

## MINUTES

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

31 OCTOBER 2012

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Adeleke	N Hollinghurst
G Chapman	Mahmood (Vice-Chairman)
Clark	Marshall (Chairman)
Conway	McLean
Flint	Organ
Hearn	R Sutton

**Co-Opted Members:**

S Parker

**Also attended:**

Councillor N Harden	Portfolio Holder for Resident & Regulatory Services
Councillor M Griffiths	Portfolio Holder for Housing
Dave Cove	Chief Executive, Sportspace
Elaine Emptage	Chair of Dacorum Sports Trust

**Officers:**

Dave Gill	Group Manager, Performance & Citizen Insight
Julie Still	Group Manager, Resident Services
Rita McGinley	Group Manager, Regulatory Services
James Deane	Group Manager, Financial Services
Fiona Williamson	Group Manager, Property & Place
Elinor Tweed	Commissioning & Social Enterprise Officer
Trudi Coston	Member Support Officer, Democratic Services (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7:30 pm

The Chairman advised Members that the meeting would be recorded to facilitate minute taking.

**OS/223/12 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2012 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Chairman.

**OS/224/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Adshead and Mrs Bassadone. Councillor Clark substituted for Councillor Mrs Bassadone and Councillor G Chapman substituted for Councillor Adshead.

**OS/225/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**OS/226/12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

**OS/227/12 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO A CALL-IN**

None

**OS/228/12 SPORTS CENTRE TRUST ANNUAL REPORT**

Dave Cove, Chief Executive of Sportspace, provided the committee with the annual Sports Centre Trust presentation. The presentation detailed the facilities at Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring and Longdean Sports Centres, the XC and Little Hay Golf Complex. Throughout the presentation, D Cove gave details of the Turnover, Investment, profits and losses, income streams and expenditure at each of the facilities. He also gave details on the XC as it had been open for its first year, the challenges ahead and exciting future developments. He then welcomed any questions from the committee.

Key points of discussion:

Councillor Flint said the figures for XC seemed much lower than initially predicted and asked what improvement plans were in place. D Cove explained a lot of money had recently been put in to launch the recording studio and understood that Youth Connexions had started to put all their resources in to the XC and all employees would be moving in to the building. He advised they would need to contact Youth Connexions for further details.

Councillor Marshall asked if the space Youth Connexions occupied in the XC was too large for their needs and if it was, could Dacorum Sports Trust utilise part of it. D Cove replied they had discussions with Hertfordshire County Council on the subject but advised that Youth Connexions do require a large amount of space as they need individual rooms for Counselling sessions, the one stop shop, meeting rooms and the recording studio.

Councillor Conway said Tring Sports Centre swimming pool and changing rooms needed improvement and asked if there was any development plans. D Cove advised that they had been liaising with Tring School, DBC, Tring Town Council and Hertfordshire County Council as they were aware the facilities were not up to standard. He said they had carried out research as to what the Community wanted and the swimming pool made up part of that. He advised they were putting together an itinerary and looking at what funding is available.

Councillor Adeleke asked what plans were in place to bring the expenditure down and keep it under control. D Cove said the expenditure was under control but difficulties can arise when they open new facilities as they have to take on that additional expenditure and therefore it increases. He said their plan for the future is to increase what they do within the community but be mindful of the subsidy and surplus.

Councillor Adeleke suggested a presentation in the future with projected figures for the next few years. D Cove agreed.

Councillor Hearn asked if the Youth Connexions attendee figures were an annual total. D Cove confirmed they were yearly figures.

Councillor Marshall referred to page 5 of the report and queried what the externally funded project was that had come to an end. D Cove replied it was a partnership project with Mencap and the funding from Sport England had been ceased, therefore the project had to end.

Elaine Emptage introduced herself as Chair of Dacorum Sports Trust and a Trustee since 2004. She gave a brief overview of her role on the board and then welcomed the Committee's questions.

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked if there was a Trustee that represented the interest of schools. E Emptage said there was not and advised that the interest of schools remained within the management team. Councillor N Hollinghurst then asked if they would consider inviting schools to nominate a Trustee. E Emptage said it was something they would consider if they felt it would be of a benefit.

Councillor McLean said it was a good report and there are good performance statistics. He asked if the Olympics had made an impact. D Cove advised that they had seen an increase in some areas, particularly in swimming courses. He said there was a legacy in sports and believed it had inspired individuals to join clubs.

Councillor Marshall asked why the Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre outdoor swimming pool was often closed at lunchtime. D Cove explained that they experience difficulties in recruiting life guards during term-time. He said lifeguards require training to become qualified and these tend to be students from University. He said the Trust tries to keep the open air pool open for as long as possible.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Councillor Mahmood entered the meeting at 8:13pm

**OS/229/12 QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE REPORT – REGULATORY SERVICES**

Rita McGinley introduced the item and highlighted some key points throughout the report. She said the team had been very busy in relation to food safety following recent news reports on an E-coli outbreak. She advised that the Animal Action week had gone really well and they had received another RSPCA Silver Footprint Award.

Key points of discussion:

Councillor Marshall asked what preventative work the team do on fly-tipping. R McGinley advised that the team work on creating awareness and education to try to stop people fly-tipping. She said it was important that people are aware of the implications and the cost that occurs.

Councillor McLean said fly-tipping was a big problem in Barnes Lane, Kings Langley, and asked if cameras were going to be put back in place to tackle the issue. R McGinley replied she would speak to her team and find out when cameras would be back in the area. She said it is important that the cameras are moved around frequently so that they can monitor the coverage of various areas.

Councillor Flint said there had been an abandoned vehicle on Galley Hill for the past few weeks and it was causing a big problem. She asked when action would be taken to remove the vehicle. R McGinley said they were aware of the problem and were investigating.

Councillor Adeleke sought clarification on paragraph 3.2 relating to non-EU foods. R McGinley explained that any food being exported out of Dacorum is required to be checked as it is DBC's responsibility to ensure the food is deemed fit for consumption.

Councillor Adeleke referred to the RSPCA Silver Footprint Award and asked if there was a high level of stray dogs in Dacorum. R McGinley advised that the Award was based on the service and not the figures. She said the Council had received two Awards this year for the Pet Policy and the stray dog service.

Following a recent incident he had witnessed, Councillor Mahmood asked if the Council had any regulations on the protection of Swans and Geese. R McGinley replied that they had no regulations and therefore would recommend people report any incidents to the RSPCA.

Councillor Mahmood asked if any individuals were caught whilst allowing their dogs to foul. R McGinley explained that most owners are compliant but there are a small percentage of owners that are not taking responsibility and enforcement can be difficult as they rely on owners being prepared to give them their details. She advised they were starting to produce data to work out how to target the issue. She said they were also looking at ways local residents can help and report any incidents.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/230/12 QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE REPORT – RESIDENT SERVICES**

Julie Still circulated an additional sheet stating the Hemel crime figures for various wards within the Borough as the report in the agenda had not stated the figures for all of the wards in Dacorum. She said quarter two had been extremely busy due to the Olympics, but the team thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated their involvement in the events. She explained that the verge hardening pilot project had been delayed due to the weather, and that Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Highways have also been delayed. She said the project was now moving forward and they hoped to progress the consultation work next week. An officer will be recruited to take on the responsibility of the project.

J Still advised that the definitions of vehicle crime and criminal damage had been included in the report, as requested at the last meeting. She said the reference made to a project relating to Age Concern and Youth Action Dacorum at the previous meeting was to provide entertainment for residents in sheltered schemes and they will be working together as a partnership to deliver the project.

Key points of discussion:

Councillor N Hollinghurst noted a lot of good news on ABS and CCTV. He referred to the verge hardening project and said there was often damage to amenity greens for various reasons and suggested that they needed to consider ways to protect them. He then said there are a number of road surfaces leading up to garage forecourts that are damaged and the land was the responsibility of DBC. He finalised by advising that that Tring Town Council had held a public presentation to congratulate Martine Wright for taking part in the Paralympics. J Still advised that the verge hardening project group had looked at damage to amenity greens and would be exploring all options.

Councillor Mahmood asked what would happen if there was a split neighbourhood, with some for and some against the provision of additional parking. J Still replied they would work with the housing department and the residents to negotiate their options. She said the housing department had been working on the prevention of damage to amenity greens and she would be feeding back any comments to them.

Councillor Mahmood asked if the list was in order of priority. J Still confirmed it was. Councillor Mahmood then asked if there was an approximate timescale for the project. J Still was hopeful that the project would commence in April 2013.

Councillor Mahmood said parking was a big issue and suggested they look at ways to get local residents involved. J Still said various departments were involved in looking at the issues surrounding parking and are weighing up all the options.

Councillor McLean asked if her team regularly met with the Police. He expressed his concern of the reduction of PCSO's and their vehicles and felt that crime would increase. J Still confirmed her team regularly meet with the Police and that they had a good working relationship. She said she understood the removal of PCSO's vehicles would not include

rural areas but the idea was to get the PCSO's walking the streets and using local transport. She agreed to feed back the Committee's concerns.

Councillor G Chapman said the Bus services were very limited in Bovingdon, Chipperfield and Flaunden and the PCSO's would require their own transport.

Councillor Harden advised that the transportation of the PCSO's would be a Police decision. He said that would form part of the Community Safety Partnership role of the incoming Police & Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Marshall referred to the crime table figures and queried what the figure was below the percentage figure. J Still explained that the figures represented the increase/decrease in the number of crimes, followed by the total number of crimes in the period.

Councillor Marshall suggested an explanation of what the figures mean would be useful as the figures could be misleading. Councillor Harden advised that an explanation could be found above the table but would suggest to the relevant officer it could be re-worded to make it clearer.

Councillor Marshall asked if the verge hardening consultation would include the relevant ward Councillors. J Still confirmed it would.

Councillor Marshall referred to paragraph 9.4 and queried what the prevention project was. J Still advised that an amenity green in Long Chaulden had been fenced off to prevent complaints of individuals driving across it and causing damage. She said there was room to park vehicles elsewhere.

Councillor G Chapman congratulated J Still and her team on how well run the Adventure Playgrounds were and was impressed by how committed the playground workers were. J Still said she was pleased to be able to feed that back to the team.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/231/12 QUARTER TWO FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT**

James Deane introduced the report on the forecast outturn as at the end of September 2012 and highlighted some key points and figures throughout the report. He advised that the process of utilising the anticipated surplus balance in the HRA as at 31 March 2013 of £9.6m had began - the Portfolio Holders had met and the item is scheduled to be discussed at the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee. Most will be put in Reserves specifically for new build and planned maintenance. He welcomed any questions from the committee.

Councillor Marshall noted how clearly presented the report was and thanked J Deane.

Key points of discussion:

Councillor Adeleke asked if the HRA underspend was due to being overcautious. J Deane replied that the high balance was due primarily to a high opening balance as at 1 April 2012 together with an interest rate on the loan to purchase the housing stock far lower than originally budgeted. In addition, there had been improvement in efficiency, including better void management resulting in less lost rental income.

Councillor Marshall enquired about the slippage of £1.6m on the capital housing fund grants. James Deane explained that the grant applications had not been received but the money would be carried forward to the next year. With regard to Hemel gym, the slippage was due to procurement delays.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/232/12 QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE REPORT – HOUSING LANDLORD**

Fiona Williamson introduced the report on behalf of Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director for Housing Landlord. She said that the MITIE contract was performing well and they were having regular meetings to identify and discuss specific issues. She referred to the average time to relet properties and explained that, due to changes in the asbestos regulations, additional work is often required. However, if properties need a substantial amount of work undertaken, those properties are taken out of the void figures. She advised that a Lead Officer for empty homes would be recruited next year and was included in next year's provisional budget.

**OS/233/12 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

It was proposed by Councillor Marshall and duly seconded to move to Part II of the meeting and to exclude the public.

Resolved:

That, under S.100A (4) of the Local government Act 1972 the public be excluded during the items in Part II of the Agenda for this meeting, because it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during those items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to: Item 9, That the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Full details can be found in the Part II minutes.

**OS/232/12 QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE REPORT – HOUSING LANDLORD (CONTINUED)**

It was proposed by Councillor Marshall and duly seconded to move back to Part I of the meeting.

S Parker referred to TL19 and queried how many of those Mutual Exchanges were part of the downsize scheme. F Williamson replied the Mutual Exchanges did not relate to the downsize scheme and the tenants would have exchanged because they chose to and not because of any incentive. S Parker said downsizing would become more popular in view of the welfare reforms impacting on the housing benefit.

Councillor Marshall queried the timescale for the review of incentivising tenants to downsize. F Williamson advised it was a project being led by Andy Vincent (Group Manager, Tenants and Leaseholders), and believed a draft would be completed in quarter three.

Councillor Griffiths advised it would make up part of the Housing Allocations Policy review, and believed the Policy would be implemented by the next financial year.

Councillor Mahmood asked if the number of days reported on in the performance indicators included weekends or if it was working days. F Williamson advised it was based on calendar days.

Outcome:

The report was noted and an update report on the Gas Servicing contract was added to the work programme for the next meeting.

**OS/234/12 COMMUNITY ALARM CALL RESPONSE PERFORMANCE**

Fiona Williamson introduced the item and highlighted that the performance had improved, with targets being met and some exceeded. She said details had been included of calls that had taken longer than 180 seconds to answer.

Key points of discussion:

Councillor Marshall referred to the dispersed schemes and asked if there was one line per property. F Williamson confirmed there was.

Councillor Organ said the table on pages 78-79 appeared to detail the reason for the call instead of the reason why the call took longer than 180 seconds to answer. He said the committee had requested to know why the calls took so long to answer and the reason for the call was irrelevant. F Williamson replied she would feed this back to the officers as it was something they can add as to why the service had failed.

S Parker referred to the 16<sup>th</sup> September where one call had taken 240 seconds to respond to, and said the reason for the call was irrelevant. He said the call could have been life threatening and should not take four minutes to respond to. He felt that if the outcome of a delayed call was fatal, there should be serious consequences.

Outcome:

The report was noted and an update report to be added to the work programme for March 2013.

**OS/235/12 PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2013/14**

F Williamson introduced the report as the provisional planned maintenance programme budget for 2013/14. She said the works programme was outlined as Annex A.

Key points of discussion:

Councillor Marshall referred to 4.7 and asked if the contractors also cleaned gutters and replaced where broken. F Williamson advised they did.

Councillor Marshall referred to 5.2 and asked how many blocks of flats that included. F Williamson advised they were undergoing surveys to investigate the number of blocks necessary.

Councillor Marshall queried if the financial years quoted in paragraph 5.3 were correct. F Williamson advised they were incorrect and should state the end of this financial year.

Councillor Marshall referred to 5.8 and queried if aids and adaptations also included minor adaptations. F Williamson advised there was an additional £250k for minor adaptations.

Councillor Marshall referred to 5.10 and asked if the target area had been identified and if the TLC and Ward Councillors had been informed. F Williamson replied that the target area had been identified in part of Highfield and they were looking at energy efficiency, estate improvement measures, working with the Clean, Safe and Green team, the Voluntary sector and Resident Services. She advised the idea was to focus on one particular area which had been identified to have multiple areas of deprivation.

Outcome:

The Planned Maintenance Programme budget proposal for 2013/14 for inclusion in the HRA budget submission and capital programme was noted, subject to approval by Council in February 2013 as part of the formal budget setting process.

**OS/236/12 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee discussed the work programme and made the following amendments:

5 December 2012

- Add an update report on the Gas Servicing Contract

- Add Housing Allocations Policy review.

Items to be scheduled:

- Community Alarm Call Response Performance update – February/March 2013.

The meeting ended at 9:52 pm.