
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

18 JANUARY 2017

Present:

MEMBERS:

Councillor Williams (Leader) Councillors, Gbola Adeleke, G Adshead, Banks, Mrs Bassadone, Bateman, Brown, Clark, D Collins, E Collins, Conway, Douris, Elliot, England, Fisher, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Howard, Imarni, Link, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, Matthews, McLean, Mills, Peter, Ransley, Riddick, Silwal, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Whitman, C Wyatt-Lowe and W Wyatt-Lowe

OFFICERS:

Corporate Support Team Leader-Democracy, Member Support Officer and Group Manager - Democratic Services

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2016 were agreed by the Members present and were then signed by the Mayor.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ransley declared an interest in item 12, referral 7.6 as she is employed by Sportspace.

Councillor Marshall and Councillor Elliot declared an interest in item 12, referral 7.6 as they are both members of Sportspace.

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor:

There were no announcements from the Mayor

2. By the Chief Executive:

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive

3. By the Group Leaders:

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Anderson, Ashbourn, Birnie, Bhinder, Chapman, Fantham, Fethney, Hicks, Ritchie

4. By the Leader and Members of the Cabinet:

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

The leader had no announcements.

Questions and Answers

Councillor Adeleke said a former opposition leader once had a bet with Councillor Williams that during their lifetime, there would be no development in Hemel Hempstead. They were wrong. With regards to the Forum, unlike the Prime Minister, the Chief Executive has gone for a 'soft Brexit' and the transition has been smooth. I would like to put it on record my thanks to officers for their hard work. Councillor Williams said he was really pleased with the move and that we had managed to stay within budget and be having our first Full Council meeting on 18 January within target. He said there was one person he had never had the opportunity to thank and that was the former Chief Executive of Dacorum, Danny Zammit, for supporting and encouraging him to continue when the project in 2007/08 fell apart.

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

- With Clean Safe & Green, the Berkhamsted Rotary Club planted bulbs in Canal Fields for Polio Awareness
- Having completed the winter bulb planting, Clean Safe & Green teams have been concentrating on leaf clearance and cutting back hedges
- With Saturday working, the refuse collection service caught up from the Christmas/New Year break by the second week in January throughout Borough
- The Christmas Tree recycling event on the 8 January received over 3,000 trees (15 tonnes) at 3 sites: Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring. It was the busiest year yet. Three Scout groups did sterling work - 1st Berkhamsted, 1st Potten End and 1st Tring Scouts – they collected, for a donation, trees from over 1,000 homes to take to chipping points – good for raising money for the Scouts and good for the environment
- The November Love Food Hate Waste Challenge, which is part of the national campaign to encourage less food waste and save money, resulted in 24

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families completing the challenge of keeping a food waste diary to identify how much food is wasted. Participants get free kitchen goodies & daily tips for saving food.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

Questions and Answers

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe asked the Portfolio Holder if she had made a New Year's Resolution to reassure Ward Councillor's that they would be informed when any occasions or events take place in their Ward. Councillor Marshall said she didn't make New Year's Resolutions but she took the comments on board. She said she agreed that Ward Councillors should be made aware of events within their Wards and repeatedly raised the issue.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Finance and Resources

Finance

In preparation for the earlier closedown requirements in 2017/18, the Council are working with Auditors to trial a mid-year audit, with the aims of reducing audit testing at year end.

A detailed review was undertaken of the Councils insurance policies and excess levels in advance of the tender exercise that was completed in December. This has resulted in around £180k savings against the proposed 2017/18 General Fund budget. The Councils insurance brokers stated this was one of the most competitive tenders they have ever worked on due to the review that was undertaken in advance of the tender and the high quality of the tender documents.

Work continues on the 2017/18 budget, and the second round of draft budget proposals are going to joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7th February.

Revenue & Benefits

The team is continuing to perform well – collection of both council tax and business rates is currently on target, and work to prepare for next year's annual billing is in progress. The benefits team is also consistently meeting the performance target, as the impact of the updated processes being used continue to embed.

Commercial Assets & Property Development

Garages sales continue to realise capital receipt with one sale completing this month and two more to complete by the end of January.

Commissioning, Procurement & Compliance

The Facilities Management Service contract with Interserve (Facilities Management) Ltd went live on January 3rd 2017. The contract will initially cover both the Forum and the Civic Centre sites as staff transfer across and also covers the security of staff and

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contractors who are still on site to complete the snagging works. This enabled the building to be opened to the public on Monday 16th January 2017.

A contract has been awarded to Eat Pure who will operate the Café in the Forum. Preparation work in early January ensured that the new premises were open for business on Monday 16th January. Eat Pure will also provide buffets for meetings.

Questions & Answers

Councillor Tindall referred to the revaluation of business rates and asked the Portfolio Holder if we were taking precautions to ensure we have sufficient reserves if any appeals were made. Councillor Elliot reassured him that that they are prudent with reserves and were well funded for any appeals.

Councillor Marshall queried the year end estimate of the sale of garages. Councillor Elliot explained that in this financial year we have completed on Malus Close at £320,000, we anticipate completing on a sale in Turners Hill today at £620,000 as this is already exchanged. We are running two parties in a closed tender on a site in Goldcroft with a minimum price of £600,000 and this closes tomorrow with completion payment due in 14 days. We are on the point of exchange for a site in Juno Road at £860,000; both these are anticipated to complete by the financial year end. We have also sold two small sites on Paston Road and in West Dene for £100,000, the latter site being for social housing.

The total should therefore be £2.5m assuming the closure of Goldcroft and Juno Road. He will be in a position to give firmer figures next week when these deals are exchanged and completion timing given.

Councillor Mrs Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

TENANT & LEASEHOLDER SERVICES

We are now able to text people who fall into rent arrears

As part of the move toward further digitalising processes we are now able to text people who fall into rent arrears as part of our standard rent arrears recovery processes.

This will significantly reduce printing and postage costs. There is also clear evidence that texts elicit a higher likelihood of a response from tenants than standard recovery letters.

Senior Link Eldercare – community alarm contractor

Our contract with Senior Link Eldercare – who have been the contractor responding to alarm calls from sheltered housing residents is coming to an end. This contract has been in place for 5 years and their performance throughout the contract has been excellent. We have been out to procure a new contract – this is likely to commence from February 2017.

This new contract will be with Tunstall Health Care Systems – and will initially be for a 3 year period.

Reductions in evictions

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The number of tenants we have evicted as a result of rent arrears has dropped to a 5 year low. The number has dropped from 22 in 2011/12 to 7 at the end of December 2016.

The Housing Service has invested heavily in strengthening the support tenants get in helping to 'sustain their tenancy'. We have recruited a Tenancy Sustainment Team who have worked alongside our Housing Income Team in helping keep people in their home and limiting the number of tenants who are evicted for non-payment of their rent.

We also continue to run campaigns – such as our Christmas Campaign and information days, such as our money advice day run in the Marlowes in December to raise awareness of the need to keep up to date with rent payments.

This performance in reducing evictions is accompanied by excellent rent collection performance – anticipated to be 99.97% at the end of the year, stable rent arrears performance and long term reductions in the number of people with high levels of historic debt.

STRATEGIC HOUSING

Strategic Housing is working closely with Osborne to manage the Empty Homes process for the borough. Currently there have been some challenges in respect of communication and contractor issues at Osborne; this has meant that in December we have identified around 7 properties that are significantly out of their target void time, which will have an impact on our overall performance figures and prospective rental income. We continue to work closely with our colleagues in Property and Place in line with the Osborne contract to challenge performance issues and seek further improvements.

Able house continues on site and is due to complete in early April. This will provide 14 new Council homes. Wood House contract has been awarded to Jarvis and they have completed the first stage ground conditions surveys with a full start on site in March. Stationers Place, Apsley, build contract is recommended to be awarded to Jarvis with a start on start currently planned for March. Swing Gate Lane in Berkhamsted and Martindale school site are also progressing well.

PROPERTY & PLACE

Osborne - Total Asset Management.

The performance figures for the last quarter, Q3, showed a significant improvement on the previous quarter following the improvement measures put in place by the Council and Osborne.

The five year plan is in the process of being finalised, which will provide improved visibility of the work that will be undertaken, and in which areas of the Borough.

As we move through the winter months there has been a rise in the number of reports of damp and mould in properties. A new process has been developed, which will assist in the diagnosis and management of these cases, some of which arise from inability of the tenants to adequately heat and ventilate the properties.

Sun Realm - Gas Servicing and Installation

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The servicing and installation contract continues to deliver consistently high levels of compliance, currently 99.95% with four overdue properties. All cases are in the legal process but two are proving challenging due a range of vulnerabilities and mental health issues of the tenants who are involved. Customer satisfaction with the service remains high.

