
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

14 JULY 2021

Present -

MEMBERS:

Riddick (Mayor), Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Barrett, Barry, Beauchamp, Birnie (Deputy Mayor), Chapman, Cloughton, Douris, Durrant, England, Freedman, Griffiths, Guest, Hearn, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Imarni, Johnson, Link, Sobaan Mahmood, Suqlain Mahmood, Oguchi, Peter, Pringle, Ransley, Rogers, Silwal, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Uttley, Wilkie, Williams, and Wyatt-Lowe (37)

OFFICERS:

The Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Assistant Director (Corporate and Contracted Services), C O'Neil (Corporate and Democratic Support Team Leader) and T Angel (Minutes).

The meeting began at 7.30 pm.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 April and 12 May 2021 were agreed by the members present and then signed by the Mayor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1 By the Mayor:

The Mayor announced the sad passing of former Dacorum Borough Councillor and Mayor, Allan Lawson.

Councillors Williams, Tindall and Guest shared their fond memories of Allan.

Councillor Williams: "Allan served as a Councillor for Adeyfield East from 2007 to 2015 and as Mayor of Dacorum in 2014/15. Allan was very committed to Adeyfield serving not only as a Councillor but also as a Governor of Adeyfield School for many years, as well as a Trustee

of Adeyfield Community Centre; a role to which he gave a lot of time in supporting the centre.

Prior to his retirement Allan had a long career as a police officer, rising to a senior rank in the Metropolitan Police and in the later part of his service working overseas in Africa helping train and develop their police officers. Following his retirement and prior to being elected, he briefly worked for Dacorum in the CCTV control room.

Allan will be remembered as a gentleman who was always happy to help and support colleagues, he will be greatly missed.”

Councillor Tindall: “Although Allan was a Councillor in a neighbouring ward, we meet on occasions, particularly at the Adeyfield Neighbourhood Group meetings. A pleasure to be with, Allan was a thoroughly nice man, and our conversations ranged across a number of subjects, mainly to the benefit of local residents, and very seldom on politics. He will be missed.”

Councillor Guest: “I have fond memories of how when one year Sir Mike Penning MP was not available to switch on the Warners End Christmas lights, Allan as Mayor stepped up to the mark and did so, making the Warners End Christmas switch-on a memorable occasion. He was not just a good councillor, but a human being. When my husband and I often visited the Crown and Sceptre at Bridens Camp on a Saturday lunchtime, Allan would be habitually found propping up the bar. We would have a chat and the conversation would always turn around to the Council. He will be sorely missed.”

4.2 By the Chief Executive:

None.

4.3 By the Group Leaders:

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Arslan, Banks, Bassadone, Bhinder, Elliot, Harden, Sinha and Sutton.

Councillor Tindall gave apologies on behalf of Councillors McDowell, Stevens, Symington, Townsend and Woolner.

4.4 Council Leader and Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council

The Leader had nothing specific to update but welcomed questions.

Questions

Councillor Tindall asked if the Leader agreed with him that the present situation was undemocratic for the members having to self-isolate and therefore not being able to participate in hybrid meetings.

The Leader agreed and felt that the guidance should have been extended even though he wasn't a supporter of the virtual meetings and wouldn't have wanted them long-term. He

said he would have fully supported an extension of the rules but we have to follow the guidance issued by the government.

Councillor Wilkie asked if the Leader accepted it was a complete contradiction that residents were told there would be a Regulation 18 public consultation which was the opposite of what happened at the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader advised those were from two different perspectives; one was about where he thought it would go and the other was the defiant position of the Council through the Local Development Scheme. He said the answers should be taken in the context in which they were asked.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER SERVICES

- Income team continue to reduce arrears and have adopted a more supportive approach to income collection. This has increased workload but offered many benefits to tenants impacted financially due to the pandemic.
- Supported housing officers are now back on site full time and have identified a significant amount of referrals required.
- Targeted housing management initiative being trialled at Figtree Hill / Heather Way, cross housing team approach to understand what impact this intervention can have.

STRATEGIC HOUSING

- Reduction in households occupying temporary accommodation to 145 and 0 households in B&B – service continuing to support those threatened with homelessness;
- Grant funding application submitted to MHCLG for Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme – collaborative bids with Hightown and DENS with proposals to provide additional units of move on accommodation for single homeless households;
- Successful recruitment to Homeless Prevention Trainee and Pathways Officer, providing vital additional support to homeless households in the current climate.
- Participation in the Afghan Locally Employed Relocation Scheme confirmed to East of England LGA.

PROPERTY & PLACE

- The continued implications of the pandemic and some pressures on some material supplies are resulting in significant pressure on all work streams within Property and Place. Essential inspections and surveys are being carried out to ensure service delivery.
- Responsive maintenance activities are continuing and operating in-accordance with Government guidelines. We are continually working with our supply chain to ensure our risk and method statements are appropriate.
- Planned Work activities have recommenced and there will be slightly reduced programme this year due to late commencement and supply chain availability. A significant concern at this point within the construction industry is material prices which have increased dramatically and material availability, both are being monitored.

- Property and Place are currently working with Osborne to launch a new partnership charter and delivery model to improve the customer experience through a culture and behaviour change exercise.
- The cleaning service is continuing to provide additional cleans in Supported Housing Schemes and are sterilising all touch point areas twice daily.
- Gas safety compliance continues to perform well and any overdue services are in the access process.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

St Margaret's Way	Stage 2 design complete and now progressing to Stage 3. A planning application is due to be submitted July/August 2021. A resident consultation event has been completed and where opportunities present the feedback has been taken on board.
Mountbatten View (Paradise Fields)	Planning Application approved. Tenders issued for Principal Contractor.
Eastwick Row	Project commenced on site including cladding removal works.
Coniston Road	On site progressing well.
Wilstone	Planning Application December submitted. Delayed going to Committee until August.
Bulbourne	Stage 2 design progressing. Approval to purchase land going to September Cabinet.
LA1	Stage 2 design progressing. Tenders returned for contractor via Pre Service Contract Agreement.
Cherry Bounce	Stage 2 design progressing. Instructed to increase sales unit numbers to 20.
Paradise Depot	Stage 2 design progressing.
Garage Sites	6 No Planning applications submitted. Beechfield, Sleddale, Housewood End and Dione Road have now been approved. Expression of interest received for Principal Contractor tender. Sempill East has been withdrawn and Sempill West is resubmitted for planning approval at August Committee. Joe Guiton looking at introducing a small parking area to amenity land which will require a planning application. Tenders have been issued for the demolition works including Wilstone and Randalls.
Randall's Ride	Planning Application approved. Cabinet approved land appropriation. Expression of interest received for Principal Contractor tender. No comms being issued until a home is found for the displaced resident.
Stoneycroft & Varney Road	Architect appointed. Tender issued for EA role.
Support Housing Project	Architect producing initial designs.

Questions:

Councillor Freedman asked if the Portfolio Holder was aware of rumours that Osbornes were experiencing difficulty engaging with sub-contractors due to them having different payment practices.

The Portfolio Holder said she wasn't aware so she would need to investigate and provide a written answer.

Councillor Ransley thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and said she was really pleased with what had been happening with social housing during the Pandemic. She raised concern about the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee next week as she didn't feel they could represent the residents well if only minimum numbers of attendees were allowed. She highlighted that although they can watch online they can't contribute.

The Portfolio Holder advised that all members were entitled to be present for the meeting, and if they're not a member of a committee they can still observe the meeting. She felt it was easier and more convenient for members and the public to watch meetings via Microsoft Teams at home. She said we were all trying to follow the guidance but also to get back to some normality.

Councillor Pringle advised she had been contacted by residents in Northchurch that have been trying to secure a garage for a long time, and yet within sight of their home they witness garages in disrepair that would be accessible. This enables antisocial behaviour and sometimes criminality. She asked, can the Portfolio Holder ensure that action will be taken to rectify this situation.

The Portfolio Holder advised that area of garages didn't actually fall under her remit. She advised there had been a stock survey on all garages and a detailed report would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the coming months. She explained that the pandemic had an impact on the garage works and had delayed some of the maintenance. She asked Councillor Pringle to contact her directly about any specific garages and she would pass the information on to the team.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

The lower deck of Water Gardens North car park has been re-surfaced and that work on the Parking and Access Movement project has commenced with work on the new access road to the Water Gardens South car park from Leighton Buzzard Road. The PAM project will take 9 weeks to complete and will include the closure of the WGS car park and the Bridge Street access to the WGN car park, but the WGS car park should be back open by late September/early October. During the closure of the WGS car park, the upper level of the WGN car park will be open for use by the public during Mon – Fri (in addition to Sat – Sun) which is already the case.

Highbarns – we are in the process of finalising contractual terms to complete the infill works. There are various statutory consents to be obtained and the works will then be programmed but likely to be commenced in the late summer. Members will be updated once a works timetable is agreed.

Work continues on the Berkhamsted Sports Centre project developing the design and site options. Consultation has commenced with various stakeholders and will be continuing over the summer with a report to be presented to scrutiny and Cabinet in the autumn.

Questions

Councillor Tindall asked if it was correct that the footpaths on Bridge Street would be widened to prevent parking.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that was correct.

Councillor Taylor thanked the Portfolio Holder for the recent Dacorum Digest magazine that had been distributed to residents. He questioned how it was possible that the Council could print and distribute copies of the Digest magazine but weren't able to do the same for the Local Plan documents last year.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Dacorum Digest had been published and distributed the same way for years and was programmed quite far in advance whereas the Local Plan documents would have been at shorter notice.

Councillor Taylor said he and some of his residents had a suspicion that the real reason it wasn't published and distributed was so they didn't have a proper consultation.

