



There were no declarations of interest.

#### **OS/190/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

#### **OS/191/13 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO A CALL-IN**

There were no matters referred to the committee in relation to a call-in.

#### **OS/192/13 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VISION REPORT**

The Committee decided to take this report at the end of the meeting.

The Chairman introduced the report and explained that any suggestions made by members towards the OSC vision statement would be taken to the Overview & Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs meeting on the 31 October 2013 in order to form a final vision statement.

Councillor Adshead commented that when this item was discussed at the SPAE OSC the general consensus was that the examples given in Appendix C were too long-winded and that a shorter statement would be more appropriate. The Committee preferred the visions of Crawley and Harrow on page 6.

Councillor Mclean commented that the fourth suggestion in Appendix C was the best as it encompassed all the elements needed in a potential scrutiny vision statement.

Councillor Hollinghurst thought the Committee was carrying out its functions fairly well and recommended the first suggestion in Appendix C with the addition of "and provide guidance to the Cabinet in policy formation".

The Committee agreed with Councillor Flint that the concept of 'proactive' scrutiny should be included somewhere to indicate that action was taken following the OSC's scrutiny of issues.

Councillor Adeleke recommended the fourth example in Appendix C with the addition of holding officers to account. The Committee agreed with that suggestion too, with Councillor Adshead pointing out that the Committee should be doing more than merely noting the report.

The Chairman asked that members contemplate possible suggestions for the vision statement and email her their suggestions before the end of the month.

#### **Outcome:**

The report was noted.

#### **Actions:**

Members to email the Chairman with their suggestions for the vision statement.

#### **OS/193/13 SPORTSPACE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Chairman:

D Cove (Chief Executive, Sportspace) was welcomed to the committee by the Chairman and he began his presentation on Sportspace's performance which covered the following points;

- Background of Sportspace
- Turnover, expenditure and the Council's grant.
- Investment
- Top 5 income streams
- Top 5 expenditure streams
- KPI's
- Highlights from 2012/2013
- Upcoming challenges
- Future plans

The Chairman thanked D Cove for his presentation and asked him to circulate his presentation amongst the Housing & Community OSC members following the meeting. The Chairman then asked the members if they had any questions.

Councillor Adeleke asked D Cove to clarify what the trend in attendance figures were for Sportspace and specifically Little Hay Golf Course. D Cove explained that overall attendance figures at Sportspace were up overall by 33,010 visits but despite this increase overall attendance at Little Hay Golf Course had dropped by 23,116 visits.

Councillor Adeleke then asked if it was only Little Hay Golf Course's attendance figures that had dropped, D Cove said that there were drops at other locations but that these were minor and Little Hay Golf Course had the most significant drop in attendance.

Councillor Griffiths then asked if these minor drops in attendance had occurred at the Extreme Centre (XC), D Cove replied that some of them had occurred at the XC.

Councillor Adshead asked what attendance increase Sportspace expected to see following the extension of the gym facilities at Hemel Hempstead Sportspace and was pleased. to see solar panels and other sustainable energy supplies were being considered by Sportspace.

Councillor Hollinghurst also commented that he thought renewable energy was a wise choice and that he had seen the architect plans for Tring Sportspace, which provided for renewable ground source energy that would cut the costs associated with heating the swimming pool.

D Cove gave an anticipated income target arising from the new gym facilities and added that solar panels had been looked at many times but found not to be economic. He was hopeful this might change in the future.

Councillor Adeleke then asked why had there been an increase in wages considering there was a decrease in income in 2012/2013, Councillor Adeleke said he was surprised to see this trend considering the current economic climate. D Cove remarked that several factors had caused an increase in wage costs including an increase in minimum wage and the new automatic pension enrolment of staff.

Councillor Adeleke also asked, if Sportspace were attributing the drop in attendance at Little Hay Golf Course to the hot weather, had other golf courses around the country been similarly affected. D Cove answered that to his knowledge other golf courses had suffered from the weather and that Sportspace had closely analysed attendance figures at Little Hay Golf Course and they had found a direct correlation between the weather and attendance.

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D Cove also mentioned that, whilst Little Hay Golf Club was an attractive venue, there was an issue around the size of the club house as it was not big enough for many events and so Little Hay Golf Course had to turn away potential functions that could provide income. D Cove said that there were plans in place to develop the club house in order to provide more space for functions.

Councillor Flint said that surely the weather was an issue for the golf course during the very hot weather if there was a hose pipe ban. D Cove said that using the man-made lake in the golf course helped in maintaining the course.

Councillor Flint said that she was concerned that some fitness/sporting activities that were run through the community centres locally may miss out if it was not known that community centres as well as Sportspace ran such activities. Councillor Flint pointed out that these activity classes were important revenue streams for community centres.

Councillor Harden responded to Councillor Flint's point and said that there was a report going to the upcoming Cabinet meeting around this issue. The report outlined that the Council could apply for funds from the Sport England fund to provide sporting activities for the disabled and elderly via community centres.

The Chairman mentioned that she was pleased to see that there had been a financial improvement at Berkhamsted Sportspace and surprisingly Tring Sportspace. She queried whether this was due to actual improvements or cutbacks. D Cove said that it was a combination of these two factors and Sportspace were trying to strike a balance between sticking to the budget and providing a high level of service.

The Chairman said that it was disappointing that on average Sportspace had only achieved a '4 out of 5 stars' food hygiene rating. The Chairman asked if it was the case that some venues fell below 4 stars? D Cove replied that most of the sites had attained 5 stars but one site did receive 3. D Cove mentioned that subsequently this site had been reassessed and received 5 stars. The Chairman commented that it did not give the right impression if Sportspace were not reaching a hygiene standard that Dacorum Borough Council was responsible for implementation.

The Chairman also asked if there had been an increase in the equivalent of full time staff, D Cove said that the full time staff levels had increased slightly due to the refurbishment and therefore higher attendance at the gym.

The Chairman asked D Cove what his opinion was of Youth Connexions' use of the XC centre. D Cove commented that after a disappointing start there had been a little progress but was not sure the space was yet being fully utilised.

M Cook asked what the cost of replacing equipment was at Sportspace. D Cove said that this was covered by the property maintenance budget which took up 5% of the overall budget.

The Chairman then thanked D Cove for his time and requested that he email his presentation to the members of the Housing & Community OSC.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Actions:

D Cove to email presentation to members of the Housing & Community OSC.

Chairman:

D Cove and N Webb exited the meeting at 8.31pm

**OS/194/13 PROPOSED CHANGES TO GOVERNMENT RENT POLICY & IMPACT ON HRA BUSINESS PLAN**

The Chairman introduced the item explaining that a report was requested following the HRA business plan presented in June to look into the question of whether the Council should continue increasing the rent at the same rate as in previous years in view of the economic situation and changes in benefit, resulting in an increased bad-debt provision. However, the situation has changed as the Government had recently announced that it would be consulting on limiting the rent increases to CPI plus 1%. Consequently, she felt it might be inappropriate at this stage to reduce the rate of rent increases from that originally budgeted for in the HRA Business Plan.

E Brooks stated that the consultation period had been due to commence early October but as of yet it had not started. E Brooks also reiterated that the present policy was an increase of up to RPI + 0.5% + £2 and not RPI + 0.5% only as printed in the Report.

E Brooks said that point 4.0 of the report detailed several factors that the Council should consider whilst moving forward with the National Rent Policy. E Brooks particularly highlighted the fact that ceasing to move towards convergence would probably have a greater impact than what was initially expected. Potentially, there could be a loss of £80m over the 30-year life of the Business Plan.

In reply to Councillor Hollinghurst's query, E Brooks explained that target rent is "convergence". Rents for new tenants start (except for new tenancies arising from certain defined situations) at target rent, increasing annually by RPI + 0.5%. Rent increases for existing tenants increase at RPI + 0.5% + £2 to bring such rents up to target rent. Those rents on existing tenancies will not reach convergence if the "£2" is not added.

Councillor Hollinghurst asked that if there was a greater tenant turnover would the Council reach convergence quicker and could the Council increase the rent at a higher amount. E Brooks said convergence would be reached quicker if there is greater turnover but that it is unlikely that the Government would allow councils to increase rent at a greater rate. CPI + 1% is likely to be the maximum, as RPI + 0.5% + £2 is currently the maximum, with councils free to increase at a lower rate.

Councillor Flint then asked a question in regards to planned maintenance. Councillor Flint commented that the repainting programme was very far behind and asked if it could be prioritised.

E Brooks said that the repainting budget had doubled and that the Council was doing twice as much this year and that he was aware that the Council were behind on this but they were trying to catch up on outstanding projects. E Brooks pointed out that replacement fascias were now made of plastic and so would not need repainting in the future.

The Chairman referred back to the issue of the rate of increasing rents and asked when the Government's consultation starts. E Brooks advised that this is awaited and that the Council would be responding to the consultation.

Councillor Mclean asked how soon after the consultation period ends the Government's decision would be implemented. E Brooks said that there was no fixed time for the length of consultation or the period of time to implementation of the policy. E Brooks said that possibly the policy would be implemented with effect from 1 April 2015 but that if the consultation had not been finalised by the time the budget setting occurred it could potentially cause problems

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around budgeting. Councillor Marshall asked that the weblink to the consultation paper, when known, be emailed to members.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Actions:

E Brooks to email members of the Housing & Community OSC once the consultation phase commences and to include a link to the consultation paper.

**OS/195/13 HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2018 REPORT**

I Connolly introduced the report explaining that the Housing Strategy 2013-2018 had been submitted to the public and the relevant stakeholders and that the Housing Service had received feedback accordingly.

I Connolly said that the Housing Strategy took into account various strands of work related to housing in order to direct investment and service delivery across all aspects of the housing service.

Councillor Bassadone asked what the targets were regarding tackling empty homes. I Connolly said that this issue was handled by Environmental Services as they had better tools at their disposal to facilitate the Empty Homes Strategy. I Connolly also pointed out that the Empty Homes Strategy had previously come to the Housing & Community OSC and that the Empty Homes Strategy may look into options for providing temporary accommodation as well if deemed appropriate.

Councillor Bassadone also made reference to the Members briefing occurring on the 31<sup>st</sup> October and asked if the issue of homelessness within the borough would be discussed. I Connolly said that the members briefing on the 31<sup>st</sup> was in response to changes that would be occurring on the 7<sup>th</sup> November regarding changes to housing allocations.

Councillor Mclean pointed out that the Strategy variously described the homeless hostel as having 41 beds and 33 beds. He queried as to whether the size of the hostel would result in the hostel having to accommodate individuals from outside the borough as Councillor Mclean recalled that the committee was told that there 5 or 6 homeless individuals in Dacorum. Councillor Mclean queried the criteria for assessing an individual's suitability to stay at the hostel.

I Connolly explained that the potential operators of the hostel would have to go through a tendering process and that there would be a strong service level agreement that stipulated that half of the beds available would be specifically for Dacorum Borough's homeless and that the remainder of the beds would be reserved for vulnerable homeless individuals such as those potentially fleeing violence, some of whom may come from outside the borough. E Brooks also added that the hostel was not too big for Dacorum's needs as it would cut down the cost of using B&B's as temporary accommodation for homeless individuals. E Brooks pointed out that the number of homeless individuals far exceeded 5 or 6 and these figures only referenced the entrenched rough sleepers who did not want help from the housing service.

Councillor Flint asked who was overseeing letting the flats over shops for temporary accommodation. I Connolly said that Estates was managing that but that where possible the Housing Service was making use of them.

The Chairman commented that the target outcomes in Part SHO 2 of the strategy did not have any indication of figures or statistics to demonstrate the target despite the request at

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the Committee's meeting in March that it did so. I Connolly said that it was a challenge to provide quantifiable targets as some of the targets were combinations of policies from different services and so were not uniformly quantifiable and that the focus was more on service provision as opposed to numerical targets.

The Chairman said that she appreciated this may be true in some cases but that she felt the strategy would benefit from having more definitive targets for the third, fourth and fifth objectives in Part SHO 2. E Brooks said this could be added in. Councillor Griffiths said that as this document was a strategy for a five-year period there was a lack of numerical targets. The Chairman said that, in the least, it would be useful for the strategy to reference documents where more precise figures could be found.

Councillor Adeleke asked how Dacorum Borough Council worked with Hertfordshire County Council in relation to the Disabled Facilities Grant. E Brookes said that Hertfordshire County Council sent referrals to Dacorum for those who qualified for this grant.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Actions:

That the Housing Strategy 2013-2018 be amended to include more specific targets or references where more specific targets could be found as appropriate and the hostel bed numbers be corrected.

**OS/196/13 WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14**

The items on the work programme were agreed.

Councillors Bassadone and Flint requested that the report from Youth Connexions due in March 2014 include the necessary financial and statistical information about the Youth Connexions provision in Dacorum.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm.

**OS/200/13 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved:

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 item 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 present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to: Item 13, That the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, paragraph 3

**OS/201/13 MINUTES**

The part 2 minutes of the meetings held on 11 September 2013 were agreed by the Members present and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting ended at 9:30pm

Chairman: