
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

20 JANUARY 2016

Present:

MEMBERS:

Councillor Williams (Leader) Councillors, Gbola Adeleke, G Adshead, S Adshead, Anderson, Ashbourn, Banks, Barnes, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, Bhinder, Birnie, Brown, Clark, D Collins, E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, Fantham, Fisher, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Imarni, Link, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, McLean, Mills, Peter, Ransley, Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, C Wyatt-Lowe and W 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), the Group Manager (Democratic Services), C McKnight (Communications), L Collins and K Johnston (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30pm

39 MINUTES

A minutes silence was held in remembrance of Ex-Mayor, Councillor Mick Young who died on Friday 15 January 2016.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2015 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

Councillor Imarni arrived at 7.35pm

40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

41 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Question from Anne Lyne to the Leader of the Council

The Core Strategy and assumed housing demand on which the Local Allocations are quantified, was set in 2013. Some 3 years later, how does proposed housing supply outside the LAs exceed the Core Strategy assumptions; what is the current status of the five year consented supply of

housing; and to what extent does this reduce the numbers of houses required in the LAs?

Answer from the Leader of the Council.

Currently the Council can demonstrate a supply of available sites for housing for a period of 5.9 years. This Government's requirement is for us to demonstrate a minimum of 5 years.

All sites, including the six Local Allocations are required to meet the housing delivery targets in the Core Strategy. Delivery of new housing has been below the annual target of 430 new homes in the past 2 years. While the supply of housing through planning permissions has increased recently, at the present time the Council does not anticipate the Core Strategy assumptions over housing provision being exceeded

The Mayor presented a question on behalf of Stuart Batchelor.

As I can't attend the meeting regarding the building of housing on Greenbelt land in Potten end/Chaulden lane area 20/01/16, I would like the Mayor to read this below question out on my behalf please. Thanking you in advance Can the council guarantee or give me assurances that all companies involved in the development of land for housing within the Dacorum area on Greenbelt land between Chaulden Lane and Potten End and any other Greenbelt land that it intends to build on are registered here in the UK and that they pay their correct amount of UK taxes, as after looking up the various developments within Dacorum's post code areas on the below website they all appear to be registered overseas for tax avoidance purposes and I don't think the council should be seen doing business with these sort of companies. Thank you S Batchelor I include the website address below so that others can also look this up themselves <http://www.private-eye.co.uk/registry>

Answer from the Leader of the Council.

The developers interested in building new housing at LA3 are Barratt Homes and Taylor Wimpey. Both are large, well established housebuilders within the UK. The Council has no contractual relationship between these companies or others in their capacity to deliver the Local Allocation sites. The purpose of the Core Strategy and Site Allocation documents is to set the proper planning policy, context and requirements for the development of these sites. Checking any company's tax or financial credentials is therefore not necessary nor a material planning factor in the identification and selection of LA3 and other sites.

The Mayor presented a question on behalf of Heather Ebdon.

Would the Council agree that their strategy for growth in their Borough is one which allows the unbridled expansion of Hemel Hempstead whilst protecting the tranquillity of other communities such as Bovingdon, Berkhamsted and Tring? I cannot be present and wish this question to be put by the Mayor.

Answer from the Leader of the Council.

The agreed development strategy does not propose the 'unbridled' growth of Hemel Hempstead, as only selective releases are being made from the Green Belt around it. The Council has set a development hierarchy in the 2013 Core Strategy which sets

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Hemel Hempstead as the main focus for growth, with Berkhamsted and Tring at the second level of the hierarchy as market towns to accommodate some of the Borough's growth; the third tier of the hierarchy is for the Borough's large villages, Bovingdon, King's Langley and Markyate where much more limited development is anticipated. The independent Inspector who examined the Council's Core Strategy was satisfied that this settlement hierarchy and the proposed level and distribution of future housing were appropriate. It reflects the relative sustainability of these settlements in terms of the availability of infrastructure and services and their ability to accommodate new homes.

The Mayor presented a question on behalf of Catherine Duvall.

As the area between Chaulden & Potten End is a drainage area, when is proposed to minimise flooding in the area, when concreted over with house, especially considering recent floods in the North, and also Global warming trends for greater amounts of rain

Answer from the Leader of the Council.

The area between Chaulden and Potten End is not in the flood plain and is therefore not at risk from the type of flooding recently experienced in the north of England, which was caused by rivers breaking their banks.

The issue for this site relates to surface water drainage and this is something that both the Council and developers are fully aware of. Indeed the developers have already commissioned specialist consultants to look at this issue and provide advice on how to prevent problems arising in the future.

The issue of drainage is also being addressed through the master planning and development design at site LA3. The text of Policy LA3 in the Site Allocations document includes the requirement for there to be early liaison between the Council and developers of the site to ensure appropriate sustainable drainage mechanisms are designed into the development at an early stage. This requirement is reiterated in the draft master plan that has also been drawn up for the site.

Question from Julie James.

I refer to the recent DBC planning determination dated 15 December 2015 declining an application for a private Traveller Site in Bovingdon on the basis that: "The proposal would constitute inappropriate development in a Green Belt area. The very special circumstances which have been advanced to show why planning permission should be granted are not considered to outweigh the harm of the inappropriate development. The proposal is therefore contrary to DBCS Policy CS5 and 22 and national planning policy as set out in the NPPF and the PPTS." However, the proposed inclusion of the Traveller Site in the Local Allocations for LA1, LA3 and LA5 supposedly accord with National Planning Policy and DBCS policy, which are explicit that inclusion in the Green Belt is "inappropriate" other than in "very exceptional circumstances" as opposed to the preferred use of brownfield sites and the promotion of more private traveller sites? How does the Council justify these seemingly contradictory interpretations of national and local planning policy?

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Answer from the Leader of the Council.

Government policy makes it clear that Travellers' sites are not appropriate development in the Green Belt. However, Government policy is also clear that Green Belt boundaries may need to be altered to accommodate new development that is needed, and on assessments carried out; this includes planning for the needs of the travelling community. No Travellers' sites are being planned on sites that will remain in the Green Belt.

A more detailed explanation of the Council's approach and Government guidance on how to deal with speculative planning applications (as at Bovingdon) versus the planned provision of sites (as in the Site Allocations document) is set out in the Cabinet Report of 15 December 2015 entitled "*Consideration of Responses to Pre-Submission Focused Changes and Submission of Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD).*"

Question from Henry Wallis.

The DBC Core Strategy and Local Allocations make assumptions on future employment figures in determining the need for land for both housing and commercial/industrial purposes. Of the sites reserved for commercial/industrial purposes, how long have they already been held in reserve awaiting possible development, and at what point would DBC be prepared to release them for housing purposes if the demand for such land did not meet forecasts?

Answer from the Leader of the Council.

The Council is required to ensure an appropriate balance between the need for homes and jobs within its development plan, and to allocate land accordingly. This is what the Council has done through its Core Strategy (which sets the targets for each) and the current Site Allocations document (which specifically allocated land for these different uses).

The independent Inspector who examined the Core Strategy was satisfied that we had this balance right. The role of the Site Allocations is to show how the Council will deliver the Core Strategy targets.

It is agreed that the uptake of commercial floor space slowed during the recession, but there are now no allocated employment sites where there is no developer interest. We expect all of the vacant employment sites (of which there are actually very few) to be developed by the end of the current plan period, and probably considerably before. As the amount of vacant employment sites is low, their contribution to future housing supply would, in reality, be limited. For information, the Site Allocations currently identifies a number of employment sites which we are encouraging to come forward for housing.

The Borough has also already lost quite a lot of office floor space through the Government policy that allows offices to change to residential use without the need for planning permission. This has further reduced the supply of vacant commercial land.

Information on the gains and losses of commercial floor space is collected on an on-going basis by the Council and reported annually through the Council's Authority

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Monitoring Report (AMR). This document, and the detailed housing and employment land position statements that inform it, are published on our website.

The relative balance of land allocated for homes and jobs will be reviewed as part of the process of preparing the new single Local Plan for the Borough, which will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and this Site Allocations document. Work on this document is already underway, and members of the public will be consulted about its content later this year.

Question from Lee Royal on behalf of WHAG.

On behalf of the West Hemel Action Group, I want to provide you context to two questions as follows.

1. We urge you as the elected members of the Council before voting on the Site Allocations to challenge the planners at DBC to be more open and transparent of the risks of commencing on a huge development such as LA3 without a joined up plan demonstrably tested at every development approval milestone; a clear recipe for disaster that we all want to avoid. With reference to the recently published Jacobs' report 'Hemel Hempstead Transport Model Update' for DBC dated 10 July 2015 and the associated DBC 'Explanatory Note' (undated). Jacobs conclude that "The full demand scenario has been discussed as far as possible but given the level of congestion and the curtailment of the model runs due to gridlock we feel that taking forward this scenario for further testing would be impracticable. On the basis of the modelled assumptions to date, this indicates that the current road network would be unable to cope with the full level of proposed development." This is BEFORE considering the impact of development in the East Hemel Hempstead area. The Council's Explanatory Note suggests that 'full demand' is a worst case scenario and we agree that gridlock impractical to model is indeed a bad situation. However, to mitigate this, rather than reduce the scale of development appropriately, an unsubstantiated 15% reduction in 'trip rates' has been applied. Our first question, with this context, how does DBC substantiate the 85% trip rate figures & therefore what does a 15% variance mean in terms of numbers of units being developed taking into account how many additional planning applications have been received and/or consented since the Jacobs report was undertaken; and even then what is the probability of the current "worst case scenario" occurring?

2. Again, given the context of my previous question, the duty of care of a Council in such matters is well tested in case law such as Kane v New Forest DC, 2011 and Lovell v Leeds CC (2009). While only one of these two found against the Council, both demonstrate the need for timely and effective discharge of the Council's duty of care not only to avoid blame but to avoid the accidents themselves. For example, regardless of any computerised model, every parent is anxious about the gridlock around the Chaulden Lane playing fields delaying and even denying Ambulance access on match days, Sunday 10th Jan was just one of a litany of such incidents. This is relevant both to the current under capacity of Chaulden Lane and its future proposed use for emergency access to LA3 & Traveller Site access. Given the semi-rural nature of West Hemel Hempstead, the roads in question contain cycle lanes, obscured sightlines (horizontal and vertical) as well as pedestrianised rural lanes such as Chaulden Lane and Pouchen End lane. Our second question, given the evident strain on the town's infrastructure in either trip rate scenario, to what extent have these scenarios been tested for health and safety including by reference to the police collision investigations unit and road safety teams?

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Answer from the Leader of the Council.

Dacorum Borough Council has, and will continue to be guided by advice from the County Council as the local Highway Authority. They have supported the Council's approach to development set out in and throughout the process of preparing, the Core Strategy and Site Allocations documents, and are content with the impact of the development at LA3 subject to the new access points to The Avenue and Long Chaulden, together with key junction improvements on the highway network being provided. These have been identified in the recent masterplan document and will be a requirement of the developer as part of the planning application process in due course.

In this regard, the further work carried out by Jacobs does not change HCC's views. Turning to the detailed points raised by Mr Royal, many of his points are covered in the Background Note that accompanies the model report. It should be noted that the model is not a precise forecast of exactly what will happen. The model was run to test the outcome of the housing growth required to meet our housing target. The role of the model has been to identify potential congestion in the local road network without improvements and to suggest how such demand can then be accommodated. The detailed master planning work has shown that off-site highway improvements to certain junctions are needed (these are at Long Chaulden / NorthridgeWay; Long Chaulden / Boxted Road; Warners End Road / Northridge Way and Leighton Buzzard Road / Warners End Road).

The highway consultants tested the modelling against the current road network i.e. without any improvements. In both scenarios congestion was identified. However, they did not rule out the full level of development providing mitigation measures were put in place as already described, although more significant infrastructure changes or a significant shift in favour of active travel and/or public transport would be required in the case of the full (100%) demand.

There were practical reasons running the model at a trip rate of 85%. It was used to show up hot spots on the road network. Demonstrating gridlock on its own is of limited value in understanding issues and potential solutions.

The model outputs are largely unchanged (along with the broad scale of development assessed in each case) from those of the model that was considered by the Planning Inspector at the Core Strategy examination, when identification of the site was first agreed. The model does not take into account any potential increase in non-car trips, something we and the County Council will try to encourage. The modelling also does not take account of the future mitigation measures I have referred to (i.e. junction improvements and changes to the local road layout) that will be required as part of new development (including at LA3). However, it does reinforce the need for such measures in bringing forward such schemes.

The level and detail of the information available is reasonable and proportionate at the town-level and to assess the impact of proposal LA3 given the early stage the scheme has reached.

Further transport assessment work will be carried out as the development proposals progress, but this is to define the detail of the improvements needed rather than revisit the basic question of whether the development is acceptable in terms of its traffic impact,

Finally on the matter of road safety for all users, this is a fundamental issue for the Borough and County Council to consider when assessing new development. Traffic on

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the local roads around LA3 will be carefully managed with safety in mind. Certainly the traffic study for LA3 took into account local accident data. Road Safety audits would also be part of the detailed technical work to be undertaken as part of the planning application process and applicants would be expected to mitigate against any potential safety issues.

The Council cannot omit LA3 (or any of the local allocations) at this stage of the process on highways grounds alone, when the highway authority has been fully aware of the conclusions of the modelling, they have clearly stated that they have no objections to the schemes, and are working with DBC to deliver these.

There has also been no significant change in circumstances since the Local Allocations were first considered and agreed via the Core Strategy process

Question from Leo Bedford.

DCLG 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' and 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites Good Practice Guide', include without limitation, the need for:

- Easy access to Major roads or public transport
- Easy access to General Practitioner and other medical services
- Easy access to local services and to social contact with other residents in the community
- Proximity to a bus route, shops and schools
- Promotion of integrated co-existence between the site and the local community
- The health and safety of children and others when considering sites adjacent to railway lines
- The avoidance of exposed sites where there is a risk of flooding and caravans being overturned.
- The avoidance of undue pressure on local infrastructure
- The avoidance of such scale that the site does not dominate the nearest settled community.

It seems to me that the current proposed location within LA3 meets none of those criteria, being on an exposed, currently flooded, marginalised location adjacent to the hamlet of Winkwell and segregated from the rest of the community and services accessible only by circuitous route via the already strained infrastructure of Chaulden Lane. Therefore, how does the Council consider that its proposed location of the Traveller Site in LA3 complies with national planning policy and design guidance.

Answer from the Leader of the Council.

The Council is aware of this DCLG guidance and the criteria it includes regarding the choice of locations for Gypsy and Traveller sites. These criteria are reflected in the Council's own adopted Core Strategy policy for 'New Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers' (Policy CS22). It is this Core Strategy policy that we must ensure we comply with, as it forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the Borough, rather than just guidance.

The Council is satisfied that it has chosen the most appropriate sites within the Borough to accommodate new pitches. The process that the Council went through in terms of considering alternative site options is set out in the 'Home and Communities: Background Issues paper' that accompanies the Site Allocations DPD. Consideration has also been given to alternative locations for the site within the wider LA3 development; following suggestions from some residents at consultation meetings that the site would be better located in a more central position within the site. However, it is

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the Council's view that the site now indicated is the best options when the needs and wishes of both the existing settled community, new residents of LA3 and the Gypsy and Traveller community are taken into account.

The location of this site (and the other proposed sites) also has the support of the Gypsy Liaison Officer at Hertfordshire County Council, who has been a key consultee through the process of allocating sites.

With regard to the specific concerns raised:

- In terms of location, the site will be part of a wider residential development and therefore part of the expanded settlement of Hemel Hempstead. It will have good access to the services and facilities that the LA3 development will provide, and to those in nearby local centres. This includes GP services.
- Its scale is very modest compared to other sites in the county, comprising only 7 pitches and is appropriate in terms of the scale of Hemel Hempstead (even when the existing site at Three Cherry Trees Lane is taken into account).
- In terms of access, it is not always possible to locate traveller sites with immediate access on to main roads. This is a much more important requirement where transit pitches are involved, which is not the case here. The local highway authority has accepted the general principle of access arrangement from Chaulden Lane to serve the traveller site. The level of traffic generated from the site is likely to be low.
- The site is not located within the floodplain, and there are already measures propose as part of the wider LA3 development to address current surface water drainage issues.

The location of the Gypsy and Traveller site within the LA3 sites will however be a matter for the independent Inspector to consider when he examines the Council's Site Allocations document.

Leo Bedford put forward a supplementary question to the Leader of the Council.

"Can you confirm the specific site we have in the LA3 which is still showing proposed within all of the consultation documents.

The leader of the Council said that LA3 will be considered for future proposal inspections after site allocations policy is considered.

The Mayor presented a question on behalf of Sam Graham

What studies have been undertaken and what evidence is there that the road network can cope with the road layout in the proposal.

Answer from the Leader of the Council.

Note: It is assumed that this question relates to the LA3 development, although this is not specified.

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Both the local highway authority (Hertfordshire County Council) and the Highways Agency (now called Highways England - who are responsible for the motorway and trunk road network) have been consulted throughout preparation of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs. No concerns regarding the ability of the overall road network to cope with the scale of new development proposed have been raised by either party, although it is acknowledged by the Council that some local highways improvements and mitigation measures will be required relating to specific site proposals. The Council is not proposing growth in the Site Allocations document above the level set out in the Core Strategy. The evidence base reflects this position (see below). Improvements have already been identified in order to accommodate the growth. The technical transport work is on-going, particularly as we take forward work on the new Local Plan, and additional transport assessments will be required for the larger sites such as LA3 at the appropriate time.

For Hemel Hempstead the consideration of highway issues has reflected outputs from the Hemel Hempstead Transport Model (Paramics model). This model is managed by specialist transport consultants on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council.

A number of model runs have been undertaken throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs to ensure that the most up-to-date information regarding the scale and location of new development within the town is reflected. These are as follows:

1. 2008 base model (May 2009).
2. 'Do minimum' models for 2021 and 2031- accompanied by a Future Years Issues Report (May 2009).
3. LDF Option Test Western Hemel (August 2010).
4. Combined Local Plan Test (July 2012).
5. Morrisons Development Test (Summer 2013).

In addition to the above a further model run was carried out in spring 2015 to ensure that there had been no material change in circumstances since 2013. The Highway Authority have advised that the 2015 model outputs indicate that there has been no material change in highway conditions since the Site Allocation Pre-Submission document was prepared and that there are no issues highlighted that cannot be ameliorated through appropriate mitigation.

In addition to transport modelling, a specific traffic study has been prepared for Local Allocations LA3. This was carried out by specialist transport consultants (Stomor) and is available on the Council's website.

The Highway Authority have been involved in the development of the indicative layout for the site included within Site Allocations Policy LA3 and within the draft master plan for the site, and are happy that it can link appropriately with the wider road network.

Any necessary highway improvements are referred to in the relevant Local Allocations policies of the Site Allocations document, and elaborated in the site master plans. The Highway Authority has confirmed through their representations that they support the content of all.

There will of course be the need for on-going liaison with the local Highway Authority (HCC Highways) on the LSA3 site, and for more detailed transport technical work to consider the timing and precise types of highway works required will be carried out as part of the planning application process. This is specified within the master plan that has been prepared for the site and is usual planning practice.

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The Mayor thanked all those that attended the Council meeting and out forward their questions to Members.

The Leader of the Council, with agreement of Members proposed to move Item 7.5 forward for debate:

42 REFERRAL FROM CABINET 15 DECEMBER 2015 - ITEM 7.5

The Leader of the Council, with agreement of Members proposed to move Item 7.5 forward for debate (**Cabinet Referral CA/120/15 Consideration of Responses to Pre-Submission Focused Changes and Submission of Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD for debate).**)

15 December 2015

7.5 CA/120/15 CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSES TO PRE-SUBMISSION FOCUSED CHANGES AND SUBMISSION OF SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD)

Decision

- a) that the changes set out in Table 4 of the Report of Representations are made to the Pre-Submission Site Allocations DPD as a result of representations received; and
- b) that the Site Allocations DPD incorporating Focused Change, together with other appropriate supporting documents is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

(Voting; 33 For, 7 against and 7 abstained.)

Full details can be found in the Minutes.

43 ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor

None.

2. **By the Chief Executive:**

There were no announcements made by the Chief Executive.

3. **By the Group Leaders:**

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Chapman, Fethney, Matthews and Whitman.

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4. Members of the Cabinet:

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

The Leader of the Council made no announcements.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

Legal Governance:

Working with the ASB team obtained a possession order to evict a Council tenant in Waterside, Kings Langley using new powers for possession because of rent arrears and criminal offences (burglary and drug offences) under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. Also obtained a Suspended Possession Order against a tenant in Marnham Rise, Warners End for drug related matters.

Also obtained a Class A Closure order against a tenant in Martian Avenue, Highfield – proceedings started after drug paraphernalia was found in the property by DBC contractors.

Digital Services:

LGA research pilot with Hull University on channel shift is complete. The academic report has been finished by the University and we are finalising our channel shift menu of options for future consideration.

We ran a digital campaign ‘Go on...help your family/friends get online’ throughout Dec and Jan on both social media and in Dacorum Digest – we will replicate this again after the go-live of the new website.

Our website design has been approved (following extensive consultation with residents, Members and staff) and we are now working on the implementation of the new design ready for launch at the late February / early March. There will be lots of publicity and communications about this over the coming weeks. We are running a Dacorum Digital Week (7th – 12th March) which will comprise of a series of events for residents, charities and businesses covering digital inclusion and using services online.

We have developed a new online benefits process which is awaiting Chief Executive approval (in line with DWP requirements) with the aim to pilot with residents at the end of January.

Project & Performance Management had an audit on performance from Mazars and received a ‘full, full’ in our compliance scores which was an excellent result.

Corporate Admin:

We re-implemented our cashless policy from 1st December 2015.

Next week we will be upgrading the Capita Payments system. In part this is just a standard upgrade which we need to do to maintain support from Capita and for PSN compliance. However, it is also a pre-cursor to the Payment Kiosk being made available for use by residents in the foyer of the CSU.

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Questions and answers

Councillor G Adshead asked if the Portfolio Holder would pass on his thanks for the “Love your neighbour” event for all of their efforts involved.

Councillor Harden said that he would pass his comments on.

Councillor Madden informed Members of the success of Max Whitlock the British Championship in Gymnastics.

N Harden said that his success should be recognised.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors - The launch of this exciting new initiative took place on December 11th at Breakspear Park and was attended by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP. The event marked the 10 year anniversary of the Buncefield incident, but provided the opportunity to reflect on the progress made at Maylands since then and indeed the bright prospect for the future development of Maylands as a premier business location. The event was well supported, with 120 businesses attending.

Mr Mayor this leads me very nicely into my next announcement, being the designation of the Hertfordshire Enviro-Tech Enterprise Zone by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement. The zone covers some 200 acres of land at both Maylands and on land owned by the Crown estate just over the Borough Boundary into St Albans District, together with the Building Research Establishment site at Garston and Rothamsted Research. Designation of the Enterprise Zone follows the submission of a bid to the DCLG last summer by Herts Local Enterprise Partnership, with strong input and leadership from Dacorum Borough Council. This should pave the way for the accelerated delivery of new commercial development at Maylands and the provision of new road and other infrastructure to serve East Hemel Hempstead. Our officers are now working with the LEP to put together the delivery plan, with the Enterprise Zone going ‘live’ in April this year.

Progress in Hemel Hempstead Town Centre has been very significant. The main improvement works in The Marlowes and Bank Court are now substantially complete. The legal issues surrounding the upgraded power supply to the Marlowes have now been resolved and it is expected that these works will be completed by the spring. Our contractors are currently on site carrying out some minor modifications to the Food Court to make it slightly larger to accommodate more food stalls; this work will last for about two weeks. On 21 December I am pleased to report that at 0531 hrs the first bus service rolled into the new Bus Interchange, which is now fully operational. By bringing bus services into the heart of the town, this should provide a better experience for passengers and improve trading. The interchange features new bus shelters with real time service information, and a new travel office with public toilets has been installed in The Marlowes close by.

We have now had our first Christmas with the new improvements and I am pleased to report that the Christmas Live@New Town Square event with the switch-on of the new Christmas lights was well attended despite the bad weather.

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Work on the Water Gardens restoration is moving ahead well. Much of the silt has now been dredged from the river bed and attention has turned recently to construction of the new fish passes – or ladders – together with the restoration of the pedestrian bridges.

At The Forum, work continues to be on schedule for DBC, the Library and other partners to move in early 2017. The build is now up to the roof level, with the laying of concrete at the top taking place in the next 2-3 weeks

Questions and answers

Councillor Fisher asked the Portfolio Holder mentioned that she was pleased with the ongoing progress but said that she felt the Market Square has been left in limbo.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that this area will be cleared of storage in the very near future. Most certainly as the authority they are looking to see what the long term use of the site will be. In the short term, the Council is looking for appropriate use for the old Market Square and also to improve the footfall in that area.

Councillor Birnie suggested that there should be a certain amount of public participation in deciding what may be done with the Market Square.

The Portfolio Holder said that they are not ruling anything out. If there are useful suggestions put forward by members of the public, then they will consider them. He added that the most important thing is to make sure that they maintain the quality of the area.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

DBC held its 20th annual real Christmas tree recycling event earlier this month held in partnership with local Scouts, beavers and cubs groups. Residents brought 3,300 trees to shred and gave several hundreds of bags of wood chippings away to those residents who brought trees and wanted the chippings. 11 tonnes of wood chip created.

Viridor, who deal with DBC recyclable waste, carried out a detailed sample in November and DBC was found to have the cleanest/contained the lowest contamination of the 29 Local Authorities it deals with, achieving 96.36% Input Recyclable Quality.

In celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday on the 25 April, Keep Britain Tidy are having a "National clean-up Weekend" on the 4-6 March 2016, their promotion reading "Vacuum your Villages! Spruce up your Cities!, De-litter your Lanes!". Cupid Green is the point of contact for the Borough for groups undertaking the litter picks and I ask colleagues to liaise with their residents to arrange for litter picks. Of course, litter picks can be done at any time, and some wards, such as Grovehill, do litter picks regularly. Cupid Green will help – supply bags and litter pick sticks and will collect the rubbish collected.

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Questions and answers

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe said that she was pleased to hear that Dacorum produces clean recycling. She asked if this helped the Council generate more money from the recyclable goods.

Councillor Marshall replied to her question in that some money can be generated in clean recyclable goods. Councillor Williams added that, as a result of the higher proportion of recyclable material, less rubbish is sent to landfill, thus saving in costs.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Thank you Mr Mayor, I would like to deliver my report on the Finance and Resources Function

Budget

Budget setting is progressing well. Papers are being prepared for budget review group and the second joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting. The team have responded well to the challenge resulting from the changes coming through from the Local Government Finance Settlement announced in December and will be presenting further options and implications for member consideration throughout the remaining process.

As a lady PM said in 1979 We should not underestimated the enormity of the task which lies ahead. But little can be achieved without sound money. It is the bedrock of sound government.

Payroll

Good progress is being made in order to deliver a new payroll provider in time for April 2016 and we are still on track to meet the timeframe.

Revenue & Benefits:

The team are continuing to demonstrate their customer focus by ensuring that claims and enquiries are dealt with quickly and efficiently. The average time to make a decision on a new benefit was about 2½ weeks during the last quarter – this is more than a week faster than during the same period last year, showing an improvement of over 25%. The council tax team are continuing to meet their target, and responded to well over 90% of customer enquiries within two weeks.

Council tax support

Since the introduction of local Council Tax Support in 2013, we have asked full Council to vote each January to approve the scheme for the following tax year.

Each year we have made changes to the calculation factors for working age council taxpayers in order to keep them in line with the annual uprating of other state benefits. Even a minor change such as this needs Council approval under the terms of the Local Government Finance Act.

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This year, central government has frozen the benefit rates for working age people, and so there is no need to change our local Council Tax Support scheme. This means that Council does not need to approve next year's scheme tonight.

There are still increases to the state benefits paid to pensioners, but central government automatically adjusts the Council Tax Support rules nationally, so we don't require a vote to bring these changes into effect in Dacorum.

Commercial Assets & Property Development:

The ongoing work to maximise capital receipts is continuing with the first garage site being marketed and an offer has been accepted subject to completion of the legal documentation. This should realise a receipt in this financial year. Further sites will be presented as part of the programme. The timing of sales will be designed to maximise the financial receipt.

The team has been busy reviewing and updating the Asset Management Strategy and this was presented to Finance and Resources OSC for comments and suggestions and will be considered by Cabinet in early February.

Thank you, that concludes my report and I invite any questions from the chamber

Questions and answers

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Tenant and Leaseholder Services.

Christmas/Winter Rent Campaign - Our 'Don't Get Ripped Off' winter rent campaign is concluding in January. The initial results are positive with rent collection performance at the end of December running at over 99.5% of the rent that is due.

Upgrading our alarm call system in Sheltered Housing - From 15 January 2016 our Supported Housing Service as commissioned Tunstall – to commence a project designed to upgrade the aging alarm call systems within our Sheltered Housing Schemes. The upgrade process will in the short term generate 'spares' for the existing systems which will help to prolong their life and maintain functioning systems in all our sheltered schemes.

STAR – Survey of Tenants and Residents - Every two years the Housing Service conducts a 'Survey of Tenants and Residents'. This process is designed to take a snapshot of tenant's views of the service and to identify their priorities for the future.

Previous results from general need tenants have indicated that:-

1. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Dacorum Borough Council as your housing landlord?
86.4% Satisfied (2012) 85.7% Satisfied (2014)
2. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?
76.4% satisfied (2012) 82.2% Satisfied (2014)
3. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?
81.1% satisfied (2012) 86.5% Satisfied (2014)

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4. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your rent (or service charges) provides value for money?

75.6% satisfied (2012) 78.5% Satisfied (2014)

Strategic Housing.

Strategic Housing have been working closely with a number of partner agencies to ensure appropriate facilities and bed spaces are available to meet Severe Cold Weather Demands (SWEP). The Council have been able to ensure the availability of up to 12 additional bed spaces, during periods of severe cold weather. This ensures that rough sleepers are able to access accommodation, food, advice and support and prevent risk of exposure to illness or injury from cold weather. The team are continuing to work closely with partner agencies to achieve positive outcomes, for those clients who are currently without permanent accommodation and rough sleeping.

In addition Strategic Housing are making preparations with staff and partners to undergo a further peer review of the service. This is following an intensive period of close work with the National Practitioner Support Service, CSU and a number of other partner agencies to further improve access and quality of service – the overall aim to achieve Gold Standard for homelessness services. This has seen the development of our Enhanced Housing Options tool, an online tool designed to provide information regarding the Council's housing options service and the services of our partners. Close partnership working is at the forefront of Strategic Housing's objectives, will form part of the services Partnership Strategy; which is currently being drafted.

Property and Place.

Longlands Refurbishment and Rooftop development

- Projected completion date 5th Feb
- 4 of the 6 new flats have been offered and accepted and the final two flats have viewings scheduled.
- The existing residents have already seen a benefit from reduced heating bills and one resident is monitoring their fuel bills for 12 months so we can establish the overall impact.
- A valuation has been arranged to determine the increase in the market value of the existing flats as a result of the refurbishment.
- The end of project survey has been carried out and there have been high levels of satisfaction.
- An article will be included in the spring edition of News and Views and the local newspaper in March

Structural Upgrading of Walkways / Balconies - All footings to both the Walkways and Single balcony's sites have been completed and there have been some amendments required to bridge underground services. 18 of the 31 walkways sites have been completed and all work is planned to be completed by April. Single Balconies, working on 31 sites, of which, 15 have been completed. The contractor now has 3 teams now working on this phase of works and a resident liaison officer has been keeping resident informed, regarding any delays or changes to the programme.

Osborne Total Asset Management

- The repair volumes over the Christmas break were lower than usual but have increased since the beginning of the calendar year.
- The External wall insulation project at Runham Road, Bassil Road, Lawn Lane and Deaconsfield road is ongoing and there have been some delays due to the

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excessively wet weather in December which prevented the application of the render.

- Fire risk assessment upgrading work is due to start on site at Pelham Court in January.
- The performance indicators remain, at or above target and the final audit for the first nine months of the contract was concluded and the total saving for the first year was £272,142, which has been reinvested back into the contract.

Gas Servicing - The servicing and installation contract has been delivering consistently high levels of compliance, currently 100%, with no properties currently overdue and customer satisfaction remaining high.

Questions and answers

Councillor Tindall made reference to the 10,000 people on the housing waiting list. He said that he was disappointed to hear of the proposal to end Council building in 2020 as a saving measure. He asked if there would be a more flexible approach to building in the future and keep the option open.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council has a plan going forward. All finances have been looked at closely; however the Council needs to take stock of where we are with current resources.

44 QUESTIONS

None.

45 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None.

46 CABINET REFERRALS

Resolved

That the following be approved:

24 November 2015

7.1 CA/102/15 BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 2 2015/16

Decision

1. **The supplementary budgets set out below be agreed. Details for these supplementary budgets are set out in the body of the report to cabinet and have a net nil impact on the General Fund Working Balance:**

- **The Increase Electoral Registration Budget by £42k**

- **The Increase Other Government Grants Budget by £42k**

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- The Decrease the budget for Conducting Elections by £30k
- The Decrease use of the Elections Reserve by £30k
- The recommended virement of underspends set out in Section 6 of the report to cabinet.

7.2 CA/104/15 ANNUAL REVIEW OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2015/16

Decision

1. The updated HRA Business Plan was adopted.
2. The revised development programme budgets as set out in the Part II appendix to the report to Cabinet was approved.

7.3 CA/107/15 TWO WATERS REGENERATION FRAMEWORK

Decision

1. The Two Waters Strategic Framework, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet, be used as a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications and guide future strategic planning in the area.

7.4 CA/109/15 REVIEW OF SCRUTINY & PORTFOLIO HOLDER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Decision

- The amendment of the Council's Constitution to adopt the new roles and responsibilities for individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out in appendix B of the report to Cabinet was approved.

15 December 2015

7.6 CA/121/15 LOCAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME UPDATE

Decision

- The adoption of the new Local Development Scheme as set out in the report to Cabinet.

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7.7 CA/123/15 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2016/17

Decision

The Committee Meeting Timetable for 2016/17 as set out in Annex A to the Cabinet report was approved.

24 November 2015

7.8 CA/111/15 Maylands Business Centre Extension

Full details can be found in the Part 2 of the Minutes.

47 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

None.

48 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Tina Howard was appointed to the Finance and Resources Overview & Scrutiny committee in place of Councillor S Mills.

49 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

None.

50 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 is 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 (CA/111/15).

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

51 PART 2 CABINET REFERRALS

24 November 2015

7.8 CA/111/15 Maylands Business Centre Extension

Full details can be found in the Part 2 of the Minutes.

The Meeting ended at 9.20 pm

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