

MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

5 DECEMBER 2017

Councillors:	Birnie Fisher S Hearn Hicks Howard (Vice-	Chairman) Ransley Timmis C Wyatt-Lowe
Officers:	James Doe Mark Gaynor Andrew Horner Keshika Naidoo Chris Taylor Craig Thorpe Emma Walker	Assistant Director - Planning, Development and Regeneration Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration Group Manager - Development Management Group Manager - Strategic Planning and Regeneration Group Manager - Environmental Services Food Safety and Health and Safety Team Leader

Also Attendance:

Councillor Janice Marshall
Councillor Graham Sutton

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

156 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 November 2017 were confirmed by the members present and signed by the Chairman.

157 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Anderson, Barrett and Riddick.

Councillor Howard chaired the meeting in the absence of Councillor Anderson.

158 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

159 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None.

161 **JOINT BUDGET PREPARATIONS 2018/19**

C Thorpe and E Walker gave a presentation regarding the budget for their service areas.

Councillor Timmis referred to the recycling programs in schools and asked if there had been any thought given to restaurants and businesses who produce a lot of food waste.

C Thorpe said commercial waste recycling has been discussed previously at this committee but currently, the department has to pay to dispose of waste. If the council were to offer commercial waste recycling then a charging mechanism would need to be developed to make sure the council doesn't lose money. The council has a statutory obligation to provide a commercial waste service.

Councillor Timmis said that sending waste to landfill must have a cost.

C Thorpe said commercial waste does.

Councillor Birnie referred to the provision for comingled recycling in flats and asked if this was as a result of the task and finish group.

C Thorpe said the task and finish group were provided with a number of options.

Councillor Birnie asked if any progress had been made.

C Thorpe said they are currently surveying flats across the borough and a group is being set up with housing and finance as they will be involved in any development work.

Councillor Birnie asked if they had received any feedback from the public.

C Thorpe said tenants were not currently aware of the arrangements.

Councillor Hicks said that C Thorpe had previously mentioned that customers are moving to private companies to provide their commercial waste collections. He asked what they were doing that the council wasn't.

C Thorpe said that the private companies are not gaining customers for recycling, they are offering a cheaper price to sign customers up and then increasing the cost. He said that a lot of customers return after 12-15 months.

Councillor Timmis asked if the landfill site was in Dacorum.

C Thorpe said it goes to a site in Watford first and is then distributed to other landfill and incineration sites and this is controlled by Herts County Council.

Councillor Timmis asked if the heat generated from incineration is used to produce energy.

C Thorpe said the heat from the food waste is used for energy but not residual.

Councillor Birnie referred to the overhaul replacement of the fleet and equipment in the department. He asked if the washing facilities were a part of this.

C Thorpe said this had already been paid and would be completed this week.

Councillor Birnie asked about the fleet replacement program.

C Thorpe said the department has 25 large refuse vehicles which cost £185,000 each. They are replaced every 5-7 years in line with the capital program.

Councillor Birnie asked if a new vehicle would need to be designed for the flat recycling project.

C Thorpe said they would need more than one vehicle as there are flats all over the borough. It would be a case of route optimising to ensure the best value for money.

Councillor Birnie asked if there was any progress in setting up a cross county organisation to collect waste.

C Thorpe said he was not aware of any plans.

Councillor Howard asked if they had any feedback from schools on how successful the recycling programs had been.

C Thorpe said they didn't have any feedback on the tonnage collected from schools but the take up and interest in the program has improved immensely especially with the newsletter that is sent out to schools advising them on recycling.

Councillor Howard congratulated the team on setting the newsletter up as it was very helpful.

J Doe gave a presentation regarding the budget for his service areas.

Councillor S Hearn asked when a developer pays the planning fee on a large application.

J Doe said the developer can pay upfront in a full application. What usually happens on a major application is the developer will submit an outline application first as this is cheaper because it is based on the area of the site not the number of units. They cannot proceed with the development until they have submitted a reserved matters application where the department then gets the full fee. The West Hemel Hempstead development of 1100 units will have a fee income of circa £100,000. The current plan is to submit a hybrid application which gives full consent for 300 units and then gives outline permission on the rest.

Councillor Birnie asked about the 3% increase in cost of employees.

J Doe said the staff turnover within the planning team is low and the increase in staffing is to cover the natural growth. In building control, it is likely that there will be an overspend. There is huge competition with the private sector due to higher salaries. The pay doesn't match the costs of the service which are relative to fee income.

Councillor Birnie asked if the council set the fees.

J Doe said yes and these were increased by 10% last year.

Councillor Birnie asked if the overspend was due to agency staff.

J Doe said yes and a number of staff are leaving before Christmas. The vacancies will be recruited on the open market and the agency staff is a contingency plan.

M Gaynor said approved inspector roles in the private sector offer £10-15,000 more than public sector.

Councillor Birnie asked if there was any progress on getting special payments for these roles.

M Gaynor said this needs to be looked at more broadly across the council as building control isn't the only area in the council that is struggling with recruitment. There would need to be a fundamental policy shift to offer market force supplements but it will need to be considered as it will carry a major cost.

Councillor Birnie asked about the fees for building control and if the council has control.

J Doe said the council are entitled to change them however, they can only charge for the cost of the service and can't make a profit.

Councillor Birnie made the point that the cost of the service is the cost of employees.

J Doe said that is correct, it is being looked at.

Councillor Hicks referred to the potential planning fee increase of 20%. He asked if the costs of extra staff had been factored in.

J Doe said subject to internal approvals, proposals for adding capacity to the service will be brought back to the committee at the February budget meeting. They are waiting for approval from the government who have indicated that this increase is to help local authorities properly staff their departments to deal with the higher rate of housing development that the Government wishes to see come forward

Councillor Timmis said she hoped that the new IT system would have a positive impact on the website which is currently difficult to navigate.

J Doe reassured members that A Horner was working closely with IT to develop a specification that would go out to tender. The first priority is to ensure that its usability is paramount.

Councillor Timmis asked if an independent panel would be used to test the system before it goes live.

J Doe said yes.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe referred to Appendix H in the agenda and asked what the residential part of The Bury was for.

J Doe said the land either side of The Bury has been assessed to see if it is suitable for development to fund the museum. There is a provision in the budget but the two items are being kept separate and the museum does not depend on selling the land.

Councillor Birnie asked if this would compromise the use of outside space for displays.

J Doe said it was a Grade II* listed building so any development must not compromise its setting.

Councillor S Hearn asked if the council can recover their costs if someone does not comply with an enforcement notice.

A Horner said that a breach of an enforcement notice can result in prosecution. The council can recover its legal costs but not for the whole process.

Councillor Hicks asked if the courts can fine the offenders.

A Horner said yes they can. Also, a breach could result in a prison sentence.

Councillor Birnie asked about the low figure on the presentation in relation to CIL.

J Doe said this was a staff saving not the money collected from CIL which currently stands at about £560,000.

Councillor Birnie said that the CIL money was for infrastructure projects but who funds the difference.

J Doe said this would need to be worked out over the coming 12 months. There is a variety of sources that funding could come from like the highways, education and sewage authorities. CIL will fund about 10-20% of the infrastructure that the Borough needs. There are also government funds that the council can apply for.

M Gaynor said on larger site, a s.106 agreement can generate more income than CIL.

Councillor Birnie asked if it was correct that CIL is fixed and s.106 can be negotiated with the developer.

M Gaynor said yes, CIL was based on square metres.

Councillor Birnie asked if this was paid up front.

J Doe said with s.106 agreements, it depends and there are trigger points. CIL is payable on commencement of the development.

Councillor Hicks asked if developers can give land back to DBC in lieu of payments.

J Doe said that the council can receive land as part of a s.106 agreements but this is relative to the need generated by the development. In the West Hemel Hempstead application, some open land could come back to DBC as part of the s.106 agreement.

M Gaynor said DBC were given a discounted piece of land as part of the affordable housing scheme in Berkhamsted.

162 WORK PROGRAMME

J Doe wanted to add the South West Herts Growth and Transport Plan Consultation by Herts County Council to the work programme with the date to be confirmed as HCC has not issued it for consultation yet. It could either come to the committee or done as a separate member development session.

The committee agreed the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 9.05 pm