

## MINUTES

### FINANCE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

7 NOVEMBER 2017

#### Present:

Cllr Adeleke  
Cllr Armytage  
Cllr E Collins  
Cllr Douris (Chair)

Cllr Howard  
Cllr McLean  
Cllr Silwal  
Cllr Taylor  
Cllr Tindall

#### Also Present:

Councillor Elliot – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources; and  
Councillor Harden – Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

#### Officers:

M Brookes	Solicitor to the Council
J Doyle	Group Manager - Democratic Services
D Skinner	Assistant Director – Finance & Resource
B Hosier	Group Manager - Commissioning, Procurement and Compliance
N Brown	Group Manager – Commercial Assets & Property Development
C Baker	Group Manager – Revenues, Benefits & Fraud
R Smyth	Assistant Director – Performance, People & Innovation
M Rawdon	Group Manager – People and Performance
B Trueman	Group Manager – Information, Communication & Technology
R Twidle	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

*Before the meeting the Chair noted that there had been some technical issues with regard to the papers in the agenda pack – The Chair advised that he would point out any changes when going through items. The Chair said that Officers had been made aware and would ensure this does not happen again.*



The minutes of the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5 September 2017 were agreed by the Members present and signed by the Chairman.

**60** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Chapman and Clark.

**61** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**62** **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

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

None.

**64** **ACTION POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Chair introduced the item; he referred to the Action Point (AP) number 4 – ‘D Skinner to confirm if Housing intended to fill the vacancies in Housing Cleaning Service & Supporting People’ and invited an update from D Skinner.

D Skinner said that at part of the ongoing budget challenge, Housing had been asked to review their position again with regard the current level of vacancy. This will therefore be answered during Budget Setting.

Cllr Taylor asked, given how crucial Housing was to DBC, particularly on edge of London, whether the comparable turnover with neighbouring districts was monitored to see whether DBC experience the same level of turnover as neighbouring Boroughs; he said would be useful to know what our neighbours are doing.

M Rawdon confirmed that DBC do not currently monitor against neighbouring authorities. R Smyth added that DBC did monitor nationally and confirmed that Dacorum’s turnover is below the public sector average.

**Action:** Chair concluded that the AP should remain open until Housing have reviewed the situation and provided an answer, stressing the importance of reaching a conclusion to this point.

**65** **BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 2**

The Chair introduced Item 7.

Cllr Elliot introduced the second quarter of this financial year report and highlighted an underachievement of investment income due to base rate cuts; he hoped this would rectify itself over the next year next year as in light of Bank of England base rates. Cllr Elliot reported that investment property income continued to increase. He also advised that Parking income had increased, adding that this was not from parking fines, but from people using DBC car parks.

Cllr Tindall raised concern regarding the numbers in Item 5.1 of the report (pg 7 of the Agenda pack); He said it stated £102k over budget, but went on to state a pressure of £120k and a pressure of £44k; Cllr Tindall that either means a pressure of £164k; or a pressure of £76k, but it is not £102k as stated.

D Skinner responded, saying that what was identified through the narrative of the main items, did not always add up exactly to the sub totals in bold within item 5.1. He said that the £120k was the relevant item and £44k was in the reserve approved draw down's which would not be reported, as the assumption would be that draw down would be happening. He said that £120k was balanced against £102k, and there are then a number of minor items that would offset it, so the £120k was the main pressure within the employees' budget.

Cllr Tindall referred to there being over 300 budget lines; he said that a small variance over 300 lines, 300 small variances could add up to quite a considerable amount of money. D Skinner said it was a balance to try and strike; when preparing the report for the Committee, the aim was to draw Members' attention to the major items. He said where there was a recurring theme, in terms of minor items that were accumulatively adding through, these would then be reported on as a corporate figure rather than on individual line items.

Cllr Tindall highlighted other examples of inconsistencies within this part of the report. He said that there were a considerable number of other examples like these, and asked the Chair if perhaps they can look at. The Chair asked Councillor Tindall to send him a list, also copying to J Doyle. The Chair advised they would ensure they are picked up prior to the next meeting.

**Action Point: Cllr Tindall to provide list of inconsistencies within item 7 of agenda to Cllr Douris, for officers to address**

D Skinner drew the Members' attention to a topic which had arisen on a number of occasions; this was the 'under-achievement of income on commercial waste'. He offered his apologies to the Committee as an officer from the Waste Service was currently unavailable to attend the meeting. D Skinner had discussed this with Craig Thorpe, and felt he had provided the best answer. D Skinner said that the under-achievement of income was £90k; this was in the context of an income of just over a million pounds, therefore DBC were actually collecting just under a million pounds. Measures had also been implemented that had been requested by Councillors; the ground structures had been reviewed and optimised to ensure a reduction in cost, to try to minimise the income loss. D Skinner explained the main driver for the reduction in customers was the costs of the service did not meet customers' expectations; first for commercial reasons and also in terms of the mix of services that DBC could offer in terms of the different waste streams that then get separated out. He hoped this answered the Committee's questions. The Chair said it did, but Members would keep a watchful eye on this particular item.

Cllr Mclean asked if DBC were not able to offer this service at a competitive price; he asked why DBC were so expensive in comparison. D Skinner said he did not think DBC were expensive but thought companies such as Biffa, had more economies of scale that they can achieve, which DBC could not. He said that they also offered discounts and free trial periods which were increased later in the contract. D Skinner said that DBC were not able to compete with all these practices.

Cllr Silwal referred to pg 5 of the agenda pack, regarding the Brownfield Register cost – he asked if this is a new or existing employee. D Skinner advised it is an existing employee seconded on to the project with some additional resource as well to back fill some of the existing work. He advised the Brownfield Land Register was a new requirement from Central Government. The Chair said possibly the word missing there is “Land” which puts it into context. It is the Land Registry item.

Cllr Silwal referred item 5.1 of the report (pg 7 of the Agenda pack) He noted the issue with recruitment of qualified people in Building Control and Planning, and asked if this was because DBC were not offering an attractive package. He noted that trainees had been recruited instead, and asked what was the guarantee that they, when qualified, would not leave for a more attractive salary.

D Skinner said that DBC was required to work within approved pay scales and approved pay points. There was currently a pressure within Building Control; one of the side effects of deregulation had seen a movement of staff from the public sector to the private sector for significantly more attractive salaries. He said there was some risk in terms of trying to retain staff, however DBC had tried to introduce measures to reduce this; e.g., when new staff start, there is a requirement that once people have qualified they have to stay for a certain time period afterwards, otherwise they have to repay the training fees associated with the cost. DBC also try to provide these staff with other career development opportunities. M Rawdon further explained the “handcuff” element of the procedure, saying that people sign up to an agreement with the training fees in that the Council pay for their training but if they leave they have to repay the money spent on the course fees. He confirmed that there had been occasions in the past when DBC had pursued individuals and received this repayment.

The Chair highlighted that the construction and building market was currently very buoyant across the whole of the south of England. He added that other projects in the pipeline, such as CrossRail 2 has meant that there is a deficit of this particular industry.

Cllr Silwal referred to item 5.2 of the report (pg 7 of the Agenda pack) regarding the conversion of The Bury to a Museum, at a cost of £75,000. He asked if support could be obtained from the National Government or the Lottery Fund to assist with the costs. D Skinner said it was in the process of being submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund. He said, if successful, some significant sums of money could be received, however he explained that this could not happen before the initial feasibility work. He said that if successful, DBC may get a third of the total cost from the HLF in terms of grant received. Until then the work was undertaken at the Council’s risk.

Cllr Silwal stated he was unaware of the background of the feasibility study and the people employed to carry it out and he asked if this information could be divulged. D Skinner said the firm that carrying out the work was a specialist company with experience of converting heritage assets into modern workable buildings for the provision of museums. He added that they have done work in Hertfordshire and for other authorities.

The Chair advised that the Committee was potentially straying into commercial confidentiality so the matter was left there. Cllr Tindall also highlighted that the details of The Bury are in the last Cabinet Minutes.

Cllr Tindall referred to item 8.3, line 191 of the report (pg 11 of the Agenda pack), specifically slippage of £1.1 million; this was now expected to be incurred later than expected because of ongoing issues. Cllr Tindall read a list including utilities, bore holes, repairs, drainage and rights of way. He said his concern this: was how many of those issues were known at the start? How many of those were identified by the professionals who prepared the project plans and how many of these came as a surprise to them to warrant expenditure of an extra £1.1 million?

N Brown responded, saying that Stationers Place was a particularly challenging scheme, given the location and environment. He said the initial feasibility works and outlying planning discussions suggested the work would be possible based on a suitable budget. He stated the Environment Agency (EA) had proven slightly more difficult to persuade of the rectification works required, which was causing slippage in the programme and also causing more costs. D Skinner said the New Build team was currently calculating the cost to complete the work. He said some of the issues mentioned by Cllr Tindall were known, but not the extent, until the detailed investigative work had been undertaken. N Brown reported different messages have been received from the EA in terms of the work that is expected and required. He said it was a work in progress.

Cllr Tindall suggested that on completion of the scheme, there should be a detailed analysis of the issues that had arisen; what should have been anticipated, how efficient were the professional staff, as well as what lessons can be learned for the future. The Chair said that on a project of this size, there should be a review and analysis to see how it went and what could be learned, including how pitfalls can be avoided in future. He stated significant variations and overruns were to be avoided. R Smyth said that, as part of the closure of any project, a project team evaluation was undertaken, as well as an additional process where more detailed reviews could be undertaken. The Chair asked if this project fell within that category and R Smyth confirmed that it would. Cllr Tindall asked if the report could come back to this Committee. The Chair said that he would take that back and discuss with the Officers where this review should land, possibly to Housing. Cllr Tindall said he did not mind if it was Part 2, his concern was that measures should be taken to prevent the same from happening again. This was agreed.

The Chair referred to item 4.1 and 4.2 of the report (pg 6 of the Agenda pack) saying he was intrigued by these items; he asked if DBC were doing well on parking, was an opportunity being missed for revenue in parking. B Hosier responded. He said that over the last couple of years, this service has divided into two, and the Parking Enforcement Contract had been outsourced to Watford. He said that as part of the budget setting process for the last two years and into next year, DBC were offering £50k based on a report commissioned in 2014/15 at reducing costs. He said that the savings have been taken out of the Parking Enforcement Contract. He also said that the Employee costs were within the client side function, with no impact on either performance or income generated. B Hosier highlighted that income was increasing without increasing parking charges which reflects well on the regeneration work in the Borough. He said availability of data from the existing machines would be addressed in the new contract being let before the end of this month.

The Chair added that the levy charged on the Penalty Charge Notices by the Traffic Penalty Tribunal has been reduced from 40 pence to 35 pence per ticket.

The Chair noted item 7.4 of the report (pg 9 of the Agenda pack), specifically "Tenants' Charges - £100k under budget (18.9%) A deficit is expected in relation to the newly de-pooled service charges. Detailed calculations for setting rent and de-pooled charges have now been performed, and a shortfall is anticipated". D Skinner said that when Central Government imposed a 1% reduction, part of the amount previously charged as rent covered some service charge elements; he said that one of the ways to mitigate the 1% rent reduction was to separate out the service charge element.

The Chair thanked D Skinner for his explanation and asked a question relating to item 7.6 of the report (pg 9 of the Agenda pack), the Osborne pension liability, following the triennial pensions review. He asked if this was DBC's liability as Osborne was a commercial company employing their own people. DS advised it is DBC's liability as part of the contract terms were that their liability was capped; this was an additional cost, ultimately passed through DBC.

The Chair asked for any further questions. Cllr Armitage referred to 8.3, line 195 of the report (pg 11 of the Agenda pack), regarding the Swing Gate Lane development; he asked for a more specific explanation as to the reasons for the slippage. D Skinner responded, saying it was his understanding that additional planning requirements had been imposed which had not been foreseen. This had meant that additional ground work would be required.

The Chair asked Cllr Elliot if he had anything to add, which he did not.

Outcome: At the invitation of the Chairman, the Committee agreed the contents and recommendations of Budget Monitoring report for Quarter two 2017/2018.

## **66**                      **Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - FINANCE & RESOURCES**

The Chair introduced the report, and invited the officer to offer any comments on it. D Skinner apologised for the missing sheet and explained its stated purpose was to provide Committee with analysis of quarterly performance and risk management within Finance & Resources for the quarter to September 2017. He said one of the main points to note was that when the CSU was brought back in-house, the reporting line changed from him to R Smyth; This meant that performance measures were now being reported under R Smyth and the report will go to Cllr Harden.

The Chair asked Cllr Elliot if he had anything to add, which he did not.

Cllr Silwal commented on (pg 30 of the Agenda pack); and asked why it was taking so long to decide the Housing Benefit Claim; he asked if it is due to the new Universal Credit system. C Baker responded saying that it was disappointing as DBC had reduced the target down to 20 days from 22 or 23 days in previous years. He said that Performance was around 30 days; He said the key problem, similar to Building Control, was a lot of gaps in staffing at present and difficulties in filling those vacancies. He said that two or three people had left, and they had been unable to replace them; in addition they also need to manage remaining employee's leave

requirements throughout the summer. Although they had tried using agency staff, it was difficult to find individuals with the required skills. As a result, DBC had not had the capacity to deal with the claims.

Cllr Silwal asked if problems related to Universal Credit were caused by staffing issues. C Baker said Universal Credit was an odd situation. He said that DBC were halfway through rolling out this new process, and there were single people who were out of work at the moment that needed to claim Universal Credit but, he said, virtually everybody else who needs help with their housing costs still need to claim Housing Benefit. He said the roll-out of the wider Universal Credit for everybody had started this month. He said it was not expected to have an impact in Dacorum, with Hemel Hempstead, Tring, Berkhamsted would not be affected until Summer/Autumn next year. C Baker said that it may have had impact in the wider job market for people with Housing Benefit skills, as there has been a reduction in the pool of skilled staff available to do the work.

The Chair raised an issue with C Baker, who had said that DBC had reduced the target. The Chair said according to the previous year's figures, the target was 20 days - he was concerned that there had been an increase of almost 50% of the average time taken between the corresponding period last year to this year. The Chair said he accepted the recruitment aspect of the problem, but he was concerned about what appears to be a trend.

C Baker accepted this. He said DBC were developing alternative methods to make sure these gaps were filled. He said DBC were in contact with colleagues in the other districts around Hertfordshire, who confirmed this is a problem that is affecting all boroughs. Taking into account the difficulty in getting staff, he said DBC, were also ensuring that that the processes was as efficient as possible.

The Chair commented that the Secretary of State has publicly said that when Universal Credit commences, there should be no reason why it should take longer than four weeks to process and get the first payment. He said DBC did not want a situation where, through a lack of staffing, DBC were not able to deliver Universal Credit in the way that it is expected.

C Baker explained that DBC were not responsible for the delivery of Universal Credit itself. He said that what DBC would find is that as the Universal Credit roll out expands, and takes in more people, it does actually produce the work of DBC. He said that housing costs would be moved from Housing Benefit into Universal Credit, and that Universal Credit was managed by staff within DWP.

Cllr Tindall commented that the Benefits department do a fantastic job, particularly when they are dealing with residents who are on zero hour contracts, because they are particularly vulnerable. Cllr Tindall said he had referred two people who had been experiencing problems with the processes and that the Benefit Department at DBC had done a superb job. He asked C Baker to encourage staff to continue their good work with those particular people who are vulnerable, because of their employment status. C Baker said he would relay that to the team.

Cllr Taylor noted (pg 32 of the Agenda pack); He said that DBC were taking longer to collect debtors, noting that these delays has gone up to 46.6 days and last month's results were 47.2, and asked why. He said last year's results were 35.6

D Skinner responded saying that a relatively small number of large high value debts for specific activities, some of which relate to commercial properties, were historic late payers. He said that they did pay eventually, however because of this, the figures were distorted. He said he should be able to provide the position if these late payers were excluded, which should show a much improved position in performance. D Skinner also added that DBC took appropriate Court action.

Cllr Taylor said he suspected that there was an element of timing insofar as it showed as an overdue length of time to pay; some debtors were actually fact paying on a regular basis but outside DBC's normal terms, so the cash flow was good but the 'debtor days' were bad.

Cllr Elliot added that DBC set very high targets with regard to 'debtor days' and there are glitches if there are large payments overdue but he wouldn't be too hard on the processes. Cllr Elliot also confirmed that DBC did write off the occasional bad debt, highlighting this was part of commercial life.

Cllr Adeleke referred to pg 31 of the Agenda pack, regarding Council Tax, noting that the target was 98% and DBC was currently hitting 92%. Cllr Adeleke said that people that have a problem with their Council Tax, may also be on benefits or face other issues; he asked if anything could be done to progress this time, to shorten it from 14 days to something lower.

C Baker responded by saying this was not a measure of people contacting DBC with issues with their Council Tax, such as a payment delay or who may be subject to enforcement stages; instead this measures the time DBC responds to someone who was making an application for single person discount or just having moved to a property, so DBC could maximise collections back from people. He said DBC had set itself a very high target, trying to achieve 98% of responses to people within 14 days, therefore it would be very difficult to respond within 7 days. C Baker said DBC was increasingly trying to automate these processes; e.g., webforms for individuals who had just moved into a property in Dacorum had been set up so that this information could be submitted to DBC at the earliest opportunity. C Baker said that in the subset of someone who is trying to contact DBC a different matter or concern, this would be looked at that as a separate issue.

The Chair highlighted that comparable figures for September 2016 indicated that DBC had responded within 4 of exactly the same number, despite having 200 more enquiries than 2016.

The Chair asked R Smyth a question relating to the RAG, on these, at the top of page 31, the figures 0 0 4 appear. The Chair said he did not know what those numbers related to. R Smyth explained that RAG is Red, Amber and Green. This assessed the performance target over the last rolling 12 month period, as well as the quarter period; this was to see how often an indicator has been green, amber or red. He said the purpose of this was to give the Committee a sense of how consistently DBC were performing. The Chair thanked R Smyth for the explanation.

Outcome: At the invitation of the Chairman, the Committee agreed the contents and recommendations of Finance & Resources report for Quarter two 2017/2018.



Cllr Elliot absented himself from the meeting.

**67**                    **Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - LEGAL GOVERNANCE & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

The Chair referred to Item 9, the Quarter 2 Performance Report for Legal Governance and Democratic Services, which will be introduced by Cllr Harden.

Cllr Harden highlighted the impressive work behind the scenes carried out by the legal team; he said this was represented in the report on a number of cases they have been successfully involved. Cllr Harden also highlighted the strenuous work being carried out by Members' Services at this time of year regarding the update of annual canvass. Cllr Harden advised he reported to Members at Full Council the non-requirement of returning forms with no change. He highlighted that that 17,000 forms were manually processed; that meant actually scanned by Officers, of which 11,000 have no change – he emphasised that was 11,000 forms coming back to the DBC that did not need to.

The Chair asked if DBC was doing as much possible to encourage people to update their information or validate their information on line, because there are other places within Hertfordshire, where the interaction electronically is as much as 98%. He said that DBC seemed to struggle with this.

Cllr Harden said that that he had asked whether the front page of the form could be adapted to highlight that if there was no change, there was no need to do anything, but there was a lot of information that has to be presented on that front page and unfortunately this could not be made any bolder. Cllr Harden said he had asked J Doyle to look at the potential to try and adapt something via the Electoral Commission, however there were very clear regulations surrounding this matter. He said that if there were Local Authorities in Hertfordshire that were having a better success rate, it is likely that DBC was already in consultation with them.

The Chair asked J Doyle for further comment. J Doyle said that in respect of the returns and recording of residents on the Electoral Register, DBC was equivalent with all the authorities in Hertfordshire. He explained that the front page of the form is almost set in Statute; therefore DBC could not change it too much. J Doyle said that DBC had tried to use advertising campaigns, bus tickets, cinema tickets, till tickets. He said DBC had tried to encourage the target audience to enrol on the Electoral Register electronically. J Doyle stated that there are other authorities in Hertfordshire experimenting with other ways of doing this and he had been in contact with them to share and learn lessons. DBC had also been in contact with the Electoral Commission to establish the extent of any possible changes to the form to encourage more electronic updates. He said he and R Smyth had conversations regarding how DBC could integrate with other in house IT systems to try and increase the electronic registration element.

Cllr Collins said that for some generations, doing things electronically was an obvious thing to do, however she said that DBC had to recognise that much of its client base would not know what was meant by “doing it electronically”. She said a certain level of sensitivity was required to help these people. Cllr Collins expressed concern, saying that she had seen an DBC employee talking to a lady of nearly 90 years of age, saying “and then you press return” and the expression on the lady’s face

showed that she did not understand what was meant. Cllr Collins said that she felt this individual had been bullied by a DBC employee. Cllr Collins stated that DBC needed to recognise that the manual application of things would gradually phase out as people became more familiar with new technology. Cllr Collins said that DBC may need to accept that this may cost more in the short term. She emphasised the need to be kind.

The Chair said that as a public meeting, he needed to clarify something. The Chair stated he was a little perturbed to hear Cllr Collins suggest that a member of the public was being bullied by a DBC employee. Cllr Collins stated that she withdrew the word "bullied". Cllr Collins said she did not consider the scene she was witnessing to be acceptable, but she re-iterated that she withdrew the expression "bullied".

Cllr Tindall why the FOI target had been completely missed. M Brookes said that throughout the year, there were very few occasions where the target was missed. He said the target is set deliberately high because it is a statutory target, therefore DBC tried to achieve 100% all the time, however, sometimes just due to the sheer volume of requests and the complexity of those requests, it could be difficult to meet them all. M Brookes said that when judged throughout the year, DBC met the FOI requirements.

Cllr Silwal asked a question relating to page 51 of the agenda pack. He asked for an explanation on how the Council addressed issues of begging, sleeping rough and such activities in the town centre. The Chair referred the question to M Brookes.

M Brookes said there was an issue in the town centre with rough sleeping and begging at times. M Brookes said this was dealt with on a case by case basis. He said DBC had issued injunctions against individuals however there was tendency for them to move on and then come back; further steps may then be required.

Cllr Silwal asked if DBC used Community Protection Notices. M Brookes explained that a Community Protection Notice was aimed at a person, prohibiting them from carrying out particular activities in an area. He said that DBC were also considering Public Space Protection Orders for the town centre, which would potentially bring in wider controls as a whole; he said this was area specific, rather than individuals. M Brookes also added that the Community Protection Notices were part of the new legislation that came through to strengthen Anti-Social Behaviour laws. He stated it was very successful in managing to deal with specific anti-social behaviour issues, faster.

Cllr Taylor raised a question relating to Pages 57 and 58 of the agenda pack regarding Member Development. He stated that the document incorrectly refers to 'Trudi Costin', who was now 'Trudi Angel'; he said this raises the question of whether other parts were incorrect. He said the document states "no data" in July, August and September, however he believed that this was because no sessions were held during this time. Cllr Taylor asked J Doyle to clarify this.

J Doyle confirmed that during this time there were no Member Development sessions. J Doyle said that the target data may be inaccurate due to incorrect recording or input, however J Doyle assured the Members that they were on target,

as was reported at the last Member Development Steering Group. J Doyle said he ensure this is done for the next meeting.

**Action Point: J Doyle to send Members the data for the Member Development sessions.**

Cllr Adeleke referred to pg 51, item 3, of the Agenda pack); regarding the number of successful prosecutions, in particular one relating to sub-letting a property. He said that when the Grenfell Tower tragedy occurred, one of the serious problems that Kensington & Chelsea Council faced was identifying tenants, as there was that there was a huge problem with sub-letting. He asked how widespread this issue was in the Borough, and if there were any enforcement programme in place to ensure that this kind of abuse is not rampant.

M Brookes said that he would come back to the Committee with as an answer to this, as this was not directly dealt with by Legal Services, but instead was a matter for the Estates Team who manage the properties.

**Action point: M Brookes to provide the Committee with further details of DBC's approach towards unlawful subletting of Council properties.**

Cllr Adeleke noted that the maximum penalty for such a prosecution was only £5,000; if the sub-letter had accrued proceeds of £9,000, this meant that even if someone gets caught, they will still end up with profit. M Brookes explained that this was a maximum level set by the Court and the Council was bound by that.

Cllr Tindall expressed concern about the increase of houses that were being divided and then let to multi users. He stated there are a number of areas where there town houses had been sub-divided into up to five individual bed-sits, which then cause considerable problems. He stated there is a fire risk, also parking and other risks and these tend to upset local residents. Cllr Tindall asked if multi-use dwellings were also investigated as a breach, alongside sub-letting.

Cllr Harden said he recalled that the Enforcement Team within Regulatory Services is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of residents within converted multiple occupancy premises. He stated that these questions may have strayed into Housing territory.

The Chair said it was the duty of everybody, Members of the Council or members of the public that if they believe there is a property being illegally used in multiple occupations, in any form, Council or private, they should report to the Council.

The Chair referred to Page 52, item 8 of the agenda pack and noted that R Hill, Licensing Team Leader was moving to a new position. He asked what was happening with regard to the recruitment of this role, as it was an important one in addressing a number of issues. M Brookes confirmed that the role was currently being advertised.

The Chair asked if any other Committee Members had any further questions, none were asked.

Outcome: At the invitation of the Chairman, the Committee agreed the contents and recommendations of Legal Governance & Democratic Services report for Quarter two 2017/2018.

## **68**                    **Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - PERFORMANCE, PEOPLE & INNOVATION**

The Chair introduced Item 10, the Performance and Risk Report and invited Cllr Harden to present it.

Cllr Harden said Members were concerned at the last meeting about how the complaint process had produced 'reds' within the performance and they asked R Smyth if it would be red next time. Cllr Harden congratulated the team as the performance data at both Stage 1 and Stage targets were within target. The Chair invited questions on this report.

Cllr Mclean referred to Page 61, point 2.1 of the Agenda pack, noting the sickness absence figures. He stated the figures were disappointing and asked for clarification over what period the 318.75 days had been calculated and received confirmation that the figures were over the last quarter. He asked what this figure is as a percentage. M Rawdon said that the target is 8 days per FTE; he would need to work out as a percentage.

**Action Point: M Rawdon to calculate 318.75 days of Sickness Absence as a percentage.**

Cllr McLean also asked for an explanation of the intended robust management process; he expressed concern that sick people could, and should, not be forced back to work. M Rawdon explained the Sickness Absence Scrutiny Group looked at every sickness case over the previous month to ensure DBC was acting in line with its procedures; this also enabled them to identify any trends or triggers. This meant if there was a concerning trend, this can be quickly addressed; he said that over the last year, it had reduced the sickness, however the figures had risen over the last few months. M Rawdon said that other initiatives were also being looked at to try and reduce sickness.

Cllr Harden said that over recent years the HR team have put in a great deal of work to try and resolve the issues. He wanted to reassure the Committee that as Portfolio holder, he also received a breakdown of what the issues or conditions were, and that this information was then reviewed with Officers at Portfolio meetings. He also highlighted that DBC had introduced a wellbeing programme, as well as mental health first aiders to provide support for mental health issues. This was to try and address stress or anxiety before it becomes a sickness issue. Cllr Harden said the positive steps that the team had taken were extremely encouraging.

Cllr Mclean said this was to be applauded. He asked if any particular trigger had been identified, e.g., the move to The Forum; he asked if it had worsened since then. He said that with increased emphasis on work from home, he wondered if some staff missed the camaraderie and support of working together. He also acknowledged the other people may prefer more flexible working.

M Rawdon said that in terms of The Forum, this had been reviewed and there was no difference in the sickness figures; indeed it had actually improved over the last 9 to 10 months. M Rawdon said that the purpose of the Sickness Absence Scrutiny Group was to look at the triggers to prevent people going off sick, rather than reacting to the situation when they are off sick.

R Smyth added that a survey had been carried out following the move to The Forum, and that the satisfaction levels were high within the working environment. The Chair added that in his journeys around the County, The Forum and how it works was held as a beacon of exciting good practice and innovative working.

Cllr Tindall asked that given the national statistics with domestic abuse and the number of staff at DBC, it was likely there were approximately 50 employees who may have problems at home. He asked where an individual was suffering from anxiety or stress, if HR sensitively explored the impact of their home life as well. M Rawdon confirmed this. He explained that part of the procedure was for Managers to keep in touch. He acknowledged that there was only a certain amount of information that people were willing to share, but that managers were trained managers to have open and frank discussions with staff. M Rawdon said there was also a 'return to work' interview, which does attempt to find out any significant information. He also explained that DBC have domestic violence training for managers and staff across the organisation.

R Smyth re-iterated the mental health first aiders so staff could talk to trained staff. He also highlighted the Employee Assistance Programme, where staff were able to access support about a range of issues, including domestic abuse. Cllr Tindall said that if any manager wanted assistance, particularly with items relating domestic abuse, they could contact him and he would provide any additional support or information that he was able. M Rawdon and R Smyth thanked Cllr Tindall.

The Chair referred to Page 63, 2.1.5 refers to the replacement of existing PCs, he asked if Officers could elaborate.

B Trueman explained that DBC was coming to the end of the life cycle with its current set of hardware; he said it was 5 years since the laptops/PCs had been replaced. He said that as they would shortly be out of warranty, DBC would start to replace them. He said that a tender process had taken place, looking at different types of equipment for different people. The Chair asked DBC would be replacing the entire stock. B Trueman confirmed this, saying this process would take at least 12 months.

Following a further question from the Chair, B Trueman said that it would be a mixture of sizes and devices, depending on what staff needed them for, e.g. working from home, in The Forum or predominantly in the field. R Smyth had brought examples of the devices to the meeting, and showed the different choices and explained their uses. The Chair asked which of those devices would be most appropriate for elected Members. B Trueman said there would be a formal assessment and evaluation in the next financial year, but there was a growth bid in the budget cycle for replacing iPads with almost certainly the Surface type devices in 2019/20.

Outcome: At the invitation of the Chairman, the Committee agreed the contents and recommendations of Performance, People & Innovation for Quarter two 2017/2018.

The Chair asked for comments on the future work programme.

Cllr Harden said the next meeting would be Joint Budget Scrutiny. Beyond this, he stated the future programme for F&R OSC was usually just quarterly updates. Cllr Harden advised the Committee that they could ask any department to come and provide further information about a particular subject. He highlighted that the next Housing OSC had Anti-Social Behaviour attending, to provide an overview of what they do and answers any questions. Cllr Harden stated that R Smyth and the team were happy to facilitate this for the Committee. Cllr Harden explained how useful this format is.

The Chair said it is useful and that he was grateful to Cllr Harden for mentioning this. He said that prior to this meeting, but too late for inclusion, he had raised it with D Skinner that the construction of these meetings follows a relatively predictable format. The Chair stated he would like to think that the Committee would identify a particular pertinent topic that could be focused on and explored in some level of detail.

Cllr Harden wanted to remind the Committee that there were two forthcoming joint OSCs, one in December and one in February. Cllr Harden said this is an excellent opportunity between the two joint Scrutinies identify what could go in next year's budget.

The Chair said that looking at the work programme, the January meeting is almost vacant, so that would be a good opportunity for the Committee and Officers to review this to consider if any further items could be added. He asked if everybody agreed with that course of action and all agreed.

The Meeting ended at 9.15 pm