
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

20 APRIL 2016

Present -

MEMBERS:

Adeleke (Mayor), G Adshead, S Adshead, Anderson, Ashbourn, Banks, Barnes, Mrs Bassadone, Bhinder, Brown, Chapman, Conway, D Collins, E Collins, Douris, Elliot, Fantham, Fethney, Fisher, Mrs Griffiths, Guest, Harden, P Hearn, Hicks, Howard, Imarni, Link, Mahmood, Marshall, Matthews, McLean (Deputy Mayor), Mills, Peter, Ransley, Riddick, Ritchie, Silwal, G Sutton, R Sutton, Taylor, Tindall, Timmis, Williams, Whitman, C Wyatt-Lowe, W Wyatt- Lowe (46)

OFFICERS:

Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration), Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Assistant Director (Chief Executive's Unit), Group Manager (Democratic Services), Group Manager (Legal Governance), L Collins and T Coston (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30pm.

60. MINUTES

Councillor Tindall asked for the following amendment to be made to the minutes under the item of 'Budget and Council Tax Setting':

"He asked that the third line of paragraph two should be amended to read as follows: "1% decrease in rent which may adversely affect the building of council houses and the monies that the Council had received from central government.'

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 February 2016 were then confirmed by the Members present and signed by the Mayor.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

62. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

63. ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. By the Mayor

None.

2. By the Chief Executive:

None.

3. By the Group Leaders:

Councillor Williams gave apologies on behalf of Councillors Birnie, Bateman, Clark, S Hearn and Maddern.

Councillor Tindall had nothing to announce.

4. Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership

The Leader of the Council informed the Council of a Local Government Association Review that will take place over 4 days between 28th June and 4th July 2016.

Questions

Councillor Tindall informed the Leader of the Council that he had received a complaint from a resident regarding the material being shown on the screen in town. He asked how the material is chosen.

The Leader of the Council said that the screen is used for a number of purposes. There is an opportunity for businesses to advertise and major sporting events etc. The Leader of the Council said that he will look into the content which is being shown and update Members in due course.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

Resident Services:

ASB

2 x Premises closure orders (Bennetts End & Woodhall Farm)
1 x Injunction for Anti-Social Behaviour (Grovehill)
1 x CPN Tring (Community Protection Notice) to address parking issues in partnership with Planning Enforcement.

Verge hardening 3 year project ended providing 344 additional parking spaces. Funding is to continue and the list is being prioritised for 16/17.

Old Town Hall welcomed Ruby Wax and Griff Rhys Jones both shows sold out.

Legal Governance:

Successfully prosecuted for fly tipping offence in Northchurch. £115 fine and £42 victim surcharge.

The team also successfully completed a Standards Investigation for Berkhamsted Town Council.

The team has also experienced and successfully dealt with a particularly high volume of case work in the last 12 months. Of note were the completion of 111 Right to Buy transfers in the last 12 months and 105 substantive new instructions (leases, land sales and other drafting) in the last 6 months, and maintained performance targets at 100%.

People:

Communication and Consultation

Website content refresh – project closed with a reduction of 25% of web pages. Work will continue for further reductions with service web editors

Digital Dacorum – Project 1: WEBSITE Re-DESIGN: launched with positive feedback. Next step Shaw Trust accessibility audit – results end of April.

Community Partnerships.

Strategic Partners Commissioning – Information, Advice and Advocacy contract – awarded to Citizen Advice Bureau.

Supporting the voluntary and community sector tender out – one bid received which is being evaluated

Reducing social isolation – currently out to tender

Research and Innovation

Re-designing services

Built a prototype online 'community calendar' to help residents see what is happening around their area. It is at an early stage but we have commenced testing.

Research

We have produced a detailed report on options to improve the usage of adventure playgrounds.

Digital Services

Digital Dacorum

Following testing we have launched our new online benefits process (Friday 14th)

The housing digital tenancy pack goes live at the end of April.

We have been invited to speak at the LGA conference on channel shift.

CRM

We have received budget approval and we are now in the planning and procurement phase for our new solution.

Forum Cultural Project

We're currently undertaking a furniture and desk audit and over the next three months we are expecting to remove a number of desks, computers and furniture so that the Civic Centre mirrors the new Forum

Technology & Digital Transformation: Forum.

We are scheduled to sign off on the final design for power and data within the Forum this week.

New Microsoft Licence Agreement.

Our 5 year deal for Microsoft licences is approaching its end. We are working with the Procurement team to source a new re-seller. Microsoft are encouraging customers to buy via a subscription model rather than the traditional 'perpetual' licences.

USB Policy.

We have issued a note to staff to advise that as part of our PSN efforts we will be deploying policies blocking USB devices (flash drives, cameras, phones, etc.) being plugged into DBC computers unless they have been specifically whitelisted. This is both part of our PSN compliance and a practical security improvement to mitigate the increasing risk of ransomware and other malware infections.

Democratic Services:

PCC Election

Preparations are underway for the Police & Crime Commissioner Election to be held on 5 May; we have completed training sessions for all the Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks who will staff the sixty-nine polling stations. 15,000 postal votes have already been produced and the first issue took place today (Friday 15 April).

The Referendum on UK membership of the EU

At the same time we are organising and making arrangements for the EU Referendum which will take place, after a very short seven week gap, on 23 June.

Questions and answers

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe said she was delighted to hear of the tender for reducing social isolation. She said it was essential to recognise the need for this and she hoped there was an emphasis on rural isolation.

The Portfolio Holder replied that the Digital Dacorum Project also supports and looks at rural isolation and how we can assist or help those in our rural communities.

Councillor Taylor asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that it was excellent news that Home-Start Hertfordshire will be working with families and volunteers in Dacorum. He asked if the Portfolio Holder would also join him in congratulating the organisation for working so speedily to ensure a seamless reintroduction of this service for local families together with our message of support to their Dacorum Volunteers.

The Portfolio Holder replied: that Home-Start, as I am sure you know has been in Dacorum for over 30 years and has supported thousands of local families in that time. Last year the on-going funding that was so gratefully received by all of the schemes in Hertfordshire from the County Council was sadly withdrawn.

Although a great loss, Home-Start – in its usual way have used this as an opportunity to look again at what they do in the community and how they can modernise to better meet the needs of families today. They have amalgamated the majority of Hertfordshire schemes making the most of their resources and ensuring that families in Dacorum and all over Hertfordshire have the same access to the very best support that they are used to.

Home-Start's new structure also allows them to increase the age of the children they work with and they now work with families with at least one child under 12 (previously five years old) and can support families with school readiness – transition to senior school as well as the very important work in the early years.

Home-Start in Hertfordshire is an **empowering - visionary** family support service built on **trusted** relationships and **rooted in the community**.

Thank you Councillor Taylor for giving me the opportunity to highlight to everyone about the wonderful work their dedicated volunteers do and the excellent benefits Home-Start can give to build strong communities through supported parenting.

Councillor G Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

Water Gardens

Work continues to progress well in the restoration of the Water Gardens.

The installation of new toeboards has been completed between Combe Street and Bridge Street and water is back in the channel. The sub base for the new footpaths has been laid through that section and work on the new lighting scheme will now follow.

Water has been drained from the river south of Bridge Street and work to toeboards is making good progress in this area. The two islands in the section to the South of Bridge Street have been prepared for new tree planting.

Fish pass one and two are completed and fish pass three is being prepared. The flat bridge by Bridge Street is being removed. A new temporary footpath has been installed from the Water Gardens North car park to Bridge Street.

The ground is being prepared for the installation of the new play area just adjacent to the flower garden. The bridge from the flower garden to Bank Court will be closed to allow works to the flower garden and play area to progress.

Six new trees were planted in the Gardens before Easter – 2 along the Lovers Walk and 4 in the flower garden including a replacement for the dead lime on the lime avenue. The landscape contractor is on site from this week and further planting of lilacs and a replacement birch will take place shortly.

Dacorum Business celebration 25-29 April

To celebrate all that is good about our diverse range of local businesses, we are running a week of business support and development events next week.

There will be 13 events during the week including a number of free surgeries on business planning, growing a business, first steps to exporting, social media audit and IP protection advice, networking events hosted by Metro Bank and Community Action Dacorum, retail training and the University of Herts hosting an event to look at apprenticeships.

The week culminates in the launch of Dacorum's Den 2016, which this year has been fully funded by business, and a Quiz night/networking event on Friday 29th at Little Hay Golf Club.

Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors

Membership of the Ambassadors scheme continues to grow. There are currently 27 paying members.

A bus shelter campaign took place at the end of February.

A place plan is being drafted with a view to attracting inward investment to Hemel Hempstead and the wider Dacorum area.

Finally I am pleased to report that 2015-16 was a record year for planning applications.

We received some 2642 applications, up from the 2426 last year – an increase of 9%.

We have made some key decisions which should support the aims of the core strategy for a sustainable and vibrant community such as:

- approval of the Beacon (272 flats near Two Waters Way) and
- Spencers Park phase 1 being constructed on site (approx. 300 homes).
- we signed our first Planning Performance Agreement to take forward phase 2 of Spencers park (around a further 600 new homes) and will be inviting Councillors to engage in this pre-application discussion.
- We granted outline consent for an out of town retail park at Maylands and are starting discussions about the detail submission to follow.

Questions and answers

There were no questions for the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Environmental, Sustainability and Regulatory Services

Urge members to visit the Walled Gardens in Gadebrige Park and Heath Park off the Magic Roundabout – utterly fantastic flowers. The Walled Gardens full of hyacinths in full bloom, scent & scene utterly amazing.

The initial results of the 'No food waste' stickers on all grey-wheeled bins to promote greater food recycling very encouraging. 420.28 tonnes of food waste collected this March compared with 335.20 March 2015 – increase 85 tonnes.

The Electrical Reuse and Recycling Event on Saturday 9 April, at Cupid Green Depot went well. 5 tonnes of electrical and electronic waste collected in 5 hours. The donated equipment, which ranged from a fridge freezer to a mobile phone, will either be refurbished for reuse or broken down and recycled. There are nine other such events across Hertfordshire till the 30 July.

Re-advertise the additional 3 WEEE banks installed by DBC at the neighbourhood shopping centres at Chaulden, Bennetts End and Adeyfield (Queen Square) for smaller waste electrical items. Markyate & Tring still have their WEEE banks.

During mid March, DBC joined the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership in a special exercise of collecting unwanted or broken electrical items from schools. 3,400 items collected.

Despite poor weather, 43 community groups, schools & youth groups collected 373 bags of litter and 70 bags of recyclable litter such as plastic bottles and cans in the Clean for the Queen exercise early March.

Finally, on Sunday 8 May, Cupid Green will be handing out free bags of compost between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. As with last May's event, will be on the basis of First Come, First Served, max of 2 bags per car. The event is to promote Compost Awareness Week.

Questions and answers

Councillor Tindall asked the Portfolio Holder if she had received a copy of the County Councils Green Space action plan and asked if Dacorum had any intention to do something similar.

The Portfolio Holder said that she was unaware of this but she would obtain a copy to read and will get back to Members in due course.

Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Finance

Budget - The budget for 2016/17 has been approved and has been released on the finance system.

Statement of Accounts - The finance team are working hard to close the 2015/16 accounts and are on track for delivering the statement of accounts on time.

Payroll - Good progress is being made in order to deliver a new payroll provider in time for April 2016 and we are still on track to meet the timeframe.

Revenue & Benefits

The annual billing for council tax and business rates was again successfully completed.

The work done with the housing team to combine housing benefit award notices with rent change letters has proved particularly successful. It reduced the number of calls from residents to the customer services team, and by reducing the number of items

posted it enabled the team to complete the process at the same cost as last year, in spite of a 6% increase in mail costs.

Commercial Assets & Property Development

Work is ongoing to realise capital receipts and the disposal of garage sites is progressing within expected timeframes.

Matters are currently in hand to secure planning permission for the proposed Multi Storey Car Park in Berkhamsted and we are working with colleagues in planning and HCC Highways to deliver a scheme that will be acceptable.

Commissioning, Procurement & Compliance

Work is continuing to consider the scope of the Facilities Management Service in the Forum and the draft specification and contractual performance indicators are being worked up by a cross council team.

Questions and answers

Councillor Tindall made reference to the Berkhamsted parking scheme and asked the Portfolio Holder if there had been a request for a meeting to take place.

The Portfolio Holder said that he was aware of the request made and had asked for a date to be arranged. He confirmed that he was meeting with the Chair on Saturday to discuss the highway access and working towards a solution.

Councillor Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Tenant and Leaseholder Services:

Sheltered alarm system upgrade - The Housing Service has commenced a programme of installing new alarm systems within the sheltered accommodation owned by the Council. Many of the alarm systems are old, lack resilience and can be prone to failing.

The first scheme where this upgrade is taking place is Bede Court – an open day to demonstrate this system will be held in May. Local Councillors will be invited to attend this day.

STAR - Results from the 2015 Survey for Tenants and Residents (STAR) are due imminently and will enable the Housing Service to track trends in satisfaction with the service.

