
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

23 NOVEMBER 2022

Present:

MEMBERS:

Councillor Birnie (Mayor) and Williams (Leader) Councillors, Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Arslan, Banks, Barrett, Barry, Beauchamp, Chapman, Claughton, Douris, Elliot, England, Griffiths, Harden, P Hearn, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Johnson, Link, Maddern, So Mahmood, Su Mahmood, McDowell, Peter, Pringle, Ransley, Riddick, Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, Stevens, R Sutton, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Townsend, Wilkie and C Wyatt-Lowe

OFFICERS:

Assistant Director - Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer), Strategic Director - Place, Corporate & Democratic Support Officer and Corporate Support Team Leader

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 MINUTES

The Minutes from the 14th September 2022 we agreed

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1 By the Mayor

Messages of condolence were received for former Councillor Linda Morris.

A minutes silence was held for Cllr Linda Morris

4.2 By the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive was not able to be present at this meeting so James Doe – Strategic Director made the following announcement.

The results of the Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, held on 17 November 2022 are as follows:

In response to the question, “Do you want Dacorum Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Kings Langley to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”

842 votes were in favour

73 votes were against

The turnout was 20.14%

4.3 By Group Leaders

Cllr Williams gave apologies on behalf of Cllrs Bassadone, Durrant, Guest and Imarni

Cllr Tindall gave apologies on behalf of Cllrs Freedman and Foster

The following Cllrs were not present at the meeting; Oguchi, Bhinder

4.4 Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet

Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council

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

Questions

There were no questions

Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Work is continuing on the development of our commercial programme. Full Business cases are being developed by officers and this work is being supported by our Commercial Advisors CommercialGov.

Two Full Business cases are very close to completion and are likely to be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet for consideration in the New Year. The rest will be taken through the approvals process when they are finalised.

The wider commercial programme work is being developed and new proposals will be added to the programme for initial business case development as they are identified. This work will be ongoing and will become a business as usual part of the Council's commercial approach.

The Commercial Board meetings continue to meet regularly and, at these meetings, officers oversee the development of the business cases along with the progression of the Garage Strategy, the EV Charging project, all procurement activity. The Board also closely monitors commercial income to the Council

There were no questions

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Barrett, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Parks and Open Spaces

We have planted 69,800 bedding bulbs. We have laid 35m² wildflower turf and planted 3,000 bee friendly bulbs in Nash Mills. We have donated 1000 Bluebell bulbs and wild garlic bulbs for a community-planting project. 100m² of wildflower seeds have been planted at Pond Road. We have given 2,000 bulbs of various varieties to the Oakwood Drive community group in Berkhamsted.

Swan Mead has been planted with wildflower Meadowscape We delivered 15m² of wildflower turf plus 1,000 bee friendly bulbs to Flaunden Parish Council. 651 Bee tubes have been returned to Masons Bees, which is double the amount returned last year.

We have extended the Covid memorial wildflower area again using Meadowscape. Work is continuing on the Butterfly chalk bank at Warner's End, where we are creating a new chalk banked area which will be sown with seeds suitable for attracting locally rare butterflies and moths. The chalk is due to arrive next week.

Clean, Safe, Green

Road sweeping deep cleans have been carried out in Berkhamsted, Bovingdon, Tring, Markyate and Chipperfield. We carried out A41 litter picking, working jointly with HCC. We had a total of 20 staff together with 6 vehicles working on this, and more 4,000kgs of litter was collected. The end of season cut was completed on the A414 central reservation. We have completed work on 90% of cut and collect of wildflower areas.

Replacement bins that were ordered in June were delivered in October, replacing 65 old style basket bins, with the work now 80% complete. New goals posts ordered June have now been delivered with installation beginning in early December.

The first batch of 54 replacement Street name plates are due to be installed from early December.

Trees and Woodlands

We are planting new trees across the borough, including 60 standard trees and 2,000 whips which have been grant funded through the Local Authority Treescapes Fund. Grant funded standard trees will be planted in Brook Street, Tring, Randalls Park and Bunkers Park, with the whips being planted in Bunkers Park by the Friends group in January 2023, to form a new hedgerow. In addition, we are also planting a further 70 standard trees and 500 Whips at various locations across the Borough.

We are organising the collection of whips by Dacorum residents from Cupid Green for HCC's Free Tree giveaway on Friday 3rd December. About 350 residents are expected to collect trees allocated through the HCC project, for planting within their own gardens.

Environmental Projects.

CHAIRMAN

Clothes Swaps

Nearly 200 people attended across our Autumn Sustainable Clothes Swaps More than 1,400 items of clothing were brought along, of which 96% were swapped. By swapping over 1,400 items of clothes instead of buying new, residents have prevented approximately 8.5 tonnes of CO2e (carbon dioxide equivalent) that would have been used to produce new items.

The remaining winter clothes were donated to the Air Ambulance and Cancer Research UK charities.

Love Food Hate Waste,

50 households are currently taking part in the challenge, participants are currently over halfway through the challenge which involves them completing a pre and post challenge survey, filling out their food waste diaries throughout the month and following the advice from two emails a week, one featuring a 'key behaviour' to follow and the other featuring an 'ingredient of the week'. End of challenge statistics will be available once the participants have completed the post-challenge survey.

Nappy November

We shared social media throughout the month to encourage the uptake of reusable nappies by making use of nappy libraries and the Herts Reusable Nappy Scheme. We distributed leaflets and posters to businesses in the borough to promote the scheme. We are preparing to have a stall at the Dacorum Parent Plus Café event in December.

Dacorum CAN Conference.

We supported the sustainability team with the setting up and running of this event and manned a stall during the networking times, showcasing the environmental projects we are running and various recycling information.

School Talks. We have presented to three school assemblies, including two nursery groups. Content included information about recycling, litter and food waste.

Street Champions.

We have welcomed 27 new Street Champions in the past month, bringing total to 948 registered volunteers, 582 of these have collected equipment. We Supported 5 litter picking events by loaning equipment to community groups.

Waste Services

We successfully completed planned village collections in Flamstead and Markyate.

Christmas waste collections – with the extra bank holidays over Christmas, waste collections will be returning to normal by 11th January 2023. Christmas tree recycling will take place on Sunday 8th January. Despite ongoing staffing pressures, we are continuing to maintain a full service.

Cllr Pringle commented that she was pleased to hear that deep clean road sweeps in Berkhamsted, Hemel and Tring have taken place and asked if it could be clarified if this includes Northchurch.

The portfolio holder advised he was not able to confirm but would find out and report back. (Action)

CHAIRMAN

Cllr Maddern asked for thanks to be passed on to the team responsible for the rewinding project on behalf of residents and members of Nash Mills Parish Council.

Portfolio holder thanked and welcomed the chance to pass on thanks.

Cllr Allen asked if there had been any reduction in waste on the A41 since the introduction of the signs making motorists aware of clearance.

Portfolio holder confirmed that there has been.

A point of order was raised querying the right to ask a supplementary question before the Mayor moved on to the next member requesting to speak.

Cllr Tindall asked that it be noted in the minutes that he is asking the Legal Officer confirm that it is within the constitution that the Mayor should ask the questioner if they have a supplementary question before moving on.

MBrookes responded to advise that the constitution does not set out that the Mayor must ask members if they have a supplementary question when addressing PH updates.

Cllr Tindall responded that regardless of this, it is his understanding that the questioner does have the right to ask a supplementary.

The Mayor invited Cllr Allen to ask a supplementary question and offered to pick up a discussion on this point with Cllr Tindall outside of the meeting.

Cllr Allen asked, if in time, if the portfolio holder could please confirm what the reductions in waste on the A41 have been and provide statistics.

PH confirmed he would endeavour to get those figures and would circulate them when available (action)

Cllr Barry Mears asked if there have been any predictions on how much money will be made through the charges to be levied for collection of Green Bins as opposed to the cost to the Council in collecting any fly tipping that may occur as a result of this service being charged for.

Portfolio holder advised Anticipated in the paper that went to OSC and Cabinet that based on a 30% take up income of £600k would be generated. He said that the thought that suddenly all residents will turn to fly tipping is not one we believe is going to happen.