The Portfolio Holder explained they engaged in a full 13 week consultation which exceeded any neighbouring authorities, paid and relied on a company to distribute the Local Plan summary to all residents but unfortunately due to the issues with that we circulated additional documents and extended the consultation period. He said that was a ridiculous suggestion and he felt very disappointed.

Councillor Ransley asked when all residents would have received the Dacorum Digest.

The Portfolio Holder said he would find out the timescales and provide a written response.

Councillor Pringle asked what the Portfolio Holder would say to residents of Granville Road in Northchurch that didn't receive the Local Plan summary until 48 hours before the closing date and the numerous other residents that didn't receive it at all.

The Portfolio Holder said he was sorry to any residents that didn't receive the summary but he pointed out the additional measures they had undertaken to get the information across. He advised the whole process was challenging but they done the best they could do in difficult circumstances. He highlighted that they received a record number of consultation responses so it had proved successful.

Councillor Pringle asked, does Councillor Williams acknowledge that it was disingenuous to refer to the publication in Dacorum Digest because it omitted the developments proposed outside of Hemel Hempstead. She said we also advised residents, including pensioners, to go to local libraries to view the proposals yet the government said it was unlawful to do so. She raised a question; is this good enough?

The Portfolio Holder replied we had an extensive consultation over a lengthy period of time and said he had answered these questions before on various occasions. He explained when the consultation started libraries were open and it was acceptable to visit, however when the

guidance changed and libraries were closed we extended the consultation so every resident had the opportunity to respond. He reiterated that a record number of consultation responses were received.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Barrett, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Waste Services Operations

- Maintained collections during COVID lockdown / restrictions despite staffing level issue with low availability of LGV drivers (nationwide issue).
- Sent four loaders for LGV training, two passed, two more to follow in next month.
- Undertook relevant vehicle familiarisation training to new fleet.
- Re-started Village freighters.

Clean, Safe and Green

- Splash Park opened with COVID restrictions in place - online booking system, event security team in place, limited number of people on the pad.
- Summer bedding and baskets completed in good time.
- Grass cutting started - 3rd cut for standard grass round, 4th cut for specialist and priority rounds e.g. EPD's (Elderly Peoples Dwellings). Length of grass a challenge due to weather conditions of rain and sun.
- Football season extension completed and went well, although a challenge on resource.
- A414 central reservation, cut the grass, hedge, litter picked and swept the gullies. These works require a permit and traffic management.

Parks, Open Spaces, Trees and Woodlands

- Whips (2 – 3yr old trees) planted (Gadebridge Park, Leys Road) - growing well, and establishing. One block in Keens Field has not established, possibly due to weather conditions and topography of the site (sloped, NW facing). Dead whips will be replaced this autumn / winter.
- Ash trees are rapidly being affected by Ash Dieback and seems tree removal is required much sooner than previously thought due to safety concerns about the resultant brittle timber. In consultation with HCC / Herts Highways about this.
- Oak Processionary Moth continues to be identified by Forestry Commission surveyors within the borough and is being tracked annually. Caterpillars of the moth can present a health hazard to the public. Presently, spraying is carried out to new moth nests by Forestry Commission contractors but DBC will soon need to fund additional spraying as this becomes mandatory.

- Work on developing the Arboretum Site at Gadebridge Park is progressing well with the first of Woodland planting being completed as well as a number of Specimen Trees planted. The Meadow area has also been defined and signage installed.
- Wildflower signs and solitary bee signs in place and bio diversity web page created.
- Invertebrate surveys carried out on 4 wildflower/re-wilded areas.
- Canal fields play area tender out and new play area on the Moor installed in partnership with Berkhamsted town council.
- Miswell Lane Friends Group community painting project completed.
- Working with Legal and Planning pulling together the S106 agreement in regards adoption of the Open Spaces for LA1 (New development off the Link Road, over 350 properties).
- Work is continuing in partnership with the EA and other stake holders in regards the River Gade improvements project.

Educational Awareness

- Joanna Boyd started in the team on an 8 month temporary contract to cover an officer on shared Parental Leave.
- Held compost giveaway supported by Waste Services – we gave away 10 tonnes of compost to over 400 residents.
- Ordered 90 x 1100 litre recycling bins to increase capacity of the flats with the lowest recycling capacity.
- The Great British Spring Clean ran in May and June with over 1000 volunteers registered over 55 litter picking events, collecting 300 bags of rubbish and 202 bags of recycling.
- Street Champions registrations going well with 305 currently signed up around the borough. Ordered new high-vis waistcoats with “Dacorum Street Champions” and “Junior Street Champion” printed on the back.
- Officers have run 5 virtual school talks and 7 face-to-face scout talks with litter picks over the last two months.
- Took part in St Albans Sustfest with Herts WasteAware. Officers hosted or supported 4 of the 7 WasteAware events (a market stall and 3x virtual events; food waste talk, plastic free periods and reusable nappy talks). An officer was interviewed by Radio Verulum in relation to Plastic free period’s event.

