

MINUTES

CABINET

19 MAY 2020

Councillors: Williams (Leader)
Griffiths (Deputy
Leader)
Elliot
G Sutton
Anderson
Banks

Officers:	Claire Covington	Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer
	James Deane	Corporate Director - Finance and Operations
	James Doe	Assistant Director - Planning, Development and Regeneration
	Mark Gaynor	Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration
	Nigel Howcutt	Assistant Director - Finance and Resources
	Linda Roberts	Assistant Director - Performance, People and Innovation
	Alex Robinson	Strategic Planning Manager
	Olivia Halper	Urban Design Officer
	Katie Mogan	Corporate and Democratic Support Lead Officer
	Mark Brookes	Assistant Director - Corporate and Contracted Services
	Sally Marshall	Chief Executive

Also in Attendance:

Councillor John Birnie
Councillor Stephen Cloughton
Councillor Terry Douris
Councillor Adrian England
Councillor Ron Tindall

The meeting began at 6.30 pm

CA/40/20 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020 were agreed by Members present.

CA/41/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

balanced budget with small variances in different services areas as outlined in the report. The Housing Revenue Account has an in year surplus of £884k and the Capital Programme is broadly on track and there is a projected rephrasing of £0.4 million into the 2020/21 General Fund. Due to the current crisis with Covid-19, next year may show a very different set of accounts with many challenges up ahead.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 11, paragraph 4.2 and asked for further details about the £115k of additional insurance costs relating to uninsured losses.

N Howcutt explained that the council undertakes its own insurance provision for minor claims and for significant claims, the council has external insurance. For the small claims, this is covered from reserves which is far more cost effective than having external insurance for all eventualities because of the large premiums.

Councillor Birnie asked if the £115k was multiple small claims or one claim.

N Howcutt confirmed that this total was made up of all insurance claims under £10k.

Councillor Birnie then referred to page 31, paragraph 5.1 relating to the vacancy pressure within the Clean, Safe and Green team. He asked if it would be better to increase the budget for staff vacancies in this team.

J Deane said the vacancy factor comes from balancing budgeting experience with what experience has shown in the past. The council budgets on a post by post basis and experience shows that at the end of the financial year, the council comes in at 5% under budget. This process gives an easy way to show what is a realistic saving over the year when taking all vacancies across the council into account.

Councillor Birnie asked if the external auditors were comfortable with this approach.

N Howcutt confirmed they were comfortable with this approach because it is part of the budget setting process and uses sound reasoning to justify. It is also reviewed every year.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/47/20 NEW NORMAL UPDATE

Decision

That the progress on the New Normal programme be noted alongside the proposals for resuming the programme and future projects.

Corporate objectives

Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.

Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications to this report

Deputy S.151 Officer

There are no financial implications to this report

Advice

L Roberts introduced the report to members which details the impact that the current Covid-19 crisis has had on the programme. Much of the project based work has had to be paused as there is a focus on continuing front line services. The report indicates some of the progress made with robotic process automation, key processing in housing and mobile working prior to Covid-19. The current situation means remote working has been tested in a way not thought of before but the goal is to make sure staff can work from any location, not just from home. There has also been progress within the People team, an improved recruitment site has been launched alongside a graduate and apprenticeship scheme. It is now important to make sure these projects continue without overloading staff with current workloads.

Councillor Williams said that mobile working has been rolled out a lot quicker than expected due to the current circumstances.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/48/20 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Decision

1. That the approach to the development and delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action plan as set out in the report be provisionally approved subject to consideration of the comments and feedback from the June Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, on the housing elements, the June Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. That a further report be made to Cabinet in June 2020 to formally consider the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
2. That the Climate Emergency Statement in Appendix 4 be approved

Resolved to recommend:

3. **The creation of a budget for the Climate Emergency of £75,000 in 2020/21 and authority be delegated for its expenditure be made to the Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration and the Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services in consultation with the Leader be approved**

4. That an annual review of the progress of the Strategy and Action Plan be made to Cabinet each year and an update be provided to Cabinet in September 2020 on initial progress
5. That a training and development programme for both staff and Members be delivered in 2020/21
6. That a 'Climate Emergency impact statement' be incorporated into Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny reports

Corporate objectives

The Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will help to support all 5 corporate objectives:

- *Safe and clean environment:* e.g. contains actions relating to the quality of existing environments and design and layout of new development that promote security and safe access;
- *Community Capacity:* e.g. provide a framework for local communities to be better informed and involved in climate emergency mitigation.;
- *New and Affordable housing:* through both direct delivery and setting improved sustainability requirements in new homes would help to reduce both the cost of energy and water and the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions the homes would produce;
- *Dacorum delivers:* fulfilling the zero carbon pledge will make a huge contribution to local sustainability and assist in the national target to reach zero carbon as a nation by 2050;
- *Regeneration:* the strategy and action plan will provide improvements to air quality, biodiversity, opportunities for cycling and walking as well as major economic potential for 'green' businesses.

Monitoring officer

The Strategy and Action Plan will require continual review against the baseline data in order to measure the effectiveness of the agreed actions.

S151 Officer

The recommended £75k budget can be funded through draw down from the Climate Change and Sustainability Reserve.

Whilst the Council remains ambitious in the delivery of its Climate Change Action Plan, it should be acknowledged that there may be occasions when financial restrictions prevent the implementation of desirable service changes in the future.

Future recommendations to Members will need to be presented within the context of the Council's broader financial position in order to support evidence-based decision-making.

Advice

Councillor Williams introduced the report to members and notified the meeting that he had made some minor changes to Appendix 4 to reflect comments made by the Liberal Democrat group. The information contained in this report has only been made available in the last couple of weeks so it has not had the opportunity to go to the relevant scrutiny committees so part of the recommendation was to send it to scrutiny for comments. Councillor Williams said he did not think it would be appropriate to make climate change a standing item on every overview and scrutiny agenda but would suggest a regular reporting cycle to the committees. He asked for clarification from Councillor Tindall about some of the points he raised about contracts, policies and protocols.

Councillor Tindall said that climate change was a serious issue with this plan extending to 2030, so asked if some wording about climate change could be included in all the council's documentation, contracts, protocols and policies. Any effort that our partners can make to reduce their use of carbon and help achieve the target would be welcome. Climate change should be a golden thread running through all local government documents.

Councillor Williams replied that as contracts are renewed or put out to tender, the council would expect companies to include information around their climate credentials. Councillor Williams asked Councillor Tindall to clarify that he wasn't expecting the council to revisit existing contracts as this would be expensive and difficult.

Councillor Tindall clarified that he would expect to see this in contracts moving forward.

Councillor Williams said that all policies have a review date built into them.

Councillor Griffiths asked Councillor Tindall to clarify that he was not expecting the council to change all its contracts for tenants.

Councillor Tindall said no that was not what he was expecting. He would like to see a phrase incorporated into these documents as and when they are reviewed so that everyone reading the documents will understand that the council is taking climate change seriously. Only 40 local authorities have created a climate change action plan so DBC are ahead of the pack.

M Gaynor said that all reports going to Cabinet in the future will require a climate change emergency impact and then new policies or procedures that come through should consider the climate emergency. Some procedures are very technical and wouldn't lend themselves to this. It will also be part of service planning moving forward so it is a golden thread of sorts. The commitment is there that it is a whole council and community issue.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 13 of the report about electric cars and was concerned that the focus seemed to be solely on electric with no consideration for hydrogen power.

M Gaynor said that an all-electric solution on its own wouldn't be enough. It is a fairly comprehensive report but it cannot cover everything. There is also a lot of work being done on methane. This is a start and the action plan is in development and it has got a lot of ideas to run with in the short and medium term but it is critical for the pledge the council have made that there will need to be technological improvements to allow this to happen. At the moment, it not sufficiently developed to make use of them but will when they become more efficient and available.

Councillor Birnie agreed that there problems at the moment with all of these solutions but would be cautious of going all out for electricity because of the financial implications.

Councillor Williams said that there is a difference in how the public can access electricity power and hydrogen power. People can have electric charging points at home and hydrogen would need to be bought at a service station – they cannot have hydrogen storage in every house. The way the public engage with them is different.

Councillor Tindall said it would be essential to involve the community and try and take people along with the plans so they are more receptive to the change.

Councillor Williams said he has taken the comment on board and said it is difficult as you can only go as far as the population will let you. Some measures will need national and perhaps international legislation. He said he did not believe that people would give up their cars easily for other forms of transport so the council must look to the science to give them a cleaner option.

M Gaynor said the action plan refers to community engagement by using the council as a means by which the public can access the correct information.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/49/20 STRATEGIC SITES DESIGN GUIDANCE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Decision

1. That the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document be approved for public consultation;
2. That authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure and Assistant Director, Planning, Development & Regeneration to agree the timing of the public consultation on the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

Corporate objectives

The DSDG design standards for new development will support the following objectives:

- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment: e.g. design principles that include promoting walkable neighbourhoods, accessible green infrastructure and prioritising pedestrians.
- Building strong and vibrant communities: e.g. including design principles providing a mix of uses and range of housing types and tenures integrated within neighbourhoods.
- Ensuring economic growth and prosperity: e.g. including design principles that promote contemporary, sustainably designed employment areas.
- Providing good quality affordable homes: e.g. including design principles to promote a range of tenures and housing typologies that meet all socio-economic needs and conform to best practice space, quality and sustainability standards.

Deputy Monitoring Officer:

There is a requirement for public participation prior to the adoption of a SPD by a local planning authority as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Deputy S.151 Officer

There are no financial implications of this report.

Advice

Councillor G Sutton introduced the report to members and said this was an exciting document which sets out the council's vision for the future. It sets out the strategy for ensuring future developments provide a vibrant, happy and healthy environment. This ties in with the previous report on climate change because it gives the opportunity to create buildings and properties that fit within the environmental aims the council wants to achieve.

J Doe added that the report had been to the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and their views have been embedded into the report. The document focusses on strategic sites as there is some large growth coming to Dacorum to give developers the appropriate tools to create developments in line with standards and style the council would like to see in Dacorum, dependant on the location. A more specific design guide will be coming forward soon for smaller sites. This project has been done in conjunction with St Albans District Council and the Hertfordshire LEP because it will be used by St Albans for development in their district and also covers large areas of employment land being considered on the Crown Estate land in East Hemel Hempstead. The recommendation asks Cabinet to approve the document to go out to public consultation. The consultation requires

documents to be available to view at The Forum and other sites for public inspection so the consultation will need to be arranged for when these sites reopen.

Recommendations agreed.

The Meeting ended at 7.15 pm