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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**18 NOVEMBER 2015**

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Present:

**MEMBERS:**

Councillor Williams (Leader) Councillors Gbola Adeleke, G Adshead, S Adshead, Anderson, Ashbourn, Banks, Barnes, Mrs Bassadone, Bhinder, Birnie, Brown, Herbert Chapman, D Collins, E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, Fantham, Fethney, Fisher, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, Hicks, Howard, Imarni, Link, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, McLean, Mills, Peter, Ransley, Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Whitman and C Wyatt-Lowe

**OFFICERS:**

The Chief Executive, the Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration), the Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), the Assistant Director (Chief Executive's Unit), Corporate Support Team Leader (Democratic Services), K Norval (Communications), L Collins and K Mogan (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

**27 MINUTES**

Before the Council meeting a ceremony took place to recognise "The amazing sporting achievements of Mr Mitchell Camp".

The Mayor and the Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services gave a speech honouring Mr Mitchell Camp and recognising his sporting achievements.

Minute Silence

A minute silence was held to remember those affected by the recent tragic events across the world and the recent passing of Ivy Crowhurst and Elizabeth Buteux.

On behalf of the Muslim community Councillor Mahmood expressed his condolences to all those that had been affected by the recent tragic events in Paris.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2015 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

**28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **29 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **30 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. By the Mayor:

The Mayor announced that Freeman of the Borough, Derek Townsend exercised his right to drive 6 sheep and 1 ram through Tring High Street on 10th of October 2015

The Mayor thanked all those who attended the recent Remembrance Day parades in Hemel Hempstead and in other parts of the borough.

2. By the Chief Executive:

None

3. By the Group Leaders:

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bateman, Clark, P Hearn, S Hearn, Matthews and W Wyatt-Lowe.

4. By the Leader and Members of the Cabinet:

(Full details are in the minutes under Announcements of the Leader and Cabinet Members).

### **31 QUESTIONS**

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

The Leader of the Council made no announcements.

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

##### **Tenant & Leaseholder Services**

**CIH Income Accreditation** - Our Housing Income Team is currently working with the Chartered Institute of Housing to achieve their accreditation for the collection of housing income. If we successfully achieve this we would be the first organisation to be recognised to have achieved this standard in England and Wales. We anticipate an announcement later in November.

**Don't Get Ripped Off** - Our latest campaign to help support tenants and wider residents to maintain their rental payments starts in November. This campaign is being run in conjunction with the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Local Credit Union, Turning Point, Dacorum Communities for Learning and a number of other voluntary sector organisations.

Watch out for information on Bin Lorries and posters within the town centres – a number of events are being run between November and January to support the campaign and to assist tenants and wider residents with both managing their debt and finding more affordable sources of credit. For more information please visit [www.dacorum.gov.uk/don'tgetrippedoff](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/don'tgetrippedoff)

**CIH Equality and Diversity Charter** - We have recently signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing's Income Charter. This charter is designed to demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality of access to housing services. As part of this commitment we are doing some work to understand how our services are currently being used and to identify actions to promote a more even distribution.

**Enablement Flat** - As part of the Health and Wellbeing Agenda we have started to work with the Health Sector to provide an enablement flat at Evelyn Sharp House, sheltered scheme. This scheme is our flexi-care scheme and has a care team permanently based on site. The enablement flat will enable resident's access to a 6 week resettlement period to prepare them to return home. Without flats like this residents would be forced to remain in hospital.

### **Strategic Housing**

The Housing Advice & Options team have seen a significant increase in demand on the service, the number of clients seen for housing advice in October 2014 was 124, this increased to 209 new cases in September 2015 and 156 in October 2015. In October 2014 the service took 18 homelessness applications, this increased to 27 in September 2015 and 48 in October 2015. All data and evidence from the Council and partner agencies suggest homelessness will continue to increase. Despite this the service has maintained excellent performance, there is a central government target set for time to investigate homelessness cases at 33 days and the team have consistently maintained the target well below 20 days since 2014, in October 2015 the average time to investigate was 8.7 days.

Procedures have been reviewed within the temporary accommodation team to provide more focussed management and earlier intervention when dealing with licence fee arrears. As mentioned above demand on temporary accommodation has significantly increased based on this point last year and the service currently has 102 households residing in temporary accommodation. The team have successfully managed to reduce licence fee arrears from £14,943.54 in October 2014 to £10170.77 in September 2015 and further reduced to £4965.29 in October 2015.

The Council development programme is progressing well. Aspen Court, Apsley is due for completion in April next year and on the Queen Street, Tring scheme, construction is due to begin at the end of November.

Wood House Maylands and Stationers Place Apsley have both been submitted for planning consideration with an outcome expected early in the year for both applications.

Demolition works have begun at the site of the former Martindale School as well as at Able House on Figtree Hill in Hemel Hempstead. Construction at Able House will begin in Spring 2016.

For further information on the development programme please contact Julia Hedger on x2363.

### **Property & Place**

**Funding Secured from Public Health** - The Tenancy Sustainment team have been successful in securing £32,000 of funding to provide community help for 18 – 40 year olds in Council housing in areas of deprivation in Dacorum.

This project will focus on identifying those in hidden deprivation and child poverty who are reluctant to engage with local services. Support will be provided to identify areas of need and empower tenants to improve health and wellbeing. The grant funding will be used to fund two 'Community Support Workers' who will make contact with a targeted selection of tenants to carry out home visits and provide support on a range of factors associated with both tenancy sustainment and health. This is part of the Get Set Go Dacorum Project and will enable much needed support for vulnerable or disadvantaged tenants.

**Longlands Refurbishment and Rooftop development** - The project is nearing completion and the scaffolding has started to come down and the grey cladding is being installed to the flats.

We are currently investigating the original crest colours, so it can be restored correctly before it is reinstated.

The residents are feeling the benefits of the external wall insulation and a number have not had to turn their heating on yet. The project is due to complete in December and the new flats have been advertised with a number of families waiting for viewing appointments, as soon as they are completed. The Council are preparing a press release to promote the project which has benefitted the existing residents and created 6 new homes.

**Structural Upgrading of Walkways / Balconies** - The project continues to progress well with, 18 of the 24 walkways sites and 14 of the 25 single balcony sites completed. The contractor, Thomas Sinden, is now based at Wood End, Maylands Avenue. There is a surgery morning on a Wednesday 9am-12pm

Residents are continually updated with the changes in the programme by letter and there are regular face to face visits

**Osborne Total Asset Management** - The external wall insulation project has completed all properties in Runham Road and just over half of the properties in Bassil Road. The programme will be extended to other solid wall properties in the Borough and the Building Research Establishment are undertaking monitoring of the properties to assess the impact of the improved thermal performance of these properties and any reduction in the fuel bills for the tenants.

The performance indicators remain, at or above target and the volume of responsive repairs has reduced in the year since Osborne commenced the contract as the focus is to undertake more planned and preventative work, thereby reducing repairs.

**Gas Servicing** - The servicing and installation contract has been delivering consistently high levels of compliance, currently 99.99%, with one property currently overdue and customer satisfaction remains very good.

### **Questions and answers**

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

### **Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services**

#### **People**

**Website Re-Design** – Three designs have been created and the project team are currently consulting with residents, Members, staff.

**Strategic Partners Commissioning** – The first contracted notice (Information, Advice and Advocacy) is to be released mid-November.

### **Democratic Services**

#### **Annual Canvass and production of the Electoral Register for 2016.**

The Annual Canvass of properties carried out to compile the Electoral Register for 2016 is nearing completion. Since the last Council Meeting those properties from which no return had been received have been visited twice to encourage completion of the form.

Overall, the current response rate is 91% with 6,895 forms outstanding of the original 63,440 sent out. Those who have moved to the automated responses options; Online, Tablet, or Mobile; equate to 27% of the total responses received.

### **Performance & Projects**

**PSN Compliance** – we are now compliant and have been issued a certificate by the Cabinet Office. Unusually, although our previous certification expired in July, the Cabinet Office has granted a full 12 months certificate, meaning we are compliant until November 2016.

**Tablets** – as you know, in order to achieve this compliance, we have had to tighten up the security policies on our mobile devices. The tightening of policy has also extended to smartphones. Our intention is to stop the current method of accessing emails on mobile phones and to replace it with installing Good for Enterprise.

**Forum** – We have met with the builders to agree the ICT components they are providing for the Forum for DBC. We have also drafted a Forum Migration Plan, which is currently under review. The draft plan recommends a staged migration across 4 weeks.

### **Residents Services**

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 Bennetts End held its Love Your Neighbourhood event and over 370 residents attended. Feedback was very positive for residents and all of the agencies who attended - the event was community cohesion in action!

Agencies involved included libraries, Police, Sunnyside Rural Trust, Old Town Hall, Druglink, Get Set Go Dacorum, Osborne, Community Action Dacorum, Tesco, culturally aware Fitness Group, Jays Indian takeaway, Beezee Bodies, Radio Dacorum, Mind, DBC Benefits team.

Activities included a pumpkin hunt, story-telling, smoothie bike, craft, drumming and to end the day Bennetts End has got talent which showcased a range of entertainment for an audience of local people.

The ASB Team accompanied the Police on Halloween and Bonfire night patrols to provide a visible presence on the streets of the borough – Halloween was a quiet evening - due to the poor weather on 5<sup>th</sup> November it was very quiet.

European Democracy Week saw 6 junior schools attended the Civic Centre and took part in an event which saw Superman win a democratic vote over Batman.

7 Schools entered a competition to design bunting with an overall theme of inclusion – the entries are displayed in the library and along the Civic Centre corridor.

### **Questions and answers**

Councillor Tindall raised concerns on behalf of the Tring residents regarding access to the Community centre for wheelchairs and pushchairs. He asked the Portfolio Holder if the Council would consider installing front doors to allow easy access for Tring residents.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would liaise with The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources as it fell within his remit and would update Members accordingly.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

### **Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration**

Ten years after the Buncefield incident, our town's businesses have risen to the challenges and led the way in shaping the future of Hemel Hempstead's on-going success. We'll be celebrating this success, and looking ahead to the next ten years (and beyond I hope) at a very special event on Friday 11th December at Breakspear Park where we launch the new Hemel Hempstead Story.

At the event we will also be introducing our Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors scheme which supports the story, and gives businesses the ability to champion the local area, highlighting its many benefits and opportunities. This, along with our Tourism Strategy, will truly establish Hemel Hempstead as an excellent centre of commerce and leisure.

The Old Town Halloween event was a great success, continuing to pull large crowds of people.

Works on the Marlowes Shopping Zone and Bank Court are finishing up with the last of the fencing now being removed and everything getting into place before the Christmas live @ Hemel Hempstead event on the 29th November. The event will include, ice rink, curling and a real snow slope along with a range of free family activities and stage entertainment, culminating in the Christmas tree lights switch on and fireworks at 5.30pm.

I am also pleased that we will also be holding an Old Town Christmas Event on Sunday 6 December. As usual the Sunday Market will run but this will extend through to 5.00pm and will include Father Christmas in his grotto and a range of Christmas-themed food and craft stalls.

### **Questions and answers**

Councillor R Sutton referred to the market event taking place in the old town on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2015. She asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm if the intention was to close the road off or if the gates would be closed.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed to Members that the road would be closed off.

Councillor Douris informed Members that last year the Coca Cola lorry arrived in Luton and this year it will be coming to Watford. He asked the Portfolio Holder if he would welcome the possibility of the Coca Cola Lorry coming to Hemel Hempstead in 2016.

The Portfolio Holder said that he would investigate this idea for the residents of Hemel Hempstead.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

Pleased to report that the Council has been recertified for its Certificate ISO14001:2004. This requires us to conduct our business throughout the Council in a proper environmental manner. There was a 5 day audit October. Objectives in the future include reducing our energy use by 5%, in fuel, electricity, gas and water, and also to increase recycling. Much credit must go to Nicola Turvey, Environmental Sustainability Officer, for ensuring DBC achieved recertification and working so hard to get the various departments to work in a much more efficiently environmental manner.

Clean Safe & Green have completed the winter bulb planting and have worked with Network Rail to remove trees that are a potential danger to the railway line. Stumps in Canal Fields have been turned into seating and play.

Heath Park Refurbishment Project works are well in hand. 15 trees have been removed and 6 trees planted. Work included new resin-bonded paths, benches, bins and sign posts. A huge number of bulbs were planted, some of which were laid over with wildflower turf which will bloom early Spring to Summer

Cupid Green have been running a social media campaign "Good to know" to raise awareness of the different types of household plastic that can be recycled. It is also focussing on food waste – which is lower than expected. Might decide to investigate further – are residents uncertain what can be put in the caddy – or are we, better still, not wasting so much food?

Questions were invited.

### **Questions and answers**

Councillor Tindall asked the Portfolio Holder if a schedule would be issued for the roundabouts in Dacorum that are having wild flowers planted and if it would be possible to nominate roundabouts that have not had wild flowers planted on them.

The Portfolio Holder said that the intention was not to have wild flowers planted on every roundabout. She mentioned that there was not a schedule at present but would look into his request and update Members in due course.

Councillor Guest highlighted the importance of the signs on the A41 northbound, stating "Keep Dacorum clean", are a good idea to educate drivers and passengers in cars not to drop litter out of their cars. She asked if the Council will continue to use these signs frequently to educate people not to drop litter out of their cars.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Councillor Guest for her question and said that she was pleased that the signs had been noticed. She informed Members that the signs are

meant to be temporary with the intention to move them around, take them away and relocate them to keep pressing home the message that litter dropping is not acceptable.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

Good evening, I present my report tonight which, as usual, covers three areas: Finance, Revenue and Benefits and Commercial Assets.

#### Budget

Budget setting is now well underway and is always a long and winding road. The first round of budget setting is complete, and was reviewed by Budget Review Group in early October.

Since then, Finance have been working with officers to compile savings, growth and capital bids, which will be presented for Members' scrutiny at the Joint Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

#### Payroll

Finance are in the final stages of signing the contract for the new payroll contract with Serco. Initial implementation meetings have been held this month, and the provider will continue to build the system in preparation for testing and dual running in the new financial year.

#### Revenue and Benefits

The Revenues and Benefits services are working closely with the Digital Dacorum team in order to make it easier for residents to tell us about changes in their circumstances. By the end of December, we will have forms available on the website which can be used to tell the Council Tax team if a resident has moved house, or the benefits team about changes which affect the amount of financial help a resident receives. This will provide a better customer experience and reduce the amount of administration required.

#### Commercial Assets and Property Development

The demolition of Unit B has been completed and all parking in Dacorum Way has now been restored. The lease of 39-41 Marlowes to the NHS has been completed alongside the purchase of the Health Centre. We continue to support and provide assistance by working with the project teams to deliver the Forum and associated development.

We are working to maximise capital receipts and as part of the ongoing asset management strategy, the disposal of a number of garage sites has now commence with the first site being marketed in the trade press, via websites and social media. The second site is being prepared for sale and we anticipate that this will start to release income in this financial year. A lot of hard work goes into maximising our income. As a lady Prime Minister said "Pennies do not come from heaven. They have to be earned here on Earth".

Thank you and I welcome any questions.



## **Questions and answers**

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

### **32 CABINET REFERRALS**

The referrals from Cabinet on 20 October 2015 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded by Councillor Griffiths and agreed by Members.

#### **Resolved**

That the following be approved:

#### **7.1 CA/087/15 – ALCOHOL TESTING POLICY**

##### **Decision:**

The Alcohol Testing Policy was approved.

#### **7.2 CA/089/15 – APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME 2016**

##### **Decision:**

1. The establishment of an Apprenticeship Scheme for 2016 was approved; and,
2. The release of £41,522 from the Management of Change reserve in order to deliver the scheme was approved.

#### **7.3 CA/094/15 – MAYLANDS URBAN REALM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT –**

Full details can be found in the Part 2 Minutes.

### **33 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

### **34 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

None.

### **35 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES**

#### **CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES**

Council agreed the following changes.

1. **DCSP**

- To change the meeting date from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to 25 May 2016.

## **2. The Call In Contingency**

- To move the meeting date of 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016 to 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

### **36 REVIEW OF LICENSING POLICIES FOR ALCOHOL, ENTERTAINMENT AND GAMBLING LICENCES**

Resolved:

That Council adopt and publish in accordance with statutory requirements:-

- (1) The draft Statement of Licensing Policy as the Council's 'Statement of Licensing Policy' under section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 for the five-year period from 7 January 2016 to 6 January 2021, and
- (2) The draft Statement of Principles as the Council's 'Statement of Principles' under section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 for the three-year period from 31 January 2016 to 30 January 2019

### **37 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the item in Part II of the Agenda for this meeting, because it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council or of any particular person.

Local Government Finance Act 1972, Part VA, Schedule 12A, Part 1 paragraph 3.

### **38 PART 2 CABINET REFERRAL**

Full details can be found in the Part II Minutes.

The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm