



Council Briefing Note – 19th February 2025

PLACE PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR ADRIAN ENGLAND

Development Management

Significant service achievement since last Council meeting:

- A residential scheme for 28 dwellings in Frogmore Road, Hemel Hempstead was granted planning permission; however, the application for 476 new residential dwellings at the former Hemel Gasworks site, London Road, was refused at Development Management Committee.
- We have received planning applications for:
 - Reserved matters land at West Hemel Hempstead (705 dwellings)
 - Outline planning permission for nursing home of up to 67 bedrooms for dementia care at New Road, Northchurch
 - Outline planning permission for c.750 dwellings at Land at Chesham Road, South Berkhamsted
 - Reserved matters at Grange Farm, Bovington (129 dwellings)
 - Outline planning permission for up to 150 dwellings at Land north of Chipperfield Road, Kings Langley

Strategic or significant operational matters which I would like full Council to be aware of:

- The Public Inquiry for Land West of Leighton Buzzard Road (c.350 dwellings) started on 5th February.
- The draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Long Marston and Wilstone has been out for consultation, with the consultation period ending on 14th February.

Strategic Planning

Local Plan to 2041

Officers have summarised the key issues to the Reg.19 consultation which garnered responses from close to 1,600 individuals and organisations.

No Duty to Cooperate body has objected on the grounds that the legal duty has not been met. Officers are working with these bodies to secure a Statement of Common Ground (SoGC). For the SoCG with neighbouring authorities, there is agreement that the use of a portfolio holder/leader's signature would be appropriate.

Most responses were in relation to sites, but key issues raised were no un-anticipated and officers continue to progress on the basis that the Local Plan to 2041 will be submitted on 11 March 2025.

Hemel Garden Communities

Service achievements since last Council meeting include the following:

- Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) are developing two Supplementary Planning Documents (Framework Plan and Transformation; Stewardship and Place-making) to ensure the qualitative output of future development plans. These will be subject to various consultation activities later this year. In parallel, an

Infrastructure Delivery Plan is being developed, which will identify the infrastructure required to support development to 2050.

- In December, the team hosted a visit from representatives of the New Towns Taskforce (MHCLG), who were keen to understand more about the Hemel Garden Communities' programme, its challenges and opportunities.
- A Landowners' Forum has been established to foster collaboration amongst landowners and to ensure a holistic approach to future development, but also to develop and agree a mechanism that will address the funding and delivery of site-wide infrastructure. Legal advice is currently being procured to support this workstream with a planning and delivery strategy.

Strategic or significant operational matters which I would like full Council to be aware of:

- The Crown Estate continue to undertake pre-application public consultation events for Land East of Hemel Hempstead (Hemel Garden Communities), which falls primarily within St Albans' boundaries. Most recently, a series of Design Workshops were held (29th / 30th January). Dacorum residents have been engaged through these events and DBC Officers continue to be actively involved in the pre-application process.
- A planning application has been consented for the development of a Community Garden at the Junction of Cherry Tree Lane and Redbourn Road, just over the boundary within the St Albans' District. The Crown Estate plan to commence implementation later this year and have partnered with Sunnyside Rural Trust to deliver this project.

Place and Enterprise

Significant service achievement since last Council meeting:

- Dacorum's Den has been launched and the closing date for entries is the 2nd April 2025.
- The Hemel Place Board met on 6th December 2024 and meets again on the 6th March 2025. The Board has 'reset' and meetings dates have established for the year ahead. The Board received presentations from the Crown Estate and Maylands Masterplan following the latter's approval by Cabinet in October 2024.
- The Maylands Masterplan is a key priority for both the Council and Board and the team will now focus and develop next steps. A procurement process is underway to secure resources to develop a Wayfinding Strategy, which is a key output of the Masterplan.

Strategic or significant and operational matters which I would like full Council to be aware of:

- Officers have been working closely with its partners, West Herts Teaching Hospital Trust and the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board to progress with the Health Campus project. Procurement has commenced for the specialist resources required to undertake the work needed to prepare a Strategic Outline Case (SOC). This is a significant piece of work, but the target is to have the SOC finalised by the end of the October. Recruitment is underway for a Programme Director to lead on the project in behalf of all partners. The closing date for applications was the 31st January and the selection process is underway.
- A Service Review is underway for the Maylands and Kylna Business Centres. This review is progressing well and will provide a series of proposals to improve the service offer and support to tenants. To inform this review, engagement has taken place with tenants, benchmarking has been undertaken and a review of current lettings and rent policies as well as a review of facilities.
- The Place Team has been working with partners and Council services to utilise the remaining UK Shared Prosperity funding from the £1.76m allocation for three years to 31st March 2025. UK Shared Prosperity Funding was introduced by central government to replace EU funding for projects when the UK left the European Union.
- Dacorum Borough Council has been advised that a further and final allocation of UK Shared Prosperity Funding for 2025/26 has been granted (Capital £106,052, Revenue £470,376). The team will prepare proposals for investment options aligned to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund themes and priorities and will engage with members and partners once final guidance has been received.
- The Hemel Place Strategy is being reviewed and finalised, and priority action plans are being prepared. This will be discussed at the Hemel Place Board on the 6th March 2025.
- The new telephony system has been installed at the Maylands and Kylna Business Centres, with a 'Go Live' date set for the 11th of February 2025.

Communities and Leisure

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Tring, Pound Meadow – outdoor tennis court refurbishment works commenced on the 3rd February. The courts are due to reopen in April 2025. The project has been funded by the Lawn Tennis Association via a grant of £49,000.
- Solar panel project at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre – the installation of the 800 panels will be completed in February 2025. The project has been funded by Sport England via a grant of £630,000.
- Community Grants, Training Bursary (grants up to £500) - four applications received to date, groups can apply for the funding throughout the year.

Strategic or significant operational matters which I would like full Council to be aware of:

- Healthy Hub Project – Hertfordshire County Council has confirmed that they will continue to fund the project for a further two years. The new delivery plan is being developed and will commence in April 2025.
- Shopmobility Service – Cabinet (on 28 January 2025) agreed to a new two-year service level agreement with Community Action Dacorum to continue to manage and deliver the service. The new agreement will commence 1 April 2025.
- Adventure Playground Service Review - user surveys (held during November and December 2024 open for 6 weeks) took place and over 200 people responded to the surveys, feedback is currently being evaluated. A member workshop is being established to inform the service review
- Active Wellbeing (Leisure) Strategy:
 - A workshop was held with elected members on Tuesday 21st January to review the feedback from the public consultation (held during December 2024 open for 4 weeks) where 500 people responded to the online survey.
 - The workshop also discussed the draft vision statement, four strategic themes and the underlying principles of the draft strategy and members' views were sought as part of the consultation and engagement to inform the strategy development
 - A second external partner workshop was held on Thursday 30th January to review the draft action plan of the Active Wellbeing Strategy.

Arts and Culture

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Old Town Hall Theatre – Christmas Production of 'Scruff's Christmas Adventure' had a successful run and exceeded financial targets set. The Mayor and I went to see the production too.
- Sport England Movement funding of £10,750 has been awarded to continue Sheltered Housing Seated Dance sessions in 2025
- 50Fest Artwork – the art piece created with input from visitors to the 50Fest event has now been completed ready for display in Council buildings (Forum)
- Flourishing Lives – first meeting held of a new group focussing on the theme of anti racism and inclusivity in the arts

Strategic or significant operational matters which I would like full Council to be aware of:

- Arts and Culture Strategy – Engagement and consultation work is complete with above expected numbers responding to the survey and focus groups, with over 850 engaged with in total. A Member workshop was held on 23rd January to feedback outcomes of sector and public consultation and members views were sought to feed into the Strategy development.
- Old Town Hall Service Review – Interim Findings were shared at a Member Workshop on 23rd January including feedback from engagement sessions. Members views were sought to inform the review process
- Dacorum Heritage Trust – in process of agreeing future SLA for next 2 years
- Officers have been working to find a solution for the location of the Tringe Festival for 2025 and safeguard this event which is important to the residents of Tring and the borough. This followed the previous venue increasing its prices beyond the affordability of the event organisers.