

MINUTES

CABINET

23 November 2021

Cabinet Members

Cllr Williams
Cllr Barratt
Cllr Anderson
Cllr Banks
Cllr Griffith
Cllr Elliott

Other Councillors in attendance:

Cllr Tindall
Cllr Douris

Officers

Mark Gaynor
Mark Brookes
Melanie Parr
Nigel Howcutt
David Barratt
Claire Hamilton

Guests

Richard Thompson

1 Adjustment to the agenda

Cllr Williams announced an adjustment to item 11, whereby in addition to considering the appointment of contractors for Aragon Close, the council would also consider contractors for Tring Road. Cllr Williams apologised that was missing from the original agenda.

CA/083/21– minutes of the last meeting

Cllr Williams asked the council if they agreed the minutes from the previous meeting on 19th October. Council agreed.

CA/084/21– Apologies

Cllr Williams noted there were no apologies for absence.

CA/085/21– Declarations of interest

Cllr Williams declared though not adjacent or close to the site, he lives on Woodall Farm estate, which is where the Aragon Close development is.

CA/086/21– Public participation

Nothing to note.

CA/087/21– Referrals to cabinet

Nothing to note.

CA/088/21– Cabinet forward plan

Cllr Williams asked if anybody had anything to update on this. Nobody had anything to note.

CA/089/21– Climate and ecological emergency strategy

Cllr Williams handed over to Mark Gaynor and Melanie Parr. Mark explained this comprehensive report sets out the strategy for the borough, how it intends to meet the 2030 pledges for scopes 1 and 2, the 2050 pledges for scope 3, and to stimulate action amongst residents and businesses. The report details which high-level actions are being looked at, pursued, and draft estimate costings for these. Mark noted the need for greater government clarity on how much funding they will get. He noted the report is not finalised at this stage. The process of beginning to incorporate actions and costings will be commencing soon, and will be in the service and budget planning for '22/'23. Recommendation 4 indicates that short-term actions begin in the near future, and council officers will now begin to work on the short, medium and long term plans to incorporate these actions and costings into the budgets at the appropriate points. Mark asked if anyone had any questions.

Cllr Tindall asked if they could provide some intermediate details, timings and dates, given the large number of different factors and types of mitigation in the whole strategy,

to give them a better idea of next steps and stages and help with target monitoring. He asked if they could include a Gantt chart.

Mark responded that the work is underway on the short, medium and long term plans to provide that. He noted that it is not clear yet which solutions will emerge as the most effective, for example installing zero carbon heating in buildings. They will not start putting it in new houses until they know it is the most energy efficient it can be, but work is underway on this. Mark also gave the example of finding a zero carbon option to replace refuse freighters. Their current fleet has a life until 2028, and it is not clear yet if the solution will be electric or hydrogen. Mark believes with bigger lorries it is likely to be hydrogen as overall more efficient, but they are not clear yet. With air source heat pumps, there are similar issues that need to be worked out, for example ensuring homes are properly insulated so they will work efficiently, and improving supply chain and installations to allow for more than the current capacity of 60,000 a year. Mark also noted that longer-term plans may change as technology improves, for example battery storage in solar heating. The information is not ready yet for a full 10 or 30-year plan, however the work is being started, with the aim to provide this in the next few months.

Melanie noted that she would be happy to make a Gantt chart for the short, medium and long-term action plans they currently have. She drew attention to page 53 of the report, where it states an annual report will be created to help clarify objectives and if anything had changed. For example, on Monday they found out it will be law next year for electric vehicle charging points to be on new builds, so they will now need to look at that. Therefore, their approach is to review things quarterly as well as producing the annual overview report of their action plan.

Cllr Elliott thanked Mark for the report. He noted the point that the carbon footprint of DBC was about 1% of the whole borough, therefore the bigger thing to do is to change the behaviour of residents. He also noted that bigger countries like China, Russia and the USA also need to change their behaviour.

Mark agreed that the bigger challenge is the borough as a whole, and mentioned Mel's work in establishing Dacorum Climate Action Network (CAN). He noted that a big focus would be on young people, because they have more reason to want to help with climate action than some others do. Mark passed over to Mel to explain more about the CAN and the event held 2 weeks previous.

Melanie agreed on the importance of behavioural change, noting that they have included information in the strategy on what the council are doing to support and influence others, and what the public can do. Once this is published and promoted, this will help push the message to encourage people to get involved. She noted the point about China is valid, however they buy things from China, so everyone is a consumer and needs to take responsibility.

The Dacorum CAN was launched at the end of September, and has grown quickly, with over 150 people and 35 organisations signed up. Mel explained that there will be a monthly newsletter, a quarterly meeting and annual event. This year's event was timed to be at the same time as COP26. It was well attended, with over 100 people in person and 30 online. They have also been holding a climate change art exhibition in the Marlowes shopping centre, to engage more local people and schools. Green Community Grants was also recently launched, where community projects can apply for up to £3,000

from a pot of £20,000. Melanie noted that today, Mark signed a contract on the Hertfordshire energy efficiency app, and they are the first local authority in the UK to work with the Energy Saving Trust on that. Melanie stated that though they have lots going on, they are always welcome to other ideas.

Cllr Griffiths thanked Mark and Melanie for their contributions. She agreed on the importance of engaging the public in adopting green principles in their own lifestyles. She noted that you get better engagement if it is a conversation rather than telling people what to do, and congratulated Melanie on Dacorum CAN for allowing people to come with their ideas and engage. Cllr Griffiths believes that if the residents know CAN are a reliable source for information, help and ideas that will go a long way.

Cllr Barratt echoed the previous sentiments, and commended Melanie and Mark on the report.

Cllr Williams agreed that the CAN event was a good launch. He noted that it is difficult to inspire residents when they read things about other countries, and what he said at the event on this was misinterpreted, as you should not do anything because China and Russia are not, but this was not his meaning behind this. He believes it is important to set examples and send clear messages to residents, so they need to be aware of this. Cllr Williams noted that the government often launch pots of funding for schemes with short notice; therefore, he wanted to ensure they have work going on on some projects that puts them in a position to bid for funding quickly if necessary, particularly in the area of social housing stock. He noted it is difficult to predict the future, with the fast pace of advances in technology, but that at every stage, they need to be prepared.

Mark noted that they have been very diligent on collecting information required in a range of areas. They have had work completed by CLS looking at the energy efficiency of some of their council buildings, which may fit into the kind of programmes the government may launch funding for. Mark noted that the government are focussing on lower EPCs, and commended the council on not having very many of those, theirs tend to be around the C to D category. For Mark, it is important to focus on all areas of housing, including renting and owner occupation. For example, they know more about their own council housing stock, however if they get more funding from the Green Homes Energy grant, they could focus some of it on advising people what things to consider. Mark believes that they can probably meet the costs within the existing budget for climate change going into 2023, but wishes the government would cease to make bidding for funding a competition, as it needs addressing across the whole country.

Cllr Williams agreed it might be simpler that way, but the amount of money needed is going to be more than what is available, therefore they need to be ready to bid for it. Cllr Williams asked the council if they agreed recommendations 1 to 4 on page 10 and 11 on the agenda. Council agreed.

Mark leaving the council

Mark G mentioned this was his last cabinet meeting, and wanted to make sure the climate emergency report got approved. He thanked the members of the council for their help, and expressed his pleasure at how much has been achieved over his 11 years in post.

Cllr Williams agreed with Mark, and noted his significant contribution to the council, for example on the successful council house building programme. He wished Mark all the best in his future endeavours, and thanked him for his time and commitment to DBC.

CA/090/21– Treasury management outturn 2020/21

Cllr Elliott stated that the annual outturn position for the council's treasury activities shows their cash position and how they manage it. He stated that for security reasons, they do not put their cash with foreign organisations, but with the Bank of England. They then look at liquidity and how quickly they can get hold of their cash. He noted they get no return at the moment due to the 0.01% rate, but that it is more important to have security and liquidity in place over a high return. Cllr Elliott passed over to Nigel.

Nigel H added that in the statutory return, the performance figures have gone through the audit process, and all the credential indicators in the treasury management strategy were adhered to this year. He noted that the return on investment was reduced by 70% due to reduction in interest rates, which is something they would like to improve on this coming year.

Cllr Barratt asked how the authorised limit of £410 million was calculated.

Nigel explained they set it, and it needs to match with their capital programme, investment strategy, and whether they can finance that level of borrowing. He noted that they may increase it next year, as about 90% of their borrowing is HRA related, and their HRA programme is expanding, creating the need to borrow more money.

Cllr Elliott added that other councils have gone above that to invest in shopping centres etc, but that is not their strategy. Their strategy is housing.

Cllr Williams asked the council if they agreed recommendations 1 and 2 here. Council agreed.

CA/091/21– Budget management in quarter 2 of 2021/22

Cllr Elliott noted it had been through scrutiny, and the recommendations were that they draw down from their economic reserve of £700,000 which was set up for pandemic costs, and to put in a budget of £200,000 for extra funding for waste services fleet personnel. There is also a new filming trading account being set up, to identify outflows of the filming industry since they had Spielberg's and Ricky Gervais' programmes there.

Cllr Williams added that the filming account is temporary, to help them see what income they have from filming in the area rather than just adding it into different budgets. This will make it clearer for them to see the benefits and potential benefits that filming is bringing to the borough. In addition to this, it will allow them to offer support to areas where trade is disrupted by filming such as the Old Town. Cllr Williams asked if council agrees recommendations 1 to 5, page 89 and 90. Council agreed.

CA/092/21– Berkhamsted Sports Centre

Cllr Williams stated that they have been asked to move onto the next stage of this process, into more detailed design and costings.

Mark Brookes presented the updated report to council, in which they have developed site options, preferred facility mix and created an outline cost and revenue business plan. Mark believes this plan will meet the requirements of sporting groups and the public, and is adaptable to changing user demands over time. Subject to cabinet authorising this report, the project will proceed to stage 3, which is public consultation, detailed design development for planning applications, and the first stage of contractor procurement. During this stage, the final position of the 3G pitches, opportunities for residential development and sustainability measures will be worked on. Mark stated that a report to update members will be produced at the end of this stage, with a further report at the end of stage 4, the technical design stage. This stage is where greater clarity will be achieved on contractor costs and revenue projections for the contract with Everyone Active. At this point, members will need to commit financially to the scheme. Mark introduced Richard, a project manager from the consultancy team, and asked for any questions.

Cllr Tindall asked about paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 on page 116, which pertain to football provision and Langley Meadow, whether these issues will be part of the public consultation.

Mark B responded yes, but they are only trying to improve the Langley Meadow site rather than developing on it, so they will keep the grass pitch, but the discussion around on or off site will be part of the public consultation.

Cllr Elliott asked about page 128, the financial assumptions, and whether the baseline hybrid facility mix is the worst case scenario, and where the figures have come from.

Mark B replied it is a combination of taking existing pre-Covid numbers, national data on income for facilities of this type, and projections for 3 years' time when they hope the recovery will have continued. He assured that they will monitor the recovery on a monthly basis, and report back in the next stage, but they do expect an uplift due to the new facilities that will be provided.

Cllr Elliott asked about the income figure for the spa, and questioned whether the residents of Berkhamsted would use it due to competition in the area with private operations.

Mark B answered that they have mapped out all the competition in the area, and found that actually what they will provide will go beyond what is already in that area. He noted there is a similar spa facility at Westminster Lodge in St Albans, so there is one comparison there.

Richard added that the St Albans facility is Everyone Active as well, and they are also opening another Lifestyle Centre in Amersham, therefore as the same operator will have all 3, the intention is for them to be complementary rather than competing. KKP, the business planner, has been involved in both schemes, which has informed their business projections here.

Cllr Griffiths expressed that personally, she sees it as a facility for the whole of Dacorum, as there is not a spa at the Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre, so the draw is bigger than just Berkhamsted. She believes that it could be marketed for the average person in

Dacorum, not as an exclusive club, and she would definitely use it, so declared her interest in this.

Cllr Tindall asked if there was an opportunity for residents of Dacorum to have an annual card or a preferential price to encourage usage.

Mark answered that Everyone Active have a membership where you can use all their facilities, so any Dacorum members would already have access, with an enhanced price for using the spa on top.

The meeting moved into Part 2

Please see part 2 minutes for details.

CA/093/21– Appointment of contractors for Aragon Close and

CA/094/21 - Appointment of Principal Contractor for Wilstone Village site (Land Rear of 36-44 Tring Road), Wilstone, Tring Housing Development

Cllr Griffiths stated that the principal contractors are Podular, a self-contained pod accommodation, which she has been out to see and approves of. It comes with everything inside, and they are also getting funding from the government for this. She added she and David Barratt would take any questions on this.

Cllr Elliott thinks the pods are a great idea, but commented that he would not want stigma to be attached to it, so they might need to think about how they dress it up.

Cllr Griffiths acknowledged this comment, but she believes that it might work the other way, they might look so nice that the rest of the area looks not as nice in comparison.

David Barratt agreed, stating that the area will be given a separate name and street address to keep it separate. He noted that normally he would come for approval with a planning approval in place, but that is on the agenda for the committee to discuss on the 2nd December. In order to realise the funding, they need to move on ahead, so subject to a successful planning committee outcome, they will be in a position to place the order immediately to get the funding. David also noted that the contractor, Hills, have a charitable foundation that have gifted a unit to them for the project, so the contract sum will reduce, which they are currently finalising.

Cllr Griffiths mentioned that the site was put forward for housing about 10 or 15 years ago, so there have been challenges with the site, but finally they have been able to secure a development that works that Willstone Parish Council are happy with. She expressed her support of this.

Cllr Anderson asked if there was a location plan they can provide.

David explained it is to the right of the pub in the main road, close to the garages. The location map was displayed on screen. David explained that there are 6 houses planned there, one of which is wheelchair accessible, with increased sustainability, electric vehicle charging, air source heat pumps, and insulation to a high standard.

Cllr Barratt asked about the square footage of each house.

David stated he cannot do that now, but will get it to Cllr Barratt, however it is designed in accordance with national state standards.

Cllr Barratt asked if they are all 3 bed properties.

David answered they are a combination of 2 bed and 3 bed properties.

Cllr Williams stated the recommendation on this one is to award the contract to Life Build Solutions, and asked if this one already has planning permission.

David confirmed that is correct.

14 Final recommendations and closing remarks

Cllr Williams asked if council is content with those recommendations. Council agreed. Cllr Williams asked if they could agree the recommendation to note item 13, the financial aspects of Ottering Road, Willstone. Council agreed. Cllr Williams concluded the meeting.