Cllr Wyatt Lowe asked the Portfolio holder to confirm that DBC was the 8th Council in the County that had decided to start charging for green bin collection and she was not aware that they had found any increase in fly tipping and adverse behaviour and she wondered if the Portfolio holder had any information on that.

The Portfolio holder responded to confirm that the evidence was that there had been no increase in green waste fly tipping in those areas.

Cllr Barry Mears asked whether this situation was the same, as there was not a cost of living crisis when those charges were introduced, she did not feel this was the correct time to introduce these additional charges. She asked if there was a plan for how to deal with people putting green waste in black bins.

CHAIRMAN

Portfolio holder responded that there are plans in place in that respect.

Councillor Banks, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

Covid-19

Work is still on-going with Covid-19, the Health Protection Board are preparing for a wave in autumn based on modelling. May I ask all members and residents across Dacorum to stay safe and get vaccinated

We have secured funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to prepare for further waves of Covid/Respiratory illness by providing Health and Safety Training for all managers of people with a focus on infection control measures.

Animal Welfare Award

The animal welfare service has been successfully awarded a golden paw print award for the excellent service provided around stay dogs. All members are reminded that the Council does have responsibilities under the animal welfare act and concerns should be reported to the dog warden in box.

Fly-Tipping Prosecutions

Operations Team has successfully prosecuted a fly-tipper yesterday following a jury trial early this year, namely; scrap vehicle parts, a sofa and plastics in Coles Lane, Markyate, without having in place an environmental permit authorising the deposit.

The fly tipper was sentenced to 10 months imprisonment but suspended for 12 months They are to attend 15 days of Rehab activity. A contribution toward prosecutions costs in the sum of £900. Compensation in the sum of £600 to pay for the clear up costs

A press release will shortly be issued to local press as a deterrent to those that would fly-tip in the borough of Dacorum.

Healthy Hub

Since its launch in June 2020, the Healthy Hub Dacorum has been providing residents from across Dacorum with health and wellbeing support on a range of significant issues affecting all demographics of people. As of writing, a total of 3173 residents have been supported by the Healthy Hub Dacorum through advice, signposting and referring into local or county wide services

Mr Mayor, We have also launched the Healthy Hub Dacorum Small Grants with five thousand pounds of the funding provided by public health to create new partnerships by financially supporting health and wellbeing projects across Dacorum. A one of payment of five hundred pounds per application has been offered and we hope to have applications and payments approved by the end of December in order to support applicants for 2023.

Old Town Hall

The OTH made a significant contribution to the recent Halloween event in the old town with the mad science and creepy-crawlies events at the venue, which were fully booked out and got very positive reviews.

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The team is working on the entertainments programme for the January to March 2023 period.

As part of the ongoing review of the OTH, we are looking at new lettings opportunities including how we can make better use of the arches area that fronts the High Street.

Cllr England noted that in the last couple of days St Albans & Watford Councils have announced the locations of their warm hubs for this year and asked the PH to advise where the Dacorum warm hubs are.

Cllr Banks responded to advise she does not have a definitive list but does know the one at Grovehill started last week and on Hertfordshire County Council website there is a list of all warm hubs by district, a search under Dacorum will advise all the warm hubs in this area and their operating times etc.

Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

1. Chiltern Beechwoods Moratorium

Cabinet Last Week Implemented Mitigation Strategy and lifted the Moratorium for parts of borough furthest from Ashridge, they were Complex Matters and remains a work in progress however, the essentials were completed. He paid tribute to officer effort. This issue would not Have Been Identified, Tackled & Protected if the Council had refused to follow the Local Plan Process

2. Paradise & Skills SPDs

Consultations end on 28th November

3. Economic Development

Economic Recovery Plan continuing, they refreshed Article 4 Directions at last week's Development Management Meeting. Bids require electoral review every 5 years, the Council was supporting Hemel Hempstead's BID vote, which closes this week, the turnout so far is low, however they only need majority vote or a Rateable Value Majorities

The Snow dog Trail has been launched and the portfolio holder thanks Cllr Beauchamp as this was supported by his wards CIL funds.

4. Hemel Place

The Hemel Place Strategy is open to consultation at www.thinkhemel.com until Fri 8th July and the next board meetings later this week and early January. Commonplace, the company that support the Hemel Place Strategy has setup "Thinking place" a steering groups looking at Berkamstead and Tring.

5. Council's HH Old Town Strategy

A successful Halloween event in conjunction with CAD took place in October. They were working through public realm improvements, for example new planters. The next public engagement meeting is taking place on the 1st December

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6. Hemel Garden Communities

Councillors Steering Group had reviewed the initial framework earlier this week and they were looking at transport options before Christmas

7. South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan

Regulation 18 Consultation went well with over 5,000 written replies, with the highest response (a 1/4) from DBC residents alone; staff were still working through the online questionnaire responses.

8. Commercial Assets

The performance of commercial assets was strong, with occupancy above 95% and income 2% above budget. They were taking Constructive Approach to Debtors (18.29%) The team successfully passed internal audit with auditors happy with the overall performance and making only 3 very minor recommendations. Work continues on completing the drainage for the new crematorium.

9. Housing Development

They have obtained £9m Grant from Homes England to Support Program. The council's development projects are progressing as planned, including Paradise, St Margarets Way, Randall's Ride, and Wilstone and 5 Garage Blocks. They are planning a topping out ceremony for Eastwick Row in January. The only fly in the ointment was that there has been delays with HCC & S278 Applications.

Cllr Elliott asked the PH to pass on his thanks to the Economic Development, Commercial Assets and Environmental Health teams as they helped to reopen a very valuable butcher shop in his ward as the owner had passed away and the 2 employees were working against time so as not to lose the premises, a valuable business. Those officers pulled out the stops and worked very well to enable this.

The PH responded that he would pass on those thanks, requesting that Cllr Banks pass on thanks to the Environmental Health team as this falls within her portfolio.

Cllr Hollinghurst referred to a meeting taking place on 20th October of the Development Management Committee, where they passed plans for 32 residential units at Marchmont Farm. The Cllr commented on this being an excellent scheme, with insulation to a great standard, which will save CO2 emissions in the longer term. Cllr Hollinghurst referred to what he considers to be a small number of solar cells mounted on rooves around the scheme, observing that there appeared to remain a significant additional roof space that could have been fitted with panels which seems a missed opportunity. The Cllr asked; "Would the PH not agree that what is a very good scheme could have been even better if the roof space could have been fitted with panels to further mitigate climate change and which could have generated some income for Council for sale of surplus energy".

The portfolio holder responded that he shares the passion about solar panels to generate electricity, in terms of the scheme itself, and the Council is following its climate change action plan and all plans have achieved maximum advantage, so he did not believe there was more that could have been done on this occasion. He agreed in general that there does need to be a lot more solar panels on buildings.

Cllr Hollinghurst responded with his disappointment that the scheme is now done so a retrofit would be expensive. Given budgetary pressures, in future, when presented with a new scheme of this nature, make sure we do get the maximum potential from

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the scheme by covering as much as is practical and possible of the roofs to mitigate the climate change and to generate income for the council for decades to come.

The portfolio holder responded that it is his view that officers are already doing that but he was happy to do that as part of the planning process.

Cllr Wilkie asked, whether the PH agreed that following the mitigation strategy, the local plan as was, is no longer fit for purpose and will change so significantly as to require a full second consultation

Cllr Anderson responded to advise that the administration has made no secret of its plans to carry out another full consultation in due course. It was only by following this process that we were able to identify this problem and address it.

Cllr Wilkie asked; "Does the portfolio holder agree that the mitigation strategy will only prevent a small proportion of footfall in Ashridge and will only succeed in moving the problem to other areas and not resolve it".

The portfolio holder advised this was raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when first presented. The goal of the scheme is to do the best anyone can do to reduce the problem. The only other option would have been to do nothing at all and that certainly will not resolve the problem.

Cllr Harden referred to concern that has been raised by residents in Bunkers Park area about developing in those areas, and asked whether the portfolio holder can reassure those residents that is not the case.

The portfolio holder responded there had been some concern raised by Chipperfield and the officers have communicated at length with those in Chipperfield to advise that it does not intend additional development in Chipperfield or suggest that lots of people will descend on that area all at once. A lot of work has gone into reassuring communities to avoid panic.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Introduction.

Since the last Council meeting the corporate Services have been incredibly busy.

Financial Services

The Finance services team have been extremely busy, firstly in the preparation and delivery of the council's MTFs which is on this evening's agenda as a referral from cabinet and the preparation of the 2023/24 draft budget proposals that will be presented to the budget Scrutiny in 2 weeks' time. In the last week the service has been tasked with understanding the impact of the Autumn statement on next year's budget and the medium term financial planning.

The finance service is also working closely with the Commercial project team to develop the basis of the Council's future commercial strategy and Full business case appraisals.

Revenues and Benefits service.

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The Revenues service has been hard at work implementing the energy bill rebates and have almost completed this work. The schemes remain open until the end of November, but the team are confident that all eligible residents have been contacted and paid already. The national energy rebate scheme which paid £150 to all eligible households has allocated £6.6m to 43,800 households and the local discretionary scheme has allocated an additional £280k to 7,600 households.

The roll out of the covid grants and relief schemes earlier in the year combined with the energy rebate schemes have combined to create a huge amount of work for this service, who have worked extremely hard to maximise the benefits to Dacorum households and businesses. The focus for the revenues team going forward will be the collection of business rates and council tax and the benefits service will support the increasing number of benefit queries they are receiving at present.

Legal and Democratic Services.

The legal team continues to support the core council service delivery and key corporate strategies to support the statutory and legislative frameworks in place.

The Elections team successfully carried out the Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, held on the 17th of November 2022, which received a 20.14% turnout. The team delivered a smooth and professional election for all electors in the Kings Langley Ward, in addition to this election the Hemel BID Ballot will take place on the 24th November supported by the council's election team.

In People and Transformation it has been a busy few months.

We are close to finalising new Digital, People and Communications strategies. These will come to Cabinet for decision in December and, if approved, will be an important step towards our transformation ambitions.

There have been a number of successful events. The Communications team organised and promoted the hugely popular Old Town Halloween event, attended by thousands of residents, with excellent feedback from businesses and visitors to the event. In addition, we have held the Remembrance Sunday Parade, attended by numerous dignitaries, dozens of community groups and thousands of residents (most well attended parade in several years);

Dacorum Life magazine was produced this month and delivered to over 65,000 homes showcasing the wide variety of work delivered by the Council

Internally, we have held a very successful long service award ceremony for staff at the Forum with another for Cupid Green staff to follow at the end of this month

Our customer strategy work is gathering pace with the first deliverable signed off by Cabinet: we now have a new complaints policy and supporting processes which will help us deliver quick, consistent and clear responses to any complaints which we receive

The technology team have also been busy developing a working solution for capturing street issues like graffiti and fly-tipping. This allows the Community Safety team to capture a photo and tag the issue with an accurate GPS position, the information is then automatically sent over to the Waste Team via so they can deal with the issue and rectify it as soon as possible.

CHAIRMAN

Our new Head of Digital, Yvonne Salvin also started in post on the 10th November

There were no questions.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

Housing Service are engaging with Finance Team to determine rent charges for 23/24 financial year, 7% increase in the rents and service charges for tenants that has been proposed, this is in line with approach taken by stock holding authorities across Hertfordshire.

Strategic Housing Service area proactively engaging with HCC, Strategic Migration Partnership, VCS to provide wrap around support for resettlement and asylum sites across Dacorum – proactive engagement is led by the service to address any issues arising in the borough.

Early engagement is underway with Dacorum based hotel in relation to regulatory breaches in accordance with the Housing Act 2004 and use of unlicensed HMO, engagement is likely to lead to further enforcement action being taken due to management concerns.

Successful stakeholder engagement event has been undertaken to support the development of the Council's new Housing Strategy, which will shape the future priorities for affordable housing delivery in the borough.

Following two successful stakeholder events, final action plan proposals are being shaped with Community Action Dacorum in relation to rising cost of living impacts for our residents.

Forthcoming Member briefing events have been scheduled for the new year in relation to the new build development programme and building safety, sessions will provide useful overview for members in relation to these key areas of activity including the alignment with best practice and national guidance/legislative frameworks;

Cllr Symington asked the PH; "Do you monitor or have any figure of reports of mould in any Council or HA properties?"

The PH responded to advise that she does not have that information to hand, but that we will have those figures and all reports of this type but only for our own Council stock, but we do not have any duty of care for housing associations. PH advised she would get figures distributed.

Cllr Griffiths commented that mould is an issue, which has been highlighted in the news by the very tragic recent death of a child. All mould is taken seriously by the Council and investigated but a lot of the issues we discover are due to how we live our lives and we have issued lots of advice on airflows, combating condensation etc.

Cllr Barry Mears asked if there is a figure of what, on average, a 7% rent increase for our tenants equates to.

Cllr Griffiths advised this will obviously be different for all tenants and she did not have the figure now but it will come out very soon when the budget process takes place.

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Cllr Barry Mears asked; "Given the current financial climate and increases in Council tax, is this the right time to do this?"

PH responded that we still have to run our service. She accepted what is being said, but if we do not look after our properties there will be problems down the line and we do need to continue to build new homes to help more residents.

Cllr Tindall referred to having dealt with issues of damp and mould in the 80s in London as a Cllr, so he knows the problems and wondered if the PH could express an opinion on the need for people to ensure they have full ventilation when using washing machines and driers as they create water droplets which can cause mould.

PH agreed that the situation is exacerbated if you have a heater or a log burner or by sleeping at night with a door closed. Fresh air is the best thing and to help combat mould you should ensure there is plenty of ventilation to avoid mould growth.

5 QUESTIONS

Cllr England to Cllr Barratt

The Council's Recycling rates have not been reported since September 2021, so numbers are several months late.

In a Dacorum Press Release, published on September 18, 2018; it says that "Recycling continues to rise in Dacorum with a new verified rate for 2017-2018 of 52.5 per cent, which is up on last year's 51.2 per cent."

If the trend had been maintained 'up by 1.3%' the figure now could be 57.7%. But it has flattened out at the same level now as 2018.

Both our neighbouring Councils, St Albans and Watford, have progressed dramatically, but it looks as if Dacorum has not matched their ambition.

On its current record, when can we expect the Council to reach 60% re-cycling, a target set in 2014?

Thank you Cllr England for your question.

I can advise you that Dacorum exceeded the average recycling rate as measured across all Hertfordshire authorities over the whole of the 4-year period from 17/18 through to 20/21. Indeed, in the whole of that period Dacorum was consistently the 4th best performing Authority in Hertfordshire as it was again in 21/22 period.

In the 21/22 period 7 out the 10 Hertfordshire authorities saw a reduction in their recycling Rates, including both Three Rivers and St Albans.

Notwithstanding our historic good performance, I can advise that work is in progress that will impact upon recycling rates across the Borough. We are seeking to achieve a minimum recycling rate of 60% by 2030, which is in line with National targets.

Cllr England addressed the PH with a supplementary question asking, when will the PH set a target to achieve the 65% rate, which is the current Herts Waste Partnership target?

CHAIRMAN

Cllr Barrett responded that we are not in a position to give a date for 65%, but our aim is to achieve 60% and will then move on from there.

Cllr England noted that the PH has repeated that neighbouring authorities are not doing as well as we are. Does he have an understanding of how Lib Dem Three Rivers is already achieving 60%.

Cllr Barrett advised there are a number of reasons why an area might achieve those figures. He agreed that Three Rivers have a high percentage, but would query, at what cost to other services.

Cllr England asked; "Can we take seriously any of the Conservative targets and can residents afford to wait until May 2023 for a change of Leadership in the area?"

Cllr Barrett responded that yes, you can take seriously what the Conservative say.

A point of order was raised that, as in a recent Council meeting, the PH had not answered the question.

The Mayor responded that he did not believe the question was actually supplementary to the main question asked, but I was willing to accept it and similarly the PH's attempt to answer it.

Cllr England to Cllr Banks

Having regard to the Air Quality Action Plan 2019-2024 and the objectives set therein, Further to

(a) maintaining close links with the Local Transport Plan, Local Planning and Public Health, and

(b) the Electric vehicle charging infrastructure study / strategy, which has not produced any actual change in emissions to date, despite promises earlier this year, which of the other nine commitments made in the plan have been pursued if at all since 2019, and how?

Cllr Banks responded that: "This matter has been addressed separately in an email to the Councillor, who is aware that air quality reporting is coming to SPAE OSC in January 2023 and therefore we would not want to pre-empt the rights of that committee to scrutinise the matter prior to this or in other Fora. I will ensure that officers address the specific questions raised by Councillor England in the report to the scrutiny committee.

Cllr England addressed the PH with a supplementary question, asking the PH to express an opinion on which of the following are the administrations key priority:

Is it:

- Influencing emission reduction from new developments
- Potential to relocate bus stops and on-street parking in the Northchurch AQMonitoringA
- Clean Air Zone feasibility study
- Workplace parking levy
- Private hire and taxi vehicle emissions policy
- Advanced quality bus partnership

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- Reducing council emissions
- Emission based parking charges
- Promoting sustainable travel and discouraging the use of single car journeys

The Mayor intervened to express concern about the direction of this question. He stated that one of the most important functions of the Council is the role of scrutiny committees and their ability to hold officers and the Cabinet to account. Asking the PH to comment in detail upon an item that is coming to scrutiny would possibly undermine the scrutiny committee and its effectiveness within the Council and it is extremely important from a democratic point of view that those processes should not be undermined in any shape or form.

The Mayor then cautioned the PH against committing herself with an answer at this stage as the matter is to be discussed at OSC.

The portfolio holder accepted the point the Mayor was making .

Point of order; Cllr Barry Mears – what is the point of questions at Full Council?

The Mayor asked the legal officer to comment on this.

MBrookes stated that where a question is put in writing it is reasonable for a member to defer that answer to provide that answer in full at a more appropriate time. The response given in that case is reasonable and allowed the question to be more fully answered later.

Cllr England raised a point of clarification that the reason for asking the question is that because air quality has not been scrutinised for 2 years. In Council, he had asked for it to be on agenda and asked for DEFRA accredited numbers to be on agenda. He said “It has not happened. It has been promised for November, in October it was still promised for November. How do I know that in February it will come forward?”

The Mayor replied; “As you will be well aware I was Chair of that committee at that time and our hands were bound as we did not have from DEFRA the revised figures that made sense of the readings that were taken at street level and we cannot control departments of state like DEFRA. We share your frustrations on this matter but, as I told you at the time, there is absolutely no point in trying to draw conclusions from figures that might not be accurate”.

6 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

7 CABINET REFERRALS

September 27th

CA/74/22 Financial Performance Q1 2022-23

Cllr Griffiths seconded and The Council agreed this

October 18th

CA/85/22 MFTS Refresh

Cllr Griffiths seconded and The Council agreed this

CHAIRMAN

CA/86/22 Annual Treasury Report

Cllr Griffiths seconded and The Council agreed this

November 15th

CA/96/22 Financial Monitoring Report

Cllr Griffiths seconded and The Council agreed this

November 15th Part 2

CA/101/22 Housing Management Restructure

Cllr Griffiths seconded and The Council agreed this

8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

9 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

10 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

Cllr Williams proposed moving meeting of Cabinet on 13th December to 14th Dec Cllr Williams proposed moving meeting of Cabinet on 13th December to 14th December.

This was agreed unanimously by the council.

11 CONSTITUTION REPORT

Cllr Williams introduced the report

Cllr Griffiths seconded and the Council agreed to the recommendations.

12 REFERRAL FROM ELECTORAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Cllr Williams introduced the report

Cllr Griffiths seconded and the Council agreed to the recommendations

13 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The Meeting ended at 8.25 pm

CHAIRMAN