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**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**15 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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Present -

**MEMBERS:**

Riddick (Mayor), Adeleke, Anderson, Arslan, Banks, Barrett, Barry, Bassadone, Beauchamp, Bhinder, Birnie (Deputy Mayor), Chapman, Cloughton, Douris, Durrant, Elliot, England, Griffiths, Hearn, Hobson, Hollinghurst, Imarni, Johnson, Link, Maddern, Suqlain Mahmood, Oguchi, Peter, Pringle, Ransley, Rogers, Silwal, Stevens, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Tindall, Townsend, Wilkie, and Wyatt-Lowe (40)

**OFFICERS:**

The Chief Executive, Assistant Director (Corporate and Contracted Services), Group Manager (Legal and Democratic Services), Group Manager (Strategic Housing), 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 meeting held on 14 July 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:**

“I am delighted to tell Council that at this year’s Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference, our Group Manager for Strategic Housing, Natasha Beresford, won the national award for the Inspirational Colleague of the Year. This followed submissions from our staff as to the special contribution made by Natasha during what has been an extremely busy and stressful time for staff and our vulnerable residents. It is a tribute to Natasha in particular but also to staff who have kept services running so effectively in what has been a very trying time.

Fiona Williamson and Councillor Margaret Griffiths were also shortlisted at the awards.

On behalf of Members I would like to say Congratulations to Natasha and our Housing Team at Dacorum.”

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

None.

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

Councillor Griffiths gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Guest, Harden, Sutton and Williams.

Councillor Tindall gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Allen, Freedman, McDowell, Uttley and Woolner.

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

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

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Griffiths, presented an update on behalf of The Leader:

In regards to the recent Olympics and Paralympics, I would like to congratulate Jess Stratton, a resident of Dacorum, for being selected to represent Team GB. Also congratulations to Max Whitlock, a Freeman of the Borough, who has also represented us very well and won another gold medal. Thank you and congratulations to them both. If members are aware of anyone else that represented our country at any event please let me know as we would like to celebrate their success also.

Happy to take questions.

##### **Questions**

There were no questions.

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

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Griffiths, presented an update on behalf of The Leader:

I have an update on the Berkhamsted Sports Centre. The key work streams focusing on the facility, highways, sustainability, 3G pitches and the residential opportunities have all been developed and further workings are now happening with the members working group, Berkhamsted Town Council and Everyone Active. A report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet in November with a project update.

Works are well underway with the access and movement project around the Water Gardens car park with completion targeted for early October.

Officers continue to monitor progress on the customer usage data for both our leisure centres which are seeing a positive increase since reopening in April. In early August this was up to 12,000 visits per week from nearly 8,000 in early April.

Happy to take questions.

### Questions

Councillor Symington referred to the update on Berkhamsted Sports Centre. She asked, will you be consulting with the wider community about placing residential dwellings on the sports centre site.

The Portfolio Holder advised that nothing was set in stone yet. She said we had ideas and aspirations but everything would have to be consulted on.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

##### **Environmental Projects:**

- Plastic Free July – Zoe presented at a virtual plastic free periods talk and plastic in our bins talk with WasteAware. We posted 23 posts on our social media channels with tips to reduce plastic use through the month long campaign.
- Officers attended a community day at Figtree Hill. The day was organised by housing who had arranged for two skips for residents to dispose of waste. We were there to encourage reuse and recycling where possible as well as speak to residents about recycling in general.
- We delivered classroom food caddies to all primary schools ready for the Monsters on a Mission food recycling in schools scheme. We delivered monster feature stickers with the caddies and information on the scheme for teachers. The idea is that children decorate their class caddy as a Teacher's Pet monster which they will feed with food waste to help save the planet from climate change. All classes that send us a picture or video of their Teacher's Pet monster will be entered into a competition. (Entries will be posted on our social media channels during Halloween week and the public will vote for their favourite monster. More info can be found here: <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/schoolrecycling>).
- As part of Zero Waste Week we held a Zero Waste day in Hemel town centre with info on reducing waste and recycling correctly. We worked with a local tailor offering discounts on repairing / altering clothes to encourage residents to fix items not bin them.

