

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MARCH 19 2014

Present:

Councillors:

Adeleke	Mahmood
Adshead	Marshall
G Chapman	McLean
Clark	Organ
Flint	R Sutton
Killen	

Co-opted Members:

J Howard	Tenants & Leaseholders Committee
A Horn	Tenants & Leaseholders Committee

Also Attended:

Councillor Griffiths	Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Harden	Portfolio Holder for Residents & Regulatory Services
Mohamed Fawzi	Youth Connexions
Lynne Redpath	Youth Connexions

Officers:

Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director (Housing & Landlord)
Fiona Williamson	Group Manager (Property & Place)
Chris Troy	Group Manager (Regulatory Services)
Dawn Rhoden	Operations Team Leader (Regulatory Services)
Neil Brown	Programme & Procurement Team Leader
Joe Guiton	Team Leader (Neighbourhood Action)
Gill Barber	Verge Hardening Project Officer
Clare Thorley	Member Support Officer

The meeting began at 7:30 pm

OS/089/13 MINUTES

There was an amendment to the minutes of the 29 January 2014 regarding Councillor N Hollinghurst's reference to the Youth Club held on Fridays. The club is run by the Tring Youth Project and not DBC.

With that amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January were agreed as were the minutes of the meeting of the 5 February 2014 and signed by the Chairman.

Chairman:

OS/090/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bassadone, Councillor Conway and Councillor N Hollinghurst and co-opted member; M Cook. Councillor G Chapman substituted for Councillor Bassadone and Councillor Clark substituted for Councillor Conway.

OS/091/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

OS/092/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

OS/093/13 TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS COMMITTEE

The Chairman explained that, following the resignation of Stuart Parker from the Tenants & Leaseholders Committee (TLC), the TLC wished to replace him with M Cook, as their co-opted, non-voting member on this Committee for housing matters only, and A Horn and J Howard be the co-opted substitute members. As permitted by full Council on the 28 September 2011, the Chairman asked for the Committee's agreement to this change. The Committee agreed and A Horn and J Howard were introduced to the Committee.

OS/094/13 YOUTH CONNEXIONS PRESENTATION

M Fawzi and L Redpath gave a presentation on the work of Youth Connexions within Dacorum borough.

Councillor Adshead asked a question regarding the home visits Youth Connexions made to NEETs within the borough. Councillor Adshead asked what triggered a home visit. L Redpath said it varied on a case by case basis and that Youth Connexions ensured that they carried on making contact attempts until contact with the young person was eventually established. L Redpath did acknowledge that sometimes it was impossible to establish contact as on occasions the young people had moved away or had been given custodial sentences.

Councillor Adshead asked whether Youth Connexions worked on interview skills and CV writing tips. L Redpath said that there was a team at the XC who did this and the caseworkers involved carried out intensive work on employability with the young people. Councillor Adshead then asked how Youth Connexions engaged with those who had little interest in working on employment skills. L Redpath said that often Youth Connexions sought to engage with these individuals through different activities and that efforts were made to identify each individual's interests and engage with young people initially on that basis and then introduce work on employability later on down the line. L Redpath spoke of the workshops carried out at schools to prevent young people becoming NEETS and added that Longdean School buy a lot of their services. She also spoke of the employment fairs they have held, which have been praised by employers, schools and parents as well as students.

Councillor Flint thanked Youth Connexions for their presentation and said that the figures were much clearer than the ones previously presented to the Housing & Community OSC. M Fawzi acknowledged this and explained that there were often issues with providing figures regarding the NEET's in the borough as this was a figure that was constantly changing.

Councillor Flint also queried how Youth Connexions tackled certain issues preventing employment/further study that may not be immediately evident when Youth Connexions first

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engaged with some young people. Councillor Flint gave mental health issues as an example. L Redpath and M Fawzi acknowledged that this was a difficult issue to deal with but that when necessary, Youth Connexions had specialised therapists to whom they could refer young people in order to better support them.

Councillor Flint then asked about the detached, area-specific work Youth Connexions carried out. M Fawzi explained that if there were particular issues with young people in a certain location then Youth Connexions would carry out targeted, 'detached', work in that area.

M Fawzi added that Youth Connexions work at the XC but also extend their work in various different 'trouble-spot' areas and also work within schools and in partnerships with other organisations such as the Dacorum Sports Trust and the Dacorum Education Support Centre . M Fawzi added that Youth Connexions was not run for profit and, given all the different formats of work they carried out, it was hard to provide specific budgetary figures.

Councillor Adeleke said that it was clear from the presentation that Youth Connexion's work covered a wide range of topics, some of which concerned personal and emotional issues and he wanted to know how Youth Connexions engaged with the parents of the young people on these issues. L Redpath said that parents were often included in the employability work that was carried out in schools but that some things were not disclosed to parents due to issues of confidentiality. L Redpath added that confidentiality was breached in situations deemed necessary for safeguarding reasons.

Councillor Mahmood said that following the presentation he now had a better idea of the work carried out by Youth Connexions within the borough. Councillor Mahmood asked how the Youth Connexions team was structured. L Redpath said that there were two employment/training advisors and 13 personal advisors some of whom were part-time. M Fawzi said in addition to the school based work there was also the one-stop shop at the XC that provided both drop-in sessions and appointments. L Redpath said that the XC was open from 10am to 10pm, with Youth Connexions staff present until 6 p.m. and then Youth Workers between 6 and 10 p.m.

The Chairman asked about the Outreach work carried out by Youth Connexions at Boxmoor Cricket Club. M Fawzi said that a problem with young people loitering and being disruptive around the Cricket Club had been noticed and the Cricket Club and the Community Safety Partnership had asked Youth Connexions to come down and engage with the young people concerned. Through conversations Youth Connexions worked hard to further engage the young people and encouraged them to partake in the Youth Connexions managed activities. In addition issues with underage drinking was identified by Youth Connexions staff at this site and so work was done to tackle this also.

Councillor Mahmood asked which ward had the highest number of NEET's and how many Bennett's End had. L Redpath said that the NEET figures constantly changed and the figures provided in the presentation were the most recent ones. L Redpath added that the NEET figure for Bennetts End was not particularly high and this was due to the intensive work Youth Connexions did with Longdean School in Bennett's End and also that the XC centre was easily accessible to young people in this area.

Councillor G Chapman then asked about the work Youth Connexions did in the villages of Dacorum as she was aware of employment issues in the villages for young people. L Redpath said that work was carried out in every area of Dacorum and Youth Connexions worked closely with Tring School and so managed to engage with young people from Tring's neighbouring villages this way. L Redpath explained that Youth Connexions was able to meet young people who were unable to get to the XC at Community Centres also. M Fawzi said that Youth Connexions also had a bus that brought young people to and from the XC.

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Councillor Adshead asked how the figures for the number of NEETs compared nationally, M Fawzi said that the NEET levels in Dacorum compared favourably.

Councillor Harden asked for clarification around Youth Connexions budget and also asked about the figure of 10,000 for attendance at Youth Connexions. Councillor Harden wanted to know if the 10,000 was individuals who visited or whether it was the number of total visits, including those who had visited more than once. M Fawzi said that the attendance figure was for the total number of attendances across all the various youth work initiatives Youth Connexions carried out. Most people attend 2 or 3 times, though there are obviously some who only attend once. M Fawzi said that his budget was approximately half a million pounds. Councillor Harden then asked how the figure for attendance at the XC compared to the projected figures of attendance outlined in the original business plan. M Fawzi said he was not sure of the exact figures in the original business plan but that he would get that information to Councillor Harden.

Councillor Killen then asked if the slide referring to Dacorum Borough Council's work alongside Youth Connexions was work that was currently occurring or work that Youth Connexions would like to see Dacorum Borough Council helping with. M Fawzi said it was the latter and that these were areas of need and ideally where Dacorum Borough Council could help.

Councillor Flint also asked for an up-to-date breakdown of NEET figures in all of the wards in Dacorum.

The Chairman and the Councillors thanked M Fawzi and L Redpath for their presentation.

Outcome:

The report was noted

Actions:

- M Fawzi to provide the Committee with the original projected figure for attendance at the XC in the original business plan and whether they have been achieved.
- M Fawzi to provide the Committee with up to date NEET figures for all wards within Dacorum.

OS/095/13 VERGE HARDENING PROJECT

J Guiton gave a presentation on the recent works carried out as part of the Verge Hardening Project within Dacorum.

Councillor G Chapman said that adequate provision of parking spaces should be discussed during the planning stages of new build programmes and asked if it was possible to ask for Section 106 funding for parking spaces or for verge hardening. J Guiton said that this was a planning policy issue and it had been raised with the planning department and that Section 106 funds were not usually used for this purpose.

The Chairman said that this was a good point and the Committee agreed that the Chairman should raise the issue with the Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership, Planning & Regeneration in order to pre-empt complaints and keep down the cost of verge hardening in the future.

Councillor Adeleke asked who would be responsible for the future maintenance of each space. J Guiton said that during the project the Council had tried to lay high performing surfaces and that potential future maintenance costs would probably be picked up by the landowner which would be Dacorum Borough Council in this case. E Brooks added that any

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maintenance costs incurred were likely to be less than the cost of the parking damage that could potentially be done to the grass verges.

Councillor Adshead asked about areas which had previously refused the offer of verge hardening. Councillor Adshead wanted to know if these areas, if they were to reapply, would be put at the bottom of the waiting list. J Guiton said no that just because an area had previously refused verge hardening it did not mean the area would automatically go to the bottom of the list if they reapplied, J Guiton said that each area's need would be assessed individually and this would determine whereabouts on the list it would go.

Councillor Adshead then asked if there were preventative measures that could be taken instead of verge hardening such as double yellow lines. J Guiton said that prevention methods like this would have to go through planning.

Councillor Mahmood said that it appeared that the management of parking and green spaces within the borough was handled by several different departments within the Council; the Neighbourhood Action team, Planning and Clean, Safe and Green and perhaps it would be worth all these teams communicating to ensure that the approach to parking/verge hardening and the protection of green spaces was as cohesive as possible.

Councillor Harden asked for ideas for a name change as the project was not simply hardening of verges but working to increase the amount of parking available.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Actions:

Chairman to raise with the Portfolio Holder the possibility of seeking at the planning permission stage, the provision of further parking for common use, for example by way of hardened verges.

OS/096/13 PEST CONTROL SERVICE: PROPOSED CHANGES

C Troy introduced the report and explained that the report outlined three key proposals; the introduction of a charge for disposing of rats in domestic premises, providing a chargeable service for other pests and further plans to develop services in the commercial sector. C Troy explained that the Operations section within Regulatory Services had been reorganised to ensure its functions were more readily aligned to Environmental Health and this included pest control. The proposals would allow for flexibility of officers to deal with a wider range of pest control services to a greater number of residents and businesses. C Troy said that in addition there were already a number Hertfordshire County Council contracts that are being taken over by Dacorum's regulatory team.

The Chairman said that she was sympathetic to the idea of charging for pest removal services but that it must be carefully presented to the residents of Dacorum to ensure that the move towards charging was not seen as money-grabbing but as a means to recover costs.

Councillor Adshead asked if in situations where resident's infestations were caused by neighbouring properties and not their own were they liable for the charge to have the pests removed? C Troy said that this would depend on the situation but that enforcement action was still an option for more extreme cases and that the charges proposed concerned pest problems that took up to three visits to resolve.

Councillor Adshead then asked who was liable for charging in multi-occupancy housing. C Troy said that the landlord would be held accountable in these cases.

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Councillor J Organ said that while he appreciated that the introduction of a charge for pest control would ideally help residents be more accountable he did feel that it was also the role of the Council to educate the public about pest prevention and what basic prevention methods they could put in place. D Rhoden said that officers who went to addresses with problems provided educational material to those concerned and there was additional information on Dacorum Borough Council's website. D Rhoden said that the Council would continue to give general advice as part of their Environmental Health role.

Councillor Griffiths asked if glis-glis was covered by Dacorum Borough Council's pest control service. D Rhoden said that it was not because the process to get rid of them was very resource intensive and that there were private contractors available to do this. Also bed bugs would not be included for the same reasons although there maybe situations where Environmental Health would be involved on public health grounds.

Councillor Adeleke asked if there were different rates for those on benefits or pensioners. D Rhoden said that discounts were available to Dacorum Card holders which should cover benefit recipients.

Councillor Mahmood asked what criteria were used when deciding what charges to set in relation to pest control. C Troy said that extensive benchmarking was carried out locally and added that arevies of the charges set within 12 months. C Troy said that he had recently attended a national meeting of the Chartered Institutes of Environmental Health and many councils were starting to extend their pest control services and introduce charging.

Councillor Mahmood then asked who was responsible for monitoring the pest control issues associated with the canals and waterways. C Troy said that the Council would liaise with the Canal trusts and also the sewage works to ensure that measures were taken in monitoring the pest problem in these areas.

Councillor McLean then asked whose responsibility it was to clear up animal carcasses within the borough. C Troy said that he believed this was in the Clean, Safe and Green team's remit. Councillor McLean asked if the pest control service would be available on the weekends. D Rhoden said that the service would only be available Monday-Friday.

Councillor G Chapman commended the extension of pest control services to all residents in Dacorum and asked if the team would be able to exterminate wasp nests in the roofs of buildings. D Rhoden said that the team was equipped to do this.

Outcome:

The report was noted and charging supported.

Actions:

None.

Councillor Adshead left the meeting at 9.35 p.m.

OS/097/13 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To consider passing a resolution in the following terms:

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Part 1, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded during the items in Part II of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were

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present during these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to: the financial and business affairs of a number of private companies. (Agenda item 11).

OS/098/13 HOUSING TOTAL ASSET MANAGEMENT CONTRACT AND CONSULTANTS CONTRACT -UPDATE AND RESULT OF EVALUATION OF FINAL BIDS

See Part II minutes.

OS/099/13 WORK PROGRAMME

Agreed

The meeting ended at 10.35 p.m.

Chairman: