

## Notes of Key Decisions/Actions

**Meeting:** Council

**Date:** Wednesday, 14 April 2021

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>1</b> Minutes	The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2021 were agreed by the members present and will be signed by the Mayor at the next available opportunity.
<b>2</b> Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations of interest.
<b>3</b> Public Participation	None.
<b>4</b> Announcements	<p><b>4.1 By the Mayor:</b></p> <p>The Mayor reminded members that they were required to complete and return their DBC Related Party Transaction Declaration if they hadn't already done so.</p> <p><b>4.2 By the Chief Executive:</b></p> <p>C Hamilton advised that the following Elections will take place on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021: Leverstock Green Ward Tring Central Ward Hertfordshire County Council Police and Crime Commissioner</p> <p><b>4.3 By the Group Leaders: _</b></p> <p>Councillor Tindall gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Hollinghurst, McDowell, Pringle and Uttley.</p> <p><b>4.4 Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet:</b></p> <p>(Full details are in the minutes under Announcements of the Leader and Cabinet).</p>
<b>5</b> Questions	<p><b>Question 1 from Councillor Symington to Councillor Anderson:</b></p> <p>In the Dacorum Local Plan (2020-2038) Emerging Strategy for Growth Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report (November 2020) produced by TRL Limited (TRL) under a contract with Dacorum Borough Council, the Urban Capacity Option is outlined. This equates to a level of development of 608 dwellings per annum and requires no further land to be released from the Green Belt. [<a href="https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-">https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-</a></p>

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	<p><a href="#">planning/dacorum-local-plan-interim-sustainability-appraisal-report-november-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=53bf0c9e_6, p32]</a></p> <p>In his response to Cllr Williams' letter of 30 November 2020, Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP, stated that 'Authorities should make a realistic assessment of the number of homes their communities need as the starting point of the process'.</p> <p>Dacorum's local needs are assessed at 355 dwellings per annum.</p> <p>In a meeting with the Conservative Friends of India, reported in the Sunday Times 28 March 2021 <a href="https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/2e76273a-8f23-11eb-af74-aabf762d9542?shareToken=5a987233be0e66a19d70aabc3465446f">https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/2e76273a-8f23-11eb-af74-aabf762d9542?shareToken=5a987233be0e66a19d70aabc3465446f</a> the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, stressed that the government wanted to "build on brownfield sites first".</p> <p>Would the portfolio holder give the reason for the Council rejecting the TRL Urban Capacity Option in favour of a huge 750-hectare Green Belt grab to meet the government's excessive minimum housing figures?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Anderson:</b> I have already provided Councillor Symington with a full and detailed answer and copied in all members. The first draft of the local plan involved considering options and the urban capacity option couldn't be chosen as it was considerably below the governments required figure. The idea of the first consultation was to show the impact of meeting the full figure and how it would look in the borough. The administration is opposed the full figure and we will need robust evidence including, but not only, the consultation results. If we're going to challenge it, as opposed to choosing hollow options, stand no chance whatsoever of succeeding. When it comes to the excessive figure and the impact it would have on the Greenbelt, we've had these questions for a while now and I'm afraid I have to ask the questioner to explain why the Liberal Democrats generally and Councillor Symington personally, stood for Election in support of it at the last General Election.</p> <p><b>Question 2 from Councillor Symington:</b> Thank you for the written response which I've read. Can you clarify; are you saying that the Council will use the urban capacity sites in the TRL report before using Greenbelt sites? As implied but not clarified in item 4.</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Anderson:</b> The full version of the response you received made it quite clear that the Council will do everything it can to use Brownfield site before any Greenfield development is used. I can't put it any stronger than that.</p> <p><b>Question 3 from Councillor Symington:</b> Notwithstanding the answer, which was unclear, do you agree that all the communities housing needs, by which I mean the actual local need assessed at 355 per annum, not the government imposed minimum quota of 1023, could be met by the urban capacity plan?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Anderson:</b> The 355 figure as far as I'm aware concerned purely urban capacity which is different from talking about the</p>

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	<p>total numbers that has to be produced annually, so I think that's being confused here. I'm happy that I've explained that the urban capacity option was one we couldn't follow because it wasn't robust and ultimately when we produce whatever happens down the track when we go to the planning inspectorate, whatever we have in the local plan will have to be robust. It will have to stand up to scrutiny and we will need our evidence. We are grateful to the public because they have given us a lot of feedback from the local plan first consultation but other homework will be required to actually stand any chance of getting our plan through.</p> <p><b>Question 4 from Councillor Symington:</b> Insofar as you're proposing to build on Greenbelt land, could you explain why you're proposing to build an average of 10 dwellings per hectare? That's 400 dwellings times 18 years divided by 350 hectares when you could be building at densities of between 20 and 30 dwellings perhaps to which would save between 375 and 500 hectares of Greenbelt across Dacorum.</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Anderson:</b> I'd say we aren't because the low figure includes open space.</p> <p><b>Question 1 from Councillor Claughton to Councillor Elliot:</b></p> <p>The Government Restart Grant scheme, announced as available from 1<sup>st</sup> April, is intended to support businesses in the non-essential retail, hospitality, leisure, personal care and accommodation sectors with a one-off grant to support them in reopening safely, as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.</p> <p>Will the portfolio holder say how many Dacorum businesses permitted to reopen on 12th April have been given Restart grants by the Council?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Elliot:</b> The Council estimates that it will pay about 700 restart grants to Dacorum businesses and expects that the vast majority of these will be made before the end of April. The Council is making these payments on behalf of the government and so it must follow guidance which is issued to us by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The guidance so far received makes clear that even where we have already paid the previous grant to a local business we must carry out further assurance checks before we can pay the restart grant. BEIS has carried out a number of streamed events to answer local authority questions, the last of which was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March and ended with the opportunity for councils across the country to ask questions. Officers are waiting for responses to these questions before getting in touch with businesses to offer them the grants. This is necessary in order to make sure we can get any additional confirmation from businesses which is required. BEIS has told the Council that those responses will be available this week so the team hopes to be able to email the eligible businesses by the weekend.</p> <p><b>Question 2 from Councillor Claughton:</b></p>

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	<p>How are businesses supposed to reopen safely when the grant to support this isn't paid until after they've opened?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Elliot:</b> We have to wait on government giving us the details before we can pay out, which we assume is £6million and we hope to be able to email the eligible businesses by the end of the weekend and get cash out by the end of April.</p> <p><b>Question 3 from Councillor Claughton:</b> I understand one of the things holding up the payment of grants is the need for the borough to validate the bank accounts of the applicants to whom they are paying grants. Given that they've already paid these businesses local restriction support grants, why haven't the bank accounts previously been validated?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Elliot:</b> I feel that we have taken as much precaution as we can and we have to check because of fraud. We really do have to validate the bank accounts as part of the process.</p> <p><b>Question 4 from Councillor Claughton:</b> Since the Portfolio Holder has laid the blame firmly at central government, can I ask if he thinks that the present government's scandalous level of ineptitude in dealing with these grants can get any worse?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Elliot:</b> I don't think they are scandalous. This government has supported the British Economy throughout this pandemic and we have poured money into local businesses to help them get through the pandemic and helping them to restart. I totally refute any suggestion that any ineptitude by central government has stepped up to the plate to get this country back on its feet again.</p> <p><b>Question 1 from Councillor Stevens to Councillor Williams:</b></p> <p>The consultation on the Local Plan has caused a huge amount of controversy.</p> <p>This was unsurprising given the scale and location of sites intended to be pre-designated for Growth when released from their current Green Belt designation.</p> <p>What was surprising was the fact that so many of the Parish and Town Councils came together and sent a <i>joint</i> letter to the Leader of the Council asking that the Borough withdraw the proposals.</p> <p>The Borough has a Parish Charter which appears to have fallen by the wayside; this included an undertaking that correspondence from a Parish will be answered within 5 days.</p> <p>At the time of writing, the parishes have not been graced with even an acknowledgement.</p>

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	<p>I am sure our respective Parish and Town Councils would like to know when might they receive a reply to the letter?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Williams:</b> I apologise to those that may have been expecting a reply because I interpreted this letter which is dated 22<sup>nd</sup> February and just about precedes the discussion we had at the last full council meeting and the close of the consultation at the end of February that I saw the correspondence from the Parish Councils, amongst the many that were received, as representations upon the local plan and not a letter that was requiring an individual response. The purpose of the letter was to ask the Council to withdraw the consultation and set out some of the reasons why. I saw this as a general correspondence on the local plan process and it was filed as a comment on the local plan. In relation to withdrawing the current consultation that was answered by the decision of full council on 24<sup>th</sup> February.</p> <p><b>Question 2 from Councillor Stevens:</b> When can the Parishes expect a reply on the more substantive issues raised by the letter?</p> <p><b>Response from Councillor Williams:</b> I have taken the time to re-read the letter and it just makes the points that are being made generally within the consultation on the local plan and sets out the reasons why they feel the plan should have been withdrawn. I think that question has been answered. There is one question towards the end of the letter which may be regarded a specific question but I don't think its within my remit to give a clear answer to that as I think it rests within a decision to be taken by the Council.</p>
<p><b>6</b> Business from the last council meeting</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p><b>7</b> Cabinet referrals</p>	<p><b><u>Resolved:</u></b></p> <p>That the following be approved:</p> <p><b><u>16 March 2021</u></b></p> <p><b><u>7.1 CA/026/21 HRA BUSINESS PLAN</u></b></p> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Council approve the updated Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021/24</li> <li>2. That Council to approve the revised development programme budgets as set out in Section 9.3.</li> </ol>

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	<p>A vote was held:</p> <p>26 For, 0 Against, 12 Abstain,</p> <p>Therefore the decision was agreed.</p> <p><b><u>16 March 2021</u></b></p> <p><b><u>7.2 CA/027/21 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL 2020</u></b></p> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <p>That Council approves the changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel in its report.</p> <p>A vote was held:</p> <p>34 For, 0 Against, 5 Abstain,</p> <p>Therefore the decision was agreed.</p>
<p><b>8</b> Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Reports 2020-21</p>	<p>The Chairman of the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Suqlain Mahmood, introduced the Annual Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny groups to the Council and highlighted certain aspects of the work carried out by the individual committees.</p>
<p><b>9</b> Changes to committee membership</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p><b>10</b> Change to committee dates</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p><b>11</b> Call-in and Urgency Procedure</p>	<p>The Council noted the following urgent Portfolio Holder Decision:</p> <p>PH/008/21 - Business Rates Relief 2021/22</p>

The meeting ended at 8.24 pm