

## MINUTES

### STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

21 SEPTEMBER 2016

**Councillors:** G Adshead  
Anderson (Chairman)  
Birnie  
Fisher  
S Hearn  
Hicks  
Howard  
Riddick  
C Wyatt-Lowe (Vice-Chairman)

<b>Officers:</b>	Lesley Crisp	Strategic Planning & Regeneration Officer (MBC)
	James Doe	Assistant Director - Planning and Regeneration
	Katie Mogan	Member Support Officer
	Rebecca Oblein	Strategic Planning & Regeneration Team Leader

**Also Attendance:**

Councillor Penny Hearn  
Councillor Graham Sutton

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

**179**            **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 September 2016 were confirmed by the members present and signed by the Chairman.

**180**            **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ashbourn and Councillor Matthews.

Councillor Timmis substituted on behalf of Councillor Ashbourn.

Councillor Birnie substituted on behalf of Councillor Matthews

**181**            **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**182**                    **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**183**                    **CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

None.

**184**                    **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

L Crisp introduced the report and ran through the highlights of the report to members. In 2015, the Hemel Hempstead Ambassadors scheme was launched to promote businesses within Dacorum. There are currently 45 member businesses generating an annual income of £36,500. In March 2016, a business survey was done to understand more of what businesses want. From this survey, it was found that 77% thought Dacorum had met or exceed their expectations and 32% predicted they would grow over the next year. The survey helped to formulate new workshops for business to cover IT skills, soft skills and business skills. The courses are always fully booked and have generated an income of £37,000. This year, the Dacorum's Den initiative has been fully paid and sponsored by local businesses putting in a total of £11,500. There were seven winners this year and next year's event is already fully sponsored. The team are busy writing the new strategy for 2017-2020 and deciding on the new priorities and how to find new investment. This is based on the results from the business survey.

J Doe said a new strategy is very important and they will be working with other council departments. It is hoped the new strategy will go to Full Council this year so it might be useful for this to be added to the committee's work programme.

Councillor G Adshead referred to item 1.7 in the report and asked if the team were addressing the issues that made the 23% not score Dacorum highly in the survey.

R Oblein said there are several wider issues. The team work with Hertfordshire County Council and the Herts LEP to try and solve some of these issues. It is hoped that new growth corridors will be built within the new Enterprise Zone to relieve parking and traffic problems. There is constant work being done with the sustainable transport team to reduce the number of cars. The Maylands link bus from the train station to the Maylands area has been taken on by Red Eagle after the contract ended with Arriva. The Ambassadors are looking at the skills shortage and transport issues to hopefully come up with a solution.

Councillor Birnie referred to item 1.3 and asked if the £36,500 was raised through membership fees.

R Oblein said it was membership fees. The fee ranges from £3,500 for larger businesses to £500 for smaller ones. The fee is based on the number of staff in each business.

Councillor Birnie referred to item 1.7 and the difficulty in finding move on premises for new businesses. Is it possible to provide a directory of premises?

L Crisp said she works closely with businesses and helps them with property searches. There is a big shortage of industrial units of 1,500-4,000 sqft.

Councillor Hicks asked about the funding for the Hemel Ambassadors.

R Oblein said the funding was for a two year period. The target was to achieve £40,000 so currently we are not that far off. We are aware of the need to retain members to ensure we receive the same fees year on year. Also, it is important to ensure that members are getting value for money. Network meetings tend to sign up more members. The most successful Ambassador scheme in the country is in Coventry where they have 100 members and generate £120,000 a year.

J Doe said it was important to protect employment land but can't prevent development applications. The government may make it easier to turn office space into residential.

Councillor Anderson asked for some evidence to back up policies.

J Doe said they have established the occupancy of the Maylands Industrial Estate and it is either full or committed.

R Oblein said they are working on an Employability Land Assessment.

Councillor S Hearn said that empty shops could provide ideal floorspace for small, modern businesses. Agricultural buildings are often converted to be expensive homes.

Councillor Birnie agreed that empty shops are ideal with short term lets.

Councillor G Adshead referred to paragraph 1.15 in the report. He questioned the sliding rent scale and its impact on small businesses.

L Crisp said that at first, the third year rent was much lower than other premises so small businesses found there was a huge hike when they had to move out of the Maylands Business Centre. Therefore, the rent is now staggered each year to prepare them for when they have to move out. It is hoped this will help businesses prepare for future premises and smaller businesses can get help with their budgets.

Councillor Fisher asked what qualifications are gained through the apprenticeships offered.

L Crisp said they ranged from Level 2 to degree level qualifications. L Crisp said she had recently been to a meeting with secondary schools to try and help remove the stigma attached to apprenticeships.

Councillor G Adshead praised the team on the workshops being fully booked. He asked how many people can attend the training and how are they advertised.

L Crisp said it depended on the course. The Microsoft training course can only have 10 people attending because there is a lot of a hand on help. Other courses can be up to 17 or 18 people as that's how many can comfortably fit in the meeting room. The Excel course ran 22 times as it was so popular. There is a database of businesses and people that get sent a monthly list of training courses. Anyone can book on these courses. L Crisp said she can add the committee members onto the database if they so wish.

Councillor G Sutton said how proud he was of the team. He said they are forward thinking and proactive. As a business owner it is difficult to find sensible business advice and as a tenant of the business centre, the team have been great and would like to thank them sincerely for all their work.

### **Outcome**

That the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report.

## **185            WATER POLICY**

J Doe introduced the report that the committee had requested. Hertfordshire has an exceptionally high level of water usage with Dacorum having one of the highest rates of litres per head per day. Dacorum is also in one of the driest parts of the country as it has three chalk streams: the Bulbourne, Gade and Ver. The chalk means a lot of water permeates through the rock. The waste water in Dacorum is served mostly by Maple Lodge Sewerage Works in Rickmansworth. Thames Water has said although it can cope with current demand, it will need significant upgrading by 2020-2025. Officers are well aware of this but we need to establish new ways to fund the upgrade – the Council is still taking section 106 and CIL payments from developers which might help. J Doe said he has been attending high level meetings to ensure providers are properly aligned with the rate and location of development in the borough. The County Council is the local flood authority and are statutory consultations on major planning applications. Thames Water's role is critical and must sharpen up when they are consulted. There were major problems with the Spencer's Park development. The site had been allocated and Thames Water had no objections

when outline planning permission was given. When detailed plans were submitted, they raised objections which delayed the project until a solution was found. J Doe referred to pages 15-16 and the major ongoing county study. Dacorum is a financial contributor to the study which looks at water supply and drainage up until 2051. The study will help inform boroughs for future developments.

Councillor G Adshead asked about water usage in Dacorum. He said 152 litres per person per day was very high and was this just residential?

J Doe said he understood it to be just residential. The high usage has prompted this study but usage includes dishwashers and washing machines. J Doe said he didn't know exact reason why it's high.

Councillor Timmis asked what was being done to limit usage. Where is the information telling people how high water usage is?

J Doe said there are various water reduction devices controls through planning development and there are more requirements in building regulations.

Councillor Timmis said there was a huge personal responsibility and there should be a way of making people aware.

J Doe said it wasn't necessarily the Council's role but water companies can control water usage through water rates and meters.

Councillor Birnie said it was good that building control is thinking positively about water usage.

J Doe said it is important that Thames Water is providing us with the right advice. It is important to develop an understanding how the system works within the boroughs. Some form of modelling work needs to be considered to identify issues.

Councillor G Sutton said Thames Water should be made more accountable. The new development in Leverstock Green flooded and Thames Water said it can't flood because there is no property there despite them connecting the new development to the mains system. They must improve on fixing leaks as they go undetected for a long time and is the probable reason for the high water usage. The MP is very concerned with regard to recent flooding problems in the area.

Councillor S Hearn said we should stop looking to pass blame. The responsibility lies heavily on the Council. Dacorum is one of the most affluent parts of the county. More affluent areas probably use the most water and this could be solved by consumers putting more thought into their water consumption. If you are prepared to build a house with three toilets in it, then you should pay more for your water. Water meters are a good idea because it makes you think and makes you more careful about water usage.

Councillor Hicks said it was important to educate. Thames Water provide facts and figures on their water bills about how much water the household is using and a water meter acts as an incentive to save water.

Councillor G Sutton said the Maylands Business Centre has a system to separate grey from waste water and there should be a way to encourage businesses to reduce water usage.

Councillor G Adshead asked what measures were in place to save water at the Forum.

J Doe said he did not know specifically but the Forum meets the very good standard as there are various sustainability factors in the design.

Councillor Anderson said the water project at county level was a good idea but wondered if it would solve the trilemma between the public perception that housing should not be built without the water supply available; the twin requirements that the housing must be built and the water companies must then get on with providing the water; and the reality that it would be absolutely daft if thousands of houses were built without sufficient water supply.

J Doe said the council had long term plans and understood the general supply situation. The Local Plan review will look at the issue of reduced water and its impact and constraints on future developments.

### **Outcome**

That the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report.

## **186                    WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

Councillor Timmis asked for an item regarding Luton airport to be added to the work programme.

Councillor G Adshead asked for a detailed report into fly tipping to be added to the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 8.45 pm