
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

19 APRIL 2017

Present:

MEMBERS:

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

OFFICERS:

Member Support Officer, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Corporate Director - Finance and Operations, Group Manager - Democratic Services, Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration and Claire Oliveri

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

33 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 February and 21 March 2017 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Mayor.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

36 ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor:

The Mayor asked that a minutes silence was held in remembrance of past Mayor and Honorary Alderman Les Taber. Councillors Fisher and Williams both gave a speech with their memories of him.

2. By the Chief Executive:

Sally Marshall announced the resignation of Councillor Adam Barnes, Bovingdon, Flaunden and Chipperfield Ward. She then confirmed as Returning Officer that there will be a Parliamentary General Election on 8 June 2017 following the announcement of the Prime Minister, Theresa May yesterday and the agreement of Parliament today. She advised that a by-election will also be held on 8 June 2017 for the Bovingdon, Flaunden and Chipperfield Ward.

3. By the Group Leaders:

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Anderson, Banks, Bhinder, Chapman, Hicks and Whitman.

Councillor Tindall gave apologies on behalf of Councillor Ransley.

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 but he did advise all members that there was a paper slip on the desk asking if they would like to receive text message reminders for member development training sessions.

He was happy to take questions.

Questions & Answers

Councillor England asked the Leader if he agreed it was unacceptable that the people of Dacorum were still without a 24 hour urgent care service, despite being promised in December that the 24 hour service would resume. Councillor Williams agreed it was unacceptable and that there was a need for the 24 hour service to be resumed. He said he understood it was due to problems with the hospital being under-staffed for the past year.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Matthews arrived at 7.44 pm.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing
TENANT & LEASEHOLDER SERVICES

Andy Vincent – Group Manager for Tenants and Leaseholders has now left the Council. In the meantime Elliott Brooks Assistant Director for Housing will be covering the Tenant and Leaseholder Group.

The Tenant Involvement Service has received accreditation from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service. This recognises the excellent work that has been done by the Housing Service to involve tenants – we aim to continue to build on this positive relationship and continue to improve tenant satisfaction with the wider housing service.

Tunstall Healthcare limited will commence in April answering alarm calls from our sheltered tenants. Approximately 2,500 tenants and residents utilise this service. We are working to make this transition from Eldercare to Tunstall as smooth as possible –

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and to ensure that performance remains excellent. We will report back on the progress with this service

STRATEGIC HOUSING

Strategic Housing are working closely with the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) and the Homeless Forum to achieve commitments as set out in our 2016-2020 Homelessness Strategy. One of the main areas is our commitment to reduce rough sleeping in the borough and increase the prevention of homelessness. The service is working closely with other local statutory and voluntary agencies to address situations of rough sleeping and associated street activity in the borough and this is being done by targeted intervention, which in some cases will include enforcement action. The Council is committed to providing a positive pathway for all households in housing need and will continue to work in collaboration to achieve this.

PROPERTY & PLACE

Osborne - Total Asset Management.

The contract continues to deliver consistently high levels of performance, as evidenced in the annual Corvu report and demonstrates the benefits that have been derived from co-location of Council and Contractors staff.

Repairs volumes appear to be within benchmarked levels with 24035 repairs being completed in the year, providing an average of 2.4 per property. Some analysis of repairs data for the first six months of the year, showed that 49% of the repairs spend was focused on 20% of the stock, which highlights that some tenants have a disproportionately high number of repairs.

Osborne officially opened their new skills centre on 30th March, which is based in their depot at Maxted Court. The facility is designed to enable apprentices, tenants and leaseholders to be able to undertake training in DIY or trade skills in an environment that combines classroom learning with practical experience.

Sun Realm - Gas Servicing and Installation

The servicing and installation contract continues to deliver consistently high levels of compliance, currently 99.98% with two overdue properties. All cases are in the access process and there are an increasing number of tenants who do not engage due to mental health or other vulnerabilities. The customer satisfaction with service remains high.

Questions & Answers

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.
Councillor Guest arrived at 7.46 pm.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

People

Armed Forces Event to celebrate our Armed Forces is being arranged for 1 July 2017. Details to follow once they have been finalised.

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New People Strategy agreed and Delivery Programme commenced – Focussing on four key themes: Developing leadership and workforce capacity, Building and sustaining a high-performance environment, Positive culture and environment where people want to work, Getting the right people in the right areas.

ICT

Our new service desk system went live – this improves the way we manage and track ICT jobs and by August we will be rolling out a new self-service portal for users to report ICT issues

Users have been testing different types of laptops (ahead of the replacement of all hardware) and the feedback has been positive

The applications review has been completed - while it found the overall state of systems was okay, it did identify some systems that need to be replaced and we will be doing that as part of a planned replacement programme

We have continued to make good progress on the development and launch of a new self-service portal for residents which we hope will go live in summer 2017

Democratic Services

Preparations are in full swing for the Hertfordshire County Council Elections on Thursday 4 May 2017. Information regarding the elections is available on the Elections 2017 pages of our website

In addition to the Hertfordshire County Council Election there are elections to the Berkhamsted West Ward; Berkhamsted Town West Ward and Tring Rural Parish Council.

The Count will take place immediately after the Close of Poll on Thursday 4 May 2017 at Hemel Sports Centre.

The first issue of 17,000 Postal Ballot Papers took place on 13 April 2017

Formal receipt and opening of the postal ballot papers began today and will continue each day commencing at 10.30 am until Thursday 4 May 2017.

Performance & Transformation

New Leisure Modernisation Programme incorporating strategic direction for leisure provision in Dacorum includes: Commissioning a provider to manage council's leisure facilities, Relocation of Athletics track & Facilities to Longdean School, Refurbishment of swimming pool at Tring School, Berkhamsted Sports centre feasibility study, DBC Sports & Leisure strategy.

New improved compliments & complaints system is going live at the end of April 2017

New internal performance and project management systems are going live at the beginning of May 2017

Positive Statistics

Average sickness per FTE reduced from **10.3** (2015/16) to **8.4** (2016/17) giving an average staff productivity saving of £120k.

Cash payments (which are more expensive than card/direct debit) were **66%** lower in 2016/17 than in 2014/15 – this was due to a new policy to restrict payments, increased usage of the self-service unit and better online payments system.

Questions & Answers

Councillor Tindall asked when the Council would be receiving the report on Sportspace and the commissioning of the various activities that will take place, and also when the report will no longer be considered as Part 2 information. Councillor Harden said they were aiming for the final decision to go to the December Cabinet meeting. In the meantime, as part of the Procurement process they will be asking for feedback from members and the relevant stakeholders regarding what leisure provisions they would like to see and this will take place around May-June this year. He advised he would make contact with Councillor Tindall on this consultation as Leader of the opposition.

Councillor Adeleke referred to the reduction in sickness and asked what the target was. Councillor Harden advised the target was 8% and highlighted that they had introduced new procedures, and the recording and monitoring of sickness was much better.

Councillor Adeleke asked how prepared the council was for the General Election that had just been announced. Councillor Harden explained that there was a lot of feedback from the EU Referendum count that took place last year and they had taken those comments on board and were taking a different approach for the upcoming County Council Election in May. He felt the new approach would help to ensure that the count runs smoother and more efficiently. He added that the Democratic Services teams always do a fantastic job and work really hard.

Councillor Tindall asked if the party agents would be invited to discuss any changes in the count process so that they were all involved in the matter going forward. Councillor Harden advised that the agents were always welcome to pass on any suggestions to the Returning Officer to help make improvements. He said they had learnt lessons from the EU Referendum as it could have been done quicker but he felt we should see a difference this time round and if all goes well in May they would replicate the process for the General Election.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

A Brownfield Land Register Officer is now in post with an aim to meet the government requirements for a register to be in place by December 2017

Water Gardens Update - The Friends building and garden are nearing completion. At the building the internal decoration took place last week and the external sliding perforated screens are due to be delivered shortly for initial fitting. They will then be sent away for powder coating.

In the community garden the raised beds and compost bins have been constructed and the final painting to the security fencing is underway.

The new play area is also making good progress with all the structures now in place. The safety surfacing is due to be laid next week to be followed by final finishing works to the play equipment.

To mark the re-opening of the Water Gardens we are planning a garden party to celebrate their restoration. The event will take place on 22nd July throughout the

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Gardens and Bank Court and include music, food stalls, gardening activities for children's and much more. Further information on the programme of events will be released nearer the time.

Business week 5th to 9th June now launched with an aim to help local businesses based in Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead, Tring and beyond to network and develop knowledge and to encourage economic growth with a full line up of business events and free practical workshops.

With business in mind I am pleased to report that the work on the extension to the Maylands Business Centre continue apace, the roofs and many of the walls are now in place.

And finally an Ambassador web site has been launched – www.investhemel.co.uk to promote Hemel Hempstead and the surrounding areas to inward investment.

Questions & Answers

Councillor Douris asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm that the funding for the Water Gardens restoration from the Heritage Lottery Fund was only for that project.

Councillor G Sutton confirmed that was correct.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

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

The additional garden waste subscription service is going well: 529 subscriptions paid for this year to date (485 were paid last year). Charge is only £50 for each additional bin collected p.a. and additional bins can be brought at £25 per bin.

The national Great British Spring Clean in March went well - 40 groups took part, totalling 1322 volunteers. 252 bags of general rubbish plus 132 bags of rubbish for recycling were collected. The largest litter pick was by Two Waters Primary School – 250 children picked in the school grounds & surrounding streets. The biggest collection was organised by DBC tenants and leaseholders of Leverstock Green, who collected 37 bags of rubbish. Cupid Green is always ready & willing to help & encourage litter-picking throughout the year by providing bags and litter pick sticks, arranging to pick up the filled bags and providing advice to keep safe.

I hope members were able to visit the Walled Garden in Gadebridge Park recently. The scent and colour from the hyacinths and the brilliance of the tulips and primulas was just mind blowing and the Clean Safe & Green service rightly got lots of praise. All over the borough, there are many good displays of late flowering tulips and primulas to enjoy.

Questions and Answers

Councillor Adshead highlighted the increase in fly-tipping in Adeyfield, especially in the bin areas of Flats with large items such as sofa's being dumped. He asked the Portfolio Holder if she was able to look at introducing more initiatives to attempt to combat this issue. Councillor Marshall explained that the Council had now adopted a policy of issuing fixed penalty notices but it boils down to getting the evidence to prove who has fly-tipped which can be very difficult. She urged colleagues to report any fly-tipping to Cupid Green before it gets collected as they can check for evidence.

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Councillor Griffiths asked if the Portfolio Holder was aware that the event in Leverstock Green organised by the Tenant and Leaseholder department also involved the wider community and local residents. Councillor Marshall thanked Councillor Griffiths for that information.

Councillor Adeleke said there was a litter-pick in Flaunden last year and the Parish Council had asked him to pass on their gratitude to the Cupid Green staff for that. He then explained that he had noticed a big problem during each litter-pick in Flaunden with empty vodka bottles being dumped and said they had collected 83 bottles this year. He asked if the Portfolio Holder could suggest anything that might help encourage the community to dispose of the bottles correctly and safely. Councillor Marshall thanked Councillor Adeleke for his kind comments on the staff at Cupid Green. She then suggested that his comments on vodka bottles sounded like a broader issue with anti-social behaviour type drinking which could be more of an issue than the disposal of bottles. She suggested he could work with the local PCSO's to identify hot-spots for anti-social drinking.

Councillor Fisher queried if there were recycling facilities for plastic bags. Councillor Marshall explained that she had enquired about this before but understood there was no market for recycled plastic bags so it makes it uneconomical to make arrangements for recycling. She said she was only aware of one supermarket that accepts plastic bags for recycling. She added that if any reasonable opportunity arises for recycling plastic bags she will grasp it.

Councillor England asked if there was any intention to change the cycle of grass cutting from previous years. Councillor Marshall said she wasn't aware of any changes but would look into it and let him know. Councillor England noted some areas of grass that were overgrown in Queensway and Trebellan Drive and asked if there were any plans to cut them. Councillor Marshall noted the areas and said she would make enquiries.

Councillor Timmis highlighted the problem of fly-tipping in rural areas and asked the Portfolio Holder how much it was costing the council. Councillor Marshall said she didn't have the figure to hand but she would make enquiries and then email the members.

Councillor Birnie asked if there had been any progress from the sub-committee discussions for the disposal of rubbish for residents living in flats. Councillor Marshall explained that the work was still ongoing with officers to discuss the options and the intention is to reconvene the Task and Finish group to consider the various options and then they would submit the result to the overview and scrutiny committee's.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Finance and Resources

Finance:

The budget for 2017/18 was approved by Full Council on 22 February 2017.

Grant Thornton has been appointed as the Council's auditors for two years from 2016/17.

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The finance team is currently working hard on year-end tasks to close the accounts for 2016/17.

Revenue & Benefits:

The annual billing for council tax and business rates was again successfully completed.

The work done with the housing team to combine housing benefit award notices with rent change letters has proved particularly successful again. It reduced the number of calls from residents to the customer services team concerning their bills. Following the issue of the bills, about 500 residents have made use of the convenience of the online portal to set up a direct debit to pay their council tax.

Commercial Assets & Property Development:

The garage disposal programme is currently ongoing and one site is being finalised for marketing.

The sale of the land at Jarmans Park continues to progress and an exchange of contracts is predicted for mid-year.

Commissioning, Procurement & Compliance:

The Procurement Team continue to support the new Facilities Management contract with Interserve and the ongoing snagging works with Carters.

Procurement are currently involved in a number of projects including the Leisure Management contract and the Car Parking Management Services contract. The tender for the new splash park and new playground for Gadebridge park have now been tendered.

The Café in The Forum has continued weekend opening due to the success and popularity of the building.

Questions and Answers

Councillor Birnie asked why two proposals to demolish and redevelop garage areas had been withdrawn. Councillor Elliot asked Councillor Birnie to advise him of the addresses of the garage areas in question and he will investigate and let him know.

Councillor Douris asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm that Grant Thornton have been appointed as the external auditors for the council. Councillor Elliot confirmed they were.

There were no more questions for the Portfolio Holder.

37 QUESTIONS

None.

38 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

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None.

39 CABINET REFERRALS

The referral from Cabinet on 21 March 2017 was submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved

That the following be approved:

21 March 2017

7.1 CA/032/17 BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 3 2016/17

Decision

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:
 - Decrease the budget for Pension back funding by £900k
 - Decrease use of the Pensions reserve by £900k
2. Increase the capital budget for The Forum by £514k to reflect contribution received from Hertfordshire County Council for fit out works to the library, ceremonial room and registration offices.

40 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES ANNUAL REPORTS 2016/2017

The Chairman of the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Mahmood, introduced the annual reports and highlighted the particular achievements for each committee on behalf of the committee Chairmen:

Finance and Resources OSC: The committee were pleased that the Cabinet and officers have actioned the financial overview and scrutiny request that credit card transactions should be charged to the card user. This has now resulted in a saving to the council of approximately £90,000 per year. Secondly it has been agreed that the officers will respond within 14 days to outstanding issues brought forward at the meeting whenever possible.

Housing and Community OSC: The committee has had a busy year with the changes brought about by the Housing and Planning Bill which became an Act of Parliament during 2016. This then resulted in revisions and updates to a number of policies. As a

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consequence of this piece of legislation certain concerns were voiced locally by the TLC members on the 'pay to stay' housing rent calculation changes. However following a successful meeting with the two local MP's requested by the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee (the so called TLC), also attended by some council members at the Civic Centre in the summer, the policy requirements for this aspect of legislation was changed from mandatory to being optional – much to the delight of the TLC members. The TLC terms of engagement were also reviewed by officers and a new TLC, with a fresh mandate and terms of reference, started up during autumn of 2016.

The homelessness strategy for the borough was thoroughly scrutinised during the course of the year at several meetings of the committee. The committee was pleased with the outcomes and acknowledged the thorough and professional manner in which the Group Manager for the Homelessness Strategy succinctly presented the reports and explained the background to the proposed changes.

Strategic Planning and Environment OSC: The Chairman is pleased in the way members are participating in regular reports and specific items, and are developing their analytical and questioning skills. In so far as specific policies were concerned, the Water Policy, on how do we cope with the dilemma of ensuring there is enough water for future development, against the requirements of the planning system was most interesting. The additional meeting in January was an excellent example of the value that members bring to our local communities in resolving to join the campaign against Luton Aircraft noise/night flights.

Health in Dacorum: The committee has looked at all health matters in Dacorum, covering the ongoing issues pertaining to the future hospital provisions for West Herts, to issues relating to local surgeries. A detailed report was included in the agenda.

41 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

There were no overview and scrutiny committee referrals.

42 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes to committee membership.

43 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

There were no changes in committee dates.

The Meeting ended at 8.22 pm

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