Hemel Hempstead Town Centre was one carried out on comparing towns up and down the country and was carried out by one of the large audit firms to monitor the effect of COVID on town centres going forward.

Questions:

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Once again I would like to pay tribute to the council staff at Cupid Green for keeping environmental services as close to normal as they can despite the circumstances of the pandemic. All the more on this occasion because as people may not have been aware one of the Prime Ministers announcements last week concerned putting certain people with underlying health problems back into shielding. We are still waiting to find out the detail of that but that potentially puts our staff under even more pressure so I would just like to ask colleagues and the members of public to bear in mind that our staff are under pressure and trying to provide services as normal as possible. If we do

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have to employ more temporary staff that will have a knock on effect in terms of the councils overspend due to COVID.

Refuse:

We have 14 new refuse trucks arriving shortly.

Trees:

Members of the Strategic Planning and Environment OSC will have received the draft Trees and Woodlands Policy which will go to Cabinet and Council and that governs how the council maintains trees in public ownership. During that discussion we publicised the fact that we now use a system called Cavat which puts a value on public trees so that we can protect them better. It also means that if public trees are damaged by members of the public we have some way of recovering some recompense for that damage. Members of the committee were very keen that the system was publicised. I understand that an article has been written for the next Dacorum Digest to advise members of the public on how to get tree preservation orders for trees in private ownership but also the process in terms of warning people that they're not entitled to damage public assets.

Also on the subject of trees I am pleased to announce that most of the 1200 trees that we were planting in the first tranche have now been planted. There is some minor whips and small saplings work that needs doing across the borough. I know on social media that people have spoken well of the new trees planted in Ley Hill and on Keens Field and those are just two examples of our commitment to mitigate climate change as much as we can in a practical way.

Happy to take questions.

Questions:

Councillor England picked up on the point regarding tree planting and referred to Keens Field being a site where a number of trees have been planted, commenting that he had cause to talk to the tree officer and in the course of that he mentioned that it is normal for there to be loss through thinning of two thirds of the original trees that are planted, so when as a Borough we think about the number of trees that we plant, do we talk about the number we expect to reach maturity or the number that go into the ground in the first place?

Councillor Anderson responded that he would have to investigate and provide a written response.

Councillor England commented that he would forward a copy of the email that refers to the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Symington thanked the Portfolio Holder and noted she had seen a recent media update regarding roll out of food recycling to flats.

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Councillor Anderson responded that roll out was completed in September; there had been a pilot previously that worked well but this has now been extended to the whole Borough.

Councillor Symington commented that she was following up on an article which claims there has been a very successful increase in food recycling, asking is that what we want? Surely we want people to reduce food waste not increase it?

Councillor Anderson responded this is double edge sword; we do want to reduce the waste people produce, including reducing single use plastics alongside other schemes the council has to impact this. The other side is, you will never cut food waste out completely, and that being the case it is important to maximise the recycling of it. The Portfolio Holder added that the Council has a waste composition exercise every 5 years, recently undertaken in autumn; expressing that one of his concerns is the amount of food waste that still goes in grey bins; want to increase the capture rate of food waste to the correct recycling route.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Banks, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

Having viewed the HYOC2020 film – I have little left to say perhaps other than to draw your attention to our latest initiative the Chatty Café.

Active Dacorum is delighted to be working in partnership The Chatty Café Scheme this was started to help bring people together and our now Virtual Chatty Cafes will be running weekly on Zoom. These are a relaxed and informal way to chat and connect with others in Dacorum, which in turn reduces loneliness and supports wellbeing.

They are weekly sessions for anyone aged 18+ and one specifically each week for 18-30 year olds. Anyone who would like to join can email jenny@thechattycafescheme.co.uk for a link.

Turning to Regulatory services, COVID remains the number one priority and I am pleased to report the majority of businesses continue to be compliant. I am sure members will join me in congratulating our dedicated officers - Dacorum was ranked in the top 5% (16/315) of authorities for Test and Trace effectiveness.

During January, the Team investigated 128 positive cases in the community that the National and County Track and Trace scheme could not reach Dacorum Borough Council now has 6 COVID Advisors funded by HCC. The aim of these advisors is to support residents, businesses and the community in complying with COVID regulations. If they come across significant non-compliance these cases will be referred to the Environmental Health Team or the Police as appropriate. The advisors are here to help and support with compliance.

The Corporate Health & Safety Team continues to support departments 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

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self-isolation. Critically they will be supporting the elections team with ensuring the Borough has a Covid –safe election.

The Operations Team have had significant success with a filthy and verminous property. Following the service of notices on the premises, our team have worked to remove the refuse and debris from the property and then alongside the aids and adaptations teams worked to ensure that this premises is fit for safe for the resident to return.

Finally, turning to fly tipping, the highways fly tipping numbers have been slightly higher month on month 8 in January last year 13 this year. In 2020-2021 up to the end of January, Environmental Enforcement has issued Fixed Penalty Notice's as follows;

Fly tipping = 32, Fly tipping duty of care (householder) = 4, Littering (a bag of rubbish - low level) fly tipping = 8

Prosecutions to date = 1 Pepperstock

Prosecutions pending = 3, 1 in Grovehill and 2 in the Flamstead area

Happy to take questions.

Questions:

Councillor Griffiths asked that thanks be passed on from her ward for the support offered by Alex Care in finding a permanent home for Sid the Snake in Leverstock green; Sid is a snake made up of painted stones that is now over 300 stones long.

Councillor Banks responded that she was very aware of Sid the Snake and is elated to know that it is secure in place in Leverstock Green.

Councillor Barry commented that the Chatty Café is such a great thing to do when so many people are experience isolation, but on that same note asked; why are skate parks boarded up?

Councillor Banks responded that officers have responded to guidance from government and skate parks are closed under current lockdown rules, playgrounds are permitted to stay open.

Councillor Barry asked; at what stage in the roadmap are skate parks due to reopen?

Councillor Banks responded that she would check that information and respond in writing.

Councillor Silwal addressed the Portfolio Holder and asked, will there be any events for Armed Forces Day this year?

Councillor Banks provided an update that the Armed Forces day is usually a celebration that takes place on 26 June; particularly important this year due to the support the Armed Forces have given the NHS and the fact that the Royal British Legion will be celebrating a birthday. The Portfolio Holder advised that unfortunately this year we cannot hold a public event but are working closely with officers to see what can be delivered either virtually or at a safe distance. We are looking at things such as films depicting local residents and their experiences, looking at visual displays

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of artwork, running competitions involving all age groups, work being done on delivering fun runs and walking events. She hoped these will be looked at as fundraisers for Armed Forces charities and the Mayors charities.

Councillor Bhinder referred to fly tipping as something to be passionate about and commented that he is pleased to hear reports on that. He asked the Portfolio Holder to extend on the type of media based evidence used by council to take action against perpetrators.

The Portfolio Holder responded that she is passionate about state of the Borough's streets. She advised that it starts with officers opening and going through the piles of rubbish that are dumped. We use our covert CCTV cameras; 15 out of 32 fixed penalty notices that we have issued had covert CCTV footage as their main evidence. CCTV was also used successfully in a prosecution and of the 3 pending prosecutions, 2 will be using CCTV evidence to inform courts.

Councillor Bhinder expressed curiosity about how legislation works for using CCTV for fly tipping and litter commenting that there has been a lot of adverse publicity nationally regarding using CCTV. Asking the Portfolio Holder, how do we resolve that?

Councillor Banks assured Councillor Bhinder that all officers adhere to the very rigorous guidelines that are laid down and it has to go through courts to get covert cameras approved.

Councillor Rogers referred to Bennetts End community Centre and advised they have been providing day care for the children of keyworkers, asking Portfolio Holder; do you know when the age limit will rise to all children in day care and nurseries?

Councillor Banks responded that she does not have exact date to hand so will have to provide as a written response. She added that pre-schools and nurseries have been running through community centre networks and have been given advice through Environmental Health and Health and Safety officers at the Council to assist them in their risk assessments to ensure they are secure under COVID compliance & restrictions.

Councillor Rogers referred to advising parents dropping off; what advice are we giving to avoid transmission of virus.

Councillor Banks commented that is cross piece working with Health and Safety.

There were no further questions.

5 MOTION

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Pringle and seconded by Councillor Taylor:

1. This council recognises the significant changes of circumstances following the launch of the consultation on the Local Plan in November 2020, namely that Dacorum escalated quickly to tier 4 and then national lockdown meaning that:

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a. residents have been severely impeded from engaging in the consultation process, or comprehending the implications of the proposals, due to distractions caused by the dramatic rise in coronavirus cases, hospitalisations and bereavements across Dacorum that was unforeseen at the time this Council voted to proceed with the consultation in November 2020

b. opportunities to publicise the local plan through volunteer leafleting, public meetings and question and answer sessions that would normally be an essential element of any such consultation have not been available

c. due to the national lockdown, those who cannot access the consultation documents through the DBC portal, because of lack of an appropriate device or skills, have effectively been excluded in any meaningful way from participating in the consultation

d. that this excluded cohort of residents is likely to contain a high proportion of elderly and vulnerable people and that encouraging such residents to travel to public libraries, in breach of the government's guidance on essential journeys to view the consultation documents presents a risk to public health during the current emergency,

e. making a journey to a public library in order to view consultation documents on the local plan is not an essential journey according to government guidelines, it is unlawful — and therefore irrational — for Dacorum Borough Council to have encouraged residents to travel to public libraries during lockdown to view documents as an element of the consultation process

f. that there is evidence of a high proportion of residents who have not been informed of the local plan through official DBC communications whatsoever and many residents remain unaware of the consultation

g. that the published communications that have managed to reach a proportion of the public, suggest that only responses by email or via the portal are acceptable, meaning that those who can only respond by post have effectively been excluded

2. In addition some weeks into the public consultation, on 16th December 2020, the government published its response to the local housing need proposals on the consultation on changes to the current planning system, setting out important changes to the standard method, which clearly stated, amongst other things, that meeting housing needs is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm to protected landscapes and the Green Belt. The council acknowledges that the publication of the new guidelines:

a. has confused many residents, some of whom believed on hearing these government proposals, that the consultation would be suspended and will have decided not to respond

b. has altered the method of calculation and therefore the fundamental premise upon which the consultation was originally based, effectively changing the goal posts such that responses submitted at the beginning of the process are now based on an out-of-date premise

c. there is such confusion around the process that it is unreasonable to expect residents to now understand the basis of the formula and therefore evaluate the proposal or to be able to meaningfully respond

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3. This council recognises that in view of these material changes of circumstances since the consultation was launched in November 2020, it would not be advisable to proceed with this consultation as it will leave any Local Plan based on such a consultation vulnerable to legal challenge and will lead to a loss of public confidence in the outcome of the consultation and undermine public confidence in Dacorum Borough Council should it choose to proceed under all of these circumstances

Therefore this council resolves to withdraw the consultation, revise the proposals and consult the public at a time and in a manner when the consultation can be fully inclusive, accessible and fair to all of our residents.

The full debate of the Motion can be found at Appendix A.

A recorded vote was held:

For: 19 (Allen, Arslan, Barry, Claughton, England, Freedman, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Link, McDowell, Pringle, Ransley, Stevens, Symington, Taylor, Tindall, Townsend, Uttley and Woolner)

Against: 28 (Adeleke, Anderson, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Bhinder, Birnie, Chapman, Durrant, Elliot, Griffiths, Guest, Hearn, Imarni, Johnson, Sobaan Mahmood, Suqlain Mahmood, Peter, Riddick, Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, G Sutton, R Sutton, Timmis, Williams and Wyatt-Lowe)

Abstain: 2 (Mayor and Maddern)

Therefore the motion failed.

6 QUESTIONS

Question 1 from Councillor Allen to Councillor G Sutton:

The Council has the responsibility for consulting with Gypsy and Traveller communities and representatives about access arrangements and the setting up of new sites, a responsibility passed to district authorities several years ago. Will the portfolio holder please confirm that;

- a) 'The Gypsy and Traveller community has been consulted with on the location and access arrangements for the site included in LA3 and share that consultation with the Council?'
- b) The County Council has also been consulted

Will the Portfolio Holder inform the Council what was discussed at (A) and (B), and the agreed outcomes?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: Firstly, the Borough Council's responsibility as Local Planning Authority is to plan for sufficient Gypsy and Traveller accommodation within its Local Plan, based on both an assessment of need and in accordance with Government Policy on location, design and layout of sites. The Borough Council does not have a statutory duty over the delivery and management of Gypsy and Traveller sites.

The Council has always sought to engage with those who have an interest in the travelling community throughout the preparation of our Local Plans and other

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supporting documents. Indeed, the Statement of Community Involvement commits the Council to engaging with a variety of organisations that represent a wide range of community interests.

As members will know, there are two sites confirmed in the statutory development plan for Dacorum and these are LA1 Marchmont Farm HH and LA3 West HH. The County Council's Gypsy and Traveller unit was engaged in the process, and we also specifically consulted with the Gypsy Council, Berkhamsted and District Gypsy Support Group and the Bucks and West Herts Gypsy Advocacy.

Both sites have been confirmed as suitable and appropriate through the statutory development plan process after scrutiny by Planning Inspectors at Public Examinations for both the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Regarding LA3, the hybrid planning application for its development was considered by the Development Management Committee in November 2019. I can confirm that the County's Gypsy and Traveller Officer was consulted on the application and support was expressed, and I would refer Members to the Committee report for this application where the issue of the proposed site was considered.

The County's Gypsy and Traveller Officer submitted responses on two occasions. The second response, which recommended further consultation with Herts GATE (Gypsy and Traveller Empowerment) came just a few days before the Committee meeting. Further consultation was not possible given the time constraints. The advice from HCC on the suitability of the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site at LA3 was clear.

The final consent for LA3 has not yet been issued as Officers are working with the applicants and HCC on the final version of the s106 agreement that will accompany the grant of planning permission for the whole development. The scope of the permission agreed by the DM Committee does however require details of the proposed site to be submitted to and approved by the Council as Local Planning Authority as this part of the application has been made in outline form only. There will, therefore, be scope for engagement both with HCC and representative groups of the Gypsy and Traveller community over the details when they are submitted.

Question 2 from Councillor Allen to Councillor G Sutton:

Can you confirm that there is no written, formal or concrete evidence of Gypsy and Traveller opinion relating to LA3 Gypsy and Traveller site?

Councillor G Sutton response: I will come back to you with a written answer for clarification on that point.

Question 3 from Councillor Allen to Councillor G Sutton:

This process has been going on since 2015 and in the absence of any formal written and concrete evidence on Gypsy and Traveller opinion, how does the Portfolio Holder justify the decision-making on LA3 when Government advice in Planning Policy for Travellers Sites 2015 says *local planning authorities should pay particular attention to*

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early and effective community engagement, cooperation with travellers, their representative bodies and local support groups? All I can hear so far is hearsay.

Councillor G Sutton response: I won't be commenting any further. I think we've met the statutory requirements and I can't say any more than that. If the Gypsy and Traveller community won't engage then what can we do.

Question 1 from Councillor England to Councillor G Sutton:

What identified online sources are generating the visits to the consultation documents on the DBC website and on the "Virtual Exhibition AECOM website, and when?

Is it social media (which posts, which days, how many), third party website articles (which articles, which days, how many), or direct searches (which days have been the top 10 and how many on each day)

The Council uses Google Analytics to know which of its web-pages and social media posts are effective and what channels are best capable of reaching the Borough population.

Please could the following key metrics be provided for either site, quantifying the number of unique user views, which sources produced traffic and the most popular pages over time?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: As previously confirmed, we will provide a full post-campaign report, which will include data from Google Analytics (with unique visitors) and data from several other platforms we use to monitor and evaluate large scale mixed media campaigns.

I have also provided all Councillors with a high-level overview of all channels and activities, which provides relevant statistics regarding audience numbers, our website and virtual exhibition. The cumulative effect of the comprehensive mixed media communications campaign is validated by the positive numbers in reach and levels of engagement.

In advance to the full post-campaign report, I am happy to share a summary of source data traffic to the Local Plan webpage, as a result of online and offline communications during 27 November to 19 February 2021:

- Search engine (e.g. Google) – 42%
- Dacorum.gov.uk referral – 24%
- Direct access (e.g. URL typed directly into browser, summary video, Link in PDF's or hardcopies etc.) – 20%
- Social Media referral – 7%
- Other – 7% (60+ sources less than 1% each)

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I am fully satisfied with the approach from both the Strategic Planning and Communications team for delivering a comprehensive, professional and engaging programme of works, and look forward to sharing the full post-campaign report in due course.

Question 2 from Councillor England to Councillor G Sutton:

Can the Portfolio Holder please explain or perhaps give one or two examples of the specific plans which were put into the communications plan to ensure hard to reach residents would be engaged?

Councillor G Sutton response: I think we did all we could and most certainly under the very difficult circumstances. We've already discussed this at length during the motion of what has occurred with the pandemic and the lockdown situation and I think that we've engaged well with the public. In fact, I think to a certain extent some of the public may have had a little bit more time because they've been at home on their computers. We've seen many people who have not been computer literate in the past suddenly become very computer literate over the past year and I think the response that we've had online is possibly slightly better than those who have attended exhibitions in the past.

Question 3 from Councillor England to Councillor G Sutton:

What are the Portfolio Holders top criteria and key targets for this important consultation being judged successful? What numbers were you expecting?

Councillor G Sutton response: In the past we've probably finished up with only two or three percent of the population having responded so I think if we achieve more than that then we've done fairly well.

Question 4 from Councillor England to Councillor G Sutton:

How different would the Portfolio Holder expect engagement numbers to be if there was not currently a pandemic?

Councillor G Sutton response: I think that's an extremely difficult question to answer actually because if there wasn't a pandemic how could we guarantee that we're going to get people to exhibitions like I already said. I think that people sitting at home in front of the computer screen probably have more time than if people were engaged in full time work and other activities. To be honest I don't think there would have been a huge amount of difference in the numbers engaging.

Before the question was asked, The Mayor advised that although the minutes Councillor Pringle was referring to were correct, he was in attendance at that meeting as the Hertfordshire County Councillor for Bridgewater Division but not as the Mayor of Dacorum.

Question 1 from Councillor Pringle to Councillor Williams:

CHAIRMAN

Does the leader of the council agree with the advice of the Mayor of Dacorum* that elderly residents should not be encouraged to travel to libraries to view the hard copies of the Local Plan, as to do so would not class as an essential journey?

**Minutes of Northchurch Parish Council 11 January 2021:*

(b) Cllr Pringle asked Cllr Douris whether he would advise elderly people in Northchurch to travel to a library, to which Cllr Douris suggested he would advise residents of Northchurch to stay home and stay safe, residents should not travel to a library as this does not class as “essential journey”.

Councillor Williams’ response: I would say not necessarily. I think its academic because I understand that the library has not been open to view this but my view would be that if the libraries were open to view this and individuals felt that they were in their own personal circumstances were happy to go to the library and use the ICT there I would say that was an acceptable thing to do.

Question 2 from Councillor Pringle to Councillor Williams:

I’m not criticising the staff but it’s quite clear that the written information from Strategic Planning to Northchurch Parish Council said (when it was sent on 14th December 2020) amongst other things that the libraries are currently open in the borough. I am simply pointing out that what you have just told the Council is contradicted by an official response to Northchurch Parish Council. How can that be? Was the response from Strategic Planning to Northchurch Parish Council a mistake or are you mistake?

Councillor Williams’ response: My understanding is that if they wrote that letter they obviously wrote it in good faith when the library may have been open. My understanding is that for at least the last couple of weeks the libraries have not been open for browsing, I’m not a regular user of the library but my understanding is that in the latest lockdown libraries weren’t open. I’m sure when the advice was given by the officers that was their understanding of the situation and what I have said his evening is my understanding of the situation.

Question 3 from Councillor Pringle to Councillor Williams:

I can tell you in good faith that I witnessed the Portfolio Holder for Education and Libraries at that meeting tell us that libraries were open at that meeting in January and that it was dangerous for people to travel there. I think it is really important when public health is at risk and when elderly people are distressed that they can’t access these documents to be consistent and so I ask, would you agree that there is a lack of consistency?

Councillor Williams’ response: I would say that the advice that you got from the officers is correct and my understanding that the libraries are not open may be incorrect. Going back to your original question, if people feel able and competent to use the ICT at the library then I would say that’s a reason to go.

Question 1 from Councillor Pringle to Councillor G Sutton:

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Does Councillor Sutton agree that the distribution of the brochure summarising the local plan (Emerging Strategy for Growth Consultation) has been a failure that has undermined public confidence in the consultation process, with many residents across the Borough, including those bordering the development sites in Northchurch, not having received the summary document at all?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: Following the extension of the consultation from 10 weeks to 13 weeks, we took the additional opportunity to distribute 61,000 hardcopies of the Local Plan summary guide, which has been available to residents and members since the start of the consultation on 27 November 2020.

We received anecdotal evidence from Councillors that some properties or streets did not receive a hardcopy of the summary document, and any missed delivery requests we received, have been posted a copy.

With leafleting on this scale it is understandable that there may be factors such as property access, voids and delivery delays due to weather conditions. To mitigate against these factors, we also procured an additional 1,000 copies which were made available to members on request.

I would like to thank Councillors who have actively requested additional copies of the summary guide to share with residents who are offline, and for sign-posting the vast majority of residents who contact them online, to the online documents, online summary guide, video and consultation portal. We have had an overwhelmingly positive response and high levels of engagement across the board.

I should remind Members that all residents were sent a copy of Dacorum Digest in November 2020 which drew the draft Local Plan to their attention including how to respond and access the very extensive amount of documents and information we put on the DBC website, including the virtual exhibition and an electronic copy of the summary document that Cllr Pringle refers to.

I would stress to Council again that this is a draft Local Plan. It is important we test public opinion at this stage before developing the plan further, and officers will be bringing a report back to Cabinet and SPEOSC once the results of the consultation have been collated and analysed.

Question 2 from Councillor Pringle to Councillor G Sutton: Does Councillor Sutton agree that it is wrong for wealthy developers to use a well-funded PR campaign to distort the consultation process on the Local Plan in their favour by encouraging residents to respond by taking a photograph of their marketing material?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: The Council is not responsible for the actions of private developers. Our residents can choose for themselves whether to respond to any lobbying or publicity they may receive.

Question 3 from Councillor Pringle to Councillor G Sutton:

Will this be given equal weight to the response of someone who, for example, has taken 9 hours to wade through the consultation process?

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Response from Councillor G Sutton: This is the actions of a broad, private developer and I've already said that we have no control over what private developers do. All submissions will be given equal status and value.

Question 1 from Councillor Symington to Councillor G Sutton:

Along with other councillors, I am receiving many emails regarding the failure of the Dacorum Local Plan 2020 to 2038 Emerging Strategy for Growth Consultation to address climate emergency issues and demonstrate a pathway to local carbon reductions.

It is noted that:

1. This is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework and the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.
2. The UK Government set a target for net zero emissions of greenhouse gas by 2050 for the UK in June 2019.
3. Dacorum Borough Council passed a Climate Emergency Motion in July 2019 including committing to the production of a strategy and action plan to make the activities of Dacorum Borough Council carbon neutral by 2030. In particular, clause B5 states the Council resolved to: Ensure the new Local Plan and associated regulations when adopted contains all available measures to cut carbon emissions and reduce the impact on the environment.

Please can you detail the actions the Council is taking in the plan-making process to comply with the obligations set by (1), (2), and (3) above?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: Mitigating and adapting to climate change is an overarching strategic objective of the Plan and underpins the sustainable development strategy.

In particular the Plan sets out a pathway to net zero carbon which exceeds the UK government expectations. All new development is expected to be net zero by 2030 and leading up until 2030, all new major development is expected to reduce carbon emissions by at least 19% below Part L of the Building Regulations (2013) requirements and contribute towards a further 20% reduction in residual carbon emissions by either generating renewable energy on-site or by connecting to low carbon energy sources. Prior to 2030 new build non-residential buildings will be expected to achieve a BREEAM standard of Excellent for buildings, after which they will also be expected to be net zero carbon.

The draft plan addresses the need for providing for biodiversity, which itself has a key role to play in helping with the Climate Change agenda. We will be developing policy in line with the proposed Environment Act as matters develop.

The Council will also be preparing a new Supplementary Planning Document to support implementation and provide guidance for developers.

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The Council is undertaking feasibility studies to establish the Dacorum carbon offset fund.

Question 2 from Councillor Symington to Councillor G Sutton:

Does the Portfolio Holder agree that it would have been appropriate to consider the role of agriculture and carbon capturing soils, trees and woods in the local plan, given that 85% of the borough is rural land?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: Biodiversity is a passion of mine and most certainly for as long as I have some sort of responsibility for this I will be pushing for this. Most certainly some of the officers know that I'm extremely keen on items such as urban farms and obviously using any available green space in-between developments for agricultural biodiversity. I think that any area can be a very pleasant place to be if it's developed, landscaped and used correctly.

Question 3 from Councillor Symington to Councillor G Sutton:

Does the Portfolio Holder think the policy of densification would be a more viable way to mitigate the impacts of transport related carbon emissions rather than replacing over 200 hectares of land North of Hemel in HH01 for just 1,550 houses?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: I think we have to look at all options of how we address this. There has got to be mixed housing, high density housing and apartments, and the success is actually creating the right mix. Also one has to take into consideration affordability amongst other things.

Question 4 from Councillor Symington to Councillor G Sutton:

Could the Portfolio Holder update members and the public on the progress being made by the Council through working with the Association of Public Service Excellence and their specialist energy consultancy to guide their approach?

Response from Councillor G Sutton: I will certainly take it up with the officers to see where we stand and I will let you know.

Question 1 from Councillor Stevens to Councillor Griffiths:

Climate Emergency – and the Green New Deal;

Funding is being closed, of which £500m had been allocated for Local Authorities for improvements to Housing heating systems.

- 1) Has the Borough applied for any funding?
- 2) If so, how much and how many properties would that have applied to?
- 3) In light of the difficulties the contractors have had with non-payment by the American consulting firm ICF, has the Borough actually received the Funding?

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Councillor Griffiths' response: Firstly I need to make it clear that the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme budget has been greatly reduced but not ended. This is completely separate from the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme which the question refers to. We did apply but were unsuccessful for the grant funding in round one, but the fund was heavily oversubscribed with conditions that were very restrictive in that the money had to be spent in a very short period and would have applied to a tiny proportion of our stock. The details of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme phase two is in the process of being finalised and will be rolled out in 2021/22. We intend to apply again.

7 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None.

8 CABINET REFERRALS

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

19 January 2021

8.1 CA/008/21 DACORUM STRATEGIC SITES DESIGN GUIDE

Decision

That the draft SPD be adopted.

09 February 2021

8.2 CA/017/21 BUDGET 2021/22

The budget 2021/22 was proposed by Councillor Elliot and seconded by Councillor Williams.

Councillor Elliot made the following statement to support the proposal:

Introduction

“When I stood in the Chamber 12 months ago to recommend my last budget to the Council, no-one could have foretold the events that have had such devastating consequences across the world. My heart goes out to all those that have suffered or lost loved ones to the pandemic, which I know includes many people within Dacorum, including staff and Members.

The destruction wrought by Covid has not been limited to health. The steps taken nationwide to combat the virus have brought challenges of their own, and many local businesses and local families have suffered financial hardship as swathes of the economy have been locked down for months at a time.

Within this challenging environment, Dacorum Borough Council has played a key role in the Covid response, extending help and support to our businesses and communities at a time they needed it most. I am particularly proud that in continuing to provide our

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day-to-day services, the Council has been a visible beacon of stability amid so much uncertainty. I have no doubt that this consistency and reliability has been reassuring for many residents across Dacorum, but in particular for the most vulnerable within our community.

Support for Business

Since March last year the Council has administered over ten separate grant schemes on behalf of Central Government. The need to make payments to struggling businesses as quickly as possible has meant that schemes that would ordinarily be designed over a number of months or years, have instead been rolled out within a matter of weeks.

It is a tribute to Council staff, particularly those within the Revenues & Benefits Team and the Economic Development Team that they have stayed on top of constantly evolving Government guidance and paid out **£35m** of grants to over **3,000 local businesses**.

In addition to this, the Council has worked closely with its commercial tenants throughout the last year to ensure it does all it can to support them through the pandemic, and into the recovery phase.

The Council will continue to work closely with its public and private sector partners over the coming months to ensure we do as much as possible to help the economy through the challenging economic times ahead.

Budget context

Over the last 9 years, this council has successfully risen to the challenge of saving over **£7m** whilst simultaneously protecting and improving the services we provide to our residents. This budget outlines plans to save a **further £600k** in 2021/22.

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

That is why this council has proposed a budget for 2021 with a strong focus on sustainability, and continuing to deliver its corporate priorities into the medium-term. We have already made significant strides towards balancing the budget in future years, having identified initiatives of over **£600k** to address MTFS savings targets beyond 2022.

Continuing to invest in the Borough

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

Some of the areas identified for capital investment include:

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- **£90m** investment in our existing housing stock, which continues to provide high quality homes for tens of thousands of people across our borough
- **£135m** investment in our ambitious and successful housing new-build programme ... helping more people to live affordably in an area which has some of the highest house prices in the country
- **£50m** investment in various ventures which combine social benefit with financial return, including significant investment in a new sports centre in Berkhamsted and plans to develop out the former Civic Centre site in Hemel Hempstead
- **£1.4m** Investment in facilitating affordable housing developments and delivery of additional temporary accommodation provision.
- **£6.5m** investment in the Council's vehicle fleet to enable the continued delivery of our frontline services.

Council Tax

As part of the budget for 2021/22, the Council is proposing to increase Council Tax by **£5** for a Band D property, which equates to less than **10 pence per week**.

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

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

Housing

In line with Government guidance the council is proposing to increase housing rents by 1.5%. The average rent for a council property next year will be £104.96 per week, which following the 4-year period of statutory rent reductions means that average rent in Dacorum remains **lower than it was in 2015**.

Despite this recent period of enforced rent reductions, the Council has continued to make housing delivery one of its key priorities, and the Council recently completed its **338th new home**.

This trend will continue ... the Council's approved plans are to **deliver a further 370 homes** across the borough over the next 4 years.

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

A further **12 new build Temporary Accommodation units** were completed in 2020 at Williams House and Howe Grove House to **add to the 44 TA beds** already available in the council's purpose built hostel, The Elms.

In Conclusion

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Unquestionably, the Council faces significant financial challenges in the years ahead as we play our role in the Covid Recovery Phase.

However, this Council can enter this period feeling confident that with the commitment of its Members and staff we will continue to deliver for our residents.

I would like to thank all Council staff for weighing in and helping out our fantastic Finance team during these challenging times

I commend this budget to full council.”

Councillor Tindall advised that the opposition chose not to propose an alternative budget this year. This was partly due to COVID but also the additional pressures that were already on the officers so they didn't want to take up any more of their time in preparing a separate budget.

Councillor Williams said Councillor Elliot had clearly laid out the budget proposals and the ambitions within them so he was happy to second those.

A recorded vote was held:

For: 29 (Allen, Anderson, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Bhinder, Birnie, Chapman, Durrant, Elliot, Griffiths, Guest, Hearn, Hobson, Johnson, Maddern, Suqlain Mahmood, Riddick, Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, G Sutton, R Sutton, Timmis, Townsend, Williams, Woolner and Wyatt-Lowe).

Against: 0

Abstain: 15 (Barry, Cloughton, Mayor, England, Freedman, Hollinghurst, Link, McDowell, Pringle, Ransley, Stevens, Symington, Taylor, Tindall and Uttley)

Absent for vote: 5 (Adeleke, Arslan, Imarni, Sobaan Mahmood and Peter)

Therefore it was resolved that the following be approved;

Decision

General Fund Revenue Estimate

- a) set a Dacorum Borough Council General Fund Council Tax requirement of £12.406m, and a provisional amount of £13.405m for the combined Borough Council and Parish Councils' requirement for 2021/22;
- b) approve a Band D Council Tax increase of £5 (2.42%) for Dacorum Borough Council;
- c) approve the base estimates for 2021/22, as shown in Appendix A1, and the indicative budget forecasts for 2021/22 – 2024/25, as shown in Appendix A2;
- d) approve the forecast balances of Revenue Reserves as shown in Appendix J, and approve section 11 of this report as the updated Reserves Strategy;
- e) approve increases in Fees and Charges for 2021/22 as set out in Appendices C3, D3, and E3;
- f) approve and adopt the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, attached at appendix K, noting the proposed changes to counter party limits detailed in section 4.6' (amended)

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- g) approve and adopt the Capital Strategy for 2021/22, attached at Appendix L;
- h) note that this budget paper, if approved by Council, will form part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Capital Programme

- i) approve the Capital Programme for 2021/22 to 2025/26, as detailed in Appendix I;
- j) approve the financing proposals in Appendix I subject to an annual review of the financing options by the Corporate Director (Finance & Operations), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, during the preparation of the Statement of Accounts.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- k) set dwelling rents according to the new MHCLG Rent Standard, which provides for a rent increase of CPI+1% (1.5% in total). The average dwelling rents is proposed to increase to £104.96 in 2021/22, from its current level of £103.43 (based on 52 weeks);
- l) approve the HRA estimate for 2021/22 as shown in Appendix F.

Employer Terms and Conditions

- m) note that the hourly rate of all Council employees continues to exceed the rate proposed by the rates of the Living Wage Foundation, for 2021/22 (to be reviewed annually thereafter).

Statement by Chief Finance Officer

- n) approve the statement by the Chief Finance Officer regarding the robustness of the budget estimates and level of reserves as set out in Appendix M.
- o) approve Dacorum Borough Council entering into a Hertfordshire Business Rates pool as described in paras 4.10 to 4.15

09 February 2021

8.3 CA/019/21 SENIOR OFFICER PAY POLICY

Decision

To Council that it adopts the Pay Policy for 2021/22 as set out in appendix 1 to the report.

9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

None.

10 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

None.

11 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

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The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

Additional SPAE meetings;

Add additional meeting to the 2020/21 timetable; Tuesday 27th April

Add additional meeting to the 2021/22 timetable; Wednesday 30th June (re. Local Plan)

Change to DMC dates;

To change the frequency of meetings (currently scheduled to take place every 3 weeks), as set out below;

2020/21 timetable;

Current timetabled date	Proposed revised date	Frequency
1 st April 2021	1 st April 2021	4 weeks
22 nd April 2021	29 th April 2021	4 weeks
20 th May 2021	27 th May 2021	4 weeks

2021/22 timetable;

Current timetabled date	Proposed revised date	Frequency
10 th June 2021		3 weeks
1 st July 2021	8 th July 2021	4 weeks
22 nd July 2021	6 th August 2021	4 weeks
12 th August 2021	Cancel	
2 nd September 2021		4 weeks
23 rd September 2021		3 weeks
14 th October 2021	21 st October 2021	4 weeks
4 th November 2021	11 th November 2021	3 weeks
26 th November 2021	Cancel	
16 th December 2021		5 weeks
6 th January 2022	13 th January 2022	4 weeks
27 th January 2022	10 th February 2022	4 weeks
17 th February 2022	Cancel	
10 th March 2022		4 weeks
31 st March 2022		3 weeks
21 st April 2022	28 th April 2022	4 weeks
18 th May 2022	26 th May 2022	4 weeks

12 COUNCIL TAX DECLARATION 2021/22

The Mayor advised that as the billing authority for the borough of Dacorum, the Council is required to set the Council Tax annually. The purpose of the report was to set the Council Tax for 2021/22 in accordance with statutory requirements.

A recorded vote was held:

For: 46 (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, Pringle, Ransley, Riddick,

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Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, Stevens, G Sutton, R Sutton, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Townsend, Uttley, Williams, Woolner and Wyatt Lowe)

Against: 0

Abstain: 1 (Mayor)

Absent for vote: 2 (Arslan and Peter)

Therefore the Council Tax Declaration for 2021/22 was agreed.

13 APPENDIX A - MOTION DEBATE

(Item 5)

The Mayor opened up to statements from the Council.

Councillor Taylor seconded motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Rogers said that he's like to say we Dacorum conservatives were united in reducing the housing demands being placed on us by the government, he hoped that people understood that, you will later hear from our council leader about our resolve, but he said he wanted to share what their aim was and how they will achieve it. This is a solid proposal, were all agreed that, more new homes are needed, but how many? In December 2019 the manifestos of the Liberal Democrats of Labour and Conservatives all stated a housing target of 300000 new homes each year in England, this was based on population figures from 2014. A little bit of background he said, if they were to use the official 2018 statistics they would project a national housing need of 200000 homes a year, they now know that the population of England fell by 1.4 million last year, so new figures have been found that reduce the total number of houses required to 170000, he said they were trying to point out the practical conservative approach to the number of houses needed in Dacorum. Last December the Government algorithm was reviewed and amended, due to the pressure from resident group from across the country, along with 80 MP's. The objective was to take the pressure of the south east and balance up northern areas, however Dacorum suffered with figures rising up 10% up to 1023 up from the 922 that were currently consulting on. Since December 2019 we've had a general election, we've had Brexit and now the pandemic, national figures from Government are 76% higher for Dacorum than they should be. This consultation they have now embarked on is the 1st step, I'd like everyone listening to remember there are 2 further consultations that are planned, and if they looked at the details on the 1st consultation they will see the process. Andrew Williams our council leader along with the rest of us Conservative want to lower the target figure and the best way they can do that is to respond at this 1st stage before the 2nd & 3rd consultations go ahead and not kick the ball into the long grass. The key factor is to encourage everyone as far as possible to partake in the process as early as they possibly can so that they can work with One Voice Alliance, Councillors, Council officers to demonstrate to the planning inspector that they have done everything they can locally and no exceptional circumstances exist for the destruction of the greenbelt, stage 2 is working with London Greenbelt Council, CPRE and MPS to influence nation government, to reduce national figures. Last night in their conservative group, they agreed unanimously to continue their opposition to the loss of greenbelt, they have sympathy, strong sympathy with the motion that has been proposed however I really honestly urge all

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voting councillors to oppose this motion, let's get on with to discover what they can practically do to achieve the joint goal of defending the local greenbelt against these national housing targets. I plead to you as I'm never going to give up on this mission.

Councillor Birnie said that the two parties are not too far apart on the underlying object of this motion, they're all against a massive amount of building in Dacorum, the conservatives have shown by a resolution by passed by the council some time ago and in a subsequent letter to the housing minister that they reject the housing target imposed upon us by central government, because they believe it to be unachievable. The Government itself have said that the greenbelt should not be built upon, unless there are very special reasons for doing so, your conservative councillors do not believe that those special circumstances exist, and they believe that you cannot build 922 dwelling per annum without destroying large swathes of the green belt, however they must recognise that they are a small district council and what our Lim Dems Friends seem to have difficulty in grasping is that they have very little power to refuse the demands of central government, they have been instructed to produce a new local plan within a timetable which is defined by law, if they fail to do so they're likely to face a situation where developers can start building wherever they like, which is what has happened in Buckinghamshire, therefore they have produced a draft local plan and put it out to public consultation, they are expecting that there will be a large amount of public opposition to parts of the draft, they plan to use this criticism as a further argument against unrealistic building targets set by the housing minister. So it's when it comes to tactics we disagree with the motion to abandon the consultation at this late stage, we need the evidence of the public opposition to use it against the target, and don't forget that the process does not end here, this is a draft which will be amended to reflect large scale public objection, and after that it will then go out to another public consultation. He said, Ladies and Gentleman they're all aware of the havoc that the pandemic has caused across the high street, many shops will never re-open, it's his belief that much of the retail space will be converted into residential accommodation thus taking some of the pressure of the Greenbelt at the end of this process, at the moment let us not accept the give unrealistic targets but also let us not be dogs in the manager by canning the consultation at this stage. Instead they should be playing the politics astutely and said he cannot support this motion for this reason alone.

Councillor Timmis said she has a lot of sympathy with the motion by Councillor Pringle however as you know they extended the consultation period considerably, with only 4 days to go it's not realistic to further extend it, she said, I think they need to let people know that this a draft plan, and that is why they are consulting on it as required by the process, the government have insisted on the housing numbers that they've got, 1023 that was 922 and they need to know people's views to be able to act on the, her views as a conservative Cllr and like many of her residents is that they do not support the governments numbers as they are not evidence based and she does not support such extensive use of the greenbelt which can never be replaced. She will put this in her response to the consultation which she feels should go ahead, therefore I will not be supporting this motion.

Councillor England said there is a saying, when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging, he said well " the ball has been kicked in the log grass" councillor Rogers, Councillor Birnie, if we need the evidence as you say, lets re-run the consultation

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when people can give them the evidence. The whole point of this debate is that they all agree consultation needs to be done, but they are simply saying that if you want to achieve the goal of sending a message to the government then they need to get more engagement than what has currently been reached, you cannot have it both ways, he said he has heard he thinks 3 councillors now try do exactly that, and you can't do it, what they need to do is re-run this consultation at a time when people can attend meetings and find out what it's about. They've all spent a lot of time of these documents, they've done their best to show people what it's about and it hasn't worked. It's been an uncertain time throughout this period of consultation and trying to press ahead just hasn't worked, the pandemic has been a rough ride for everyone, many local deaths, and lurid headlines and dangerous new variants appearing, and that and the time of year have prevented it from being a proper process at all. In questions tonight the leader acknowledged that engagement activity had stopped due to the pandemic, so if engagement is being stopped in the middle of the consultation, what does that tell you, since the 27th November the Dacorum infection rates had soared and they found themselves in tiers of confusion followed by a peak which was predicted by epidemiologist which has only been reduced by people staying at home unless they were given an appointment for a vaccination, so much has changed, in response to the threat to life which at one point lead to Dacorum going from Covid tier 2 to 4 in as many days, this threat has not been met with measures to safeguard participation in this consultation, the grudging extension first resisted at full council in November, December and then offered in January have made Dacorum look leaden footed even in comparison with the most leaden footed government in recent history, Nor has the fundamental change in the housing numbers the gerrymandering of evidence for what has been proposed been acknowledged via the process by which this this plan is presented, things have changed and they should recognise that for another reason why if they want to put solid evidence forward they need to go back, they need to go back and they need to accept that what learning has been achieved they need more, the point about consultations is this is a regulation 18 which means feedback can be given by residents, the next stage won't allow feedback, it's a regulation 19. In the debate earlier at the meetings, he actually asked if there would be a guarantee of another regulation 18 and he would have been prepared to vote in support if there had been, however it was denied, so they're not going to get another chance at that are they? Extensions have not been enough, they need to recognise that physical exhibitions and through Q&A's are essential, they need to do these in the summer when people are vaccinated and can go outside. They need to target a good percentage of the adult population there are 120000 adults in Dacorum and so far this has only reached about 4% of them. There should be room to debate the principles of the strategy, we simply haven't been able to do this over the winter and they need to come back to this, the real problem is safely and effectively reaching the people who are not online, As Cllr Pringle has set out, they are asking people to make trips to libraries which I think are open, and they wouldn't be making these trips if the consultation period is postponed until the summer, so he said again, we can't have this both ways, if they want the evidence, if that statement is real then they shouldn't be afraid of pausing this and coming back to it in the summer.

Councillor Symington said, she is speaking in support of the motion, it started at the wrong time and is continuing through a period where it's completely inappropriate for

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them to be consulting with the public. The Covid infection rate has already been discussed only on Monday they had their own prime minister speak to us about how cautious and careful they have to be. So although she accepted not that this consultation has been extended considerably, she disagreed with that, 3 weeks is not considerable and that is all it was extended by, she said it should be halted or extended considerably, this motion proposes they halt it and get the numbers right, she agreed with her conservative colleagues that it is imperative that they get the numbers right and the timing right of this consultation. Looking at the website and accessibility, she had counted and she was sure she hadn't counted all of them, the front end documents alone amount to 149, and that doesn't count the sub documents within that, this document online document is not suitable for the vast majority of people, if one of Cllr Pringles resident done it in 9hrs then she commends them, in terms of the other literature that's gone out and it been well documented that despite a very nice and attractive glossy documents been produced, the dissemination of this has been woeful, in fact she had that day had communication with a resident who had actually received it in Tring. The vast majority of people do not know that this consultation is taking place, it needs to be halted, its needs to be open to everybody and if you look back at the website, in 2017 it was very clear they ran public exhibitions, it was open to all, people could walk in and discuss and look at all these things, this is simply not able to happen, it's not possible, the way that it is being portrayed to people is a form of censorship, the censorship being that the difficulty in navigating the online documents and that they are only a limited part of our residents, so she urged the council to think about this, to think about the consultation with the residents this is for them, their future, they represent the residents and they need to be sure that they are building a community for public spaces that they want and they can only do that by engaging with them, she said she would like to reiterate that 2 of the councillors have said "to engage in this we need people to partake as early as they can", that hasn't happened and very many people cannot partake because they either don't know about it or cannot get out to do it. Another councillor mentioned that they need to know people's views, they can only know people's views by telling them it's happening and giving them the opportunity to respond. We need to halt this consultation I fully support it and urge councillors to vote in favour of this motion.

Councillor Maddern said on the 18th of November she voted in support of the draft local plan to go out to consultation, however no one of them knew at that time what was going to happen with regards to lockdown and the difficulty in regards to getting the information out to residents, she said it seemed that some areas of the borough haven't received the booklet and she is concerned that not enough people would have been informed or would have had an opportunity to properly consider the consultation, as an example she said just 23 hours ago the Chaulden and Warner's end councillor asked on Facebook for people to let them know if they hadn't received the information booklet, so they could deliver them, so far people in 6 roads within their roads within their ward have said they hadn't seen in, but even if our three hard working Chaulden & Warners end councillors had beetled around delivering those booklets today that doesn't give people time to fully digest the 359 pages before the lengthy and somewhat onerous task of submitting comments online, for those that don't have online facilitates they simply wouldn't get it posted back to the forum in time, whilst I absolutely believe that our councillors are in agreement about the unreasonable

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pressure on numbers from the government, this isn't the point here, she also passionately believe that we are here to serve our residents and we have duty to give them a voice, she doesn't believe that legally no facility to delay or extend this consultation due to the exceptional circumstances until such time that people can enjoy the freedom to visit exhibitions and feel properly informed, she also doesn't believe that they should be abandon or withdrawing this consultation simply, simply that they should be extending it further until such time that people can properly view it.

Councillor Johnson said he doesn't propose to speak on behalf of all Dacorum residents but he does wish to speak on behalf of Kings Langley residents, Our electors called a parish poll in Nov 2017 in response to the initial draft local plan options and issues consultation and subsequently voted by over 99% against any form of greenbelt development, they have subsequently took a full and active part in the consultation. Over the last 3 years they've continued to play an active part as the next stage of the consultation process developed with social media posts, newsletters to every household about what was happening and regular articles in my Kings News and Kings Langley village news. Since Nov 2020 in addition to the documentation provided by Dacorum Borough Council there has continued to be newsletters, articles in the local my Kings news and Kings Langley village news, sustained social media debate and the list goes on all about the threat posed by housing developments, not only in the parish of Kings Langley but in the Kings Langley employment area and the Kings Langley estate both of which are not on our doorstep in the Three Rivers area but on our doormat in Kings Langley, with the publication of the draft local plan they have responded online, by email and by writing a letter if they don't have a computer, they did not need an invitation to do so as they are independent and intelligent people who worked this out for themselves. He said he could go on but as others have suggested the motion is saying they should ignore every response they've received and consult what is arguably going to be on higher number of houses to be built per annum a subsequent higher number of greenbelt sites to develop and ignore completely the fact they have another round of consultation after this and then the planning inspector and that's where the fight needs to happen. He said, could things have been done better? yes things can always be done better but he opposes this motion because he does not accept that Kings Langley residents have been simultaneously been impeded, excluded, confused, he does not believe they have failed to understand there is a draft local plan consultation or assumes the process has already been suspended or though that they needed to understand the formula in order to realise that over 900 houses per year was far too many.

Councillor Banks said wanted to agree with the opening comments by Councillor Rogers and like Cllr Pringle I too have received letters emails phone calls and knock on her door regarding the emerging local plan, he had encouraged everyone to either go online, to write a letter or to make a phone call as you advised on page 2 of the booklet. She understand that not every house has received it she knew has had site of Hemel Online and of the Gazette of Local publication and their own in touch and political news sheets, she too is very passionate about protecting the greenbelt she is very passionate about keeping the number of houses to meet their needs alone, that they are eco-friendly and that they have the infrastructure for any development going forward, she said she is equally passionate about democracy and she feels it would be

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an absolute insult to residents of Dacorum to cancel or postpone the consultation any further, she is really pleased at the level of participation and was really pleased that gentlemen that don't have access to the online portals in my area have written letters and she has redirected every enquiry she has had about the booklet or lack of booklet to officer and she knows that those booklets have been posted out because the residents have bought the booklets to show her. She feels it's imperative that they move forward and take note of what local residents have to say and feels it's rather insulting to think they should stop the process now and ignore all those hard efforts of those people that shared their contribution, so consequently she will not be supporting the motion.

Councillor Elliot said this is just grandstanding by the Liberal Democrats, because you'll all recall their manifesto from 2019 when they were matching the Conservative and Labour manifestos at 300,000 houses per annum, they talk about democracy but this is a party that ignored the democratic move of the people under the EU Referendum so their talking about local democracy, he said they are trying to gather evidence against building these extra houses, so it's a case of ask conservatives, they oppose building on the greenbelt they want to gather the evidence to give it to central government to show that our residents are opposed to this building and Cllr Pringle talks about she's got overwhelming evidence but comes to Cllr England and Cllr Symington say there is not enough evidence so where is this coming from, they either have overwhelming evidence or no evidence, so again I oppose this motion.

Councillor Adeleke said he no longer wishes to speak as his points were made by his colleagues.

Councillor Mahmood said Covid 19 has created a digital revolution I think I speak about my elders of 96 years who 12 months ago could not use computers and WhatsApp and social media who because of Covid 19 have learnt to do so, so there are a lot more familiar with the internet of things than they were 13 months ago, whilst it is true that some people who may have not had the support and may have missed that, however the vast majority of people he thinks have heard or would have seen the consultation because of Dacorum Digest because of the campaign the members have led on both sides of the argument, so for him he said there is no reason whatsoever for extending the consultation period which was longer than normal, it has been covered in the papers, it was covered everywhere so he thinks in terms of publicity it was a job well done, for him he said the consultation must go ahead and the planning must proceed rather than grandstanding and falling foul of the planning inspectorate and having the planning inspector force numbers upon them because they've not been capable or competent to carry through the process, so for him Cllr Sutton earlier said there were 2,000 people over 5,000 responses 46,000 hits on the website so I think people, not everybody is passionate he is sure there are a lot of people passionate, there are parts of the borough where people aren't affected so they haven't taken the time to engage, he hoped they do but they haven't and that their choice, he thinks the feedback from what he is hearing will help Dacorum's case with both Westminster and the planning inspectorate to get the numbers reduced, so he thinks the consultation is a key part of the fight that the council has been putting up through the MPS and through representation to say we can't cope with these numbers, equally he thinks it is on record for the past 2 decades, he has been a councillor for 14 odd years, this

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council has fought very hard to protect the boroughs greenbelt, and he has not seem anything from this side of the chamber which tells me that that resolve has softens, that resolve is there, everybody is passionate, they want to get the numbers reduces but follow due process which he thinks is the right thing to do, he said for him he is not going to support the motion, he said it's very easy when you're in the opposition to point fingers and he thinks they have to look at the Lib Dem councils around, the manners in which they have dealt with the consultation, he thinks the current administration have done a very good job and consultations like these, local plans, they are 1000s of pages, you could take a year and still not get through it, he feels people will get their points heard, either through email or through consultation and he knows a lot of people have people helping , Listening to Cllr Pringle certainly on her neck of the woods making sure everybody from young to the elderly re engaging which is a positive sign, he thinks the passion for the right reason or the wrong reason has helped publicise the whole affair, so for him he said it's a good administration they get things done, they're not a talking shop and he means the conservative so he thinks there is a very good chance once the feedback comes in.

Councillor Hobson said that she just considers herself a resident. She happened to join the Lib Dems because they aligned with her values at the time. She said that we are here to represent our residents. The Council has form in publically being seen to not listen to residents. She thinks they are seriously risking again, being seen not to listen to residents. They will come back and say, "we've got the consultation and that's what we're listening to" but she thinks the way that a lot of people that spoke against the motion this evening could appear to be sounding tone deaf to what residents' views are. It's a real opportunity for the whole Council, whatever colour they are politically, to really show that you are listening and willing to listen to residents and that's not just by following due process. If the Council doesn't agree with the numbers, if the Council is passionate about protecting the green belt, why have they issued consultation proposing to release, forever and ever irrevocably, swathes of the green belt in the hope that following a risky strategy, a gamble, that enough residents will be able to see the consultation, respond, some people will be angry or frustrated or giving opinions rather than maybe responding to the questions which Officers can then use to put forward good solid evidence. If, as some of us have understood, there is a very risky strategy during a pandemic when people are very distracted by home-schooling, working from home, being ill themselves, helping other people, losing people and having to deal with the trauma of loss, if not enough people respond because of these understandable reasons, this is a very risky strategy of the Council to consult on something that they don't believe in, in the hope that people will turn it down. Why didn't they consult on something that they did want and then take all of the positive evidence to the Planning Inspectorate? Cllr Hobson has only been a Councillor for a couple of years and does try to represent her residents. She asks do we really think that if we extend this or if we postpone this, that the Government will then say they will ignore that fact that there has been a year of hiatus of opening and closing. The Government will be on very shaky ground to force Local Authorities to push forward something that they haven't been able to consult on properly and I think that the Council could be a lot stronger in this. We are hearing a lot of positive words but what we see in writing and the process that's being followed does not match the passion and the words and all of the things that we've heard. It will be really good if somebody who knows about this could address this point. If the Planning Inspectorate turned down or if we didn't have the plan in place by the appointed time and builders could build wherever, but under the current scheme wouldn't the green belt be protected because these swathes wouldn't have been released as the current consultation

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proposes. Cllr Hobson's supports the motion and what Councillor Maddern said about a delay. But she really does think that the Council needs to listen as their appearance in front of residents is not positive.

Councillor Colette Wyatt-Lowe said that the sheer weight of emails sent to her on this matter indicates that we are reaching many local residents. Also that we have to follow due process to make our submissions valid. She feels disappointed that the Lib Dems have chosen to attack the administration as we all want to protect our green belt and we need a consultation to add weight that reflects the rejection by our residents of the numbers proposed by the Government and working together we can only strengthen the impact of that rejection. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe urges working together going forward to the next stages of this and then we will achieve a truly unified response from the Borough. She believes that the Lib Dems are almost trying to create a situation of them and us when it should be WE working together to push this through and to get the Government to listen and together that will add the weight that is needed. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe cannot support this motion because the basic premise of the motion itself is flawed.

Councillor Allen said that he is heartened by what Cllr Wyatt-Lowe says and Cllr Timmis and Cllr Rogers that our Tory colleagues are keen to resist the numbers being proposed. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe highlights a desire for it to be WE, and since Christmas he has been writing letters on this matter and it would have been helpful if Conservative colleagues could have flagged up their support for resisting the numbers back then. There are concerns about things that have been said in this debate, Section 18 Consultation in which residents are able to provide commentary, Section 19 that commentary does not have the same weight and therefore to say that there are further consultations is not necessarily helpful unless those further consultations involve the public being able to offer commentary. The commentary that has been received so far from residents, far from the 5000 he has just heard quoted, it was said earlier that it was 500 responses so far. Colleagues say that they want to hear what people say, is 500 enough? We want a stronger message than that and therefore, a consultation in which a large number of people have not been able to access because of digital barriers, paper versions because libraries are not essential journeys, a large number of void houses which is really many streets and quite large chunks of our communities have not received the leaflet and he still getting emails, this morning he forwarded one to Strategic Services requesting a leaflet. This is days before the consultation ends, it is too late. If we want more people to respond, it to be needs at a time when people have the head space, although the messages are getting out there and so many people are responding but we are not getting the commentary that is needed on this consultation. The news that is on the TV is missing really important issues because it is all about Covid and vaccines. Parents are run ragged trying to look after their children's education, people are generally disengaged at the moment from a lot of very important normal life messages and communications because they are getting through a period of time in which there is this enormous distraction. He really feels that we don't want to lose the commentary received so far but we need additional commentary and at a time when our residents are in the head space to be able to engage with this issue and currently he feels that they are not.

Councillor Anderson said he cannot support the motion as he can't understand why anybody would want to start again with a bigger number of houses which will be the consequence of stopping this consultation. If all the people who have claimed to have said that they support this were made aware that the consequence of having to start again would involve more housing still, he doesn't think Members who supported the motion would have had the same answers. Process has to be followed that is prescribed by the Government and if we don't follow this process the consequences

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are quite clear and we will end up with developers being able to develop what they like, where they like. One of the issues, particularly in Kings Langley, is with the Three Rivers Liberal controlled Authority and their issues and options consultation composed massive of houses on the east side of the Gade Valley each side of the M25. By not actually following the prescribed route they are taking a huge risk with that housing potentially happening, it's all green belt and that would wreck the whole of the Gade Valley which worries Cllr Anderson that the Liberals at Three Rivers are running that risk. We need the public opinion as evidence to say that we can't do this. It may not work, and one way of ensuring it doesn't work is not to try it and in terms of risks the bigger risk is not to do it. If the Lib Dems portray that the Council somehow were in favour of all of this development by going through this process, that is their luxury as opposition, but if anyone is truly objective they will understand that we have to go through this process we do not have any choice in this matter. In terms of listening to the public, they have been listened to and by enlarge we do agree with them, but there is a lot of misleading information with some Councillors claiming that another group of Councillors are in favour of the development when they are not. It is just as important that we listen to people as well as important that we are honest with the public about where we stand. At the General Election all three political parties were fully in support of this massive amount of housing but at a local level you will find that none of us are agreeing to it. This is a more honest position to have with the public that than with inaccurate claims. The consultation is not easy but has to follow a prescribed method. With regards to terms and availability, with Covid things have become a lot more digital and not everyone has access to the Internet but there isn't a lot that can be done if some people don't have access and he understands that some people don't have that chance but vast majority of the public do. The Government has made it plain that they do not see the pandemic as a reason for any Authorities to hold up the planning process, in fact there are looking to Planning Authorities to accelerate the process to lead the recovery through greater house building. For all of these reasons and more, he cannot support this motion. We don't like this level of housing but we have to follow the process and try and combat what the Government is trying inflict on our residents.

Councillor Barry said she is supporting this motion for all of the reasons that have been outlined by both parties that not enough people have been able to have their say, to loads of barriers put in place. She is completely disheartened by what is being said from the Conservatives. They say that we are only a small District Council and cannot make a difference. Councillor Johnson insinuated that his residents are intelligent as they have read it, but yours aren't, no they just have barriers and this is not about intelligence. This is about standing up for our community and emails that everyone has been receiving from residents across Dacorum are saying that they can't believe this is happening at a time when there is so much else going on. People do not have the time to go through 149 pages with 4 days to go and some people have only just heard about it. To say we need their input for this to go ahead as the Section 18 or 19 is confusing, so you are saying we need the input but how we are getting this input, we can't oppose it without this input that you say we are getting but it is clear we aren't, is it 5000 responses or is it 2000. 42,000 hits are not 42,000 responses. It seems clear to her that some Councillors do not want to represent their community and it is really disappointing. She feels there should be a recorded vote on this so it can be seen who is not willing to support their community and their residents and what they want and if they cared about extending or agreeing with it you would have proposed an amendment but didn't.

Councillor Taylor said he was disappointed by the response of the Conservative party. They seem to have forgotten that they are in power in Central Government, you set the rules, whether they are set nationally or locally. Dacorum is represented by two Conservative MPs, one of which was elected with an explicit promise to protect the

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green belt and if anyone thinks that a 25% increase in the size of Berkhamsted and 50% increase in the size of Tring in the draft Plan is an appropriate development, he must question their understanding of language. Now MP is in Parliament he has forgotten about the people who elected him. An algorithm was created which would inflate the numbers where the developers wanted to build them. When it was challenged the Central Government went back to earlier figures and in effect the target for Dacorum went up. If the numbers used had been the original numbers that the new algorithm it would have resulted in the halving of the target for Dacorum. In effect the targets were set and the numbers fiddled to give the desired results. This makes the Draft Plan ridiculous as the numbers would be more than halved if they had followed the logic of their own rules. The continuation of the consultation treats our residents with contempt. There are too many houses, they are the wrong type and they are in the wrong place. Please support this motion.

Councillor Freedman said that he wanted to highlight two issues with some of the things that he has heard about the motion. If this motion is passed it specifically states that when the consultation is re-launched it will take into account of the comments that have currently been received so there is no part of this motion that is saying that those that have already responded would be ignored. The other issue he wanted to highlight is some people have talked about the difference between the Conservative and the Lib Dem approach to this, he thinks that one of the key differences on it is that the Conservative position seems to be the end justifies the means, if you can get the responses you want that help to oppose the numbers then you've done the right thing. But they don't seem to mind that a lot of people feel excluded so whilst you might get the result a lot of residents, even if they are going to be saying the same things that other people have already put on they are going to feel excluded and one of the points of this motion is to make sure that everybody has ample chance to respond. So even if we all want the same result we do disagree on how to get it.

Councillor Uttley said she is delighted that some of the Conservative Councillors finally agree that the figure prepared in the Local Plan is not supported by evidence with a couple of notable exceptions. When this was previously brought up there has been a reliance on commitments to suggest that changing proposals when there is new evidence and it's the new evidence that she would like to point out here because not only is this consultation going on during a pandemic, this consultation and Local Plan is unable to change direction. There is an enormous amount of potential changes in our society happening just now and we our consulting on a society that was the one we had three or four years ago. Councillor Uttley feels that this is something we really need to think about and would also like to point out that the Conservative Councillors say that they want a lot of responses and there aren't a lot of responses. Even if people have got access to online media this is not an easy consultation to navigate, it's not just 130/ 150 pages, there's another 138 documents in the background and if you really want to understand it you have to look at them. It's overwhelming and difficult for people who are home schooling, working and worrying for people to access this properly. People point out that we are trying to avoid risk from predatory developers which is not entirely fair to suggest because when a Council does not have a five year land supply in evidence, which we don't right now, we fall back on national planning policy. National planning policy framework protects our green belt land. Releasing our green belt land, if we are forced to do it by proceeding with this consultation, will definitely not protect our green belt land so I think releasing this is a far greater risk.

Councillor Guest says she has been fighting to save the green belt in Dacorum since 1996 and she's not going to stop now. Everyone in this Council wants to save the green belt but she doesn't think that this motion is the way to do it. When our core strategy was adopted in 2013 the Planning Inspectorate passed it on the condition that

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we went for an early partial review because its housing numbers were on the low side. The early partial review that we are doing now, and if we didn't have a sound Local Plan in place then developers could build what they like where they like when they like. We need to have a sound Local Plan. 922 houses PA is too much but if we came in with a lower figure in our consultation, if we went to the Planning Inspectorate with a lower figure that would be found unsound and we would not have a sound Local Plan giving developers the freedom to build what they like where they like when they like. For us to effectively challenge these figures and effectively have a lower figure, to have a sound Local Plan with lower figures in we need evidence and we have to consult to get that evidence so that is what we are doing. It is by consulting that we will have the evidence to go to the Planning Inspectorate and say we can't do 922 houses PA and this is the reason why. Councillor Guest opposes the motion and she supports the green belt.

Councillor Tindall said that what he was going to say has been said by others and so he will not speak.

Councillor Stevens said he was confused by the comments that Cllr Rogers made at the beginning that we are trying to get the numbers changed. His reading of the Plan tells him that it has been prepared to match the requirements in the NPPF, that it has been positively prepared etc. We have challenged the Minister and he has come back with higher numbers and Cllr Taylor makes the point. National Government makes the rules and he hasn't heard anything from colleagues that suggests that they are willing to challenge the rules. We need to use evidence to support our case and so far no one has said we've got to change the basis under which we challenge the rules. Regarding the Consultation from a marketing sense, when you have 64,000 properties in the Borough and you have only a few hundred responses, he wouldn't say that you've got a comprehensive input on your consultation and he feels that is what needs to be done. He is sure there are a lot of people who have written in but we are missing a huge number of people who are unable access the information because of other distractions. Councillor Stevens is supporting the motion but would like to see a better consultation and as we move forward he would like to make sure that the Council consults on the right numbers for the right homes in the right places without the release of all of the green belt that is being talked about, otherwise it is a cynical exercise.

Councillor Williams said that the Local Plan and the consultation process is very complicated and to do justice in 85 minutes is quite challenging. The situation hasn't changed greatly as it was implied since launching the consultation in November. We knew in November that it would be remote and wouldn't be having face-to-face meetings, the only change is the announcement on 16th December, which he doesn't agree confused people with the Government's intention which if anything made the situation worse for the Council for 1023 but we are not consulting on 1023 we are consulting 922, so nothing came out on 16th December that requires us to change our tack. Whatever is done as a consultation even in the best of times, you are only going to reach and get responses from a very small proportion of the population – 2-3% would be a significant return in terms of responding to any sort of consultation. If there are a reasonable number of responses, that can be relied upon to give us the evidence that is required. During the process of this consultation Cllr Williams has seen some very accurate portrayals of what the Local Plan is about and some very inaccurate ones too. Some of the suggestions that it is green belt grabbed by developers is ridiculous, this would be if there wasn't a Plan in place and they are able to make applications however they like. The process of having a Plan is to control the amount of land that is released and to have some control over the type of development. We have worked hard on getting the right type of homes and could be criticized that there

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are too many one and two bedroomed flats and not enough family homes in the Plan and there have been debates around the affordability and other issues. But there has never been a Conservative Councillor say we support 922 but we do know, and I heard Cllr Uttley say, that the bar to come up with a different number is very high. There are very few areas in which you can challenge the figure that the Government has handed down. When we go at some point following this consultation the Inspector will look as a starting point at has there been enough done to achieve the 922 or a 1023 or whatever it might be and if we haven't then you need to do that. In 2013 Plan we were 2000 below the figure we were supposed to provide at that time and the Inspector said he wasn't sure that we had tried hard enough and you need to do an early partial review. What this Plan is not endorsing 922, no Conservative Councillor has ever endorsed 922, what is being said is this Plan demonstrates how 922 can be achieved and we are seeking residents views on what Dacorum would look like with that level of development in place to achieve what is required in the Plan. The purpose of the consultation is to get people's views on what Dacorum would look like with 922 and he believes to that end we are achieving that. We will then have to consider what our options would be going forward in terms of taking forward the Plan to further consultation to amendment, to looking at the levels of development we have got, the types of development we've got in the Borough and taking into account the changing face of retail, commercial to residential, but we have to accept that within Dacorum and in particular Hemel Hempstead, offices have not been attractive to the market for the last 20 years and almost everything that can be converted to residential already has been even pre-Covid, so the opportunities from commercial to residential are very limited. Councillor Williams can reassure everyone at the meeting this evening, that this administration is facing its responsibility to produce and demonstrate what a Plan would look like to meet the National target. It is a target that all parties are signed up, and the Conservatives are facing up to our responsibilities as administration and that it is seriously facing up to the challenge that we face with this Plan and he will not support the motion.

Councillor Pringle summarised and thinks it is really insightful for the residents who she welcomes to the meeting tonight to hear the arguments that take place in this forum. We are told that it's up to the residents during a pandemic to save the Conservative party from their own colleagues. My residents have written to the MPs and they have written to Councillors and have been told that the MPs say it's the Councillors and the Councillors say it's the MPs. Cllr Pringle suggests to Cllr Williams that he stands up to the MPs because he represents the residents not Westminster, because we risk a developer-lead free for all right across our countryside for people to fill their pockets from asset stripping our country. Cllr Pringle says that Cllr Williams said that during a pandemic he is leaving it up to widows, parents who are home schooling and people who only have a land-line and that he cannot stand up to the Government and that you rely on people but you can't even get a pamphlet delivered even though it has already been extended by 3 weeks. Cllr Pringle has the evidence from people who all tell her that they had heard nothing about it. Cllr Pringle has been doing the work that he should have ensured was planned for when she warned that we can't go ahead with this consultation because it is not fair to our residents. Cllr Pringle and her Lib Dem colleagues are committed to representing our residents which is sometimes tough, but there is a concept called Managing Up and what this means is when you represent the residents of the Borough and someone tries to force something on you that your residents do not want or is not in the interests of the Borough and being in the middle of a pandemic, you say that you are going to talk to some of these people in my party, this seems that the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. The Mayor doesn't seem to recollect what he was told a few days earlier as the County Councillor so he can't express the things that he has witnessed at the Northchurch Parish Council meeting when he was specifically asked to pass it

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back to you, this is evidence. Cllr Pringle says that what Cllr Williams is doing is a disgrace to the residents, people are genuinely worried and he is putting them through it because of some sort of game he is playing with Westminster and when people call you out you are saying don't look at me look at him. Why should residents trust you and that somehow some magic will be played behind closed doors and what is proposed, because one thing that is clear there is a lot of green belt fields on these plans and there is a risk that it will be released for building and lost, because once it has gone it has gone forever and damages the ecology and the countryside on the edge of an Outstanding Area of Natural Beauty and he is risking it all because you want the residents to come and save you and that is not good enough. When it is all stripped back that is what everyone has said, how much respect does that show the people that have elected you, who do you work for – those who elect you or those who tell you what to do, are you puppets on a string or do you have any say in your hollowed out party anymore. Each of you who has spoken needs to reflect on that in this recorded vote. Cllr Pringle would also take exception to someone who suggests that people in Kings Langley somehow are much more cleverer than people in Northchurch, what she suggests is that maybe you only speak to people who have IT at home, people who you are professionals maybe who worked from home, but do you speak to people who don't have IT at home, do you speak to people who only have an iPhone where they can't look at these plans, do you speak to people who only have a landline or the elderly. She suggests that you don't, she suggests that every time an election comes around you just rely on your party and your blue rosettes to get elected and you do not speak with or engage with your residents the way she has. Because this is evidence, she knows her people and she knows what they want, and 100% say this isn't fair, this is wrong, this is legally questionable. But more than being legally questionable, it's morally reprehensible to do this to people and we risk losing something so precious at a time of national crisis. Under this Government more people have died with Covid 19 than in the last war, think about that, would you be asking people to sit and wade through 9 hours of documents during the blitz, but that is what you are asking real people to do. But because they are isolated and alone behind their front doors and bereaved like Dorothy who gave her specific permission for me to tell her story, her husband loved the green belt. Cllr Pringle asked Dorothy if she could use her name tonight and she agreed as she wanted everyone to know. Those people who say that she is not clever enough, not as clever as my residents in Kings Langley, how does that sound, you are an elected representative and that's what is being told to residents across Dacorum. Cllr Pringle says this is not acceptable because this pamphlet which she received, and she is only one of 3 odd of eight of the Northchurch Parish Councillors who have received this, it tells people clearly that there is two ways to get involved, you go to the consultation portal, which we have already heard took 9 hours from Mrs Smith, although our friend of Kings Langley thinks that she's maybe not as clever as the people there, or you can email. What do people who are 101 years old with only a landline do, they get ignored. But my 101 year old resident has spoken at length in the letter that he took the time to hand write to her to say how valuable the green belt is to him. What is worse is that how can we trust people when we hear Councillor Griffiths say the libraries are closed when Cllr Pringle has a letter from Strategic Services dated December to Northchurch Parish Council saying "with regard to the Libraries which are currently open in the Borough, Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring, we have implemented a number of measures to ensure that they are compliant with Covid secure requirements in order to limit browsing time. The Council has provided a pack of documents which Library members can loan from.

Councillor Griffiths had a point of order and said that she was asked a question about why the members of staff were speaking to our tenants in her questioning and she said we do not tell them to go to the Libraries, the majority of libraries are closed. Cllr

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Griffiths stands by that, the majority as she understand it are closed, certainly in Leverstock Green it is closed and maybe in Adeyfield. The main library may be open here for limited services but the Council, and this is what she was referring to in answering the question, she said we do not tell tenants to go to the library, and that she understands they closed. Cllr Griffiths feels this is getting very personal on how Cllrs conduct themselves and to judge Members on how they perform their duties as Cllrs, this is not the function of this motion in her opinion.

The Mayor said he has tried to be considerate to Cllr Pringle but he has noted Cllr Griffiths comments. He feels it has got to the point where in the remaining 2 minutes that Cllr Pringle has, that he must ask that she addresses herself specifically to the motion and not to any other comments about other people etc. Please address your final 2 minutes to the motion.

Councillor Pringle asked the Mayor does she get a chance to respond. The Mayor replied that she does not and that there was a point of order and the process is that the Mayor responds to the point of order and others do not have an opportunity to question the Mayor's decision on the point of order.

Councillor Pringle said she feels that it does not need a response as the public have witnessed what they need to witness this evening. Cllr Pringle has an elderly resident who phoned up to find out how she could see the actual documents because she has difficulty with her eyesight and the only place she can do this was in The Forum, and she was asked whether it would be a lawful journey and was told that they would rather that she didn't. This is an example of a situation, Cllr Pringle does not wish to be personal but she takes this seriously because it is the real people who matter to her, not whether she offends a particular Cllr, but whether she offends the people of Dacorum who she thinks have had some fairly offensive remarks made about their ability to navigate this incredibly difficult process. We know the brochures haven't been delivered, we have the evidence, we know that people are not aware of this, we know that the Council is choosing to say it's not me it's them about Westminster. Cllr Pringle feels that this is reprehensible to continue with this under the current conditions and to ask the residents to dig the Council out of the hole. Therefore, Cllr Pringle implores everyone to do what 100% of the respondents in Northchurch have asked for, what all of the Town and Parish Councils across the Borough have asked for and what all of the residents groups together have asked for. Please support this motion, please speak for the residents and not for Westminster.

The Meeting ended at 10.57 pm

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