

## MINUTES

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

JUNE 18 2014

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Adeleke	Mahmood
Bassadone	Marshall
Adshead	McLean
Clark	R Sutton
Flint	
Conway	
Killen	
N Hollinghurst	

**Co-opted Members:**

Mavis Cook

**Also Attended:**

N Harden (Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services)

M Griffiths (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe

**Officers:**

Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director (Housing & Landlord)
James Deane	Assistant Director (Finance & Resources)
Chris Troy	Group Manager (Regulatory Services)
Julie Still	Group Manager (Resident Services)
Claire Lynch	Community Partnerships Team Leader
Clare Thorley	Member Support Officer

The meeting began at 7:30 pm

**OS/134/13 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2014 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Following the last Housing & Community OSC meeting the Chairman explained that C Lynch had circulated additional details in regards to the possibility of Dacorum Borough Council volunteers receiving qualifications for their participation in the volunteer scheme. The Chairman explained that providing Community Volunteer Qualifications (CVQ) for ten volunteers was an intensive process and the total cost would be approximately £5393. The Chairman said that the suggestion had been made to review this issue after the volunteer policy had been running for one year to see if it would be appropriate to introduce the opportunity for qualifications then.

C Lynch explained that the biggest cost incurred would be that of staff resources as existing Dacorum Borough Council staff would have to oversee and implement the relevant training

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for the qualifications. C Lynch said that other local authorities Dacorum Borough Council had consulted with when considering this issue typically had a designated Volunteer Co-ordinator and Dacorum Borough Council did not, which meant that the work load of performing this type of role would be challenging for existing officers and therefore contributed to the overall cost of implementing the CVQ scheme.

Councillor Mclean asked if, during consultation with other local authorities, issues of volunteer attrition were discussed and was it possible that if a volunteer dropped out of the qualification programme would they have to pay the authority for the remaining cost of the qualification. C Lynch said that this issue was not discussed but it could be considered if the qualification scheme was implemented.

The Chairman asked if Members would be happy to recommend to the Portfolio Holder that there should be a year's pilot of the policy before considering introducing qualifications, Councillor McLean said that he would like to see accreditation introduced as soon as possible but that ideally he wanted some sort of backstop to ensure that there was not a high number of volunteers dropping out which would incur a large cost to the Council but, after discussion, the majority of Committee members said they would prefer to wait a year.

#### **OS/135/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were given for Councillor Hearn and Councillor Clark substituted.

#### **OS/136 /13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **OS/137/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

#### **OS/138/13 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL IN**

None.

#### **OS/139/13 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2013/2014**

J Deane introduced the report and explained that it covered the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme for Housing & Community.

J Deane said that in relation to the income figures for Housing the figure was only a few thousand out and this was a very good result and it was unlikely that this could be further improved upon. J Deane said that in regards to the capital programme the YTD spend was close to the revised budget but that more thought needed to be given to initial budget planning to ensure the figures are more accurate and so did not need revision.

Councillor Bassadone asked what the Keepmoat contract was which was referenced in the report. E Brooks explained that this was previously the Apollo contract which concerned the planned maintenance works and the name change had occurred due to a company merger.

At 7.35pm Councillor Wyatt-Lowe entered the meeting.

Councillor Flint asked to what the slippage figures referred. J Deane said that a lot of the slippage was a result of initial inaccurate forecasting and that some slippage had been taken out following the implementation of the revised budget. J Deane explained that the issues

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with the original budget concerned delivery on projects and inaccurate estimations of when project costs were likely to be incurred. J Deane said that it was important that these issues were addressed especially as the Council was approaching the time when they were looking to borrow.

At 7.36pm Councillor Griffiths entered the meeting.

J Deane said to counteract these issues budgets would be checked against key procurement milestones to ensure more accurate budget forecasting.

At 7.38pm M Cook entered the meeting.

Councillor Adeleke asked if provisions were being made to prevent another overspend in relation to the repairs and maintenance costs associated with adverse weather conditions in winter. J Deane said that this point had been raised in the Finance & Resources OSC meeting and provisions would be made.

Councillor Adeleke also asked when works would be complete on the Old Town Hall and why had works not been completed in line with the improvement works that were carried out on the Old Town High Street. J Still said that there had been issues with getting permission for some of the necessary works at the Old Town Hall as it was a heritage site and so permissions had to be granted by Central Government which had held up the process. Councillor Adeleke then asked if this meant the project was likely to go over budget. J Still said that she thought it may do but that she was not able to say by how much at this point but that there would be a full report on this issue coming to the Housing & Community OSC soon.

Councillor Mahmood asked what the process around scrutinising slippage was. J Deane said that there was a monthly meeting with the relevant budget holders and then following that a report was submitted to CMT and areas of slippage flagged. J Deane did highlight that the processes in place were working as slippage was decreasing.

Outcome:

The committee noted the provisional outturn report.

Actions:

None

## **OS/140/13 Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT – RESIDENT SERVICES**

J Still introduced the report and said that she had nothing to add except that she wanted to draw attention to the amber indicator on the quarterly performance Corvu output in relation to CYP01a and CYP01b and explained that the reason for the downward trend with these two indicators was related to the adverse weather conditions.

Councillor Killen asked what the introduction of the Crime, Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014 would mean for Dacorum Borough Council. J Still outlined some of the changes associated with the new legislation and offered to provide more detail in a future report to the Housing & Community OSC. J Still highlighted that Anti-Social Behaviour Orders would be replaced with 'injunction' type measures with the age range extended down to age 10.

J Still said that these measures would have both negative and positive elements to them in order to provide more supportive and constructive methods for dealing with individuals

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engaging in anti-social behaviour. Councillor Killen asked if there would be any costs incurred by Dacorum Borough Council following the changes in legislation. J Still said that there should not be but that this would be looked at when deciding who was responsible for delivering some of the injunctions and this would be discussed with Dacorum Borough Council's strategic partners.

The Committee said they would welcome such a report detailing the changes in the new legislation.

Councillor Bassadone asked if it was possible for members to go up to the new CCTV control room. J Still said that this was a possibility and despite some initial teething problems the control room had been a great success.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that he hoped with the introduction of new legislation concerning anti-social behaviour, Dacorum Borough Council would be looking at ways to improve their response to anti-social behaviour, especially at the weekends.

Councillor Adeleke asked if the priorities set for 2014-2015 were realistic and would there be any financial implications. J Still said that the priorities were attainable and that programs within the Borough involving young people were proving to be very successful and young people were contributing and leading their own agenda for work within the area. J Still said that a Citizens Academy was being piloted in Dacorum and the young people were working alongside the Police and Crime Commissioner to facilitate this.

Councillor Adshead mentioned that he and Councillor Mckay had visited the new CCTV control room. Councillor Adshead also asked if the target attendance figures for the Old Town Hall was a little low. J Still said that the figure was based on national average attendance rates for theatres. Councillor Adshead asked if it would be possible for the members to receive the attendance figures for some more local examples in order to make a more relevant comparison.

Councillor McLean asked if it was possible to get a map of where there were CCTV cameras within the borough and if there were any black spots in the villages. J Still said that there is a map and that in order for cameras to be installed in areas the local community had to be in agreement about their implementation which may account for the black spots in villages. J Still did say that following the implementation of the software installed at the new control centre it was now much cheaper to install and link up to cameras in the borough.

The Chairman said that she was aware the Old Town Hall offered screenings of high quality Oscar-nominated films and that one film she went to had very few people attend. The Chairman questioned how the Old Town Hall could afford to screen such films given the low turnout she had witnessed. J Still said that she did have attendance figures that indicated that many of the films had been a great success and that this would hopefully balance out the instances when film attendance was not as high. J Still also added that the films shown at the Old Town Hall were out on general release and DVD, and so did not cost a huge amount to screen. J Still said that an update report regarding the Old Town Hall with more accurate figures in it would be submitted to the Housing & Community OSC soon.

#### Outcome:

The committee noted the report.

#### Actions:

- J Still to provide comparable theatre attendance figures for the Old Town Hall.
- J Still to provide details of CCTV camera locations within the borough.

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- J Still to provide a report on the changes arising from the Crime, Policing & Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014

#### **OS/141/13 Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT – HOUSING LANDLORD**

E Brooks introduced the report and in addition commented that the Quarter 4 Performance reports submitted at the Overview and Scrutiny Committees did not always provide Members with an in-depth and up to date insight into the work the Housing team was carrying out. E Brooks pointed out that the Housing department had eleven teams whose work was not always given exposure to the Housing & Community OSC. E Brooks used the rent collection team as an example and said that this team had recently had a huge amount of success and the rent they had collected had reduced arrears and contributed to creating a more financially robust business plan which in turn benefitted the New Build projects and Capital programme.

E Brooks also said that there had also been some restructuring within Housing and that, although some staff were initially resistant to this change, very positive work was now being carried out. In addition relationships were being built up with Osborne, the total asset management contractors; in order to successfully integrate some of their officers into the Housing team, and Osborne were contributing their own ideas to the challenges around some of the issues faced by Housing.

Councillor Mahmood asked what the key challenges were around empty homes and why were the Council looking at joint viewings for prospective tenants in relation to empty homes. E Brooks explained that joint viewings may be a suitable option for general stock and that currently the viewing process involved writing to applicants to find a suitable time for them to come and view properties which was proving to be a time consuming process. E Brooks said that there needed to be a balance struck between providing high levels of customer service and flexibility and also providing a prompt and effective viewing process. E Brooks added that delays in viewing and sign-up meant that the days a property stood empty soon added up.

Councillor Bassadone asked if joint viewings may not be fair on prospective tenants as it may lead to their hopes being built up and then dashed if they were not to get the house in question. E Brooks said that he appreciated this may be an issue but that he thought it was worth piloting joint viewings as currently it was hard to hit the targets associated with empty homes with the current viewing process.

Councillor N Hollinghurst suggested that perhaps different teams from within Housing could provide updates to members in meetings of a similar format to the member development sessions which were conducted in a less formal setting and often were very informative and led to more interaction between members and officers. E Brooks said that this was something the teams could look into.

Councillor Killen asked how the Local Lettings Agency was progressing. E Brooks said that it was a slow burner and that currently there was about 50/60 landlords on the books which equated to about 100 properties. E Brooks explained that the Local Lettings Agency was just one of several methods for tackling the housing requirement and that the agency would grow and the team was looking to facilitate this by running events such as the Landlords forum.

The Chairman asked if the complaints received by the Housing department were often upheld. E Brooks explained that stage 1 complaints were dealt with by General Managers, if the complaint then reached stage 2 he would deal with it and a stage 3 complaint would be dealt with M Gaynor. E Brooks said that he typically saw 40/50 stage 2 complaints a year and that typically stage 2 complaints were not upheld. The Chairman acknowledged this but asked if there was a process by which multiple complaints of a similar nature, even if not

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upheld, were flagged to management. E Brooks said that complaints were scrutinised but that there was variance in terms of which departments received the most complaints as the complaints were often all of a differing nature and that some areas were prone to receiving more complaints due to the nature of work they did. At the Chairman's request, E Brooks said a report or information will be provided to the Committee at a future meeting on the nature of the complaints received by the Housing Department.

#### **OS/142/13 Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT – REGULATORY SERVICES**

C Troy introduced the report and said that the slippage regarding abandoned vehicles equated to about three to four abandoned cars a month and that the slippage was related to an issue that Dacorum Borough Council had with the recovery service, Redcorn Ltd that had now been rectified.

C Troy said that there had been a noticeable increase in the amount of enforcement action taken by regulatory services covering noise nuisance, food safety, Health & Safety, flytipping and Housing. Noise abatement notices and Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices have been served in recent months and a number of potential prosecutions are currently with legal.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that he had noticed a large number of cockroach traps around some properties in Dacorum and wanted to know if C Troy felt that cockroach infestations were an issue in Dacorum. C Troy said that currently the Council did not deal with cockroach infestations in residential properties but that this would be something that could be offered with the introduction of the Council's new pest control services.

Councillor Adeleke said that he felt there was a lot of enforcement action taken by Dacorum Borough Council that the general public were not aware of and he asked what was being done to publicise this work. C Troy said that frequent press releases were released to update the general public about the work of regulatory services. The recent novel foods case in particular has generated a lot of positive publicity for the council as it was a landmark case in regards to the production of novel food items. Cllr Harden reiterated that all members are circulated on any press releases and sited that this had been the case for recent statements for Regulatory services.

Councillor Adshead asked how many people were being prosecuted for fly tipping. C Troy said there were currently six cases Dacorum Borough Council were dealing with.

The Chairman asked if Dacorum Borough Council were obliged to carry out health and safety risk assessments in car fitting/tyre exhaust centres. C Troy said that as part of government policy the Council was obliged to check high risk areas and that car fitting and tyre exhaust centres were deemed high risk. Councillor Killen asked if the Council were under the same obligation to check mobile operators in this space. C Troy said that responsibility for monitoring mobile operators fell under the remit of the Health and Safety Executive.

#### Outcome:

The report was noted.

#### Actions:

None.

#### **OS/143/13 GET SET GO DACORUM**

Chairman:

The Chairman invited Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe to join the meeting in her role as a County Councillor on Hertfordshire County Council's Adult Care & Health Committee.

C Lynch introduced the report and said that it provided an overview of Dacorum Borough Council's recent application to the Community Sport Application Fund (CSAF) in relation to the Get Set Go Dacorum project. C Lynch said that Dacorum Borough Council had been successful in their application which had resulted in £250,000 of funding from CSAF. Dacorum Borough Council had also released £45,000 following the successful bid in addition to £17,500 from Sportspace and over £77,250 in-kind support from various community and voluntary sector groups.

C Lynch said that there were clear health inequalities in the more impoverished wards within Dacorum and the project had been devised to tackle these and other social issues. C Lynch said that the idea behind Get Set Go Dacorum would be to engage with the community initially through sport but to eventually tackle other social issues once engagement had been successful.

C Lynch said that the project would launch on 22 September 2014 just a few weeks after the Tour of Britain cycling event which is due to go through Dacorum on 12 September. C Lynch said that, in addition, a member of staff seconded from Sportspace would be working at Dacorum Borough Council to help launch and run the project.

The Chairman said that there was a lot of reference to sport within the report and wanted to know if Get Set Go Dacorum would involve other physical activities not classified as a sport such as dance exercise lessons. The Chairman said that she was concerned that by focusing on sport and ignoring other activities perhaps the project may be excluding people who would potentially be interested. C Lynch said that for the purposes of the CSAF application only sporting activities recognised by Sport England could be included – walking is not recognised and so could not be included. C Lynch did say that Get Set Go Dacorum would be looking at non-sporting activities already run by existing groups such as walking and help publicise these alongside the sports offered in Get, Set, Go Dacorum.

Councillor Harden said that he acknowledged the Chairman's concerns but pointed out that Dacorum was not the usual suspect for receiving grants of this nature as typically the money would have gone to more deprived areas. Councillor Harden said this was credit to those who had developed the Get Set Go Dacorum application

Councillor Adshead offered his congratulations on the successful CSAF bid and said that he acknowledged that the project had taken into account the upcoming Tour of Britain but that he wanted to know if officers had looked to gain some publicity for the project off the back of the World Cup. C Lynch said that she had overlooked the benefit of building on the World Cup due to the timings but did say that football was featured within the project following on from the success the Council had with the Kick Racism out of Football project it had run previously. C Lynch will take this suggestion on board and include within the project.

C Lynch said that as well as encouraging the community to become involved in physical activities the Council was looking to provide coaching qualifications for those within the community who took on coaching roles for local sports teams.

Councillor Mahmood asked about the costs associated with the project. C Lynch explained that appendix 3 outlined the costs of the project and explained that costs would reduce over the 3 years of the project because ideally the projects that were part of the Get Set Go Dacorum initiative would be self-sustainable and eventually taken over and run by members of the community and not Dacorum Borough Council.

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Councillor Conway asked what provisions had been made to include children under the age of 14 within the Get Set Go Dacorum project. C Lynch said that the Sport England application only covered ages 14+ but that provisions would be made to incorporate younger people into some of the projects within the Get Set Go Dacorum project. The funding allocations had been broken down within the application to ensure that Sport England money is used for 14+ but the £45,000 from DBC and £17,5000 from Sportspace could be used for under 14 activities.

Councillor Killen said that she was pleased to see that Flamstead was included within the project but asked how the geographical locations in the rural areas were chosen. C Lynch said that there was not enough funding to include all the rural locations within Dacorum and that wards were selected for inclusion in the project via other indicators such as obesity problems. C Lynch did acknowledge that more consultation needed to be done in the rural areas to more accurately assess need. Councillor Killen said that perhaps this could be looked at as part of an update report after the launch of the project.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe said that she wanted to offer her congratulations to Dacorum Borough Council for their successful bid and on producing a project which covered a wide range of health and social issues. Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe said that she felt it was one of the best sporting initiatives seen in Hertfordshire and that Dacorum was a role model for other boroughs within the county in this area.

Councillor Adeleke offered his congratulations to C Lynch and her team for the project and successful bid.

Councillor Adshead then asked if Sportspace would be the main delivery partner or Dacorum Borough Council. C Lynch said that Dacorum Borough Council would be accountable for the funding but that Sportspace would be leading on some of the delivery and that would be managed by service level agreements. DBC will also have line-mangement responsibilities for the Get, Set, Go Dacorum co-ordinator.

Councillor Adshead left the meeting at 9.30pm.

Councillor Harden said that he would be chairing the Get Set Go Dacorum project steering group, the primary aim of which would be to oversee the project and to co-ordinate the partnership groups associated with the project. The Chairman suggested it would be appropriate for an additional Council member to be on this board. Councillor Harden said he would consider into it.

Councillor McLean left the meeting at 9.45 p.m.

The Committee asked for an update report be provided in the autumn.

#### Outcome

The Committee noted the report and asked for an update report be provided in the autumn.

### **OS/144/13 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy and the Housing Revenue Account business items were deferred until September.

Items to be added to the scheduled list are: Housing Appeals update report, report on the implications of the Crime, Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour Act, information on complaints received by Housing, the Old Town Hall and update on Get Set Go Dacorum.

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The meeting closed at 9.55 p.m.

Chairman: