

MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

5 FEBRUARY 2019

Present:

Councillors: Anderson (Chairman)
Birnie (Vice-Chairman)
Fisher
S Hearn
Hicks
Howard
Matthews
Silwal

Officers:

David Austin	Assistant Director - Neighbourhood Delivery
Sharon Burr	Corporate and Democratic Support Officer
James Doe	Assistant Director - Planning, Development and Regeneration
Fiona Jump	Group Manager - Financial Services
Chris Taylor	Group Manager - Strategic Planning and Regeneration
Craig Thorpe	Group Manager - Environmental Services
Sara Whelan	Group Manager - Development Management and Planning

Also in Attendance: Cllr Graham Sutton
Cllr Janice Marshall
Cllr England (for Cllr Bateman)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the ast meeting were agreed and signed.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Wyatt-Lowe, Cllr Timmis, Cllr Riddick, Cllr Ransley. Cllr England substituted for Cllr Bateman.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

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

None.

6 BUDGET PREPARATIONS 2019/20

Cllr Anderson asked the officers present if they had anything to add, specific to the s

J Doe gave the presentation for his service. He explained there were some updates/changes from the December meeting.

J Doe said that there are some changes around the financing of the contract for Hemel Market for some years the income has been around £60,000 per annum, the market contract expires today – 2 bids were made for the contract 1 of which was successful but the bidder pulled out, we were left with the prospect of not having a market, a meeting was called with Cllr Sutton. A further 12 months contract has been agreed with the current provider on a profit share basis. We are currently looking for re purposing and making improvements that can be made to the market working with Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Business Improvement District and members to decide the type of product and it will go out to tender again later this year so that a new contract should be in place by next year.

J. Doe then went on to talk about staffing within Development Management. Growth pressure of £30,000 per annum.

The final part of this presentation was information regarding CIL.

J. Doe then took questions from the members.

Cllr Birnie asked how the performance of the market operator would be monitored, and whether the expenses would be fixed.

C. Taylor said that we have monthly figures and takings from the market operator already and the agreement means that she or any representative from the Council are able to make a spot check as to how many stalls there are against his figures. Markets are feeling the impact of the downward turn in retail, but they would be discussing things that they could do to improve the market, such as evening opening etc., We have figures to use going forward for his expenses, which do not really change, it is more the number of stalls that varies.

Cllr Sutton added that there had been a number of meetings with this gentleman and it is important to have some sort of continuity with the market, we don't want to see the town without one. Hopefully over the next couple of months he said that we may have a Task and Finish Group to try and see what we actually want from the market because at the end of this year until February of 2020 it may well be that we try to do something different, we may try to do something independent so we should use this time to make sure that we have the best possible solution for the town.

Cllr England asked if only having 2 bidders for the contract had happened before, C. Taylor replied that it had – only 1 bidder 6 years ago, that was the person who is currently running the market. C. Taylor added that some councils actually pay

markets to come to their area and we may need to look at the market differently, with a balance between generating income and quality of the market.

Cllr Hicks asked whether stallholders were down and C. Taylor replied that they were.

J. Doe added that because of the lack of interest from other tenderers the Council is not in a strong position to dictate terms, he said that there is an understanding within the industry of who is out there and a good knowledge of who the competition is.

Cllr Hearn asked a question regarding Enforcement Officers – where does the money go to from fees and penalties if you are successful? If you win the case and there is a fine.

J. Doe explained that when there is an appeal case and we make an application to recover our costs that money comes back to us. In those cases where we have to enforce a non-compliance through the court, the fines don't. He added that he would have to check that point. J. Doe went on to say that they are now looking at profits from the proceeds of criminal activity and invoking the Proceeds of Crime Act.

Cllr Hearn expressed that he was hoping that was the answer that would be given and that it would be pursued.

Cllr Anderson asked if we were entitled to be spending money on CIL administration and J. Doe replied that it meant apportioning the time that an officer spends on CIL and demonstrating that there is a proper accounting of the time.

Cllr Hicks asked if to get more money in, more would have to be spent on administration and J. Doe said that was likely, but it would only be a proportion.

Dave Austin gave a presentation for his Service.

D. Austin explained that he would only be going through changes in his area, not repeating things from December.

Waste From Flats – following a successful trial last year, this has been approved at Cabinet.

The Capital Bid – there has been a sum of money approved to refurbish some of the Waste Transfer Station and it has become apparent that the changing rooms and toilet facilities at Cupid Green are in need of significant improvement.

Cllr Marshall explained that recycling commercial waste would be having charges introduced from the beginning of this financial year which should improve income and is incorporated in the figures. The amount of Trade refuse collected on a recycling basis is quite modest, but it was making a loss.

Cllr Birnie said that his understanding was we were losing customers and that is why we were losing money, so how he wanted to know how we would avoid losing more customers by charging.

Cllr Marshall explained that there are two types of Commercial Waste customer – one being all waste, for which we already charge and for which there has been a drop off in numbers. The second is trade waste that can be recycled, that is the waste that no longer generates an income and the one for which a charge is being introduced.

D. Austin said that there were around 700 residual waste customers and about 165 recyclable waste customers, letters have gone out to these customers to introduce the charge, it is still half the price of sending their waste to landfill.

Cllr Anderson asked if there would be an opportunity to do more if we can make it in the businesses interest – giving as an example food waste from restaurants.

D. Austin agreed that there is – this is Phase 1 and as soon as that is delivered Phase 2 will start in April, which will include discussion of new ways of dealing with food waste.

Cllr Sutton said he hoped we would also be looking at cooking oils and fats as they cause ongoing problems.

Cllr Birnie said that he noticed there was a charge for fixed term posts in relation to the flats recycling project and he wondered why we were only hiring for fixed term. Also there is a further £55,000 for the food waste project team – he wanted to know if people were hired specifically for this project.

C.Thorpe replied that this was just to complete the roll out of the recycling to flats, so it is for education and awareness of the flat dwellers after that it becomes part of the day to day operational plan. C. Thorpe added that we did have to hire people for the project, this is to roll out the food waste to another 7 or 8 thousand on top of the 1500 involved in the trial, he confirmed it would be a one off charge.

Cllr Hearn asked if £90,000 was realistic for all the improvements at Cupid Green and D. Austin replied that he and Graham Patterson have walked round it and building services have looked at what is required and it is felt that it is deliverable for that amount.

Cllr Hicks if there was a cost saving now food was taken out of waste.

C. Thorpe replied that there was not necessarily a cost saving but there were environmental pressures as well to remove the food waste and we are rewarded through Diversion of Waste from Landfill, but it is more about the environment.

There was a discussion about the Tourist contract. C. Taylor confirmed that Dacorum have reduced spend to £5,000, and that the service is getting quotes to rebuild the website and then there will be training arranged so it can be maintained and enhanced in-house.

Cllr Birnie asked if there were any areas which we have to call upon significant reserves.

J. Doe said that one major one was the Local Development Framework Reserve. Local planning work is much more regular now. The activity is higher. The Planning Enforcement and Appeals reserve is used when we have an adverse award of costs against us so it is not something normally budgeted for, it is quite a while since that happened.

S. Whelan added that it is also used for defending appeals and consultancy fees, advocacy etc. They are infrequent.

Cllr Birnie commented that Dacorum's record is good.

J. Doe explained that we get the appeals performance quarterly which is generally good. Next year we will be trying to put forward more about the success rate on enforcement cases. We have had some good news stories recently which we have requested are put out through the communications as they send a message to potential perpetrators

Cllr Birnie asked if there were enough staff and S. Whelan replied that it would be looked at next year as the work has increased over the last few years. There is a new Assistant Team Leader which is a great additional resource.

Cllr Anderson said that we have to be proportionate and act in the public interest.

Cllr Hicks asked the officers why they thought enforcement cases were going up.

S. Whelan said that she wasn't sure but there were more people working on their homes and more applications.

J Doe suggested that it feeds into the Local Plan – more is being reported.

Cllr Matthews asked whether there was confidence that the new posts would be filled and S Whelan replied that they already are.

Cllr Matthews then asked a question about fly tipping and whether we had sufficient provision for managing and removing it.

D Austin answered that we have sufficient resource for the removal of fly tipping – trying to catch people is the hard part, he added that there was a joint operation with the Police in a couple of weeks entailing stopping vehicles carrying waste and asking to see the Duty of Care documentation. In addition we have applied to Magistrates Court to use covert cameras in a difficult area. There are still, on average, around a hundred fly tips a month. We are getting more prosecutions and we are clearing them quickly.

Cllr Anderson thanked the officers for their presentations.

7 WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Marshall asked about the Work Plan – Cllr Anderson advised that there were a lot of guests attending the meeting in March in connection with the Air Quality item, and it would be first on the agenda.

Cllr Birnie said that he noticed car parking standards were on the Agenda for the March meeting, Cllr Anderson confirmed this and said that J Doe would be giving an interim report.

J Doe said it will be pre-cursor to cabinet meeting in March.

J Doe added that the SW Herts plan may have to be put back as the information may not be ready, Cllr Anderson agreed that this would be fine as it is not time critical.