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## SUMMONS

### MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

**Wednesday 17 July 2024**

**Council Chamber, The Forum**

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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 17 July 2024 at 7.30 pm to transact the business set out below.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Hamilton".

**CLAIRE HAMILTON  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**Contact: Democratic Support  
ext 2209**

# AGENDA

**1. MINUTES** (Pages 4 - 9)

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 Legal & Democratic 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 10 - 25)

5.1 Councillor England Leader of the Council (verbal update only)

5.2 Councillor Allen Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Emergency

5.3 Councillor Wilkie Portfolio Holder Place

5.4 Councillor Tindall Portfolio Holder People & Transformation

5.5 Councillor Capozzi Portfolio Holder Corporate and Commercial Services

5.6 Councillor Dhyanani Portfolio Holder Housing & Property Services

5.7 Councillor Bromham Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Operations

**6. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING** (Pages 26 - 27)

To consider any business referred from the previous meeting

**7. CABINET REFERRALS** (Page 28)

To consider the following referrals from Cabinet:

7.1 CA/42/24 – Constitutional Updates 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

7.2 CA/59/24 – Bovingdon Neighbourhood Plan 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**8. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORTS** (Pages 29 - 33)

**9. WAIVER OF 6 MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE** (Page 34)

**10. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

To consider any proposals for changes to committee membership

**11. CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES**

To consider any proposals for changes to committee dates

# Agenda Item 1 Public Document Pack

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## **DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**17 APRIL 2024**

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Present:

#### **MEMBERS:**

Councillor Tindall (Leader) Councillors, Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Banks, Barry, Bristow, Bromham, Capozzi, Cox, Dhyani, Douris, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Gale, Guest, Hobson, Johnson, Link, Link, Maddern, McArevey, Mitchell, Patterson, Pesch, Pound, Pringle, Reynolds, Riddick, Santamaria, Silwal, Stevens, Stewart, Symington, Taylor, Walker, Weston, Wilkie, Williams, Williams and C Wyatt-Lowe

#### **OFFICERS:**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

### **1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Action: Democratic Support to review the Minutes of the previous meeting as it was noted there were spelling mistakes and that Cllr B Link was referred to as Clink.

Cllr Tindall noted a correction on the previous minutes. The minutes as printed were factually correct however he said that the reason that Cllr Symington stepped down from Cabinet was because she had been selected as a parliamentary candidate and felt it was appropriate, so although the opposition did speak the words as written they were mistaken.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participations.

### **4 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were announcements from the Mayor who advised of his upcoming events.

The Chief Executive made the following announcements,

The Chief Executive - There will be a Police & Crime Commissioner election on Thursday 2nd of May 2024. The verification of the ballot papers will be carried out on Friday the 3rd of May from 10am. The Count will take place on Saturday 4th of May from 10am. Both of which will be held at The Forum. For further details, please contact the Elections team.

The Chief Executive - On 26th March I received notification that Councillor Goverdhan Silwal left the Conservative Party and will continue as an Independent Councillor.

Cllr Tindall gave apologies on behalf of Cllrs, Smith Wright, S Hobson and Deacon.

Cllr Williams gave apologies on behalf of Cllrs, Barradell, Durrant, Timmis and Bhinder.

Cllr Pesch gave apologies on behalf of Cllr Hannell.

There were apologies from Cllr Birnie.

## **5 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES**

The Portfolio Holders took their updates as read and were happy to take questions.

Actions:

Item 5.4 (Cllr Wilkie PH update) Cllr Banks referred to funding for playground refurbishments and asked if this be inclusive for children with disabilities. Cllr Wilkie confirmed this would be the case but advised she would take the question away to provide further information.

Item 5.5 (Cllr Weston PH update) Cllr Guest asked for a timescale for the publication of the Corporate Plan. Cllr Weston confirmed it is expected within the next couple of months and confirmed she will provide expected timescales by email.

The full discussion and questions can be views via the video minutes

## **6 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

There was no outstanding business from the last meeting.

## **7 CABINET REFERRALS**

7.1 CA/33/24 Senior Officer Pay Policy 19th February 2024

This was seconded by Cllr England and agreed by the council.

## **8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

There were no referrals from Overview & Scrutiny.

## **9 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Cllr Williams advised Cllr Walker was to replace Cllr Silwal on The Development Management Committee.

## **10 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES**

Cllr Tindall Advised that the Strategic Planning Overview & Scrutiny Committee planned for the 10<sup>th</sup> July would be moving to the 9<sup>th</sup> of July.

The Meeting ended at 8.06 pm

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## **DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**15 MAY 2024**

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Present:

#### **MEMBERS:**

Councillor Tindall (Leader) Councillors, Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Banks, Bhinder, Bristow, Bromham, Cox, Deacon, Dhyani, Douris, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Guest, Hannell, Hobson, Johnson, Link, Link, Maddern, McArevey, Mitchell, Patterson, Pesch, Pound, Reynolds, Riddick, Santamaria, Silwal, Smith-Wright, Stevens, Stewart, Symington, Taylor, Walker, Weston, Williams, Williams and C Wyatt-Lowe

#### **OFFICERS:**

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

#### **1 MAYOR**

Councillor William Allen made a speech in relation to his year as Mayor of Dacorum.

Councillor William Allen asked for nominations for the election of a Mayor to hold office until the appointment of a successor at the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2025.

It was moved by Councillor Carrie Link, seconded by Councillor Simy Dhyani and unanimously;

#### Resolved:

That Councillor Brenda Link be appointed Mayor to the Borough of Dacorum until the appointment of a successor at the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2025.

Councillor William Allen vacated the chair which was taken by Councillor Brenda Link who made her declaration of acceptance of office.

Councillor Brenda Link delivered a speech of acceptance.

The newly elected Mayor referred to the duties carried out by Councillor William Allen as Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum during the past year.

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Simy Dhyani and unanimously;

#### Resolved:

That the Council tender to Councillor William Allen their most cordial thanks for the admirable manner in which he has discharged the duties of the office of Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum during the past year and place on record their appreciation of the energy and sound judgement which distinguished his actions during that period: That the Seal of the Council be affixed to a copy of this resolution and that it be presented to him in recognition of his services as Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum.

## **2 DEPUTY MAYOR**

The Mayor asked for nominations for the appointment of the Deputy Mayor to hold office until the appointment of a successor at the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2025.

It was moved by Councillor William Allen, seconded by Councillor Ron Tindall and unanimously;

### Resolved:

That Councillor Catherine McArevey be appointed Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum until the appointment of a successor at the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2025.

Councillor Catherine McArevey made her declaration of acceptance of office.

## **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting will be considered at the next Council meeting.

## **4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllrs, Barry–Mears, Birnie, Capozzi, Gale, Pringle, Timmis, Wilkie.

## **5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **6 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Brenda Link handed over to Cllr Tindall for his announcements.

Councillor Tindall advised that he was stepping down as leader of the council and proposed that Councillor Adrian England would take the position as leader.

It was proposed by Councillor Tindall, seconded by Councillor Nigel Taylor and agreed that Councillor England be appointed as Leader of the Council until the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2027 (unless the term of office is brought to an end earlier in accordance with the Constitution).

Mayor Brenda Link handed over to the Chief Executive Claire Hamilton for her announcements.

Claire Hamilton announced the following



The Police & Crime Commissioner election was held on Thursday the 2nd of May 2024. I can confirm that there was a 29.3% turnout across Hertfordshire and the candidate elected was Jonathan Ash-Edwards of the Conservative Party.

I would also like to inform members that there will be a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum in the Bovingdon area on Thursday the 13th of June 2024. The Notice of election has been published and poll cards issued. For more information please see the Elections 2024 page of the council's website.

## **7 APPOINTMENT OF THE CABINET, OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND REGULATORY COMMITTEES 2024-2025**

Councillor Adrian England appointed Councillor Simy Dhyani as Deputy Leader

Proposals for the Cabinet, Chairs and Vice-Chairs and Members to serve on the Standing Committees until the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2025 were circulated as set out in Annex A to these minutes and agreed.

## **8 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

Mayor Brenda Link handed over to Councillor Adrian England

The full appointment to outside organisations will come to the next meeting of the Full Council. In the interim, I propose the following representatives be appointed;

1. Councillor Jane Timmis - (London) Luton Airport Consultative Committee

Councillor Adrian England extended thanks to Councillor Douris for his work on the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee and advised that Councillor Robin Bromham would now handle any future liaison with them under the portfolio of Neighbourhood Delivery.

The Meeting ended at 8.15 pm

# Agenda Item 5



Council Briefing Note 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## CLIMATE & ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR WILLIAM ALLEN

The CEE programme consists of a range of projects and activities being delivered across the Council to help us deliver our objectives set out in our Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy.

### Decarbonise Social Homes

- The first phase of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) saw investment of over £1m into 24 homes. This project involved delivering energy efficiency improvements that enabled us to achieve Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) A for all the homes concerned.
- Phase 2 is currently under way and has involved decarbonising a further 30 homes - 8 at Blackwell Road Kings Langley & 22 at Curtis Road Berkhamsted (Curtis Road due for completion in July due to adverse weather).
- Work includes energy efficiency measures such as external wall insulation, loft insulation, draught proofing, heating controls, improved ventilation and solar PV installations. Government funding is being used where possible, but it often comes with constraints which limit its effect in widening the benefits.
- Confirmed additional 45 homes will be delivered and goal completion date in 2025.
- £22.4M has been allocated in the approved HRA business plan to achieve EPC C by 2035 in all social homes, prioritising those in fuel poverty for 2030. This is in line with governments milestones.
- A high level £1m costed plan has been put together for year 1 (24/25) with a focus on additional EPC's and a focus on new roofing, Solar PV, improved cavity and loft insulation.
- 4 Sheltered housing schemes have been identified for hybrid boilers for the next financial year. We have developed designs and submitted applications for planning permissions for all 4 schemes.

### Decarbonising our core assets

- The council are working with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) to develop an updated, prioritised and financed Net Zero programme to decarbonise our built assets by 2030.
- We have submitted a funding application to Low Carbon Skills Fund to undertake work on developing a strategy for alternatives to gas consuming assets. Our application focuses on Berkhamsted Civic Centre, Victoria Hall, Maylands Business Centre as their boilers are older than 10 years (key criteria).
- We have been successful with our grant application for £630k from Sport England which will enable us to install approximately 720 solar panels at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre. Once installed the solar panels are estimated to generate 360kWh of renewable energy, which will help reduce the carbon footprint of the facility and enable an estimated 324,120 kWh reduction in electricity consumption per year.

### Sustainable Transport

- Dacorum is currently developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to encourage residents to cycle and walk more.

- Draft walking and cycling maps have been developed.
- Route audits have taken place to assess the current conditions and assess what interventions (projects) will need to be made.
- The Council is exploring the feasibility of the provision of shared bikes in the borough. The project is going through various internal approvals at the moment.

#### Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) in council car parks

- The installation of EVCPs across car parks in Dacorum is progressing well. Osprey rapid charge points are now live at 5 sites - The Forge, Hicks Road, The High St, Leverstock Green and Wood Lane End.
- Connected Kerb fast EVCP installation is now complete at 15 of 16 sites.

We are working closely with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to identify additional on street locations throughout Dacorum that would be suitable for EVCP's. HCC have been allocated £6m of funding through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding. The LEVI fund prioritises off street locations, as such the list is comprised of locations in car parks at community centres or shopping areas, with a few of on street chargers where there was no off-street option available nearby to suit residents. The idea is that this fund will be used to distribute charge points much more closely to residents' homes, ensuring they're within a walkable distance and prioritising areas where residents do not have off street parking.



## Council Briefing Note 17 July 2024

PLACE PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SHERON WILKIE

### Planning Services

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- The appeal against the Council's decision to refuse the development of 1,400 houses (and associated development) on Land East of Tring was dismissed by the Secretary of State. The Council has been notified as an Interested Party that a challenge has been bought forward by the applicants. There are no set timescales on this.
- A new appeal has been received at Land West of Leighton Buzzard Road against the refusal of planning permission for construction of up to 390 dwellings (C3 Use), including up to 40% affordable housing and 5% self build, a residential care home for up to 70-beds (C2 use), along with associated landscaping and open space with access from Leighton Buzzard Road. The anticipated public inquiry date is 15 October 2024 (planning application 21/04508/MOA).
- The HCC team continue to work with DBC on the Local Cycle Walking Infrastructure Plan. An update will be provided to SPAE OSC on this work in autumn and a stakeholder engagement session with a consultation is planned for the end of September 2024. The timescales on this work have been updated due to the purdah period.
- The Strategic Planning Team are continuing to finalise the evidence base required to demonstrate to the Planning Inspector that the final version is the best strategy for Dacorum. The Task and Finish Group had their last meeting on 27 June, the Duty to Co-operate meetings are continued with our neighbouring local authorities and the team are working with statutory consultees on our Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will support the Local Plan. The next update to SPAE OSC is scheduled for Wednesday 4 September.
- The key performance indicators in the planning enforcement team for Q4 (up to April 2024) showed are increasing thanks to the work of the team including temporary resources to work through the back log. The team are working on a plan to make this performance sustainable and ensure a manageable workload. The Enforcement Team remain focused on dealing with the most harmful breaches of planning control. A total of 6 formal Notices were served in the quarter (all Enforcement Notices)

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

- Bovingdon Neighbourhood Plan is on agenda for Full Council 17 July and will continue to be adopted.
- The Strategic Planning Team is also supporting Great Gaddesden and Berkhamsted Neighbourhood Plans.
- Markyate Conservation Area Character Appraisal agreed at SPAE OSC, and Cabinet on 12 May. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal will be adopted following Council approval.
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document has been agreed by SPAE OSC and Cabinet, the consultation period is currently being planned.

### Place and Enterprise

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- The Head of Place and Enterprise and the Enterprise Manager started on 1 July 2024
- UK Shared Prosperity funded projects completed or nearing completion – Keens Field Flower Shield, People’s Park feasibility study in Berkhamsted, Maylands Masterplan
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Hemel Imaginarium. Officers are working with voluntary sector partners as well as the BID on ‘pop up’ summer activities. This includes a Summer of Sports delivered by Apex 360, a big screen in the town centre with deckchairs for the Olympics, and a 2 day freestyle bike ride workshop in Market Square

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

- Health Campus – A report will be presented to Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> July detailing next steps and with recommendations to take the project forward
- Mulligans Hemel is opening in Jarmans Park in July. This will include an indoor 18 hole crazy golf course inspired by iconic games, as well as additional activities such as electro darts, ping pong and pool.

## **Communities and Leisure**

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Berkhamsted Pool reopened on 1 July on schedule, following repairs to a significant leak and Maintenance agreed to be undertaken while the pool was empty. Officers worked closely with Everyone Active to ensure closure was kept to a minimum and effective communications in place.
- The Spring round of Community Grants has awarded £27,860 to 11 groups and £4,400 in small grants to 9 groups

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

- A summer Holiday Programme has been developed for Adeyfield and Bennetts End Adventure Playgrounds

## **Arts and Culture**

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Dacorum Community Dance have resumed weekly seated dance sessions at Evelyn Sharpe House and William Crook House
- Subways Public Art - Plough Roundabout – young people attended two workshops with final designs submitted to HCC with painting anticipated mid July

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

- Old Town Hall Theatre – a new Disability Access system is due to launch in July
- A two week festival of Comedy Previews is programmed for July with comedians including Jo Brand and Milton Jones trying out their material ahead of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival

## **Hemel Garden Communities**

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Hemel Garden Communities continues to develop evidence and draft policies to support the Local Plan processes, across both Dacorum and St Albans.
- Further work on the Framework Plan has been progressed to reflect Landscape Assessment work and ensure the boundaries for Land North of Hemel Hempstead can be robustly defended and capacity maintained at around 10,500 dwellings across Hemel Garden Communities.

- In parallel, various workstreams are being developed that will inform a future Supplementary Planning Document to ensure the qualitative output of future development plans.
- Work is also progressing on land assembly and delivery strategies, which will be necessary to delivering comprehensive development across Land North of Hemel Hempstead.
- The Councillor Review Group engagement activity plan is being refreshed to outline engagement activities for the second half of the year.

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

- N/A will be reported via wider DBC Local Plan processes.



## Council Briefing Note 17 July 2024

PEOPLE AND TRANSFORMATION PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR RON TINDALL

### People and Transformation

#### People

- Leadership Training for all tier 4 managers has been completed.
- We have set up a staff values and behaviours delivery group to help further embed these within the Council's desired culture. A new management 121 approach launched to further embed aligned staff behaviours. The next schemes to be approved include mentoring, staff volunteering and staff recognition.
- We are working closely with the Depot management team to drive down sickness – reviewing data to identify trends and exploring interventions such as physio offer, and health and safety practices.
- A revised Drug, Substance and Alcohol Policy approved by TUs and SLT, which has been relaunched with training for staff and managers.
- Devising with managers, staff and TUs a new mandatory managers development training programme – to be launched in the Autumn.

#### Digital

- Procurement of new laptops for the workforce has concluded. Devices are expected to arrive in July for roll out to commence.
- Procurement for new Wi-Fi has concluded. New Wi-Fi hardware expected to be installed and live by the end of August
- Digital platform builds are underway with garage portal and complaints & FOI modules now in development.
- Cyber security training rolled out to all staff and members
- Digital improvement programme signed off by Transformation Board and is now underway.

### Customer Services and Complaints

- New Persistent & Unreasonable Behaviour Policy introduced to enable the Council to effectively deal with unreasonable customers that is impacting on staff resources
- Submitted Ombudsman Annual assessment and supported the submission of Annual complaints report to the Housing Ombudsman
- Complaints policy has been updated to align to the new Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Improved on call wait time performance measures for March/April (busiest time for the year), in comparison to the same time last year
- Successfully managed the annual Green Waste Subscription service renewal during the busiest time of year when the Council Tax bills and Rent increases also took place
- Reviewed Operator calls in Customer Service to improve customer journey on calls to have their enquiry dealt with at the first point of contact

- Improved all Integrated Voice Recognition scripts to provide customers with a smooth journey to having their enquiries dealt with, introducing self-service to reduce down call wait times

### PMO / Performance /Transformation

- New and updated KPIs were presented and approved at Cabinet which will ensure we are measuring performance of teams with relevant performance Indicators and ambitious targets.
- We continue to work across the Council to improve our overall approach to performance management. We have introduced and facilitated new governance processes so that Directors have greater oversight of performance at department levels and hold relevant service leads to account over performance levels.
- We have undertaken detailed analysis of recent report from OFLOG. This has helped understanding of what data OFLOG is using and what this says about DBC performance which will support us to develop specific actions to improve performance levels in required areas
- We continue on our journey to improve our corporate approach to managing projects. We have now finalised our corporate portfolio which the Programme Management Office (PMO) will support and ensure relevant oversight and accountability. We have set up new reporting and governance processes to enable this. We also delivered Project Executive training to our corporate leadership team so that they can undertake their roles effectively in overseeing these projects and programmes
- Following the procurement of a new digital platform, we have now established a two-year roadmap and programme plan for delivery
- We worked with Council Tax service to introduce improved self service which allows customers to let us know about moving in/out and change of circumstances much more easily, obtaining refunds more quickly whilst allowing us to process these transactions more efficiently.
- We have started redesign projects with Waste Services, Garage Bookings, Benefits, Complaints, Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act that will improve the way customers can interact with the council whilst enabling us to deliver these services more efficiently

### Communications and Engagement

Continued support across all services, supporting on external communications, marketing and engagement activities for corporate projects, campaigns and operational service delivery. Highlights include:

- Keep Britain Tidy's 'Great British Spring Clean' 2024 campaign - More than 1,000 people took part in the 2024 Great British Spring Clean in Dacorum, with volunteers helping to clear almost 600 bags of litter, supported by our Clean, Safe and Green (CSG) team.
- Free Compost and Wildflower Seed giveaway: Ten tonnes of peat-free compost was shared between more than 250 households in May as we marked International Compost Awareness Week. On Saturday 18 May more than 500 bags were given away to keen gardeners. More than 300 packets of bee-friendly wildflower seeds were also given out through the Dacorum Climate Action Network to support our local pollinators and brighten up the borough's gardens and allotments.
- General Election – Communications and awareness campaign - The Pre-Election Restricted Period (PERP) runs approximately 6 weeks until polling day. During this period we are unable to use Councillors quotes or photographs in any publicity. The restrictions aim to make sure that local authorities do not appear to be using public resources to support any particular party or individual involved in elections, or to influence the outcome.



- Events programme – work continues on the delivery of the annual events programme. Recently delivered external events include The Mayor’s Garden Party (12 May 2024) and Armed Forces Day (29 June 2024).



## Council Briefing Note 17th July 2024

### CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR MICHELA CAPOZZI

#### Financial Services

##### Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

- The production and publication of the year-end financial statements have been concluded by the finance team, with Dacorum one of only 40% of councils that achieved this statutory requirement.
- Financial performance of the Council's revenue and capital funds remained positive up to year end, with a surplus positive position reported at year end.
- The HRA remained in a short deficit for the 2023/24 financial year and the future pressures remain under careful monitoring.

##### Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:

- The annual Fees and Charges review process has been started earlier than in previous years, with the aim of delivering revised Fees and charges proposals for 2025/26 in October 2024.
- Work is underway for the MTFs update in October 2024, and planning for delivery of a balanced budget for 25-26. There are a series of work programmes underway to develop proposals for meeting the ongoing MTFs savings requirement of £3.9m. The work underway includes reviews of commercial income streams and fees and charges, efficiency reviews, a strategic review of the Council's assets, as well as budget and service planning.

#### Revenues and Benefits service

##### Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

- The 2024/25 Council Tax billing process has been undertaken following February Council approval of council tax levels.
- The annual business rates billing for 2024/25 has been undertaken with businesses receiving their bills.

**Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:**

- Citizen access online has been rolled out successfully, which allows us to support residents more effectively by providing digital access to certain services.

**Legal and Democratic Services**

**Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:**

**PCC election 2 May 2024**

The Police & Crime Commissioner election was successfully carried out.

84 polling stations were open and fully equipped on polling day and just over 400 staff roles were appointed. All polling station staff were required to carry out new online training and this was well received. A new process for appointing staff and booking of polling stations also enabled a quick and efficient process to be followed. This was the first election these processes were used and overall were very successful.

In addition, new processes at the count were rolled out which resulted in a smooth verification & count over the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2024. Overall, the PCC election saw a 20.66% turnout.

**Bovingdon Neighbourhood Planning Referendum**

The Bovingdon NPR was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June. This involved 2 polling stations for an electorate of 3613. There were no issues on polling day and an efficient count was carried out after the close of poll. Overall, this referendum saw a 20.43% turnout.

**Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:**

**Parliamentary Election 4 July 2024**

Since the announcement of the Parliamentary election, all polling stations have been booked and to date around 430 staff roles have been appointed. All poll cards have been issued and the first run of postal votes have been sent out.

The Elections Team are working cross boundary with St Albans District Council as they will be running the Harpenden & Berkhamsted Constituency, and are also working with Three Rivers District Council, as they will run the South West Herts Constituency.

A major aspect of a Parliamentary election is the increase in Registering to Vote applications, Postal Vote applications and Overseas applications. All can now be applied for online and the Elections Team have seen a significant increase in these sorts of applications and can be processing per day around 250 registrations, 100 postal & proxy vote applications, 20 overseas applications and around 10-15 Voter Authority Certificate applications. The Proxy vote application and Voter Authority Certificate application deadline was the 26<sup>th</sup> of June.

**Electoral Review**

Phase 1 of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) electoral review for Dacorum is now complete. The Council submitted a recommendation to agree 53 councillors but the Commission have issued a 'minded to' decision notice which states that their view is that 51

councillors remains an appropriate number of councillors for Dacorum. The Commission considered the Council's evidence that the Council is functioning well and making decisions effectively within its existing governance framework. The Commission's final decision will not be made until the Spring of 2025.

Phase 2 of the review is now underway, which is where the Council reviews warding patterns. The submission date for consultation responses was previously 15<sup>th</sup> July but this has now been delayed until 9<sup>th</sup> September due to the General Election. Officers continue to work with members of the Electoral Review Committee to develop their consultation responses.

## **Commercial Development**

### **Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:**

- Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) continue to be installed in certain Council car parks across the Borough. Over the next few weeks and months, more EVCPs will be installed and operational, which will support the Council's commitment to improving availability of charge points and addressing climate change.