The results will be published within the Housing News and Views newsletter, reported to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee in the late spring/early summer.

Housing and Planning Bill - The Housing and Planning Bill if it remains in its current form will have implications for existing Dacorum Borough Council tenants.

This is likely to involve a review of our existing secure tenancy – details of the likely implications are being taken to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July.

Rent collection performance - 99.93% of the rent that is due has been collected by the Housing Income Service in 2015/16. This is a tremendous performance particularly considering the difficult financial climate and changes to the welfare benefit system.

This performance helps ensure the financial viability of the housing service and enable it to maintain services needed by some of the most vulnerable members of society.

Strategic Housing:

Strategic Housing for the past 12 months have been working closely with the National Practitioners Support Service (NPSS) and our partners, to improve access and customer satisfaction to our service. Additionally we have continued to develop and seek to improve our approach to providing advice, preventing and investigating homelessness as demand on the service continues to increase.

I am pleased to confirm that as a result of this hard work, it has today been confirmed that the team have **passed** our peer review assessment, with some really excellent results. The next stage is for the service to apply to achieve its first local challenge to achieve Bronze status. This is an excellent achievement by the team, with only 2 authorities in Hertfordshire having already passed the peer review assessment.

Key highlights from the assessment

- Positive focus on homelessness prevention, 60% of homelessness is prevented, compared to a national average of 53% and a regional average of 41%
- Strong focus to limit use of B&B
- Positive pathways initiative, which is unique to this authority and NPSS have requested to share as good practice with other LA's
- A significant improvement in our partnership approach and development of our Partnership Strategy
- Focussed approach to early intervention, tenancy sustainment and tenancy training
- Customer Service relationship and in particular Housing Options Advisor based in CSU
- Management demonstrate excellent staff development and assessment programme, a clear emphasis on supporting and developing staff as a service
- A clear corporate commitment with a committed lead member, with strong awareness of the service and key issues

The new **Council home programme** is continuing with Stationers Place (31 new homes) and Wood House (79 new homes) both securing full planning permission last month. OJEU process for the developer has begun with start on site for both of these schemes due this autumn.

Aspen Court, London Road is due to complete end of May and Queen Street, Tring is due to complete in August, with both progressing well.

Councillor Griffiths paid tribute to Dharini Chandarana who sadly passed away unexpectedly on 8th March. Dharini had worked in Supported Housing for many years

and was a committed and valued member of the team. She gave her condolences to her family and said she would be extremely missed.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe arrived at 8.04 pm.

Questions and answers

Councillor Ashbourn made reference to the sheltered alarm system upgrade and asked the Portfolio Holder if that had caused the increase in cost.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that a better service was now being offered to residents, whereby in the past there had been a queuing system. Now the new system will allow several people to call at the same time.

64. CABINET REFERRALS

The referrals from Cabinet on 22 March 2016 were submitted. It was moved by Councillor Williams, duly seconded and

Resolved

That the following be approved:

22 March 2016

7.1 CA/036/16 REVIEW OF ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The amendments to the Council's Sickness Absence Management Policy and Procedures as summarised in the Cabinet report and set out in full within Annex A of the report to Cabinet.

65. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

None.

66. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES REVIEW 2015/2016

Councillor Mahmood introduced the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review 2015/16 on behalf of the other Chair's.

Finance

He highlighted the importance of the Performance and Budget reports within this OSC Committee and said that these were core to the committee.

Health

He mentioned that there have been lots of health topics of variable interest with many projects in place such as Get, Set, Go Dacorum project which has helped people to get out and have a more active lifestyle.

SPAE

Councillor Mahmood highlighted that two thirds of the Committee only joined the Council for the first time at the beginning of the civic year, and said that the Chair was pleased with how they developed into their oversight/scrutiny role.

Housing

Councillor Mahmood highlighted the use of the action point list being used at the Finance and Resources OSC meeting and said that he would like to implement this at the future Housing OSC meeting as he found them to be very useful.

67. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

None.

68. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE DATES

The following changes to committee rooms and dates were agreed:

Development Control	28 April	will be held in the Bulbourne Room
Finance & Resources OSC	7 June	will be held in the Council Chamber
Housing & Community OSC	8 June	will be held in the Council Chamber
SPAE OSC	14 June	will be held in the Council Chamber
Development Control	16 June	will be held in the Bulbourne Room

Health in Dacorum Meeting moved from 22 June to 5 July 2016

Councillor S Adshead arrived at 8.18 pm.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm