

## MINUTES

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

6 MARCH 2019

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Armytage	England
Banks	Mahmood (Chairman)
Bassadone	Pringle
	W Wyatt-Lowe

**Portfolio Holders** – Councillor Griffiths (Housing) Councillor Marshall (Environmental Services) Councillor Harden (Community and regulatory Services)

**Officers:**

Fiona Williamson	Assistant Director (Housing)
Fiona Jump	Group Manager (Financial Services)
Ricky Lang	Mechanical and Electrical Team Leader
Matt Rawdon	Group Manager - People and Performance
Linda Roberts	Assistant Director (Performance, People & Innovation)
Alan Mortimer	Group Manager - Property and Place
Kayley Johnston	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

**23**            **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were agreed by Members and signed by the Chair.

**24**            **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Cllr Imarni, Adeleke, Mills and Fethney

**25**            **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was no declaration of interest.

**26**            **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None

**28**                    **Q3 - BUDGET**

F Jump presented the report and was happy to take questions from Members.

Cllr Bassadone referred to 5.3, the underspend on Kylna Court, how did that arise.

F Williamson said following Grenfell, they had to change the specification for cladding, and include the provision for sprinklers, so there was a change to the budget, which has resulted in a saving.

Post meeting note – the outturn figures for Kylna at Q3 do not reflect the final account, which is still being assessed.

Cllr England said, with the areas of slippage, why so much, what about the garages.

F Williamson said it was a decision to commence works after the Christmas shut down period on two garage sites, to have continuity of work.

The development sites can be complex, the negotiations can take longer. One sale is to currently due to complete at the end of March but it is essential that due diligence checks are completed before entering into contract, so slippage in the programme can incur. We try to maintain a rental income for as long as possible and we only give 1 weeks' notice for disposal. The identified slippage will be carried forward.

Cllr England referred to 3.3 garage voids, since the 2-year increase in rent has it been too much and people have handed the garages back.

F Williamson said that it could be one of a number of reasons; the Civica system now lets us see the popular/least popular ones and provides residents with the opportunity to see blocks closest to their address, which is a new function.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to appendix. The landscape is on a small screen, can you extenuate everything so it is easy to read and user friendly for those who are colour blind.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe also pointed out an error with appendix B, repairs.

F Jump confirmed that it was an error and that the formula had not pulled through.

**29**                    **Q3 - HOUSING**

F Williamson presented this report and was happy to take questions from Members.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said that he had received a complaint about ASB matters, it seems that with private landlords and tenants the council isn't responding, he hopes that this isn't the case and they are not being treated any differently.

One might be a HMO can we do anything to break down language barriers.

F Williamson said that ASB, between private occupiers was not in her remit but there is an ongoing project to produce a corporate policy that will provide a consistent approach regardless of tenure. If ASB between tenants is classed as a medium level, housing work directly with the tenants, if it is classed as high level then the ASB team will take over as they have more enforcement powers. There is a robust approach in both areas.

Regarding the suspected HMO F Williamson asked for details to be passed onto her and she will look into this.

Cllr Mahmood referred to Voids performance, is there staff to tackle it.

F Williamson said the team is nearly at full strength, with one person currently at offer stage in the recruitment process, which will complete the team.

Cllr England referred to community alarms KPIs, what is the number of buttons pressed rather than a percentage.

F Williamson said that they only get a percentage and not numbers; she will try to get numbers.

*Cllr Griffith arrived at 8:35pm*

Cllr Mahmood confirmed that the action points on Voids and ASB for the next reports.

### **30                    Q3 - PERFORMANCE, PEOPLE & INNOVATION**

M Rawdon gave an update on the report and was happy to take questions from Members.

Cllr Banks referred to item 4.2, adventure playground numbers. She asked about youth club centres like Bennetts End, Grovehill and Gadebridge, did we have figures for them.

M Rawdon was unsure; he asked who ran them, as it wasn't DBC.

Cllr Banks said that she thought it was run by Herts County Council. She also added that this was the 4<sup>th</sup> Year that Grovehill had had no heating.

Cllr Harden said that we don't have any involvement in youth centres its HCC.

Cllr Mahmood said it would be nice to know what's going on with youth centres and the attendance figures etc we use to have someone come from Youth Connexions to update us at OSC but this hasn't happened since J Still left, could we possibly invite them to the next meeting.

M Rawdon said he will happily contact them for figures and to see if they would come and do an update at OSC.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said that the HCC Local Area Partnership for Dacorum ("LAP" - comprising the 10 Dacorum County Councillors) often receives reports and

presentations from Youth Connexions. He suggested that we should ask YC to keep H&C and LAP informed at the same time - by sending the same papers to both.  
Andrew Williams chairs the LAP.

Cllr England referred to 8.1, the staff survey. The percentage, is that in line with previous returns.

Matt Rawdon said its always been around those figures.

Cllr England said is there any reason why or anything we can do to bump figures.

Matt Rawdon said he thinks the reason why is because they don't get much response back from Cupid Green as they don't use computers there so their return figures are always low there. We do encourage staff to fill it out but we cant force them, we have shortened the questions and we also enter staff into a competition to win vouchers if they complete the survey.

Cllr Bank asked if we could have historical staff survey figures to compare them with.

M Rawdon to send previous figures (email sent to Members on – 07/03/2019)

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said don't be disappointed with figures as 50% is high compared to elsewhere.

Cllr Bassadone suggested the old pencil and paper as this may also encourage people too, not everyone is computer confident.

Cllr England asked when the Sports Strategy was due to come to OSC and when the action plan comes what scrutiny will apply.

M Rawdon said that its worked out with everyone active to seek feedback which went well, good progress going forward. When it comes back any improvements will be welcomed.

Cllr England asked if the old playground at Gadebridge will be talked about, there has been lots of feedback regarding the fencing not being fenced in, will the action plan deal with this.

Cllr Harden said that we are looking at this and aspects of how, there are improvements to what we have done and include physical activities to get families more engaged.

Cllr Bassadone said that the Gazette reports residents saying about the sandpit needing a gate to stop dogs going in it.

Cllr Harden stated that the area is supposed to be self-policed and it is the responsibility of dog owners, we don't want to close things off and restrict it as that's not what its about.

Cllr Pringle said self-policing is the irresponsible ones and people will find it hard to challenge them, as it can be intimidating, there needs to be more of a balance.

Cllr Banks asked why other parks were fenced off then.

Cllr Harden said he believes its to safeguard children as they are play areas. The Gadebridge development isn't a metal enclosed park area it's a wooden outdoor play.

Cllr England asked what advice are the Council relying on to say that that is good advice.

Cllr Harden said its supported by other Councils and this is the way forward, he will get information for the committee on the studies behind it.

### **31                    SAFETY IN COMMUNAL AREAS POLICY**

R Lang gave an update on the policy and was happy to take questions from Members.

Cllr Pringle spoke about a case from a resident and her concerns about supported housing and communal areas/safety and the mix of tenants, some being young and some being old with issues. She mentioned about training for staff and safeguarding issues, explaining that frail people do not have the use of the communal facilities. She said that staffs need to be trained to manage issues of people not being able to use the facilities. There needs to be dispute resolution services so residents and relatives feel they are being dealt with.

Cllr Griffith said they do not have many residents under the age of 60 in EPD; you can only be there if you are vulnerable and as far as she is aware they are not getting complaints. These are people's homes not communal areas for anyone, if this did come up then there are things in place to deal with it.

Cllr Griffith asked Cllr Pringle to bring this specific case to the Officer to deal with.

Cllr England referred to the policy, point 2.4 compared to 2.1 said is zero tolerance being applied uniformly. He asked what the stats were to say how unsafe a doormat is.

R Lang agreed and said he would be more explicit with what/where zero tolerance is applied but he is referring to stairways and external spaces.

The reason why we have a zero tolerance is because if we give them a slippage they then take advantage, it's to keep them safe and not for the Council to make money.

Cllr England said not enough is being done, its someone's home.

Cllr Griffith said that she watched a video of a block of flats filled with mats etc, and then filled the room with smoke. She said it was a brilliant video and shows you how dangerous it is, she asked if it was possible to get the video off the fire service to put on the web as people don't realise the dangers.

Cllr Mahmood refereed to parking, its not in there can we include it. She also asked if people could report anonymously intimidation in EPD shared schemes.

Cllr Griffiths said that that is the job of a supported housing officer.

A Mortimer said issues could also be reported online.

## **32                    WORK PROGRAMME**

Cllr Bassadone stated that there was many items on the June agenda, could anything be pushed to July.

It was agreed for the sports strategy and EA to be added to the July Agenda.

The Meeting ended at 9.00 pm