Questions & Answers

Councillor Tindall sought clarification on information given at the Development Control Committee that various parts of sites had to be moved due to refuse collection vehicle access and asked if it was a fault of the designs. Councillor Griffiths said she would investigate the matter and report back to him.

Councillor England referred to the long-term voids and asked if a common factor had been identified. Councillor Griffiths said there was lots of work ongoing and the figure was slowly coming down. She advised there was a communication issue with Osborne's recently which will have an impact on the figures but they will continue to work on getting them down.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

"The move to the Forum has been a major undertaking and I would like to thank the Members of the Forum Cultural Board, sponsored by Sally Marshall and managed by Rob Smyth for all their hard work and effort to make this a success.

In particular, I would like to mention the following people:

- Thank you to Ben Trueman, Gary Osler, Amanda Jefferies and the ICT Team for setting up the new building and its infrastructure while also keeping the Civic going during the transition.
- Thank you to Cassie O'Neil, Sarah Allen and the Central Admin Team for helping to scan and remove 35 tonnes of paper and ensuring that the mail service was working seamlessly across the two sites.
- Thank you to Charles Berry Ottaway and the Improvement and Innovation Team for successfully managing the logistics of the physical move – moving hundreds of staff is a major exercise, but the feedback has been extremely positive and within 90 minutes all staff have been settled in and working as normal.
- Thank you to Kelvin Solely and the Communications Team for making sure that we made everyone aware of what was happening and that we continued to engage with staff to make sure everything worked as it should.
- Thank you to Dave Skinner, Ben Hosier, Tony Moore, Jim Guiton and the Facilities Team for ensuring the smooth management of both buildings".

Special mention also to Mark Gaynor & Rajesh Sinha for their involvement in the project

People

All voluntary sector contracts are now live and we have a networking meeting set up (late January) to find new ways of supporting each other.

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Sickness is still significantly lower than at this point last year (approximately 25%).

Performance & Projects

DBC has formally given notice (to Northgate and its staff) that we are bringing the CSU back in-house. The existing contract with Northgate Public Services will terminate at the end of July and plans are currently being put in place to ensure a smooth transition.

Residents Services

ASB

An ASB Officer received commendations for a partnership project at a national awards ceremony where the Dacorum project was runner up in the Resolve Awards and the project was also recognised at a County awards ceremony.

Old Town Hall

The Old Town Hall had attendance figures of 73% with an extremely busy Christmas season which ended on Christmas Eve!

Hertfordshire Inclusive Theatre launched drama classes at the Old Town Hall on 14th January 2017 which was funded by Children in Need.

The Old Town Hall will be screening relaxed screenings of vintage films for people with dementia or memory problems and their carers. The first screening is on 26th January at 2.00pm and is a Doris Day classic, Calamity Jane – this project is in partnership with Age UK Dacorum and sponsored by Derrick Bridges and Co Solicitors.

The Let's Dance group from the Old Town Hall - the over 55 dance group have been working on a new TV show with ITV, a spoof of the classic film Dirty Dancing and were filming last week.

Neighbourhood Action

Members of the NA groups and Community Champions will be visiting the Forum on 30th January 2017.

The Community Safety Partnership

Held an information event in Hemel Hempstead town centre on 26th November which received good feedback and which will be repeated later this year.

The Portfolio Holder presented two short You Tube videos to the members on Get Set, Go Dacorum.

Questions & Answers

Councillor Tindall congratulated everyone involved in the move to The Forum. He then queried if a study had been undertaken on whether the parking in the borough was getting worse and if any action was being taken to relieve the pressure. Councillor Harden advised that the growing population was difficult to control but they will continue to work alongside Hertfordshire County Council to look at ways to deal with the increase in population and need for car parking.

Councillor Tindall requested to continue to have neighbourhood action meetings. He also asked for reassurance that Domestic Violence victims that may arrive at The

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Forum in distress will be treated sympathetically in the new Customer Service Unit now that the service was back in-house. Councillor Harden said the ball was in his court for getting together for neighbourhood action meetings. He then advised that Customer Services were the same staff as in the old Civic Centre and they were trained in how to deal with Domestic Violence victims in a sensitive manner.

Councillor England referred to the ongoing issue of car parking in the borough and queried councils approach to resolving the issue. Councillor Harden said the council was proactive and was currently in the third year of the verge hardening project which had so far successfully created an additional 300 spaces. He said they look at the prioritised list every month and if there is a road that needs to be added to the list they should let him know.

Councillor England asked how many years approximately the wait is for verge hardening. Councillor Harden explained that they have criteria to meet to go on to the waiting list and it was done on a points system to create a list in order of priority. He said it may take approximately a couple of years on the waiting list but it all depended on the need of each road.

Councillor Adeleke thanked the Portfolio Holder for the videos but said he could not see any Cabinet members in the clips. He asked the Portfolio Holder if there were any plans to promote the facilities in the borough to a wider audience. Councillor Harden said DBC had a You Tube page and the videos could be viewed on there or on the DBC website for free. He advised that so far 3,000 people had participated in the activities and they're within budget so if the future bids were successful they would look at where to take plans forward and would continue to work with local groups, use social media and the press to promote the facilities.

Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

1. Re Town Centre

Sally Marshall and Councillor Sutton attended the awards' ceremony in Whitehall. Hemel Hempstead lost out to the overall winner of the competition, Blackburn. The awards generated widespread publicity for the town nationally and received positive support from the vast majority of quarters locally. We also get a runner's up prize of £500 to spend.

Quote from judges at GB High Street Award

Judge Deborah Owen-Ellis Clark, British Land's Head of Retail Marketing, says:

"Although Hemel Hempstead didn't win, they should be extremely proud of being finalists in this year's Great British High Street competition.

"We were very impressed with the work being done by Dacorum Council in the town centre and they deserve their runner's up prize and the knowledge that they're amongst the best high streets in Britain."

2. Re Water Gardens

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In the Water Gardens the final elements of landscaping are being undertaken, this week focussing on planting where the river bends by Bridge Street. Woodland species have been selected for this shaded area.

Near to Combe Street, the new building for Clean, Safe and Green and volunteering activities is taking shape. The sliding glazed doors have been installed and the internal walls plastered. On the exterior of the building, the feature sliding screens with a striking decorated motif will be fitted shortly.

The compound area has been moved to the old bus station at Market Square enabling the Combe Street entrance to the Water Gardens North car park to be re-opened before Christmas, improving access for shoppers and visitors to the town centre.

In early December, young volunteers got involved in the restoration of the Gardens when 5 pupils from South Hill Primary School helped to bury a time capsule on an island in the Gardens. The school council selected items to be saved in the time capsule, which will be opened in 2041.

3. MBC Extension Update

Foundations are complete and the site levels have been reduced as necessary in the building areas. The mains water diversion work is also complete. In the next month the remaining drainage will be installed, and the carpark area will be formed including the sub base. The building structure is being manufactured off site and will be delivered early March. We are still heading towards a completion date of end of May 2017.

4. Christmas Event

It's difficult to put a number on attendees as this was an all day event, but upwards of 7000 would be an estimate. Phasels Wood provided adventure equipment to fill Marlowes with activities for the children and there was a varied programme of acts on the stage. These included a Baby Rave, The Rock Choir, children's entertainment and fifties rock band the Rockabellas. The lights were switched on by BGT finalist Balance Unity and the day finished with a bang with fireworks from the roof of Riverside. Everything was free which was very well received.

5. Re Strategic Tourism Service agreed for Dacorum

The value of Dacorum's tourism economy has risen in the last 5 years by an estimated £36 million pounds based on the Cambridge model (nationally accepted measure for tourism economy). As from April 2017 this service is being contracted to Visit Herts, for a 3 year period, who will continue and build on the good work we have done internally to raise the profile of Dacorum's attractions, and widen the opportunities for our tourism businesses to get involved on a more county/regional and national basis.

Questions & Answers

Councillor Adshead referred to a recent incident on the new play equipment in the Town Centre and asked what the council were doing to ensure the equipment in the borough is as safe as possible. Councillor G Sutton advised they had fairly strict

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controls and inspections and they continuously monitor the equipment to ensure the safety of the residents. He said they would look at or remove equipment if it wasn't safe as safety is paramount.

Councillor Fisher said that the Christmas lights were very attractive but asked why they didn't cover the market square. Councillor G Sutton said they could look at illuminating the whole area in future.

Councillor England congratulated the Portfolio Holder on the profile of coming second place for the Great British High Street awards. He noted recent conversations on the Facebook page 'Hemel Hempstead Community and Conversation' relating to the loss of Hospital and Pavilion and asked about the vision for Hemel Hempstead and Dacorum beyond housing. Councillor G Sutton said he would speak to Councillor England in detail after the meeting.

Councillor Douris said it was great to see activities in the Town Centre but also great to see a growing number of activities in the Old High Street. He said there was an event recently where a number of local residents attended and unfortunately the weather was awful but the press was positive and highlighted that Hemel Hempstead was a great place to be, work and live. Councillor G Sutton agreed and commended the hard work of the teams involved.

Councillor Matthews asked if other areas of the Borough would benefit from tourism activities, not just Hemel Hempstead. Councillor G Sutton assured Councillor Matthews that he would do his hardest to ensure all areas of the Borough would benefit.

5 QUESTIONS

None.

6 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None.

7 CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 29 November 2016 and 13 December 2016 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved

That the following be approved:

29 November 2016

7.1 CA/117/16 GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

Decision

CHAIRMAN

That the following be approved:

- 1) the Terms of Reference to the Infrastructure Advisory Group as set out in Appendix 3 of the Cabinet report, including that authority is delegated to the Chairman of the Infrastructure Advisory Group to approve spending of CIL receipts of up to £50,000 on projects not identified in the Infrastructure Business Plan.
- 2) the allocations of CIL funds to those Infrastructure themes set out in Section 3 of the Cabinet report
- 3) that funding is allocated to these themes for use in 2018/19 and 2019/20
- 4) that submissions for CIL funds are encouraged from April 2017 using the CIL submission forms at Appendix 4.
- 5) entry into the Memorandum of Understanding with Hertfordshire County Council as set out in Appendix 5 of the report to Cabinet
- 6) that authority is delegated to the Assistant Director (Planning, Development and Regeneration) to:
 - (a) finalise the wording of the CIL submission bid form and associated guidance notes; and
 - (b) finalise guidance notes for Town and Parish Councils and Ward Councillors.

13 December 2016

7.2 CA/127/16 BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 2 2016/17

Decision

That the following be approved:

1. Approval of the supplementary budgets set out below. Details for these supplementary budgets are set out in the body of the report to Cabinet and have a net nil impact on the General Fund Working Balance:
 - Increase the People and Performance Supplies and Services budget by £40k

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- Increase use of the Management of Change reserve by £40k
- Increase the Community Partnerships Supplies and Services budget by £15k
- Increase use of the Management of Change reserve by £15k
- Increase the capital budget for Disabled Facilities Grants by £133k to reflect additional grant funding received

7.3 CA/132/16 UPDATE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ADVICE NOTE & SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST

Decision

That the following we approved:

- (a) The updated Sustainable Development Advice Note and associated Sustainable Development Checklist to inform Development Control decisions be adopted; and
- (b) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director, Planning, Development and Regeneration to make any necessary minor editorial changes to the Advice Note (Annex A of the report to Cabinet) and Checklist (Annex B of the report to Cabinet), prior to their final publication.

7.4 CA/134/16 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2017/18

Decision

That the following be approved:

- The Meeting Timetable for 2017/18 as set out in Annex A to the Cabinet report.

The Leader advised that the changes to committee dates detailed in item 10 would be incorporated into the timetable. He understood that the timetable wasn't easy to read on the iPads so he agreed that all members could have a paper copy printed for them so they could get the meeting dates in to their diaries.

7.5 CA/135/16 COUNCIL NEW BUILD PROGRAMME UPDATE

Decision

That the following be approved:

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1. the approval of a supplementary estimate to fund a consultancy budget of £50,000 to develop plans to build new homes on 2 garage sites at Westerdale and Northend garage sites (as detailed in the report to Cabinet, subject to securing planning permission).

Councillor England queried the estimate of £50k. Councillor Williams advised that it was part of the process to ensure they have a reasonable budget but the £50k should be more than sufficient.

8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

None.

9 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

None.

10 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

Resolved:

That the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15th March 2018 be moved to 21st March 2018.

That the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3rd October 2017 be swapped with the Member Development Steering Group on 4th October 2017.

11 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Part 1, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded during the item in Part II of the Agenda for the meeting, because it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that, if members of the public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Items 12 and 13).

(Local Government Finance Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, paragraph 3).

12 CABINET REFERRALS PART 2

Full details in part 2 decision sheet

13 CALL IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURE

Full details in part 2 decision sheet

14 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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The Meeting ended at 8.50 pm

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