
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

28 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present:

MEMBERS:

Councillor Williams (Leader) Councillors, Gbola Adeleke, G Adshead, Anderson, Banks, Mrs Bassadone, Birnie, Brown, Herbert Chapman, Clark, D Collins (Deputy Mayor), E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, Fantham, Fisher, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Imarni, Link, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, McLean (Mayor), Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Whitman, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe (42)

OFFICERS:

Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Corporate Director - Finance and Operations, Group Manager - Democratic Services, Member Support Officer, Chief Executive and Member Support Officers Kayley Johnston and Katie Mogan.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

13 MINUTES

A minute silence was held for Councillor S Adshead and former Councillor and Mayor Ken Coleman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2016 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

Cllr G Adshead asked if we could add in his question in relation to removing the EU flag from the Council Chamber.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

16 ANNOUNCEMENTS

By the Mayor

None.

By the Chief Executive:

None.

By the Group Leaders:

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Ashbourn, Barnes, Bhinder, Matthews, Mills and Peter.

Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet:

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

The leader had no announcements to make but was happy to take questions. There were no questions for the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

Resident Services:

In Anti-Social Behaviour, a further closure order has been obtained in court for a property in Highfield where residents were suffering ASB related to drug use. 2 properties previously subjects of closure orders returned to the Council for allocation to housing register applicants – one property saw the occupant permanently evicted and another voluntarily returned the property to the council following the enforcement action – permanently stopping the associated ASB for local residents. An ASB Officer who delivers the Silver Street Meetings for vulnerable residents in the borough is one of 3 Finalists at a national award ceremony RESOLVE and the winner will be announce in November.

In August, the Old Town Hall had the annual Gadebridge Park outdoor family show. This year we presented Dotty the Dragon by Blunderbus Theatre Company, the weather held and both shows were sold out! Ticket sales were up to 72% from 67% last year and the new website up and running from mid-August. The Café / bar is now up and running from 17th September – kids lunch boxes and refreshment packages now on offer and can be pre booked.

Neighbourhood Action - Pop up sports events took place throughout the summer at Gadebridge and neighbourhood parks – free inflatable sports and entertainment was enjoyed by 1750 children and young people. Love Your Neighbourhood Grovehill took place on 17th August and was well attended by 211 local residents. The next LYN event will be held at Chaulden community centre on 25th October.

Adventure Playgrounds - All weather sports pitches were installed at Adeyfield and Chaulden Adventure Playgrounds. Over 4500 attended National Playdays during the first week of August at the Adventure Playgrounds

People:

Information, Advice and Advocacy: Citizens Advice Dacorum have signed the contract and the service began on July 1st.

Supporting the Voluntary Sector: Community Action Dacorum have signed the contract and the service will start October 1st.

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Reducing Social Isolation: Age UK have signed the contract and the service is due to start October 1st

M-ASK Project - This new programme using theatre techniques is for those suffering from stress, anxiety, depression and other conditions affecting mental wellbeing. You don't need experience to take part, but must be 11+ years old and live within Dacorum. Started in September with 15 young people currently participating.

ICT:

Our PSN Submission will go to the Cabinet Office on 30th September
ICT are working with Builders & Furniture suppliers to finalise plans for Forum technology fit-out and migration
Tenders are being assessed for an external company to lead an application review, looking at all line-of-business applications within the Council.
A new version of Good for Enterprise (Good Work) is currently being installed with a view to testing in October/November.

Democratic Services:

The Annual Canvass is proceeding well. We have processed the returns from the first canvass reaching a 61% return rate – e-responses around the 30% mark. The data for the second issue has been collated and sent to the printers and the actual postage will begin next week. This is nearly 25,000, but we would expect most of these to respond to the second prompt. The service is pretty much on target to achieve a canvass in the high 90% as usual. As a result of the initial canvass, over 3,000, Invitations to Register have been dispatched to residents identified on the returned forms whose details we are required to confirm. Finally, congratulations due to our Communications team at CIPR Pride Awards 2016. The Dacorum Digest won Best Publication and the judges were impressed with the look and feel of the magazine, which it knew what it was trying to achieve and the entry showed clear results and outcomes that related to the objectives. Dacorum Digest fits in with the wider organisational strategy and objectives. It also demonstrates clear messaging, in a readable, user-friendly style that was well liked by its audience.

Councillor Harden was happy to take questions.

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

Strategic Planning:

The Council's Site Allocations plan, which sets out the detail of how the adopted Core Strategy will be delivered – reaches an important stage in early October, with a two week public hearing. These hearings will be held in the Bulbourne and Gade Rooms, with the Government Inspector using the Members Room (Mountbatten Suite) as a temporary office for the duration. The main role of the hearings is to give those who objected to particular sites and policies within the plan a chance to air their concerns, and explain the changes they would like made to the plan. Provided the Inspector finds the plan 'sound' (with or without changes), Council will be asked to formally adopt the plan before it can come fully into operation. We expect to receive the Inspector's report later this year or early in 2017.

Enterprise and Investment:

The Maylands Business Centre Extension work is continuing to plan with the Bungalow site now cleared and ready for the construction phase. Planning permission

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was granted in August and we are just dispensing the pre commencement conditions applied before the build can start. There are already tenants lined up for all five of the units.

Earlier this month DCLG finally signed off on European Regional Development Funds to support start-up businesses in Hertfordshire. This will mean up to £50k per year in additional funds going into the MBC to deliver the programme of business advice and training. This funding is for a period of 3 years.

Hemel Hempstead's new fountain continued to be a roaring success during the school holidays. In addition to this attraction, 5 summer film days were held in the new town square, sponsored by Enjoy Dacorum (our tourism service). These attracted many youngsters to come out and sit on the lawn area set out for the events.

The Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors programme continues to attract new members. This scheme is about promoting Hemel Hempstead and its surrounding area as a place for investment. There are now 45 members with income of £36,500. This scheme will be celebrating its first year in January 2017.

Infrastructure and Project Delivery

Heath Park

Works to the riverbank have started well, with the concrete edge being removed and new impact planting of reeds and flowers being put in to make the area look softer in appearance. Low level fencing will be in place to protect the new grass seed from interested residents (and geese).

Water Gardens

Earlier this month a major milestone in the Water Gardens restoration was achieved with the installation of all seven of the new bridges. On each delivery day a crowd came out to watch the bridges being carefully lifted high into the air and maneuvered across the watercourse. New paving slabs are now being laid to connect the bridges to the footpath on Waterhouse Street. This week the restored statues are being returned to the Gardens, following extensive cleaning at a specialist foundry. In pride of place overlooking the lake will be the Rock and Roll dancers, looking as good as they did in the 1960s. The Kangaroo, Joey and Platypus will be visible from Bridge Street, completing the works to the brick islands which have been repaired and planted with Japanese maples to add autumn colour. The bespoke play area will be the next new feature to start on site.

Maylands Urban Realm Improvements

The majority of the hard landscaping works are complete with new footways, street furniture including recycling bins and benches and signage. Two entrances totems have been installed and illuminated shortly. Soft landscaping will be undertaken in season in Autumn and Spring.

Durrants Lakes Bank Repair

The bank repair to Durrants Lakes was completed successfully. The disrepair of the bank was causing issues to the lake and its surroundings. The repair has greatly improved the conditions. The repair will help to support DBC's wider aspirational improvements for the area

Marlowes Pedestrianised Area and Bank Court Fountain

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The fountain launched in July has been the centre piece of the improvements, attracting footfall to the town centre and positive comments from both visitors and businesses. The fountain will be operational until the beginning of November and will be decommissioned over the winter period between November and March.

History Tree (or more fondly known as the Tree of Life) returns

The newly repaired and refurbished tree has been returned to its spot in the food court. LED lights have been added and will be installed shortly (ready in time for the earlier dark evenings) to be enjoyed by all

Councillor Sutton was happy to take questions

Councillor Mahmood asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that the Council is doing well regenerating the town.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Councillor Mahmood for his kind comments and said the work is progressing well.

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

Thank you to the Mayor for officiating at this year's Clean Safe & Green Community Champion Awards. Individuals and residents' groups are given awards for working selflessly to keep their neighbourhoods clean, safe and green. I must mention the winner of the "individual category" – the amazing 7-year old Harry Stevens from Bovingdon. He has been active and passionate about rubbish and recycling since the age of 3. He tells his neighbours what can and cannot be recycled, reminds his neighbours of the bin collection days, wheels out his neighbours' bins and puts them back, makes tea for the collection crew and picks up litter in his road. He is really lovely boy and everyone there was really chuffed that he won the award.

Thank you to the Council Members who joined in the Council's Environmental Action Morning on 7 September, joining officers from Environmental Health, Environmental Services, Housing and Anti-Social departments, PCSOs and Firemen and covering Bennetts End, Northend & Cornerhall. Four tonnes of flytips were reported and collected, notices were served on 7 untaxed vehicles, 60 bags of litter collected & many other issues identified as well to be followed up.

The National Recycle Week took place earlier this month and DBC officers went to Sainsburys in Apsley and Tesco at Jarman Park to involve customers in identifying what everyday items used in the home can go in the recycling bin or food caddy.

Councillor Marshall was happy to take questions

Councillor P Hearn asked if the Portfolio Holder could pass on her thanks to the Clean, Safe and Green team who do such a wonderful job, especially in Tring.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Councillor P Hearn for her comments and would pass them on to the team.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Thank you Mr Mayor, I have pleasure presenting the briefing for Finance & Resources.

Finance

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Work has started on preparing the 2017/18 budget. Services have been working on savings and efficiency proposals which are currently being reviewed by the Chief Officer Group. These will be incorporated into the first draft of the budget going to Scrutiny Committees in December.

Electronic payment cards have been implemented and have started to be rolled out to services. These reduce the processing costs for low value invoices as well as providing cash rebates from banks on spend directed through these cards.

A new direct debit portal has gone live on the Council's website, allowing residents to set up direct debits online. This speeds up the set up time for a direct debit and reduces paper based instructions.

To further strengthen financial controls, a policy has been enforced to ensure purchase orders are raised for all appropriate supplies and services. This has been in place for nearly three months and has significantly reduced the number of invoices paid without a purchase order.

Revenue & Benefits

The Revenues team has continued to work with the Digital Dacorum team which will enable the public to update their council tax records.

Commercial Assets & Property Development

We are currently finalising tender paperwork for a stock condition survey for the main Council properties to enable us to plan maintenance more effectively. This will enable better allocation of funds and a reduction in unplanned maintenance and forms part of the approved action plan from the Asset Management Strategy.

The ongoing work to maximise capital receipts continues to come together with the fourth garage site being marketed.

I am probably not very popular with certain elements of the Berkhamsted community, and as a certain lady PM said 'if you set out to be liked you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time and you would achieve nothing'.

The Planning Application for the construction of the Multi Storey Car Park in Berkhamsted will be heard by the Development Control Committee on 29th September. This has involved extensive work from Officers and Consultants and will be recommended for approval. Subject to the outcome of the DCC then we will then be in a position to proceed to tender.

Commissioning, Procurement & Compliance

Following a rigorous and robust tendering process, a recommendation for the award of contract for the Facilities Management Services was presented to Cabinet 20/09/16. In the first instance, the main focus of this contract will be to deliver security, portage, cleaning and repair and maintenance services to the Forum, but there is scope for this contract to include other Council buildings in the future.

The contract for the furniture for the Forum has been signed and we will shortly be releasing the tender for the Forum Coffee Bar/Café.

Councillor Elliot was happy to take questions

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Councillor G Adshead said now we have a second female Prime Minister, he asked the Portfolio Holder when he would start quoting her.

Councillor Mrs Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Tenant and Leaseholders: #HousingDay

#HousingDay was a national 24-hour social media event taking place Monday 19 September to celebrate the positive impact of social housing on thousands of tenants and those working in UK housing. 80,100 people viewed our tweets about #HousingDay.....

This year's #HousingDay theme was connecting with communities. This means demonstrating how we listen and engage with customers or tenants in our local communities.

This is the fourth year of the campaign and an opportunity for Dacorum to promote the housing service to both our tenants and to the wider housing industry.

Papers being reported to Cabinet, Audit and Housing and Communities Committees in September

The Tenant and Leaseholder Group have taken the following papers to Cabinet, Audit Committee and Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September on top of standard reports such as performance reports and service plan updates.

Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy – Cabinet – Tuesday 20 September

Housing Rents internal audit report – Audit Committee – Wednesday 21 September

Depooling of rents and services charges report – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 22 September

Chartered Institute of Housing Income Accreditation

The Housing Service is striving to seek national recognition for the quality of service it provides to tenants, leaseholders, housing applicants, homeless households etc. In a number of areas accreditation has been achieved – the Homeless Service recently passed their peer review assessment and are now working towards achieving the Gold Standard. Our Supported Housing Service achieved 'Excellence' accreditation from the Centre for Housing Support in 2014, we have retained our Gold Award from the RSPCA for how we manage pets in social housing for the third year in succession and finally we retain our British Standard Accreditation for our commitment to continual improvement.

In October the Chartered Institute of Housing will be spending 3 days auditing policies, procedures, relationships with external agencies, preparedness for ongoing welfare reforms and individual rent accounts to assess whether we meet their Housing Income Accreditation.

Should the service meet this exacting standard it would be one of only a handful of housing.

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Strategic Housing:

Strategic Housing have been working closely with staff from across the Housing Service and the Home Office, to prepare for the first arrival of refugees in line with the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement project. The project has involved collaboration with a number of voluntary sector and statutory agencies to ensure that temporary homes are suitably prepared for the families and access to schooling, medical care and secondary education/training is in place. I'm pleased to confirm that Dacorum have received 2 families from a chartered flight, which arrived at Stanstead airport on the 21 September. The families have now been moved into their properties and introduced to their support workers, work will now commence to familiarise them with their local areas and integrated into the community.

Over the summer Aspen Court, London Road, Apsley and Elizabeth Court Queen Street developments were completed and occupied. These 2 developments provided 41 new Council Homes for social rent in Dacorum.

Able house continues on site and is due to complete in March next year.

Wood House contract has been awarded to Jarvis and they will start on site early November.

Work on Stationers Place, Apsley, Swing Gate Lane in Berkhamsted and Martindale school site continues.

Property and Place:**Osborne - Total Asset Management.**

Two of the community investment projects that have been introduced by Osborne are:

- A Bus Buddy project, which has bought together a number of services in Dacorum to help encourage elderly people to use public transport to get out and about. Osborne are currently working with the volunteer centre to find suitable volunteers to support the project
- An Empty Homes initiative, which has reduced the amount of items which get thrown away from empty properties, by donating them to The South Hill Centre and Dacorum Community Trust who then distribute them to local people in need.

An action plan was put in place in July to address the declining performance in the number of appointments kept and a higher number of responsive repairs not being completed within the target timescales. These are two critical indicators and the decline in performance corresponded with an increase in complaints. The action plan has improved the performance in August, with all indicators being met or exceeded, however there are still complaints being received that are being investigated to determine further appropriate interventions.

Sun Realm - Gas Servicing and Installation

The servicing and installation contract continues to deliver consistently high levels of compliance, currently 99.98% with the two overdue properties both have appointments scheduled. Customer satisfaction with the service remains high.

Councillor Mrs Griffiths was happy to take questions.

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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17 QUESTIONS

None.

18 NOTICE OF MOTION

The following motion was moved Councillor Harden was seconded by Councillor Williams and agreed by Members:

That a special meeting of the Council be convened on 26 October 2016 in order for the Council in pursuance of the powers conferred upon them by statute admit to being an Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Dacorum (the most honourable distinction which it is their privilege to bestow) double Olympic gold medal winning gymnast Max Whitlock for his outstanding sporting achievement and the example set to the youth of the Borough of Dacorum.

19 WAIVER OF 6 MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE (SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972).

The Waiver of the 6 month Councillor attendance rule (section 85 Local Government Act 1972) in respect of Cllr Ashbourne was seconded by Councillor Griffiths and agreed by Members.

20 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None.

21 CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 26 July 2016 and 20 September 2016 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved

That the following be approved:

26 July 2016

7.1 CA/077/16 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Decision

That the following be approved:

1. The revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2016/17 – 2020/21
2. The financial projections within the 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy
3. A General Fund savings target of £1.33 million for the 2017/18 budget-setting process;
4. A four-year General Fund savings target of £3.6 million for the duration of this Medium Term Financial Strategy;

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5. A review of the Housing Revenue Account base budget and savings target be undertaken as part of the review of the HRA business plan and budget preparation cycle;
6. The Corporate Director (Finance & Operations) working with the Council's Corporate Management Team and Portfolio Holders to deliver options that will achieve the saving targets identified within the strategy;
7. Authority be delegated to the S151 Officer, in consultation with the Budget Review Group, to consider Government's proposed four-year Settlement, and, subject to further guidance emerging before October, to accept the offer if appropriate;
8. The Financial Planning Framework to support the budget-setting process for 2017/18;
9. The Corporate Director (Finance & Operations) be requested to revise the Medium Term Financial Strategy and re-present to Cabinet and Council for approval if material changes to forecasts are required following future Government announcements.

7.2 CA/079/16 AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: CLARIFICATION STATEMENT

Decision

That the following be approved:

- (a) Re-adopt the Affordable Housing Clarification Note as a material planning consideration in relevant planning decisions and for use in the preparation of future planning documents; and
- (b) That authority is delegated to the Assistant Director, Planning, Development and Regeneration to make any necessary minor editorial changes to the current Clarification Note, prior to its re-issue.

20 September 2016

9.1 CA/096/16 BUDGET MONITORING 2016/17 - QUARTER 1

Decision

That the following be approved:

- The revised capital programme to move slippage identified at Quarter 1 into financial year 2017/18.
- The supplementary budgets set out in the report to the Cabinet. Details for these supplementary budgets are set out in the body of the report and have a net nil impact on the General Fund Working Balance:

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- Decrease the Corporate Improvement and Innovation Employees budget by £46k
- Decrease use of the Technology reserve by £46k
- Increase the Planning Supplies and Services budget by £100k
- Increase use of the Management of Change reserve by £100k

A supplementary Capital budget in the Housing Revenue Account of £1.05m for the Affordable Housing Development Fund, as per paragraph 7.3 of the Cabinet report

9.2 CA/097/16 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015/16

Decision

That the following be approved:

That Council accept the report on Treasury Management performance in 2015/16 and the Prudential Indicators for 2015/16 actuals

9.3 CA/099/16 OPTIONS FOR PROVISION OF ATHLETICS TRACK WITHIN THE BOROUGH

Decision

That the following be approved:

1. That Council approve a capital budget of £150k to progress more detailed design and planning works for the relocation of the athletics track from Jarman Park to Longdean School

22 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

None.

23 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

None.

24 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

None.

The Meeting ended at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN