

MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

26 MARCH 2019

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Anderson (Chairman)
Birnie (Vice-
Chairman)
Fisher
Hicks
Howard
Ransley
Silwal
Timmis
C Wyatt-Lowe

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 Attendance:

The meeting began at 19:30

8 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed.

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Bateman, Hearn, Howard and Matthews.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

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

None.

13 **BUDGET MONITORING Q3**

Fiona Jump presented this item and explained that the purpose of the report was to present the financial position of the council as at the end of December, but the timing of the report is probably less than ideal as some of the items would have moved on.

Cllr Birnie asked a question regarding Para 3.1 Page 62 – 2nd paragraph the forecast overspend of £18k – are these agency staff?

J Doe replied No. These are new trainees, and an additional officer, all employed directly by us due to the acceleration of the Local Plan.

Cllr Birnie said that he had a question about 3.4 on the same page, regarding an independent consultancy report that is referred to and wanted to know if this was part of the review of the commercial waste service, or to do with the flats.

D Austin replied that this was for Plan B it includes major work and recommendations on work on the Commercial Waste Services as well– They looked at productivity of the front line rounds for example, garden waste tonnages, and a few other areas. They are waste service specialists. Cllr Birnie asked if will have an effect on our dealing with commercial waste and D. Austin confirmed that it already has

Cllr Hicks asked why the fleet replacement was put off.

C.Thorpe replied that they were looking at standardising the fleet as at the moment we have 16 or 17 different types of vehicles to cover different types of work and so they have spent more time putting together a tender to ensure we can reduce the amount of vehicles which then reduces spares etc and means that one vehicle can do more than one task. He added that it was also allow us to carry out more of our own maintenance.

Cllr Riddick wanted to know the vehicle warranty period, and whether we would see maintenance costs decrease during that period.

C. Thorpe agreed that the maintenance costs should decline during the three year warranty period offered by the manufacturer.

Cllr Fisher asked if the survey work mentioned in 3.2 was in response to an emergency or if it was likely to occur again. James Doe will email a response to the committee regarding this.

Cllr Birnie asked if the new vehicles were more adaptable and C. Thorpe agreed that they were.

Cllr Anderson asked a question regarding the pressure of work on the Local Plan – do we have to include some growth in the budget moving on.

J. Doe replied that the posts in place are 2 year posts to deal with fluctuations of work. There is a fixed amount of funding for each year but it will sometimes vary because of work pressures. The plan has to be reviewed every five years now.

The report was approved.

14 **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES Q3 REPORT**

This item will be merged with item 10

15 **ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION Q3**
PERFORMANCE REPORT

D. Austin presented the report. He first gave the highlights which included improvement dealing with flytipping. Lots of activity in Enforcement Activity and the new Dog PSPO approved by cabinet last Tuesday.

Cllr Riddick asked about 6.3 – prosecution pending regarding defendant who didn't turn up and warrants for his arrest have been issued – what is the current situation.

D. Austin explained that it is ongoing.

Cllr Riddick then asked about fly tipping in Rucklers Lane, which Cllr Anderson confirmed he had also reported.

D. Austin said that he was not aware of any evidence with this.

Cllr Anderson said that Nicola Loebendon assured him that the tip was being investigated and would be cleared at the end of the investigation.

A question was asked regarding how many cameras we have available to deal with fly tips and how often are they moved.

D. Austin explained that we have to go to Magistrates Court for approval to use these covert cameras, we have 6 and 2 or 3 are needed to capture angles at a site.

Cllr Timmis asked about fly tipping on private land and whether the Council was looking at enforcing fly tipping on private land and at the side of the road as it is often difficult to establish whose responsibility it is.

D. Austin replied that there is a new protocol being developed with the Highways Committee involving 10 districts in Herts and the County Council have agreed to provide clarity around those type of incidents – and whose responsibility it is. He said that to the best of his knowledge we are not using Community Protection Notices for the prosecution of fly tipping. There is a pilot scheme as part of the County wide scrap fly tipping campaign with some private land owners helping them with these types of issues and he will speak to Duncan Jones who heads this up and provide the Committee with more information.

Cllr Birnie asked what lone working devices as detailed in 4.4 are, and if the costs would be detailed in Q4.

D. Austin said that Russell Ham and his team reviewed the Lone Working Policy and looked at devices that those working alone can use – the technology will flag an alarm if there are any issues with someone's safety or if they have a problem while working alone as we have a duty of care towards them as employees, so we have just rolled out these new devices as part of that work stream. There will be an update, including the costs in Q4.

Cllr Hicks said that he knew a fly tip has to be investigated before removal – but existing fly tips attract others to dump rubbish and he wondered if there was a way to utilise cameras to capture new offenders.

D. Austin responded that the cameras are used in fly tipping 'hotspots' - the hotspots have to be identified in terms of the number and types of fly tipping that happen in the particular area as justification for them, there is nothing to stop us within that hiding a camera within an existing fly tip as part of that strategy. We are looking at the ration between the number of fly tips we deal with which is over 100 a month and how many we actually find evidence in.

Cllr Riddick enquired what happened if there was an obvious contaminate like asbestos – does this give an opportunity to do something more quickly.

D. Austin replied that when something of that nature occurs our enforcement officers are trained in the handling of hazardous materials. He added that it is a difficult area but hopefully with the work of the Herts Waste Partnership the situation will improve.

The Report was approved.

16 **PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

J. Doe presented the report.

J. Doe said that touching on the exceptions to performance – building control, we think that we will finish the year under our target level of income but we have pulled back some ground which means that it is better than previously forecast. There has been a blip on the application processing times, the aim is to hit 100% of all cases being turned round from two months of receipt. There is a new manager who has come in and drastically turned things around and we are now turning a lot of cases around in one day now which is exceptional performance but there has been a backlog which have been left behind which reflects in the 90% level you see for this quarter.

Land charges income recurring theme this year largely because the property transaction sector is rather low at the moment. It is now rising but the income will be downgraded when we set the budget for next year.

Cllr Timmis asked whether the property market slow down extended to new builds.

J. Doe explained that it mainly impacts on the 2nd hand market.

J.Doe added that time is being put into the new software system and Cllr Anderson asked whether there were any timescales for this and J.Doe replied that September is the aim.

Cllr Birnie – Council completions are really irrelevant as far as the income is concerned, but is there any evidence that the private sector is not completing at the rate that we expect.

J.Doe replied that the full picture will be seen in a few months' time.

Cllr Anderson – asked whether there was any indication as to way forward with Building Control.

J.Doe said that there would be a part II report on that in due course and that he was hoping to bring some proposals through to cabinet in the Summer as discussions are ongoing regarding future options for the service.

Cllr Anderson enquired about how many appeals were allowed or dismissed but it shows that 28% of cases were allowed on appeal. 2 were allowed recently and we lost costs.

J>Doe responded that our target is 70% which is around the national average. Our appeal performance has been good. He added that the appeal cases are being monitored carefully.

The report was approved

17 **CSG AND WASTE ANNUAL REVIEW**

C. Thorpe presented the Environment Q3 Report..

C. Thorpe explained that this would only be a brief overview as everything was contained in the annual review. He addressed sickness figures, and said that 42%

was gastro-intestinal, and more welfare facilities are being installed at Cupid Green and also new vehicles with new hand wash basins which should improve the situation, he added that 9% was muscular-skeletal and a lot of work is being done on manual handling, including a consultant working with all the crews to improve this.

The report was approved

C. Thorpe presented the CSG and Waste Annual Review.

C.Thorpe explained that the report went back a year to the last big Spring clean. He went on to say that there was a clothes swap event which was successful, and the compost give-away was very popular and the compost went within two hours.

C. Thorpe announced that following the food waste trial going to cabinet the collection would be starting in April for all flats in the borough. He then went through the other items on the report.

Cllr Birnie asked why the Community Champion awards are coming to an end this year and C. Thorpe explained that the same people are receiving the awards year after year and so something different will be tried, probably involving businesses.

Cllr Ransley said that she was interested in the part of the report that spoke about going into schools, particularly the part about the local council recycling clear plastic bottles to build greenhouses.

C. Thorpe said that Sunnyside Trust has been helped in this way as well.

Cllr Timmis asked if the signs on the A41 have made any difference in terms of littering.

C. Thorpe replied that at the moment it is too early to tell.

Cllr Timmis then went on to ask about food waste and said that as we are now going into schools to make children more aware, what about Restaurants in the area, they have no separate food waste and yet they must generate a lot so they should also be encouraged not to waste food but to use it. Cllr Timmis also asked about food collection for the restaurants.

C. Thorpe replied that there are food waste collectors out there and explained that at present we are setting up a charging mechanism for our customers that we are providing a service for and then further down the line we will be looking at the whole of our commercial recycling service and food may be one of those items that we look at.

Cllr Hicks asked what a Bring Site was, and asked for more information about the Roman Mound that has been uncovered.

C. Thorpe replied that it is one of the community sites that you will find mainly in neighbourhood precincts etc., there are 27 of them at present. He explained that the Roman Mound had become overgrown with trees and hedges so it was cleared in order that the public could see it.

Cllr Anderson remarked that he thought the signs along the A41 were excellent and highly visible.

Cllr Howard said that she had heard some of the bins were cracking and wondered how long they last.

C. Thorpe responded that there has been a problem with the blue-lidded bins not lasting as long as the previous ones used and that he is in discussion with the manufacturers.

The Chairman thanked C.Thorpe for an excellent report.

The report was approved.

The Meeting ended at Time Not Specified