Fleet Services

- Took delivery of; 10 x New Refuse Collection Vehicles (Mercedes Econic/ Geesink), 2 x Light Vehicles (Vauxhall), 26 x Handheld Power Tools for CSG

Questions

Councillor Guest asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed that by increasing biodiversity and biomass at Warners End valley, also known as The Dip, the wildflower meadows will help the Council respond to the Climate Change emergency.

The Portfolio Holder agreed and added that the wildflower meadows helped to lower our carbon footprint and enhancing and improving our biodiversity levels.

Councillor Tindall asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed that where trees and other greenery on DBC land overgrow private property the Council should make efforts to prune the overgrowth and that should be part of the protocol.

The Portfolio Holder agreed that the Council had a responsibility to maintain our trees. He said they would prioritise any dangerous trees they've been advised of.

Councillor Tindall asked if the Portfolio Holder would have an objection to a household hacking off parts of a tree that hang over their fence.

The Portfolio Holder asked that no residents hack at a tree. He advised the correct procedure was to report the tree and the Tree's and Woodland's officer would make a decision about what to do with it.

Councillor Pringle was pleased to hear about the renovation at Canal Fields in Berkhamsted. She queried if the works included upgrading the surface quality of the grounds.

The Portfolio Holder replied he would need to provide a written answer.

Councillor England queried the reasons for the non-established trees at Kings Field and asked how many trees were effected.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the trees that were effected were the whips and it was expected that not all whips would survive. He said he would need to provide a written response about the number of trees that were effected.

Councillor England asked what they will do differently this winter.

The Portfolio Holder didn't think they would do anything differently this winter. He said part of the process with planting trees was accepting that some will not survive.

Councillor England noticed that the Portfolio Holder used the term "established" in his PH update and was grateful. He asked, will the Portfolio Holder continue to align with County terminology in focusing tree plans on the basis of "establishing trees" rather than merely "planting" 1300.

The Portfolio Holder said it was just the nature of planting trees, you don't expect them all to survive. He advised any trees that don't survive will be replaced.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Banks, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services

Councillor Williams presented an update on behalf of Councillor Banks:

REGULATORY SERVICES

I take this opportunity to highlight the continued excellent work within Environment & Community Services given the increasing pressures from the Covid pandemic.

The crucial and overriding priority is containing the spread of Covid 19 infection.

Case numbers have been rapidly on the increase in the Dacorum and Wider Hertfordshire areas. This is mainly due to the younger age groups that are yet to be fully vaccinated. The pressure this has placed on the Test and Trace Team in Dacorum has really increased. Officers of the wider team have been pulled from business as usual to support the national effort in containing these outbreaks. Enhanced isolation checks have been carried out to support those self-isolating and ensure they have access to the support they need to continue isolation.

Vaccination numbers continue to increase 62% having their first dose and 46% having second dose.

Pop up Vaccination clinics were held in some warehousing and distribution centres in the Maylands Industrial estate to support businesses and worker access to the Vaccinations.

The good news is that hospitalisation and pressures on the NHS remain lower compared to previous spikes in cases. They are likely to rise as society returns from the easing of restrictions. We will address the requirements of the Government as we move towards Step 4 of the roadmap at its earliest on 19 July and the easing of the Covid measures. Vigilance must be maintained and people will be asked to make informed decisions and act carefully and proportionately, to manage the risks to themselves and others. The service will continue to support residents and businesses through track, trace and isolate; advice and enforcement.

AIR QUALITY

The annual status report for 2020 has been completed and submitted to DEFRA. DEFRA typically take 2-3 months to ratify prior to publication on the Website.

Monitoring for 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 but only to the point we suffered 2 months loss of data that being March and April 2020. These were early months of lockdown.

Our monitoring showed an improvement in all AQMAs for 2020 which when factoring the effect of 3 lockdowns was expected. We came close to meeting objectives in Lawn Lane and London Road, but when taking into account the level of reduction achieved demonstrates the scale of the task at hand to improve local air quality. We are on-track with monitoring in 2021, no issues thus far.

Generally, there has been around 20% reduction in levels of NOX across the borough, this can largely be attributed to the 'stay local' advice that was in for much of the year due to the Covid pandemic. ". We await DEFRA consideration and the impact on our air quality management areas. (Northchurch, Lawn lane & London Road)

PSPO & LITTERING TENDER

The tendering process has commenced for the pilot scheme for enforcement. We successfully attracted 4 companies who are interested in working with DBC. The evaluation,

selection and procurement process is moving forward. Hopefully, I will be able to let Members know which business has been awarded the 12 month pilot contract at the next meeting of the Council.

In case there is a need to highlight Fly tipping cases:

3 currently with Legal services.

Fly tipping from a vehicle - Box Lane Hemel Hempstead. Trial adjourned to until November 21.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Armed Forces day is an opportunity for Dacorum Borough Council and its residents to show gratitude and appreciation for the men and women who make up the armed forces community, from current serving troops to service families, veterans and cadets. This year, the council were again unable to host a large event in Gadebridge Park, however there were a series of local events supporting and recognising the armed forces community. This included the official flag raising organised by the Mayor's office and 17 local organisations or providers involved in events like producing and displaying banners about the heritage of the armed forces in Dacorum which were created by Dacorum Heritage Trust and shown in Hemel Hempstead, Tring and Berkhamsted. Images of the banners were also sent to primary schools as a resource regarding local heritage. 6 community groups were also given grants to run their own activities to support the armed forces community during this week. One of the real successes this year was that Tring Book festival worked with Dacorum Borough Council to run two webinar events, one with ex RAF John Nichol and also with Michael Morpurgo. The Michael Morpurgo event was just for schools and the webinar attracted over 30 schools, 14 of which were from Dacorum, and over 3000 children attended. Michael Morpurgo waived his fee in order that Dacorum children would be able to have a signed copy of 'Farm Boy' which is his follow up from 'War Horse', and is soon to be a film. St Barts School posted a thank you to DBC on twitter for arranging this and for the copies of the book they had received.

The Virtual Wellness Festival was an event delivered by the Community Partnerships team under the Active Dacorum and Healthy Hub Dacorum label. It was a 7 day (week-long) health and wellbeing event aiming to raise the profile of health and wellbeing services and support organisations in Dacorum. 16 local organisations were involved in providing online activities to support Dacorum residents on topics such as Mental Health, physical Activity, Economic Wellbeing, Nutrition and Creative Activity. Videos were viewed 415 times during this week and content will continue to be available on the YouTube channel for the community to access. The total spend on this event was under £2000 and the Facebook reach was over 16.5k with some really positive testimonials from individuals including one person who emailed us to say *"I just want to say, A BIG Thank you for putting on this virtual WELLNESS Festival. I'm so glad that I've found it in time to take part. I for one have really struggled since Covid and even now! I'm always looking for ways to try and help myself. THANK YOU!"*

We are pleased that from 5th July, our newly refurbished Adventure Playgrounds at Adeyfield and Grovehill have been re-opened. Opening hours are 3.30 and 6.30 Monday to Friday and there is a maximum of 30 young people or adults who can attend to ensure we can manage this safely. We are looking forward to being able to extend this to all 4 playgrounds and for longer hours as restrictions change and when we feel this can be managed to balance the huge benefit of these services to young people and ensuring the safety of our communities. These facilities can still be hired by groups for youth activities or private parties for a fee.

The team are now starting to focus on the Your Town 5km Hemel Run which will take place on 17th October 2021. To take part residents pay a contribution towards the Mayor's charity DENS and we are looking forward to this being a successful in person event after the virtual activity we did last year.

Questions

Councillor Uttley asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm whether he said the reduction in emissions were nearly met in 2020.

Councillor Williams confirmed that we were close to meeting the objectives in Lawn Lane and London Road.

Councillor Uttley pointed out that several months of 2020 were subject to lockdown restrictions and therefore she thought we would have met the objectives.

Councillor Williams said it showed the massive challenge we had to achieve the objectives and it would be a long term situation.

Councillor England asked if the Leader agreed with him that having identified the air quality problem in 2014 and still not having averaging a solution to it wasn't great.

Councillor Williams suggested Councillor Banks would have a better understanding of the background to the report. He agreed it would be good to meet the objectives, however we as an authority can only monitor the performance but can't enforce any changes. He advised there were some areas that were limited to try and reduce traffic, one of them being Apsley, but we need people to change their driving habits and some are reluctant to do so.

Councillor England asked if the Leader agreed that although we can't enforce an individual's choice of transport we should avoid using problematic areas for big residential developments which will only contribute to the predicament.

Councillor Williams advised we have to create a balance when it comes to development sites and look at the whole picture. He said changes wouldn't happen instantly but over the long term changes to transport and driving habits will hopefully have an impact.

Councillor Barry asked if the Council would make a commitment to allow staff to work from home, which would be more efficient and would reduce pollution.

Councillor Williams replied the last 15 months have demonstrated that the Council do allow its staff to work from home and the improvement in air quality across the Borough has been achieved by so many individuals working from home. He summarised that going forward there will be a mixed approach to the different ways of working and it was unlikely we would return to the same level of office working as we did prior to Covid.

Councillor Douris asked if the Leader would join him in welcoming the involvement of Councillor Banks as the Armed Forces Champion. He felt it was a very important role and asked for the Leader's agreement for Councillor Banks to bring a short update to the next meeting about the work she has been doing within that role.

