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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**20 FEBRUARY 2019**

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Present -

**MEMBERS:**

R Sutton (Mayor), Douris (Deputy Mayor), Adeleke, Anderson, Armytage, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Bhinder, Birnie, Brown, Chapman, D Collins, E Collins, Elliot, England, Fisher, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Link, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, Matthews, Mills, Pringle, Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, Timmis, Tindall, Williams, C Wyatt-Lowe, W Wyatt-Lowe (41)

**OFFICERS:**

The Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration), Assistant Director (Corporate and Contracted Services) – M Brookes, Elections Team Leader – J Doyle, PA to the Corporate Directors - S Turner (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm.

**1. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2019 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Mayor.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Douris declared an interest in a company in which he has some shares in, who rent properties from Dacorum Borough Council.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**4.1 By the Mayor:**

None.

**4.2 By the Chief Executive:**

None.

#### **4.3 By the Group Leaders:**

Cllr Williams confirmed that apologies had been received from Councillors Clark, Conway, Mclean, Taylor and Whitman and apologies for the late arrival of Councillor Imarni.

Cllr Tindall advised that apologies had been received from Councillor Ransley.

Cllr Fisher offered apologies for Councillor Fethney

#### **4.4 Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet:**

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

Cllr Williams confirmed there was nothing to report on this item of the agenda but was happy to take questions.

Cllr Pringle mentioned that Cllr Williams at the last meeting commented that Dacorum Borough Council didn't need to make any plans for the possibility of a chaotic no deal Brexit, because we are not Kent. Cllr Pringle said that Cabinet has arranged to discuss this on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, just 10 days before we could crash out without any deal, and asked Cllr Williams if this was too little too late and can he explain the preparations that will be put in place to advise and support local businesses affected by this and also our EU27 residents who are tenants or Dacorum Borough Council employees and our neighbours.

Cllr Williams said that at the last meeting he advised it was very difficult for us to make arrangements for circumstance which we can't possibly foresee, and unlike some of Kent areas and port areas where there may be particular difficulties, where you may be expected to make explicit arrangements. Subsequent to that the Government has announced funding for each district Council in the UK of £35k over two years, to support Brexit preparations and therefore it seemed appropriate for Cabinet to put this onto the next agenda to look at the issues that may be relevant to the Council in relation to Brexit.

Cllr Williams said that in regards to the workforce a study was undertaken and there were very few EU nationals working within the organisation, but clearly there is no statutory requirement for them to declare their nationality, so that information is based on those who were willing to respond.

Cllr Williams advised that given the status of the UK Governments standing for EU nationals, that he didn't believe any EU national living in the UK has anything to fear from Brexit and will retain the right to reside here.

Cllr England asked if Council agreed that the £60k per year – 5 year contract since the market moved away from Market Square was done to facilitate improvements but has not come to fruition. Cllr England thinks it was unfortunate that the tender process produced only two bidders and one fell away leaving the incumbent free to name his price, resulting in a £40k pressure to the budget.

Cllr Williams queried what he was being asked to agree.

Cllr England said that he is asking for agreement that it was unfortunate.

Cllr Williams confirmed that any loss of income is unfortunate but it is a reflection of two things, particularly the challenge for market operators to successfully operate markets given

the competition from poundshops and other similar outlets which have undermined the traditional market place. There was only one tenderer the last time the contract was let five years ago and similarly we only have one tenderer now. We know without going into the financial arrangements with the operator in the past, that running a market is financially challenging and we have to accept if we want a market that's appropriate there will be a smaller fee and we can work with the operator to improve the quality on offer. Having a good market in the town centre is more important than maximising the accounts of the authority.

Cllr England asked what the plans were for Market Square.

Cllr Williams replied that there are no specific plans for Market Square. There were arrangements in plan for a number of sites in the Town Centre including this and the site next door, those arrangements have now concluded and Market Square is back wholly under the control of this Council. At the moment we are looking at options but we are not pursuing any particular option at this stage.

### **Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

#### Revenues, Benefits and Fraud

For the second year in a row the revenue and benefits service have achieved exceptional internal audit assessments. The revenues service in relation to business rates collection and the benefits service in relation to housing benefit processes, have received the highest level of assurance from internal audit.

This is very good news and demonstrates both that there are appropriate controls in place, and the hard work put in by the teams to ensure that the collection of council tax and business rates, and the payment of housing benefit and council tax support are carried out effectively.

The Audit committee were extremely impressed with the outcome of the internal audits for the revenues and benefits services, especially given that this service is responsible for collecting in excess of £200m per year.

The teams have started in earnest to prepare to issue next year's council tax bills, to ensure that the council can proceed with billing of the new financial year in a very timely fashion, following the approval by Council tonight of the budget.

#### Financial Services

Budget and Council Tax setting for 2019/20 was the central focus for Financial Services during January. The draft budget proposals and council tax requirement for 2019/20 were presented for a second round of challenge by all Overview and Scrutiny Committees and these were subsequently agreed by Cabinet on the 12<sup>th</sup> February. The Council Tax declaration for 2019/20 is to be presented at this Full Council meeting for ratification and this includes all the major preceptors such as Hertfordshire county council and Dacorum Parish councils.

The service saw new post holders take up their roles during January following a successful round of recruitment to posts across the team. The service is now fully staffed with permanent employees and is well placed as it heads towards the end of the financial year and the creation of the financial statements of accounts.

#### Commercial Assets and Property Development

### **Ex Civic Centre**

Work continues with UKPN and Affinity Water on timeframes to begin Phase 2 which will involve the diversion and relocation of utilities followed by demolition of the remaining building structures.

In January, trenching and ducting works for the relocation of 2 UKPN substations continued and will be followed by the construction of the new substation housing in Dacorum Way. In addition, we are liaising with Bellway Homes, who bought part of the West Herts college site for development at the western end of Dacorum Way, to resolve positioning of their site entrance so as not to impact on the proposed location of the new substation.

The utility infrastructure referred to supplies large areas of Hemel Hempstead and has to be treated appropriately. As part of this process the Environment Agency are monitoring the site closely to ensure that approved development plans and future development of these sites do not have an adverse environmental impact.

Whilst it is too early to confirm the precise date that the relocation work will be complete, it is likely to be within the next 6-9 months. This has no impact on the cost to the Council, nor will it delay the development of the site as the relocation process will run concurrently with the design and feasibility work of the proposed development, currently underway. Development plans for the old civic centre are expected to be submitted and approved in this calendar year.

### **Garage Disposals**

The sales of underutilised garages to release a capital receipts for future developments are continuing with one garage site under offer at £300k to a private developer and legal work between respective solicitors is being finalised.

The next phase of the Garage Disposal Strategy has commenced and 18 sites have been reviewed by Housing Associations to assess viability of the sites for purchase. Once a garage disposal timetable is finalised members will be informed of the schedule of sales.

### **Bunkers Park**

We have received construction partner tender submissions bids for the creation of a new cemetery at Bunkers park which once completed will meet the requirements of the Borough for the next 50 years, and more specifically will replace the Woodwells cemetery in 2020, once it reaches capacity.

Together with our appointed Cemetery development consultant, we will be interviewing the bidders in February and will be awarding the contract in March 2019.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

Cllr Birnie mentioned that our council tax is 34% less than our neighbouring council Watford, which is run by Lib Dem, and would you agree with me that as long as we have a Conservative Council setting the budget that our residents are always likely to be better off.

Cllr Elliot confirmed that yes it probably demonstrates the prudent approach to the financing of the Council, improving the Borough, protecting front line services without being prolific with our residents money and giving value for money.

Cllr Anderson asked what stage local Ward Members will be advised on what's happening on garage sites.

Cllr Elliot advised that the sites are actively being considered and once they are identified Ward Members will be informed, but there is no timetable yet that would enable us to speak to individual Ward Members. Once they are decided we will consult.

### **Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing**

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows;

#### **Tenant & Leaseholder Services**

##### **Income**

The appointment of a dedicated UC officer has meant that we are building a body of expertise and also been able to start to build a network of contacts to smooth communication with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and JobCentre Plus (JCP) and to share best practice with other Local Authorities and Social Landlords. Due to this appointment and to the hard work of the rest of the team our arrears performance is holding up well.

We are continuing to chase other forms of debt due to the Housing Service, in particular, rechargeable works debts, and our Empty Homes Team are identifying increasing numbers of repairs and clearances to be charged to the tenants rather than being borne by the HRA. We hope that this will result in more tenants taking greater responsibility for leaving the property to our Empty Homes Standard – we are already seeing some evidence for this and people are certainly becoming more aware of their responsibilities.

##### **Tenancy sustainment**

The TS Team are currently supporting 257 households, this is made up of 101 vulnerable tenants in General Needs Accommodation, 107 in Temporary Accommodation, 46 in Introductory Tenancies who have been previously Homeless and 6 Refugee households who have been resettled as part of the governments Syrian Refugee Resettlement Program. We are about to start using a new Case Management System and training is now underway. Officers are working really hard to cover for a vacant post and an officer off on long term sick, we currently have a waiting list of 9 assessed cases

##### **Supported Housing**

The supported housing, tenancy sustainment and welfare teams are currently working on the implementation of the new housing support system. The new system will allow us to support individuals to achieve outcomes, to monitor progress and to use data to proactively respond to service demands. The implementation has been challenging due to the short timescales for completion but the teams have worked hard to ensure that it is being delivered on time.

We have experienced a challenging time with the provider of the council's community alarm monitoring and response contract, where performance has dipped below the acceptable level. Work continues to ensure that the impact on customers is kept to a minimum.

##### **Tenancy**

We are in the process of filling a number of posts in the team and have new starters joining the council at the end of this month. Those currently in post are working extremely hard to ensure that the vacancies have little impact upon our tenants. The completion of Kylna Court

has meant there have been a significant amount of new tenant visits required to ensure that tenants are settling into the properties.

### Strategic Housing

Strategic Housing Service has several staffing pressures due to vacancies in key areas, recruitment is ongoing and agency staff are also being recruited

There are ongoing challenges in relation to allocation and letting of some of our homes, which take significantly longer than others to let and impact on performance. A number of proposals are currently being considered.

The team have not yet seen an influx of HMO licence applications, which may be an early indication that after the 6 month initial period of regulation change we will need to increase our efforts to detect and potentially enforce against unlicensed landlords.

### Housing Development

Kylna Court – Handed over and residents moving in.

Swing Gate Lane (Corn Mill Court) – Completion March 2019.

Martindale, Stationers Place, Northend and Westerdale all in the process of starting on site. Groundbreaking events held for Martindale and Stationers - Magenta Court.

Pipeline Schemes - St Margaret's Way, Gaddesden Row, Coniston Road, Bulbourne and Eastwick Row – All commencing due diligence work, surveys and in some cases working up designs

Paradise Fields – Homes England have agreed to sell the site to us, unlikely to complete purchase this financial year

Resource – Campaign to secure a new Senior Project Manager was not successful, new plan coming through.

### Property & Place

Our current re-roofing programme is drawing to a close this year and a full programme for 2019 / 20 has been identified and is being reviewed ready to commence early in the new financial year.

Our external wall insulation programme has identified 28 Homes that in the planning stages for works, with work on site set to start in the spring.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

### Questions:

Cllr England enquired about the activity on Council flat rentals where other authorities are housing some of their residents in the Dacorum area.

Cllr Griffiths advised she didn't have any specific information but she was aware that Brent were buying properties in this area about two or three years ago and this had been raised at Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She said she was aware that other authorities were doing the same, Watford included. There's nothing we can do to stop it, effectively

everybody is moving further out although she has no anticipation of us moving into Bedfordshire or Bucks but never say never. Other authorities should inform us if they are putting anyone in our area, especially if they are of a vulnerable nature, but what they should do and what they necessarily do are two different things.

### **Councillor D Collins, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows;

#### Legal

On the 13th February 2019 at St Albans Magistrates Council Mr Ased Ashfaq food business operator of Flamingo's Grill, Gossoms End, Berkhamsted, was found guilty of 21 food hygiene offences.

The prosecution was taken by the Council due to a failure of the business to act on advice from Environmental Health Officers. The premises were voluntarily closed on the 30th January 2018 due to poor hygienic conditions and an infestation of rats. After improvements the business was permitted to re-open.

However following a revisit 22 February 2018 to ensure that conditions had been maintained, Officers found that conditions had deteriorated to the extent that the business needed to be formally closed as it presented a health risk condition. St Albans Magistrates agreed with the action taken by the Council Officers and imposed a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Order.

Mr Ashfaq was found guilty of 21 food hygiene offences receiving a total fine of £15,750, with costs of £9,281.25 and victim surcharge of £ 75.00 the total amount payable to the Court was £25,106.

The Council secured a one year injunction against a man who was abusive towards a council employee and sets an example that the Council will not tolerate abuse towards its staff.

The Council achieved PSN Compliance (in January) for another year. The PSN compliance is where the Council submit our security framework to the Cabinet Office for approval and it means our technical and organisational security are in accordance with the required standards set by the Cabinet Office.

#### Projects

Berkhamsted Multi-Storey Car Park - Work continues with the utility providers (Electric/Gas/Water) to divert services before the substantial construction works commence. The temporary car park on the Moor has been temporarily closed due to adverse weather conditions which have caused the site to become uneven and muddy. The Council has consulted with contractors to agree the best solution to enable the car park to re-open as soon as possible. We are in discussion with providers to lay an additional surface using Euromats. They provide a temporary surface that protects soft ground and are weatherproof, water resistant and environmentally friendly. I have also arranged for more postings and other communications to keep the public and businesses up to date.

Tring school swimming pool works – Works are progressing well on site with a projected completion date of the end of March. The Council is working with Tring School to agree an opening date for the new facility

### Electoral Registration:

Preparations for the local elections in May are well underway. All staffing availability letters have been issued and around 80% of roles have been appointed to.

### Leisure Contract

Customer feedback is positive with a 99.5 + approval rating, well within the KPI target. Membership continues to grow with. The membership attrition rate is now 4%, compared with a national industry average of 6%. No major accidents have been reported. Everyone Active has appointed an Area Maintenance Manager and is promoting community engagement. Hemel Storm is attracting more support and has expressed its satisfaction with the working relationship with EA. EA has agreed sponsorship for Berkhamsted Half Marathon and plans are in progress for a Hemel Triathlon. This contract remains on target to deliver for users and rate payers.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

### Questions:

Cllr Pringle queried the conditions of the temporary car park in Berkhamsted which she looked at today and it was a quagmire. Cllr Pringle said that we have not had any adverse weather conditions for this time of the year that wouldn't be normally expected, and asked if the Portfolio Holder could inform the Council of what compensation has been sought from the contractor, because the temporary car park was not built fit for purpose.

Cllr Collins did not want to argue about the weather but wanted to assure Council that we have had some substantial rain and snow. Cllr Collins advised he was currently focussing on putting it right, because it is more important to get it back up and running.

Cllr Pringle did not feel these were unforeseeable weather conditions and asked if the Council had taken any action to assess the total loss of revenue that would have been expected from the use of the car park and also quantified the loss of the facility to the local residents who have no-where to park. The residents do expect the Council to behave financially prudently with such an investment.

Cllr Collins clarified that the Council is always financially prudent and with regards to loss of revenue, yes there had been some loss, which can't be denied, but equally a number of people who were against the temporary car park, said it wouldn't be used. There is regret for what has happened but there are measures being put into place that will enable us to re-open the car park, hopefully before the end of the month.

Cllr England mentioned that he had heard that many residents are writing to Everyone Active about large increases in their fees and people paying more for lessons than in other areas. Cllr England asked how the Portfolio Holder felt about the Direct Debits rising by as much as 50% from £20.40 to £32.50 per month.

Cllr Collins confirmed that Dacorum Sports Trust had a variety of different prices throughout their organisation and didn't seem to have any co-ordination or culpability on how their prices were set, which did result in some members paying less and some paying a lot more than they should have done. The policy of Everyone Active has been to try and implement a pricing structure that is coordinated and it is benchmarked throughout the Country. Cllr Collins advised that since EA took on the contract all new customers paid a fixed price £7.61 per lesson, which has now been increased by 2.5%. There are also two different options for lessons, one a 51 week per year or term time 38 weeks per year, again they are the same

throughout the week as they do in all their centres. So they will be moving to 50 weeks per year. Cllr Collins was aware that there are one or two cases that because of previous arrangements the price has gone up, but overall the price increase is 2.5%, which I think you'll find is less than our council tax proposal.

Cllr England asked if the Portfolio Holder could be more specific about the one or two cases and also that Everyone Active Direct Debits will be going out on the 1<sup>st</sup> March.

Cllr Collins advised he was aware of some but that he can only be aware when he's been informed, with regards to Direct Debits, I think that's a financial matter for Everyone Active.

Cllr England said we are talking about a 12 months moratorium as part of the contract so if the Direct Debits are indeed going up in March that's inappropriate.

Cllr Collins said he had been informed they are not going out in March and as far as he is aware the contract has been let. No price increases have taken place for the first 12 months.

Cllr Williams wanted to clarify that Direct Debits are increasing on 1<sup>st</sup> March because fees are taken a month in advance, so this will be for April lessons.

Cllr Tindall said that given the additional information provided by the Leader of the Council would the Portfolio Holder confirm what is the contractual clauses between us and Everyone Active which determines the increases they are allowed to put on individuals. The 2.5% increase overall seems minimal however some individuals are getting a 50% increase which is substantial for some people on a tight budget. Cllr Tindall would be happy to see information at this meeting on the contractual clauses which govern such increases.

Cllr Collins will come back to Cllr Tindall with that information.

**Action: Cllr Collins**

### **Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

#### **Environmental & Community Protection**

On 13th February at St Albans Magistrates Council Mr Ased Ashfaq food business operator of Flamingo's Grill was found guilty of 21 food hygiene offences.

The Court took into account Mr Ashfaq's guilty plea and discounted the penalty by a third. This still resulted in a fine of £15,750 (21 x £750), with over £9K costs awarded to the Council and victim surcharge the total amount payable was £25,201.25p.

The reason that the Council decided to prosecute Flamingo's:

- The standards at the business on the 30/1/18 were so bad largely due to an infestation of rats and filthy premises that officers closed the business on a voluntary basis. After improvements the business was allowed to re-open
- On the 22/2/18 a further visit was made to ensure compliance had been maintained, unfortunately it had not. Cleaning was again very poor and there was again an infestation of rats at the premises.
- A Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice (HEPN) being served by the Council Officers.
- The HEPN was confirmed by St Albans Magistrates that the officers were correct to formally close the business.

- The failure of the business to act on advice from the Council, the blatant disregard of the law and the protection of the public were the reasons that the prosecution was taken together with the number of offences 21 in total.

Our longest running ASB case of 5 years was won at High Court after numerous appeals for drug dealing/ASB in Marnham Rise. Costs have been recovered.

### Operation Tip Stop

On Monday, 18 February in Maylands Avenue, Hemel Hempstead, Dacorum Borough Council joined forces with officers from the Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team to deliver its first Operation Tip Stop.

As part of a major crackdown on fly-tipping officers took part in roadside checks of suspect vehicles to ensure that waste was being carried lawfully and that correct documentation was being kept.

During the two-hour period, officers stopped and checked 26 vehicles to see if they were carrying waste and were licensed to do so.

- 4 drivers given limited time for them to produce the correct documents in line with waste carrying regulations
- 1 licence inspected at the roadside to ensure it was current and correct

The Council and police have been working closely together to help crack down on unlicensed waste carriers, reduce the amount of fly-tipping in the borough and to inform residents that if they pay an unlicensed carrier to remove their waste and it is fly-tipped, they will be held legally responsible and liable for prosecution.

The information and intelligence garnered will be shared with the Herts Fly Tipping group which works across the county with neighbouring local authorities. The group is a multi-agency taskforce which has come together to improve how Hertfordshire responds to fly tipping.

### **People Group**

#### Community Safety and Children Services

- APGs – S106 bids have been submitted for some new play structures. New party offer to be launched April 2019. (Branding completed, card payment, food ordering, staff structure, marketing).
- PCC Bids – Submitted and awaiting results 22 February 2019.
- Safeguarding – Audit still ongoing, has been extended to Mid-February 2019.

#### Community partnerships and Leisure

- Sports and Physical Activity Strategy – The draft of the action plan will be discussed at the its project board made up of our key sports stakeholders.
- Armed Forces Day 2019 – project set up and acts are being booked.
- Community Grants Awards 2019 – Work underway to arrange event. 12 March 2019. Of which all members are welcome.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

### Questions:

Cllr Tindall, with his hat on as Chair of the Domestic Abuse Forum and involved in the bid to the PCC along with Youth Connections and the Council, asked if we had any potential dates or are we awaiting the gentlemen's decision.

Cllr Harden replied that there are a lot of bids across the County going in at the same time and it's the first time we've submitted bids and we have three bids, we are positive we'll be successful but we'll have to wait and see.

Cllr Birnie was delighted to hear about the tip stop operation and asked if there was any idea when we would be likely to get the results from the four who are expected to present their documentation at a later date and if we haven't got it please could you let me know afterwards as there are many residents who are very concerned.

Cllr Harden said that he would certainly update Members, but it's a bit informative in the sense that they've got to produce their documents that they are legitimate waste carriers and he will ask Officers to come back to a later Council meeting.

**Action: Cllr Harden**

Cllr England asked how the project board for the sports and activity plan is constituted.

Cllr Harden replied that the first meeting will be at the end of the month and he will be attending. It is made up of sports related stakeholders, naming a few like Everyone Active, Herts Sports Partnership, Dacorum Sports Trust, Dacorum Sports Network, Dacorum Schools Sports Network and Public Health Hertfordshire possibly, but he may have missed off one or two. Cllr Harden said he was very encouraged that they are all very keen to work with the Council with the development of the Sports Strategy. He advised he had seen the action plan and Members will see that action plan in the future, he added that he was very excited that the Council is being very proactive, not only about the sports element of it, but the whole idea of how we engage people more in thinking about being physically active.

### **Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows;

#### First tenants moved into the new Maylands Business Centre

Our satellite extension to the Maylands Business Centre at Kylna Court is now open and we have welcomed our first three business occupants. The Centre provides much needed further business space in Maylands and builds on the great successes of the Business Centre which we opened in 2013. Alongside the new council flats that are now filling up, the completion of the Kylna Court development marks an important stage in the regeneration of the Heart of Maylands.

This afternoon I had the pleasure and privilege visiting the new offices in Kylna Court and meeting the three companies who had just moved in. They could not speak highly enough of the new facilities and saw the move to high quality offices in the Heart of Maylands as being a boost to their business.

The Council must be justifiably proud of itself in providing these amazing facilities and confirms the Boroughs commitment to being a champion of business.

### Development at Tring takes an important step forward

Members will be aware that our planning Core Strategy of 2013 identified a major housing development to the west of Tring, which is commonly known as site LA5.

This site, along with others in the Core Strategy will provide an important supply of new homes in the Borough for a number of years to come.

This site at Tring took an important step forward to being delivered when the Development Management Committee agreed to support the proposals at its meeting on 31 January. The scheme will deliver 226 new homes, of which 40% (90 units) will be provided on an affordable basis. It provides for an extension of the Icknield Way business area extending to 0.75 hectare (about an acre and three quarters), an extension to Tring Cemetery and 6.76 ha (over 16 and a half acres) of new public open space.

Officers will now arrange for the final details of the s106 agreement to accompany the planning application.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

Cllr Tindall apologised to Cllr Sutton for the late notice on this question as he had only been asked it himself about an hour ago. Cllr Tindall said that there was a resident who is very concerned about the budget line where there is £25k to support a one off costs for feasibility in Strategic Planning funded from the Planning and Regeneration Project Reserve. Cllr Tindall advised he would be happy to have a written response following the meeting.

Cllr Sutton advised he would need to come back to you with a definitive answer.

**Action: Cllr Sutton**

### Councillor Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

The programme of installing dry recycling facilities for blocks of flats in the Borough which hitherto had no such facilities is going to plan. Only Grovehill, Woodhall Farm and Markyate left now to do under the scheme - their bins should be installed next month. Once completed, and subject to the approval of the budget this evening, Cupid Green will then immediately turn to the task of rolling out the collection of food waste from flats. Can I thank the Task & Finish group (Cllrs Adshead, Banks, Birnie, Howard, Imarni and Tindall) and Strategic Planning & Environment OSC for their work and help in supporting this venture.

Permits are being sought to have another A41 litter pick at the end of March. At about the same time, new anti-littering signs will be erected.

The Great British Spring Clean – the national litter picking campaign will run 22 March to 23 April – aim to highlight litter and to encourage volunteers – individuals and groups – to litter pick. Cupid Green will provide advice together with bags and litter pick sticks and will, by arrangement, pick up the filled bags. I should add that Cupid Green is always ready and willing to help in this manner throughout the year, not just in March/April. Last year, despite

the Beast from the East, 30 groups of 700+ volunteers took part collecting over 200 bags of recycling and 200 bags of litter.

A reminder that Garden Waste collections start again at the end of February. Householders can have additional garden waste bins collected for a seasonal subscription fee of £55. Additional green wheelie bins can also be purchased at £25 each.

An outdoor fitness gym is being installed in Gadebridge Park courtesy of Hemel Hempstead based Henkel – the gym uses aluminium elements from Right Guard aerosols. It is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> gym of its kind in the country – the first being in the Olympic Park. The gym will have a variety of fitness equipment including exercise bikes weights and cross trainers

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

Cllr England offered congratulations to the Portfolio Holder on the dry recycling and food waste. Cllr England visited the recycling centre with a couple of Members, he was most impressed that the Manager said he could tell when a lorry comes in from Harpenden as they have washed their recycling and it's easier and cheaper to deal with. Cllr England queried whether we can compete with Harpenden.

Cllr Marshall replied that it seems strange that only Harpenden does it and not the local authority as a whole. Cllr Marshall added that Dacorum's contamination rate is one of the lowest in this country.

Cllr Fisher mentioned that some residents still seem concerned about recycling and asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm if any of their recycling end up in landfill and also assuming it is actually recycled, is it done in this country or is it abroad.

Cllr Marshall confirmed that if the recyclable materials are very heavily contaminated they would regrettably be treated as residual waste, otherwise the recyclable materials are disposed of by Pearce on the markets for recycled material. In that sense residents should not be concerned that there mostly clean plastic bottles are ending up in a hole in the ground.

Cllr Griffiths asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that there is a balance to be struck between recycling and cleaning everything that uses an awful lot of energy and resources to get it nice and clean so it can be recycled.

Cllr Marshall said it was a question of degrees and with respect it was an impossible question to answer.

#### **5. QUESTIONS**

None.

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

None.

#### **7. CABINET REFERRALS**

The following referrals from Cabinet on 12 February were approved.

## 7.1 CA/018/19 – Budget 2019/20

Cllr Elliot would like to move the budget. Cllr Williams seconded the budget and reserved his right.

Cllr Elliot set out the budget context.

- Over the last 8 years, the Council has already faced reductions in its annual government funding of over £7m. This budget sets out plans for Dacorum Borough Council to save a further £900k in 2019/20.
- In addition to this, local authority finances face a period of review as the current 4-year funding deal is set to end in 2020. Government continues to work on its Fair Funding Review which will determine how funding is allocated among councils beyond 2020.
- That is why the Council has set the budget for 2019/20 with a strong focus on sustainability and continuing to deliver its corporate priorities into the medium-term. We have made significant strides towards balancing the budget for the next *two years*, having already identified savings initiatives of around £300k to address future years' savings targets.

Cllr Elliot put forward the continued investment in the Borough.

- Dacorum Borough Council is proposing a capital investment programme of over £225m to further enhance the services we provide to our residents over the next 5 years.
- Some of the areas identified for capital investment include:
  - £90m investment in our existing housing stock
  - £80m investment in our ambitious and successful new build programme
  - £4m investment in facilitating affordable housing developments and the delivery of additional temporary accommodation for some of our most vulnerable residents
  - £4m grant funding to Housing Associations for the delivery of Affordable Housing
  - £11m investment in community facilities including car parks, cemeteries, and leisure

Cllr Elliot advised how front-line services will be maintained.

- Over the last 8 years Dacorum Borough Council has successfully protected its front-line services in the face of 70% government funding reductions. The council has again taken steps to find the savings required for 2019 without reducing its front-line services.
- The Council has worked hard to deliver efficiencies required through fostering a culture of innovation and a strong focus on performance and continuous improvement.
- This has enabled us to deliver savings through a range of initiatives including:
  - more efficient staffing structures;
  - a more commercial approach to contract negotiation; and,
  - The Forum, which has already reduced our annual running costs significantly, but which will offer increased value for money from April 2019 when the Clinical Commissioning Group will take up a tenancy on around 25% of the building.

Cllr Elliot set out the Council Tax proposals.

- As part of the budget for 2019/20, the Council is proposing to increase Council Tax by 2.99%.
- This equates to an increase of £5.85 for a Band D property, or around 11p per week.
- This proposal was strongly endorsed through the Council's budget consultation process, with over 95% of residents involved supporting the decision to increase Council Tax by the maximum permissible in order to enhance front line services.

Cllr Elliot put forward the Housing proposals.

- The Council has complied with legislation and once again reduced its rents by 1% in 2019/20. The average rent next year will be £100.08 per week.
- The Council is proposing a Housing business plan which continues to deliver new homes across the Borough:
  - 130 new homes already delivered
  - 300 new homes in the pipeline for delivery over the next three years
- Following Government's recent announcement of the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap, officers are currently modelling how the delivery of new homes can be further accelerated.

Cllr Elliot concluded that he remains confident that this Council is well placed to meet the significant financial challenges that lie ahead and he thanked officers for their diligent and prudent work over the last year which has set up Dacorum Borough Council as an exemplar of financial probity.

Cllr Elliot recommended the budget to Council.

Cllr Tindall put forward an amendment. Cllr England seconded the amendment and reserved his right.

Cllr Tindall said that Local Government plays a crucial role in the lives of its residents – a fact not often acknowledged by the Westminster bubble who seem to prefer arguing amongst themselves rather than dealing with housing, social care, and the myriad other problems this country faces. The present government dispenses an additional pot of money here, and extra payments there, but continues to cut – and fails to provide a stable and sustainable funding formula for local government. Indeed they cannot even assure us that we shall have their 2019 spending review until later in the year, which will put enormous pressure on our officers.

Cllr Tindall added that tonight, we are dealing with the coming year, and Liberal Democrats are proposing we combat austerity by putting some flesh on the bones, pointing the way forward with positive and innovative additions to the Council's budget for 2019/20. I shall highlight some of the measures proposed with Councillor England addressing others. All costed and responsibly financed.

Cllr Tindall felt that the number one priority must be to address the failure of the Council to provide a strategy for Air Quality to follow that which expired last year, and a number of Councillors have expressed concern.

Cllr Tindall said that there has been a dangerous rise in emissions of nitrogen dioxide, particulates and ozone, the impact of which cause 40,000 early deaths each year across the United Kingdom and have a serious impact on our children's health. Fumes inhaled by children are putting them at lifelong risk of asthmas, pneumonia and cancer. According to Unicef, the persistent illegal breaches of air pollution limits across the United Kingdom are an unacceptable violation of those limits. It is a disgrace that this country is home to more children suffering respiratory conditions than anywhere else in Europe. Even in the leafy glades of Dacorum, hazards may lurk and we need to create a modern strategy as soon as possible. Our budget line sets out just a few of the steps this Council could take, investing £100k in our resident's health.

Cllr Tindall mentioned that the administration has recently started down the path of introducing Public Space Protection Orders to control the lives of residents, a measure with which we disagree. Even worse, they are measures with little or no enforcement so while appearing effective they are relatively useless. We propose an appraisal of the Warden Service with the intention of widening their areas of responsibility, with a primary aim of getting to grips with the parking epidemic which threatens to overwhelm us all. Once the appraisal has been completed, we would see this as the basis for combined action to brighten up our Borough without menaces or threats.

Cllr Tindall turned to the generation of monies under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), this is a welcome windfall among the many challenges that increased development brings us. But we have to have a coordinated approach to this windfall to ensure that it is spent for the benefit of residents, and in accordance with the wishes of local councillors. The lack of any neighbourhood representation in Hemel Hempstead does not help. We have added to our budget the means of employing a member of staff to concentrate on CIL, working in conjunction with others to 'brighten up our Borough' in a coordinated approach throughout the Council. True to our belief of relieving current pressures on staff we have provided additional finance for this purpose.

Cllr Tindall advised that the final line of our budget I wish to address at this point is communications. I do not have to explain to this chamber the failures of our present telephone system, and this Council desperately needs to get to grips with this. Our residents must be welcomed and have an easy and understandable path to the service they require, not necessarily based on whether someone surfs the net, and we have provided the money to enable a comprehensive study so that we can all understand what is needed.

Cllr Tindall felt that the administration's budget is somewhat like a curate's egg – good and bad in parts. He commended the financial acumen and expertise of the officers to produce a balanced budget, but as has been seen in this chamber over many months, disagree with the political direction and on occasions actions of the Conservative Cabinet. Presently lacking access to the full range of Council resources to enable us to propose a comprehensive redrafting of the budget in line with our principles, we have limited ourselves to proposing improvements to the administration's budget and commend them to the Council.

Cllr Marshall listened to Cllr Tindall with interest and with respect to the Environment and Planning OSC meetings she had attended she had not recalled any Liberal Democrat proposals to amend the budget. Cllr Marshall added that it seemed a bit late in the day for these proposals to be made without proper consideration.

Cllr Marshall referred to the second item about solar powered compactor litter bins, compacting rubbish and less emptying seems a good idea in principle, the downsides are that the rubbish is still there but over a longer period of time and it gets very smelly, particularly in very hot weather, when bins are emptied there is a mini litter pick around the bin, so if the bin is emptied less frequently the litter will build up. Waste bins are often ignited, vandalised, damaged by traffic, a solar powered compactor litter bin costs twenty times more than an ordinary litter bin purchased and installed, plus there's an annual software fee, as the bins send an electronic message to say when it's full. The Council have tried a couple on the A41 a short time ago and we were unimpressed, yes it did compact the rubbish but it still needed emptying fairly frequently, in short there was very little saving in terms of manpower and that's ignoring the purchase and installation costs. Cllr Marshall said that Planning and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny may wish to seek a report on this so that there can be proper consideration before budget provision is made. Cllr Marshall didn't feel it was the correct time to be making budget provision.

Cllr Williams said that this was the first time in several years where there had been any meaningful amendments to our budget. He thought the opening statement of the presentation of the motion was a step towards ending years of austerity is a very bold claim for what is in reality a few sound bite amendments to the budget more designed for focus than they are for delivery of any real improvements in our services.

Cllr Williams felt the amendments were gimmicky rather than having any meaningful purpose, Cllr Tindall enlightened us as to what the Wardens were and gave us a little bit of background to the first item of £100k. Cllr Williams said that his colleague Cllr Marshall had gone through in detail, but there was nothing included that could be prescribed by the s151 Officer. What this amendment does is what Liberal Democrats are well known for and that's spend, spend, spend. There are no corresponding savings here and commits us to further expenditure from a revenue stream, which is claimed to be sustainable.

Cllr Williams confirmed we have benefitted from £900k saving in negative support grant, we have as a prudent authority put this into a reserve to help smooth future saving requirements, you can't have a sustainable budget and increase your spending and staffing. Cllr Williams said that Cllr Tindall had mentioned in introducing his amendment that we don't know what the future holds but we do know where this would be under the fair funding review.

Cllr Williams said that the Conservative budget is well costed as has been acknowledged, what we have here is random last minute proposals some of which duplicate things this administration has already done. Also some predates reports that are due to go to Scrutiny as early as March and others are simply playing into left field, like looking at electric charging points. Cllr Williams has already asked colleagues to look at usage and charging, Council may be interested to know that one of the electric charging points in the Borough, for the whole of 2018, was used for 21 hours, so I think we need to understand the infrastructure before we commit to invest more money.

Cllr Williams did not believe this adds anything to the budget, it doesn't address austerity, it touches on things that should be provided by others and I ask the Council to reject the amendment.

Cllr Anderson said this amendment reminded him of a film called Midnight Run where the main character has had a bad day, he's in the airport lobby smoking a cigar, he walks up to the attendant who asks smoking or non-smoking, he says take a wild guess. Cllr Anderson was reminded of that scene when he saw the proposed amendment to the budget, as it's quite clear the amendment will be included in the leaflets for the next couple of months as part of their election campaign.

Cllr Anderson confirmed that air quality is a very important issue, we have had three locations within the Borough where it has been a real difficulty and it is a very difficult problem as it is so holistic. It should be looked at properly as part of a planned approach and indeed the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be looking at this issue in two weeks-time. Cllr Anderson urged Members who are interested to attend that meeting as there will be external speakers presenting.

Cllr Anderson said that Cllr Marshall has mentioned the solar powered compactor bins, my question is why is this needed, if we are spending on bin provision we might as well spend it on 20 times more bins and have a much better return on investment. Cllr Anderson said that sports services have already been reviewed at length and as for CIL, getting someone in and paying them to show us how to spend money, is the last thing the Council needs advice on.

Cllr Anderson did not feel that the proposals in the budget amendment were well thought out and they were not sustainable, he said he would be voting against them.

Cllr Anderson supports the main motion and he thoroughly supports the work that Members and Officers have undertaken, he felt this was a thoroughly robust budget and that is why he will be supporting the motion.

Cllr Harden responded on some of the proposals in the amendment that falls within his Portfolio. This includes air quality, which will be discussed in more depth at the OSC meeting, including improving air quality at schools which is best achieved by not driving to school or using other methods like car sharing, cycling and walking. Cllr Harden advised that air quality sites are located where there is a regular volume of stationary vehicles in a confined corridor and are regularly monitored. Improvements to air quality requires a shift from petrol/diesel vehicles to electric vehicles or others, cycling, walking and the use of low emission public transport and the reduction of burning fossil fuels.

Cllr Harden said that in response to the proposal within the sports service, in 2016 Dacorum Borough Council commissioned an external consultant, the Sports Consultancy, to conduct a full strategic review. He added that KKP consultancy are currently undertaking a full review of the sports and leisure facilities within Dacorum, which will give valuable insight into the investment required. Cllr Harden felt it would be a duplication of funding to pay for an officer to be employed to undertake similar work.

Cllr Harden confirmed that the Council has a small Communications team that exists to raise the profile and reputation of the Council through effective internal and external communications. Last year the Team Leader attended the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny to talk Members through service delivery matters and received positive feedback. The team has also received nationally recognised awards for their service delivery.

Cllr Harden added that Members had agreed to implement a voice recognition telephone system, to encourage customers to self-serve more and not just wait for customer services to pick up and act as an operator forwarding calls to the service. This was done to support significant budget savings we needed to achieve. At the moment we take approximately 1200 calls per day, which means that in the last 16 months we have had in the region of 410,000 calls. Since August 2017 we have had 3 formal complaints and 10 informal complaints regarding our telephone system.

Cllr Harden raised concerns about the lateness of the proposals today, he said he had encouraged Members all through Scrutiny throughout the year to think of budgets proposals that can then be discussed within a Scrutiny environment and we can do research with Officers to see whether they are viable, whichever political party they come from.

Cllr Harden felt it was unfortunate that we have a Full Council leading up to an election where for the first time in years we get some random proposals from the Liberal Democrats and most of which we are in the process of carrying out or work we have already done. Cllr Harden thought it was a good attempt and said that they need to try harder next time.

Cllr England said that Cllr Tindall has set out our approach to seek improvements that will save lives, improving people's quality of life and give people more access to services. Cllr England wanted to talk about fixing a couple of areas, where as a Council we are getting off track and we need to find a better way forward.

Cllr England confirmed that there is a strategy for sports and activities, but in our opinion the experienced resources allocated to it have not been present within the Council to make this

an in depth and authoritative document and the consultancy that's been obtained seems to be only moving in one direction. The Lib Dems are proposing funding solutions to the strategy issue, one which makes the best of the work that has been done and broadly uses the payment by Everyone Active to engage knowledgeably with the commercial and contract holders so that Dacorum gets what Dacorum needs, not EA finds it convenient to provide.

Cllr England mentioned sustainability and the problem with a near neighbour capable of generating huge traffic congestion and also raised the possibility of relocating Hemel Hempstead Football Club releasing housing land so that Jarmans Athletics Track may be permanently safe from redevelopment.

Cllr England said that the second issue he would like to raise was litter, with the scourge of plastic getting blown into the environment, we see the way to increase litter bin capacity, with an alternative approach, this is creative thinking, having a backstop. By using technology Dacorum can do better, increasing capacity. There are two options that should be investigated, solar powered compactor bins and sensors on ordinary bins to make collecting smarter and hugely more efficient, providing better distribution and capacity to residents.

Cllr England said that Cllr Williams mentioned that these proposals were not sustainable, Cllr England pointed out that one of the proposals was meant to be sustainable, all of the others are trials, plans, review, appraisals and studies. These are not meant to be things that go on and on, these are things that need to be fixed.

Cllr England was pleased to hear that Cllr Anderson agreed with him that air quality is a serious issue. The reason this is being reviewed next month is because it's overdue, it was meant to be done last year. Cllr England commented that it's important that the money is spent in the right way.

Cllr England said his final point was on Cllr Harden's comments on the Sports Strategy, he felt it was clear from the numerous attempts that we've seen so far to write a strategy, that this needs to be properly thought through from the beginning and that's the reason that we've proposed that resource.

## Voting

### *Names of those voting*

For: Tindall, Link, Pringle, England, Fisher (5)

Against: Douris, Adeleke, Anderson, Armytage, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Bhinder, Birnie, Brown, Chapman, D Collins, E Collins, Elliot, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, Matthews, Mills, Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, Timmis, Williams, C Wyatt-Lowe, W Wyatt-Lowe (34)

Abstained: R Sutton (1)

The Mayor confirmed that the amendment is lost and we now move to the main budget.

Cllr Williams advised that reserved his right to second the motion to support the administrations budget, Cllr Elliot when moving the budget outlined some of the pressures we have faced and the way in which we face those challenges. We continue to face those challenges by presenting to the Council a budget which continues to protect front line services and continues our significant record of capital investment for improvement and continues to look forward to the challenges we will face over the coming years. The budget sets us up as best we can be, given that we don't know anything will happen for us

financially over the next few years, to continue our revenue and protecting front line services for residents. This budget is the last of a four year policy of rent reduction of 1% for our tenants and also for the third year in a row of freezes car parking charges. This year we will be freezing garage rents for the benefits of our tenants as we continue to redevelop some sites and improve garage stock in others.

Cllr Williams highlighted that the budget continues this administrations prudent approach to the finances of this authority and therefore he is happy to second and recommend this budget to Council.

Cllr Elliot said that as usual the Liberal Democrats want to throw residents money down the drain as they continue to ape their European Union colleagues over the water, where they have never had their accounts signed off ever. This is why Liberal Democrat controlled band D Council Tax is 34% above Dacorum's. Cllr Elliot quoted the Prime Ministers comments about the Liberal Democrats being very good at spending other peoples money until it runs out, we ensure it doesn't run out. Cllr Elliott recommended this budget to the Council.

Cllr Pringle raised a point of order regarding representing positions of responsibility in this era of fake news, not to deliberately perpetuate myths.

The Mayor confirmed this was not a point of order and the budget proposals were put to the vote.

#### Voting

##### *Names of those voting*

For: Douris, Adeleke, Anderson, Armytage, Banks, Barrett, Bassadone, Bhinder, Birnie, Brown, Chapman, D Collins, E Collins, Elliot, Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, S Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Maddern, Mahmood, Marshall, Matthews, Mills, Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, Timmis, Williams, C Wyatt-Lowe, W Wyatt-Lowe (34)

Against: Tindall, Link, Pringle, England, Fisher (5)

Abstained: R Sutton (1)

The Mayor declared the motion to be carried.

Cllr Williams mentioned the addendum on the Council Tax Members received today, having set our Council Tax as an authority, we are the collecting authority on behalf of the other precepts within Hertfordshire County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner and appropriate Parish Councils. The Council Tax Declaration pulls all of that together to form the Council Tax bill for residents 2019 and therefore he would like to move the resolution for Agenda item 13, Council Tax Declaration 19/20.

Cllr Griffiths seconded the proposals and this was agreed by Council.

#### 7.2 CA/019/19 – Period 9 Budget Monitoring Report

Cllr Williams mentioned the Period 9 Budget Monitoring Report and resolve to recommend.

Cllr Griffiths seconded the report and this was agreed by Council.

#### 7.3 CA/021/19 – Senior Officer Pay

Cllr Williams put forward the proposals for Senior Officers Pay for 2019/20 to be resolved to recommend.

Cllr Griffiths seconded the report and this was agreed by Council.

#### 7.4 CA/022/19 – Growth and Infrastructure

Cllr Williams asked for the Growth and Infrastructure Strategy to be resolved to recommend.

Cllr Griffiths seconded the proposals and this was agreed by Council.

### **8. MOTIONS TO COUNCIL**

Cllr Fisher set out the proposal supporting the fight against modern slavery locally.

The Council has demonstrated its concern with the serious problem of modern slavery by providing awareness training for staff and members. However the Council needs to press ahead with work to ensure that its supply chain is free from any taint of modern slavery.

It therefore resolves to sign the Charter Against Modern Slavery put forward by the Co-operative Party and already signed by over eighty councils of various political complexions.

This pledges to:

1. Train its corporate procurement team to understand modern slavery through the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply's (CIPS) online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply.
2. Require its contractors to comply fully with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, wherever it applies, with contract termination as a potential sanctions for non-compliance.
3. Challenge any abnormally low-cost tenders to ensure they do not rely upon the potential contractor practising modern slavery.
4. Highlight to its suppliers that contracted workers are free to join a trade union and are not to be treated unfairly for belonging to one.
5. Publicise its whistle-blowing system for staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
6. Require its tendered contractors to adopt a whistleblowing policy which enables their staff to blow the whistle on any suspected examples of modern slavery.
7. Review its contractual spending regularly to identify any potential issues with modern slavery.
8. Highlight for its suppliers any risks identified concerning modern slavery and refer them to the relevant agencies to be addressed.
9. Refer for investigation via the National Crime Agency's national referral mechanism any of its contractors identified as a cause for concern regarding modern slavery.
10. Report publicly on the implementation of this policy annually.

Cllr Williams felt the motion replicated work that has already been undertaken and appropriate measures are already in place, therefore he is happy to support the motion and implement it as policy.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said she would be voting to support this motion and would like to reflect that in Hertfordshire where we have been working together in partnership which we do very well at all levels of local government and with local police. We already have many elements that comprise this particular proposal and how widespread this has got. Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe would like to remind Members that Hertfordshire Police were the first Police force in the Country to obtain a successful conviction for offences against modern slavery and have

done great pioneering work on this issue, which has been recognised in the House of Commons. Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said she will certainly support this motion.

Cllr England said this is very much not just a policy issue, it's a real life issue for many many people. Early in 2015 the coalition government passed the Modern Slavery Act to make it easier to identify victims and bring traffickers to justice and prosecutions have increased as a result, but now many of Theresa May's own policies are undermining efforts to tackle this problem. The hostile environment introduced by the Home Secretary is making it harder for victims to come forward, whether to report crimes or seek medical help. In 2016 for example she created a new offence of people working, which traffickers use to keep victims in fear of prosecution if they seek help. Cllr England said this was in 2016, a time when the Government had become free of the restraining leash of the Lib Dems.

Cllr England added that perhaps the biggest stretch in efforts to combat modern slavery is the Governments defacto policy on a hard Brexit as it now has to be postponed. As the European Commission, the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee and respective Scrutiny experts have all made clear, it puts things like tactics like prosecutions and the cooperation that we rely on to fight organised crime and human trafficking.

Cllr Tindall said that he had seconded this motion in order to ensure it's referred because it is a very important subject, particularly as we move towards a period of uncertainty. This alliance is in the same category of domestic abuse, an abuse of individuals human rights against human rights generally an abhorrent practice by anybody concerned. Cllr Tindall felt that the problems we have is that as times get harder over the coming months, it behoves us all to encourage everyone to treat everybody as human beings and to try and protect those who are less able to protect themselves.

Cllr Fisher thanked everyone for their support and was pleased this was met with such favour and asked to proceed to the vote.

The motion proposed by Councillor Fisher, seconded by Cllr Tindall was supported unanimously.

## **9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

## **10. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Cllr Williams confirmed that Cllr Mills will be replacing Cllr Clark on Development Management Committee with immediate effect. Cllr Marshall seconded and this was agreed by Council.

## **11. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES**

The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

- Move Group meetings from 18 February 2020 to 25 February 2020
- Move Council from 19 February 2020 to 26 February 2020
- Move Call-in contingency from 26 February 2020 to 19 February 2020

## **12. ELECTORAL REVIEW**

Cllr Williams advised that Members have before them a resolution from the Electoral Review Sub Committee to amend three polling stations in the Borough, in Tring East, Nash Mills and

Boxmoor and to have reserve provision should a conversation within Adeyfield Ward be unavailable, which I'm assured it will be available.

Cllr Williams mentioned the Committee resolved it's preference in regards to Boxmoor for the relocation of a now closed polling station to St Mary's and Joseph Church and that is still our aspiration for the long term, but the Church have indicated that the hall will not be available for May 2<sup>nd</sup> this year, therefore the fall back provision of Camelot Rugby Club is being recommended for this order.

Cllr Griffiths seconded the proposals and they were agreed by Council.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm