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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**18 SEPTEMBER 2019**

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Present -

**MEMBERS:**

Douris (Mayor), Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Arslan, Banks, Bassadone, Barratt, Barry, Beauchamp, Bhinder, Birnie, Chapman, Claughton, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Griffiths, Guest, Hearn, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Link, Maddern, So Mahmood, Su Mahmood, McDowell, Pringle, Ransley, Riddick (Deputy Mayor), Rogers, Silwal, Sinha, Stevens, G Sutton, R Sutton, Symington, Taylor, Tindall, Timmis, Uttley, Williams, Woolner, Wyatt-Lowe (45)

**OFFICERS:**

The Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration), Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Assistant Director (Corporate and Contracted Services), Group Manager (Legal & Corporate Services), C O'Neil (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm.

**1. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2019 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Mayor.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Bassadone referred to Agenda item 5, advising a member of family works for DENS and she herself is a volunteer at their events.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**4.1 By the Mayor:**

The Mayor announced that he will be separating the 2 announcements by Leader, first Cllr Williams will give his announcement as Leader, and later in proceedings he will give his second announcement in his role as Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Contracted Services. This arrangement will carry forward to future meetings.

The Mayor continued with an update on his recent activities;

On 7<sup>th</sup> September attended Sunnyside Rural Trust for fundraiser; 'Give Bees a Chance' which was held at Hemel Food Garden. The event was a great success.

The next day, 8<sup>th</sup> September, at Woburn Abbey, 3 of Mayor's family members took part in triathlon and raised £580 for Sunnyside Rural Trust.

15<sup>th</sup> September attended 75<sup>th</sup> Battle of Britain commemoration at Kings Langley, excellent event showing our appreciation for those that fought in Battle in Britain.

Have attended numerous other events, including coming this evening from having opened an exhibition at Kings Langley Library.

#### **4.2 By the Chief Executive:**

None.

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

Councillor Williams confirmed that apologies had been received from Councillors Johnson, Oguchi and Peter.

Councillor Tindall confirmed that apologies had been received from Councillors Bowden & Townsend.

Cllr Imarni was not in attendance.

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

##### **Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council**

The Leader advised that owing to the relatively quiet period since the July meeting, he has nothing to report, adding that he is happy to take questions.

Cllr guest asked; does the Leader agree that, in coming to its decision following redevelopment of the West Herts Hospital Trust estate, the NHS should have conducted real consultation, not just engagement?

Cllr Williams responded that he agrees there should always be the most appropriate consultation, adding that he is aware this particular issue is subject to a court case so would not be appropriate to comment.

Cllr Tindall asked, given recent announcements by Government re. Brexit contingency funding, can you update us at all on what money's have been received by this Council and will Members be given regular briefing since there are only 6 weeks to go to possible leaving date.

Cllr Williams responded in relation to money received, cannot confirm if it has been received yet, but the figure we are due to receive is £37k, fairly modest sum, not sure if it will be over 1 or 2 years. Very limited in what we can do in preparation for Brexit, the situation is very fluid, we do have a plan & risk assessment which is a standing item on Corporate Management Team agenda. Were asked by the Government to appoint a lead contact officer, a Brexit Officer, we have appointment Dave Austin who is our contact with Government. Through East of England & the Hertfordshire Chief Executive's there is contact and work going across those organisations. There are a number of things that are a

direct risks to DBC, such as supplies and services continuity, for our vehicles etc. Only limited amount we can do in the national context. Our own staff, we have identified of our 700 + employees that we have 10 EU nationals, nothing to indicate their employment status will be affected.

Cllr Uttley commented that this week, children and adults across the globe taking part in strike demanding action on Climate change. In July this Council took the first step towards Climate Action unanimously passing a motion. The Councillor asked; can the Leader of the Council assure us that this will be followed up with an action plan as promised in motion?

Cllr Williams confirmed that the Council has started on actions plan, he has been in discussion with the Chief Executive around what we can do in longer and shorter term. The Leader added that only yesterday he attended a CMT and Cabinet member away day at which this subject was one of the agenda items, to look at how we can do more. An update will come to Council in following months.

Cllr Uttley added; given obvious public concern for urgent change, do you agree it would be prudent for PH members to update on the climate emergency at each Full Council meeting?

Cllr Williams responded that it would be appropriate to update when there is something to update, but do not think it should be a standing item. Cllr Williams added that ultimately he will accept responsibility for reporting back to Council.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update (as can be read in Appendix A attached).

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### **Questions:**

Cllr England asked, does the Portfolio Holder agree that finding and registering Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) is a challenge that requires more resource than it currently has?

Cllr Griffiths responded this is a new service that Housing Team took on last year, they are progressing well. Throwing more people or money at it won't necessarily make it as efficient as it could be the way it is working. If there is a proven case that it would increase the work they are doing, we would put that forward in the forthcoming budget. Important that we do the work at a steady and correct pace, that we deal with everybody well.

Cllr England added that the Building Research Establishment estimates there are over 900 HMOs in Dacorum, the registered numbers is a fraction of that at around 200. Private Sector Housing Team are working hard with the resources they have, but do you think more resource would help it work better to protect residents?

Cllr Griffiths responded that everything we do is to protect residents in one way or another. The same argument could be applied to every area of work the Council does, but we have to take a balanced approach and I believe we do that.

Cllr Stevens commented that he pleased to see the first residents coming into the new development in Swing Gate Lane. Would you agree it comes as a disappointment to find that there is an overspend of £577k so far with final accounts to be negotiated?

Cllr Griffiths confirmed that the final figure is still to be negotiated, therefore the PH advised that she cannot until that final account is produced to this Council.

Cllr Stevens further enquired, are we able to recover the full amount of the overspend?

Cllr Griffiths responded that she would not want to compromise any negotiation going on, but a detailed report will be presented which will demonstrate if any overspend is not to be reclaimed, why not.

Cllr Hobson commented that she is pleased that the Borough is doing its share of taking in Syrian refugees and asked, what steps we are taking to help them become part of the community?