Councillor Williams agreed.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

Infrastructure

Maylands Business Centre's 10 year anniversary

- July 23rd – 10 year anniversary celebration of the Maylands Business Centre (helped over 160 businesses during this time and is currently fully occupied) along with the launch of the new drop down FLEXIDESX facility and café with the official naming of the Sutton Atrium café facility – in honour of the late Graham Sutton as the centre continues to respond and adapt to the needs of the local economy.

Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

- The “Made in Hemel” initiative – pop up stalls for local businesses in the Marlowes - will run as a pilot during July every Saturday and Sunday.
- This can be extended if successful – a chance for first time independent retailers to try having a presence on the high street – supported by DBC, Hemel Market and the BID.

Planning

Pilot scheme for good design in Hemel Town Centre

- Following our award as a Pilot Authority by MHCLG in the National Model Design Code project, consultation with our residents, stakeholders and businesses via the ‘commonplace’ platform has gone live.
- This is a great opportunity to encourage the community to provide comments what they want to see more and less of in Town Centre.
- We will use this to inform design code for the Paradise area of the Town Centre as first design code – this is work completed as we are part of pilot with 14 others across country. It will be a key piece of work that will feed into the new Town Centre Strategy for Hemel, and serve as a model for design codes elsewhere in Dacorum.
- MHCLG is happy with feedback on project to date.

Key decision by Development Management Committee

- The planning application for the second phase of Spencer’s Park for 600 homes was approved by DMC on Thursday 8th July.
- The decision underlines the Council’s commitment to continue to deliver new homes in the Borough, of which 40% are affordable.
- The new development will link into the first phase of Spencer’s Park where over 350 new homes have already been built.

Requirements of the new Fire Safety legislation

- These provisions come into effect from 1 August 2021, where applicants seeking consent for new developments will have to submit fire statements as part of the planning application process (although not for proposals made in outline).

- The Health and Safety Executive will be engaged in this process. The requirements are for proposals which:
 - contain two or more dwellings or educational accommodation and
 - meet the height condition: 18m or more in height, or 7 or more storeys.

Views sought on Roundabout changes at Maylands

- HCC has launched a consultation on active travel, focusing looking at Boundary Way roundabout close to Amazon and the new Prologis development – this closes on 30 July.
- This will deliver improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and will link to the new cycle lane improvements already put in place in the area by HCC.

Questions

Councillor Hollinghurst asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed with him that Councillor Williams was wrong to make a call to Mr Graham Bright about a sensitive planning issue during the restricted period leading up to the Election.

The Portfolio Holder did not agree.

Councillor Hollinghurst questioned if the Portfolio Holder would have made that call during the purdah period.

The Portfolio Holder said he wasn't aware what was said so he couldn't answer.

Councillor Wilkie sought clarification from the Portfolio Holder that Green Belt land would be characterised as growth, result being that developers could build at higher density and we as a Council have no influence over the number of houses, the density, or any land that will be left to be allocated as open spaces.

The Portfolio Holder said he didn't agree and didn't share that pessimistic view.

Councillor Wilkie replied she was happy that the Portfolio Holder felt so positive about this but as a record could he confirm that any Green Belt land would be protected and currently re-zoned and used as characterised growth land.

The Portfolio Holder advised there wasn't a simple yes or no answer to that black and white question, particularly when it comes to planning policies. He said it was clear that the National Planning Policy Framework aspire for Green Belt land to be protected, but equally it wasn't possible to prevent all development on Green Belt so it was a balancing act.

There were no further questions.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Councillor Williams presented an update on behalf of Councillor Elliot:

Financial Services

The Financial Services teams focus during June was to complete the 2020/21 Draft Financial Statements, and this was completed to deadline, with the draft accounts presented to the external auditor for review in early July. The production of the draft accounts is now

followed by an external audit process of testing and review to feed back to the audit committee in September.

The finance service has started working with budget holders on the financial performance of the council in the first quarter of 21/22, and will report back to members in September on projected outturn.

As businesses and industries are starting to reopen the role of the accounts receivable service in working with council partners and creditors will become more challenging and the need to work hard with these partners to find short and medium term solutions that support the local business economy will be essential.

Commercial Assets and Property Development

Despite the unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic, the Estates, Building Services & Bereavement Teams continue to deliver effective services to customers, operational buildings and commercial partners in a difficult period.

Estates Team

The Estates Team continue to work with Public Health England, the NHS, Herts County Council and other partners on the assessment and delivery of vaccine delivery sites and pop up testing sites, such as the one set up on the Marlowes during May.

The Team also continue their partnership work with commercial tenants to collect commercial property income and secure future tenancy payment plans as well as letting vacant property. As the economy opens up more in the summer months this process will take on additional impetus.

Revenues and Benefits service

The teams continue to play an important role in providing financial support to local residents and businesses affected by the pandemic. Having reduced during April and May, the number of applications for the £500 Test & Trace Isolation support payments has risen significantly over the last few weeks, but successful applicants are being paid within an average of just five days at present. The volume of test and trace payments are expected to continue to rise as the number of positive tests increases during the relaxation of the Covid lockdown.

The council has now allocated over 90% of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) with over 95% of these funds being paid as grants directly to micro, small and medium sized local businesses.

In addition to this nearly £6 million in Restart Grants has been paid out to over 700 businesses, and the business rates team is also currently finalising the process of re-billing business rates for those affected by the change in the level of the Expanded Retail relief scheme from July.

Questions

Councillor Pringle asked if Councillor Williams shared her dismay at the clear evidence of the increase in recorded cases of Covid-19 and agree that this presents a grave risk to public health, particular young people who have not been vaccinated as a matter of government policy.

Councillor Williams agreed that the rise in infection rates were a cause for concern and it was clear from the evidence that transmission rates were up amid young people. He was pleased to report that everyone aged over 18 years had been offered at least their first vaccination and the success of the vaccination programme had reduced the severity of the virus and the level of hospital admissions. He said we all need to stay vigilant but we need to try to balance that with a return to normal life the best we can.

Councillor Barry felt we should stop tarnishing all young people with the same brush. She highlighted that everyone has a responsibility to be vigilant and we should stop blaming young people.

There were no further questions.

5. MOTION

The following Motion was proposed by Councillor Anderson and seconded by Councillor Williams:

Planning Bill

Whilst welcoming and participating in some of the Government's proposed changes to the Planning system, for example the use of design codes and mapping, this Council is opposed to the reduction in community involvement, and requests that the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning write to the Secretary of State at Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government to express the Council's objection to the reduction.

The Council has concerns about the removal of local policies from the Development Plans part of the system, and the other consequences of allowing certain planning proposals to bypass local decision making in the Development Management part of the system altogether through further permitted development and prior approval, and asks that these matters are included too in objecting to the Secretary of State.

An amendment to the Motion was proposed by Councillor Tindall and seconded by Councillor England. The amendment was to include the following paragraph to the preliminary Motion:

Further, following the passage of the Bill, with consequential amendments and additions to the draft Local Plan

- a. The Council recognises that community involvement would benefit from a re-run of the Regulation 18 consultation, and
- b. The Council believes that the draft Local Plan would be strengthened for local people by added provisions for social housing, distinct from affordable housing.

Councillor Anderson said he wouldn't accept the amendment and asked that his colleagues reject it. He explained we already had debate and Q&A's on this very point this evening and now wasn't the time to be prejudging whether we will be doing it or not.

Councillor Williams agreed with Councillor Anderson and said he couldn't support the amendment. He advised he was sympathetic to the amendment but these two matters

weren't in the same Bill and if we passed the amended motion we would leave ourselves open to challenge.

Councillor Pringle spoke in support of the amendment. She said many of the residents she had interacted with were frustrated by the lack of social housing and some are living in completely unacceptable living conditions, yet the government continue to conflate the need for social housing with a free for all to allow developer's access to our Green Belt.

Councillor England said: "This original Motion identifies that Community Involvement is important – The Local Plan is certainly the issue which brings the *most* public participation, but we need to make a commitment to build proper trust with residents:

We've convinced ourselves that 3% of the population commenting is great – it isn't! The bar for considering a Local Plan consultation a strong success is set very low, by those about to jump it!

And it is my conviction that with a different approach to the R18 consultation many-fold more responses and ideas could be garnered. Those of us who dove into the engagement of this know that many more people have opinions, but are not willing to enter into the detail, or cannot formulate their response, so don't.

This is why I believe it is important for this Council to be clear now with residents that it recognises community involvement enough to seek a re-run of R18 – preferably one where respondents can request a copy of their first submission to use as a starting-point for their update, and perhaps be given more than one scenario to rank their preferences? (Obviously this can only be advisory, but there is value in that!

If there is agreement that Involvement is important enough to be protected, then we should take this moment to cherish it and really find out how people's preferences might work.

Yes - The greenbelt must be protected, and I know that members across parties are keen to address the need for social housing – again, if so, we should expressly plan for it, so that it happens as we want it to happen."

A vote was held on the amended Motion:

15 for,
20 against,
0 abstentions,

Therefore the amendment was denied.

The Mayor invited Councillor Anderson to speak on the original Motion.

Councillor Anderson stated that the motion is to do with the Planning Bill and not the Local Plan. He did not agree with the views of Councillor England and considers that the consultation carried out was extensive and it is not necessary to carryout re-run consultation on the draft plan when we haven't actually had the time to change anything.

Councillor Hollinghurst spoke against the motion as being unsatisfactory un-amended. He stated that the big issue was local involvement and that the motion at the moment was concerned with local involvement in the future. There is an imposition on this borough and a

target set by government and therefore the non-acceptance of the amendment results in an enormous imposed target which has been placed on everybody at the turn of the year.

Councillor Tindall stated that he could not support the motion as it stands and that it was a shame that the amendment had been lost. The Planning Bill will change the whole planning scene which means we will have to make changes to the local plan and it will be unrecognisable from the one that went through consultation in lots of areas. The borough needs to be consulted on this whole issue again. Can't support this as it stands.

Councillor Guest stated that local people have the knowledge about their local area and it is so important that planning officers use their local knowledge. Local elect members determine planning applications according to planning law and locally agreed planning policies, through the democratic process and local people having their say. The Development Management Committee enable this to happen and therefore weakening the role of the committee weakens local say, local input and local control of their area. This motion highlights the importance of local involvement and I will be pleased to support it.

Councillor Pringle stated that the motion has no teeth. Highlighting the issues of planning and the way it is being conducted across all levels of government has been rejected by the public and we need to send a strong message that echoes the views we are hearing back to central government. It has to be acknowledged that no through the endeavours of those who sought to minimise responses but is through the endeavours of the public themselves such as the Berkhamsted Citizens Association and the Grovehill Residents Association. We reached out to the public to genuinely consult and explain to them what is going on, rather than simply going through the motions. Many members of public who we spoke with, felt that it was completely inappropriate and insensitive to run a consultation during a pandemic. Many residents have been put through the most stressful time in history and deserved more respect. I am proud to have spoken in favour of the amendment and to refuse the amendment exposes the true nature of the motion which is to say one thing but deliver very little and I will abstain.

Councillor England said: "I am disappointed that the amendment has been defeated, as it makes me wonder whether the council really wants to involve residents, and whether this once in a generation chance to address the need for local social housing will be meaningfully addressed.

So additionally, I would again recommend also that the letter ought to implore some rationality about the use of the latest ONS numbers, but that is just my logical hemisphere.

In conclusion: yes, I support the stating of our objection to the "reduction in involvement" – but, again, I think it makes the case for promising another R18... but as it stands I cannot vote for this Motion un-amended, so I will abstain."

Councillor Birnie stated that this debate had nothing to do with the local plan but is attempting to change the governments mind on removing democracy from where it belongs that is with the people. If we send a letter about issues with have nothing to do with the White Paper we will be regarded as fools. This letter you are proposing to send is a focused criticism and brings in irrelevant and erroneous matters. I intend to support this motion.

Councillor Wilkie stated that in regard to the motion in front of us, we could have seen the value between stripping the Bill and the Planning Motion and if we had received support or commitment to get the Regulation 18 re-done. We are being told by Councillors to our residents associations that it is definitely going ahead and then in this Chamber it appears we are playing a different role and therefore of course we don't have the confidence to be able to support it. It's a shame and it's a loss to the residents who we are here to serve. I'm sorry but I will have to abstain on the motion.

The proposer and seconder of the Motion, Councillor Anderson and Councillor Williams, summed up the key points of the Motion and why they felt it should be supported.

A vote was then held on the original Motion:

22 for,
0 against,
12 abstentions,

Therefore the motion was carried.

6. QUESTIONS

None.

7. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

None.

8. CABINET REFERRALS

Resolved:

That the following be approved:

20 April 2021

8.1 CA/027/21 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD PLACE STRATEGY

Decision

That Council approves a budget of £500K to be drawn down from the Dacorum Development Reserve as required to fund the work to develop the Place Strategy.

22 June 2021

8.2 CA/037/21 TRANSFORMATION PHASE 2 BUSINESS CASE

Decision

1. A draw down of £361k from the Management of Change reserve to fund the General Fund elements of the programme.
2. A reduction of £305k in the HRA contribution to capital to fund the HRA elements of the programme.

8.3 was considered under item 14 (Part 2 Cabinet Referrals).

8.4 was considered under item 14 (Part 2 Cabinet Referrals).

8.5 CA/041/21 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN

Decision

That Council approve the following supplementary capital budgets in financial year 2021/22:

1. £95k for Fire Door improvement works at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre.
2. £50k for Hemel Hempstead swimming pool dosing equipment.

9. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REFERRALS

None.

10. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The following changes to committee membership were agreed:

- Councillor Beauchamp to replace Councillor Wyatt-Lowe as Vice-Chairman of the Development Management Committee.
- Councillor Beauchamp to replace Councillor Bhinder on the Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee.

11. CHANGES IN COMMITTEE DATES

The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

- Reschedule Licensing Committee from Tuesday 27 July to Tuesday 20 July.
- Reschedule Cabinet from Tuesday 20 July to Tuesday 27 July.

12. CALL-IN AND URGENCY PROCEDURE

The Council noted the following urgent Portfolio Holder Decision:

PH/013/21 - Additional Restrictions Grant Phase 2 – Covid-19 Support for Local Businesses.

13. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved:

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded during the item in part II of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Item 14).

14. CABINET REFERRALS (PART 2)

Full details can be found in the Part 2 Minutes.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm.