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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**20 JULY 2022**

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Present:

**MEMBERS:**

Councillor Williams (Leader) Councillors, Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Arslan, Banks, Barrett, Barry, Mrs Bassadone, Beauchamp, Birnie, Chapman, Claughton, Douris, Elliot, England, Freedman, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Imarni, Link, Maddern, Su Mahmood, Oguchi, Peter, Riddick, Rogers, Sinha, Stevens, R Sutton, Symington, Taylor, Tindall, Townsend and C Wyatt-Lowe

**OFFICERS:**

Chief Executive

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

**1 MINUTES**

Cllr Tindall raised a point regarding an inaccuracy in the voting in the minutes from 13<sup>th</sup> April and said he believed the chief Executive would be reading out a statement.

Chief Executive

It has been brought to my attention that there was a discrepancy in the voting totals under Item 1 (minutes) at the meeting of 13 April, where 33 Members were present but only 20 votes recorded as having been cast. It is however accepted that the decision remains unchanged.

Moving forward, I have requested the following process be put in place;

- Prior to any vote, the Mayor will announce if the vote is intended to be recorded or unrecorded; only recorded votes will minute individual votes by Member name, otherwise the minutes will display 'For', 'Against' and 'Abstain' totals only.
- During any live vote, we will monitor the number of votes cast against the numbers of members present and, if there is any discrepancy, an announcement will be made to give Members sufficient opportunity to cast their vote.
- During a live vote, should any Member have any query, or experience any issue when submitting their vote, they should raise their hand and an officer from Democratic Services or ICT will provide assistance.
- Once a vote is closed, if it is the case that a Member present has not submitted a vote, this will be recorded in the minutes as 'Abstained (no vote cast)'

The minutes were then agreed for 13<sup>th</sup> April and 10<sup>th</sup> May

## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

none

## **3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Steven Butler asked a question of Alan Anderson, the questions was as follows:

Stephen Butler: I thought it would be useful to share an example of the issue at hand which relates primarily to planning application 00958, which is a granted application for land in Tring for a residential area which designated 0.75 hectares for employment purposes, and planning application 2201962, which is pending, and relates to a supermarket development on that site. The land adjacent to this employment space is the Icknield Way Industrial Estate, which was referenced in the 15th July press release as-

The Mayor interrupted and asked Mr Butler to read his original question

Stephen Butler: Will you ensure that land is used as per the local plans and prioritise enforcement action where developers seek to breach conditions of their planning permission in place to protect those local plans?

Cllr Anderson: Good evening, Mr Mayor, and good evening, Mr Butler. As this question relates to a planning application which is currently awaiting determination it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the specifics at this stage The council will have regard to any comments received in response to this application and, in addition to what it says here, I'd say that any member of the public can participate in the planning process as registering to speak to the development management committee, should it get to the development management committee, and there you will have your opportunity to have your say. On the wider point of protecting employment space in the borough, I would like to point out that the council has recently made an number of Article 4 directions which will provide continued protection from potential losses in the employment space, and if one goes back to Tring for a moment, I know that former Cllr Mike Hicks, it was an issue that was very close to his heart, because I remember him, when I was Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, I remember him mentioning it in relation to Tring on many, many occasions and I hope, next year, we will have the opportunity to continue that campaign. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Mayor: Mr Butler do you have any supplementary questions.

Mr Butler required no further questions

Cllr Hollinghurst: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Could I ask for some guidance from the officers, please? I do not wish to refer to the matter raised by the member of the public, because that is a planning matter of course. However, the gentleman who was speaking had plenty of time in which to explain the reasons for his question and the background to it, and yet, Mr Mayor, you cut the gentleman short and asked him to proceed to his question forthwith. So, therefore, with your indulgence, I would like to ask if the officers can give some guidance as to whether it is proper to curtail a question in this manner when the person raising it has plenty of allocated time to go?

**CHAIRMAN**

The Mayor: Cllr Hollinghurst, I realise that I'm a new Mayor, but I don't think this is the time and the place to re-jig the format in terms of questions from the public, but I'm happy to take the officer's advice.

Cllr Tindall: Clarification, I believe that Cllr Hollinghurst was referring to the amount of time that the questioner had and the fact that, during the course of the asking of that question, you curtailed his opportunity to explain what the question meant while he still had time within his allotted period. I think that was the thrust of Cllr Hollinghurst's question to the officers, and whether or not the member of public should have been entitled to actually explain what his question was about.

FHussain : We were given notice of the question in advance, so what the Mayor was asking was for the question to be read out, because this is the question that has been put to Cllr Anderson, so the response that has been prepared has been on the basis of the question that has been asked by the member of the public.

Cllr Tindall: Excuse me. Sorry to prolong the meeting, but the problem is there are a considerable number of councilors around this room that have no idea what the question was about, because the member of public was curtailed. If the member of public had been allowed to continue his explanation we would have all understood what the meaning of the question was.

Mayor: I'm sorry that you have difficulty in reading the question. It was actually circulated and it seems to me perfectly explanatory in itself as to what is going on. However, as Cllr Anderson says, we are not curtailing the questioners ability to approach the appropriate body, when if and when this issue comes before the planning committee that is Development Management, then he is entitled to address them. Thank you.

## **4 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

None

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

Update given under item 1 - Minutes.

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

Cllr Williams gave apologies for Cllrs Durrant, Timmis, Silwal & Johnson

Cllr Tindall gave apologies for Cllrs Foster, Cllr Wilkie, Cllr Pringle, Cllr McDowell & Cllr Ransley

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

The Leader advised he had nothing to update under this particular section of the agenda, but happy to take questions.

### Questions

**CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Symington: Thank you very much. I'd like to ask the Leader of the Council whether he agrees that the democratic process is severely limited if we invite members of the public to come and speak for three minutes and, in less than 50 seconds, we cut them off and ask them to read out a question that clearly is not a three minute question, because they wouldn't have submitted 450 words, a 450 word question to read out, at council?

Cllr Williams: No, I do not. The standing order of the process for public participation is that a person, or any person wishing to participate, submits their question and that question can be 30 seconds or up to three minutes, but when they attend they read that question. It doesn't come with an unprovided statement.

Cllr Symington: Inaudible (no Microphone)

Cllr Williams: I don't think the circumstances make any difference. They've got three minutes and they can submit whatever question they want to us in advance, as Mr Butler did, and then that question is read out. What you can't do is come forward with information or questions which you haven't previously submitted.

Cllr Hollinghurst – Inaudible (no Microphone)

Cllr Rogers: asked a question advising that it's about the number of staff who are actually attending in the forum. Over the past few months on my infrequent visits I've noticed that there are very few officers on site it would appear, clearly many continue to work from home, fully understandable under the circumstances, but now the rest of the world is getting back to normal and I'd like to know how many officers are actually coming into the office, coming into the forum, how many are actually, in percentage terms, how many are available for consultation, not only for residents but also for councillors, because on many, many occasions, I don't know if other councillors and members of the public have had the same level of service, I'd like to know the sort of red or amber and green traffic light systems that we're actually achieving in terms of being available. Many officers have actually turned their mobile phones off as well and made themselves unavailable, so we can't call them back, because they take on the privacy button on their mobiles. Sorry, I was little confused there, but it's just about the level of service that we're achieving from the number of officers who are in the building.

Cllr Williams: I thank Cllr Rogers for advanced notice of the question for me to gather the information. On average, over the last month or two, there are 88 members of staff present in the forum on the average working day. Staff are expected to attend the forum on two days per week, so I don't know if that percentage is but it would tell you that around 40% of their time would be here, but if someone is not available that doesn't mean to say that they are not working, because there are quite a number of staff who would be based here, but who are out working as housing officers and building surveyors and things like that, who will be out and about. We are currently undertaking a customer service review along with our new ways of working, which will look at how much of this building needs to be used, or how much time staff need to spend here, and best use of technology. Some of the issues that you've raised in the second part of the question about non-availability and getting in contact with officers, it's disappointing to hear that you can't make that contact, you know, systems are in place for voicemail messages to be transferred to emails and people to pick them up. Generally I find that you're not always going to get someone at their desk when you ring them, but you should get a call back. If there are issues that are not being addressed there then they should be addressed to the Chief Executive to be dealt with, but also I expect how we deal with some of those communications issue in a new

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working environment to be dealt with through the customer service review, both to the benefit of customers and to the benefits of staff and members.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

Under Tenant and Leaseholder Services we've introduced an ultra-web for the housing income team and this has offered benefits to the team in providing efficiencies in the collection of rent arrears. The current rent arrears are below the level at this time last year. We've upgraded the community alarm systems, which have been completed in two supported housing schemes.

Under strategic housing, the implementation of the new Housing Allocations Policy, alongside full system updates and data cleansing has now been completed. Successful handover taken an allocation of the new-build homes in Coniston Road in Kings Langley. The fifth Afghan household has been resettled into a private sector property in line with the ACRS resettlement scheme. A successful warrant enforced with the police of a privately owned home due to regulatory breach, and this was the unlawful occupation of an outbuilding. Further enforcement action is also being taken against the same homeowner due to an illegal eviction. 181 households currently occupy temporary accommodation. The service is starting to see an increase in the presentations from households concerned regarding affordability and is working closely with partners in relation to developing a cost of living symposium.

Under property in place, a new compliance dashboard for monitoring all six compliance areas is being developed under the home standard. We're developing a reporting template to encapsulate performance and exception narrative for consideration by SLT each month. We're engaging with the sector recognised compliance experts called Manifest Consulting to review compliance and act as a critical friend as we continue to improve. There's a continued focus on complaints as a result of repairs.

The focus on void performance to improve key to key and reduced rent loss. We're engaging with government funded services, foundations, to review DFG processes from initial contact through to completion and we're starting the journey to produce a whole organisation asset management strategy that will consider key themes, such as stock performance, both financial and non-financial, impact of social housing on climate agenda, data verification and the maturity of the stock-, and maturity, which is the stock conditions survey. As the new-build is no longer part of my portfolio there will be no request from me to add it to the minutes. Thank you, Mr Mayor. Happy to take any questions.

Cllr Barry-Mears: I was just wondering, on the tenants and leaseholders say on the maintenance services, when will we be getting the results from that or if there's been any going on at the minute, details of the people that have been invited to them?

Cllr Griffiths: I assume you're referring to what we're going to do with the new contract when the Osborne one runs out, that's what you're referring to? There's a whole load of consultation going on, including with us as members. We haven't had our first meeting yet, but I think to date there have been three, might even be four by today, and they will be going on through the summer as well. They will all form part of the feedback that will come back to us as members on that working group, but also to scrutiny as part of the whole package of what we're going to do and where we're going

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to go forward. There are no preconditions to this, it's literally the blank sheet of paper, what people want from it and then what will the market deliver.

Cllr Symington: thank you very much. I've had an email from one of the lead people of the Berkhamsted Parish team expressing thanks, deep thanks, for the fact that the council has been able to move ahead and house a fifth family. My question is, thank you very much Mr Mayor for letting me say something before asking a question, especially as it is a particular thanks to the council, my question is, it obviously took a question to Full Council, it's taken a number of emails and, apparently, it's taken nearly a whole year in total for that house to be delivered to the family, so two parts to this question, firstly are we able to speed up that process for future? Secondly, which I suppose is contingent on the second question, which I should have asked first, is it possible and will the council be looking at housing other families that still are local to us in Dacorum? If you take the second one first, that will probably be best.

Cllr Griffiths: I'll try and take them altogether. I think we need to know where we are. We are trying to square a circle. As I've just said we have 181 people in temporary accommodation at the moment. We have found housing for ten families from Syria. We have now, with the aid of the Berkhamsted, we have been able to enable five Afghan families. So far, I don't think we've had any Hong Kong families present to us, but that is a possibility as well and, of course, we have the Ukrainian issue. I think members ought to be aware that we are getting people presenting as homeless because of family breakdowns, or it not working out for the British families that have taken onboard the Ukrainian families. I'm not sure what's going to happen in six months' time when that payment stops. So, what I'm trying to say is, we have a lot of pressure on our housing and it's balancing that whole, us being a good council, caring about other nationalities and nations and what they're going through, but we also need to care about our own, and so I don't make any apology for the fact that we reviewed this in line with everything else that's going on. We also have to think of our staff who are dealing with all these issues day in, day out, so we have a care of duty to them also. So, no I make no apologies for the fact it has taken a year and I can't make any confirmed commitment that we'll be able to take any more, because of the reasons I've just stated. Obviously, if we're legally instructed by the government to do so, we will not break the law, we will do it, but I think we've done our fair share at the moment.

Cllr Hollinghurst: Thank you very much indeed. We've had a salutary lesson I think over the last few days about the way in which climate change can wreak severe damage upon our environment and our social structure. Photovoltaic cells are the quick fix, and I'm very grateful indeed to be able to give my appreciation to the portfolio holder for the progress which is being made in attaching photovoltaic cells to the roofs of some of the council's buildings. Will she accept my appreciation for that?

Cllr Griffiths: I'm very happy to accept his thanks for that, and we obviously do what we can, not only on the council buildings, but on the homes of our council tenants as well, and flats, and all new-builds have them on.

Cllr Hollinghurst: And my gracious supplementary question is, having made a good start, can the portfolio holder assure us that she will make every effort to increase the number of photovoltaic cells, bearing in mind that this is, in climate change terms, a quick fix and can produce quick results?

Cllr Griffiths: The last point on my report was starting the journey to produce a whole organisation asset management strategy that will consider key themes, such as stock performance, both financial and non-financial, i.e. anything to do with anything that makes our homes safer, more energy efficient, warmer or cooler, etc.

**CHAIRMAN**

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Under environmental projects the team have been filming drain footage in several parts across the borough, with three short films being made for Love Parks Week splash park promotion and parks and open spaces promotions. The film will be posted on the DBC website, YouTube and social media. We have created the new zero waste map on the borough website, showing locations of recycling points, refill shops, repair cafes, community fridges, etc. To celebrate Biodiversity Day the Dacorum climate change network gave away thousands of packets of bee friendly wildflower seeds to residents and local schools, and to tie in with our Biodiversity Day celebrations we've ran a primary school competition to win a large insect hotel complete with planters, compost, flowers and wild seeds. The team subsequently spent an afternoon with the winning school helping them to assemble the hotel and helping them with the planting. We're organising a clothes swap in conjunction with Open Door at Berkhamsted Civic Centre, which will take place in September. We launched refill and go trails on World Refill Day, residents can download the free app and follow the trails. Every time they refill in a business they can get a free entry-, they get free entry into a competition to win a variety of reusable items. Trees and woodlands, we have held meetings with friends groups at Bunkers Park and Chipperfield Common. We have met habitat consultants at Bundale and Bunkers Park prior to the commissioning surveys at each location. We have participated in discussions together with the strategic planning and housing developers about delivering biodiversity net gain on new housing developments.

Clean safe green, we continue to have several vacancies, however I can confirm that the number is reducing. Third cut grass cutting has commenced and fourth cuts are commencing on priority routes. A new grab lorry has been delivered, which has increased the efficiency of fly tip collections and thereby will produce an overall cost saving. All summer bedding plants have been planted. The first batch of road nameplates have been ordered, however installation has been delayed due to contractor availability. The Jubilee event was a big challenge, however the team worked hard over the whole of the Jubilee period to ensure clearance of the large quantity of extra litter that was generated. We've been meeting with the Football Association to explore additional funding for maintenance of sports pitches and digital pitch assessments. We collected 352 fly tips over this last quarter. Under waste services we successfully covered all collections over the Jubilee bank holiday period, working with no disruptions to our service. We have carried out electric inspections at Cupid Green over a period of three weekends. The outgoing tonnages of waste for the quarter were 3,843 tonnes of co-mingled recycling, 3,518 tonnes of garden waste and 1,220 tonnes of food waste. Again, during the period, we have a total of 449 bulky items service requests and 1,237 sharps box collection requests. Under parks and open spaces, works have been completed at the (inaudible 29.46) at Leverstock Green. The Canal Fields playground improvements are scheduled to be completed by this Friday. Final works of laying the safety surface were delayed due to the climatic conditions, however this is taking place over the next two days. (TC 00:30:00) The opening is subject to final sign-off by ROSPA, which will hopefully take place this Friday, so hopefully it can be open the following Monday. All planting, wildflower, turf laying, benches and other works in the area around the (inaudible 30.13) tree was successfully completed on schedule for the ceremony on the 16th July. Work to improve part of the playground at Bovingdon Memorial Hall has commenced in partnership with Bovingdon Parish Council. We're working on the first stages of a

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major project to improve facilities at Coronation Fields. That's all, thank you. I'm happy to take any questions.

Cllr England asked: Does the portfolio holder join in me acknowledging the great and largely successful efforts of clean, safe and green to overcome staff shortages and deliver over the Jubilee period and the early start to this week, Monday and Tuesday? These labour shortages caused by the government's disastrous and undercooked Brexit deal, which has left districts and boroughs compensating for a distinct lack of free movement of labour, particularly for drivers in the last year or so since Boris Johnson's surely ironic Freedom Day, which was a year ago today. Does the portfolio holder acknowledge that mis-collections are now gradually increasing, especially where there has been a loss of expertise on the routes due to staff turnover?

Cllr Barratt responded: Thank you, Cllr England. Yes, I am quite happy to join with you in congratulating the clean, safe, green staff for the excellent job that they do and did do over the Jubilee weekend. As far as any increase in mis-collections are concerned, I'm not aware of the numbers, but I can check that and get back to you with a number to confirm whether they have or not increased, but I'm not aware that they have increased.

**Action: Cllr Barratt to provide numbers and confirm whether or not this is an increase.**

Cllr England asked a supplementary question: As we heard that drivers have been diverted from other duties in order to keep the show on the road, what effect has this had on, for example, grass cutting or other driving jobs that would normally be done and what is the portfolio holders plan to resource and recruit those duties?

Cllr Barratt replied: I don't think the shortage of drivers on waste collection has had any effect on grass cutting, because the skills are different. We are continuing and we will continue to endeavour to recruit more drivers, that's an ongoing campaign and, as I'm sure the council will recognise, that's a difficulty suffered by all organisations, whether they be public bodies or commercial organisations.

Cllr Banks: I've recently spent some time over in Essex in the Epping district looking after my parents and one of the first questions I asked was around dustbin collection. I was advised by my family that maybe Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, but put all the dustbins out, because they've got no idea which ones would be collected. Would the portfolio holder please congratulate Cupid Green on their outstanding work in maintaining services across Dacorum.

Cllr Barratt: Absolutely. I'm delighted to hear Cllr Banks' comments and I'm delighted to be able to congratulate the staff at Cupid Green. They do an excellent job, they've done an excellent job for a number of years. I can't think of any time when the service has fallen down during the whole of the COVID period and beyond. So, I think we've got an excellent staff there and I think we should all commend the work that they do.

Cllr Symington: Thank you, Cllr Barrett, for your report. I also would like to add my thanks, which I've received from the residents of Berkhamsted West, who particularly mentioned over the Jubilee weekend the care that the clean, safe and green team took when they had all their bunting up, so a big thank you for that. My question is, it relates to the cleaning of the A41. I believe it was mentioned at a scrutiny committee which I don't attend, but I can see the minutes, that the A41 was deep cleaned ahead of mowing. What it doesn't say is, what is the coordination between Dacorum Borough Council and Herts County Council around those two activities? Did they take place

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simultaneously and with the same road, you know, obviously not closure, but restrictions, or were they done on different days? Thank you.

Cllr Barratt: Yes, I can confirm that CSG always liaise with Herts County Council in respect to litter collection on the A41 and always endeavour to coordinate the litter collection with the grass cutting, or any works that Herts Highways carry out. As far as I'm aware, on the last litter collection, that was done at the same time as Herts had their road closures and that does produce an enormous cost saving to the borough in coordinating the work at the same time

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Thank you, Mr Mayor. Just a few items under corporate strategy, commercial strategy. I'd like to report an improved performance from our leisure services with increased income against the expectation when we set the budget a few months ago. There are still risks to achieve pre-COVID income targets, but there is increasing use of facilities. The outdoor pools are now open for the school holiday period, as a result of a significant effort by EA (Everyone Active) to secure necessary chlorine stocks. As members may be aware, the opening of the outdoor pool was delayed because there is a national shortage of chlorine, and the one outdoor pool at Hemel uses more chlorine than the rest of the pools in Hemel combined, and therefore it was decided to prioritise, because it's outdoors it goes through the chlorine much quicker I'm led to believe. Significant progress has been made towards the installation of EV charging points across council owned car parks. Final negotiations, which I'm sure members will be pleased to hear, are taking place during July on the terms and conditions and heads of terms with Connected Kerb and Osprey for a range of provisions and DNA surveys have been largely undertaken with a few sites remaining outstanding. Detailed proposals will return to cabinet over the autumn months as the AA results are analysed and the feasibility of installation has been completed. The garage team has been recruited to now and has a full-time commercial manager to implement the strategy agreed by cabinet earlier in the year. A detailed stock condition survey will be procured in the next few weeks to provide the data for detailed service and stock planning. Happy to take questions, Mr Mayor.

Cllr Douris: Would the portfolio holder agree and join with me in congratulating our parking services team who have recently won the Patrol Parking and Traffic Regulations outside London Pacer Awards for the Best Customer Service for their parking services within Dacorum, and I think it's a credit to them and a credit to Dacorum that, from all the counties and boroughs in the country, we've come out number one.

Cllr Williams: Yes, I'm very happy to add congratulations. I'm delighted to hear they've won an award. It's not very often that parking services, and particularly CEOs, get praise. Normally it's a lot more criticism than it is praise, so I'm absolutely delighted that they've been recognised for the work that they do.

Cllr Symington: I wanted to ask a slightly maybe left ball question, curve ball even, I'm not a cricketer. So, you have a commercial strategy, excellent. In terms of things that might feed into it, a number of residents I have in my ward have asked if they can have white H lines either refreshed or painted outside their houses. Now, I know this is something that the Council has a policy, not necessarily an obvious policy, on, but generally the answer to new ones is no and even refreshing seems to be randomly

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applied. My question is, is it possible, given that this is what residents want, and they understand that these lines are unenforceable, for you to offer this service on a commercial service, i.e. that you can recoup the costs of doing it, given that the lorries are out there painting lines anyway?

Cllr Williams: I'm not going to commit to a yes or no on that, although I have to say that commercial means that you make a profit not just recoup your cost. If you're recouping your cost there's no point in providing the service. My understanding is that, clearly, the operations that we carry out on the highway in relation to parking enforcement, yellow lines, traffic regulation orders, are done under the guise of our agreement with Hertfordshire County Council, who are the highway authority. My understanding, when I've enquired about H lines in the last couple of years, is that the county council don't encourage them, in fact they don't support them anymore and that they won't put new ones in and they won't replace old ones. They're not enforceable and there's no reason to put them in. So, I'm happy to go back and check what the position is from our parking service, but we have to operate the rules that we apply under the rules of the county council on whom's highway we're operating.

Cllr Symington: Thank you. I hear what you say about Herts County Council and I understand that, in terms of the profit that you would be making, obviously that depends how you portion costs, so you could run it under a commercial project if you portioned your costs in a certain way, and therefore you could make it look more profitable than it is if you do that. So, is it possible for you to portion costs so that this is a profitable activity and therefore would meet your criteria for a commercial activity?

Cllr Williams: Yes, I'm not quite sure if I'm interpreting your question in the way in which it was asked, because what it seems to imply is you can massage the figures to make a profit look like you want it to look like, and I'm not sure that's the way in which I would want to operate. There is a set cost, there is a cost of a contractor going out and painting the line, the invoices for that, and that is a fixed cost which you can exactly understand, because if they tell you it cost £100 it's £100, and then there is your officer time in booking and processing that, and that is a bit more difficult to price out. Clearly those are incidental to the fact of whether you're allowed to do it in the first place, because if you're not allowed to do it in the first place how it's done and the cost of doing it is irrelevant. So, going back to my first answer, the first thing to do is to ascertain exactly what the county council policy is in relation to these markings.

Cllr Allen: You mention the EV chargers in borough car parks, which we of course welcome. I was wondering if you could share which of the five car parks are proposed to be going forward, if I understood your report properly that is?

Cllr Williams: Clearly not quite, Cllr Allen, because I didn't mention five car parks. The list that the operations are assessing is much more significant than five, it's all of our pay and display car parks, it's some of the neighbourhood centres, but in the end it will come back to their assessment of the commercial viability of installing in those particular centres. So, at this stage we don't know exactly which ones it will be, but the number being considered is far in excess of five.

Cllr Allen: Apologies, I misheard.

Cllr England: Does the portfolio holder agree with me that car ownership and use is putting yet more pressure on finite parking across the borough, and can he say how much the enforcement demand increases per year approximately?

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Cllr Williams: Our contract is that we provide a number, a fixed number, of enforcement hours per week, per month, per year through our contract with our enforcement contractor, and therefore that valuable resources is spread around enforcing the contracts. Parking is finite, but in many areas of the borough it's not subject to traffic regulation orders or controls and therefore there is no patrolling or enforcement in those areas. We can't enforce in residential areas by and large, and it's often a misconception that we can enforce against pavement parking, which outside London is not an offence unless you're completely obstructing the pavement, and then that can only be enforced by the police. The time when pressure on our parking enforcement does increase is when we introduce new CPZs, because they are more intensive in terms of being enforced and we have far more of those than we used to have, so there is a pressure there to patrol those, but by and large we have a fixed resource and that is deployed as most appropriate by the service and by the management. So, the invaluable resource is constant.

Cllr England: Thank you. Okay, so how does the parking contract-, I mean, how often is it reviewed? How often is the amount of resource needed reviewed?

Cllr Williams: The contract is a heritage contract, I think it's around five years with a period to run. We can review that-, I mean, with the contractor we can review that at any time, but clearly if we want more enforcement then there is more cost and we have to balance off the cost against the amount of resource we want to make available. You could have more officers on the street, but I'm not aware that the service gets lots of request for additional enforcement, and where we do get request to enforce against particular problem areas then we do so, but we're not currently looking at increasing the resource in terms of hours of patrol.

Cllr Hollinghurst: Thank you very much indeed. I was very pleased indeed to hear about the negotiation with Osprey for new EV parking charging points and they're probably going to be the 7.4 kilowatt ones which we've already got in car parks here and there across the borough. Extending this to community centres will be very good indeed. My question is this, in addition to the 7.4 kilowatt chargers, we do need I think at least 100 kilowatt rapid chargers in four key locations and at least two in each, near junction eight coming off the M1, of course, and Maylands Industrial Estate, Bourne End A41 Services and on the Tring Industrial Estate. These are essential for the establishment of regular EV use, because if you're going on a journey, a long journey, you do need to charge up rapidly. Those would be four areas which would be most useful to long-term travellers. In addition.

Mayor: Thank you very much, but we have run out of time.

Cllr Hollinghurst: Can you please, portfolio holder, can you please assure me that these rapid chargers are being considered as part of the Osprey contract?

Cllr Williams: The reason the contract is split between two providers is, one is providing the smaller chargers and Osprey will provide the larger, more powerful chargers, but to disappoint him, they will only be provided in locations where Dacorum Borough Council owns the land and that's certainly not any of the four sites that he listed, although I am aware that Shell are introducing EV charging at their site at Breakspear Way.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

**CHAIRMAN**

Thank you, Mr Mayor, turning first to environment and community protection. I am pleased to report that the air quality steering group, suspended through the pandemic, met in late June. We are refreshing our terms of reference with objectives being to monitor our air quality action plan and to look at ways to improve air quality with a focus on our three air quality management areas. As a reminder, My Mayor, the air quality management areas are parts of Lawn Lane, London Road Apsley, and the High Street in Northchurch. A further update will go to the overview and scrutiny later this year. Fly tipping prosecutions, a review of covert camera footage captured image of two occupants of a vehicle disposing of assorted wooden items. We have successfully prosecuted this fly tipper who assisted his uncle to dump rubbish in Coals Lane in Flamstead, perhaps this will be the warning that people have been waiting for. My Mayor, we take a zero tolerance view on fly tipping and we will pursue these serious offences that blight our communities through the use of either the fixed penalty notices where appropriate, or through prosecution where it is necessary.

Mr Mayor, turning to community. To ensure the community safety team partnership take an intelligence led approach to tackling the crime and disorder that is most effecting residents' businesses and visitors to Dacorum and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, we are developing a comprehensive strategic assessment of crime and disorder here in Dacorum and we will inform-, and this will inform our strategy and partnership plan over the next coming years. Tackling domestic abuse remains a high priority, ensuring that victims of domestic abuse can access the services and support they need.

We also will be looking at how we can work with our partners at Herts County Council to see if we can develop effective preventative programmes and activities for those that cause harm in order for them to change their behaviours. I am pleased to report work is under way with Community Action Dacorum, working with the voluntary sector to see what can be done to support residents in coping with the current cost of living crisis. Officers are looking at two dates for a conference in September and a follow-up in October. Both these will be anchored around the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny for feedback. This intelligence gathering exercise will pull together a comprehensive information base for organisations providing support and assistance to our residents, and finally, Mr. Mayor, Dacorum has been allocated just over 1.7 million as up to March 2025 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which succeeds the old EU Structural Funds and supports local business, people and skills, and communities and place. A partnership group has been established to oversee the development and implementation of this investment plan looking at delivering various projects and programs that will support our residents and business. A webinar was held on the 29th June for partner organisations to share information about the SPF fund, it's opportunities and processes. I'm pleased to report that 23 organisations were represented and 61 expressions of interest have been received of people looking for more information to contribute towards our delivery. Mr. Mayor, I'm happy to take questions.

Cllr Guest: Does the portfolio holder believe that it is a good idea that district enforcement do not give a heads up as to exactly where they're going to be patrolling so that those who are going to drop litter or not clear after their dogs are not displaced to somewhere else?

Cllr Banks: Cllr Guest, absolutely. The pilot that we are currently running around the PSPOs looks to ensure the district enforcement is at all our wards, villages and towns, and, indeed, it would be giving the game away if the publicly announced where they would be attending. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN**

Cllr England: Just to quickly comment, is it not obvious from the-, no that's my question. I'll stick to my question. Does the portfolio have any indicative figures on air quality, up or down, on the levels of pollution in the worst areas?

Cllr Banks: Thank you, Cllr England. At the moment, I believe, we're still waiting for them to be ratified from DEFRA, but I can advise members that Northchurch air quality levels are now significantly reduced and if it hadn't have been for the Covid pandemic, where, obviously, transport was reduced, and so, every area had shown an improvement, that would most likely have been removed from the air quality management list.

Cllr England: Can the portfolio holder comment on the general level of air quality across Dacorum, which I understand actually is a lot higher than the public might think it is? Is it as good as it could be?

Cllr Banks: I don't have figures to hand to justify the position and I'm not quite sure that we actually collect data widely across Dacorum. I think we've had a period throughout Covid where with people staying at home the air quality has significantly improved and we are making tirelessly to ensure that we remain a clean, green environment.

Cllr Freedman: My question is also on district enforcement, but if you will indulge me, the tone of your voice when you just made the response on Northchurch's air quality decreasing, did you mean to say that the pollution is decreasing. Or did you mean to say that the air quality was decreasing.

Cllr Banks: Thank you very much for the point of clarification. Absolutely, the air quality is improving significantly.

Cllr Freedman: Okay, thanks. So, with regards to district enforcement, is it correct that the amount on-the-spot fines have increased to £100 or are there reports of people receiving £100, more people masquerading as officers?

Cllr Banks: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. There are no on-the-spot fines issued by district enforcement and the fine remains at £80. I have not had any cases brought to my attention so would appreciate if, outside this meeting, you could update me.

Cllr Freedman: Happy to do that. I'm just finding them on social media.

Cllr Barry-Mears: Mine's also a question about the district enforcements and the officers and the fines. I was just wondering if there was any data available, sort of, on the ages of people who are being given fines the most, what for as, I'm going to reference social media, it seems it's a lot of young people almost being targeted because they may have dropped something. They're not being given an option to pick it up. I know they shouldn't be dropping things, but there was a case, I'm sure we all saw it the other day, someone spat a fly out of their mouth and they got a fine. So, I'm just wondering if there's, sort of, any data on ages and things like that?

Cllr Banks: As part of the review of the pilot, I'm sure that is something that will be looked at. The information that I do have to hand that there were three fixed penalty notices issued to young people that were found to be inappropriate because of their age and they will be withdrawn.

Cllr Adeleke: First of all my apology for not advising in advance of this question. Of late, there has been a spate of thirteen-year-olds missing in Dacorum. I think in the last four months, we've had about eleven thirteen-year-olds gone missing and the police

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have come up with this explanation of, 'Missing and found,' but not with an explanation. Will the portfolio holder, on behalf of the council, perhaps approach the police department here to let us know exactly what is going on, whether this is a serious, sort of, outside influence and what they are doing in particular to keep our youngsters safe in the borough? Secondly, would it be appropriate for the portfolio holder to, perhaps, get the chief of police to come and give a presentation at the council?

Cllr Banks: Thank you for your question. I would like to congratulate the police on the first instance in their rapid use of social media to alert residents across, not only the Borough of Hertfordshire, but also nationally of missing young people because, obviously, it's very alarming for the family and friends of those individuals. Having had a quick look at the Dacorum Police Twitter, I'm able to assure you that the young person you've referred to has been returned safely home. It does seem as if there has been an increase. I'm sure that the community safety teams that liaise with police, every day, every morning it's the first thing that they do, would alert us if there was a particular upward trend that we needed to be worrying about, but I'm happy to take that up and ensure that that's the case. Thank you.

Cllr Adeleke: The portfolio holder did not answer the second part of the question which that is, inviting the police chief here to explain to us exactly what they are doing.

Cllr Banks: My apologies. As I sat down, I remembered your second question. I do apologise. I think it may well be appropriate that it came through to scrutiny committees, but I'll take advice from officers on that one. Thank you.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe: Cllr Banks, I wonder, can you let us know whether we have any idea yet about how well the district enforcement measures are being accepted by local residents? Feedback in my ward is very good and I just wonder whether that's been reflected across the rest of Dacorum?

Cllr Banks: It'd depend upon your source. Certainly, I know that it's welcomed by police and I've had feedback from the park supervisor and the open space maintenance men, that they have found a huge improvement in both lack of dog fouling and lack of litter, enabling them to get on with their job in hand. The feedback I've had from residents is very similar in my ward, and, indeed, it has been an interesting debate through social media and although there has been some initial shock-wave, I do think most of the comment now is in support and I welcome residents' feedback. Thank you.

Cllr England: I'm quoting SPAE figures. Is the fact that 88% of litter fines are in Marlowes not itself in an advertisement of where the substantive patrols are going to be? It's a matter of record that at least five wards have seen no fines at all. How is this disguising the location of the patrols?

Cllr Banks: I'm so sorry, Mr. Mayor, I lost the very last part of that question.

Cllr Banks: that information, although, obviously, members of the public have access to minutes, isn't generally shared and you are absolutely right. There are a number of prosecutions from the Marlowes, but that is our biggest meeting point across Dacorum.

### **Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

**CHAIRMAN**

On the Chiltern Beechwoods moratorium, good progress has been made on the three elements of the mitigation, especially the work the National Trust needs to do at its own estate at Ashridge. The council, meanwhile, is working to identify the sites which we need to upgrade to draw people away from Ashridge and re those sites working on existing usage surveys and future capacity plannings so that we can actually achieve that. We're optimistic that we can partially lift the moratorium in the coming months, starting with the parts furthest from Ashridge, such as Hemel Hempstead.

The Two Waters Opportunity Area consultation pilot, despite technical difficulties in having to extend the consultation period, it went well, attracting 1,000 contributions, which is more than we would have received with previous traditional forms of consultation. It was one of the three digital pilots undertaken for the Government. We've learned much from the consultation, never mind the feedback received as well. The Cabinet has approved the Paradise Site Design Code Scheme which will be put out to consultation shortly.

Hemel Place on Friday the 8th July, the council successfully launched the Hemel Place Story to take forward our efforts to promote the town and it was attended by 80 key stakeholders. I hope members have seen some of the branding that's on some of the lampposts around the town and a website has been set up called thinkhemel.com, and this was all put in place for the Queen's Baton Relay, for The Commonwealth Games.

In May, the independent chairman of the Hemel Place Board, Andrew Percival, and at team of our senior officers attended the UKREiiF business exposition in Leeds and made 50 new contacts. Hemel Gardens Communities, work is continuing on the overarching framework plan and as we move onto the next stages we're looking at involving more of the local members involved.

The South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan, the Vision and Regulation Consultation has been agreed by all six councils involved and going out to consultation in September.

Under commercial assets, for those of you missing Cllr Elliott's regular slot, performance of commercial assets is strong, with occupancy above 95% and income 3% above budget. The team are working to obtain drainage licence from the environment for the Poppy fields Cemetery and I'm pleased to report the restoration and repair of Boxmoor War Memorial has been completed.

Under housing development, previously in Cllr Griffiths' portfolio has mentioned the Coniston Road Scheme in Kings Langley has recently been completed. Eastwick row, there's a major scheme that started in February and is progressing well and there are no less than 14 other major projects at various stages of development, and I can't believe I've done that in 3 minutes and 20 seconds. That's got to be a record. I'm happy to take questions.

Cllr Elliot: Would the portfolio holder agree with me that the renovation of the war memorial is a fantastic job and a fitting tribute to the people who served this country in all conflicts, and I'd like to pass on my congratulations to the estates team for arranging it.

Cllr Anderson: Absolutely and here, here.

Cllr England: Can the portfolio holder give an indication of the location of the sites where Hemel residents will be expected to go instead of Ashridge?

**CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Anderson: Not as yet, but that will be provided when it's available.

Cllr England: And, will he be putting his name to the campaign to promote these sites ahead of when the moratorium would be relaxed?

Cllr Anderson: I didn't know there was a campaign. Sorry, I'm not sure I quite understand the question or the motive for it.

Cllr England: Point of order, Mr. Mayor. Was that an answer to my question?

Mayor: Would you care to repeat it? Was it you couldn't hear it or understand it?

Cllr England: I didn't see how the answer related to my question at all.

Mayor: I think that we can probably take it as an answer, thank you.

Cllr Symington: Cllr Anderson. I wonder if you could just clarify a couple of things you said. I think you said, well, I wrote down that you said that you were making good progress towards lifting the moratorium and negotiating with the National Trust. Could you define what good progress means in that context, and also link it to, you said, yes, so following on from that you said that, 'In the coming months,' so not so long ago, the coming months was meant to be September. Are we still on target for September, which is two months away, or has it slipped and will it be later in the autumn?

Cllr Anderson: At this stage, I can't really put a precise deadline on it. You know, the work that's ongoing is, as I mentioned, we have assurances The National Trust are working on improving their estate to resolve their side of the bargain and we're working on ours. I can't say that the whole thing's going to be done by the 15th September. I don't think anybody could do that, but I can assure members that progress is being made.

Cllr Douris: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Cllr Elliott has reminded me of the war memorial and that prompts me to ask Cllr Anderson if he would join with me in welcoming the fact that Dacorum Borough Council has now re-signed the Armed Forces Covenant for the next ten years, having signed it ten year ago, and it's quite appropriate that it should be renewed to recognise the work that we do to support our armed services personnel.

Cllr Anderson: Absolutely, Mayor.

Cllr Allen: You mentioned the Two Waters consultation and that lessons had been learnt. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that, what sort of improvements will come from this trial in future?

Cllr Anderson: I think one of the interesting things about the consultation was that we actually made it too easy for people to comment to the point where people were firing off comments which weren't actually placed on the map relevant to what they were talking about and we need to, how can I put this, control contributions, so that when people are commenting on a specific location, it's actually at that location on the map. Unfortunately, because it was, sort of free-form, it's going to make the collation quite a significant job, but that's one example of how the consultation, in future, can be improved. I mean, it was excellent. I took part in myself and the way you could click on any location in the area and say what you thought about it, whether you liked it, whether you disliked it, how you'd like to see it improved, all those issues. What were the important issues, for example, where was it difficult to ride a bike, in terms of trying

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to get more sustainable transport usage, right through to people commenting on certain-, I won't say which building, but certain buildings being hideously ugly, you know, could be re-developed as a really good opportunity for the future. So, I think it was a really good exercise. It just needs a little bit more fine tuning and I'm just really pleased that Dacorum's in the vanguard of piloting it.

Cllr Allen: Yes, I'll try and make it a question. So, I wonder whether part of the difficulty that I understand that residents had was the connectivity and had a lot of comments that suggested that it was easier to use if you used a PC rather than a telephone, and that might explain why some people got the tags in the wrong place.

Cllr Anderson: Yes, and there were also other technical issues early on and that was the reason why we extended the consultation for a much longer period than originally planned.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

In finance, the revenue and benefits team continue to support our residents in the delivery of financial support schemes. Over 43,600 payments of £150 have now been paid as the energy bills rebate for residents living in council tax bands A to D. Approximately 30,000 of these have been made directly into residents' bank accounts with the remainder paid as credits against council tax accounts. This means that in total, we have now paid over £6.5 million of financial support for residents. In addition, Dacorum has been allocated £289,350 to provide additional support to residents through our local energy rebate scheme which will support the most vulnerable residents with further financial support. The final arrangements for the scheme are currently being agreed through portfolio holder decisions. Applications are now being received from local businesses for reductions in business rates under the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund. This scheme will support businesses which were affected by the pandemic but were not eligible for retail, hospitality and leisure relief. Information about how to apply for this is on the council's website. The financial services team has recently published the council draft accounts for 2022-2023, in advance of a statutory publication deadline. The external audit process is now underway, expected to conclude during September. The team has undertaken significant development work on the council's medium-term financial strategy which'll be brought before members in the autumn.

The service continues to ensure that council staff and suppliers are paid accurately on time. Collection of income due to the council is an ongoing priority and is carried out with due consideration to the current cost of living pressures.

Our legal and democratic services team ensured that through the hard work of the licencing team, recent events in Gadebridge Park were able to proceed efficiently. Now, I'd like to mention that Farida Hussain, our head of legal services, will be leaving the council in a few weeks time to take up a new role as a monitoring officer. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Farida for her service with Dacorum and wish her well in her new role.

Now, moving onto people and transformation, it's been a busy few months. Our new permanent strategic director, Aidan Wilkie, started at the beginning of June. He's a fellow Scotsman, although he's a St. Johnstone supporter so we might not get on too well, but we'll try. The council's transformation work progresses at pace. Work has been ongoing to develop new digital, people and communication strategies, which

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members will see shortly. These are augmented by clear delivery programs. In the background, officers have also been developing our capability and ways of working to ensure that our transformation objectives are realised and our corporate plan is delivered.

It has been a very busy time for the communications function. They have been hugely involved in a popular series of summer events, including The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, Armed Forces Day and The Commonwealth Baton Relay and Wellness Festival. In addition, we have launched our residents' survey to gain valuable feedback on our services and plans for the borough and also produced and circulated Decorum Life Magazine, delivered to over 65,000 homes in May.

As well as promoting the summer events, the team has focused on publicising fly-tipping and environmental enforcement prosecutions, the opening of Northridge Way basketball court refurbishment, the start of work on Canal Fields Playground and Tring's great skatepark. Changes to regulation 10 parking tickets and changes to housing allocation points system.

From a technology perspective, we have now completed the AV enhancements in the forum. This has seen installation of technology supporting hybrid team meetings in all meeting rooms as well as provision of a large touch screen monitors so that users can collaborate on and export digital white boards. In the conference room, we have installed ceiling microphones so that hybrid meetings can be held without fixed microphones needing to be laid out in advance. Finally, we have upgraded The Orchard Housing Management System to the latest version. Development of an exciting new digital strategy and successful recruitment to the service desk which should see further improvements in performance.

Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor, and I've just made it and I welcome any questions.

Cllr Adeleke: Just a very short question for the portfolio holder. In your presentation you mentioned that you've got some extra fund for people who are not entitled to the core fund that was distributed out for the Covid Relief Fund. How are these people being advised that they're entitled to the funds?

Cllr Elliot: Okay, thank you very much. We have about £3.8 million available and these are our businesses that haven't been able to qualify through the previous grants. So, it's only businesses that have not received any grants from us in the past. We have identified 700 businesses that may be eligible. As I speak, we've had around 130 applications, so it's a case of just assessing them, going through them, but we will endeavour, as best as we can, to get that cash out to businesses that have not had help previously so that we can get this borough back on it's-, business back on its feet again.

Cllr Adeleke: Thank you very much. My question, really, is the first wave of payments that we made, there was huge publicity surrounding it, you know, both by the council and by the government, on this occasion, how are we informing people that are entitled to it, because, as you say, you've only got, I can't remember the number now, people that already applied, how are we going to make sure that people are entitled to it actually get the fund that is due to them?

Cllr Elliot: As I mentioned earlier, we've identified 700 businesses. 130 have applied. We are doing our best through the websites and it's word-of-mouth, businesses talking to each other, but maybe some of these businesses don't want to do it, have moved

**CHAIRMAN**

on, are not around anymore, or just, they thought it's not worthwhile doing it, but we are very cognisant that this money's there and we have to distribute it.

## **5 MOTIONS**

### **5.1**

Cllr Tindall: Could I thank the leader of the council for presenting an amendment which we have accepted, and, therefore, what is before you is an amended motion going forward on the subject of the cost of living. I understand the text is going to be put up on the screen but if you would like me to read it out?

Mayor: I'm instructed, Cllr Tindall, that you must move your original motion first.

Cllr Tindall: I've accepted the amendment and we have accepted the amendment in its entirety, and Cllr Williams is going to second the amended motion, so, therefore, there is no need to go through the rigmarole, as it were.

Mayor: I think the officer agrees with you.

Cllr Tindall: Thank you. Right, yes, it just saves time and everybody's energy on these warm evenings. Can I say, as I said before, I thank the leader of the council for proposing his amendment which we've taken in its entirety and so this motion is a motion that I hope the whole council can agree. It is presented to the council without prescription or time limit so the Dacorum can come together to support those in our communities who are affected by the cost of living crisis. I do not intend to do anything to setting out the facts at present and urge the whole council to support this motion and the future work that will derive from it. There is a cost of living crisis and there is no doubt that it is likely to continue for some time, possibly two, three or more years. Further, we have no way of knowing when external factors such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine or further pandemic pressures will end. It is for that reason that this motion calls upon the officers to look at and improve Dacorum's present support systems that are available to help vulnerable residents including making available availability to such support easier to those in need. We're also looking to ensure that we're able to support our communities into the future. So, the motion also calls for an action to bring together all those involved so that the support given is co-ordinated, gets to those in need and our efforts are not wasted. It may be that we have to ensure that our local organisations are supported themselves so they can reach out to the communities in need. I know that the council presently works well with those local organisations but let us ensure that everything we are doing and could do is structured and gets to the target.

The third point concerns the burden of taxation on those who can least afford it and looks at the medium-term. There is no news of the cost of living crisis easing. Indeed, the available information suggests that interest rates will continue to rise next month, therefore, the motion asks that this council has discussions with The County Council-, I'll leave that bit out because the motion has changed slightly. The only other point I would like to make is The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has produced a first class summary of the increased problems of managing the cost of living crisis on a low income and I know that it is not necessary to repeat them in this council chamber, except, perhaps, one statistic that illustrates, most clearly the growing need. Citizen's Advice have reported that while foodbank referrals in a particular period in 2021 were 400 a day, demand has climbed in the equivalent period this year to 700 a day, and I doubt this extraordinary pace of increase will slow anytime soon. I commend this motion to you and ask for your support.

**CHAIRMAN**

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Tindall. Cllr Williams, do you wish to speak?

Cllr Williams: I second, and reserve my right.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Williams. I'll let any other contributions from the floor.

Cllr Taylor: We are facing the worst financial crisis since the war. A financial time bomb of unequal proportion in modern times. Energy has gone up in price by 54%. If current predictions are followed, it will go up another 65% in the autumn, making a total increase of over 150% in one year and there is no likely reduction in sight. It is estimated that it would cost someone on the state pension, a third of that pension to pay for their energy bills in future. The £400 government help provided will be swallowed up and not be noticed when this is due to be paid back and any tax cuts that may be given will pail into insignificance compared to the cost of the energy people have to pay for. Families will be faced with a choice of starving or freezing. Brexit has cut us off from the European labour market to do those mundane jobs nobody else wanted. Companies are faced with no choice to increase pay to compensate for scarce labour. As a result, we hear stories of social workers quitting their jobs to work in McDonald's. How will we, as councillors, continue to provide the essential services in these circumstances? Inflation is now the highest in the G7 countries. It is likely to get worse. So far, many businesses have tried to absorb the increasing cost, but soon they will have no choice but to pass that cost on to their consumers. The way governments have always dealt with inflation in the past is to either increase taxes or increase interest rates.

If a government will not do the former, The Bank of England will do the latter. It will have a very serious impact on anyone who needs to borrow money, whether you're a house buyer or a business, it will be hard. I have touched on just a few of the problems that we face in coming years. We, as elected representatives, have a duty to act. Governments at all levels must prioritise helping those least able to help themselves. We will need to open the doors of public spaces to allow people to come in and keep warm when they cannot afford to heat their own homes. We must focus on how we pay our employees so that they are not forced to seek alternative employment when they are not able to cope on the salaries they currently receive and we must plan now, have focus to respond to this crisis so we are ready with the help, and help is needed. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Taylor. Any other contributions?

Cllr Williams: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I'm happy to rise to second this motion and when redrafting this, I didn't want to make it too long and wordy, but I did want to emphasise that it is not just in Dacorum or with our partners in Dacorum that we are seeking to work. I was at a meeting of The Herts Leaders this morning, the eleven councils in Hertfordshire, and we have set up a cost of living working group amongst the Herts leaders to co-ordinate activity across the county, recognising that there will be challenges for our community going forward and it's not going to be a one or two-month fix. Clearly, there has been some significant support from government in the £400 that Cllr Taylor mentioned in the significant rise in the National Insurance threshold, in the council tax rebate and in the £650 of additional funding to people on Universal Credit, but it is right that the challenge will rise as we face the winter. Those challenges will get all that greater. We can only hope that some of the international pressures that are on, not just us, or Europe, or the world, will ease, but most notably, the war in Ukraine, not just for the benefit of the residents of the United Kingdom, but more significantly, I suppose, the residents of Ukraine that that situation is resolved, but the effects of that situation are obviously far more widespread than just in Ukraine.

**CHAIRMAN**

So, we are working across the piece, and I do hope that on the conclusion of current events in Westminster and the successful selection of a new Prime Minister in September that the government will continue to focus on the cost of living crisis and effects on the residents of the United Kingdom in supporting that. What does disappoint me, is not for the first time this evening that we try and weave this link to Brexit into problems that clearly are not Brexit-related. Thank you, Mr. Mayor

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Williams. Cllr Tindall, do you wish to sum up?

Cllr Tindall: I don't think I need to.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Tindall. In accordance with the suggestion made by the Chief Executive, we shall have to go to a recorded vote on this.

Mayor: I'm instructed that we can only move to a recorded vote if three members request it.

Cllr Williams: Sorry, if I may, as the constitution doesn't require a recorded vote, and I suspect this is not going to be contentious and likely to be unanimous, I'm not sure what the benefits of recording are.

Mayor: May I just ask if anyone is going to object to this motion, as amended? Can anyone show if they intend to? If not, I agree with your suggestion, Cllr Williams, that we accept the motion as amended by universal ascent.

The following Motion was proposed by Councillor Tindall and seconded by Councillor Williams:

1. This motion calls upon the Council to address the present Cost of Living Crisis which is a complex problem which may be with us for some years. The Ofgem energy price cap has risen by 54%, the pensions triple lock has been suspended, and food and petrol price rises have contributed to the highest levels of inflation for nearly 30 years.

2. Whilst the opportunities for action at local level are limited, it is important this council does what it can to ease the pressures on our residents. Therefore, this Council resolves as a matter of urgency to

- instruct officers to look at and improve the current support mechanisms available to residents,
- arrange discussions with all concerned organisations across Dacorum including food banks and the voluntary sector, and
- initiate discussions with Council Tax Preceptors regarding 2023/2024 with the purpose of enabling proposals to be brought forward in a timely manner to provide assistance and support for those most in need in our communities

**DECISION: A vote was held and the Council unanimously agreed the Motion.**

## 5.2

Mayor: Thank you. We shall now move onto motion 2, which is proposed by Cllr Garrick Stevens. Cllr Stevens, do you have a seconder?

Cllr Freedman: I second the motion.

**CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Stevens: Thank you. Do you want me to read out the whole of the motion?

Mayor: I think we can take it as read.

Cllr Stevens: In June, the soon to be ex-Prime Minister announced that the government was confirming its plan to extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants. That set off alarm bells, as the reality of a historic right-to-buy policy has undermined availability of much affordable housing, which is leading to societal breakdown. In addition to that announcement, I came across an article written by Lord Kerslake, who used to be the former chair, head of the civil service, who is now chair of the Peabody Trust. It was rather an angry document, pointing out the fact that the trusts are independent bodies and do not take kindly to being told what to do. Among the little detail released by the government, it said 2.3 million housing association tenants would be given the Right to Buy as an extension to the current Right to Buy scheme. The government would work closely with housing associations on the design of the scheme. The scheme would be capped, to ensure it is affordable within existing government budgets, and there was going to be a commitment to build replacement homes for each one sold, with minister Gove suggesting a like-for-like replacement. So, on the face of it, what's not to like with such a proposal that appears to address the replacement issue? As with much that comes from government, the devil is in the detail. Not being an expert on social housing sector, I looked for reports that councillors would regard as authoritative, and found the 2022 UK Housing Review by Glasgow University, which is commissioned, amongst others, by the Chartered Institute of Housing, and found that in part of the summary, over 2.8 million homes have been sold under Right to Buy, and potential buyers under the Right to Buy face a lottery of different purchase prices and relative costs of mortgage payments and rents, which in layman's terms means that a three-bedroom house costs a lot different in one part of the country from another.

The discounts, especially in England, provided a disproportionate benefit to tenants, often far exceeding their cumulative rent payments, and in fact the discounts are a huge transfer of public wealth to the private sector. Up to 1.1 million Right to Buy properties have been private tenancies, possibly on multiple occupancy, with greater insecurity, higher rents and often poorer management and maintenance. The downside, many are new households and small towns in rural areas who cannot afford to buy and are unable to access housing locally, because of Right to Buy. For households unable to buy, the long-term consequences of Right to Buy have been very serious, and in the 40 years from 1980, capital receipts from Right to Buy across Great Britain exceeded £58 billion. Most were used to repay debt, or reverted to the Treasury, and few were retained for local reinvestment, and the section on the summary concluded, 'The Right to Buy has become a strategic failure in England, and unless reconsidered, the policy will continue contributing to social disadvantage, and exacerbating inequalities.' Now, that's very anodyne language from a study by well-respected academics. Contrast that with another headline, 'How Right to Buy ruined Britain,' which arguably reflects the views of countless thousands of people, desperate to escape the worst of the private rental sector. Now, the extension to the Right to Buy in the housing association sector was in the Conservative Manifesto in 2015, as it's long been an aspiration of the Conservative Government. I found that work had already been done to pave the way, with the National Housing Federation leading for the housing association sector. In 2015, the federation on behalf of its members put forward a proposal to the government on how it could deliver its commitment to extend Right to Buy, by way of a voluntary agreement, rather than legislation.

It wanted to make sure that any system delivered for tenants, housing association and the government. The agreement was based on four key principles, discounts for

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tenants, control over which houses to sell, full compensation, and flexible one-for-one replacement. They undertook a number of pilots, and the outcome was evaluated by consultants, with a report published in February 2021. Now, as a result of that, we'd expect policy would be developed from a very sound evidence base. I assessed their website. The federation, on its website, summarises, 'Our agreement with the government at the time that the voluntary Right to Buy pilots was based on a clear set of principles, with our red line.' Remember that phrase? 'Our red line being that every single social home sold would be replaced. The evaluation of the pilots demonstrated how difficult this is to achieve, as there's not enough money from sales to build new social homes. On current figures, less than half the homes sold have been replaced, and those that have been replaced are rarely replaced at social rent levels.' I have a very enthusiastic comment from the author of the original guidance, which went on to say, 'Tenants have the opportunity to buy their homes, which is great. Extend the policy,' etc. 'It really delivers for everybody, and it provides the blueprint for best practice,' and it's also going to extend the Right to Buy and increase the number of properties, which I don't understand how he got to that stage. Among the little detail released, the government said-, sorry, wrong page-, it's going to increase the number of affordable homes under the voluntary agreement. Now, I've identified the fact that he has a pretty casual relationship with numbers here. Replacing one-to-one does not equate to boosting the supply of new, affordable homes.

I think you'll all agree on that one. So, here we are, in 2022, with a government determined to grab a headline with a scheme that the evidence shows will lead to a policy failure, with further loss of affordable homes. If the home or related alternative is transferred to the tenant, its replacement, according to government guidance, can be anywhere nationally, it says. The government in effect is treating the housing association sector as one homogenous body, as opposed to the myriad of individual housing associations rooted in their communities. The text actually says, 'Replacing one-for-one basis nationally.' Now, it stands to reason, a transfer to a tenant without a local replacement will reduce the availability of an affordable home to a local resident. We already have huge difficulty in negotiations with developers for affordable homes. We need to avoid making things worse for our residents. I hope all members can agree that there are some serious flaws in the current guidance on the scheme, and this needs to be corrected. Our motion recognises that one of the key elements of the guidance, the government has undertaken to meet the full cost of discount, but this doesn't go far enough. In light of the published evidence from the pilots, as the current scheme specifically allows for replacement nationally, we also call upon government to commit to meeting the full replacement cost of the dwelling within the same locality, and to meet the operational costs of administering the sales process. Housing associations must be given a solid commitment that government will meet all the costs to replace the property, not just for a one-for-one, but I'm told it needs to be on a like-for-like basis in the same area, in our case, in this borough. I move the motion.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Stevens. Cllr Freedman, you seconded the motion. Do you wish to speak now?

Cllr Freedman: I will reserve my right to speak.

Cllr Griffiths: I will be voting against this motion, on the basis that from all the evidence I have, this is out for consultation. There is no direction yet on where the government is going with social-, sorry, with the-, oh, the likes of High Town, housing associations. Sorry, I do apologise and so, are we not putting the cart before the horse? I presume that the member himself, and the group opposite, will be joining in the government's

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consultation, when it goes out for wider consultation. At the moment, it's only happening with the housing associations, and I don't think that we can judge something that none of us have seen the detail of, because it hasn't been published yet. So, I don't think we can really vote on something that we don't know anything about, Mr Mayor.

Cllr Hollinghurst: I don't think it's quite true that this is something about which we don't know anything, as the previous speaker implied. We do know quite a bit about it from the hints that have been given, and the drafts which have been made leading into the consultation, but the problem with social landlords is that the whole situation is flawed. If you introduce Right to Buy, better described as compulsion to sell, then you will find it very difficult to replace like-for-like, and in the same area. I'm not surprised that the Peabody Trust got very upset about this. Quintessentially, that is a historic, high-quality housing association which developed in the East End of London, and around the Docks. It was precisely located to solve the social problems of the day, and sadly, the situation has rather persisted. The properties are in the right place for the people that need them, and they are in very valuable locations. So, anybody who acquires one of these properties from an RSL like Peabody, is really going to get something in a prime location. Wherever you build a replacement, it is not going to be in that same situation, it will be removed from the people that Peabody was set up to help, and I believe this will be true for a great number of housing associations. What we will have is a, sort of, pepper-potting of estates and people in the local area being forced to move to somewhere else, which may not be convenient and may not be conducive to solving the social problems that RSLs were originally set up to achieve.

Cllr Maddern: When I saw the motion, I absolutely understand everything that Cllr Stevens is saying about this, in fact, I've spent the last year studying social housing at university, so it's something that's very interesting to me. I was a massive fan of the Right to Buy scheme when it first came out. I thought it was wonderful that people who wouldn't ordinarily be able to afford to buy their home, were suddenly able to do that. I naively thought at the time that that housing would be replaced. What's really happened is, of course, that it hasn't been replaced. So, if this is something that is absolutely, definitely going to be on the table, I would absolutely be supporting the Liberal Democrat motion tonight, but I do take on board what Cllr Councillor Griffiths said. This is very early stages and I do think it's a bit premature, so I will be abstaining on this one. Thank you.

Cllr England: As a district with a large social and housing association dependency, we of all boroughs, must use our voice upstream now for maximum affect, and write to the Ministry, early doors. It seems vital for our residents that we agree this motion and help government to help thousands of our residents. Perhaps a tiny amendment would help in the paragraph, 'Calls upon the leader of the council to write to the minister, with copies blah, blah, blah, requesting that the government proceeds with its proposals.' Why don't we insert, 'And forthcoming consultation.' And then, this is a timely motion.

Mayor: Cllr Stevens, do you wish to reply to that?

Cllr Tindall: I believe the constitution allows for amendments to be made to the motion and the discussion. It is for the person to suggest that and that is then seconded, an immediate local statement is taken on that amendment, and then the debate continues with or without any amendment.

Mayor: Councillor England, can you confirm that you're proposing this as an amendment?

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Cllr England: Yes I am proposing an amendment

Mayor: And do you have a seconder?

Cllr Barr-Mears: I second the proposal

Mayor: Thank you. So, we have to now discuss the amendment to the motion.

Cllr Griffiths: Point of clarification as to what the amendment actually is?

Mayor: Could you repeat your amendment please

Cllr England: In the paragraph which begins, 'Calls upon the leader of the council to write to the minister, at blah, blah, blah.' After the words, 'Requesting that the government proceeds with its proposals.' I propose an amendment that we insert, 'And forthcoming consultation.'

Cllr Williams: Yes, speaking to the amendment, but what I might be able to clarify is that we're not going to accept the motion as amended, or unamended. Now I'll take the opportunity to say my piece on that. I think Cllr Griffiths has clearly indicated, I accept there are lots of flaws in the Right to Buy scheme. It's been a huge success in some aspects, and it's liberated thousands-, millions of families into being able to own their property, as Cllr Madden said, in a way which they would never have been able to do. But from the get-go, the way in which that funding has been redistributed was perhaps not as helpful as it could have been, and through the late 1990s into the 2000s, when perhaps we might have expected a more lenient view on the council housing situation, the changes in the early 2000s to housing finance made the situation for new housing-, and it's some of those years, if you check the figures from the relevant government department. There were no new council houses built anywhere in England in some of the early 2000 years because the funding mechanism was so against councils. The transfer of funding from tenants back to the centre, from rents, made the whole construction of new council housing extremely difficult, and housing associations have picked up that piece. But in 2005, in 2014 and in 2019, and now again in 2022, there's been proposals to open or extend the Right to Buy scheme to housing association tenants. It's never come to fruition before, in this occasion it seems to have gathered a bit more pace with the Prime Minister making a commitment to it, but I'm not sure now where that policy will stand going forward over the next couple of months. We understand there is a consultation going on with housing associations, registered social landlords in that sector, and if they proceed beyond that, there will be a consultation more broadly with councils and other providers. I think that is the time when we should make our case. If at that point, there is a clear commitment to proceed with the policy, I would support the principle in what Cllr Stevens is moving, and that is that for every property sold, there should be a fully-funded replacement. And I would even go slightly further, that that fully-funded replacement should be at social rent and not at affordable rent, because I contend, in this part of the world, that affordable rent is not genuinely affordable for people who are doing some of the sorts of jobs that we were referring to earlier.

You know, I've always had trouble with the concept that affordable rent is affordable for all those who can't afford to house themselves, and that's why I've committed discounts to delivering new housing at social rent, because I believe that is more genuinely affordable. But there comes a point where you make your case and move your motion, and you make-, the leader writes to the government, when you understand what it is, the government policy is. At the moment, I think Cllr Stevens doesn't have enough information or facts. That hasn't stopped him putting the motion

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forward, to understand what the government policy is and therefore, for that reason, we will not be supporting it until we understand what it is writing to the government about.

Mayor: Thank you Cllr Councillor Williams. So, now, Cllr Stevens, do you wish to speak again to your motion?

Cllr Griffiths: Are we not discussing the amendment?

Mayor: Does anyone else want to speak to the amendment?

Cllr Townsend: can we move the amendment to a vote?

Mayor: Cllr Stevens so you want to reply to the amendment

Cllr Stevens: I'm happy to accept the amendment.

Mayor: We vote on the amendment. Okay. I think that this had better be a recorded vote. So-,

Mayor: I need three members to propose that it be a recorded there

3 members requested a recorded vote.

### **Vote results**

For 13 – Allen, Barry-Mears, Claughton, Dhyani, England, Freedman, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Link, Stevens, Symington, Taylor and Tindall

Against 20 – Barret, Adeleke, Anderson, Arslan, Banks, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Chapman, Douris, Elliot, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, Peter, Riddick, Rogers, Su Mahmood, Sutton, Williams and Wyatt-Lowe.

Abstain 4 – Birnie, Maddern, Townsend, Hearn.

The amendment to the motion was not carried

Mayor: Okay, now, we are now back to the substantive motion, Cllr Freedman.

Cllr Freedman: Just a point, I know that Cllr Banks had her name down at one point, I don't know if she still wanted to speak.

Cllr Banks: I have some concerns around part B and freeing up more land for more housing, that sits rather uncomfortably with me when residents have made a clear commitment that they don't want us to build more housing, taking up green belt. So, I find that rather uncomfortable, so I will not be supporting this motion.

Cllr Taylor: I wasn't originally intending to speak at this point, but I was curious, by some of the comments by the leader of the administration that because it's a government consultation, it'd be wrong to debate this motion. Surely, if it's a consultation this is an ideal time to have this debate, as it's far easier to shape government policy before it is firmed up, then when it is firmed up. So, maybe I'm new to this and therefore I do not understand those ways, but I've always found that once government makes up their mind, they tend not to change it. I'm also very pleased to hear that Cllr Banks is no longer intending that the administration allow any more

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release of green belt. I'm sure my residents will be very pleased to hear about that, but I'm not sure that the government will be, in central, if that's the reason for not doing it. I also have to ask a question about this whole principle of the Right to Buy, which, if the government sees fit to extend the Right to Buy to social housing tenants, why does it not just extend the Right to Buy to all tenants, and apply the rules consistently across all tenancies? And I have never understood this, it seems to be one rule for one group, and one rule for another group. Perhaps someone could enlighten me on that. Thank you.

Cllr Banks: If I may just clarify my position, I do apologise if I wasn't clear. I am uncomfortable with Section B because it seems to be suggesting that there be further house building, and I don't think that sits very well with the response that we've had to our local plan.

Cllr Freedman: So, thank you everyone for your comments on the motion. It actually seems that we all appear to be in very violent agreement on this. I think the fundamental point where the majority party is taking the view to oppose this motion, is to do with the timing of it, and when it would be appropriate. The reason why I disagree with them and feel that it would be appropriate to comment at the moment, are actually for exactly the reasons that Cllr Griffiths mentioned, and Cllr Williams extrapolated on. Dacorum has an enviable record when it comes to social housing provision. We've got one of the largest stock of housing in the country. Comments from the leader of the council, or, as I personally think, the housing portfolio holder, carry a huge amount of weight. You've got the experience and the expertise of all of the additional challenges of managing, for example, a building split between social tenants and ex-tenants. It's vital to those to be submitted to the people creating that proposal. The reason that these things need to get to the authors as quickly as possible is, yes, this is not being formally proposed to consultation, but there is a draft out there in the public interest that is on the road to consultation. By somebody with the expertise and, let's face it, there's not that many councils in the country. You are one of a very, very small number, so we can say you are national experts when it comes to this. Your input onto this is going to be seen a lot more than just a statutory consultation. You will hugely influence it, and if you are pointing out some of the major concerns of that before this document comes out to full proposal, anybody competent in government would be taking those comments on board before they draft that white paper.

Right at the moment, the people behind the white paper, we may disagree, but my position is it's mostly being driven by the private developments. And anything that we do at the moment that gives the private sector advantage over councils and housing associations in providing housing means that the housing, that ultimately will be provided, is not necessarily going to be for those who need it. It's going to be for the benefit of the people developing it. So, housing associations, and still ourselves as local government, need to be able to provide housing that we know that our residents need, and that we know that it's with a view on the tenants side. So, we need the certainty of stock, we need the location and the communities that are affected. The housing associations need to know they're going to be consistent with charitable objectives, so this is the reason why we're proposing it now, and why I would very much ask you to reconsider about whether it's appropriate for you to comment right now. In response to Cllr Banks comment, the motion talks about assuring that there is appropriate funding put through for replacement housing. It doesn't say anything about where or how that's to be built. So, one of the things I would say, and again, yes, we want to see what a final proposal is, but one would imagine that the government should provide as much resource as needed to build on a more expensive brownfield site, if that is what the market is requiring.

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If they turn around and give a partially funded rebuild cost, then yes, people are going to start thinking about whether they have to build on a cheaper greenfield site or not. We're not in any way saying that that's what they should do, but the policy should ensure that it is being a fully funded return, and that means the replacement of like-for-like housing. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you Cllr Freedman. So, we shall now move to a vote on the original motion

Motion;

1. While acknowledging that home ownership is an aspiration for many, this Council also recognises that many in the community will, for various reasons, be unable or unwilling to be other than a lifetime tenant of a Registered Social Landlord ['RSL or Housing Assn'].

In this Borough approximately 5,000 dwellings are owned by RSLs and they make a vital contribution to the provision of affordable housing in the rental sector.

2. The Government has made a proposal to introduce the Right to Buy to tenants of Housing Associations. Until now this has been restricted to tenants of public sector housing stock.

3. To safeguard the property and other assets of Housing Assns/RSL, which are independent corporate bodies, and to maintain the stock of local housing for rent [or shared ownership], this Council -

Calls upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Minister at DLUHCG, [with copies to the respective MPs, -

a. requesting that the Government proceeds with its proposals only with an unequivocal commitment to ensure that any dwelling so removed from the RSL Housing stock in the Borough shall be replaced on a 1-for-1 basis, and

b. the Government provide the additional funding to meet the full replacement costs to include provision for the supply of land within the Borough.

3 members requested a recorded vote:

### **Vote results**

For 13 – Allen, Barry-Mears, Claughton, Dhyani, England, Freedman, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Link, Stevens, Symington, Taylor and Tindall

Against 20 – Barret, Adeleke, Anderson, Arslan, Banks, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Chapman, Douris, Elliot, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, Peter, Riddick, Rogers, Su Mahmood, Sutton, Williams and Wyatt-Lowe.

Abstain 4 – Birnie, Maddern, Townsend, Hearn.

Mayor: Thank you. The motion has failed. Thank you all for giving me such a hard time on my first stint as the convener of these meetings. We will now move on to questions, and we have-

## **6 QUESTIONS**

**CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Symington: Can I raise a point of order, please?

Mayor: If you must.

Cllr Symington: Yes, thank you. These are written questions, which obviously we've submitted. I can't see they've been circulated, and furthermore, you mentioned earlier in the meeting that the resident who attended-, question has been circulated to us all. I can't see it either on the documents I have or by email.

Mayor: If I spoke in error, it was because I was assured that that had happened, Cllr Symington.

Mayor: Okay. In this case, apparently, these questions are not circulated in advance, that is why they are read out at the meeting.

Cllr Symington: Okay, and the resident who attended, who you said-, his question had been circulated to us all. Can we have a clarification of whether that is true because I haven't received it, and I can't see any evidence that it was.

Mayor: I'm told that it was not circulated but that is why he was asked to read it out.

Cllr Symington: Please could we have an apology for the resident who attended, when you said that his question had been circulated to everybody, and it hasn't been?

Mayor: I can certainly apologise that I was misled on that matter, but I won't apologise for asking him to read out the question, in the light of what you have just said, that it wasn't actually circulated.

**6.1** The following question was submitted to Cllr Williams from Cllr England

Cllr England: The Cabinet have set out priorities for addressing the Climate Emergency, based on a "Fabric First" strategy.

Please provide the following information:

a. The number of DBC homes retro-insulated in the 3 and/or 6 years to 2019 and the comparative number of homes retro-insulated in the last 3 years.

Mayor: Cllr Williams, I'm assuming that we have here three substantive questions, so you may answer the first.

Cllr Williams: The answer to the first question is in the three years, between 2016 and '19, the number is 920, and the three years between 2019 and '22, the number was 786.

b. The estimated heating savings generated from the available insulation projects (above), and from typical examples of the five most effective and most widely available insulation interventions available across DBC stock.

Cllr Williams: The annual estimated fuel savings and carbon savings from those above interventions, is £206,515 and 662,850 kilograms of CO2. Then, I think you went to ask that most-,

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c. A breakdown of the numbers of each main type of insulation intervention (in homes insulated and cost per home) available and planned as part of the published Climate Emergency Action Plan claim of 90% of stock which is planned to be completed by 2030.

Cllr Williams: Number of each type of installation, the number of propositions we've retro-fitted to hit the 90% target, is that the question? Because I'm a bit confused about what it is that Cllr England is asking. Right okay, and this is based upon a three bedroom semi-detached house. Double glazing, we have met the 90% target, on our properties, we will continue to upgrade individual properties as and when required. For wall insulation, there are 64 properties to hit the target. Loft insulation, there are 1,728 at a cost of £691,200. Cavity wall insulation, there are 396 properties, at a cost of £237,000. I think that was the question.

Mayor: Thank you Cllr Williams. Do you have a supplementary, Councillor England?

Cllr England: I do have a third question, can I ask, with a fabric first policy, that since declaring a climate emergency, the number of properties retro-insulated has gone down?

Cllr Williams: As I've not been the housing portfolio holder, I think that question will be more relevant to-, I can only get a written answer, Mr Mayor. And I think this is a very good example of a question with so much detail, it would have been more appropriate for an emailed exchange rather than a question at full council, Mr Mayor.

Action: Cllr Williams to provide written answer.

Mayor: Thank you Cllr Williams. Cllr England, that is your number of questions that is allowed.

**6.2** The following question was submitted to Cllr Banks from Cllr Hobson

Cllr Hobson: This is a question about the Gadebridge Park toilets. I appreciate I didn't actually put that on the written question, so for the avoidance of doubt, this is about the Gadebridge Park toilets. Given the huge success of events held at Gadebridge Park including the Jubilee celebrations and the Armed Forces Day, plus the popular water park, can the portfolio holder provide an update on:

1. How often the toilets have been open to the public
2. How often they are cleaned/checked for stock
3. What plans if any the council has to refurbish them

Cllr Banks: CllrHobson, this is not my portfolio, but acknowledging the link you're trying to make with the town centre PSPO, I am able to offer you an update. Anyone familiar with Gadebridge Park will know that there are three sets of toilets. In addition, there are also toilets available on the old town high street. The toilets have been open throughout all the recent events, such as our fantastic Jubilee celebration and Armed Forces Day, and extra cleans are arranged to cover the extended opening times. When an event is taking place, the toilets are cleaned and restocked every two hours. If no event is taking place, then the toilets within the park, and the old town for that matter, are cleaned three times a day. As part of event planning, consideration is also given as to whether or not we need additional porta-loos, this is part of the health and

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safety risk assessment that's undertaken, and for any event that's held within the area. I'm not aware of any current plans to refurbish them.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Banks. Did you want to ask your second question on this matter, Cllr Hobson

Cllr Hobson: Given the PSPO is in place to stop defecating and urinating in public together with the fact that the Council is encouraging many older and younger people to visit the park, does the Portfolio Holder accept that improving facilities and ensuring they are available for every large event should be a priority?

Cllr Banks: The administration encourages everyone, residents and visitors, to enjoy our open spaces, including Gadebridge Park. I do not accept that it should be a priority. It is a priority.

Mayor: Thank you Cllr Banks. Do you have a supplementary question, Cllr Hobson?

Cllr Hobson: Yes, I do. Just very quickly, I just want to apologise for not getting the right portfolio holder, I was assured that you were the person to do this, so thank you for answering the question, thank you for working with your colleagues. This supplementary was prompted by Cllr Anderson's presentation, so again, apologies if this isn't the right person, but just to say, is quality toilet provision included in the plans to draw people away from Ashridge, for improving locations for other people to go and enjoy green spaces. Thank you. And I'm happy to take a written answer if that's not your portfolio. Thank you.

Cllr Banks: Mr Mayor. Indeed, that is beyond what I know the answer to. Absolutely, I'll get a response, probably from Cllr Anderson. Thank you.

**Action: Cllr Banks to liaise with Cllr Anderson to provide written response.**

Mayor: Thank you Cllr Banks.

**6.3** The following question was submitted to Cllr Barratt from Cllr Symington

Cllr Symington: CllrBarrett, just before I address you, I just want to address Cllr Williams. This question has already come forward in an email form twice, so, you know, we do try to do our best to work with you, and sometimes, things just need to come to the council because we're not getting responses.

Cllr Symington: The Wildflower Meadows Map at <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/environment-street-care/landscape-recreation/biodiversity-and-conservation> is a welcome addition to the Dacorum Borough Council website. The site in Buckingham Road, Tring, is the only site with no map attached identifying the exact location.

Can you clarify the location of the site and for completeness have it added to the map?

Cllr Barratt: Thank you Cllr Symington. I can confirm that the map has now been updated to reflect this location, and the location is a triangular piece of open space on the corner of Buckingham Road and Weavers Road. I would add that I would agree, this should have been a written question, and I certainly haven't seen it as a written question. Had I have done, I would have responded to it. Thank you.

Mayor: Do you have a supplementary question, Cllr Symington?

**CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Symington: Yes, so my supplementary questions are to do, obviously, with the same map. Thank you. So, can you confirm how many of the DBC wildflower sites, with locations, can you confirm how many are DBC planted, i.e. is planted by Dacorum Borough Council wildflower sites, with their locations, and how many effectively just no-mow areas?

Cllr Barratt: Again, if I'd have seen that in advance, I could have got the information for you. I don't know, I shall find out and respond with a written reply

**Action: Cllr Barratt to provide written response.**

Cllr Symington: Yes, I'm asking that on behalf of a colleague and she and I will be happy to get an email on that. Sorry-, this is actually the third one. How many are DBC, are Dacorum initiatives, and how many are the result of requests from ward councillors?

Cllr Barratt: My response is exactly the same to the last question.

**Action: Cllr Barratt to provide written response**

Cllr Symington: Thank you. I'm happy to take written responses, and also to my co-ward, Cllr Foster.

Mayor: You've got the request to circulate it to Cllr Foster as well did you, Councillor Barrett?

Cllr Barratt: Yes, I'll certainly make those adjustments

**6.4** The following question was submitted to Cllr Williams from Cllr Symington

Cllr Symington: Yes, thank you Mr Mayor. Cllr Williams, I haven't emailed this one to you in advance but it is a Herts County Council initiative, so I'm sure you're aware of it. Given the growth of electric vehicles and the need to ensure that residents have access to charging points, how do you, as the portfolio holder, intend to work with Hertfordshire County Council following their change and stance to facilitate on-street electric vehicle charging points?

Cllr Williams: Thank you. I did become aware of it when I got the questions, I have done a brief bit of checking, but understand there isn't a policy for Herts County Council-, for us to firm up on. But I understand there is a meeting between Herts officers, our officers-, well, HCC are setting up a meeting for officers across Hertfordshire in August, to discuss their new EV strategy before it goes to the Environment and Transport panel in September. I'm sure there we'll gain more details of how it's going to work. As such, then we will have sight of the document and be able to feed into this. We have our own EV strategy, as I said earlier, for our own car-parks, and we'll weave that in with the HCC strategy, which I understand is likely to be a scheme will permit installation of EV chargers on streets, but I don't think HCC are likely to be undertaking that, and I think it's unlikely that DBC would then be undertaking that. I suspect it will be for private providers to look at locations where it's feasible to do so, under a scheme that HCC permits, which I think is a relaxation from their previous stance.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Williams. Do you have a supplementary?

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Cllr Symington: Yes, thank you. I think it's been partially answered. So, the council's been, I would say, pretty secretive about the car-parks that have been put forward to the programme, which you've now given us the names of the contractors for, so that's useful, thank you. I think lots of residents will welcome that they're good names. But, the reason given, is that the residents who don't get their EV charging points in the car-parks, they then will be very upset and disappointed. Presumably, you don't know the answer to this because we're waiting for the DNO, can you give a reassurance that those residents who are disappointed, and cannot have EV charging points in car-parks near them, that Dacorum will facilitate and work with Herts County Council and external people, external providers, to give them on-street access? Given that 40% of houses in the borough have no off-street parking.

Cllr Williams: I think I take objection to the tone of that question, to say that it's secretive. What I said in answer to the previous question was all DBC car-parks are on the list. So, if you can't work out for yourself where the locations of DBC car-parks are, then I'm sorry but I just don't think I need to write them all down for you, but it will be subject to, as I said before, a decision of the commercial operators. Whether that car-park is viable, whether that will generate enough traffic to generate an income from that particular charge. And, yes, it may be that some car-parks will not be found to be commercial, the supply can be too far away, the potential number of chargers can be too small, and it's very likely, to be fair, to be a network rolled out over time. It isn't going to be a big bang and they're all going to be there in the first week because there won't be a demand there for 100 chargers, or whatever it is, in the first week. Some people will have further to travel, and I'm sure when they're purchasing an electric vehicle, they'll factor those considerations in. We will work and facilitate the installation chargers where it's practical to do so on-street, within the framework of Hertfordshire County Council schemes. So, they'll decide where it's safe, if you can attach it to a lamppost, where the supply comes from. What I don't expect Dacorum to be doing is funding that process.

Cllr Symington: I won't ask any more supplementary questions on that item, but-, you'll be relieved to hear.

Mayor: Very kind of you but I see that you're going to make another appearance. Question for Councillor Anderson, from Councillor Symington.

**6.5** The following question was submitted to Cllr Anderson from Cllr Symington

Cllr Symington: Yes, this is my final question, thank you very much. You'll appreciate that actually I'm just bringing forward the concerns of residents when I'm raising these questions, and I think it is important that actually they are aired in council, and that people have the opportunity to hear the answers from the portfolio holders, so I appreciate this opportunity.

Given the need to ensure that common policies apply across the Borough, what measures is the Portfolio Holder undertaking to ensure that the moratorium on development relating to the discharge of conditions is applied fairly and consistently across the borough?

Cllr Anderson: The restrictions requested by Natural England to protect the Chiltern Beechwoods affects developments in different ways depending on the specifics of the proposal. When discharging planning conditions, the council is required to review the precise wording of each condition, on a case-by-case basis, to determine whether it can be discharged or not. The council works closely with its legal team to ensure its

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approach is consistent in what is a complex area of planning law. The council's published detailed FAQs, and will keep these on the website, and will keep these under review.

Cllr Symington: I'm sorry, I do have a supplementary actually, Mr Chairman. Yes. Can the portfolio holder explain why Dacorum has a different policy relating to reserve matters, from other planning authorities?

Cllr Anderson: I'm not sure I can, because I'd need evidence of that before I can comment.

Cllr Symington: Okay, so thank you. So, the evidence has obviously been provided by residents, who've had to get the advice from Queen's Council. Do you think it's fair and reasonable that residents are having to seek that advice to basically work their way through the process, and get these reserved matters discharged?

Cllr Anderson: If we are talking about the email that you sent me-,

Cllr Symington: No, we're not.

Cllr Anderson: Support from Long Marston?

Cllr Symington: We're not talking about that.

Cllr Anderson: It's a different case then. Okay, well-,

Mayor: Excuse me, Cllr Symington is entitled to a supplementary.

Cllr Anderson: Yes, I'm sorry, I struggle to accept the motivation behind the question. As I've already explained, the council has to follow legal advice itself and has done so. We're not in a position to bend the rules just because of a particular case.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Anderson.

Cllr Tindall: Point of order, Mr Mayor. I believe the question was, why had we a different understanding of how the moratorium should apply to our neighbouring boroughs and neighbouring authorities. Now, it's legitimate for Cllr Anderson to say that he hasn't got the answer to hand and he's happy to provide a written answer. What I regret the portfolio can't do, is actually say that he's not going to answer it, or actually make comments about why the question was posed. Cllr Symington was entitled to ask the question, Cllr Anderson is entitled to say, 'I will provide a written answer.' I believe that's as far the exchange should go.

Cllr Anderson: I'm sorry, I'm entitled to provide the answer I provide, and I don't accept we're looking at things in different ways to neighbouring authorities. One has to remember that we're the one that's closest affected by the issue, they may not be under the same constraints we are, but I don't accept that we're being inconsistent.

Mayor: I'm sorry, when you say, 'inconsistent,' you mean as between us and other councils?

Cllr Anderson: Yes.

Mayor: Thank you, Cllr Symington.

Mayor: Thank you very much for those questions and answers. We now move on to agenda item seven.

**CHAIRMAN**

## 7 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None.

## 8 CABINET REFERRALS

Cllr Williams: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I'd turn the members attention to page 29 of the original agenda. CA/32/22, housing revenue account, business plan updates with the result to recommend.

### **Resolved:**

That the following be approved:

### **13 April 2022**

#### **Item 8.1 CA/32/22 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan Update**

##### **Decision**

1. That Cabinet recommends that Council approves the updated Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan

Cllr Griffiths: Seconded

All: Agreed

##### **Decision: approved**

Cllr Williams: Then I'd turn members to the supplementary agenda, referrals to Cabinet, referrals to council from more recent Cabinet, and CA/55/22, provisional financial help, turn 2021, '22

### **12 July 2022**

#### **Item 8.2 CA/55/22 Provisional Financial Outturn 2021-22**

##### **Decision**

2. That Cabinet recommends to Council to approve the following General Fund reserve movements in respect of 2021-22:

- £0.009m surplus Filming income to be transferred to the Dacorum Development Reserve, to be drawn down in 2022-23 for work on town centre improvements.
- £0.216m surplus CIL admin income to be transferred to the Dacorum Development Reserve to support the costs of CIL administration in future years.
- £0.565m overall General Fund surplus to be transferred to a new reserve- Inflationary Pressures- in order to meet unexpected inflationary pressures brought about by fluctuations in the current economy.

3. That Cabinet recommends to Council to approve the following General Fund reserve movements in respect of 2022-23:

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- £0.022m draw down from the Dacorum Development reserve to support the cost of the Armed Forces event in 2022-23.
- £0.020m draw down from the Dacorum Development reserve to support the cost of the Queen's Baton relay event in 2022-23.
- £0.150m reserve draw down from the Dacorum Development reserve for Berkhamsted Leisure Centre redevelopment planning.

4. That Cabinet recommends to Council to approve an HRA transfer of £0.020m to the HRA Lift sinking fund reserve.

5. That Cabinet recommends to Council to approve the following slippage on the capital programme:

- £2.777m to be slipped to 2022-23 in respect of General Fund capital schemes.
- £0.595m to be slipped to 2022-23 in respect of Housing Revenue Account capital schemes.

Cllr Griffiths: Seconded

All: Agreed

**Decision: recommendations approved**

Cllr Williams: Moving then down the next page CA/56/22, chief housing officer post with a recommendation;

**Item 8.3 CA/56/22 Chief Housing Officer Post**

**Decision**

That Cabinet recommends:

1 That Council approves an additional post of Chief Housing Officer to be added to the establishment which will sit at Tier 3 within the Corporate Leadership Team

2 That Council approves a total budget for the post of up to £130,000 per annum.

Cllr Griffiths: Seconded

All: Agreed

**Decision: approved**

Cllr Williams: Further down the next page CA/59/22, PMO, project management office, resource funding with a result to recommend;

**Item 8.3 CA/59/22 PMO (Project Management Office) Resource Funding**

**Decision**

1. To note the update on PMO resource

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2. That Cabinet recommends that Council approves the funding of £170,000 to temporarily fund the Cabinet [www.dacorum.gov.uk](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk) General Fund PMO while permanent resource is planned and implemented.

Cllr Griffiths: Seconded

All: Agreed

**Decision: recommendation approved**

Cllr Williams: And then turning to the bottom one, CA/62/22, which is titled, incorrectly as 'West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee,' but it should actually be constitution update, and the text under there is correct. So, it was the title that was wrong that was causing confusion. The matters of the Cabinet considered under crematorium was a matter for Cabinet, not council, so there's a recommendation there.

**Item 8.4 CA/61/22 Constitution update**

**Decision**

1. That Cabinet recommend Council agrees the amendments to Part 3 of the Constitution as highlighted in the report and shown in tracked changes on the attached document entitled "Constitution – Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions"

2. That Cabinet recommend Council agrees the amendments to Part 4 of the Constitution as highlighted in the report and shown in tracked changes on the attached document entitled "Constitution – Part 4 – Rules of Procedure"

3. That Cabinet recommend Council agrees the amendments to the Council's Financial Regulations as highlighted in the report and shown in tracked changes on the attached document entitled "Financial Regulations v.1.1"

4. That Cabinet recommend Council approve the proposed amendment to Commissioning and Procurement Standing Orders as set out in section 4.5 to the report.

Cllr Griffiths: Seconded

All: Agreed

**Decision: agreed the amendments as recommended**

**9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

**10 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**11 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES**

**12 CALL IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURE**

Mayor: Cllr Williams, would you like to inform the council of an urgent part two portfolio holder decision?

**CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Williams: Thank you, Mr Mayor. As required under the constitution, it's for information only, of the decision taken under the urgency procedures in relation to the leisure contract, which was to agree a revised financial contribution from the operator for the current financial year. Because we wanted to conclude those negotiations, as we're partly way into that year, the decision was taken under the urgency arrangements to secure the financial amount.

Mayor: Thank you very much Cllr Williams, that brings the business of the council this evening to an end, so I declare the meeting closed

### **13 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Meeting ended at 10.05 pm