Cllr Griffiths responded that we have a full programme of integration; the first 2 families that arrived enabled us to lay out how it would work. Can confirm those families have integrated well, we spoke to other Syrians (not refugees) within Dacorum who were very helpful. When the families arrived, their homes were already kitted out with all the equipment they would need to run a family home, including seasonal appropriate clothes. They were allocated officers to work with them. Can confirm that all those of working age have jobs, learning English and children in schools.

### **Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services**

The Portfolio Holder thanked Cllr Williams for covering for him at the previous meeting and presented his update, covering the following points;

#### Refuse & Recycling

- Hertfordshire Waste Partnership; Waste reduction & dry recyclables
- New trucks from November & VRS Works have begun
- Flats Food Recycling - Rollout begins next month
- Waste Reduction - clothes swop events taking place on 10/11/12 October at The Forum

#### Clean, Safe & Green

- Hand Arm Vibration case completed, DBC praised for staff welfare
- Edge of Gadebridge; bollards & height restrictions installed to prevent vehicle access

#### Trees & Woodlands

- Notification system
- Planting; some limitations, but hoping to reach 1,000 by end of Next Yr

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

Cllr Wyatt Lowe commented that she is told we have more trees in Dacorum than any other Local Authority in Herts and asked the Portfolio Holder to give a full report on the Trees & Woodland Service, given we have so many of them?

Cllr Anderson responded to confirm that Council officers have written up plans to plant more than a 1000 trees by the end of next year, adding that consideration need to be given to the land owner and any potential for damage to neighbouring land. Nevertheless, working on realistic ways to plant more trees than we have to cut down. Also working on a way people can sponsor trees, particularly in high profile locations, in the same way they do roundabouts.

Cllr England referred to the street champion scheme, grown by 60 since beginning of year, at around 120, doubled in 9 months. The Councillor asked the Portfolio Holder if he agrees that it is great that people are responding and the work carried about by groups such as Gadebridge Cleaners, Plastic Free Hertfordshire and Adeyfield Action Group by signing up as street champions. Street champions should be properly valued, listened to, encouraged and resourced so that by building trust and co-working with residents, Council services can be targeted on onto less easily served parts of the Borough.

Cllr Anderson responded that he welcomes the street champion scheme and is glad it has doubled in the last 9 months. It is not just a change agenda, people are taking more notice in the place they live and that should be congratulated and supported as much as the Council can.

Cllr Allen addressed the Portfolio Holder with a question from Gadebridge Cleaners, a Hemel wide litter picking community of nearly 80 people, part of Street Champions. He asked, does the Portfolio Holder agree that we need more recycling bins in areas such as sports grounds where lots of plastic bottles and drinks cans are used of and disposed of.

Cllr Anderson responded that this is an issue the Council tries to do, as much as we can and resource permitting. It is a case of doing what we can with the resource that are available.

Cllr Allen referred to areas in Boxmoor and Gadebridge Park where litter builds up significantly over weekend, might more collections be a good idea?

Cllr Anderson confirmed this is something that needs to be discussed at an operational level, but asked that if Members want to provide specific location he will discuss them with Council officers.

Cllr Freedman commented that he is pleased to hear values in terms of exporting rubbish and recyclables abroad. He asked, has the Council considered if separating from Herts Waste Partnership is it is no longer appropriate to Dacorum's values.

Cllr Anderson responded that the Herts Waste Partnership is an important one and expressed that he does not believe it would be a good idea to leave over one specific issue. This is a particular case where we could achieve more remaining part of the partnership rather than leaving at first sign of trouble.

Cllr Hollinghurst commented that he is pleased the Portfolio Holder has reaffirmed his commitment to the Herts Waste Partnership, do not think it is useful for the local district and boroughs in Herts to go their own way. On the matter of export of waste, it is something we should aim to reduce, it is much better that everything is recycled in situ. Such issues should be raised with the partnership.

Cllr Anderson responded that he did raise the issue and will continue to do so with regard dry recyclables. The waste is sold, and then sold on and we do not have any control over what happens down the track. The key will be to lobby government so that it ceases to be the most profitable way of doing things, and enable us to deal with the recycling here.

Cllr England referred to recycling week, 23 September, commenting that he looked for Dacorum stats couldn't find them, and therefore asked what Dacorum's recycling performance is.

The Mayor commented that the time is now up for these questions, would suggest the Portfolio Holder and Cllr discuss the matter outside of the meeting.

### **Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update (as can be read in Appendix B as attached).

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

There were no questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update (as can be read in Appendix C as attached).

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### Questions:

Cllr Beauchamp advised it is great news that we now have enforcement to protect our shoppers in the Marlowes from the gangs of youths who have been riding their bicycles dangerously in the pedestrian areas of the Town Centres. Would like to hear how that public order is going?

Cllr Banks responded and agreed that it is great news for our pedestrians in both the Marlowes and Bank Court and we look forward to working closely with residents to make sure they understand the importance of safety in our shopping centres. Officers are working on educating people, issuing leaflets and using the large screen to keep people informed.

Cllr Tindall noted that Cllr Banks mentioned work on the Emergency Plan and asked; would you agree it would be useful if all Parish & Town Councils are also briefed in addition to Borough Councillors. The Councillor advised that at a recent meeting he was told by a Town Council that they are not kept properly informed and up to date.

Cllr Banks agreed, the more people that are involved in our plans for crisis situations can only be a good thing.

Cllr Hollinghurst asked, can the problem of cycling in the Marlowes be solved in a positive way, by providing clearly marked safe cycle routes to encourage this environmentally friendly mode of transport?

Cllr Banks responded that it is important to note that a pedestrian area is for pedestrians. There are safe cycling routes either side of the Marlowes. The Portfolio Holder added that she is sure that encouraging cycling will be part of the works taken forward in looking at environmentally friendly climate change issues.

Cllr Adeleke asked the Portfolio Holder about the work of DBC Enforcement Officers; would you agree there is a misconception that the Council never tackles offenders?

Cllr Banks responded that a lot of the good work we do goes without note, to give an example, most recent enforcement activity included H&S enforcement notices in the Town Centre for shop with unsafe electrical fittings. The Section 20 request made for information involving the Holiday Inn regarding the collapsing of the stairwell. There were 8 Community Protection Notices issued relating to noise, 4 Community Protection Notices issued in Kingsley Walk with regard to refuge in garden, 5 abatement notices, along with other orders covering noisy building construction works so indeed our officers do work hard.

Cllr Symington referred to shortage of community football pitches in Berkhamsted, following a meeting with Officers it has become apparent that certain pitches can only be played on 13 times a year. She asked the Portfolio Holder, would you consider having some money set aside to upgrade the pitches in Berkhamsted?

Cllr Banks responded that the pitches she made reference to in her update were those at the adventure playgrounds, adding that she agrees there is always a need for more sports facilities, particularly when trying to push through a wellness agenda and that if money were to become available she is sure this could be looked at.

Cllr Symington confirmed for point of clarification, this would be for youth provision in Berkhamsted and asked, would you agree it is important for them?

Cllr Banks noted the comments.

Cllr England noted it would be good to see what the Sports Strategy says about provision in Berkhamsted, not just Hemel.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update (as can be read in Appendix D as attached).

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### **Questions:**

Cllr Symington thanked the Portfolio Holder for his written answer to Cllr Woolner's question at the last meeting re. 2020 Masterplan and asked, why, as you have stated in your response, did the Masterplan not go through the Cabinet & Council process?

Cllr Sutton responded that he would have to enquire further as he was not involved at that time, will provide a further written reply.

Cllr Symington asked, what assurances can you give to the residents of Berkhamsted that the same thing will not happen again?

Cllr Sutton responded that there are now more checks in place and the officer team who will be handling this new local plan are well informed on how this process should progress. Cllr Sutton gave assurance it would be completed properly.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe referred to activities that have taken place in Water Gardens over the summer and asked, can we expect to see more of this over the coming months, particularly the summer months? Is there a mechanism by which people can input their ideas to make full use of the area, as it is a real asset to the Council?

Cllr Sutton confirmed that the team responsible for looking after the use of the Water Garden's will be looking at everything that is of good community use.

Cllr Tindall referred to the Water Gardens and asked the Portfolio Holder if he would consider commissioning a survey of the use of the car park Monday to Friday lunchtimes, particularly given the further restrictions with new tenants. Noted there are quite a few visitors to the town that are struggling and adding that we need to support our shopkeepers

as much as possible; might be interesting to see if we need to do more to attract people to spend more money in shops by providing more parking.

Cllr Sutton responded that parking falls within the Portfolio of Cllr Williams, advising he would discuss the matter with him and agree the best way forward.

Cllr Hollinghurst asked the Portfolio Holder; will you consider a network of electric charging points for vehicles across Borough, adding that it is important to support a sustainable transport system, but could also be a source of revenue to the authority as people are now willing to pay for these services.

Cllr Sutton responded that charging points are constantly under review, observing the need to be careful where we put them to ensure they will be utilised as he is aware of a charging point in town that is not well used.

Cllr Hollinghurst asked the Portfolio Holder if he is aware that most of the chargers available are very slow and that rapid chargers are the way forward, reinforcing that is his suggestion, rather than duplicating what we have at the moment.

Cllr Sutton confirmed he would investigate this point and come back with an answer.

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

The Portfolio Holder thanked Cllr Williams for standing in for him at the last meeting and presented his update (as can be read in Appendix E as attached).

The Portfolio Holder invited questions.

#### **Questions:**

Cllr Birnie asked the Portfolio Holder to explain what the Councils strategy is on investing cash reserves and would these include for example, overseas investments or is the EU considered to be a poor investment?

Cllr Elliot assumed this refers to the Treasury Management Strategy which forms part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy – a key financial planning document for general fund services. The Portfolio Holder advised that throughout 2018/19 Dacorum had an average cash balance of £102m, this includes a constant supply of transient cash holdings from the collection of Council Tax on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council and Business Rates on behalf of the government. This cash is invested to secure the best returns are those that ensure public funds are protected, have liquidity that the Council has sufficient access to its investments and can continue operating at all times ensuring the best returns. The Council consults a treasury advisor, the current average rate of return on investments is 0.69%. The strategy for this Council is to keep cash within the UK, to have no investment overseas or in portfolios or hedge funds etc. The Portfolio Holder stated that he can therefore assure the Cllr that our cash is safe within the confines of the UK.

Cllr Guest addressed the Portfolio Holder, observing that the economics county wide are robust with employment at a record high, and asked the Portfolio Holder to advise the latest employment figures for Dacorum.

Cllr Elliot referred to ONS stats 2018 listed the population in Dacorum at around 154k and advised that up until March 18 (as the most recent figures) there are 75,800 males employed, equalling 49.1% and 78,500 females which is 50.9% of economically active residents of Borough. Overall we are above the GB average. Within Dacorum 80.5% of



people are paying PAYE through employed companies, above the national average of 75.4%. Self-employed is 9.6%, slightly below national average of 10.7%. Our unemployment rate was 3.1%, below national average of 4.1%. Doing very well here, good employers, good employment.

Cllr Durrant commented that he is pleased to hear that garage disposal is releasing much needed sites for housing and asked; how many have been sold so far and what are the capital receipts?

Cllr Elliot responded that it has been a long term strategy of Council to look at Brownfield sites for Housing. Been very successful. Many of the garages were not fit for purpose as built in 70s when cars were smaller. We identified a few years ago sites that could be sold off to developers and we have sold 17 in past 3 years, with capital receipts of just over £8m.

Survey being undertaken on remaining garages so Council can look at best options for taking sites forward.

Cllr Symington referred to the asset allocation with the Portfolio Holder stating that none is invested overseas and asked; can you please tell us what percentage is in equities and hedge funds?

Cllr Elliot clarified that we do not put money into hedge funds, it is invested as liquid and safely as possible.

Cllr Symington added; can you confirm that all investment is in cash?

Cllr Eliot confirmed.

Cllr England referred to parts of the Civic Centre still standing, stating that we were told a year ago they would come down within a year. He asked the Portfolio Holder to provide an update us on this situation?

The Mayor confirmed that time for questions is up.

## **5. MOTION**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Tindall and seconded by Councillor England:

'This Council notes that the introduction of Universal Credit has led to a number of circumstances which have had an adverse effect on the more vulnerable members of our communities.

It further notes that it has been necessary for the County Council to foster Holiday Clubs with the provision of food in order to ensure that disadvantaged children are provided for so as to counter unhealthy holidays and social isolation.

This council recognises that a greater reliance is being placed upon Food Banks and is aware that the Dacorum Food Bank is struggling to fulfil the demands upon it.

Therefore,

- The Council asks the Cabinet to make arrangements to support the continuation of the Food Bank by working with DENS to a greater extent, and
- Given that the position of Coordinator of the Food Bank is of crucial importance, the Cabinet is further asked to make provisions in the Council's budget for 2020/2021 for financial assistance in the maintenance of this post.
- Further as a matter of urgency, the Cabinet is asked to make the necessary arrangements for the early commencement of this funding from 1st October with an appropriate financial transfer from the 2019/2020 reserves'

Councillor Tindall referred to the motion proposed and added that recent stats from DENS give the fact that benefit changes delays last financial year were 709 demand, whereas this year we have only covered 5-6 months of the year and already demand has overtaken at 753 down to delays in changes in Universal Credit. The most staggering is the increase in demand child meals from 5 last year, to so far this half a year, 26 already. So you can see the demand is growing and is expected to increase again this year.

It is a matter of some worry and concern that the 5<sup>th</sup> richest country in the world has such a demand for food banks in its local communities. Feel every Local Councils should do everything they can to help. There are no figures mentioned in this motion because we felt it appropriate for the administration to discuss with DENS what would be an appropriate amount to support the staffing of this. Money should go to staffing as that is the area that does not attract funding. The Councillor therefore asked everyone in room to support this and note the last paragraph that the funding starts from 1st October.

Cllr England seconded the motion.

Cllr Woolner referred to roll out of universal credit in Dacorum causing some issues with a large number of recipients becoming in rent arrears; it follows that this will lead to increased financial need and reliance on food banks. Current research shows 52% average increase in food bank usage in areas that have had Universal Credit for 12 months, compared to 30% in areas that haven't. Dacorum should be providing more support to claimants and ensure that DENS is fully funded and able to cope. The Cllr urged Council to support this motion.

Cllr Stevens referred to holiday hunger, something he has been talking about for many years. The number of children on free school meals is something we should be looking into, number of children attending holiday programmes are very small numbers, believe need to build robust approach to how feed children during holiday times. Need a coordinator to ensure a food bank runs well and urge members to support the motion.

Cllr England added that he hopes all Members can support the motion, although some things are decided by Central Government, we can appeal for a change of policy, in recognition that Universal Credit is not working the way it was promised. Waiting for 5 weeks or more for food money doesn't work when you don't have any savings. In Dacorum we can, as a Council, Show compassion and imagination and have to support food banks while it is still needed. While this continues it is harming our community, we cannot look the other way. So, let us take a strong position and take back control and use our management of change reserve, or other such reserve, to ensure our residents are able to manage change in their lives. We declared a climate emergency, but for these people having the basics is their emergency. If we want people to listen to the Council and participate in dealing with the climate emergency, we need more carrot and less stick.

Cllr England continued; lets support people to recover from their setbacks, we need people in hardship to find their change of direction. The Cllr questioned if the Council has got its priorities right inside the Forum? Why just refer people to a food bank when we could take care of the other key building blocks; housing, health (particularly mental health) and homelessness, by bringing those functions more closely together. If we are still looking at new locations for DENS, perhaps we could look at the physical and psychological distance between the Job Centre, the Food Bank and The Forum, where housing issues and the risk of homelessness we can all solve by improving collaboration. While people of Dacorum are struggling to put food on the table for their children, we should be doing all we can to support early intervention. What DENS say they really need now is the resource of a coordinator for their food bank, this is of crucial importance, let's show how Dacorum can be hands on in supporting local agencies. I urge the Council to support this motion.

Cllr Griffiths responded that she was very surprised to read the motion when it came through on the agenda papers. This Council has a very good working relationship with DENS, both Members and Officers are often at DENS. Was therefore very surprised DENS had asked for something that had not been communicated with me. Officers were equally surprised as they had not heard anything about this. This motion implies DENS are about to lose their coordinator, that role is fully funded and they are not about to lose it. They did have a dip in donations during August, which is often the case as people were away on holiday. Ask any organisation, would you like some more money, there is very few that is going to say no thank you. DENS desperately need volunteers to help them fundraise – the sleep out is taking place on 15<sup>th</sup> November at Hemel School and registration is now open if anyone would like to take place.

The Cllr continued that this motion is an unlimited request for money and for it to start straight away, then through Portfolio Holder report questions this evening we've had requests for money to be spent on HMOs, more football pitches, more recycling bins and weekend emptying, rapid charging points, a survey of parking in Water Gardens. No suggestions have been submitted on where this money could come from other than drawing down from our Change Management reserves. That is change management within this Council so that we can deliver more services to the public and not spend the money on delivering a service as in back office functions. Would also respond to Cllr England by pointing out that our Homelessness Team were the first Council in this Country to get a Gold Standard award for our homelessness policies and responded to the Cllr that his speech

implies that we do not speak to or care about our residents, to which she objected. Cllr Griffiths confirmed she would not be supporting this motion as she does not find any fact in it.

Cllr Pringle commented that she finds it rather concerning, this is a very serious issue which we know affects many people in this country and in Dacorum, taking it personally is the wrong approach when thinking about vulnerable members of the public. It is a fact that food bank usage has increased not just throughout the country but also within Dacorum. It coincides with the introduction of Universal Credit, a badly funded policy which takes money away from the most vulnerable. 11% quarter on quarter increase in food bank usage in the first quarter since the introduction of Universal Credit, followed by 44% quarter on quarter increase. This government is pledging money on propaganda campaign urging us to get ready for Brexit. Funding could be used this ends. Poverty created by this government's irresponsible social policy are impacting all areas of our communities. Let's not take this personally, let's look at the people who we are here to represent and speak and for. We are now urged to get ready for Brexit, the foodbanks will need to take care of the people in this society who are not in a position to stock pile and the coordinator will need to support with that.

Cllr Adeleke commented he has read the motion again and again, stating he does not have anything against charities and feels they are doing a fantastic job in this borough. He commented that the Food bank is supposed to be supported by community generosity. What this motion is trying to say is that we support one particular charity, but what happens to other charities? There are lots of initiatives to support charity and lots of ways you can support charities. On that basis I will not be supporting this motion.

Cllr Maddern responded to the motion, commenting she is a huge supporter of DENS, very passionate about volunteers helping them and takes along Scouts, Cubs, Beavers to the food banks to help there. The Cllr expressed her concern that, from what Cllr Griffiths confirmed, that this is a fully funded role, cannot see how it is lawful for us as a motion to fund something that is already fully funded, if that is right it does not make sense to me so I will not be supporting the motion.

Cllr Anderson commented that it appears National, Brexit and General Election politics are getting in the way, if this comes up at every Council meeting it will be very difficult to look at running local Council services for the benefit of our own citizens. He confirmed that he is not able to support this motion as there has been no local established evidence that there is any problem specifically with the food bank, and no official request from DENS for more support.

Cllr Freedman commented that he spends most of his life trying to make the best use of various funds that have been given to charities, to inform the room, even when a charity is well funded, none of that funding can be guaranteed to go on long term, which makes the provision of services and long term staff roles very difficult. In addition a lot of donations that are received will be reserved and restricted on what they can be used for. A lot of central infrastructure costs are often over looked as insignificant overheads. What this motion is trying to do is to provide some security on those costs so that DENS can be comfortable in its own security and future. I support this motion.

Cllr Williams responded to the motion and expressed his concern on reading the motion that it implies the food bank is struggling to carry out its task. The Cllr stated that the Council has a very good relationship with them and the thought they are struggling was a concern, so I rang the Chief Executive at DENS to assure them of our ongoing support. DENS advised that they had not approached the Council, they had been approached to ask them if they could use more money, we will see what we can do, which I feel to be irresponsible.

Cllr Williams continued that we accept Universal Credit is causing some challenges. With regard the County Council and holiday clubs, we were talking about 'Fit, Fed & Read', which is a scheme that has run for several years now, supporting some of the most disadvantaged families during the holiday period. The Council recognises the reliance that has been placed upon food banks and is aware that Dacorum food bank struggle, when I spoke to them, August did have a pinching effect, the virtue of the holiday's increases demands, but this is in terms of donations to the food bank dip. That is in terms of donations, not the food bank struggling to operate which this motion implies.

The post of coordinator, which could be implied from this motion is a post that would be created to strengthen the food bank, is a post is already in place and funded. This motion is suggesting we replace that funding with our funding and DENS are free to use the equivalent amount of money anywhere else in their service.

We might want to consider how much support we already give to DENS; we have been working for several years with DENS, they occupy a number of Dacorum properties to a rental value of around £115k per annum to which they pay rents between £0 and a proportion of market rent; in total they pay us around £24k a year. Those properties to provide accommodation which in turn generates an income for DENS from the Housing Benefit they receive from the tenants they house. They use the Paradise Depot to house the food bank, we do not charge them rent and we allow them to sub-let some parts of the building so they generate an income from that. We work very closely with them through our Housing and Homeless services. In the past, when they have had problems, particular problems with running a particular service, they have directly approached us and we have given them additional financial support to ensure the continuation of service. I am confident if they were in a position where they were unable to maintain the service, one which we consider to be very important, they would approach us and we would look at what we could do to support.

Cllr Williams finished by saying that he does not feel it appropriate this matter should be brought together with Brexit and neither should DENS, a respected local charity, be used in a political motivated agenda that is not going to improve the service.

Cllr Wyatt Lowe commented she has been a Cllr here for more than 16 years and added that to imply that the virtue of caring about the weak the unfortunate lies on one side of the chamber is totally disrespectful to the members of this Council who have sat here year after year looking after the people in this community and doing that within the financial resources available, to the best of our ability to do the best that we can for them. She added that year after year, at every election residents have come back and voted us in as they approve in the policies we carry out. I will not be supporting a politically motivated motion.

Cllr Tindall responded that some of the comments in the chamber are quite surprising, as no

where do we say anything about politics in the motion.

Cllr Tindall continued that he heard or we were told about the fact that the food bank was struggling, I acknowledge the fact the Council does an awful lot, but this was a funding issue, and when I checked with to DENS, as I also spoke to the Chief Exec, they were concerned about the coordinator post because they have to gather together funds from various places each year to get enough to fund the post, which is always very tricky. It is difficult to ask people to fund something that is a back office. They are funded at the moment, but anyh of those bits of funding could disappear. The Cllr expressed; if this council is not here to help those in need, then what are we here for?

Whether or not it is lawful, I address that point from Cllr Maddern, it is lawful, it is not a question funding something that is properly funded at the moment, it is something DENS struggle to fund, and therefore it would help to cement that.

Cllr Tindall advised that the motion is split into two parts, one where it says we would like to look at the budget next year and then could we not provide some money from our reserves. We are not just plucking a figure for funding out of mid-air, it is suggesting the Council discuss this with DENS to find out exactly how it would be best helped, that was deliberately worded for the greatest manoeuvrability so the Council can work to help DENS in the best way possible.

The Cllr advised that due to the level of comments coming from the other side, he would like to request a recorded vote, as it would appear people would like to express how they feel.

The Mayor moved the motion to a vote.

Voting:

| <u>Votes for</u>  | <u>Votes against</u> | <u>Abstained</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Cllr Tindall      | Cllr Williams        | Cllr Bassadone   |
| Cllr England      | Cllr Griffiths       |                  |
| Cllr McDowell     | Cllr Elliot          |                  |
| Cllr Claughton    | Cllr Banks           |                  |
| Cllr Freedman     | Cllr G Sutton        |                  |
| Cllr Allen        | Cllr Anderson        |                  |
| Cllr Hobson       | Cllr Su Mahmood      |                  |
| Cllr Uttley       | Cllr Birnie          |                  |
| Cllr Hollinghurst | Cllr Chapman         |                  |
| Cllr Ransley      | Cllr Sinha           |                  |
| Cllr Pringle      | Cllr Beauchamp       |                  |
| Cllr Link         | Cllr Maddern         |                  |
| Cllr Barry        | Cllr So Mahmood      |                  |
| Cllr Woolner      | Cllr Arslan          |                  |
| Cllr Symington    | Cllr Barrett         |                  |
| Cllr Taylor       | Cllr R Sutton        |                  |
| Cllr Stevens      | Cllr Timmis          |                  |
|                   | Cllr Durrant         |                  |
|                   | Cllr Rogers          |                  |
|                   | Cllr Silwal          |                  |
|                   | Cllr Bhinder         |                  |

Cllr Adeleke  
Cllr Hearn  
Cllr Wyatt-Lowe  
Cllr Guest  
Cllr Douris  
Cllr Riddick

Total votes for 17  
Total votes against 27  
Total abstaining 1

Mayor declared the motion lost.

## **6. QUESTIONS**

None.

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

None.

## **8. CABINET REFERRALS**

The following referrals from Cabinet on 30 July 2019 were agreed:

### **8.1 CA/071/19 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)**

#### **Decision**

The revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2019/20 – 2023/24, including the recommendations at Section 2 of the Strategy be approved.

Seconded and agreed.

### **8.2 CA/072/19 Dacorum Borough Statement of Community Involvement**

#### **Decision**

That Council adopts the revised Statement of Community Involvement

Seconded and agreed.

### **8.3 CA/073/19 Hemel Garden Communities**

#### **Decision**

The draw down from the Local Development Framework Reserve of £0.14m in 19/20 and the residual £0.235m in 20/21 in line with Table 2 - 2 Year Spending Plan be approved.

Seconded and agreed.

The following referrals from Cabinet on 10 September 2019 were agreed:

#### **8.4 CA/083/19 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2018/19**

##### **Decision**

The report on Treasury Management performance in 2018/19 and the Prudential Indicators for 2018/19 be accepted.

Seconded and agreed.

#### **8.5 CA/084/19 Q1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

##### **Decision**

1. Consider the budget monitoring position for each of the above accounts (as set out in the Cabinet report);
2. Approval of the revised capital programme to move £1.5m slippage identified at Quarter 1 into financial year 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix C of the report to Cabinet;
3. Approval of supplementary revenue budgets funded by grant income. This grant income has already been received by the Council and is ring-fenced for use in specific services. Details are set out below:
  - Supplementary budget funded by grant of £70k in the Benefits Administration service.
  - Supplementary budget funded by grant of £100k in the Strategic Planning service.
  - Supplementary budget of £62k in the Homelessness service, funded from the homelessness prevention grant currently held in reserves.
  - Supplementary budget of £21k in the Partnerships service, and £18k in the Homelessness service, funded from Dacorum Partnership Reserve. This expenditure has been approved by the Dacorum Strategic Network.
4. The approval of supplementary capital budgets required to deliver several service changes as set out below:
  - A capital budget of £112k to fund arena seating at Hemel Sports Centre.
  - A capital budget of £36k for land transferred to the Council in lieu of a Community Infrastructure Levy contribution.
5. £130k is drawn down from the Litigation Reserve to fund the legal costs and the fine associated with the recent HAVs case.

Seconded and agreed.

#### **8.6 CA/086/19 BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE**



1. The Borough Council's Building Control service is transferred to Broste Rivers Limited, holding company of Hertfordshire Building Control Limited and The Building Control (Hertfordshire) Company Ltd. on the terms set out in the Cabinet report.
2. Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service to agree any final and outstanding technical, financial and operational matters to be concluded in effecting the proposed transfer of the Building Control service and to authorise the completion of the respective Services Agreement, Inter-Authority Agreement, Shareholder's Agreement and Articles of Association with Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd., together with any other legal agreements and documents which are required to give effect to the transfer.
3. An increase in the Building Control revenue budget for 2020/21 of £40k p.a.
4. The draw down of £187k from reserves to fund the one off initial membership purchase, £152k and subsequent £35k set up costs of transferring the service to HBC Ltd.
5. The following Officers are confirmed to serve in regard to Broste Rivers Limited as follows: The Chief Executive (as representative of Dacorum Borough Council as shareholder; The Corporate Director (Housing & Regeneration) as Director of Broste Rivers Limited and subsidiary companies; and the Group Manager – Development Management and Planning to the Commissioning Group.
6. To pass a resolution to delegate statutory Building Control functions to one of the Building Control authorities ("LA1").

Seconded and agreed.

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

None.

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

The following changes to committee membership were agreed:

- Appointment of Councillor Rosie Sutton to the Development Management Committee
- Appointment of Councillor Margaret Griffiths to the Member Development Steering Group (to replace Councillor Rosie Sutton)
- Appointment of Councillor Goverdhan Silwal to the Standards Committee (to replace Councillor Rosie Sutton)
- Appointment of Councillor Claire Hobson to the Development Management Committee

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

The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

Audit Committee to move from Wednesday 25 September to Wednesday 2 October 2019.

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

Approval given for Councillor Bowden's non-attendance at meetings of the authority due to ill health for a six month period up to 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cllr Tindall proposed, advising that within a week of the election Cllr Bowden was taken seriously ill. He is now responding well to treatment, his health is improving and he is looking forward to resuming duties soon.

Seconded by Cllr Williams and unanimously agreed.

The meeting ended at 9.42 pm

## **Appendix A**

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

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

- Telecare service in Supported Housing has been rolled out with good take up amongst existing customers in fall detectors, which is positive and supports the approach to health and social care needs.
- Supported Housing demand is being reviewed to look at how we can meet the needs of our growing older population and have been talking to a number of other stock retaining councils about how they provide these services.
- The Housing Officers will be undertaking a pilot programme for six months that will enable them to issue Community Protection Warning letters to tenants whose behaviour is having a detrimental impact on the quality of life of those in the locality. The Housing Officer – Tenancy will work in collaboration with the Anti-Social Behaviour Officers, and along with the newly approved ASB policy will ensure there is a consistent approach for tenants and residents and also empower them to take swift action to resolve problems early.
- We have retained the RSPCA Paw Print Gold Housing award for the sixth year running for the proactive work we do to manage pets in our homes.
- The Sustainment team are currently supporting and working with 310 households, these are made up of 182 in settled accommodation with DBC, 120 households in temporary accommodation, whilst their homelessness case is being investigated and 8 Syrian refugee families being resettled as part of the government's resettlement program.

- The officers have been working hard to maximise household income and have seen success when requesting mandatory reconsiderations when applicants UC claims have been turned down.

### Strategic Housing

- Approval to recruit a Homelessness apprentice to train and develop further skills to support increasing demand in this area
- Working closely with Hightown Housing Association to recruit 2x dedicated Street Outreach Workers for Dacorum and 1x Community Drug & Alcohol worker
- Currently developing new information sharing arrangements with the Police and Public Protection Unit in relation to high profile offenders, due to the rise in approaches to the service
- Working closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Change Grow Live to develop an improved pathway for clients with dual diagnosis
- Undertaken further development to our website provided enhanced information to customers needing housing advice or at risk of homelessness
- Licensed a further 6 HMO's

### Housing Development

- Cabinet Report - Next Report – October 2019 - Planning to take approval to appoint a Contractor for the Gaddesden Row project.
- Resource - Appointed Ian Johnson as Senior PM start date 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept. Sam Bramley – leaving date 20<sup>th</sup> Sept. Starting the recruitment process for new Lead Officer post.
- Corn Mill Court - Handover planned for this Thursday noting car park will be closed until party wall works complete.
- Martindale Martindale - Progressing well on site no issues.
- Northend & Westerdale - Progressing well on site no issues.
- Stationers Place - Progressing well on site no issues.
- St Margaret's Way - On hold subject to brief clarification.
- Eastwick Row - Planning application submitted.
- Pipeline Schemes - Looking at feasibility schemes for Cherry Bounce and Marchmont LA1, and Paradise Depot to include facilitates for DENS.
- Land purchase - Paradise Fields land purchase ongoing. Architect has produced initial scheme with positive feedback from Planners. Pre app submitted. To avoid any further expenditure the project is on hold until the land is secured.
- Gaddesden Row - Planning approval obtained and adjudicating tender returns.
- Future Garage Sites - Tendering for Architectural services.
- Off Site Construction – Looking at options to bring these products into our programme.

### Property & Place

- Year 4 extension (year 9 addition) to contract has been formally awarded following completion of agreed additional targets that were required to evidence continual improvements.
- it is likely that year 5 (year 10 addition) will also be awarded later this year if KSI's are continued to be met, and agreed improvements are maintained
- New garage officer came into post in July, and two additional surveyors will be joining in September following successful recruitment.
- Additionally two key posts, Fire safety & Aids & Adaptations surveyor, have been successfully recruited to and agency staff have taken roles on a permanent contract.

- Major works programme progressing well
- Current Informal restructure pilot proving successful and aiming to consult team formally late September/early October.

## **Appendix B**

### **Update from Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services**

For those that use Gadebridge Park, may be aware over last few years of the deterioration of the white bridge. Structural Engineers been looking at how can be renovated, now at stage where contract can be drafted, this has been awarded to a company called Tasiker Industrial Ltd. Works are planned to commence in January 2020, subject to approval by Env. Agency, which can take 8-12 weeks.

Multi storey car park Berkhamsted, works progressing well with pre-cast stairwells and steel work. Received draft report on space allocation (long term, short term, business use etc) will send out before talks with Town Council. As work started later than anticipated, will soon be submitting planning application to extend use of temporary car park for a further 6 months.

## **Appendix C**

### **Update from Councillor Banks, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services**

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

Public Space Protection Orders have gone live across the Borough with officers initially promoting the Orders. The Operations Team attended Fun in the Sun Events and are working with Pets at Home. The Anti-Social Behaviour Team have been working with Police, Communications and CCTV to maximise use of resources and initially educate on the requirements of the PSPO.

Corporate Health, Safety and Resilience Team attended the Leadership event to give an update on Health and Safety matters and the refreshed Emergency Plan. All staff that have a named role will be provided with bespoke Emergency Plan training in October and November. The Corporate, Health, Safety and Resilience Team have also been providing Health and Safety advice to the CCG to assist them with legal compliance and best practice here at the Forum.

The Environmental Health Team have been making full use of powers available to them when informal action has failed to address the issue. This includes, Health and Safety Improvement Notices to deal with faulty electrics in commercial premises, Abatement Notices when dealing with nuisance (noise, dust, accumulations, odour etc.) and Community Protection Notices for dealing with a wide range of anti-social issues.

Mark Dewey has been promoted to Environmental Health Officer from Trainee Environmental Health Officer.

#### **Turning to People and Communities Group Services**

##### **Community Safety and Children Services**

I am pleased to report tenders are being drafted for a new 3g playing pitches in Grovehill Adventure Play Ground and an extension at Adeyfield APG, with an estimated build completion in April 2020.

Community Safety and Wellbeing Events – two events now held. At the events there will be our community safety partners and various wellness activities. It is an opportunity to gather community safety concerns/issues as well as promoting wellness. Approximately 200 people attended each event and feedback from the community safety questionnaires are being analysed. The last one is in Oct Half term.

During the summer break I was able to visit 'Fit Fed and read' holiday club is a national initiative developed by StreetGames UK which aims to confront the growing issues faced by children from low income families during the school holidays. Fit Fed and read projects in partnership with Herts Sports Partnership provided physical activity sessions where young people can socialise, be active and enjoy lunch together and aims to combat the education attainment issues commonly experienced by young people throughout the school holidays.

#### **Human Resources**

### Recruitment and Retention

All graduate and Apprentices have been approved for service areas (9 in total). Recruitment has commenced.

### National Graduate Development Programme

Final interviews are taking place. Graduate to start in October.

## **Appendix D**

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

#### **Water Gardens**

- Our recently restored Water Gardens continues to go from strength to strength and there are two new events happening this month.
- There will be a model boat sailing event on Saturday 21 September between 9 am and 2 pm. Everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary! You can bring your own sail or electric model boat or try one of Luton and District Model Boat Club's boats.
- The next main event will take place at the end of the month on Saturday 28 September. We've commissioned The Heroine Project Presents to write and perform an outdoor theatre story, entitled 'The Serpent's Tale' revealing secrets about Susan Jellicoe, the Water Gardens and Hemel Hempstead. Performances will take place at 10 am, 12 noon and 2.30 pm. They will start in The Marlowes at the Rainbow Stage and continue into the Water Gardens
- I think at this stage it is good to reflect on the level of community activity that has taken place in the gardens since they were restored. This has included:
- The Big Garden Party – where there were over 500 attendees, despite the adverse weather that day
- 4 Dementia gardening sessions – 3 care homes and a dementia club now involved
- Further public sessions for model boating, Hemel sub-section of Luton & District Model Boat Club now being formed, 5 members recruited to date
- 8 garden maintenance sessions supported by the lead gardener, including a session where corporate volunteers buddied up with pupils from a local special school
- 30 children took part in a miniature gardens activity
- Big Painting Challenge - 8 amateur artists were challenged to capture the spirit of the colourful flower garden, judged by Susan Jellicoe's nephew
- New leaflet on the Gardens, and information signage on composting, mason bees and heritage fruit trees in the Friends' garden
- Overall, I feel that our hard work to build momentum and a diverse audience for the Water Gardens has come to fruition, particularly as we are providing access opportunities to both the community in general and groups such as dementia sufferers who have high care needs.

#### **Building Control**

- Members will of course note the proposals on the agenda this evening for the transfer of Local Authority Building Control services to Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd.
- Cabinet received the second of two comprehensive reports on this matter at its meeting last week on 10 September.
- As members will know, Local Authority Building Control services operate in a highly competitive market against a growth in private sector providers.
- Hertfordshire Building Control is a company set up and owned by seven of the local authorities in the County, and on joining on 1 October as planned, Dacorum will become the eighth member and joint owner.
- Together, with our partner Councils, I believe we can provide good quality, competitive and resilient Building Control services – which are there to ensure new construction is safe for its users and the public by compliance to national Building Regulations – through this new arrangement.



- Cabinet has considered these proposals in depth, and I would like to put on record my thanks to all Members and Officers involved.

#### Travellers Site, Featherbed Lane

- Members may be aware of the travellers' encampment at Featherbed Lane, for which the Council received a planning application.
- Planning Permission has now been refused on the basis of the proposal being inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and of its impact on the character and appearance of the Green Belt.
- The Planning service served an Enforcement Notice on 11<sup>th</sup> September requiring all development to be removed (fencing and hard standing) and for the use of land to cease – i.e. to remove all caravans and vehicles from site.
- The Council is seeking a permanent injunction in respect of the site and this will be sought in the High Court, this Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September.
- I understand that the Council is expecting both the refusal of planning permission and the enforcement notice to be the subject of appeals. The applicant has until 9 October to make an appeal to the Secretary of State.

## **Appendix E**

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

#### **Revenues, Benefits & Fraud**

National figures for council tax and business rates collection for 2018/19 have been published, and they show that in most areas Dacorum's collection is in line with or above the national average. I want to highlight one area where the team here has outperformed, which is in the collection of arrears. Looking at the total arrears as a percentage of the current year's debt, across England there is an arrears level of 11%, which has not changed from March 2018 to March 2019. Dacorum's arrears level is only 5% at the end of 2018/2019, reduced from 6% at the end of 2017/18, which places us in the top 50 councils for reducing outstanding debt.

The national figures for the speed of processing housing benefit claims have also been published. These show that our benefits team is continuing to provide an excellent service to residents who can claim housing benefit, as we are in the top half of performance both for new claims and dealing with changes in resident's circumstances.

#### **Financial Services**

The Council's audited accounts for 2018/19 were published in line with the statutory deadline of 31 July 2019. In their Audit Findings Report, the Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP noted that the Council 'prepared high quality... financial statements' and that the Council's Finance team was 'responsive, helpful and fully engaged in the audit process'.

Preparations are underway for the upgrade of the Council's financial system. This has involved a detailed programme of testing, organisational communications and preparation of training materials, to support a smooth- system go-live at the end of September.

Following the approval of the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Strategy MTFS for the period 2020/21 -2023/24 by Cabinet in July, work is progressing to set the Council's budget for 2020/21. The Finance team will support the delivery of this objective via the provision of support and advice across the organisation.

#### **Commercial Assets & Property Development**

##### **Garage Disposals**

Following the successful sale of garages at Cuttsfield Terrace, the next phase of the Garage Disposal Strategy has commenced and 18 sites are currently being reviewed by Housing Associations to assess viability of the sites for purchase and to develop additional homes for the borough. Once a garage disposal timetable is finalised members will be informed of the schedule of proposed sales.

##### **Bunkers Park**

Following extensive archaeological surveys to meet Planning obligations, construction commenced at the beginning of June, and the construction programme is on schedule and progressing well for completion in this calendar year.