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SUMMONS

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Wednesday 27 September 2023

Council Chamber, The Forum

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the Dacorum Borough Council in the County of Hertfordshire to be held in the Council Chamber, The Forum on Wednesday 27 September 2023 at 7.30 pm to transact the business set out below.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claire Hamilton".

**CLAIRE HAMILTON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**Contact: Corporate & Democratic Support
ext 2209**

AGENDA

1. MINUTES (Pages 4 - 22)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting of the council

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To consider questions (if any) by members of the public of which the appropriate notice has been given to the Assistant Director (Corporate and Contracted Services)

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive announcements and business brought forward by the Mayor, Leader, and Members of the Cabinet or the Chief Executive.

4.1 By the Mayor:

4.2 By the Chief Executive:

4.3 By the Group Leaders: Any apologies for absence

5. CABINET MEMBER UPDATES (Pages 23 - 37)

Members of the Council may ask the Cabinet member any question without notice upon an item on the report as published in this agenda;

5.1	Councillor Tindall	Leader of the Council (verbal update only)
5.2	Councillor Dhyani	Portfolio Holder Housing & Property Services
5.3	Councillor Bromham	Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Operations
5.4	Councillor England	Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Emergency
5.5	Councillor Wilkie	Portfolio Holder Place
5.6	Councillor Weston	Portfolio Holder People & Transformation
5.7	Councillor Symington	Portfolio Holder Corporate and Commercial Services

6. QUESTIONS

Question from Cllr Mitchell to Cllr Wilkie:

The 36 workers currently employed at the Wilko branch in Hemel Hempstead will be made redundant at the latest in early October; 32 of these workers live in the Borough and 11 of them are not entitled to any redundancy at all. For every one of these workers, losing their job will impact on their lives, the lives of their families, and their community. Being put at risk of redundancy has a big emotional impact and is a major life change to come to terms with especially when an organisation such as Wilkos goes into administration. What will this administration and the Borough Council do to assist these workers in finding alternative employment?

7. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING (Pages 38 - 42)

To consider any business referred from the previous meeting

8. CABINET REFERRALS (Pages 43 - 44)

To consider the following referrals from Cabinet:

CA/63/23 18th JULY 23 ENFORCEMENT REPORT

CA/77/23 12th SEPT 23 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE QUARTER 1 2023-24

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

10. CHANGES TO HEALTH COMMITTEE (Pages 45 - 50)

11. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

To consider any proposals for changes to committee membership

12. CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

To consider any proposals for changes to committee dates

Agenda Item 1

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

12 July 2023

Present -

MEMBERS:

Allen (Mayor), Adeleke, Barry-Mears, Banks, Bhinder, Birnie, Bristow, Bromham, Capozzi, Cox, Deacon, Dhyani, Douris, Durrant, England, Freedman, Gale, Guest, Hannell, C Hobson, S Hobson, Johnson, B Link (Deputy Mayor), C Link, McArevey, Mitchell, Patterson, Pesch, Pound, Pringle, Reynolds, Riddick, Santamaria, Stevens, Stewart, Silwal, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Walker, Weston, Wilkie, A Williams, B Williams, and Wyatt-Lowe. (46)

OFFICERS:

C Silva Donayre (Deputy Chief Executive), M Brookes (Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services) C O'Neil (Corporate & Democratic Team Leader), L Fowell (Acting Corporate & Democratic Support Lead Officer) and J Gowlett (Desktop & AV Support Analyst)

The meeting began at 7.30pm

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 May 2023 were approved as a correct record.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from members.

3. Public Participation

Mr Philip Aylett was introduced.

PAylett, Chair of Dacorum Health Action Group, commented that emergency care at a specialist hospital should be at a clear central site. Action group members have expertise in construction, finance, planning and in health services and PAylett noted that the group is pleased that the Health in Dacorum Committee is being retained. PAylett welcomed Cllr Tindall's pledge to press for fair health funding in Dacorum and for a new modern health facility in the centre of Hemel Hempstead. PAylett commented on Hemel Hospital, noting that many services are held, including bowel screening, MRI and cardiology, with 250,000 patient episodes at the hospital each year. PAylett advised that West Herts Trust's clinical strategy claims that Hemel Hospital will be the centre for planned medical services in the area and he stated that this was not true, noting that Watford General has many more planned medical appointments and that there are not plans to increase these at Hemel Hospital in the coming years, leaving no distinct role for it. PAylett stated that many vulnerable people in the area will instead have to travel to Watford and it is therefore vital that a good health facility be maintained. PAylett commented that he has heard from a number of sources regarding doubts that the current Hemel Hospital site will be retained, which raises a number of serious

questions, such as if the suggested facility will be able to provide the same range of services, what will be the location of this facility, and how will it be funded? PAylett noted that West Herts Trust's plans will take money away from Hemel Hospital, though a vision has been put forward for Hemel Hempstead that looks at integrated services for social care, health care and voluntary organisations.

PAylett asked the Leader of the Council to give an update on his statement made on 30 May regarding hospital funding and what the Council will do to ensure that Dacorum has its fair share of funding.

The Leader of the Council advised that they have been working with partners, including the hospital trust, to discuss how hospital services can be provided in the borough and ensure that health inequalities are narrowed so they achieve the best services for Dacorum residents. In relation to funding, the Leader of the Council stated that the breakdown of the funding envelope has not been confirmed but that they recently met with the Chair and Chief Executive of West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust to discuss opportunities to co-create a model for health and wellbeing services that can meet the needs of the people of Dacorum now and into the future. It is hoped that the Chair and Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board will also be met with soon for a similar conversation. The matter remains a priority and the Leader of the Council advised that they will continue to keep members and residents informed as plans progress and new funding information becomes available.

PAylett asked the Leader of the Council how he intends to make sure that West Herts Trust engages with the Council given that public engagement over the last year has been very limited and the Trust has been previously unwilling to see the Health in Dacorum Committee to discuss their plans publicly.

The Leader of the Council responded that they are a new administration with a different approach and that it's understood that the Trust also has a new administration. The Chair and Chief Executive were met with yesterday and the Leader of the Council advised that it was a positive meeting that took place over two hours but no agreement could be made as the government are yet to release funding details. The Leader of the Council confirmed that a further update would be made when more information was available.

4. Announcements

The Chair noted the passing of former county councillor, Ian Laidlaw-Dickson. The Chair described Mr Laidlaw-Dickson as a dedicated citizen who engaged in local activities and in supporting residents he served, including many years of dedicated service as a trustee of Community Action Dacorum. The Chair described him as a spirited local character, and whilst they did not have party affiliation, he noted the spirit of local service that they enjoyed. The Chair passed on his and the Council's sincere condolences to his partner and family.

Cllr Tindall commented that he did not work with Mr Laidlaw-Dickson and noted his devotion to Hemel Hempstead as well as his involvement in voluntary work. Cllr Tindall commented that Mr Laidlaw-Dickson was a member of the Council for 8 years from 1979 to 1987, and was also a county councillor, through which he became a member of the police authority and Chair for 5 years, and that he had received an OBE for his services to the police in 2009. Cllr Tindall stated that Mr Laidlaw-Dickson would be sorely missed and he extended his condolences to his family.

Cllr Williams referred to Mr Laidlaw-Dickson's work with the police and as a county councillor, noting his long life in public service. Cllr Williams noted that Mr Laidlaw-Dickson had only stood down from the Council at the last AGM and that his contribution to Dacorum had been significant.

Cllr Guest referred to her memories of Mr Laidlaw-Dickson on the Warner's End Neighbourhood Association Committee, which he sat on as the local county councillor and that he would be remembered for the financial acumen that he brought to meetings. Cllr Guest passed her condolences to Mr Laidlaw-Dickson's partner and family.

Cllr Pesch thanked the Council on behalf of Mr Laidlaw-Dickson's partner, who was in attendance, and his daughter, for their kind words. Cllr Pesch referred to Mr Laidlaw-Dickson's career since becoming elected in the 1979 local elections, noting that in the past 12 years he had been a member of the Board of the Community Action Dacorum where he was appreciated for his insight, knowledge and understanding of the bodies that he served on. Cllr Pesch advised that Mr Laidlaw-Dickson had been a member of the local Labour Party for almost 50 years, having joined in 1974, and held a number of various local positions, including the CLP Chair and was providing advice up until his death. Cllr Pesch commented that many members owe much to Mr Laidlaw-Dickson's dedication and hard work as he tried to improve people's lives and that he would be greatly missed by all the lives that he touched. Cllr Pesch noted that a celebration of Mr Laidlaw-Dickson's life would be held on Friday 28th July at 2pm at Warner's End Community Centre.

Cllr Douris noted the references made to Mr Laidlaw-Dickson's involvement with Community Action Dacorum and commented that he had worked with Mr Laidlaw-Dickson in the last year when he chaired Hertfordshire Independent Translation Services, a trading offshoot of CAD, and he had developed HITS into a formidable translation service that is recognised across the county and wider still. Cllr Douris advised that Mr Laidlaw-Dickson made HITS a profitable organisation that is highly respected and contributed to the benefit of CAD.

A minute's silence was held in memory of Mr Laidlaw-Dickson.

The Chair noted events that had taken place in the last month, including Armed Forces Day, and thanks were passed on to DBC staff for the work put in to making it such a successful and vibrant occasion.

The Chair commented the Windrush commemoration and noted the number of well-run events that took place in the borough that DBC staff should be commended for. The Chair advised that up to 30% of applicants to the Windrush Fund are still awaiting to hear the outcome of their applications and that the borough needs to be mindful of this. The Chair stated that he was struck by how many members of the chamber attended events but that events were not as widely attended by black and minority ethnic communities. The Chair advised that he has met with black and minority ethnic representatives and that engagement with communities will be a focus going forward to help ensure an even more vibrant and engaged event next year.

No announcements were made by the Chief Executive.

Cllr Tindall asked to give apologies as Councillor Mottershead

Cllr Williams gave apologies on behalf of Cllrs Anderson, Barradell and Elliot.

Cllr Pesch gave no apologies.

Portfolio Holders Updates

Cllr Tindall – Leader

Cllr Tindall provided an update as Leader of the Council, noting that his update on meeting with West Herts Trust had been given under item 3 through the public question and that he had no further updates to report.

Cllr Williams commented that the Council has previously supported the view of the campaign group that the best provision for hospitals is within Dacorum and would be on a cleared site, not the refurbishment that Watford Hospital has proposed. Cllr Williams asked Cllr Tindall to confirm that the Council's policy has changed, given that the supported view is now unlikely, and that it is accepted that they will no longer get the best outcome for their communities.

Cllr Tindall confirmed that his personal preference is for a new hospital but that he recognised the significant role that funding would play in this process. Cllr Tindall explained that it has been announced that the plans of the hospital group will be funded but there are no further details, adding that a strategy can't be set until there is an understanding of what is being proposed and what has been agreed. Cllr Tindall welcomed an offer to work cross-party and confirmed that he would be in touch with other group leaders once further information has been received.

Cllr Symington – Corporate & Commercial

Cllr Symington provided the update for Corporate and Commercial Services, noting it has been decided to realign the portfolio holders with the strategic directorates.

Cllr Symington confirmed that the draft 2022-23 financial statements have been published and are awaiting external auditors. The 2021-22 external auditor's annual report has been published and this outlined no risks of significant weakness in the Council's financial stability, governance or economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Cllr Symington confirmed that the Q1 report will be brought to members in September.

Cllr Symington next reported on revenue and benefits, noting that the 2023 annual council tax billing cycle has been successfully implemented and the collection process is underway for 2023-24. Cllr Symington noted that a team has been set up to administer the government's energy support payments for residents who did not receive them automatically and over £100,000 has been paid out to date. Council tax has been collected for 67,000 residents and over 4,400 business rate payers.

Cllr Symington next looked at legal and democratic services, noting that the local elections were successfully conducted on 4th May and that over 45,000 ballot papers were verified and counted across all borough and parish areas with over 400 staff employed to assist. Cllr Symington advised that feedback forms were sent to staff, group leaders and election agents to understand what went well and improve services in the future. The election teams also delivered two successful member induction days followed by the annual council and mayor making ceremony, and the teams have been recognised for their work through the annual staff recognition awards held at Shendish Manor. The legal services team continues to represent the Council in various courts and tribunals on a regular basis, and successfully prosecuted an individual for fly-tipping offences in early June. It is hoped that the successful completion of this case will help deter others from similar actions.

Cllr Symington next provided a commercial development update, noting that proposals have been developed to increase parking tariffs and amend parking policies with proposals presented to the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will go to Cabinet on 18 July. The proposals include tariff increases to reflect inflation and cost of service delivery and the introduction of a more consistent application of charging policies across council car parks. Proposals were also submitted to Cabinet in June for a strategic asset review as it has been many years since the Council's housing revenue account and general fund assets were reviewed and officers across the Council will undertake a series of reviews to

consider strategic opportunities for development and repurposing of assets to help support place-making, housing, regeneration and commercial objectives.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe asked if it was recognised that charging for parking could negatively impact usage across a broad spectrum of residents using facilities, such as the splash park, bowling greens, health walks, and UA3 who use the car parks before going on coach trips. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe suggested that the proposal is a 'pay to play' strategy rather than a coherent car parking fee increase strategy.

Cllr Symington thanked Cllr Wyatt-Lowe for the comments and stated that the Council is engaging in an extensive consultation process with all stakeholders and users of car parks to ascertain the effects of the policies being proposed. Cllr Symington acknowledged that people would be affected differently by the changes in car parking charges and policies and that this will be taken into consideration when assessing the impact.

Cllr Guest asked if the impact of the proposed parking charge increase on retailers recovering from the impact of Covid restrictions and the challenge of online retail has been considered.

Cllr Symington responded that the impact on all stakeholders will be considered and that they will take into account that they are recovering from the pandemic and that they are currently in a cost of living crisis. Cllr Symington also acknowledged the high-inflationary environment and advised that all issues will be considered. Cllr Symington noted, as someone linked to the retail sector, that Cllr Guest would be concerned about this and confirmed that they will engage with retailers. The move to online shopping has affected behaviours around car park usage and therefore the car parking strategy needs to be looked at holistically with all other policies, particularly place-making, which will be key in shaping what communities will look like.

Cllr Guest asked if residents will specify in the consultation if they are individuals or businesses so that the Council can gauge the potential impact of a car parking charge on retailers.

Cllr Symington advised that this question had been raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that confirmation was given by the officer attending that this question will be included in the consultation.

Cllr Mitchell commented that the residents of Gadebridge will be greatly impacted by a car parking charge at Gadebridge Park and that local residents will be impacted if visitors instead choose to park on local streets.

Cllr Symington thanked the member for the feedback and acknowledged the potential impact, noting that this is why they are looking to engage with all stakeholders. On wider displacement, Cllr Symington advised that many residents want controlled parking zones and better enforcement.

Cllr Birnie asked if the portfolio holder could inform the Council of the cost of the strategic review and if they were reassured that this price would not increase. Cllr Symington stated that she could send the figures included in the financial resources papers and suggested that the amount is £100-150k. Cllr Birnie responded that the papers suggest the cost will be £500k. Cllr Symington suggested that this is a net increase on what has been budgeted from the previous administration for this work. Cllr Symington confirmed that she would circulate the figure.

ACTION: Cllr Symington to circulate cost of the strategic review to members.

Cllr Bhinder commented to the reference that the reason for the car parking review is inflation and asked if the intention is therefore to bring the cost back down when inflation decreases. Cllr Bhinder noted that there has been a continuing number of reports regarding the erosion of the Chiltern Beechwoods and asked if these concerns are being considered.

Cllr Symington advised that unless inflation becomes a negative value then prices will not fall and that she could therefore not commit to prices coming down if the rate of inflation falls. With regards to the Chiltern Beechwoods, Cllr Symington confirmed that there is a full consultation on the impact of charging people to access open spaces and that there are other spaces that people can access free of charge.

Cllr Tindall raised a point of clarification, noting that most questions raised related to actions that commenced in the previous administration and suggested that opposite members concentrate on questions on items that they may be responsible for in the future and not what they were responsible for in the previous administration.

Cllr Williams commented that Chiltern Beechwoods is a national issue beyond the administration and that the questions are therefore relevant.

Cllr Dhyani – Housing & Property Services

Cllr Dhyani provided the Housing and Property Services update, noting that a key priority of the housing strategy is to improve existing homes for tenants with an average of 24,000 repairs and improvements carried out each year and work is underway to achieve the net carbon target with retrofitted energy saving measures to existing housing stock into 90% of council homes with B energy ratings by 2030. Fire risk assessment work was completed at two supported housing schemes where all doors have been upgraded to the current legislative standard. Cllr Dhyani confirmed that a two-year contract has been awarded to deliver community alarm upgrades. The management process of complaints has been revised to ensure that they are closed within target and reduce the number of stage 2 complaints. The 2023-24 capital investment programme has been finalised and has commenced with improved monitoring. Cllr Dhyani confirmed that planned visits will be made to each of the supported housing schemes to listen to senior tenants with face-to-face visits and allow for property spot-checks to help prevent complaints and dissatisfaction.

Cllr Dhyani advised that the planned strategy for next year will include plans to invest £369m in council homes over the next 10 years, £263m in existing homes, £106m in new council homes, including £28m for climate action. There are a number of new housing projects that are currently being worked on, including the development of 5 former garage sites, and 4 new homes have been completed in Beechfield and Kings Langley. A strategic asset review has been approved for the next 2 years with 8 construction site projects delivering 165 new council homes. To further improve the lives of tenants, the housing operation service is currently engaging with voluntary sector partners to explore opportunities to enhance amenities and green areas in some wards with proposals in development.

Cllr Dhyani commented on the Building Safety Act, noting that resident engagement strategies have significantly progressed with the draft framework to be taken to the tenant and leaseholder committee in July. The Housing team participated in district council roundtable discussions to support and prevent a central government funding decision relating to humanitarian responses and, as a result, the Council is now in receipt of a number of grants. The Council is providing coordination across multiple agencies and ongoing support and 4 private sector rental properties have been acquired to help prevent homelessness for Afghani households. Community services are working with a range of partners to tackle key priorities, including cost of living, homelessness prevention and migration safety.

Cllr Pringle noted that a new initiative to visit supporting housing has been introduced and asked how this is helping the most vulnerable residents.

Cllr Dhyani advised that the team is coordinating well with the work and are responding to residents when visiting with positive comments from residents. Cllr Dhyani noted that there are several issues that residents don't report and that most appreciated council visits.

Cllr Pringle asked if any particular visits have stood out.

Cllr Dhyani referred to a bungalow that looked very deteriorated and that there was no response when knocking on the door. The door was opened and Cllr Dhyani advised that the resident and property were not in good condition, so it was decided that the resident needed to be cared for through a different approach.

Cllr McArevey commented on the cost of living crisis and asked if contact has been made with DENS.

Cllr Dhyani confirmed that she has visited DENS and noted that DENS have strong standards with a good approach towards residents as they look to train and educate them so they can move to new properties.

Cllr Douris thanked Cllr Dhyani on bringing attention to to the successful completion of the residential accommodation referred to in the report, which were implemented and commenced under the previous administration.

Cllr Capozzi asked for further information regarding the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme.

Cllr Dhyani advised that the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme has obtained £300,000 in grants towards the new building and this has been match funded. This will provide single apartments for temporary accommodation for 2-3 years and further grants will be required.

Cllr Birnie congratulated Cllr Dhyani on the initiative to visit so many residents and noted the strong team of officers within the department. Cllr Birnie commented that the maintenance of council housing is not at the desired level and asked if there are any policies to review the current contract in this regard.

Cllr Dhyani explained that a review will take place this year. The contract was extended for 2 years with Osborne and there is still a further year to make a decision.

Cllr Birnie asked what measures are in place to monitor the efficiency of the current contractor and the length it takes for reports of damage or repairs to be concluded.

Cllr Dhyani stated that day-to-day management is being more closely monitored and an officer is situated in the Osborne office to act as a bridge between complaints and improve communication.

Cllr Mitchell asked if emergency temporary accommodation has been looked into.

Cllr Dhyani advised that temporary accommodation is to provide a base before an individual is moved onto their property and points are allocated on a number of areas. Cllr Dhyani confirmed that they are actively working with people to get them onto the property ladder when they are ready.

Cllr Bromham – Neighbourhood Operations

Cllr Bromham provided the update on Neighbourhood Operations. Regarding environmental matters, Cllr Bromham advised that 900 items of clothing were swapped at a recent clothes swap event and that there was a successful compost and tree giveaway event with 5,000 trees taken. The mowing teams are on their third cut of the season with some bedding plants in and the 5-day deep clean of the A5 has been completed. When the splash park was closed for a number of days, local management engaged entertainment, which proved popular. Cllr Bromham advised that there is a backlog of category C tree maintenance and there is a plan to engage with residents on the positive aspects of services. New waste collection routes are being launched at the end of the month, which will require date changes for some households and those effected will have received first communication, to be followed by further communication and a bin tag. The change in collection routes will save approximately £1m per year. Cllr Bromham advised that challenges with collection lorries will be focused on with the team over the coming months.

Cllr Bromham advised that they have been using fuel, including 50% hydrotreated vegetable oil, costing around 60p a litre more than standard diesel. There is a global shortage of vegetable oil due to the situation in Ukraine and there will be a move to standard diesel to bring considerable annual savings to the Council. Currently 59% of 55,000 eligible households have signed up to the green bin subscription service and there is likely to be an imminent waste conformity legislation, which may mandate food and green bin collection. The two-tier waste system needs to be optimised.

Cllr Bromham noted that 4 people were prosecuted in April for fly-tipping offences and 13 offenders who did not pay FPNs, resulting in average payments of £453 each. The air quality management area in Northchurch was revoked in April as air quality in the area has improved with NOx being below the threshold for several consecutive years and the real-time air quality function will be moved to Apsley.

On bereavement services, Cllr Bromham commented that the intention for the Poppy Fields Cemetery and adjacent crematorium is to have poppies in the grasses and wildflowers from next year.

Cllr Mitchell referred to tree management, noting that this is causing residents distress and asked if the administration are looking to increase the budget for tree management next year.

Cllr Bromham commented that tree management is currently years behind schedule and that they will endeavour to work out what budgets are required, noting that he has requested a plan to bring that back on schedule over the coming years.

Cllr Guest asked if the new administration intends to take forward the policy of verge hardening.

Cllr Bromham advised that there is enormous pressure on parking in residential areas and that there may be more verge hardening until the infrastructure is enabled, partly through central government.

Cllr Guest commented that the verge hardening policy has been on hold and asked if there is a timescale for this.

Cllr Bromham advised that there isn't currently a timescale but that a written answer could be provided on this.

ACTION: Cllr Bromham to provide written answer regarding timescale for verge hardening.

Cllr Freedman commented that a substantial amount was previously invested in new lorries for the bin fleet and that they have a number of performance issues, made worse by the technological knowledge to maintain them is abroad and this can't be brought in due to Brexit regulations. Cllr Freedman asked what actions are being taken to save this extra cost.

Cllr Bromham advised that the loader is not properly fastened onto the hopper, which is partly due to the poor specification of the lorries when they were purchased, which has been exacerbated by long lead times on spare parts, which is partly a result of Brexit, and some trucks have had to be hired. Cllr Bromham also commented on the freedom of movement and that the support they receive from the Dutch company is reduced as they are now less likely to embed field service employees in the UK.

Cllr Pringle referred to a life-threatening event that occurred in Northchurch recently with a tree on land belonging to Hertfordshire County Council and asked for further details regarding the backlog of tree management given the number of trees that are not being maintained and therefore pose a danger to life.

Cllr Bromham explained that tree maintenance is categorised and stated that officers are diligent and monitoring trees. When a tree is identified as being a safety risk, it is typically actioned quickly and Cllr Bromham stated that the topic is under investigation.

Cllr Pringle commented that a considerable backlog had built up under the previous administration and asked if this is the case.

Cllr Bromham advised that a large backlog had built up for non-safety related incidents and that there have been difficulties with suppliers due to labour shortages. Cllr Bromham confirmed that he has approved 2 new arboreal companies to help clear the backlog and noted that it was previously difficult for issues to be reported so that the Council could respond quickly.

Cllr Taylor asked if the issues with the bin lorries is a benefit of Brexit.

Cllr Bromham commented that the Dutch company is able to deal with other EU countries and that the UK is often dealt with last.

Cllr Barry-Mears commended the additional activities brought in when the splash park was closed and asked if there are plans to continue these activities.

Cllr Bromham advised that this was a quick initiative and that they will need to assess whether they can afford to maintain these activities in future.

Cllr England – Climate Change

Cllr England provided the Climate Change update, noting that the portfolio has been newly created to address climate concerns and that Dacorum will be working alongside other communities to keep people, places and properties out of harm. Cllr England recognised the work carried out by officers and Cabinet since 2019 and commented that the previous administration included climate change duties in with the other duties of the Leader, resulting in a 90% level of ambition. Cllr England advised that he has attended the Hertfordshire Climate and Sustainability Partnership briefing and meetings and that he has taken on the position of Chair of the partnership, putting Dacorum at the centre of the important work both in Hertfordshire and the wider region. Cllr England noted that by striving to reinvent Dacorum for self-preservation, climate generation rather than climate emergency can be chosen and a better future can be achieved.

Cllr England noted the importance of attaching the proper cost to the CO2 being used and that the initial programme has to work within the budget established in February and includes a big step in active travel, cycling and easing parking. There has been a strong focus on recycling, particularly removing food waste from grey bins and making green waste easily compostable. There will be a focus on funding streams to draw in investment for decarbonisation and giving people the confidence to invest in solar panels. 104 charge points will be installed across council-owned car parks this year and the future needs for the borough will then be assessed. Cllr England commented that climate regeneration is bringing a can-do attitude to the borough and the recognition that if the borough doesn't want a climate emergency then they all have to attach the proper cost to the CO2 that they demand or use.

Cllr Pringle referred to work with schools and asked for further information.

Cllr England gave credit to officers and the previous administration for Dacorum Climate Action Network, noting that there are currently 73 organisations and 580 individuals signed up, including 14 schools. Cllr England advised that communications are going out to the other schools not signed up with an invitation to get involved and that they hope to see increased engagement.

Cllr Pesch noted the installation of solar panels and asked if they will be installed in existing council houses.

Cllr England commented that he is keen to look into this and that he would like to have seen more progress in this area. Cllr England advised that Dacorum is in the top 20 in terms of the amount of social housing it has and that this is a huge opportunity to use this real estate to harness solar power.

Cllr Pesch asked if any funding will be put into the budget in future for the installation of solar panels in existing council houses.

Cllr England advised that they are in the early stages of budget planning and that he will feed these ideas in. Cllr England continued that the team of officers that he works with is very small and that they work with a number of members.

Cllr Bromham commented that the Dacorum Environmental Forum has been neglected over recent years and only kept running by a small team of dedicated members. Cllr Bromham asked if more work will be done in future to ensure that the forum survives.

Cllr England stated that with local government cuts and the effects of both Brexit and the pandemic, there are huge pressures on budgets and an urgent consultation needs to be held.

Cllr Guest raised a point of order regarding Cllr England's use of the word 'bloody' and asked if it was appropriate to swear in the chamber. Cllr England apologised for his language.

Cllr Wilkie - Place

Cllr Wilkie presented the update on Place, noting her pride in being the portfolio holder and that she hoped that all members can work together to produce the gold standard in service for councils. Cllr Wilkie commented on the broad range of areas that the portfolio covers and she thanked officers who work on all items.

On planning services, Cllr Wilkie noted that the public enquiry regarding the plan to build 1,400 new homes at Marshcroft has now closed and that the decision is now awaited by the Secretary of State. Cllr Wilkie

advised that there are currently no timescales and there will be a significant impact on the draft local plan. Cllr Wilkie advised the the Space Scrutiny Committee received a comprehensive report on the planning enforcement service and she thanked members for their input on this. The update allowed the Committee to look at the proposals to bring down the caseload for the service from 400 to 300 per annum. Cllr Wilkie noted the ambition of this target and acknowledged the achievement of reaching 400 given the current size of the team. A report will go to Cabinet on 18th July on how this will be achieved and will include a temporary officer for 16 months.

Cllr Wilkie next looked at proposals being worked up across the Council on the remaining aspects of the Chilterns Beechwood Mitigation Strategy, which will allow for the provision of suitable SANGs to support the borough in delivering the number of houses required.

Cllr Wilkie advised that work is progressing on the new draft local plan and a new timetable is being prepared by officers to take the Council to the next stage with a regulation draft. Cllr Wilkie stated that she hoped to be in a position to consult members soon.

Cllr Wilkie noted that the Strategic Director for Place attended the UK Retail Investment and Infrastructure Forum ("UKREiiF") in May, which acted as a soft-launch for the Hemel Town Centre Vision. Cllr Wilkie noted the importance of investment in Hemel Hempstead and that the launch was particularly effective with over 50 new contacts and follow-ups on these enquiries will be fed back to members through SPAE and the usual processes.

Cllr Wilkie confirmed that work continues on the Old Town Place Project and she noted the summer planting and wooden planters built by the Community Action Dacorum Repair Shed and were planted by Sunnyside Rural Trust with art work from a local artist. Cllr Wilkie noted that the Maylands masterplan work has been tendered and submissions from consultants are being evaluated.

Cllr Pringle congratulated everyone involved in DBC securing over £1.7m of funding from the UK Prosperity Fund and asked for further information on how this funding will be allocated to help residents of the borough.

Cllr Wilkie credited officers and the previous administration for their work in securing this funding and confirmed that £1.763m was awarded. On how the money will be used, Cllr Wilkie advised that this has provided the Council with an opportunity to reach out to the community and to ask them what their priorities are. Submissions of interest were submitted by council officers, including for the Canal Trust, and submissions were also sent by voluntary sector groups and stakeholders. These submissions have resulted in a robust investment plan approved by the Department for Levelling Up and, since approval, officers are undertaking further due diligence to ascertain if grants are still required and what projects can be delivered. Community Action Dacorum can reach out to smaller grants, such as assisting victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking, and will be given a specific sum that can then be distributed amongst these smaller groups in the area.

Cllr Johnson referred to 2 controversial planning appeals in the last 9 months in his ward that have been fast-tracked, noting that the fast-tracking process has been used for a number of years but that this is the first time it has been used for cases where the officer's recommendation has been overturned by the Development Management Committee. The decision to fast-track an appeal is therefore made against the Committee's decision by Dacorum and not the planning inspectorate. Cllr Johnson advised that this process gives the appellant another opportunity to include disputed information but that neighbours and ward councillors who objected the application are denied a role or fair hearing. Cllr Johnson noted that the previous portfolio holder banned fast-tracking controversial appeals resulting from the first case but that this

now appears to have been discontinued. Cllr Johnson asked the portfolio holder if she agrees that fast-tracking these cases is unfair and whether she will reinstate the ban to stop this from happening.

Cllr Wilkie stated that she was unfamiliar with the cases referred to and that she would look into this further. Cllr Wilkie asked Cllr Johnson to send further information on the cases being referred to so that she could assess these with officers. On fast-tracking, Cllr Wilkie confirmed that she would look into this further and provide a written response.

ACTION: Cllr Wilkie to provide written information on fast-tracking to Cllr Johnson.

Cllr Birnie raised a point of order and asked that all written information be circulated to all members. The Chair confirmed that Member Services will distribute written responses to all members.

Cllr Weston – People and Transformation

Cllr Weston provided the update on People and Transformation, noting that that the portfolio covers people and HR, digital and IT, communications and transformation, with much of the work focused on delivering council-wide improvements, such as a new digital platform and recruitment issues. Since the last full Council, teams have made significant progress with the People team focused on delivering the people strategy, particularly regarding recruitment. Recruitment has been a particular challenge in the public sector and is a strong focus of the team, and the recent introduction of the Market Forces Policy and Agency Framework will help alleviate the challenge and cost. A number of successful recruitment campaigns have been run recently and there will be a large number of new starters joining the Council imminently.

Cllr Weston advised that the Digital Team has an important role in ensuring that the Council's technology continues to function efficiently and safely and that the team is leading the way to introduce a new digital platform that will be a major building block in the ambitions for how the Council operates. The team recently introduced Gov Wi-Fi across all Dacorum buildings and a kit refresh is being rolled out to staff to allow for more agile working and upgrading functionalities so members can be more accessible to residents.

Cllr Weston explained that the Transformation Team are driving forward the customer strategy work to ensure that residents are at the heart of all activities. The team are progressing telephony to allow for a quicker and more straightforward process for those calling the Council and webpages are being updated and organised to be more helpful. This will help residents as well as reduce the number of calls that the Council receives, allowing officers to focus on those residents who need the most help. The team are also working with services to ensure that the most useful information is being provided upfront.

Cllr Weston referred to the two recent flag-raising events for Armed Forces Day and Windrush Day at Gadebridge Park, with both events well attended. The Communications Team also delivered the annual staff award ceremony, recently held at Shendish Manor and the team secured sponsorship for the event where individuals and teams across the council were recognised for their excellent work. Cllr Weston thanked her team for all their work and assistance.

Cllr Guest asked the portfolio holder if she is working with Hertfordshire County Council to promote professional roles that are difficult to recruit to as career choices in schools.

Cllr Weston confirmed that she works with all portfolio holders and members to help promote any positions.

Cllr Guest asked what work is being done with Hertfordshire County Council to help promote these roles with young people.

Cllr Weston stated that she would provide a written reply to this question.

Cllr Guest clarified that the question is how they are working with Hertfordshire County Council to work with schools to encourage young people to choose these professions.

Cllr Weston confirmed that she would work with Hertfordshire County councillors to obtain the information required and that a written response would be provided.

Cllr Mitchell asked what the HR team is doing to access new recruitment channels.

Cllr Weston advised that vacancies can exist for a number of reasons and do not necessarily mean a systematic problem. Cllr Weston commented that the Council has a healthy turnover and has seen recruitment successes in recent months with many recruits joining in weeks and months to come. There are still hard-to-recruit roles and this is not unique to the Council, but developments such as the Market Forces Policy means the Council can compete with the market. Cllr Weston advised that any further information could be provided via a written reply.

Cllr Mitchell asked what will be done to recruit in more challenging areas, such as landscaping, particularly given how visible these roles are to residents.

Cllr Weston responded that they are doing all they can to recruit the right people and any recruitment should come from SLT.

Cllr Pringle noted the prioritisation given to recruiting new members of staff given recent challenges and asked the portfolio holder if she is willing to work imaginatively with colleagues and local colleges, such as West Herts College, and other revenues could be used to invest in creating apprenticeships with the college.

Cllr Weston confirmed that there has been a significant recruitment drive to ensure they have as many permanent staff as possible and that they are exploring all avenues, including schools and apprenticeships, but that this has to first come from the SLT to be approved.

Cllr Bromham commented that some staff are working in particularly arduous roles, including bin loaders, for 37 hours a week and that sickness rates in these roles are quite high. Cllr Bromham advised that other staff have had more flexible working patterns and asked if they would be looking at greater flexibility for those working in more challenging roles.

Cllr Weston commented that vacancies can exist for a number of reasons and do not necessarily mean a systematic problem. Cllr Weston advised that the Council's turnover is healthy and has seen recruitment successes in recent months with many recruits joining in weeks and months to come. It is still hard to recruit professionals but developments such as the Market Forces Policy mean they can compete favourably within the market.

Cllr Bromham asked if people in more physical roles will be prioritised to work out ways to improve their working conditions.

Cllr Weston confirmed that they are looking to ensure they get the right people in the right conditions.

5. Motions

Cllr Pringle proposed the motion, noting that it arises as a result following elections across the country on 4th May. Cllr Pringle read out the following motion:

"Given the findings of the electoral commission and the experiences of many legitimate voters in Dacorum who either were turned away at polling stations or who wished to vote but did not attend the polling station because they did not have photo ID, it is proposed that the Leader of the Council write to the Home Secretary to ask that voting ID requirements be suspended immediately for all elections and bi-elections until there can be a full enquiry into the proportionality and efficacy of this requirement."

Cllr Barry-Mears seconded the motion.

Cllr Pringle spoke as the proposer of the motion, stating that, as elected representatives, they welcome voters and that they represent the voices of all those in their wards. Cllr Pringle suggested that the interim findings of the electoral commission following the introduction of photo ID was concerning in terms of how it discriminated against particular voter groups. Cllr Pringle suggested that these groups are more vulnerable and are generally less empowered in society where their only method of having power over their circumstances is at the ballot box. Cllr Pringle commented that it is concerning for democracy and that they must encourage participation as well as reflect the values of democracy to ensure that every single person's vote matters. Cllr Pringle stated the preclusion of voting must not be forced on people by unjustified regulations.

Cllr Pringle advised that the basis for introducing the voter ID scheme has no clear evidence and she queried the motivation of bringing it in, noting that it did result in a number of undesirable consequences and should therefore be reviewed. Cllr Pringle explained that general awareness of voter ID was reasonably good at 87%, though awareness was significantly lower amongst black and minority ethnic voters and young people. Cllr Pringle commented that those in underrepresented groups were excluded even more with the most concerning being that those without valid photo ID are 13% less likely to vote. Cllr Pringle stated that many people can't afford a car or don't travel abroad and therefore don't have a driving licence or passport and that no one should be excluded from democracy because of this.

Cllr Pringle referred to particular residents who had not been able to vote, including one resident in social housing who was also a carer and was unable to vote due to not holding valid photo ID. Cllr Pringle referred to another resident in sheltered accommodation who was retired and was turned away for producing his National Service registration.

Cllr Pringle asked the Leader of the Council to write to the Home Secretary to demand that this impediment to people be removed, noting that these marginal numbers will affect outcomes and could disenfranchise vulnerable people.

Cllr Williams commented that they would not be supporting the motion, noting that voter ID is used across the world and described it as a positive step forward. Cllr Williams stated that other countries can manage voter ID and that he felt the residents of the UK could equally cope with presenting ID. Cllr Williams suggested that everybody in the room is likely to know someone who has voted for someone else and that voter identification is a positive step forward.

Cllr Banks supported Cllr Williams' comments, stating that the Electoral Commission's report is not due until September and that the interim report released in June shows that 92% of people were aware of voter ID with 0.7% initially turned away and 63% of these returned to vote. Cllr Banks described the matter as a

small issue and suggested that voter fraud is a more significant issue, having risen from 300 cases 5 years ago to 2,000 last year and that this is likely to become a larger problem with globalisation.

Cllr Weston supported the motion, noting that residents were turned away and that members should trust their residents to vote without ID.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe acknowledged the sentiment behind the motion, stating that it is a concern if the need for voter ID prevented people from voting. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe commented that it is essential to have voter ID in some areas of the country to help protect the rights of all votes and she confirmed she would not be supporting the motion. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe stated that she was reasonably confident that voters would embrace these new measures and that initial issues will be resolved, adding that members should ensure that these problems are being addressed by recognising that some people in the community do require protection.

Cllr Guest commented that, during the recent election campaign, she and her team informed people that they needed voter ID to vote and that most people were glad that their votes were being protected. Cllr Guest advised that most people stated they had valid voter ID and, for those who didn't, they were informed of how to apply for free voter ID through the Council and that Cllr Elliot went through the process of applying with someone on the doorstep. Cllr Guest noted the need for ID to protect people's identity from those looking to steal it for malicious purposes and asked why people should not be protected at the ballot box and that she would therefore not support the motion.

Cllr Pesch confirmed that Labour would be supporting the motion, noting that there was a small proportion where people may have voted in someone's place and that deterring people from voting for the sake of a few was not acceptable. Cllr Pesch advised that a number of people do not have valid photo ID and that she supported the motion.

Cllr Freedman referred to statistics raised by Cllr Banks, stating that he was not comfortable with there being anybody turned away, regardless of number. Cllr Freedman stated that they all played a part in encouraging people to sign up for voter ID if required. Cllr Freedman noted 37% voter turnout, which needs to be improved, and that they should focus on encouraging people to vote rather than creating additional obstacles.

Cllr Bhinder confirmed that he would be voting for change and would not be voting to change it back.

Cllr Bristow commented that they have conducted many elections without the need for voter ID and that putting in extra bureaucracy was more work. Cllr Bristow confirmed that he would support the motion and described it as a ridiculous move by the government.

Cllr Hobson referred to an earlier comment that voter ID is common practice and noted that mandatory ID is in place in a number of European countries. Cllr Hobson suggested that the threat to democracy is more relevant from the actions of Cambridge Analytica and claims on the sides of buses rather than voter fraud.

Cllr Wilkie supported the motion, stating that the motion is about people having the fundamental right to vote and that it is a disgrace that a bar is being put on already disenfranchised people. Cllr Wilkie stated that these measures impact those who are already in a difficult position and that she was appalled by the suggestion that it was acceptable if only a few voters were disenfranchised, stating that even one disenfranchised voter is a stain on democracy.

Cllr Patterson supported the motion, stating that the opposition does not appreciate how central government introduced the measures, such as senior bus passes being acceptable but student bus passes not. Cllr Patterson noted that Jacob Rees-Mogg admitted that it was an attempt to play the system in the Conservatives' favour. Cllr Patterson stated that there were more cases of postal vote fraud and queried if the opposition were not raising this as postal voters are more likely to vote Conservative.

Cllr England referred to unconscious bias training and urged members to check their bias when motions are brought to them. Cllr England commented that unless there is evidence that can be shown, they should not let process get in the way of democracy, and that there is no evidence in this case. Cllr England advised that he had spoken to over 300 people on polling day and that a significant number were not planning to vote as they didn't feel it was worth it and that they should therefore focus on encouraging people to vote. Cllr England noted that other European countries have a culture of ID cards, which the UK does not have. Cllr England asked why people should be prevented where there is no significant evidence in place for it.

Cllr Barry-Mears seconded the motion, firstly referring to the argument made by the opposition that people would get used to the new measures and suggested that similar comments may have been made in Nazi Germany. Cllr Barry-Mears referred to an earlier comment that everyone had voted on behalf of someone else and suggested that they should look to report anyone involved in voter fraud. Cllr Barry-Mears noted that student photo ID was not allowed and that the measures could also impact newly wedded women who are awaiting new ID. Cllr Barry-Mears suggested that if the opposition knows people who have conducted voter fraud then it suggests this is an ingrained issue and it is not within the people that they want to stop voting. Cllr Barry-Mears noted that voter turnout fell, that some people returned with valid ID but that others had been unable to. Cllr Barry-Mears commented that she was confident that the motion would pass and that this shows the change in administration required.

The Chair commented that he was uncomfortable with analogies involving Nazi Germany and that such parallels should be drawn with extreme caution.

Cllr Pringle summarised, noting that the passion of Cllr Barry-Mears was justified as she understood how hard she worked to encourage young people to sign up for voter registration. Cllr Pringle commented that student loans are increasing and that young people turning 18 just after an election may mean they don't get to vote until they are 23. This portion of the demographic is disenfranchised and Cllr Pringle questioned the decision to deprive young people of their vote. Cllr Pringle stated that it was not a democratic decision and was therefore autocratic. Cllr Pringle stated that she was proud to make a decision based on evidence and to apply rational decision-making to her thoughts before speaking and that was she was therefore unsure about some of the comments made. Cllr Pringle advised that the motion was worded to propose that the arrangements be suspended, not abolished, to allow for a full enquiry for the proportionality and efficacy. Cllr Pringle suggested that everyone who spoke against the motion was not in favour of evidence-based decision-making and she asked why they are putting staff in a position of having to deny people their democratic right. Cllr Pringle added that a helpline needs to be in place to assist people and enable everybody to vote rather than depriving people of their right to vote. Cllr Pringle noted her surprise at Cllr Williams' comments that everybody knows someone who has voted for someone else and suggested that Cllr Williams doesn't know anyone who has committed voter fraud, unless he is providing evidence to the police.

The Chair asked Cllr Pringle to be careful of casting doubt over Cllr Williams' comments.

Cllr Pringle retracted the comment and noted her surprise that anyone would know anyone who openly talks about committing voter fraud. Cllr Pringle suggested that there is a tendency to speak ideas that will

be taken up as fact and she asked members to consider the evidence. Cllr Pringle stated that believing everyone has a passport or driving licence shows members are out of touch with reality and that they should look to inspire people to vote. Cllr Pringle referred to an earlier comment regarding stealing votes and suggested that the inadequate, underfunded measure means that the Conservative government is stealing votes.

Members voted on the motion. The motion was approved with 30 votes for and 15 votes against.

It was confirmed that the Leader of the Council would therefore be called upon to act accordingly.

6. Questions

Cllr Hannell asked Cllr Wilkie what percentage of social housing proposed to be built across Dacorum will be council-owned social housing.

Cllr Wilkie thanked Cllr Hannell for the question. Cllr Wilkie noted that the administration has brought this up a number of times and commented that whilst the local plan and affordable housing comes under her portfolio, social housing comes under Cllr Dhyani's portfolio. Cllr Wilkie confirmed that she would provide an additional response and that any supplementary questions would be answered by Cllr Dhyani.

Cllr Hannell advised that he had not asked a particular individual to answer the question.

Cllr Wilkie advised that the starting point to seeking affordable housing on a development site is the council's adopted planning policies and, in most cases, this is 35% of new units being proposed on sites of 10 units or more in urban areas and 5 dwellings or more in rural areas. Cllr Wilkie referred members to the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2023, Affordable Housing 2013 and the subsequent Affordable Housing SPT clarification note from 2022. Cllr Wilkie explained that future social housing needs will be addressed through the new local plan, underpinned by the most recent evidence, and the national planning policy framework defines social housing within the wider definition of affordable housing, representing a starting point for which future applications will be determined until the new local plan is adopted in due course. Whilst an extremely important consideration, the delivery of social housing needs to be considered with all other issues.

Cllr Hannell asked if the administration will commit to holding developers to account over social housing numbers and not allow them to renege on their commitment to complete the building of genuinely affordable housing across the borough.

Cllr Wilkie advised that the provision of affordable housing is a high priority and that exact numbers on each site will depend on proposals during the planning application stage for each site. Where a developer seeks to provide fewer affordable homes against the council policy, this will need to be justified through a viability assessment. There may be occasions where other considerations, such as a specific infrastructure taking precedence, including a developer offering to buy a residence for assisted living rather than social housing, which falls under affordable housing.

Cllr Hannell asked if it was agreed that the current administration will silence a number of objections that residents have with the amount of house building proposed if they provide a large number of genuinely affordable homes with a local connection qualification criteria that will allow their children and grandchildren to remain in Dacorum.

Cllr Wilkie commented that the question was regarding whether social housing numbers would be given in advance.

Cllr Hannell responded that he was under the impression that he could be nimble with his supplementary questions.

The Chair agreed, stating that only the first written question needs to be pre-stated.

Cllr Wilkie asked Cllr Hannell to repeat his question.

Cllr Hannell asked if the current administration would silence a substantial number of the objections constituents have with the amount of house building proposed if they provided a large number of genuinely affordable homes with a local connection qualification criteria that will allow their children and grandchildren to be able to stay in Dacorum.

Cllr Wilkie agreed that there is a strong argument for the points made in terms of allowing a larger number of affordable homes and that the local connection is already established in local housing. Cllr Wilkie commented that they could look at how to progress matters to ensure that local people benefit from the social housing being built.

7. Business from the last Council Meeting

No outstanding points from the previous meeting were noted.

8. Cabinet Referrals

Cllr Tindall moved CA-52-23, the Provisional Outturn Report.

Cllr England seconded the referral.

Agreed

9. Cabinet Referrals, Overview and Scrutiny Referrals

No referrals.

10. Constitution update report

Cllr Tindall noted the motion to change the constitution to ensure that reports are amended to the agenda so members can review them ahead of Council meetings. Cllr Tindall advised that this will assist members as well as speed up meetings.

Cllr Tindall noted the motion regarding minute taking and advised that all Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings will be recorded and retained and displayed on the Council's website and stand as a record of debate rather than long-written minutes. The final decision will be confirmed as a written minute.

Cllr England seconded the motion and stated that this will improve the experience of residents.

The motion was agreed by the chamber.

11. Appointment of the Independent Person and Independent Member

Cllr Tindall noted the appointment of Michael Brown as the Council's independent person and Susan Johnson as the independent member. Both roles support the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee. The recommended appointments follow an interview process that involved the Chairman of the Standards Committee, Cllr Gale, and MBrookes. The Council's gratitude to Susan Johnson was noted for serving as independent person for the past 4 years.

The recommendations in the report were agreed.

12. Outside bodies

Cllr Tindall moved the report for the individuals named, noting there are a number of vacancies. Cllr Tindall confirmed that he would consult with the leaders of other parties to determine any amendments, noting that there should be a complete list by September.

ACTION: Leaders to discuss outside bodies list.

13. Changes to committee membership

Cllr Tindall proposed that Cllr Cox fill the vacancy on the Financing and Resourcing Committee.

14. Changes to committee dates

None.

Cllr Hobson made a point of order and asked if a comfort break could be arranged for future meetings. The Chair noted that members can leave when required and confirmed that this would be considered.

The Chair closed the meeting.



Council Briefing Note 27th September 2023

**HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES PORTFOLIO
– COUNCILLOR SIMY DHYANI**

Housing Operations

Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

- We are providing ongoing tenancy sustainment support & enablement services for residents.
- We have improved satisfaction results for residents living in temporary accommodation.
- We have delivered a housing needs & allocations briefing to members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- We have completed over 40 nominations for Hightown's new affordable housing development in Maylands.
- We have completed allocations to the Council's new build developments at Beechfield, Dione Road, Housewood End & Wilstone.
- Our waste pilot on housing estates has been completed which will inform our Housing Transformation Programme going forward.
- We have reviewed elements of our cleaning service & improved workforce scheduling.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- There has been an increase in individuals requiring homeless, housing help or support, including refugees with complex needs resulting in extended casework timescales and time in temporary accommodation

Safe Communities

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- The CCTV teams activity has been pivotal in securing a conviction of a Hemel Hempstead resident for GBH, following infliction of significant injuries to the victim.
- 3 civil penalties for Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing offences served, 1 paid in full & 2 payment plans agreed.
- 1 prohibition & 2 housing improvement notices have been served.
- We have helped 84 afghan individuals across 24 households to access accommodation in the private sector – alleviating demand for temporary accommodation and homelessness casework support.
- We have developed a new Humanitarian Response service funded via government grant to provide ongoing resettlement support.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- We are currently monitoring community tensions and activity that could lead to counter-terrorism concerns.
- We are reviewing the Council's Anti Social Behaviour case review procedure, in order to enhance the opportunity to hear the victim's voice.

Property Services

Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

- The upgrades of two communal heating systems at supported housing schemes are near completion. These upgrades will introduce renewable technologies that will reduce our running costs and carbon footprint. The installations were completed over the summer months to reduce tenant disruption
- Fire safety works are on site at Gade Tower. The project will upgrade all doors and include refurbishment of the communal areas.
- Non-compliant decking material present on the balconies at Kylna Court has been removed and replaced. The approved designs to remediate the materials on the roof top terrace are going through the approval process and we hope to be on site before the end of this financial year.
- All five buildings over 18 metres have been registered with the Building Safety Regulator and the Council has provided supplementary information, where requested.
- 10 buildings that are measured above 11 metres are being inspected quarterly to ensure we comply with the door inspection regime brought in under the Building Safety Act.
- Successful drop In Session have been held at Emma Rothschild Court with residents, councillors and Key DBC staff, with positive feedback from residents.
- Planned works programme schedules have been finalised for the remainder of the financial year with clear and measurable targets.
- Damp & Mould inspections has been completed and relevant works raised.
- The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 funding project at Northend has been completed. 24 homes were included in the energy efficiency project that has increased the average EPC of these properties up to an A. Some external landscaping works remain that will provide the finishing touches to a successful project.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- On the 7 September the government issued new guidance relating to damp and mould '*Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home*' The Council's policy is being reviewed in-line with this document and will re-issued.
- Purchase of Osborne Property Services by Cardo Group – Initial due diligence checks have been completed and Council officers are meeting with the Cardo Group Senior leadership team in October.
- Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) identified in 3 blocks in small sections above plant rooms and a communal staircase – All impacted properties have been written to and action taken to install protective decking beneath the RAAC was completed on 11th September. This protective decking will remain in place until the

RAAC has been fully removed as part of roof replacement works due to be completed this financial year.

Strategic Housing & Delivery

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- We have handed over two new build developments in Dione Road, Hemel Hempstead – 4 social rented houses and Barton Close, Wilstone – 6 social rented houses
- We have received Homes England Grant allocations of **£10.9m** in total for 56 social rented flats at Paradise Depot and 32 flats and houses for social rent at Marchmont Fields.
- We are planning a Registered Providers Forum in November.
- An independent review of resident engagement has commenced.
- The Tenants & Leaseholders Committee met in July to scrutinise our approach to building safety and provided helpful and positive feedback.



Council Briefing Note 27th September 2023

NEIGHBOURHOODS OPERATIONS PORTFOLIO –
COUNCILLOR ROBIN BROMHAM

We have made significant progress across my portfolio since the last Full Council meeting. In particular, I am delighted that our new senior management team for neighbourhood services (under the management of our new strategic director, Stefania Horne) is in place and I am very much looking forward to working with them.

One of the major achievements of the last 3 months has been the successful implementation of a new set of waste routes. It is waste management good practice to regularly routes taken and this new approach will allow us to be more efficient and effective and will contribute some significant savings. I am grateful to staff for developing and implementing the plan so that public impact was minimised.

More broadly, we are still awaiting new legislation regarding waste policy consistency, extended producer responsibility and deposit return scheme which could how we deliver our waste collection services. DEFRA have announced that they are looking at introducing new procedures to deliver these proposals set out in the Resources and Waste Strategy 2018.

We have also made significant progress through our Clean, Safe and Green team. Chipperfield Common car park resurfacing capital project - Cricket Ground car park completed, further works to smaller car parks to commence in 2023/24

It was another successful summer for the Gadebridge Park splashpad with limited downtime. Officers will be working over the winter to resolve a few ongoing issues so it is ready to open as scheduled in late Spring/early Summer 2024. We were delighted to hear that the green flag Award has been retained for The Water Gardens, Tring Memorial Garden, Canal Fields, Bunkers Park and Chipperfield Common

We have made some significant investment to provide new goalposts for our football pitches in the borough and we are now working with The FA and Grounds Maintenance Association using their app to improve the quality of the borough's football pitches.

We are also ramping up our work on tree management. The Highway Agency Agreement for tree management with HCC finished on 1st September and DBC is now completing a list of outstanding safety works - all new enquiries are being administered and progressed by HCC.

We have also working with colleagues in HCC Prevent and DBC Safe Communities on a pilot scheme to better monitor extreme stickering/leafleting and graffiti in the borough through the use of an app to get a better understanding of the extent of the issue and provide the Police with better intelligence

Our regulatory services team have had yet more success and acknowledgement - the Stray Dog service this year has won Platinum Paw Print Award from the RSPCA, alongside the work the Animal Welfare Team does with Housing they have also been awarded a Platinum Paw Print Award

Gadebridge continues to be a popular spot with the public but this usage has caused some problems. We have been working closely with teams across the Council and are pleased to report that we are seeing improvements in littering, dog fouling, drifting, and antisocial behaviour in the area.

Early September saw some illegal encampments across the Borough. Regulatory Services have worked with Police, Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that the areas were left as they were found and that the Gypsy and Traveller Community were given access to appropriate welfare facilities.

Council Briefing Note 27th September 2023

CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY
PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR ADRIAN ENGLAND

Dacorum CAN - We can reduce local people's energy bills. Dacorum CAN generate a different future in relation to Climate instability.

We CAN respond to the weakened jet-stream which burned the Mediterranean and ruined the Hertfordshire summer of 2023 – until September, when it was unusually hot here, while the warm, heavy weight of a Mediterranean Hurricane demolished two dams in Libya, and brought a month's September rain to the south of England – in one night.

We CAN respond to the modern-day Pompeii burning of Lahaina, Maui, which was running so hot and dry it only needed a spark before hurricane Dora, from hundreds of miles away, fanned the horrific flames in paradise.

We CAN respond to the dangerous negative feedback-loops – such as the melting summer ice which now makes the assumed year-round snow-white Arctic a dark magnet for the sun.

How? With a new CEE programme team in place, we have reviewed all of the existing actions identified to help deliver our CEE Strategy ambitions, establishing defined projects with key plans and timescales and a new robust governance structure to ensure we have appropriate oversight and accountability of the programme.

The Council's social media connects Climate Emergency response with reducing household costs, and proposes constructive ways to be effective and save money, by saving waste.

We are talking to local people about Climate Justice. The first email was sent to 3,300 registered recipients and was opened by 61% - two thousand people. Dacorum-CAN membership has grown over the summer, as we took a methodical approach to contacting all Dacorum's schools, churches and parish councils. We are currently planning the DCAN conference to be held on 20th November, and a year-round programme of involvement invitations.

We'll be working with Dacorum Environmental Forum (DEF) and the whole voluntary sector. Exploring community energy and how to energise the community. Our primary projects alongside the involvement of residents and organisations in D-CAN and with Cost-of-living support, are:

The generation of income and autonomy, from renewable energy within Dacorum,

Fabric-first decarbonisation of buildings, beyond the limited profile of DESNZ funding,

The planning of better transportation environment via a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), with member engagement briefing coming up on 12th October.

The nationally-recognised "Climate Action Scorecard 2023" result will be announced in October. CAS was supplied with our "right of reply" clarification in June, so the 2023 report reflects the former administration. The key finding appears to be that Local Authorities of all types could be doing more, if investment resources were available from central Govt!

Dacorum is now in a better place to reach its autonomous potential, at least. Districts' potential does vary, according to natural and built features, but crucially, policy is set by differing administrations. At the time of this year's assessment Dacorum Borough Council did not have a proper focus on Climate Emergency, did not have a Climate Change Manager in post and was drifting on EVCPs, having promised them deployed by the end of 2022.

Since the change of administration, further Carbon Literacy training is planned to be delivered to identified key leadership and new staff in management roles to ensure we are considering the Climate and ecological emergency across all service delivery in Dacorum.

We plan to remove meat from the menu for any internal catered events to directly reduce our CO2 impact and walk the walk, as well as talk the talk.

The team and I met with Portsmouth City Council in August, to exchange best-practice on tackling Climate Change and the cost of living.

Work continues to decarbonise sheltered housing, changing gas boilers to hybrid heat pumps. Hybrid heating systems are a combination of air source heat pumps and gas boilers. The heat pump will work as the primary heat source with the gas boiler providing back up or additional supply during peak demand.

Having delivered wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) investing over £1m decarbonising 24 homes, with 19 of these homes at Energy Performance certificate (EPC) A standard and 5 at EPC B standard, we are now working to decarbonise 75 more homes with SHDF wave 2.

HUG (Homes Upgrade Grant - EPC D to G) We expressed interest in the HUG1 & HUG2 schemes and were then given funding allocations based on our population size (number of residents) and an assessment of likely demand for the scheme (based on the number of off-gas heated homes). Dacorum received just £88,000 in HUG1 works. HUG2 will allocate up to £700m nationwide, with funding expected to be delivered from early 2023 to 2025. Dacorum has been allocated £540,000. No works yet received on HUG2, as the scheme hasn't yet started.

The real challenge for efficiency and effectiveness in tackling decarbonisation is that these schemes are rule-bound and awkward stop-start affairs. We are looking at home-grown initiatives for how Dacorum can take control of its ability to do fabric first for more households.

In the end the Government could be properly investing in our prosperity by saving energy and maximising renewables. You have to ask why they wouldn't, and the answer is found in who funds them. I call on the Government to choose between its friends in the oil and gas industry, be they Russian or otherwise, and its duty to the people of the UK. Compare the money going into chasing fossil fuels with the money going into energy efficiency?

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/09/fossil-fuels-more-support-uk-than-renewables-since-2015>

Solar Together, a group-buying initiative to help households install Solar PV panels at more competitive rates, was hugely successful across Hertfordshire, and Phase 2 has just launched for registrations. It closes on 27th October and installations will take place next year. Dacorum aims to do better this time around, as this scheme unlocks progress in micro-generation. In round one Dacorum lagged behind our Hertfordshire neighbours, so let's all share the opportunity with our residents?

Transport is responsible for over 40% of the whole borough's greenhouse gas emissions.

As Portfolio-Holder for Climate Emergency, while I am keen to support the transition to Electric Vehicles, I know that what Dacorum really needs is much better buses, which support the LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan). I am approaching the Hertfordshire Bus Partnership "Intalink", with an ambitious mission to transform buses in Dacorum.

HertsLynx is a new demand responsive transport (DRT) service for rural parts of Dacorum where timetable buses would not be feasible. There are no fixed timetable or routes, instead passengers choose where and when they want to go within a designated operating area. This service is designed to increase access for residents to employment, education, healthcare and shopping and reduce social isolation for residents living in rural areas where there is limited or no access to existing public transport services. This has been successful in areas of North and East Hertfordshire and is expanding to Dacorum, initially as a pilot project, and will be providing transport links to Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring by the end of the year.

Resurfacing the Grand Union Towpath between Nash Mills Lane in Apsley and the River Gade lakes, north of Kings Langley was completed earlier in September, making the area more user friendly and encouraging active travel.

Resurfacing work has now been completed on a further section of the historic Nickey Line footpath and cycleway. It has proved a popular local leisure attraction since it was opened to the public in the 1980s and it now forms part of the national cycling network.

We are working on a number of projects throughout the borough that form part of a long term plan to encourage more active and sustainable travel in the local area. This not only helps to tackle the challenges of climate change but also encourages healthier lifestyles and saves money. Dacorum is now pushing HCC to progress its LCWIP.

We are supporting the funding of HCC upgrades to the A414 St Albans Road to improve access between residential areas and local destinations. This will include a new step free, signalised toucan crossing making it safer and easier to cycle and walk to Jarmans retail and leisure park.

Herts County Council (HCC) have recently received news that they are in Tranche 1 for the LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Innovation) funding. HCC will decide this funding between the districts and boroughs. We are working closely with HCC to pinpoint potential locations for Electric Vehicle Charge Points and make use of this funding. Residents of your wards should be encouraged please, to report locations where they would like to see EVCPs. The best way is by signing up to DCAN, using this link: <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/environment-street-care/climate-change/climate-action-network>

As part of our plan to improve air quality in the borough, we have been working with Hertfordshire County Council to install three new air quality monitors to monitor pollution levels and help us understand where we need to reduce pollution from road traffic, in addition to our current network of diffusion tubes and analysers. These are in locations including a school, an ongoing air quality management area and a new location raised as a potential traffic pinch point.

The data will be fed into our Pollution Team's regular monitoring and form part of the yearly reports sent to DEFRA, aiding in decision-making around safer walking and cycling routes, traffic management, and raising local awareness. This will also feed into Hertfordshire's air quality alert system, which is a free service that sends registered users an alert if air pollution in their area is forecast or measured to be moderate, high, or very high. The description of the level of pollution is based upon the UK's Air Quality Banding System.



Council Briefing Note September 2023

PLACE PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SHERON WILKIE

Planning Services

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- The Public Inquiry into proposals for 1400 new homes at 'Marshcroft' on land East of Tring decision is expected around 15th November.
- Two major planning applications have been received for development within Bovingdon. Firstly, an application for 57 dwellings and 59 extra care units (plus outline permission sought for up to a further 129 dwellings) at Grange Farm. Secondly, an application for 43 dwellings on Molyneaux Avenue (the LA6 site).
- Cabinet approved temporary enforcement officer resources to cover a 16 month period. It is expected that this additional resource will be in place at the beginning of October.
- Two graduates through the Local Government Association Pathways to Planning scheme will be placed at Dacorum Borough Council in March 2024
- A bid has been submitted to Planning Skills Delivery Fund for £75,000. This fund is for local authorities to help clear backlogs of planning applications and address skills gaps is hosted by Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-skills-delivery-fund-year-1-guidance-for-applicants>

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- Proposals are being worked up across the Council, led by the AD for Planning, on dealing with the remaining aspects of the Chilterns Beechwoods Mitigation Strategy. This is to ensure that there is sufficient SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) to support the delivery of new housing across the Borough)
- Work progresses on the new Dacorum Local Plan and a new timetable is being prepared by Officers to take the Council to the next stage in the process, a 'regulation 18' draft for public consultation.
- Engagement in the ST Albans Regulation 18 consultation which closes on 25th September 2023
- The revised South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan Vision and Objectives were supported by Scrutiny on 6 September 2023

Place and Enterprise

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Two successful Velodrome events were held on the Market Square in Hemel Hempstead over the summer, funded through UKSPF funding. Additional activities provided by the BID were also funded as part of their summer activities.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- Maylands Masterplan contract has been awarded to Cushman and Wakefield. A contract inception meeting was held on 20 September with a partner inception meeting to follow.
- Following approval by Cabinet of the UKSPF Investment Plan proposals, due diligence on applicants was undertaken. Successful bidders have been notified of conditional award of funding with some follow up due diligence being undertaken on two applications. Officers continue to follow government governance reporting requirements.
- The Hemel Town Centre Vision was approved by Cabinet on 18th July 2023.
- Applications for Dacorum's Den closed on 1st September 2023. 26 applications were received, currently being reviewed. Pitch presentations to the Den will take place on 6th October 2023 with an awards event on the 3rd November 2023.
- Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors has ceased as an organisation due to the subscription model not being sustainable. Businesses have been signposted to the council's newsletter sign up as well as the business email address, both of which are routes to ongoing business support. Officers are working on proposals for a Council Business Engagement Framework to be launched over the Autumn.
- Arrangements are underway for Christmas lights for Marlowes. Hemel Old Town, Tring and Berkhamstead and for the neighbourhood centres. Christmas trees have also been ordered for some locations and options for additional attractions are being considered.

Communities Arts and Culture

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- The Old Town Hall continues to offer a very full and varied programme to our residents. Overall customer satisfaction for events in the last quarter as 96% excellent or good, with the front of house staff receiving 100% excellent or good.
- The Adventure Playgrounds (APG) have seen 16,336 child attendances from April to July with a further 15,466 other users including bookings.
- Funding has been secured for a further year for the Health Inequalities and Healthy Hub programmes.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- A proposal for the future approach to Voluntary and Community Sector funding will be presented to Cabinet on 12th December 2023 once it has been through appropriate governance.
- For the first time, the Old Town Hall will present a three week show over the Christmas period. 'The Ballard of Rudy' will run from the 5th -24th December, with schools and group bookings expected to provide the majority of the audience.
- To increase the ability to promote the services the APGs can offer, a micro site has been developed where policies, booking links and activity information is now held in one place.
- A Recycled Art Sculpture project is underway, culminating in an event in Hemel Hempstead Town Centre on 14th October to promote National Recycle Week.

Hemel Garden Communities

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Towpath re-surfacing improvements, Nash Mills to Kings Langley, have been completed.
- Nickey Line re-surfacing from Redbourn Road to Queensway has been completed.
- A Place-making for the future event was held on 17th July looking at health and well-being; green infrastructure; and, active and sustainable travel challenges and opportunities.
- Solar Bulk Buy Autumn 2023 was launched at the end of August. The promotion introduces residents to a Hertfordshire-wide group buying scheme for photo-voltaics, battery storage and electric car charging point installation. The autumn 2022 programme has resulted in the installation of over 10,000 PVs across Hertfordshire.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- St Albans District Council are currently consulting on their Regulation 18 draft Local Plan. The proposals include the Hemel Garden Communities' housing allocations at land East of Hemel Hempstead, employment land and gypsy and traveller site allocations. The consultation has included a series of consultation events, including an event on 8th September at Leverstock Green. The consultation closes on 25th September and Dacorum Borough Council are a Statutory Consultee.

**Council Briefing Note 27th September 2023****PEOPLE AND TRANSFORMATION PORTFOLIO –
COUNCILLOR CAROLE WESTON**

Our People and Transformation teams continue to work on delivering the 4 key strategies (Customer, Digital, People and Communications) which were agreed at the start of 2023.

The customer strategy aims to ensure that the resident is at the heart of everything we do. The current focus is ensuring that we get the basics right. To that end, there has been significant work undertaken to improve the telephone experience (and reducing delays) for those who choose to call us. Improving our website so that it is easy and clear for our residents to access the information they need, by improving how we communicate, so residents know what they can expect from us. This is all building to the introduction of a customer charter whereby the Council will make commitments around customer service which it will then adhere to.

This work is supported by our digital team and are now upgrading our Microsoft Teams capability so that external calls can be made and received through teams. This means that officers can be contacted more easily, irrespective of where they are or what they are doing. This is a key part of our digital strategy, and will be followed by further work to ensure our officers have the right kit to enable them to complete work activities when out engaging with residents (rather than having to return to the office). This will result in greater productivity and a better service for our residents.

Our People team continue to support the Council through the challenging jobs market and our collective work is showing significant success in bringing new talent into the Council. Our market forces policy is now live, allowing us to offer recognised salaries where there is evidence that this is required to recruit in specialist areas. Part of our recruitment strategy is to provide a very strong 'offer' to potential joiners. Our commitment to leadership and development is part of this and we've now rolled out the next stage of our programme to middle-management grades.

Summer is a busy time for Council run and supported events and this year is no exception. Following on from the successful June events such as Armed Forces Day where we also recognised the Windrush 75th anniversary, we delivered a 'Summer of Fun' events programme. This brought together some free and low cost events delivered by the Council and our partners, including Hemel Hempstead Business Improvement District. Also events such as the surf-simulator, street velodrome in Market Square and Birds of Prey. The programme celebrated the use of our beautiful assets across the borough including our green flag parks, Splash Park, skate parks and other family and sporting activities.

We published the summer edition of our residents magazine, Dacorum Life, celebrating the Council's achievements and sharing important news and information with our stakeholders. We continue to grow our weekly version, Dacorum Life (digital), sending important news and information about Council projects, achievements and events direct to subscribers' inbox each week.



Financial Services

- The external Auditors have concluded the audit of the 2022/23 financial statements, with no initial adverse findings.
- The first quarter corporate financial monitoring report has been presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet.
- The treasury management service are working effectively at investing the council's resources and achieving good returns on investment, to the benefit of the councils 23/24 financial performance projections.

Revenues and Benefits service

- The service has continued to support new housing benefit, council tax support and discretionary housing payment applications and make changes to continuing awards.
- It continues also to administer council tax and business rates accounts for residents and businesses.
- Proposals have been developed for amends to the 24/25 Council Tax support policy. If agreed, the proposed changes would provide benefit to the borough's lowest income residents, without significant cost, and will also enable more efficient administration of the policy. Cabinet approved the start of a consultation process with preceptors in September, which is now underway.

Legal and Democratic Services

Electoral & Democratic Services:

- Annual canvass has now begun, and all properties have been sent relevant forms. Around 75% of the borough were Route 1 properties (meaning the whole household matched with the DWP checks) and around 25% of the Borough were a Route 2 property, which means at least one member of the household did not match with the DWP. Reminder forms to properties who do not respond, will be distributed on the 26th of September. Anyone who receives a reminder form must reply.

Legal Services:

- The Legal Team have been developing a project to carry out a statutory compliance review, to assure that the Council is meeting all of its full statutory duties.

Licensing:

- The Licensing Enforcement Team have been active, with a number of enforcement investigations over the summer period, and on the 22nd August the Licensing and Health and Safety Enforcement Sub-Committee met to consider an allegation of dangerous driving. The Driver was given 7-week suspension for pulling away from the kerb while the rear door was open and a mother was still strapping her baby into the car seat.
- Phil Wortley the Licensing Team Leader has now retired, and Sally McDonald is stepping into the role on an interim basis until a recruitment exercise can be complete.

Commercial Development

Parking:

The Parking Service introduced 3 Traffic Regulation Orders over the summer, with the aim of improving parking and traffic management. These were as follows:

- **The Borough of Dacorum (Various Roads, The Denes, Hemel Hempstead) (Waiting Restrictions) Order 2023**
The effect of the Order was to introduce the following waiting restrictions at and on various roads in and around The Denes, Hemel Hempstead:
 - Additional no waiting at any time (double yellow line) restrictions on Pinecroft, The Denes, Barnacres Road and Georgewood Road
 - Making the existing two advisory disabled parking bays in The Denes mandatory at any time
 - Making the existing limited waiting bays in The Denes time restricted to Monday to Sunday 8am to 7pm, two hours, no return within two hours.
- **The Borough of Dacorum (Old Fishery Lane, Hemel Hempstead) (Prohibition of Waiting at Any Time) Order 2023**
The effect of the Order was to introduce new no waiting at any time (double yellow line) restrictions on both sides of Old Fishery Lane from its junction with Chaulden Lane for its entire length.
- **The Borough of Dacorum (Waterhouse Street, Hemel Hempstead) (Disabled Persons Parking Places) Order 2023**
The effect of the Order was the replacement of a section of the existing taxi bays with new disabled parking bays. These will be in use Monday to Sunday, 8am to 8pm, three hours, no return within two hours.

- Garages – The garage service continues to be on track to deliver the increased income target for 2023/24, with a net increase of an additional 54 garages being rented so far this year. Work is underway to plan repairs that will make more garages available to residents, particularly in areas where there is known demand.
- Parking – Proposals were put to Cabinet in September for an informal consultation on proposed changes to parking tariffs and charging, following presentation to Finance & Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- Procurement – A review of procurement and contract management processes is underway, to assure they continue to support the Council in securing best value in the services, works and goods it procures. This will include contract management training to ensure officers continue to effectively manage the Council's contracts.
- Commercial – Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) have started to be installed in certain Council car parks across the Borough. Over the next few weeks and months, residents will start to see these EVCPs installed and operational, which will support the Council's commitment to improving access to and the availability of charge points and addressing climate change.

Commercial and General Fund Property Services

- Commercial rents audit outcome – The audit has reported an audit rating of Substantial Assurance, which confirms there is a robust system of internal controls operating effectively to ensure that risks are managed and objectives achieved.
- Works are progressing at Bennetts Gate Neighbourhood Centre to replace the windows and complete concrete repairs.
- A fire drill evacuation was undertaken at The Forum on the 10th August at 15:00 pm. Overall, this was a satisfactory exercise to check that the procedures we have in place are working effectively and regular exercises will continue to be undertaken.

Update on strategic or significant operational matters:

- Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) - The Commercial Portfolio has been inspected for the presence of RAAC and it has been confirmed that there is no RAAC present in any General Fund commercial asset.
- Cupid Green playing fields – Following the major sewage works undertaken a few years ago the land utilised by Thames Water has not been reinstated. This is a complex legal issue which officers are progressing with the aim to bring the land back into public use and members will be kept updated.

FULL COUNCIL - JULY

ACTION POINTS FOR PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Date of meeting	Action point	PH responsible for action	Response / Investigation Ongoing
July 2023	Cllr Symington to circulate cost of the strategic review to members.	Cllr Sally Symington	<p>The work streams planned for the Strategic Asset Review (SRA) are reported in the Report to Cabinet 20 June 2023 and listed in Table 1 on page 5. In total, the costs for the SAR are estimated at £516k. These are being partly funded from existing budgets provided for by the previous administration. However, there is a shortfall across the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of £95,500 and the General Fund (GE) of £115,500, giving a combined total shortfall of £211k. The HRA funding requirement is being funded by a one-off reduction to the 2023/24 HRA revenue contribution to capital and the GF funding requirement is being funded from the Dacorum Development Reserve.</p> <p>The Strategic Asset Review will enable the Council to make best use of Council assets to support the delivery of housing growth and regeneration throughout Dacorum; and to generate long term income streams that support service delivery for the benefit of Dacorum’s communities.</p>
July 2023	Cllr Bromham to provide written answer regarding timescale for verge hardening.	Cllr Robin Bromham	<p>“I appreciate the amount of reported parking congestion we have on residential streets, and the effect that has, especially on pedestrians of restricted mobility. Our streets were not designed for the quantity and size/weight of modern vehicles.</p> <p>As this problem was neglected by the previous administration, and a backlog of potential schemes has built up, I have asked for policy options, based on evidenced parking congestion, desire-lines for pedestrians and co-ordination with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which is now being progressed properly by the new administration.</p> <p>I believe that the LCWIP will serve to reduce the need for reliance on cars for local travel, and hence support the choice to reduce levels of multiple car ownership.</p> <p>Thus, I am investigating the provision of more parking on residential streets where the need is shown to be most acute, with an ability to restore to grass or planting in the long-term.”</p>

<p>July 2023</p>	<p>Cllr Wilkie to provide written information on fast-tracking to Cllr Johnson</p>	<p>Cllr Sheron Wilkie</p>	<p>Further to the question from Cllr’s Anderson and Johnson in Full Council meeting on 12th July , please find my written response to all members as requested.</p> <p>In November 2022 Planning Officers provided a Member Briefing Note regarding fast-track appeals after a request from the previous portfolio holder Cllr Anderson – please find attached.</p> <p>Cllr Anderson and Johnson asked at FCM on the 12th July;</p> <p><i>‘In the last year there have been two highly controversial planning appeals in Kings Langley that have been fast-tracked. The fast-tracking process has been used for some years, but this is the first time it has been used for cases where the officer's recommendation has been overturned by Development Management Committee, and the decision to fast-track an appeal against the decision of Development Management Committee is made by Dacorum Planning Department, not the Planning Inspectorate. The fundamental problem with the process is that the appellant gets another opportunity to include disputed information, but neighbours and ward councillors who have objected to the application are denied a role in the fast-track process. They are denied a fair hearing. The previous portfolio holder banned fast-tracking controversial appeals, resulting from the first case, but this ban would appear to have been discontinued. Does the portfolio holder agree with me that fast-tracking these cases is fundamentally unfair, and will the portfolio holder reinstate the ban to stop this from happening?’</i></p> <p>As per the Member Briefing in 2022:</p> <p><i>‘A householder appeal is an appeal against the refusal of planning permission for development attached to a dwelling or within its grounds (i.e., householder planning applications); or against conditions attached to such planning permissions. The householder appeal service was introduced in April 2009 to streamline the procedure for householder appeals, with quicker timescales for making an appeal, and the overall appeal decision-making process”. In other words, a ‘fast track appeal’ is simply the process by which <u>ALL</u> householder appeals are heard. In that sense Cllr Anderson has misunderstood the fast-track appeals process as this is not a process that Dacorum’s Planning Department can choose.’</i></p>
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			<p>Cllr's Anderson and Johnson are correct that the appellant has a further opportunity to provide the Planning Inspectorate with their comments (their 'full case'). However, given the appellant will not previously have seen the Officer's report and the reasons for refusal it is in my view proportionate and proper that they have an opportunity to respond to these.</p> <p>Cllrs Anderson and Johnson are incorrect to say that there was a ban in place through the previous portfolio holder (Cllr Anderson), as it is not the Council / Planning Department that decides this process.</p> <p>As such, I have not lifted any such ban, nor do I have the powers to re-instate one.</p> <p>Moving on to the two specific cases referenced by Cllrs Anderson and Johnson:</p> <p>1) 22/00015/FHA: 36 Belham Road, Kings Langley WD4 8BY</p> <p>This appeal was allowed on 21.02.23. The Planning Inspector agreed with the recommendation of Officers and concluded that the development would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. The key section is as follows:</p> <div data-bbox="920 839 2119 1394" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"><ol style="list-style-type: none">6. I consider that the proposed two storey side extension incorporating the existing garage and extending to the rear elevation of the main house would be of a scale, height, bulk and design in keeping with the character of the existing house itself and the prevailing pattern of development along the street. The extended hipped roof would reflect the existing roof pitch and would be a visual improvement over the existing side dormer when viewed from the street. The size of the plot is ample to accommodate the increase in built form.7. The proposed first floor rear extension over the existing single storey extension would be relatively modest in scale with a hipped roof and would be in keeping with the main house. It would be visible from the rear windows of properties in Hempstead Road over the long rear gardens but not from the street.8. I conclude that the proposed extensions, together with the minor alterations to the chimney and rooflights and other openings, would not harm the character and appearance of the street scene or the wider area and that they are consistent with Core Strategy policies CS11 and CS12.</div>
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			<p>Therefore, this is simply an example of where Planning is not an exact science. Members, as is their right to do, reached a different view on the harm caused by the development to Officers. This is not uncommon and not due to a fast-track appeals system.</p> <p>Design / impact on the character and appearance of the area are subjective assessments. Officers rely on their experience and knowledge of previous decisions to assess when a scheme tips the balance and becomes sufficiently harmful that it needs to be refused.</p> <p>Officers have checked through householder planning appeals since the beginning of 2021 and there have been 4 householder appeals resulting from DMC Members reaching a contrary view to Officers. Three of these appeals were dismissed with one allowed.</p> <p>2) 22/03760/FHA: 29 Langley Hill, Kings Langley WD4 9HA</p> <p>This appeal has not yet been determined. This one was refused for the following reason:</p> <div data-bbox="920 770 2051 1018" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Reason(s) for Refusal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development by virtue of the rear facing balcony, will result in overlooking of, and an unacceptable loss of privacy to neighbouring residential properties. As such, the development fails to comply with Policy CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy </div> <p>It if Planning Officers position that regardless of the Planning Inspector’s conclusion, any impact resulting from this development is very localised and that this development is not controversial in a wider sense.</p>
<p>July 2023</p>	<p>Cllr Weston stated that she would provide a written reply to this question “What work was being done with</p>	<p>Cllr Carol Weston</p>	<p>Hertfordshire County Council staff members regularly attend the Hertfordshire Head of Human Resources meetings and recruitment is a frequent item at the meeting. We had an external presentation on how to best use social media and LinkedIn to assist with recruitment. As a result we are now utilising a recruiter license which allows us to proactively contact candidates who match the job vacancy skill set and are open to work.</p>

	Hertfordshire County to promote roles with young people		<p>There is other work continuing at the Council, which will support the recruitment/retention of young people. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of our national graduate development programme intake, from 1 per year to 3 per year. • Continuing HR and management presence at career fairs • We have a stage in recruitment approval process to ensure managers consider the option to amend the vacancy to a trainee/apprentice role. • Bespoke marketing campaigns for graduate positions, latest one for the graduate environmental health officers. We received 12 applications. • We offer apprenticeship training for staff and currently have 11 members of staff on apprenticeship courses. • We offer a work experience programme for schools, this will be expanded in the next offer. • We are exploring partnerships with local colleges/universities with an aim to provide a pathway to job opportunities with the Council. • We have recently registered our interest in the planning graduate scheme run by the Local Government Association (LGA). This will be launched in the New Year. • The appraisal process now includes a succession planning element to ensure that future training is bespoke to the needs of personal career development as well as job related training.
July 2023	Leaders to discuss outside bodies list.	Cllr Tindall and Cllr Williams	Waiting for remaining Outside Bodies to be appointed.

Cabinet Referrals

Full Council 27TH September 2023

18TH July 2023

CA/63/23 ENFORCEMENT REPORT

Decision

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

2. **To recommend to Full Council** to approve a drawdown from the Dacorum Development Reserve of up to £110,000.

Corporate Priorities

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
Building strong and vibrant communities
Ensuring economic growth and prosperity
Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery

Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

As set out in the legal implications section, the Council has a duty to investigate alleged breaches of planning control and take action where it is expedient to do so. The additional resource should help the Council to fulfil this duty within a reasonable period of time.

Deputy S151 Officer:

The additional Planning Enforcement resources requested is unbudgeted and would be supported by a drawdown from revenue reserves. Reserve resources are one-off in nature. There are sufficient resources within the Dacorum Development Reserve to support the resource request set out in this report.

Advice

Cllr Tindall introduced the report. JDoe advised this had recently been considered by SPAE Overview & Scrutiny and welcomed any questions which both he and his colleague PStanley would be happy to address.

There were no questions.

Recommendation agreed

12th September 2023

CA/77/23 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE QUARTER 1 2023-24

Decision

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

5. To recommend to Council to approve the following additional slippage on the capital programme from 2022-23 :

- £1.000m relating to the buy-back of Council Homes purchased under Right to Buy Purchases.

6. To recommend to Council to approve the following draw down from the Council's General Fund revenue reserves:

- £0.057m from the Council's Litigation reserve, to support historic pension settlement costs.

Corporate Priorities

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
Building strong and vibrant communities
Ensuring economic growth and prosperity
Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need
Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
Climate and ecological emergency

Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

This report forms part of the Council's regular financial monitoring and provides members with an overview of the Council's financial position at the close of quarter 1. The Monitoring Officer has no further comments to add to the report.

Deputy S151 Officer:

This is a Deputy S151 Officer report

Advice

Cllr Symington introduced the report and advised that all 3 OSC have reviewed this (Housing will be meeting tomorrow but have seen the agenda).

There were no questions.

Recommendation agreed



Council

Report for:	Council
Title of report:	Changes to Health in Dacorum Committee Terms of Reference and Chairman's allowance
Date:	27 September 2023
Report on behalf of:	The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ron Tindall
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	none
Background papers:	none
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	none

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Mark Brookes, Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services)



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Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	1. To seek approval for changes to the Council's constitution in respect of the name and Terms of

	<p>Reference for the Health in Dacorum Committee</p> <p>2. To seek approval to include a special responsibilities payment to the Chairman of the Health in Dacorum Committee, in line with other committee meetings</p>
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<p>1. That Council agrees to the proposed revisions to the name and Terms of Reference for the Health in Dacorum Committee.</p> <p>2. That Council authorises the Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services) to make the required changes to Part 2 of the Constitution to reflect these changes.</p> <p>3. That Council agrees to 0.5 of a special responsibilities payment being paid to the Chair of the Health in Dacorum Committee, and for this to be included in any future Independent Remuneration Panel reviews.</p>
Period for post policy/project review:	The constitution is under continuous review by the Monitoring Officer and updates are proposed to Council when required.

1 Introduction/Background:

- 1.1 The Council is not a direct provider of health services but provides a non-statutory overview and scrutiny function of external local health care providers. This function is carried out by the Health in Dacorum Committee and the current terms of reference are set out in the Constitution as follows:

HEALTH IN DACORUM COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

To perform a non-statutory role of overview and scrutiny of matters relating to the provision of Health Services in the Borough by external local health providers.

- (i) The Health & Well-Being in Dacorum Committee will consist of 7 Members of the Council together with 3 Co-Opted Members (who shall have full voting rights) which shall include 2 representatives from the Patients Forum.
- (ii) The Chairman & Vice Chairmen of the Health Scrutiny in Dacorum Committee shall be appointed by the Committee itself.

- 1.2 The Committee meets quarterly and is made of up of the following 12 members as selected by Political Group Leaders and approved by full Council;

Councillors; Bhinder, Cox, Elliot, Freedman, Hannell, C Link, Maddern, McArevey (Chair), Patterson, Pound, Pringle (Vice Chair), B Williams

Co-opted; Edith Glatter (Patients Representatives Group)
Kevin Minier (Dacorum Patients Group)

1.3 The standing agenda items for each meeting are as follows;

- Ward issues
- West Herts Hospital NHS Trust update
- Clinical Commissioning Group update
- County Council Health Scrutiny Committee update
- County Council Adult Care Services update

In addition to this, there is a work programme to steer any key issues the committee wish to come forward

2 Key considerations & alternate options;

2.1 Health and Well-being services in Dacorum provide vital community services and there is an opportunity to re-invigorate the Committee to ensure that it provides greater focus to the areas which the Council can directly influence through its own service provision, whilst also retaining an external scrutiny function regarding services provided by third party organisations.

2.2 Council officers are engaging with partners at the Integrated Care Board and the South West Herts Health and Care Partnership as they shape their approach to localities based health care provision using data led analysis. This includes a task and finish group that is looking at how Council services can support health and well-being provision and services.

2.3 It is recommended that the progress of this work is presented and considered by the Health and Well-being Committee and that the Committee focuses on the wider determinants of poor health in Dacorum using the latest data sets available and works closely with partners in the health and care system to improve health outcomes for local residents.

2.4 It is therefore proposed that the following changes are made to the Committee's name and Terms of Reference to ensure that its focus is directed to the areas that it can most directly impact and influence.

3. Proposed changes to the name and Terms of Reference for the Committee

3.1 It is proposed to change the name of the committee to the Health and Well-being Committee. The committee will still have a non-statutory function separate to the three main council overview and scrutiny committees, but the name change will emphasise a change of remit to include a greater emphasis on well-being and an enhanced focus on services that the Council directly provides.

3.2 The proposed revised Terms of Reference for Health and Well-being Committee are as follows;

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

To perform a non-statutory role of overview and scrutiny of matters relating to the provision of Health and Well-Being Services in the Borough by the Council and external local health providers.

- (i) The Health and Well-Being Committee will consist of 12 Members of the Council together with 2 Co-Opted Members (who shall have voting rights) which shall include 2 representatives from the Patients' Forums.
- (ii) The Chairman & Vice Chairman of the Health and Well-Being Committee shall be appointed by full Council.
- (iii) The Committee will set and manage its work programme to fulfil its duty in reviewing health and well-being matters which impact Dacorum residents.
- (iv) The Committee will explore any matters affecting Dacorum and/or its residents including the assessing the impact of services provided directly by the Council, its partners and external health providers/agencies and invite those bodies to provide updates to the committee in accordance with the Committee workplan.
- (v) The Committee will consider how the services directly in the control of the Council can best be deployed, organised and prioritised to support and promote health and well-being in Dacorum. To include, but not limited to: Health inequalities work; housing services including tenant liaison and support and homelessness services; provision and management of parks and open spaces; environmental health services; delivery of active travel initiatives, the development of the Sports and Leisure Strategy, economic inclusion work and the role of the Local Plan, Development Management and Place Strategies to deliver new developments which foster active and healthy lifestyles.
- (vi) To work with the Council's statutory Overview & Scrutiny committees, to ensure referral of any matters as relevant, (including those matters subject to public consultation by external health providers with local residents), for formal scrutiny.

4. Officer Support

- 4.1 In order to support the continual the development of the Committee, it is essential that a robust work programme is developed and agreed by the Committee. The Committee has lacked direct officer guidance and support to help develop the work programme in the recent past and therefore going forward will be supported by the Assistant Director, Place, Communities & Enterprise Directorate.
- 4.2 The Place, Communities & Enterprise team include health and well-being within their overall remit and are best placed to highlight existing Council service provision and the action the Council can take to impact the health and well-being of residents. The team will horizon scan national health trends, as well as engaging with local health provider and partners to keep the committee engaged on local issues and future models of care locally.

5. Alternate options considered

- 5.1 In considering the recommendations as set out in this report, consideration was also given to alternate options for the future of the Health in Dacorum Committee, these included;
- (i) Change the committee from the current non-statutory Overview and Scrutiny Committee to a 'Health in Dacorum Steering Group'. The steering group would not be open to public attendance beyond the co-opted members. To maintain transparency on matters of public interest, where agreed appropriate, the Steering Group would refer items to the relevant scrutiny committee for their formal consideration in regards to impact on our residents. This idea was discounted the opportunity would be lost to develop ideas in a public and open forum.
 - (ii) Discontinue Health as a formal committee and replace with quarterly Health in Dacorum briefings, open to all Members. Allocate an officer lead with appropriate Health & Well-being knowledge and responsibility to liaise with our health partners to ensure that the programme of briefings are informative and support Ward Councillors in performing their duties. These briefings would not be open to public or co-opted representatives. As above, the new Committee has a real opportunity to develop health and well-being initiatives and policy development and it is the recommendation of officers that this is best done in an open and public forum.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The proposals in this report have been agreed by the Leader of the Council, Chairman of the current Health in Dacorum Committee and Opposition Group leaders.

7 Financial and value for money implications:

- 7.1 Under the current arrangements, no special responsibility payment is made to the Chairman of the Committee so there will be a small increase in the Members' Allowance budget but noting the proposed expansion of the Committee's remit it is the view of officers that this is appropriate and commensurate with other Members' allowances.
- 7.2 The payment to the Chairman would be 0.5 of the Special Responsibility allowance (£3,060). 0.5 is appropriate as this is a non-statutory committee and meets only quarterly so is less frequent than the statutory scrutiny committees.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Constitution will be updated to reflect the agreed change in procedures and there are no other legal implications arising from the report.

9 Risk implications:

- 9.1 This report proposes changes to the terms of reference to ensure that the Committee can operate effectively and add value to the Council's internal governance, policy development and decision making. Failure to make the changes proposed could mean that the Council does not make the most of the Committee's scrutiny function.

10 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

- 10.1 There are no Equalities, Community Impact or Human Rights implications arising from this report.

11 Sustainability Implications

- 11.1 There are no Sustainability Implications arising from this report.

12 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

12.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

13 Conclusions:

13.1 The proposed change to the name and Terms of Reference for the Committee gives greater clarity as to its purpose and function.

13.2 The introduction of the special responsibility payment is appropriate noting the overall remit and meeting frequency of the Committee.