### **Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:**

- New Parking Proposals – Preparations for the commencement of statutory public consultation relating to new tariff proposals were completed by the beginning of July. The consultation start date was postponed due to the announcement of the General Elections, but arrangements were made to place adverts in the local press to align with the publication and start of the statutory consultation on 10 July 2024.
- Work is underway to prepare for the Procurement Act going live in October 24, which will bring changes to requirements for public procurement, and will require an update to the Council's Contract Standing Orders. Training on new requirements will be rolled out nearer the time for Council officers, and information will be available to Members on the requirements of the new Act.

## **Commercial and General Fund Property Services**

- Despite a challenging environment our Commercial portfolio is circa 96.55% occupied. Income levels are slightly below target due to service charge invoices still to be raised. Once the invoices are raised, it is anticipated income will be on target. Income is profiled for reporting purposes on a monthly basis, against which we record income received. The income target for Month 2 (May) is £2,291,124 reported as May is the most recent closed month at the time of this update.
- July 2024 update - There are 150 commercial buildings and sites that DBC own and Property Services manage and report on for compliance under 6 main headings: Fire; Asbestos; Legionella; Gas, Electricity & Passenger Lifts. All areas are performing well.
- **Bennetts Gate Window Renewal & Concrete Repairs.** The works were completed in June bringing thermal and structural improvements but also a much needed facelift. Included were window replacements, concrete remedial repairs, decorations to the shop frontages covered walkway, ceiling, concrete pillars and the curved wall to the centre block.

- **Rossgate Window Works, Phase 2.** The existing curtain walling panels to the front elevation of the precinct are almost 40 years old and at the end of their useful life. The Council is receiving an increasing number of complaints from the tenants that the windows are ill-fitting, draughty and in some cases dangerous. Phase 1 was completed in 2023 replacing the windows to the rear. Following Officer & Commercial Board approval, Cardo have been appointed to undertake the works. A planning application has been submitted which is expected to take approximately 10 weeks. Once consent has been obtained, the works can commence which is currently forecast towards the end of the summer.
- **Victoria Hall Ceiling.** The Building Services team have arranged for a repair to a small roof leak together with some additional timber support work to the ceiling. A capital bid for extensive ceiling improvement works has been submitted as part of the annual Service Planning exercise.
- **56/58 High Street.** Freehold Disposal. In line with previous instructions, Brasier Freeth have been appointed to market the property for sale. Marketing particulars are being prepared with a view to disposal at soon as practical.



## Council Briefing Note 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024

### HOUSING & PROPERTY PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SIMY DHYANI

#### Housing Operations

- Verification of all Universal Credit (UC) rent changes from April 24 are completed.
- As the year continues, more tenants will be migrated from the legacy benefits over to UC, which will mean arrears figures will fall slightly out of trend for a short period, working with Revenue & Benefits to minimise impact and aid smooth transition.
- Tenancy Strategy scrutinised at HC&OSC, pending Cabinet approval in July.
- Randalls ride development- on track with all allocations including direct matching to adapted units.
- Completion of nominations for Hightown's new build development in Maylands and Watford Community Housing Trust development in Wood View.
- GIS mapping of HRA green space, trees and hard landscape complete – data analysis and testing underway to inform future grounds maintenance delivery model.
- Tenancy Management & Mutual Exchange Policies – updated and published
- [Pet Policy](#) – updated re. 'Banned Dog Breeds' (section 2.3) and published.
- Supported 476 tenants/applicants to sustain their tenancy
- Undertaken a review of all hoarding cases to inform a refresh of the hoarding multi-agency protocol.

#### Safe Communities

- Emergency Prohibition Order served on House in Multiple Occupation (Old Town) due to Fire Hazard.
- 2x Civil penalty notices served in Nash Mills totalling £9000 due to Housing Act 2004 regulatory breaches
- Successful ASB/nuisance action morning held @The Marlowes, leading to number of investigations & follow up actions.
- New ASB & Community Safety leaflet developed to support engagement with tenants and residents.
- ASB collaborative partnership neighbourhood engagement meetings held in Grovehill & School End Crescent.
- 6 asylum dispersal properties now live in the borough & numbers accommodated in contingency sites has reduced.
- Numbers of households approaching the council for housing assistance has continued to increase, 260 households occupying temporary accommodation. Partnership engagement to establish new prevention initiatives underway.

#### Property

- We continue to focus on the older repairs and expect to have reduced this backlog of work by August 2024. This will reduce the number of complaints and help us to undertake new repairs faster.
- We are increasing capacity to undertake disrepair work to speed up our response to complex works and increase capacity.
- Planned fire safety upgrade works at Phyllis Courtnage House, Church Street and Townsend made good progress in May
- The rooftop garden remediation works at Kylna Court near completion and are on track to be open to residents again in June
- FRA works at two large blocks of flats in Eastwick Row were completed in May with decorating and new flooring to follow
- Communal hybrid heating system replacements have commenced at two supported housing schemes. These projects will introduce renewable heating technologies to help us tackle climate change.

- The SHDF Wave 2 retrofit project continues to make good progress. 8 properties in Blackwell Road have been completed and we are currently on site delivering external wall insulation and installing solar PV panels at Curtis Way.
- Updates on the procurement of the repairs, maintenance and capital delivery contract:
  - Following on from the stakeholder workshop held in March, the Council have identified 4 lots which means the Council will be looking to procure a minimum of 4 contracts. These include responsive repairs (including voids), capital delivery, M&E and Lifts. Contractors will be able to tender for multiple lots.
  - Stakeholder engagement was carried out in May with internal officers to inform them of the process and to identify their needs and concerns for the next contract. The stakeholders will now move into working groups which will support the development of the procurement documentation, and the procurement and mobilisation process.
  - A Pre-Market Dialogue notice has been published to the market for the contract, to identify suitable companies the Council would like to meet with to discuss the contract requirements, prior to commencing the formal process. This will help the team test our requirements against the market as well as raising awareness to ensure there is a good response to the contract opportunity.
  - The project plan currently has the formal procurement process commencing in October 24.
- The Interim Contract Strategy is nearly complete. We have 2 contracts left to formalise and should have a solution for these at the end of June.

## **Strategic Housing & Delivery**

### Investment & Delivery

- The main contractor for development scheme at Paradise Depot which included the new Hub building for charity DENS, went into administration at the end of April and as such all construction works ceased on the 29<sup>th</sup> April. Officers are working hard to secure a new contractor to take over the build and complete the project. A report will come to Cabinet in due course.
- The next housing scheme to complete will be at Randall's Ride where 30no. 1 and 2 bed flats will be handed over at social rent levels including 3 fully adapted wheelchair flats. The flats have all been allocated and the handover date is due 17<sup>th</sup> July.
- The Council held its second Registered Provider Forum on the 11<sup>th</sup> June with the topic of Housing for an Ageing Population as its theme. The event was well attended and there was a good deal of productive discussion around the challenges and practicalities of delivering homes suitable for older people and for people's changing needs.
- This year's Inside Housing Awards shortlist have been announced and Dacorum Borough Council have been shortlisted in 5 categories: -
  - Best Development Team (Urban)
  - Best Development over 4 storeys – Mountbatten View (Paradise Fields)
  - Best Partnership with Bugler Developments Limited for Marchmont Fields
  - Best Affordable Development under £5m – Wilstone development (Barton Close)
  - Best Affordable Development under £10m – Randall's Ride.
 The winners will be announced on the 27<sup>th</sup> September.

## **Strategy, Quality & Assurance**

- The Inspection of our services delivered to our HRA tenants was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May by the Regulator. We await the final outcome and their observations which will be worked into an improvement plan. This plan will then feed into the ongoing HTIP (Housing Transformation Implementation Plan) work.
- Our Resident Engagement platform CX-Feedback is now operational. We have set up transactional surveys for repairs, complaints and Anti-Social Behaviour, and will be using it to deliver our TSMs (Tenant Satisfaction Measures) later this year.



The New Neighbourhood Operations Directorate is working on a number of key projects that will continue to strengthen operations and deliver quality services.

## **1. Neighbourhood Management**

### Green Waste

- 1.1 Green Waste (Garden waste) paid subscriptions went live on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and the current subscription rate is slightly higher compared with the same period for the preceding year, at 33810 compared with the same period for the preceding year at 33087.

### River Gade restoration

- 1.2 On Friday 24 May, the Environment Agency confirmation that their Full Business Case had gone through the assurance process, and they have been given the green light to proceed with the project. Officers are now awaiting a final programme of works. Main works are planned to commence in August. Officers are mindful that this is the busiest time of year in the park, so will be working closely with the Environment Agency to mitigate any risk both physical and to people's enjoyment of the park.

### Green Flag Award and Anglia in Bloom

- 1.3 All our sites have now been judged for Green Flag Award and we await the results, which will be announced in late July – our existing Green Flag Award sites are Bunkers Park, Canal Fields, Chipperfield Common, Tring Memorial Garden and Water Gardens. We entered a new site this, which was Gadebridge Park. In addition to Green Flag Award, the council has also entered three parks into Anglia in Bloom (regional Britain in Bloom competition) this year – the three parks are Gadebridge Park, Water Gardens and Tring Memorial Gardens.

### Playground Refurbishment Programme

- 1.4 Tenders have now been awarded and the projects will be delivered in two phases as outlined in the presentation to the committee in March. The first phase commences imminently with completion by the school summer holidays – the sites in phase one are Croft Meadow, Flaunden, Tower Hill, Woodhall Farm. One scheme was move forward from phase two (Apsley Lock) meaning five schemes will now be completed as part of phase one. The remaining phase two site is Durrants Hill. The schemes for Miswell Lane and Warners End Valley were put back out to tender and are due back in late June

Within each of the schemes awarded to date, there is inclusive equipment proposed in each scheme – officers are keen to build on this with any future schemes as well as including access to and from playgrounds.



## Parking solutions

- 1.5 A draft policy/framework is now drafted and will be presented to a future meeting for comment before being formally adopted. The previous Verge hardening programme will now be called Parking Solutions Programme (or similar) to move away from the negative connotation of the definition of verge hardening, which can be perceived as not environmentally friendly and instead consider schemes and parking solutions for the local areas that can be other interventions, including using permeable materials for a more environmentally friendly interventions.

## SANG Delivery

- 1.6 Following recent interviews, an appointment has been made to the SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Green spaces) Delivery Officer. This role is key in delivering the commitments that have been made under SANG to support future housebuilding in the borough. We are awaiting confirmation of a start date but their initial focus of work will be to commence delivery of SANG obligations at Bunkers Park and seek the necessary permissions to commence works at Chipperfield Common.

## Gadebridge Park Splashpad

- 1.7 Following some refurbishment works to the surfacing, the splashpad opened in early May and will be operational 7-days a week now until September. Despite the unseasonal weather, attendances at the facility have been good.

## **2. Regulatory services**

2.1 Officers have been updated the current Contaminated Land Strategy to bring the strategy in line with current regulations and best practice. Changes included a more streamlined version and updated in line with current best practice. This has been benchmarked with other authorities.

2.2 The Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System return has been completed and returned to the Food Standards Agency. The authority reports on resourcing and is benchmarked against other authorities on performance with regard to statutory functions within the food service. All high-risk inspections were completed by the team within the statutory deadlines. 54 Unrated inspections remain outstanding most of these businesses were not yet operating. 125 new businesses were registered within the borough in 23/24. The service issued 238 written warnings, served 1 hygiene improvement notice, carried out 1 voluntary closure and 1 Emergency prohibition order.

2.3 Officers are currently drafting the update Air Quality Action Plan and Air Quality Status Report for 2023 and an update will be presented at Scrutiny and further governance meetings in the Autumn.

## **3. Resilience**

3.1 A resilience audit of Corporate Health and safety took place in 2023. After a discussion with auditors, officers provided evidence of documents and governance in place that supported a "Reasonable Assurance" rating. Dacorum Borough Council is working very closely with partners such as HCC, the Fire Service and Police to strengthen our preparedness in response to emergencies.

**FULL COUNCIL – 2023/2024**

**ACTION POINTS FOR PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Action point</b>	<b>PH responsible for action</b>	<b>Response / Investigation Ongoing</b>
April 2024	Cllr Guest asked for a timescale for the publication of the Corporate Plan. Cllr Weston confirmed it is expected within the next couple of months and confirmed she will provide expected timescales by email.	Cllr Weston	The corporate Plan is progressing well and our aim is to bring it to Full Council in September.
April 2024	Cllr Banks referred to funding for playground refurbishments and asked if this be inclusive for children with disabilities. Cllr Wilkie confirmed this would be the case but advised she would take the question away to provide further information.	Cllr Wilkie	Response pending

April 2024	Democratic Support to review the Minutes of the previous meeting as it was noted there were spelling mistakes and that Cllr B Link was referred to as Clink.	Layla Fowell	The Minutes have been reviewed, 2 typographical errors were found and amended. The reference to Cllr CLink was Correct as it referred to Councillor Carrie Link. However to make it clearer we will ensure there is a space between C and Link going forward.
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# Agenda Item 7

## Cabinet Referrals

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

### CA/42/24      CONSTITUTIONAL UPDATES

#### Decision

#### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

1. Cabinet **recommended that Council** agree the amendments to Part 2, 3 and 4 of the Constitution as referenced in the report and annexed to this report.
2. Cabinet **recommended that Council** agree the amendments to the Council's Financial Regulations as highlighted in the report in section 3 and annexed to this report.

#### Advice

Recommendation agreed

18<sup>TH</sup> June 2024

### CA/59/24      BOVINGDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

#### Decision

#### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

On the basis of a successful 'YES' vote, at the Referendum on 13th June 2024, that Cabinet **recommends that Full Council** formally adopts ('makes') the Bovingdon Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Local Plan.

#### Advice

Recommendation agreed

## **Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report**

**For the period June 2023 to May 2024**

### **Introduction**

Following is a sequential summary of matters brought to the Finance & Resources Oversight and Scrutiny Committee for the period since to appointment of a new council at Dacorum. (5<sup>th</sup> May 2023). These summaries are not intended to reduce or simplify the questions, challenges and details behind the topics discussed, and this report should be read in conjunction with the published minutes of the committee which can be found on the council's website.

As chair, I have been regularly impressed with the quality of reports and presentations given by the officers which cover very broad and detailed topics. The quality of dialogue and cross party co-operation in understanding these issues from all committee members is similarly appreciated. Particular thanks must be given to the member support officers (Trudi Angel) for the timely communication of these reports and the prompt adoption of suggestions to improve the vector and comprehension of the vast amount of data and information contained within.

Down to business:

### **June 2023-**

Format of officer reports, particularly concentration of key areas of concern (staff turnover, staff absence, communication with residents)

Strategic Asset Review – approved proposal with indicative costs to take to cabinet.

Performance reports and analysis – particular focus on staffing issues and dependence on agency staff and concerns in regards to cash collection driven by wider economic environment.

Introduction to the risk register

Financial outturn report presented showed favourable developments; this meant council was under less economic pressure than previously modelled but no significant change that would allow the council to reasonably commit to additional undertakings. All favourable developments were understood to be one off bonuses, and could not be expected to replicate in future periods.

### **July 2023-**

Parking Charges Plan – officers brought a proposal constructed with the objective of bringing DBCs parking charges into line with neighbouring councils and a view to include inflationary increases for covering the last 4 years. Proposals were drafted with (previous) cabinet direction to apply a consistent approach to council parking across the borough, which included the removal of free parking in some areas of the borough. Concerns & questions were to be addressed by officers before progressing the report to cabinet.

### **September 2023-**

Performance reports and analysis – particular focus on cost of living/leaving effect on staff & operations, leading to proposed Market Forces Policy to address staff vacancies and turnover.

Revision to Council Tax Support Scheme – proposals to close a loop hole blocking off non-pensioner residents to council tax support for economic hardship. Support from committee as proposal would have minimal impact on the council whilst having a significant impact on the small number of households effected. Proposals were taken to Herts County Council, where they were not supported.

Parking Charges Plan – further to proposals raised in July, the report and concerns raised by the scrutiny committee were taken to cabinet.

### **October 2023 –**

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – Nigel Howcutt presented and defended an MTFS which acknowledged a large amount of challenge and uncertainty from external economic pressures, but which recognised the likely resilience of the council to remain competent to deliver the existing level of service throughout the period. The nature of uncertainty was such that any significant change of policy or direction was unlikely to be in the interests of our residents or staff. The leader of the council confirmed that a policy of consistency featuring only marginal change and not seeking early exit from any previous agreements was being pursued by the organisation.

### **November 2023 –**

Performance reports and analysis, focusing on efforts and improvement in previous areas of concern including sickness, staff vacancies and customer complaints & communication. Updates on the transformation plan in workstreams/projects that are addressing these areas. Several councillors raised new concerns in regards to capital programme slippage, and the risks of further delays. Causes of the are external economic pressures and residual effects of the planning moratorium from the Chiltern Beechwoods protection concerns.

### **December 2023-**

Budget Proposals 2024/25 – annual budget constructed consistent with the MTFS presented in October. Nigel Howcutt presented and defended the proposals

Menopause Policy – committee supported officer proposals that a staff Menopause at Work policy be developed and implemented.

Parking Service Tariffs – further to proposals initially presented in July, the revised proposals were presented and defended by portfolio holders and officers. The committee agreed that these proposal could be communicated publically and form the basis for the statutory public consultation on revisions.

### **Feb 2024 –**

Budget Proposals 2024/25 – annual budget constructed consistent with the MTFS presented in October. Nigel Howcutt presented and defended the proposals, with committee feedback added the proposals were taken to cabinet.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) proposals – in support of the councils transformation programme, a revised suite of enterprise KPIs were proposed and explained by Aidan Wilkie and other senior service officers. The translation from previous KPIs to the proposals, as well as explanations around initial targets and benchmarks were explained to the committee.

Parking Service Tariffs – further to proposals initially presented in July, the revised proposals were presented and defended by portfolio holders and officers. The committee remained concerned in regards to a number of proposals, for example the effect of increased charges

in Kings Langley, but recognised that most concerns previously raised by the committee and raised in the public consultation had been addressed.

Climate and Environmental Emergency Programme – officers and the portfolio holder presented and defended the first CEE Programme plan, and invited the committee to scrutinise its efforts and progress in this area against the plan in future meetings.

#### **March 2024 -**

Performance reports and analysis, focusing on efforts and improvement in areas of debt collection and bad debt write off.

Deep dive into People (Staff) data, including recent trends showing improvements in previous areas of concern, and identifying successful strategies leading to these improvements.

Deep dive into Customer Service data, including recent trends showing improvements in previous areas of concern, and identifying successful strategies leading to these improvements as well as proposed systems and technologies identified but not yet implemented to address contemporary challenges in this area.

#### **Conclusion**

The change of administration at Dacorum Borough Council, as well as the Executive Leadership Team's roll out of a number of change strategies to address the contemporary challenges on a public body (including several new appointments at senior level) has meant that a continuing review of the effectiveness of these new strategies has been of particular importance, as well as the objective consideration of pertinent matters that affect residents and relate to the responsible custodianship of public resources.

**Councillor Rick Freedman, Chairman of Finance and Resources OSC**

## **Annual Report: Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 2023**

In 2023, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee experienced a significant influx of new Councillors, bringing with them a diverse array of skillsets and personalities. This fresh injection of perspectives has proven immensely beneficial to the scrutiny process, fostering dynamic discussions and innovative approaches to addressing housing challenges within our community.

Throughout the year, our committee delved into a multitude of critical topics, guided by the overarching goal of ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of our residents. From reviewing housing policies to examining the implementation of initiatives aimed at tackling homelessness, each discussion was marked by a commitment to thorough analysis and constructive dialogue. From the intricacies of housing allocations to the efficacy of tenant engagement strategies, every facet of housing provision and management received meticulous attention.

Our meetings served as forums for collaboration and exchange, where members drew upon their respective expertise to challenge assumptions and propose solutions. The dedication displayed by each member of the committee underscored our collective commitment to serving the best interests of the community. The brilliance of our officers shone brightly, providing invaluable support and expertise to facilitate our deliberations. Their tireless dedication and unwavering professionalism ensured that our committee remained well-informed and equipped to make informed decisions.

Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing the interests of our community and upholding the highest standards of accountability and transparency in housing governance. There will be challenges ahead, but with our collective expertise, passion, and dedication, we are confident in our ability to navigate them successfully.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023 and chart our course for the future, let us continue to embrace diversity, collaboration, and innovation in our pursuit of a housing landscape that is equitable, inclusive, and thriving for all.

It has been a privilege to be Chairwoman of this committee. I would like to thank my Vice-Chairwoman, Cllr Michela Capozzi, the whole Committee, Portfolio Holders Cllr Sheron Wilkie, Cllr Simy Dhyani and Cllr Carole Weston, and all Officers for their dedication to Dacorum this past year. Thank you to Kayley Johnston for her attention to detail which ensures the minutes are accurate, and for assisting me as a new chair who sometimes needs some support in what I am doing.

**Councillor Sammy Barry-Mears Chairwoman, Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee April 2024**



## **Strategic Planning & Environment (SPAЕ) OSC Annual Review 2023-24**

The purpose of SPAЕ is to perform the overview, scrutiny and policy development role in relation to all matters and business associated with the Cabinet Portfolios for 'Environmental Services & Sustainability', and 'Planning & Regeneration'.

The committee held 9 meetings between April 2023 and March 2024. In addition to the regular scrutiny of the quarterly performance reports, the committee received briefings on significant policy areas including consultations on the Local Plan and a Walking and Cycling infrastructure plan. The committee reviewed these policy and consultation proposals in detail and provided feedback to the Portfolio Holder and officers before the final versions were taken to Cabinet and full Council.

The committee noted the backlog challenges that the planning enforcement team had for most of the year and welcomed the council's actions to address this, including employing a new team leader and investing in temporary additional resource to cut the backlog and improve performance against targets for high priority cases. The committee looks forward to seeing positive improvements in the performance statistics in 2024-25.

The committee recognised the sterling work done by the team fighting fly tipping, including some impressive successes in court.

The committee was pleased to note that there was limited disruption to bin collections after the routes were revised with the aim of increasing efficiency in collections. There were few issues on the small number of streets whose collection day was changed.

The committee also took an interest in the location and number of bins available for general and dog waste, especially following the Canal & Riverside Trust's decision to remove all dog poo bins from towpaths. The committee won assurances from officers that ward councillors would be consulted on bin and bench locations in their wards where these are being reviewed and especially when new bins or benches are being proposed.

The committee was particularly grateful to have briefings from Thames Water and Affinity on sewerage and water supply, and the Environment Agency on the Gade River Project. Members of the committee also joined a briefing in Gadebridge Park by the Environment Agency on the move of the Gade back to its original position.

Items that are currently on the committee's radar include:

- Luton Airport
- Economic Development Update
- Place Strategies (Hemel, Berkhamsted, Tring)
- Maylands Master Plan
- Visit to Cupid Green and CCTV
- Hemel Garden Communities
- Air Quality
- Rural Plan
- Climate Change
- Verge Hardening
- Natural England & National Trust

Cllr Claire Hobson  
Chairman, Strategic Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

# Agenda Item 9

## **WAIVER OF 6 MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE (SEC.85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972).**

Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires a member of a Local Authority to attend at least one meeting of that Authority within a six month consecutive period, in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor. This requirement can be waived and the time limit extended if any failure to attend was due to a reason approved by the Authority, in advance of the six month period expiring.

Councillor Birnie represents the Bennetts End Ward.

Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that “if a member of a Local Authority fails, throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of the Authority they will, unless the failure was due to some good reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the Authority.” Attendance can be at any committee or sub-committee, or any joint committee, joint board or other body where the functions of the Authority are discharged or who were appointed to advise the Authority on any matter relating to the discharge of their functions.

Councillor Birnie has not been able to attend any Council or committee meeting since the 10<sup>th</sup> January, due to illness. The Monitoring Officer has received a request for the Council to consider approving an extension to the usual six month attendance rule enabling him to remain in office until he is able to resume normal duties.

This request has been submitted to approve an extension of the usual six month rule.

Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 enables a Local Authority to approve the reason(s) for non-attendance of a Member at any meeting of the Authority throughout a period of six consecutive months, provided that approval is given by the Authority before the expiry of the six month period.

The Council is asked to approve Councillor Birnie's non-attendance at meetings of the authority due to ill health for a six month period up to 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025 pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.