##### **Trees and Woodlands:**

- Progressed Dundale public open space transfer boundary issues with our Legal team. Agreeing boundary positions to allow legal transfer of site to DBC
- Attended Herts Tree Officer forum
- Meeting with HCC in Berkhamsted to view the potential impact of Ash Dieback disease on the use of the public highway
- Meeting with HCC about our tree maintenance term contract

##### **CSG:**

- Currently CSG are recruiting to fill 14 Vacancies
- 4 CSG Operatives booked in for HGV training
- 10 CSG Operatives have passed a 1 Day First Aid training course.
- 4 Operatives passed chainsaw crosscutting/maintenance course, 3 day Tree felling course to follow in December 2021
- Grass/Hedge Cutting of A414 Dual carriageway, 3 Days inc Traffic Management August 2021
- Play area tender for Canal fields out
- Working on wildflower web-page/mapping
- Shakespeare play held in Tring Memorial garden
- Canal Fields new footpath built and bridge re-furbished

### Questions

Councillor Tindall said he had been contacted by a number of residents complaining about the amount of grass growing through the surfaces of footpaths and various other areas. He asked if the Council had any plans to tackle this problem.

The Portfolio Holder replied he wasn't aware of a specific programme but agreed it was more visible and needed improvement so he would speak to the relevant officers.

Councillor Timmis queried if the Monsters on a Mission food recycling scheme would be rolled out to all schools in the Borough or if it just covered Hemel Hempstead.

The Portfolio Holder believed it was just Hemel Hempstead schools at the moment but hoped it would be rolled out to all schools. He said he would confirm this with officers.

Councillor Symington said it was her understanding that there were 950 outstanding tree orders and the budget wasn't sufficient to complete the works. She queried what the Council's policy was for prioritising and dealing with the tree orders.

The Portfolio Holder advised he was unaware of the shortfall so requested Councillor Symington sent him an email with more detail. He explained the priority would be dealing with trees that present a danger to the public or its surroundings.

Councillor Hollinghurst advised he was travelling on public transport recently and noticed how noisy it was when the bus was being hit by overhanging branches near the roads by the old A41. He asked if thought could be given to the clearance required for routes around the towns.

The Portfolio Holder replied the route in question would be covered by Hertfordshire County Council or the Highways authority.

Councillor Hollinghurst advised he was asking about all town bus routes not just the one he mentioned. He referred to the agency agreement between Hertfordshire County Council and Dacorum Borough Council that says DBC are responsible for maintaining highway verges.

The Portfolio Holder replied trees on all roads were the responsibility of Hertfordshire Highways and they advise us on what we should and shouldn't do.

Councillor England asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed with him that the Clean, Safe and Green and Waste Services team deserve thanks for managing in the current circumstances and during a workforce crisis. He felt the wildflower areas had been a success, albeit some areas were wilder than others.

The Portfolio Holder agreed but said we should be recognising that for all our employees. He also agreed about the wildflower success.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

#### **COVID-19**

Case numbers have been slowly increasing throughout August in Dacorum. This is mainly due to the younger age groups that are not fully vaccinated or ineligible for vaccination. The pressure this has placed on the Test and Trace Team in Dacorum has really increased. Members of the wider team have been pulled from business as usual to support the national effort in containing these outbreaks. The cases are now taking longer to deal with than earlier in the pandemic due to the increase in social activities.

Modelling shows that cases can expect to rise in September following a return to schools.

Vaccination numbers continue to increase 67% having their first dose and 61% having second dose. Work is outstanding to ensure that those eligible have access to Vaccinations, with various pop up vaccination sites being run in those areas with the lowest uptake such as Woodhall Farm.

There continues to be pressure on the health services, mainly due to non-Covid matters, but needs to be taken in to account for any increase in demand due to Covid -19.

Environmental Health Team have supported the Red Quarantine hotel in the area and have visited weekly to ensure Covid Risk Assessments are in place and have supported the hotel with compliance. A multi-agency response has been set up to deal with these using a proactive communication strategy between local partners, government departments and the two hotel sites in Hertfordshire.

Likewise the Environmental Health Team have been working with those responsible for placing Afghan families accepted into the ARAP scheme temporarily in a Dacorum Hotel until suitable accommodation is available. The EH Team have inspected the hotel and worked with them to ensure legislative measures are in place to protect the health of the families using this accommodation.

#### **Public Space Protection Order and Littering Enforcement Pilot Contract**

The Littering/PSPO Pilot Contract has been approved and awarded to District Enforcement Limited. The Contract will now be mobilised. Information from this pilot will be used as part of the Public Space Protection Order Review that is due in July next year. This is a statutory review that is required as part of the legislative regime.

The pilot is zero cost to the council, to provide us with information on the best way to enforce littering and PSPO's in future in Dacorum. This approach is one taken by numerous other Local Authorities to support enforcement teams with enforcement of PSPO's and littering offences.

Members will be further updated on the progress of the pilot, as and when data is available from the service.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **Healthy Hub**

There continues to be an increase in residents who are approaching the Healthy Hub asking for support with areas like Debt, Physical Activity, Mental Health and Housing support. Since the launch of the Healthy Hub in June 2020, over 1000 people have now been assisted to gain access to health and wellbeing support. While the majority of the services are being accessed online, the first physical drop in sessions were started in May 2021. Residents can now find the Healthy Hub at the South Hill Centre and plans are in place to identify other locations around Dacorum with links made with other community activities where residents may benefit from accessing the Healthy Hub.

A monthly newsletter has continued to provide a roundup of local health and wellbeing updates and national Public Health England messages on COVID-19. The last edition provided details of projects with Herts Mind Network, Citizens Advice and the South Hill Centre and increased to 100 subscribers. It is expected that demand and engagement will continue to increase as the Healthy Hub begins to open up physically.

### **Community Grants**

The Spring round of Community grants has been completed with 24 voluntary or community organisations successful in getting funding from DBC to deliver local projects. In total £34,500 was allocated. This was split between 13 large grants of up to £5000 and 11 small grants of up to £500.

To be successful each bid must demonstrate how their community, voluntary, arts or sport project would benefit the residents of Dacorum. They must also work in partnership with other groups and meet one of the council's priorities. Additionally the projects must support at least two of the key outcomes from the five ways to wellbeing.

Some examples of projects that were successful for funding include a Health and fitness programme for survivors of domestic abuse, Creation of seating and planting areas at a recreation ground for older residents, Equipment, kit or uniforms for small local sports clubs and Digital support and equipment to help bring community groups together and provide support for those experiencing grief and bereavement. There will be further round of Community Grants in the Autumn.

We have also recently launched a Covid Community Grant after a successful bid from the Health Protection Board (HPB) gave DBC £110,000 to provide to local community groups to enable them to re-open and cover bills and costs that are normally funded through fundraising initiatives. This acknowledges the huge amount of support provided to residents by the Voluntary and Community sector throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and the impact that this has had on their income and ability to fundraise. The Covid Community Grant has so far allocated £34,375.00 to local partners and a further round is currently open, closing at the end of October.

### **Questions**

Councillor Adeleke asked if the Covid marshals were still in place.

The Portfolio Holder replied the temporary contracts had been extended until January 2022. She said the Covid marshals had done an excellent job throughout the pandemic.

Councillor Adeleke questioned if we had contingency plans in place for a possible Covid outbreak this winter.

The Portfolio Holder advised that question didn't fall under her portfolio, however she was aware that contingency plans were in place and for every eventuality.

Councillor England asked if the Portfolio Holder could provide any interim figures in relation to the PSPO experiment.

The Portfolio Holder advised she would have to provide a written response as she didn't have any figures to hand.

Councillor England queried how the figures would be adjusted due to social distancing and Covid related restrictions that have varied during the experiment.

The Portfolio Holder replied that the pilot hadn't begun yet but once it was in place the key performance indicators will be captured and they will look to see if it was necessary to wait on those findings. She said she would keep the members updated.

There were no further questions.

### **Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure**

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

It was an interesting experience to be on YouTube. It is a shame that the last meeting wasn't streamed on YouTube so that members of the public could have seen the Opposition voting against the Administration's motion to complain to the Government about the reduction of community involvement in planning applications.

I have four items to update;

#### **1. Emergency Article 4 in Hemel Hempstead Town Centre**

This started end of July & consultation landowners/residents August.

Government change permitting residential redevelopment of retail.

All planning authorities are concerned about the threat, especially at ground level.

As a result the Council have implemented an Article 4 Direction at ground level in the centre of Hemel Hempstead.

A consultation ran through August and the Council will consider comments & confirm order shortly.

Judging by the amount of applications for floors above, it was just as well the Council did so.

#### **2. Filming Activity**

Big Increase in local area activity, attracting folks from Ricky Gervais to Steven Spielberg.

This is really good for our Borough and we've decided to allocate some new staff resource to support the industry and realise the benefits both direct and indirect of the economic activity it generates, the way it promotes our local area and obtaining income when filming on public land.

### **3. Illustration of Planning Enforcement Workload**

Significant public concern about open land south east of Church Road, Little Gaddesden.

The land was sold in small plots; possibly to investors that were misled.

Article 4 direction implemented to prevent development.

One challenger has developed fencing/buildings & ignored enforcement action including different kinds of stop notices.

The Council is mounting a High Court Injunction costing £10k, although one hopes we may recover some of cost.

### **4. Controversy concerning Watford's Transport Plan**

The plan includes 10-12 schemes varying in reality vs kite flying.

Contrary to bizarre claims on Facebook DBC did not negotiate to get a Park & Ride Scheme on the Dacorum/Kings Langley side of Junction 20.

The accuser really needs evidence to make those claims and is seeking to distract from bigger issue regarding the Three Rivers side of the Junction if the motorway service area is successfully defeated.

DBC officers have communicated with Watford officers about the Plan and will be commenting during the consultation period as we do not support the idea.

#### Questions

Councillor Townsend asked if consideration had been given as to whether Tring and Berkhamsted could have Article 4 implemented as there were similar concerns.

The Portfolio Holder advised they did consider Article 4 in Tring and Berkhamsted but the issue was the High Streets were protected as Conservation areas, they were harder to convert into residential and the threat just wasn't there so it wasn't necessary.

Councillor Townsend suggested there had been a lack of enforcement action at St Francis House development in Tring and asked if the Portfolio Holder could advise of the actions being taken to resolve the issue.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the Enforcement Team had been under pressure but they had now filled the vacancies and also implemented a new triage system to prioritise cases on a public interest basis. He said he would look in to the case that Councillor Townsend referred to and reassured members that everything that can be done is being done to resolve the issue of the backlog.

Councillor Tindall asked a question on behalf of Councillor Allen who was absent. He asked the Portfolio Holder to confirm that all matters in relation to LA3 which were raised by Bourne End Village Association via email had been dealt with and acted upon appropriately.



The Portfolio Holder said he replied to the email from Councillor Allen and advised that due process had been followed and he wasn't concerned anything was outstanding. He added that the s106 agreement had been prepared and was awaiting signature.

Councillor Stevens firstly thanked the planning department for instituting a new service for Town and Parish Councils; the monthly Joint Liaison meetings via Teams enables Town and Parish Councils, Committee members, Chairs and Clerks to speak to the lead officers in the planning department. He then asked, as typically weekends are used to look at plans, can they be told when servers are going to be down.

The Portfolio Holder advised he was aware of these incidents and was disappointed. He said he would look in to the matter to avoid it happening again.

Councillor England said he was sorry that the Portfolio Holder was disappointed that the previous Council meeting wasn't streamed on YouTube. He asked if the Portfolio Holder was aware he had been calling for meetings to be streamed for nearly five years.

The Portfolio Holder replied he wasn't aware but he felt it was a good thing to be able to demonstrate the proceedings of Council meetings to the public.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented his update as follows:

#### **FINANCE AND RESOURCES**

##### **Financial Services**

During July and August the Financial Services teams had two main focuses;

Firstly the completion of the 2020/21 Financial Statements and overseeing of the external audit of these accounts by Grant Thornton. The audit has now been concluded and the external auditor informed the audit committee last week that the financial statements had been produced to a high standard with good quality supporting information.

Secondly, supporting the organisational service planning process and the detailed horizon scanning undertaken in relation to future service developments and delivery. This process has now led into the 2022/23 budget setting process that finance will oversee over the next few months, prior to the final budget approval by Council in February.

The Financial performance reporting cycle has continued in 21/22 and the first quarter financial monitoring report has been published as part of the cabinet agenda next week.

As businesses and industries are starting to reopen the role of the accounts receivable service in working with council partners and creditors is becoming more challenging and the need to work hard with these partners to find the right support mechanisms to support the local business economy are underway.

##### **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, pop up testing/vaccination sites, and booster jab locations.

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. The financial performance of the commercial portfolio has been strong in the first quarter and to date the occupancy levels of the commercial portfolio remain high. The period of time from September to December will be critical for this service as during that period the 100% first quarter business rates relief for the retail, leisure and hospitality sector will have ended as will furlough.

### **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 earlier in the year the number of applications for the Test & Trace Isolation support payments has risen significantly over the last few months, 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 over the autumn and winter period.

The council has now allocated 100% of the first two rounds of Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) with over 95% of these funds being paid as grants directly to micro, small and medium sized local businesses. During August the council has received an additional £1.4m of discretionary ARG grant to be allocated prior to year-end, proposals on how best to support the local economy with these funds are being developed.

As of August there are no longer any business rates based business support grants in operation and at present there are no government plans, the council is aware of, for new business grants to be administered.

### **Questions**

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe made reference to the news report that approximately 50 shops were closing each day in the UK and queried what our vacancy rate was in Dacorum.

The Portfolio Holder advised as of quarter one, commercial property occupation remained strong at 95.2% achieving pre-pandemic KPI levels. The Council is working closely with commercial tenants and assisting struggling businesses where possible with affordable payment plans.

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe asked if it was possible to give an indication of the Council's arrears levels.

The Portfolio Holder advised it was circa 20% but was in line with the 21/22 budgeted levels and therefore was not creating a financial pressure to date.

Councillor Adeleke asked for an update on the car parking income levels.

The Portfolio Holder explained there was a pressure of £330k on car parking as the income streams were impacted by the Covid restrictions. As restrictions eased from Mid-May, the income has begun to improve but we're still approximately 20% behind on budget. Footfall has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Councillor Adeleke questioned if they expected car parking income to return to pre-pandemic levels.

The Portfolio Holder replied it was difficult to say and will depend on individual behavioural changes. It was something that was uncertain so they would have to just wait and see.

Councillor Douris advised his contacts in the construction industry have said materials and other costs have increased by up to 30% per annum. He queried what impact that was likely to have on the capital programme.

The Portfolio Holder advised the construction projects are impacted by three main uncertainties; supply and cost of materials, shortage of supply of skilled professional trades-people and existing Covid working practices and uncertainty of future requirements. Clearly the pandemic has had an impact on the cost of materials, particularly from the Far East but also due to the cost of transport and the holdup at Ports. These factors are making planning, procurement and delivery of capital projects more uncertain but at present we're still on track at quarter one. We do expect to see a 30% cost increase for near future programmes.

Councillor Douris asked, in view of that information are we taking advantage where possible to let contracts on a fixed price basis to give us some security.

The Portfolio Holder advised we do that but with some contingencies built in by the contractor due to inflation. Early indications show it will take until spring 2022 for price pressures to decrease.

Councillor Hollinghurst made reference to land at Icknield way, an area within his Ward. He asked if the Council could look at securing this land for its original purpose for small business use and try to duplicate some of our successful incubation schemes.

The Portfolio Holder asked if Councillor Hollinghurst could send him some more details via email so he could visit the area. He thanked Councillor Hollinghurst for bringing this information to him as he was always keen to support start-up businesses within the Borough.

There were no further questions.

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

The Portfolio Holder presented her update as follows:

#### **TENANT & LEASEHOLDER SERVICES**

- Erosh (Sheltered Housing) accreditation – The supported housing team successfully completed the annual review of their 'outstanding' award. Team morale, manager support and tenant engagement were highlighted as particular strengths which is encouraging given the past 18 months.
- ISO 9001 certification (Quality Management System) - The Improvement and Engagement team facilitated the Housing Service certification visit with our ISO 9001 assessor. Please to report that we successfully achieved recertification with no

nonconformities identified. Team were praised for continuing the certification process during the pandemic.

- Tenancy sustainment – The team continue to support vulnerable people to maximise their income. Recent example of officers supporting a family to get significant back date of welfare benefits.

## **STRATEGIC HOUSING**

- Delighted to tell Council that Natasha Beresford, our Group Manager for Strategic Housing won the award for the Inspirational Colleague of the Year at the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference.
- Successful grant funding application for Ministry of Justice Ex-Offenders, to deliver Housing Navigator Scheme in partnership with Emerging Futures;
- Further successful grant application to MHCLG for the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme move on scheme proposed, subject to planning consent;
- Engagement with voluntary sector to compile supporting information and communication for ARAP (Afghan Resettlement) hotel/residents;
- Reduction of rough sleepers in borough to 3, through successful engagement and collaboration with Dacorum Outreach and Community Safety Partnership.

## **PROPERTY & PLACE**

The continued implications of the pandemic are continuing to put significant pressure on all work streams within Property and Place, this has been a repetitive theme for the last 18 months as previously mentioned.

However we now have the added pressure of material and labour shortages and the implications within the construction industry of material price increase which is dramatically changing week on week, limited material availability, disruption to distribution of product and the shortage of European labour.

We are working very closely with our supply chain and partners to monitor this, all these issues add in additional levels of complexity and challenge into an already difficult environment. The key focus in these difficult times is to ensure tenant safety in the home at all times. All maintenance works stream are continuing with the reintroduction of a slightly reduced planned works programme.

Stronger emphasis is being placed on empty home refurbishment to reduce letting times. Property and Place are just about to award phase one of a new stock condition survey programme on the Housing portfolio to help assist the development of future delivery models for major work activities, this information compelled with our recent Energy Saving Trust exercise will also start to map Dacorum's requirements and vision to help tackle the climate emergency.

Property and Place have developed a new joint charter with Osborne which focuses on the customer experience through a culture and behaviour change, this has also lead into a co-location of staff approach to eliminate waste, this is being implemented shortly at the Osborne office. The cleaning service is continuing to work tirelessly to undertake its function in these difficult times.

## **HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

- Shortlisted for the following Awards:
  - Evening Standard - 17<sup>th</sup> September

- Martindale Fields - Best Family Home
- Inside Housing Awards - 4<sup>th</sup> November
  - Magenta Court - Best Development (Urban – Outside of London)
  - Best Development Team (South)
- Housebuilder Awards - 24<sup>th</sup> November
  - Magenta Court Best Design for Four Storeys or more
- Planning Approval achieved for sites at Wilstone Village, Randalls Ride, and 5 garage sites at Beechfield, Sleddale, Housewood End, Dione Road and Semphill West.
- Planning Application submitted for a 46 unit scheme at St Margaret's Way.
- Planning Application to be submitted shortly for “move on” accommodation at Aragon Close in the form of modular units. We have obtained some funding from Homes England to support this project.
- Planning Application due to be submitted shortly for the Paradise Depot site including a provision for DENS.
- Cabinet 21<sup>st</sup> Sept will have 2 reports – Approval to appoint contractor for Randalls Ride and our Paradise Fields sites. Approval to purchase Bulbourne site from Tring Town Council and 2 No land appropriations from General fund to HRA – Marchmont site and Paradise Depot.
- Eastwick Row and Coniston Road continue to progress on site.
- New member of staff joining the team next month.

#### Questions:

Councillor Symington said she had been contacted by several residents within her Ward that have been impacted by the pandemic implications and the reduction in repairs and maintenance. She questioned how we balance that with the reasonable expectations of our residents.

The Portfolio Holder replied she was aware of the issues but they had to take the safety of residents first. The pandemic has caused a backlog which is being worked through on a priority basis. She highlighted that it wasn't done as a budget cut, the money is still there and services will be delivered again as soon as possible.

Councillor Beauchamp understood we were proposing to install heat source pumps. He said it was a great initiative and one he definitely supported. He asked if we had a feel for the costs and potential recovery time scales for the expense of converting some of our existing properties e.g. flats to this technology, and would it be within the lifetime of some of our old and less fuel efficient buildings.

The Portfolio Holder advised they're pulling together a complete stock condition survey so they can eventually put together a long-term plan on how they're going to implement all these changes. If a Grant becomes available and we could deliver in that time we will apply. She added that they were actively putting in a Grant to get some heat source pumps in almost immediately.

Councillor Maddern asked how the current figures for homelessness cases compared prior to Covid.

The Portfolio Holder said she would have to provide a written response.

Councillor Ransley expressed her concern that some of the resident's lounges at sheltered accommodation were still closed. She asked what the possibility was to open the lounges soon for the mental and physical health of the residents.

The Portfolio Holder totally understood Councillor Ransley's concerns but advised we had to strike a balance between the residents and staffs safety. She said she couldn't give a date for when these would open as it would depend on staff availability to clean such high functional areas. Although she couldn't give an answer she said she was very conscious of the issue.

There were no further questions.

## **5. MOTION**

### **Proposed by Councillor Adrian England**

#### **Climate Emergency and COP26**

1. Dacorum Borough Council notes that the important Climate Summit COP26 is being held in Glasgow this November, with only eight years remaining of the ten that were available when the Climate Emergency was recognised and declared by this council.
2. Council also notes that the local response to the Climate Emergency, while capable of undertaking many urgent and useful actions within its powers and capacity and able to energise local people and businesses, faces critical limitations in key areas for scaling-up change, such as:
  - Sufficient and adequate workforce, trained and scaled for deployment to install Ground-Source and Air Source Heat Pumps and other innovative renewables and insulating technologies to reduce CO2 production in housing and other buildings
  - Funding for the front-loaded costs of insulation schemes and conversion to renewables of present carbon-intensive systems used in Dacorum, both by the Council and by residents and businesses.
3. These work-streams and others require urgent action by Government, to improve capacity for local authorities to draw on, particularly those authorities like Dacorum with large housing stock, who are required to insulate buildings, adopt non-fossil-fuel sources of heat and power, and to reduce or recycle waste products safely and efficiently.
4. To ensure this council and others can undertake this critical work, local authorities need reassurance from Government that they can confidently prepare budgets knowing that that capacity will be available.
5. Council agrees to ask the Portfolio-holder for Environment to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Alok Sharma, President of COP26 to urge a commitment on spending and timing for an urgent and effective scheme of investment in workforce training, technological innovation and industry standards to allow local government to make urgent progress in meeting its challenges meaningfully in the financial year 22/23.

Councillor Barrett seconded the Motion and thanked Councillor England for bringing the Motion to Council. He confirmed he was fully supportive of the content and was happy to write a letter as proposed. Further as a measure of the importance of the subject he would be asking the Leader of the Council to join him in signing the letter.

The Mayor invited the proposer, Councillor England, to speak on the Motion.

Councillor England: "The August 2021 report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) makes clear that we already face global temperatures in excess of anything our species has experienced.

*"Since 1995, government representatives from around the world have gathered annually for the UN Climate Change Conference (often referred to as the Conference of the Parties, "the COP")*

*At COP21, hosted in Paris, world leaders committed to a historic agreement to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the rise to 1.5 °C. They also agreed to step up efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.*

*The world has woken up to the need to curb emissions and invest in climate resilience. But we all need to move faster down this path, with the UK continuing to lead by example with its net zero targets written into law.*

*At COP26, we need governments, businesses, cities, the scientific community and civil society to work together to accelerate the transformation of our economies, deal with the inevitable impacts of climate change, and bend the curve on global emissions."*

I proposed this Motion because we have urgent work to accomplish and my group aims to assist the Council in making essential progress in tackling the Climate Emergency,

...and next year is a vital year.

We welcome the seconding of this Motion by the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Environment.

I am hoping this Council will be able to come to **unanimous** agreement, just as with the declaring of the Climate Emergency, which we did in summer 2019.

I want to take this – for me rare - opportunity to do "non-political" because this issue is too important to miss the opportunity that COP26 – from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> November in Glasgow presents.

This Motion recognises that the 10 years we had in 2019 is now eight.

I looked up the physics of avoiding a crash and can tell you that, in dry "perfect" conditions a car at 60mph can stop in 6.87 sec. The first second of that is "thinking time". That is enough maths to tell us that OUR thinking time is used-up.

So we need to be able to act at scale, and as a Council in the coming Budget for 2022/23.

To do so we need to see how, via Central Government, the necessary action can be funded and a suitable workforce applied to the transition in levels of insulation across our large stock-holding and to renewable fuels and methods for heating.

The reason for using the examples of heat pumps and insulation is that these are mentioned by DBC officers in the report to Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SPAEC OSC) from 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021:

(Page 54) Section 3 – points out that DBC has heavy reliance on Govt plans and progress, including:

- Offshore wind and solar
- Hydrogen
- Nuclear
- 600,000 heat pumps by 2028

(Page 58) 4.1.2h states that:

“...The first phase being considered is a 5 year programme to tackle low performing dwellings within the HRA portfolio with a fabric first approach, this would concentrate on roofs, insulation, windows and ventilation (with the potential of some type of solar intervention)...”

...“The phased approach to tackle climate emergency would commence financial year 2022/23”.

COP26 organisers urge us to:

*“Make your action count and inspire others to do their bit by sharing what you are doing using #TogetherForOurPlanet and #OneStepGreener on social media and joining others through the Count Us In campaign.”*

The “Count us in” campaign picks out 16 things we can all do:

- Fly less
- Drive electric
- Insulate your home
- Wear clothes to last
- Tell your politicians
- Walk and cycle more
- Cut food waste
- Green your money
- Repair& re-use
- Dial it down
- Speak up at work
- Talk to friends
- Eat more plants
- Eat seasonal
- Switch your energy
- Get some solar

I want to mention the encouragement I had from the Chair of SPAE OSC:

Although I didn’t quite have confidence in his concept of being able to solve the energy problem with a “combination” of Hydrogen and Nuclear, I hope I have understood the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for Strategic Planning and Environment, Cllr Birnie’s email comment to me on 13<sup>th</sup> August, when he wrote back to me:

*“Anxiety about climate change is pretty universally shared and I hope we can approach DBC policy on this matter in a constructive cross-party manner going forward.”*

(Obviously there are safe limitations to constructive cross-party working as long as the Conservatives retain all the Chairs of Scrutiny Committees, but now that the Education Secretary has gone perhaps we can relax just a tad about people marking their own homework?) Just kidding folks.



The August 2021 report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) makes clear that we already face global temperatures in excess of anything human beings have experienced.

So I hope that COP26 WILL bring the enabling of local government action which will tackle the Climate Emergency AND save residents from the cost of heating leaky homes, with fossil fuels.

As a Council we cannot *make* Govt policy, but when our officers report that Govt action is necessary for our plans to be credible, it is right that in the lead-up to such an important summit, Dacorum speaks to power, to say what it needs.

One more time:

The August 2021 report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) makes clear that we already face global temperatures in excess of anything our species has experienced.

What a statement.”

Councillors Banks, Griffiths, Pringle, Stevens and Birnie spoke in support of the Motion.

A vote was held:

It was unanimously agreed,

Therefore the Motion was carried.

## **6. QUESTIONS**

None.

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

None.

## **8. CABINET REFERRALS**

None.

## **9. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REFERRALS**

None.

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

The following changes to committee membership were agreed:

- Councillor Ransley to replace Councillor Tindall on the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **11. CHANGES IN COMMITTEE DATES**

The following changes to committee dates were agreed:

- Move Strategic Planning and Environment OSC from 20 October to 2 November.
- Schedule an Extraordinary Council meeting on Wednesday 6 October.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm.