

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

4 SEPTEMBER 2019

- Councillors:** Adeleke (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs Bassadone
England
Imarni (Chairman)
Mahmood
Pringle
Durrant
Johnson
Oguchi
Hollinghurst
Barry
Freedman
- Officers:**
- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Alex Care | Community Partnerships Team Leader |
| Fiona Jump | Group Manager - Financial Services |
| Alan Mortimer | Group Manager - Property and Place |
| Matt Rawdon | Group Manager - People |
| Linda Roberts | Assistant Director - Performance, People and Innovation |
| Lucy Tash | Accountant (Finance and Operations) |
| Sarah Turner | PA to the Corporate Directors |
| Tracy Vause | Strategic Housing Team Leader |
| Layna Warden | Group Manager - Tenants and Leaseholders |
| Annie Smith | Community Partnerships and Wellbeing Officer |
- Also Attendance:** Banks
Griffiths
Douris

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

56 **MINUTES**

The Chairman advised that the minutes need to be amended to include some additional comments that have been made and they will be circulated for approval.

57 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Arslan.

58 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

59 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None.

61 **QUARTER 1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

F Jump presented the Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report and asked Committee for any questions.

The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Williams had mentioned that the agenda was becoming quite large, because there was a lot of business to be done and we must stick to questions that relate to the agenda items. If there any additional areas that you want to discuss please contact me as the Chair and we can table it onto a future Committee. The comment wasn't aimed specifically at this group but just Members in general.

Cllr Mahmood queried how long the garages have been on the agenda and wondered whether this could be taken forward. Cllr Mahmood wondered if there is an opportunity to sort them once and for all. F Williamson advised there was an action plan and we want to ensure performance is optimised. We are currently part way through a stock condition survey and we will be able to look at our investment strategy. Aligned to that is the disposals programme, where the Council started two years ago disposing of garage sites. We have a future programme of disposals and we are trying to ensure we maintain the occupancy of those garage sites up until the point we have a firm offer. We have had a number of sites where offers have fallen through which have obviously delayed the sales process and we have had all of those garage blocks void during those periods. In terms of our approach there are various things that we have now introduced into the system and we are looking to advertise and promote the garages, we have just appointed a new officer who has started in post, they are working through an online lettings process, which is similar to Choice Based Lettings. That will enable people to express an interest and we can look at demand for certain sites. The aim is to have a complete purge of all of the void garages to get them advertised and from the demand and stock condition information we will be able to rationalise the use of those garages that we can get to virtually full occupancy, looking at the some sites for disposal. We are not just looking at open market disposal for development but for other opportunities such as potential use for allotments or self-build projects, so we are now considering wider opportunities that could benefit the community.

Cllr Mahmood asked if we had looked at the option of building garages that are more suitable for modern day cars. F Williamson said that we have looked at this, we have obtained quotes for new modular garages that are larger and have more capacity for the larger modern cars.

Cllr England said that one of the first questions he had asked three years ago was whether there was a stock condition survey for the garages, at the time he was told that there wasn't one and he was told that in 2014 a number of sites were identified for disposal. Cllr England asked which are the garage sites that are now being looked at, are they those sites which were for disposal or is there another list.

Cllr Griffiths highlighted the point made by the Chairman earlier and would it be worth perhaps speaking to you afterwards and asking for the strategy on garages to come to this Committee, which she thought it was already and she was not trying to stop the debate, but the agenda item is about the outturn and not really about garages. The Chairman said it was a valid suggestion and asked if Cllr England was happy with that. Cllr England confirmed that he was.

Cllr England said that on the revenue side, we have had two years where we've put the rents up by 10% which is a large increase and especially a large one to be repeated. Cllr England asked if we felt that the two increases had not worked and had not been appropriate in retrospect. F Williamson confirmed this had been looked at in the overall strategy and the decision was made this year not to have any increase and that included an inflationary increase. It puts us, in terms of comparable garage rents, in the locality, we are competitive and therefore the desire to keep them at the level they were last year without any increase is in part to try and address that concern.

Cllr Mahmood mentioned the underspend on vacant posts if we seem to be doing a good job without them, are the staff needed. We have had this saving for years and years and Cllr Mahmood wondered how we are coping without those people. L Warden advised that we definitely need the staff and we are just about coping but we are not particularly reducing the risk that we should be. A lot of the vacancies have been things like secondments, which is a great opportunity for staff to trial other posts on a short term basis but often they tend to move around housing, which has a knock on impact on subsequent roles. We are then struggling to fill posts which mean they are vacant for longer. It is actually putting a huge pressure on the service at the moment so we're trying to find a number of things, for example we have agency staff in some posts. Alan has been doing a lot of work with the surveyors looking at salary rates because some of that isn't competitive with private sector so we struggle to fill those posts. It has had quite a significant impact on the service and we are continuing to try and do the best that we can which is highlighting some of the key risk areas and focussing on those, but the pressure is definitely building up. The important thing for us now is to make sure that we get those posts covered as quickly as possible to allow us continue to make sure we are not missing things

Cllr Mahmood asked about the provision for bad debt where we always seem to have £975k, where does that go. F Jump advised that it was held on the balance sheet and it is reviewed on a regular basis and drawn down as needed. It will either be increased or reduced at the end of the financial year as deemed necessary. It is

utilised if needed but any balances that are not used are carried forward into future financial years.

The Chairman highlighted the £1.2m underspend on Stationers Place because the contingency wasn't needed and this comes up every year when we say are we forecasting correctly, previously it was that we were going over-budget but this seemed to be significantly under-budget and I'd like to understand what the issues were around why it needed such a big contingency. F Williamson replied that with Stationers Place, the main issue was in respect of some work that the Environment Agency had asked us to carry out to a culvert and ultimately we made the decision that rather than undertake that work, which would be very costly and potentially not have a huge benefit to the orientation of the site, it was better to look at the scheme design and reduce the number of units by two, so that in part is why there is a larger contingency because the original budget included for the works to the culvert.

Cllr England asked for clarification on Eastwick Row and the £900k purchase of the land, if it was just moving money around from Housing Revenue Account to General Fund. F Jump confirmed it was movement within the Housing Revenue Account from one Capital line to another, so it's taking money from the new build general expenditure line and moving it to Eastwick Row.

Cllr Hollinghurst mentioned the difficulties with the Environment Agency found itself in with the culvert, we've lost two housing units and asked if we got any compensation. F Williamson confirmed it was two flats and because of its proximity to canal and in order not to cause any contamination issues into the canal, there was a requirement for us to either change our design in terms of piling and also diverting the culvert, on balance our view was that it was better to redesign and reduce the number of units by two.

Cllr Hollinghurst felt this was the responsibility of the Environment Agency or were we as landowners acquired responsibility. F Williamson advised that as the developer of the site we would be responsible for any changes that might affect the water course.

Councillor Mahmood said that it sounded like a good decision.

62 QUARTER 1 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

F Williamson presented the Quarter 1 Housing Performance report and asked the Committee for any questions.

Cllr Friedman said that the split out between general properties and adapted/special and queried if the target for general homes turnaround time more aggressive than it was six months ago when it was a combined target. F Williams advised that the general needs has remained at the same target, so it's not any more aggressive, but we do monitor any exceptions to the average times. Tracy Vause and Alan Mortimer, Tracy works on the allocations side and Alan works on the works time, so progress during the empty homes refurbishment works.

Cllr Friedman mentioned at the last meeting we were talking about voids, mainly the sheltered and adapted and now that the information appears to show that the general has been the problem. You said that you have plans to tackle that and asked for more details. T Vause advised that they had been split out and we have identified

that general needs does tend to be the one that we are struggling with meeting the targets. We are reflecting true key to key times within every figure that we're reporting, so from the moment that the property becomes void and comes back to us, until the day we sign up a new applicant. We are looking at every area where we can find some improvements, so looking at advertising properties before they are void, advertising properties for three working days and then working through shortlist to quite strict targets. We always come across different issues, sometimes we have to go down to the 17th or the 18th person on the list, for a number of reasons with the allocations, but we try and do multiple transfer visits for every property that's being advertised, so that we are getting as many applicants ready for a potential offer. That increases the workload for Alan's Lettings Officers because they have to do more visits. We are looking at different workstream reviews that we can do to improve each element of the process. Alan is working very closely with the contractors to reduce the amount of time that the keys are onsite with the contractors having works completed, because until they are back with us, we can't sign up the tenancy. We have made lots of changes to the Policy last year with regards to refusals, to try and reduce the amount of refusals that we are getting through because they cause significant delays where we have gone all the way through the process for someone to then turn it down when the property is ready for viewing. We are looking at all areas where we can mitigate any quick wins that we can do to reduce the timeline of keys.

Cllr England said that the idea of stripping out the adapted was because we knew that they were skewing the figures, but it sounds as if we still have outliers which are dragging up the average, so we still have that problem of looking at a measure which isn't really telling us the typical measure of turnover because it's still corrupted or contaminated by the outliers. Cllr England asked if there was any point in trying to take the process further or is it more trouble than it's worth. T Vause advised that with regards to the figures that are in the general needs, we still include any properties that have major works, so longer term voids that have substantial repairs or clearances required, also we still report on anything that properties considered for adaptations and then released back to general needs as not suitable, so they might have been stuck there for a while and properties that are being considered for disposal but then decided to keep and they are put back to general needs. What we are trying to do is reporting true key to key, so every property that is void for the period, but within the more in-depth commentary we will break it down to say if we took these out, this is what the true figure would be, to see whether it's worth looking at further separating the figures as we move forward.

Cllr Mahmood commented on the key to key period, that we do this thousands of times over the years and asked how is it that we've set an ambitious target and were missing it, or are we looking to the process to find out where the delay is. For example; is it the survey, the longer that people living in the house a month before giving notice and if you're a private landlord you're going to have a look. Perhaps if the tenant gives us a list of what's wrong with the house. If you macro breakdown the process where is the problem. A Mortimer confirmed that we are looking at the processes. We've had some staffing changes, there has been some silo/disparate working within the teams and they are now working much more closely aligned and are being integrated across as well, so we have an understanding of what's affecting each part of the process. We are now looking at that macro level as you suggested, what can we do, what do we have to do, what can be done concurrently, not just consecutively. It's only by actually going into the level of details can we really strip

down to what is the tightest target we can possibly get and then work towards that. With regards to target we've currently set, I would say that's an industry standard, that's not an unfair or unreasonable target to try and achieve. If anything we need to be identifying why we are not hitting that target and why we're not hitting it more often.

Cllr Mahmood said that we just seem to be doing the same thing and we are not putting it right. A Mortimer advised that even within the void, each void has got a different category, so some have got a lesser extent of work, so should be turned around quicker, and a category 4 void, is the worst we can get. With the detail we are going into we are discovering that are coming back in a worse condition, which means they require additional amounts of spend, but it's not just the value, it's the volume of works required within that, so that can skew the figures. I think we can improve it.

Cllr Mahmood said that he looks forward to the report in due course.

L Warden also mentioned that an element of this is ensuring that we do the right work while tenants are in situ as well, so making sure with the condition of the property, like introducing audits where we visit every single property, once every five years as a minimum, those kind of things should have a positive impact on the condition of the property when they are being handed back. Housing Officers are working closely with the voids team to make sure that work that we can do while they are a tenant will assist us to get back the property in better condition.

L Roberts highlighted that this is one of those times when you need to look at things differently, we have gone out to tender to look at business process analysis and review. One of the options that we've gone out to tender on is the voids process. Some of the people we have been in discussion with have dramatically reduced the void processes in other councils and it's by using people very skilled in process mapping and discussions, their facilitation and carry on of the work that the team has already started will hopefully make some differences and show us where we might be able to use the same approach on other processes that need looking at within the Council.

Cllr Adeleke asked about Universal Credit, in terms where people are falling into rent arrears, is the figure going up or down, if it's going up what extra efforts are we making to support tenants. Cllr Adeleke also wanted to know the number of people being supported by the Homeless Team is going up but it's not indicated by what percentage, what was it two months ago and what is it now. L Warden said in regards to Universal Credit, the last report indicated that rent arrears as a whole, as the number of people in receipt of Universal Credit goes up, the number of people in rent arrears goes up, however the amount per household is decreasing slightly as we've put a few steps in place with our new Universal Credit Officer. One of the key things is when a tenant moves in, a high percentage of them make their first benefit claim and go straight onto Universal Credit, so we've introduced some regular drop in sessions at Kylna Court for example, and will continue to do that for any of our new build schemes. Some of those approaches are having a positive impact on ensuring we are being more proactive. Last month or the previous month we bought a full detailed report of the impact of Universal Credit, we'll continue to work through some of the actions and some of the things set out and look to give an update when we have a bit more information about the wider role out of transferring our existing

housing benefit onto Universal Credit, which will be a massive impact, but we are waiting to hear a bit more information about how that will happen from the DWP. F Williamson said that she could provide the Homeless figures from June 18 and June 19, the number of main duty applications in June 18 was 3 and in June 19 that had gone up to 26, the number of rough sleepers have stayed the same in that period. The number of cases where we have been able to prevent homelessness, last year was 35 but that was under the old system, whereas under the Homelessness Reduction Act we get involved earlier and 25 people have been prevented from homelessness June 2019, but the number of cases where relief has been successful, where we are ensuring we discharge our duty and people are then housed, June 2018 there were 3 people and June 2019 has gone up to 16 people.

Cllr Hollinghurst thanked F Williamson and confirmed that his question relates partially to the response on homelessness. We have a wider responsibility for housing than simply our own stock and questioned is how much intervention we carry out these days with regards to vacant private accommodation that could be used for housing but is for some reason vacant and not being rented out. F Williamson advised that we have a Private Rented Sector Team that are currently undertaking a piece of work around empty homes within the borough, there has also been a change in the Council Tax that is liable on empty properties and at the end of two years there's a full 100% rate that is applicable and then that goes up to 200% of the property being vacant for five years. That has meant that we've seen an increase in enquiries to the Council in respect of any grant funding that's available to bring properties back into use. We are currently looking at a project around what our options are as a Council because we don't have any available Capital funding to be able to provide grants to owners in the private sector to bring those properties back into use. The options are either then to take on a management order, in which case you still have to bring them back up to a habitable condition and in some cases that would require some Capital investment, the third option is to go for compulsory purchase, which is a lengthy process and again requiring Capital investment. We are looking the numbers within the Borough and over the last year they range between 88 at the lowest end and 111 at the highest end, that was the total number of empty properties in the private sector and in the Council owned stock as well.

Cllr Hollinghurst said that if we have to acquire under the 2004 Housing Act if we require the landlord to spend money on his property to bring it up and they can't, can we do the work and put a charge on the property. F Williamson confirmed that we don't have anything in place at the moment in legal terms due to the priority for HMO licensing changes for the private rented sector. The majority of their focus have been on properties in the private sector that are currently let out meet the required standards. This piece of work has just started on empty homes, there's actually a National Empty Homes Week, the last week in September, where we will be looking at other interventions that Council's undertaken currently to try and bring empty homes back into use.

Cllr England asked what number are we at with HMO's with the number of registered HMO's, we're being told that we need to get to 900, are we making progress towards that. F Williamson said that we have 144 dwellings licenced as at the end of quarter 1, which compares with 125 dwellings at June 2018. We are also processing about 30 licence applications.

Cllr England enquired about Universal Credit where at the last Committee we would invite some of the stakeholders to come in so that we can force them to hear what you want to tell them. The Chairman said she met with F Williamson over the summer and Officers have done quite a bit of work, Natasha is the lead on this and after the last meeting she had some quite positive meetings where people had been willing to come to the Council and meet her. The Chairman is yet to get the updated list of who she is still outstanding to see but it's definitely not off the radar and we did take your point up and act on it. It would be a shorter list than the list that came to this Committee just before the summer because there has been some meetings organised by Natasha and held with the team and they were very happy with the outcome.

Cllr Mahmood said that overall the performance was pretty good, rents rising, HMO's increasing and more satisfaction on anti-social behaviour. In terms of the Homeless Reduction Act and delivering a mechanism jointly with St Albans, which is coming to a conclusion in June. Cllr Mahmood asked how that had gone and what was the outcome. F Williamson confirmed that we received the rough sleeper initiative funding of £200k and that is to provide outreach workers to support street homeless and people who are struggling to access any of the services that can provide the correct pathways. The positions have now been advertised and we are shortlisting, the hope is that we can work in conjunction with Hightown who already have the infrastructure set up for outreach work.

Cllr Mahmood asked where St Albans comes into it. F Williamson advised it was a joint bid on behalf of the two districts.

Cllr Oguchi queried the mid-level increase in anti-social behaviour seemed like a big increase, 67% to 83% and asked if there was a reason for this. F Williamson confirmed this was an increase in the satisfaction in how the cases were handled. In terms of the volumes that's not reported, but if you would like to see that reported so that you can understand whether the percentages go up because there's less cases, we can report the figure as well.

Cllr Johnson said that the report mentions investigating offsite and modern methods of construction. Cllr Johnson asked what the timescales were for feeding back whether this was successful in delivering housing in Dacorum. F Williamson highlighted that we have been working with a consortium with registered providers that's being led by Watford Community Housing Trust, the intention is to provide sufficient volumes to make it attractive to the offsite manufacturers. One of the possible outcomes is that if there is sufficient volume in the locality they may look to actually provide a manufacturing plant based in Dacorum, so there is dual benefits to the Council if we are able to achieve that, but we need to get buy-in from a number of registered providers to commit to the volumes that would make that worthwhile.

Cllr Mahmood mentioned the study that we are doing on lots of flats, where we could have pods for bathrooms etc. we could have thousands of these with that study. F Williamson said that we are looking at predominantly low rise developments, just because of concerns over any form of timber framed construction in respect of height and fire risk.

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PERFORMANCE REPORT

M Rawdon presented the quarter 1 performance report for the services he manages and invited questions from the Committee.

Cllr Barry asked if the 3 D pitch at Grovehill was open to more than just the adventure playground. M Rawdon confirmed that it will be open to children for free play and available for people to hire, we will be looking at appropriate fencing and how best to manage with a better booking system and codeless entry, which seems to be the most effective way of managing it while still keeping as much of the income as we can.

Cllr Barry mentioned that the turning is pretty awful when you turn into the Adventure Playground and wasn't the sports track was going to be moved there but it was not suitable. M Rawdon confirmed it was one of the reasons but the level traffic will be a lot less than hiring out a sports pitch, although there will be increased visitors he didn't think it would be significant traffic.

Cllr Adeleke said that the Adventure Playgrounds appear to be in Hemel Hempstead but there is no provision in areas like Berkhamsted, Tring and outlying areas, all the reports seems to miss out these areas. M Rawdon replied that we have the facilities in Hemel Hempstead and we look to improve them and run them as best we as we can. We have inflatable pop ups in other areas, which are children events. We are looking at it but it is difficult as the Playgrounds are located in Hemel, but point taken, obviously residents outside of Hemel are just as important.

Cllr Adeleke advised that about 5 or 7 years ago he raised the same questions and would it be appropriate, through the Chair, to ask if we can have Youth Activities to support outer Hemel areas on the Committee over the next months or year. The Chairman said that she will liaise with the Directors for timetabling and feasibility of that.

Action: The Chairman

Cllr Adeleke suggested that the Old Town Hall marketing scope included plans to attract Members and Staff to events so that we can help advertise what's going on there. It would be good to know what you can do to encourage Members and staff to attend. M Rawdon mentioned that there is a report coming to the next Scrutiny Committee and it will set out some of the challenges and ideas, but we can include marketing ideas.

Cllr Bassadone enquired about the problems with the splash park but they've been sorted out now and asked when it will close. M Rawdon mentioned that it was not his area and he would find out from Dave Austin, he believed the maintenance issues had been sorted out and he will refer back to Dave as to when it closes.

Action: M Rawdon

[After meeting note: The splash park will be closing for the autumn/winter break on Sunday 29th September 2019.]

Cllr Mahmood asked about gang and knife crime reporting, that we didn't want that problem in our town, where do the public go to report complaints. I would initially

suggest they go to the Police, this Support Worker is one post that is shared across Hertfordshire so we need to be careful that they can manage the workload. It's very early days in terms of that post and we are just working out the mechanisms for how people will report issues into the post.

Cllr Mahmood asked if it was a problem in the Borough. M Rawdon confirmed that it was and also nationally. We are no different to the national picture.

Cllr England commented on the Adventure Playgrounds and the s106 money for the 3G sports pitches, that was obviously in the action plan, to get more pitches. Cllr England mentioned the point made by Cllr Adeleke regarding facilities outside of Hemel, and asked if this needs to be a line in the Action Plan or in the Sports Activity Policy, because you are saying that the Adventure Playgrounds need to attract more sports clubs and visitors. M Rawdon said you are right, but there are conditions on the s106 money around where you can spend it. There is a bigger issue in terms of 3G pitches across the Borough, but with that particular one it had to be in that vicinity.

Cllr England said that the fact the funding is coming from s106 fights with the strategic objective of doing what Cllr Adeleke wants which is to spread out the facilities. M Rawdon confirmed it was a challenge.

Cllr England asked about the work that the Community Safety Team had undertaken with the Police, 130 vehicles stopped and a number of arrests, can we have the numbers. M Rawdon will provide the information.

Action: M Rawdon

[After meeting note:

A total of 130 vehicles were stopped during the six hour operation

- Six people were arrested for the following offences; taking a vehicle without consent, drink driving, drug driving. Four people were arrested for possession of drugs with intent to supply.*
- Ten vehicles were seized for numerous offences including no insurance, driving licence or tax.*
- Ten Traffic Offence Reports (TORs) were issued for no insurance, bald tyres and no MOT.]*

Cllr England asked about the placement of the electronic sign for main reception. M Rawdon confirmed that where the visitor book is at the moment, there will be an iPad which will scan someone's face and then they need to fill in their details and we will give them a badge, which will be a lot better than it is at the moment, writing in a book.

Cllr Oguchi highlighted that the team are doing great work with all the events that are happening, her children have benefited from some of them and she felt quite lucky to live in a Borough that cares for its people so much and cares so much about bringing communities together. Cllr Oguchi said that the splash park had raised quite a lot of noise about how it was desecrated and it's such a great facility for children, especially during hot summer days, whenever you have nice things of course there is always going to be one or two people who ruin it for everybody. Cllr Oguchi wondered if we can get some assurance or some level of confidence that this will not be shut down at any point because of a few bad apples. M Rawdon replied that it

had been a heavily invested facility and he was sure that all of us would want it to continue. Cllr Griffiths gave assurances that it will not be closed down, it may have to for health and safety reasons, to clean it out and to correct any problems, but closing it down is not an option.

Cllr England asked if there was any way that the design of the splash park can be adapted so that if something happens only part of it needs to close down. Cllr Banks confirmed that it was one filtering system and one water supply system so that would not be possible, with contamination the whole park needs to be shut down and disinfected.

64 HERTFORDSHIRE YEAR OF CULTURE 2020

A Care introduced the Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 report and A Smith presented on the details of the events/projects and asked Committee for any questions.

Cllr Douris confirmed that he attending as the HCC Cabinet Member for education and localism and he is the county lead for the Herts Lifestyle and Legacy partnership. It's being led by Hertfordshire Association of Cultural Officers (HACO) and looking at what's been presented both verbally and in the paper, he thinks that Dacorum have done a splendid job in developing this so far. Cllr Douris met with the two lead officers from HACO to talk about the involvement of Town and Parish Councils and all the various levels of public participation across the county. Cllr Douris said he was very pleased to hear what we are doing in the presentation and he felt this is an exemplar of what's been done and he will be very interested to see how the other local authorities prepare their efforts. Cllr Douris mentioned that Cllr Banks is the lead Member for the Year of Culture for Dacorum along with Alex and Annie and he said he was very pleased to be associated with it. We will be looking at an event to start the year and part-way through the year and then an event to round it off. The year of physical activity was a huge success and we aim to build on this and make it even better.

L Roberts mentioned the approach to the work and that Annie had brought a lot of vigour and enthusiasm which we are very grateful for and has given us these ideas but effectively will then turn an action plan, so we are mirroring the approach to sports and leisure, this is the other side of the health and wellbeing, which is cultural. We will be adapting a similar approach and will be monitoring it in the same way.

Cllr Adeleke was very impressed with this initiative and he looks forward to it. The first question was asked if there were plans to have a proper timetable of events so that Member can get involved in events in their area. The second question is that we have the cycle tour and other events, is there going to be an event where we can have something big for the town to do at the end of the event, will something be put into the plan where you can have a big community event, where perhaps the Mayor can open it, bring some feel good factor to the town. Third question is for the Portfolio Holder, as the Member Champion, please can you explain to us your role and interaction with Members. Cllr Banks replied that her role is to support the officers to deliver a fantastic year. A Smith said that in response to question one, the programme of events, there is also going to be a County programme board, so there is a lot of countywide events and there will be a programme for that which will be

published. On a local level we will publish events in advance, we won't necessarily be able to do the whole year, because a lot of events will be happening and confirmed as the year goes on, which is what Herts Year of Culture is about, it's not having all the events there and we're doing events at people all year, it's about using the momentum of Herts Year of Culture for a more long term way of working in the future. I expect we will have some events and a lot of activities that will be ready to go ahead next year, but I hope that we will also gain momentum, that it will plant new activities and new ideas through next beyond 2020. Where possible with events that we know that are happening and also to promote existing events that we know that areas put on, such as the carnivals, the festivals that happen, we will be promoting those all under the Herts Year of Culture umbrella. A Smith confirmed she is working with Comms on a framework for the communication for next year, we want as many people to know about it as possible, so we will get the information out.

L Roberts confirmed that Comms sit in our area and they are very much imbedded in what we do, they also have responsibility for Members News and pushing that out, so at the very least we will do is to make sure that Members News we tell you about things that are imminent or very soon.

Cllr Mahmood said that the list was quite impressive and the way that the whole things been developed, you can actually follow, it's very good, well done. Cllr Mahmood highlighted that there's nothing about food in there, I've seen a music festival, there's a book festival, which may be something to look at as there is quite a lot of cultural diversity in the town. A Smith advised she had been in touch with the Housing Engagement team and we are looking at possibly doing a cultural cookery course within their tenant engagement scheme, but absolutely food and drink is an area we would like to celebrate.

Cllr Mahmood asked about possible grants or funding, if people want to do something do they contact Annie. A Smith confirmed that they should contact her, we are supporting with funding information and where people can go to access funding, we are working with Community Action Dacorum on that, because they offer a lot of funding support. M Rawdon mentioned that as part of the community grants pot, people that apply for projects for cultural events get more points as part of the scoring mechanisms.

Cllr Mahmood said he was looking forward to it and it would be nice to have a calendar on the website of what's happening. A Smith said that there's a Herts Year of Culture webpage which has gone live and you can subscribe to the newsletter and updates. They will be putting a programme of county events on there and also the local events in the areas.

Cllr Friedman echoed colleagues comments that it's an impressive list and programme and asked if there is concentration on promoting any of the less used venues that can be used in community engagement, like school halls. A Smith said that we would be looking at getting events in some of the community centres, the schools have just had the summer break but the intention is to contact them once they've settled into the term about further involvement in Herts Year of Culture as well as offering them a resource pack. They will be involved in some of the projects on the list. With regards to opening up spaces and venues for activities to happen we will want to promote that.

Cllr Friedman asked if there is anything targeting disabled or with learning needs getting involved in projects. A Smith replied that one of the months themes is access to the arts and we are keen to promote them. An idea at the moment is having a debate around access and barriers to the arts and how they may be overcome. I've been in touch with Herts Inclusive Theatre and Electric Umbrella about activities and events for next year to make sure that we're being inclusive.

Cllr Friedman mentioned that the list contained profit venture and not for profit community engagement and asked if there is a risk this is too popular that there will be support given for commercial events at the cost of some smaller community not for profit events. A Care said that from the point of view that we are using the for profit sector, Annie's role is more about partnership working and bringing partnerships together rather than us getting involved in the activity or promotion. Our focus is heavily involved around the community sector but we don't want to leave out those, because it's such an opportunity to involve the business sector, that we don't want to ignore them. A Smith added it's also about linking businesses and the community, for example, the Marlowes Centre are going to be offering space and empty shop units for activities next year to the community organisations.

Cllr Oguchi said this was a great initiative and it's going to be exciting, she doesn't have a question, more like a suggestion that's been echoed around the room, around diversity and inclusion. There are some aspects of diversity already included but hoping that it could be made more broad, like the event for women, celebrating pioneering women or around accessibility. Cllr Oguchi would like diversity talked about in every single event, for example the dance programme, different types of dances, not just street dancing, but something like bangra or some African cultural dance, just something to reflect all the diverse culture within Dacorum. A Smith mentioned that there is Dacorum Community Dance who work a lot with older people and that's included a variety of dance from contemporary to Indian dance, suggestions are certainly welcome and we are trying to cover and be as broad as much as possible.

Cllr Durrant asked if all the events are free. A Smith replied that some of the events are about raising the profile of some existing activities and events that organisations put on in the Borough, they are not normally expensive but they do incorporate some minimal costs, because the organisations need to cover that. There will be some free events, we will be adding the cultural arts creative activities to our inflatable pop events next year. The projects that we are applying to the Arts Council for, the joint applications, so the large cross-county projects, are going to be free. It will be a mixture, some will be free and some will be chargeable.

Cllr Johnson wanted to point out that in terms of some of the activities that DBC are involved with, he felt it would be useful given the motion that the Council passed last month that there is some explicit commitment or reference to climate change in the Borough, he thought maybe a painting competition or photography competition.

The Chairman mentioned that as someone with an arts background, she is really excited about this and asked how early advertising will commence for 2020, from a point of view of getting as much support and buy-in as you can. There is one of Walt Disney suppliers based in Apsley, maybe if they know about it soon enough they could give you some support, also Harrods accounting office was in Maylands and if you tell people early enough perhaps you'll get some support or funding or additional

buy-in from the various creative agencies that are around Dacorum. A Smith said that we would want more of the creative industries and agencies involved, it is a matter of getting word out there. A Smith confirmed it's just her on 3 and a bit days a week, as much as she has quite a lot of contacts, any help with spreading the word would be hugely helpful and invaluable.

Cllr Adeleke asked is Cllr Douris at County going to start it at County level separate from the Borough, will there be a big opening or closing event. Cllr Douris said first of all the vast majority of support to make the Hertfordshire Year of Culture happen is being done with the support of the Districts in terms of providing the Officer support and the Officer resources to enable these things to take place. The vast majority of them are at no or low cost and we are looking at partnerships and people getting involved. In terms of the Hertfordshire one, we have also done exactly the same thing in terms of resource, if you think of an umbrella and the individual segments being gathered together, Hertfordshire is the glue that binds all the segments of the umbrellas. There will be some cross fertilisation, so if Watford are doing a particular event or Three Rivers it might be that Dacorum would attach itself to it and do a joint event. There will be a discussion early October, bringing all the participants together and will include the Hertfordshire Lifestyle and Legacy Partnership. He had mentioned the essence of the Olympic games was one of diversity and sportsmanship and alongside the Olympic Games was the Paralympics, that's the legacy, and the legacy of the Year of Culture will be ongoing in years to come. It will be very exciting and terms of the Year of Culture it will run from the 01 January to 31 December.

A Smith confirmed there will be a County press launch. Cllr Douris mentioned that throughout the year the Mayor will be actively promoting events.

65 HOUSING STRATEGY

L Warden introduced the Homes for the Future Housing Strategy 2019-2022 and asked Committee for any questions.

Cllr England mentioned it was a good coherent document but in light of the climate emergency motion there is nothing included about climate emergency, perhaps commitment 3 could be slightly adapted to accommodate that. L Warden confirmed that we have been having discussions at the moment in relation to what we as a Council can do to move forward to address some of the issues with the climate emergency. In particular in Housing there is a few key areas in relation to materials that used, how we look at new developments, etc. There is definitely elements as part of this which will take that into account, and those will probably come through some of the other strategies, but we can definitely have a look at this and see if there are elements that could be included.

Cllr Griffiths mentioned that it would probably be more in the repairs and maintenance and new build policies, as you know we have done Summer Court, the biomass conversion of the boilers, solar panels that we are putting in, the extra insulation or cladding for various homes across the borough. It is something that the department is very conscious of and something that we are working on, but it's like a lot of other things, it has to be fed into the complete mix to give a complete picture, rather than just going off on a different tangent.

Cllr Hollinghurst asked in considering our Housing Strategy have we given any thought to accessibility to the houses, from the houses and services and would that be reflected in specific proposals to support public transport. L Warden said that one of the key commitments is managing disabled adaptations, that's the physical getting in and out of the property, and asked if Cllr Hollinghurst was talking about the wider infrastructure. Cllr Hollinghurst said the wider infrastructure. L Warden confirmed this was planning, when we are looking at new developments we work very closely with the Planning team in relation to accessibility, it's not something that we specifically focus on in housing, that tends to be more the planning and community services. The focus tends to be the services within the estates and in particular the physical aspects of the homes and the tenants that live in them. Cllr Hollinghurst said that in Aylesbury they have put a lot effort into this with bus networks and the Silver Rider etc where you have access of buses into the estates, which doesn't allow for other traffic and they are very popular.

Cllr Griffiths mentioned that the Aylesbury Plan, that is really what's forecast, that sort of connections, for the new Community Gardens Plan in the distant future, but on the scale of developments that were doing and our housing stock, we do not have the concentration or the money to do that side of things.

Cllr Bassadone advised that it was a very interesting strategy and had one comment, that has been said before at this Committee, and that it would be rather nice to have a paper one, that we could actually keep and look forward, because in a couple of years time, trying to go back and find things out. L Warden said that we do publish all of our strategies and policies, there's one page on the housing part of the website, so if there are any policies that come through here, then you can find those quite quickly. The Chairman added that anything that isn't part two is on the public website.

Cllr England asked why the previous five year strategy was replaced with a three year strategy. Cllr Griffiths replied that time is moving so fast now, technology is moving so fast and perhaps a five year timescale is quite a long time for a plan. We were having to review it anyway because the law was changing or the world was moving on, look at all the different changes there have already been in climate change, building regs change, etc. We were reviewing these every so often, it's just one of those ones that have changed so much that perhaps three years is okay, we might get to three years and we won't need to change so much, so the next one could be five years or a year because so much has changed. As far as I know that's the main reason. L Warden said that in the last three years we've had Grenfell and rent restructuring, so there's quite a few significant changes that have had an impact on housing so the decision was that three years allows us to identify what might be happening over the next three years and make sure that we have something fit for purpose in three years time to tackle whatever challenges have come up.

Cllr Adeleke advised he wanted to support what Cllr Griffiths said, that gone are the days when companies used to have long term plans, that is no longer applicable, everything is now short term, 12 months or 24 months.

Cllr Johnson questioned the sheltered housing scheme that are currently undergoing review and asked if there are any timescales, it also mentions options for future investment or use and wondered what options are being considered. L Warden said that we have identified as part of the void process that we had a number of sheltered

schemes less desirable than previously had been. Over the last few months we have had a project group creating an action plan around a number of different elements of reviewing our sheltered housing. One of those is focussing on the physical structure of the schemes, we had a consultant do a stock condition survey and provide information more around feasibility of the schemes, looking at the rent levels, available land around, the demand and access to services and we are currently compiling our own information around tenants satisfaction, voids and lettings to combine together to give a rating of which schemes actually are spot on exactly as they are, which we maybe need to do some minor work to refurbishment which might need major works and actually which ones are not quite as feasible anymore and we need to rethink the options for those. In addition to that we have been working closely with Hertfordshire County Council with a Dacorum Supported Housing Board looking at supported housing over the next 10 years and they've set a number of areas to focus on, where they think we've got an ageing population, we need more flexi-care and we have been talking to them about what the demand is likely to look like in Dacorum, trying to move ourselves forwards so that we are preparing for that in relation to any new schemes and which locations might need to be in. Currently there is a lot of work going on with that, and we are also reviewing some other things with the allocations policy, for example we currently have some limits around how much savings you can have before you are allocated supported housing property and just reviewing whether those limits are correct or whether we should be increasing those. There is a number different actions at the moment and we have supported housing on the next agenda in October, Oliver Jackson will be attending to talk more about the schemes, what work they are doing at the moment and how we are moving forward.

66 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman confirmed that following meetings with Officers, items had been included in the work programme, but there is still some availability in January. The Chairman requested that Members email her if they have any agenda items they would like to be included

The Meeting ended at 9.25 pm