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**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting – 23rd May 2013
Council Chamber Civic Centre**

MINUTES

Attendance

Phil Pennington	DEF Chairman
Gruff Edwards	DEF Vice Chair
Cllr Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council
Lizzy Staincliffe	Dacorum Borough Council
Jean Blackman	FOE
Paul Harris	Green Party
Steve Wilson	DEF/ Geography Consultant
Cllr William Wyatt-Lowe	DBC & HCC
Emma Norrington	Consultant
Gordon Godfrey	Northchurch Parish Council
Julie Laws	DBC Portfolio Holder, Environment and Sustainability
Alan Story	DBC Sustainable Transport Officer
George Holland	Safer Neighbourhood Police Inspector.

Apologies

Cllr Fiona Guest	Dacorum Borough Council
Roger Hands	DEF Water Group, Box Moor Trust
Adrienne Gear	Council for Voluntary Service
Bob Farrar	Water measurement, Bulbourne

The meeting started at 7.30pm

(1, 2 Apologies and Minutes of the last meeting)

3. Matters arising from Minutes

Emma Norrington reported that there had been a good response from the questionnaire concerning the Local Food Strategy

4. Election of Chair

Gruff Edwards had been nominated by Dennis Harvey. This was seconded by Steve Wilson, and there being no other nominations, Gruff was appointed as the new Chair. Gruff thanked the floor for their support, and thanked Phil for his term of office since 2006, which had been characterised by robust chairmanship, faithful attendance at relevant events, and generosity in hosting Steering Group meetings at the Boxmoor Trust Centre.

He said that he envisaged that DEF would carry on much as at present, at least initially. He saw its main value in promoting the environmental case in matters that affect Dacorum directly or indirectly. It would seek to become well-informed enough to influence officialdom, particularly via public consultations when they came along, and wider public opinion. To this end he would like to have people volunteer for various roles, including:

Press Officer (e.g. to submit announcements and reports of DEF meetings for the "Clubs and Community" section of the Gazette)

Youth /Schools outreach person.

Secretary/minute takers.

Grants/funding researcher, liaising with constitutional/legal/financial advisor(s). For this we would also need a Treasurer.

Ad-hoc champions on topical issues (e.g. we could have done with one for the Appspend Lane woodpile disaster)

DEF E-mail Inbox monitor/housekeeper

Facebook/Twitter blogger/activist. (This might attract younger members)

(If any recipient of these minutes feels that they have something to offer in these areas, please contact Gruff in the first instance at gruff.edwards@tiscali.co.uk)

5. Election of Vice Chair

Steve Wilson had been nominated by Emma Norrington. This was seconded by Garrick Stevens, and there being no other nominations, Steve was appointed as the new Vice Chair. (See also "Any Other Business", last paragraph, for Steve's view of the future of DEF)

6. Sustainable Transport: Presentation by Alan Story, Sustainable Transport Officer DBC

Alan has been appointed at DBC on a two year contract, funded by the Department of Transport via Herts. County Council. An initial focus is with Maylands Businesses and

the new bus route ML1/ML2 between Maylands and the Railway Station, which has a two year subsidy. Some funding has been directed towards Sustrans in order to run a TravelSmart project in Dacorum, which started in late April. (See the Travelsmart briefing note file reference at the end of the minutes.)

Alan drew attention to the "Maylands on the Move" website (<http://www.maylandsonthemove.co.uk/>). "Maylands on the Move" is aimed at businesses in Maylands Business Park and their employees, and is seeking to promote more efficient and sustainable ways of travelling to and from the business park. The site includes all relevant bus service timetables, including the new (since February) ML1/ML2 (both are between Hemel Railway Station and Maylands, but ML2 includes an additional stop at Adeyfield). Employers are encouraged to participate as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility.

The project envisages many initiatives to address the problems of traffic congestion, including Integrated Ticketing, Car Sharing, Cycle route improvement (Nickey Line and Maylands to Town Centre), "Walk to Work" week, Section 106 agreements (i.e. money for environmental improvements as a condition for planning approval) under the Maylands Design Strategy from developers, and EV Charge Points for electric vehicles.

Statistics from trends already occurring were encouraging. For instance there were 5% fewer single-occupancy car visits to Maylands in 2012 than in the previous year.

Q. (William Wyatt-Lowe) Was the figure of 18,000 households on one page of the display credible?

A. As far as could be verified, yes. It was a figure for Hemel Hempstead, not Dacorum. (Alan has subsequently clarified that the TravelSmart service will be offered to a total of 18,000 households in Hemel Hempstead, which is the 18,000 that he quoted. The target area will comprise the wards of Adeyfield East, Adeyfield West, Apsley & Corner Hall, Bennetts End, Boxmoor, Chaulden & Warners End, Gadebridge, Grovehill, Hemel Hempstead Town, Highfield, Leverstock Green, Nash Mills and Woodhall Farm.)

Q. (Steve Wilson) Had there been a survey to show how many Maylands workers used Hemel Hempstead Railway Station?

A. Yes. From a sample of 200 Maylands workers, 4% used ML1

Q. What is the fare, and could it be reduced?

A. Currently for example £1.80 single, weekly return £12.50. Free for 'bus pass holders. There were offers and reductions on fares for workers in firms involved in the Maylands travel scheme.

Q. (Garrick Stevens) Has a Zip Car or similar scheme been considered for pool cars?

A. It is envisaged within the travel plan. However, there is little housing at present within Maylands, which works against the viability of such a scheme, since pool cars would be little used outside working hours.

(Further questioning had to be curtailed, but Alan kindly gave his Email address alan.story@dacorum.gov.uk for anyone interested in continuing the discussion of this topic with him.)

7. Pavement Parking Policy - Police Response by Inspector George Holland, Safer Neighbourhood Inspector. (See Item 5 of last meeting's minutes.)

(As introduction, Gruff Edwards reminded members that the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence had said that people should shun their cars if a trip could be done in 15 or 20 minutes on foot or bike, and had called on councils to do more to make walking and cycling an easier option in local communities. He said that addressing pavement obstruction by parking was one obvious way of making walking easier, but that despite this there was no official police policy on the matter in Hertfordshire. The request, approved at the January DEF meeting and made shortly afterwards, by DEF to the Herts. Police Commissioner that there should be a such policy has still not been answered.)

Inspector Holland acknowledged that pavement obstruction by parking was a bad thing, and that he wished he had a magic wand to stop it occurring. However, it was a universal problem, exacerbated by households owning increasing numbers of cars, and commuters. Taking action against pavement parking in one road would merely shift the problem elsewhere. Forcing cars to park on the roadway in many cases causes a traffic obstruction. In any case the police did not have enough resources to deal with the problem. In respect of one example of a large red van apparently permanently parked so as to completely block the pavement in Upper Sales, off Northridge Way, that had first been reported by Gruff Edwards to police in December 2012 and that was still in the same spot on the day of the meeting, he would contact the local Police Community Support Officer to see what could be done.

Q. (Gruff Edwards) The argument appeared to be that obstructing traffic was more important than obstructing pedestrians, though in his experience, when he had been successful in getting some police action in one particular road, cars started to park allowing both pedestrians and traffic to pass. Vehicle owners and their employers should be responsible for considering where a vehicle is going to be parked responsibly when planning its purchase, but they will always go for the cheaper or free option if allowed to. In one case a large Baldwin's crane was parked for years during non-working hours next to the health centre near Stoneycroft and presumably used for journey to work by its driver who lived nearby. Surely in line with NICE's statement (see above) pedestrians should be given as much consideration as motorists. Pavement parking in London was a statutory offence, so why could it not be one elsewhere?

A. London traffic conditions are very different from Dacorum. They also have a cycle hire scheme.

Observation (William Wyatt-Lowe)

There has been a marked increase in pavement parking at Station Road, Boxmoor. A "hands-off" approach by the authorities encourages pavement abuse. Local opinion is in favour of penalising pavement obstructers.

Q (Paul Harris) Is not part of the answer to encourage rented garages to be used as such, instead of for storage etc?

A. The garages are often too small.

8. Reports on workshops on local allocation sites at Marchmont Farm and West Hemel Hempstead, May 14th/15th

Paul Harris said that he had attended both workshops. Within the context that both sites are set to lose their Green Belt status, the plans overall seemed reasonable. They included provision on both sites for cycleways and for houses arranged around greens to give a sense of local ownership. Changing the percentage of affordable housing on both sites from 40% as earlier proposed to 35% was however regrettable. At Marchmont Farm (300 dwellings) there would be an extension to Margaret Lloyd Park. At West Hemel Hempstead (900 dwellings) provision was being made for a primary school, an extension of Shrubhill Common, a GP surgery and a shop area. Also there would be playing fields and parklands, and 'bus services would be rerouted through the new housing development. There would be three points of access, The Avenue (existing Fields End Estate), Long Chaulden (near the existing Adventure Playground) and more controversially at Lindlings or Chaulden Lane. The site would benefit from new hedgerow and tree planting and from additional 'bus services. Paul's group recommended solar heating and power for the new housing. There is to be a further workshop in July.

Phil Pennington had also attended, and reported that those attending were split into around twelve groups of six in order to agree their respective "wish lists" which would be collated and presented to the development consortium.

Garrick Stevens asked whether District Heating, possibly arising from local waste processing, had been suggested at either workshop. Apparently it had not.

Steve Wilson asked whether water (supply, conservation, run-off etc.) considerations had been discussed. Those present who had attended could not recall that it had, but Phil Pennington said that Roger Hands of the Water Group had attended.

9. Any Other Business

Steve Wilson said that the Friends of Gadebridge Park had had a vital role in facilitating co-operation between the Environment Agency and DBC so that floodwater accumulated earlier in the year was cleared in three days. The banks of the Gade had been strengthened, and a management plan involving the Clean, Safe and Green team was now in place. The next meeting of the Friends would be on June 5th.

Jean Blackman asked whether the course of the Gade was going to be altered on the Morrisons site in the Civic Zone redevelopment.

Steve Wilson and William Wyatt-Lowe said 'yes', but concerns by the Environment Agency meant that the original plans for altering the course and the channel would need to be altered. (For the EA's letter detailing these concerns, see the file reference at the end of the minutes.)

Regarding threats to birds of prey (see January minutes, Item 7 - what DEF should be doing) Steve Wilson said that the RSPB in response to the question had stated that they had no great concern over birds of prey in Hertfordshire, but that they were concerned generally over the current Government policy of relaxing planning controls because it could lead to more infilling and paving over of urban habitats such as gardens.

Julie Laws pointed out that the current DEF Terms of Reference needed updating as it contained outdated references to other bodies such as Dacorum Partnership, but that

DBC still wished to work in partnership with the Forum. Gruff Edwards thanked her for this, and said that the need to update the Terms of Reference had been identified by the Steering Group, and that a draft would be sent to her for comment.

Phil Pennington said that he had been 'phoned by an Andy Haslam to see whether anyone in the Forum was interested in attending a conference on railway-improvement to be held in London on June 25th. See <http://www.publicserviceevents.co.uk/254/railway-improvement> for further details if you would like to attend.

Phil went on to announce that Lizzy Staincliffe, DBC Environmental Sustainability Officer, who had been the Forum's main link with DBC since 2007, was going to leave Dacorum for her native Wiltshire on June 20th. He thanked Lizzy for the many ways in which she had helped the Forum and for continuing to attend evening meetings even when a change in her job description last year meant that she could no longer support it as part of her work. A small presentation was made, funded by members of the Steering Group. Lizzy thanked those responsible, said that she had enjoyed working with the Forum, and wished it well for the future.

Steve Wilson, newly elected Vice-Chair, said that it was vital that DEF attracted more members from varied backgrounds and with knowledge of various topics so that it could process and disseminate informed and balanced views, and so become more influential and well-regarded, in particular by councillors. He himself was a professional geographer, and there was a large overlap between that discipline and the range of topics that the Forum deals with.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

The next two meetings of the Dacorum Environmental Forum are booked for 22/08/13 and 21/11/13 in the Bulbourne Room. Dates for subsequent meetings are not yet fixed, and within the next year will require new venues, since DBC will be moving to smaller premises (which currently house the Gazette offices) in the first stage of the Civic Zone redevelopment project.

Note: The Agendas and Minutes from the Dacorum Environment Forum meetings, together with any available supporting documents, can be found at <http://www.dacenvforum.org.uk/minutes.php>

Links to files related to the following files, and to files related to previous minutes, can be found on the front page of the DEF Website:

20130523TravelSmart in Hemel Hempstead - briefing note for project partners Dec 12.pdf
20130523EA Concerns re West Herts College site Hemel Hempstead.pdf