

Cllr Barry confirmed that her mum had recently taken on a role within Supported Housing and Cllr Bassadone confirmed that she was a volunteer for DENS.

71 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

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

None.

73 THE OLD TOWN HALL - SERVICE UPDATE

M Rawdon introduced the item and handed over to S Railson and S Fairthorne to give the presentation. Questions on the presentation were as follows.

Cllr Hollinghurst questioned how the contract bar worked, did people give a sum of money to you as a privilege of running it or do you have to pay them to take it on. Also does it run at a loss or a profit for DBC. S Railson replied that in the past we have had an external operator who paid a rental to the Council. As we've been running it in-house for the past few years, since the last external operator walked away, we've found that because we set the prices for the product, we've been in a position to look at our outgoing spend is, staff and purchasing stock and then we've been able to look at our mark-up. We've got to a position where it's almost break even, that's just running it ourselves but it does take a lot of time, so Stuart has to rota the bar staff, order the stock, so it's one of those needs must at the moment. When we went out this summer with a tender, it was similar to the tender put out in 2015, when we had one response to it, this summer we have had nil response. Part of the reason is that it's in the High Street but it's not obvious, you have to come into the building, you have to go upstairs, you have to go through the doors, so it's not directly obvious that there is a business there. Also the Old Town is one of the busiest environments for pubs and cafés and restaurants. Whilst we were disappointed that we didn't get anyone to take it on, it actually has forced us into thinking about how we run it ourselves, what are the changes we can make to improve the service. We would like to see a service that is being run throughout the day that then changes into an evening refreshments service for the shows after 6pm. Again it's staff heavy and will require the resource and management of it, were not caterers first, we are arts directors, marketing people and it's not our natural roles, we've done okay and we will probably have to do okay for a little bit longer.

Cllr Hollinghurst asked about the boiler replacement and if the land at the back of the building, which is Council owned, could be used for ground source heat pump coils under the ground, completely unobtrusive and it would give you some background heating so that might be able to get away with a smaller boiler. S Railson said that she hadn't thought of that and it might be worth having a conversation with our colleagues in building services and facilities management to discuss the idea, it's not my area of expertise, so conversations will be required with staff who are more experienced and skilled in that area. Cllr Griffiths said that the land behind the Town Hall was owned by the Church, it's their graveyard. S Railson said it was, it belongs

to the Diocese of St Albans, the land that's under the arches is ours, but directly behind us is the churchyard.

Cllr Bassadone advised that about 20 years ago when she was Chairman of Housing, the Director and I often used to go and have lunch at the Old Town Hall, when there was a flourishing lunchtime club there so hopefully you can get something like that. Cllr Bassadone queried 70% of your people come in via email and you do a follow up and requested if you do a follow up for the people who do not go in for email. S Fairthorne confirmed our websales are at 70% and the remaining sales are split between people coming in directly to the box office or by calling on the phone, so those people who come in directly by the box office or the phone, there is a conversation had that asks them how they heard about the show and theatre and if they want to join our email or postal list. We also provide feedback cards on all the tables in the gallery, so audiences when they come in can provide that feedback to us directly and we've also got feedback available on our website.

Cllr Bassadone said that a couple of years ago there were problems for disabled people using the cellar, has that now been resolved. S Railson confirmed it had as part of the refurbishment was undertaken in 2012/13 we have had a disabled lift installed. There's been a change in the way you access the cellar, so you now come off street level into the cellar foyer and the passenger lift is there which will take you down into the cellar club.

Cllr Adeleke felt that part of the theatre is the refreshment part and you should look at a provider of a café and get it sorted out somehow. Cllr Adeleke mentioned previously about encouraging staff and Members to visit and you have a captive audience, why can't we look at giving a 5-10% discount to encourage us to attend. Also did we know how many members of staff have visited the Old Town in the last six months – one year, some of the shows that he would like to attend and wouldn't mind a discount. Cllr Adeleke also asked where the leaflets are displayed. S Fairthorne confirmed that the leaflets are in stands throughout Watford, Hemel, St Albans, Aylesbury, Luton and Hitchin, very much anywhere you may go within a 20 to 30 mile radius, you will find these in stands with other theatres, so the likes of Aylesbury or the AGT for example. We send out about 2,000 of these specifically for those stands and they go within four weeks. They are going out although the majority of our customers are from the Dacorum area, we are noticing that there is a growth in the wider area and we hope that will continue because we have added extra areas that we send these to now.

Cllr Adeleke asked if the leaflet is available online. S Fairthorne confirmed that it's available on our website.

Cllr England mentioned that he had been looking at the numbers, there is a gap of about £340k and asked if that was a consistent amount of subsidy that's needed or is that shrinking. L Roberts said that it was roughly the same and it had been the same for the last few years, it's around £300k. Also what's taken into account is the capital work that needs to be done, like boilers etc can become more expensive, it is an investment but it is one of the main ways in which we deliver arts and theatre through Dacorum to our residents.

Cllr England asked if looking to the future is it the intention as we stand to stick with the Old Town Hall as the primary venue or do we think that as a growing town we

want to try and be a bit more ambitious for the town. Cllr Banks advised that the Old Town Hall is staying as the main venue and she has no doubt that we would welcome any external interest that would come along. She added that she was not aware of any plans.

Cllr England queried about the different types of usage for the Old Town Hall, different types of performance, which of those is growing, is the mix changing or is it all growing at the same rate. S Railson said that children's work and comedy has always been the high achievers in the programme Theatre, which is actually indicative across the country, is lessening in attendance, so actually I'm quite pleased with the attendance we are getting, one of the things that didn't go up there is, we are attracting about 52% attendance on a theatre performance, which is above the national average, so we are holding our own in the theatre. A lot of it is that people have different needs and wants from what they go to see at the theatre a lot of it is personal relevance, a lot of it is about whether it's value for money, is it on a day that you're free, so there are a lot of things that kind of part of that mix, but theatre is holding its own, children and comedy will always be the over achievers. I'd like to see a growth in music, one of the things we don't have that other districts have is a vibrant local music scene and the Old Town Hall could be that venue, but we do need to look at the mix of the product and what we can actually offer to make it a sustainable experience. That's an area of growth that is being looked at especially in this year of culture 2020.

Cllr Arslan asked if we used the large screen TV in the Town Centre for advertisement. S Fairthorne confirmed that it was used currently, it's managed by the Comms team and we provide them with regular update slides that go onto the screen.

Cllr Durrant enquired if you have a comedian that wants to perform at the Old Town Hall how do you negotiate payment, is it a fixed payment or is it based on ticket sales. S Railson said that most comedy is on a box office split and she will negotiate with the promoter whether that is a 70/30 box office split or 75/25 or in some cases if she really wants the act because what they are going to do and we have people talking about wanting a ticket, then she might go to a 80/20 split, because we will have a full house, that's 120 people, they are all going to buy at least one probably two drinks at the bar, if there's an interval that's three or four drinks, so actually that's how we are recouping some of the costs. S Fairthorne added that the capital we gain on a big name is huge.

Cllr Mahmood asked how you establish what the most popular shows are. S Railson confirmed that she has been around quite a while and has a network of promoters and agents and contacts, she gets to see work, say at the Edinburgh Festival, which she attended this year, London, Bedford and Milton Keynes and it's about making sure that I'm aware of what's out there and around and then making a decision, talking with colleagues about whether that's going to work as part of the Old Town Hall programme, thinking about the audiences that we're looking to attract and also how it's adding to our reputation and to our profile. In terms of comedy and children's theatre, there's a lot of really good work that's out there. You have to be a bit more careful with some of the theatre because some people taking a chance if they don't like it, it might mean they never come back. A lot of it is because I've been around so long, it's not something that is conscious, it's something that I feel for the venue. The Chairman mentioned that she understands what S Railson said as she works in the

arts, that gut feeling does have a professional value, it's not somebody deciding on a whim, there is a science behind that.

Cllr England wanted to offer some suggestions. Youth Connections Herts could be contacted, they might be good to get them involved in workshops or simply just for awareness and also when reading the Gazette, there are often about five great things going on and none of them are local, so please can you take every opportunity to get. S Fairthorne confirmed that there is a huge article in the Gazette this week and it's been in there quite a few weeks but it is hidden behind the adverts and we have seen that it's had a really good response.

The Chairman asked how many people are aware that the Old Town Hall exists, because she loves theatre and she goes to London, she went to the Old Town a couple of years ago, and thought for that price we'll go next month as well, but I was surprised that I'd lived her for so long and hadn't searched it out. The Chairman also wanted to know if it's treated as a heritage asset and with that in mind are there funds that we could attract to maybe refurbish say the function room and would that make an impact on the hiring, she did look at hiring it a couple of years ago, but it didn't quite catch up to other venues that were say in a five mile radius. S Railson advised that it is Grade II 160 year old building and is a heritage asset for the Borough and Town, but it isn't something we've considered. We've had a visit from English Heritage before and they love the front façade of the building, they are not that impressed with the rest of it, so it would be interesting to follow that and see if there was any traction or mileage in making a bid for some of the maintenance work. In terms of brand awareness S Railson confirmed that she had the same frustrations, she has worked there a long time and seems as if, it's not about getting the message through, it's about getting it to stick and having it be someones first choice. There is a lot of competition, Stuart in his first year has made, some very significant changes in the way we are branding ourselves and the way we are trying to get our message out there. It is a constant process to be able to do that, there are people that do know we are there, they just don't like what we offer and there are people that love what we offer, it's just sometimes it might be on for one night and they can't make it. There's a combination of things, if you get into a cab at the station and ask for the Old Town Hall and they say where's that, it's a constant process of trying to be on the leading edge of new marketing initiatives, new ways of communicating with our customers, whether it's by print, website or snapchat or whatever medium, to make people aware of our work and the fact that we exist.

The Chairman enquired if the Old Town Hall still did the courses, we discovered it because a friend of mine did a really good writing course there a couple of years ago and didn't know if it was the job centre or somebody who referred her and then she looked at the brochure and said there's some really good shows on here. The Chairman also queried in regards to the café if the College run any catering courses, but they might be a good one to team up with, because they will need students that the live experience and if the appetite isn't there from commercial businesses you might find it's there from the College, obviously there's food safety etc but I'll leave that one with you as just an idea that may or may not be viable. M Rawdon advised we have thought of and we are looking at it. S Fairthorne highlighted that we are in regular contact with the College in terms of marketing and talking with their students to find ways in which we can collaborate, they get experience, we get some really good young version of marketing that hopefully will breath that younger demographic

that we're currently searching for and also it helps us with brand awareness. We are looking at teaming up with certain people to get that logo out there a bit more.

Cllr Griffiths mentioned that some of us were in the Old Town Hall with the Mayor when we had the flypast and it made me think at the time, that there's quite often major events going on in town, thinking of Halloween event and street light turn on, if there's some way you could really publicise the Old Town Hall while it's there almost having an event in there, because quite often that is absolutely heaving. S Railson advised that we had been involved for Halloween event for quite a number of years, we've done ghost walks round the Old Town Hall, we've had performances, we've transformed the internal building, we've had spooky wood, we've had a museum, we've had a haunted house and we've had ghost stories. This year is the only year that we're not actually open and doing an event and part of that is we're thinking about our commitment to 2020 next year and the type of events we want to run for that, this is actually the first year in about 8 or 9 that we haven't been open for that kind of business. You are absolutely right, there is huge amount of potential on the street that night to drive people in and we have had shows which have been sold out. We try to tie up as much as we can when it's something that is not just good for but also good for that environment and the Old Town to drive the footfall into the Old Town. S Fairthorne added that we are also in contact with Marlowes Centre as they are looking for more ways of doing community engagement and they have offered us an opportunity to use one of the stands that you see as you walk through the centre and we are looking at taking up that offer very shortly.

Cllr Adeleke wanted to know what the open space is under the arches. S Railson mentioned it is currently being utilised on the first Sunday of every month for a market that's put together by traders in the High Street and it has historically been used for that purpose in the past, so it's getting a little bit of usage. S Fairthorne added that film companies also use it. Cllr Adeleke said that a couple of years ago when we looked to revamp the Old Town, there was some suggestion of works to do to that space, the Chair of Housing then put together a compendium of suggestions. S Railson said that one of the suggestions was to glaze in the space to make it either an artist studio or a café offer, which would have that shop front on the High Street. There have been some suggestions in the past but it comes down to cost and some additional investment.

Cllr Hollinghurst suggested that we could exploit that it is a prominent piece of the towns heritage and people are often very happy to be associated with something like that and to pay for some kind of membership of friends of the Old Town Hall. There would be a concession to make it worthwhile, for example something off the price of a ticket. A lot of people are very enthusiastic about this sort of thing and get a warm feeling with supporting it with a sum of money by way of an annual membership but may not actually use it all that much, so it completely additional to the ticket sales. S Fairthorne advised we have started to look at this but it is very preliminary and we would like to create a tiered membership system, I think there's some talks that need to happen with regards to taking that money in and what we offer in return but it has been shown certainly in large theatres across the nation that having patrons in that manner are much more engaged with the programme and want to help.

A Mortimer presented the report and asked Committee for any questions.

Cllr Adeleke queried the Sunrealm Contract where they have 24 hour emergency service, the contract says if there is a problem they will make it safe within 24 hours, so what happens to the accommodation, will the tenants be without. A Mortimer confirmed they would respond within the 24 hour period and where there is a need there is a more rapid response time, if they are unable to repair the boiler, they leave electric heaters, so they would not be without heating, if possible if there is a facility to use the emersion heater, there will be hot water. Cllr Adeleke asked if there could be an additional line to show that something will be provided in those circumstances.

Cllr Adeleke asked about the DBC share of 50%, is this a typing error, on Q3 you have 97,456 and 50% is 19,000. A Mortimer confirmed there is a typo and will need to confirm on that figure.

Action: A Mortimer to provide corrected figure.

[After meeting note]

The typo was a missing digit as the gain for Q3 should have read £197,409.56

Quarter	Dates	Total gain for period	DBC Share @ 50%
Q1	Apr - Jun 2018	£162,562.75	£81,281.38
Q2	Jul – Sept 2018	£221,620.58	£110,810.29
Q3	Oct – Dec 2018	£197,409.56	£98,704.78
Q4	Jan – Mar 2019	£173,518.03	£86,759.02
TOTAL			£377,555.46

Cllr Adeleke asked about apprentices for Sunrealm and Osborne and whether they were local. A Mortimer advised that both contractors try to extend it to the local environment to bring on the apprentices. With Osborne figures you see the make up of staffing, how much is local, which is primarily secured through local job fairs and schools.

Cllr England mentioned that he believed that Osborne and Sunrealm have a better performance level than the previous contractors, so that's a vote of confidence as long as it continues to be the case. Cllr England asked about the 50/50 split when they beat a target cost, are we obliged to spend our 50% with them and recycle that back into what they get paid. F Williamson confirmed we have the freedom to spend it elsewhere, in the spirit of the contract, the intention was that we would reinvest but because of the timelag for the audits to take place, we are working to a quarter in arrears and therefore especially at year end that money is then reinvested in the following year. If there are higher priorities around other areas for investment such as compliance it may be that it is invested elsewhere and not within the Osborne contract.

Cllr England asked if we still used an independent cost consultant or do we just use the same one. A Mortimer said that for this exercise we just used the one independent cost consultant but as part of the five year review we did use more than one.

Cllr England queried the KSI's and if they were challenging they probably wouldn't be achieved so are they challenging enough or are they set in such a way that we do expect them to achieve them. A Mortimer replied that Osborne also have KPI's underpinning the KSI's which are overarching into the contract and the KPI's sit behind them. They seem to be easily achieved but not necessarily if the KPI's behind them, where we feel they haven't been challenging enough, these have formed part of the five year review and they are being amended now. Even with the KSI's they have not all been achieved, in the last year they have but the previous year there was some issues and there was some further work that had to be done before the fourth year was awarded. F Williamson added that there is a review of the fifth year and we've undertaken some benchmarking, from that the new KSI's will have specific deliverables against them, so that by the nature of it being a Strategic indicator it's open to some interpretation and we want to sure that in the remaining period we have explicit deliverables and also although they have earned five years, if they fail to perform in year six they can lose year 10. Whilst they've managed a five year bank of additional years in order to maintain a level of performance that can be measured and also have an incentive attached to it, they can lose years as well.

Cllr England mentioned that following discussions with residents about when they want to contact the Police and they can't get through on the telephone and the Police solution to that is to use a webchat and he wondered whether we had a webchat channel as it might be a good tool. A Mortimer said that at present there isn't a webchat but it's something we could look at as to whether it's something people would pick up on or not, from personal experience when someone has a problem they don't want to webchat, they will either phone or if they are happy they will send an email. Cllr Griffiths said in that the industry people are moving away from webchat, if it's being done properly there should be a person behind it, most of the webchats now pick up key words and it just fires you back an automatic message. If you have a live person sitting there it's very cost intensive and they tend to also be a phone operator, so if they are web-chatting they are not on the phone, so then you have the problem that they can't get anyone on the phone.

75 SUPPORTED HOUSING SERVICE UPDATE

O Jackson provided the Supported Housing Service Update and questions arising were as follows.

Cllr Bassadone asked about the 400 people on the register who are over 60 not actively bidding and wondered if this was because they were waiting for a two bedroom properties or a specific property, so what is the under-occupation of our EPD's at the present time. N Beresford confirmed there are 6,500 people on the housing register and we've just had the annual report, so across the housing register last year only 829, across all client groups bid for accommodation, which means nearly 90% aren't actively bidding. There is a piece of work we need to do to identify whether or not there is a genuine housing need and to understand why people aren't bidding for accommodation. We don't believe that it's in respect of people trying to target two bedroom accommodation, all of those on the housing register predominantly have a need for one bedroom sheltered accommodation. There are some who require two bedroom accommodation due to medical needs, but they are identified through adaptations process.

Cllr Bassadone asked what the current percentage of EPD's are vacant. N Beresford will need to provide that information as she doesn't have that currently. There is a weekly cycle for advertising and she will email you the figure, but it's relatively low in respect of stock in comparison to the numbers waiting for accommodation.

Action: N Beresford

Cllr Hollinghurst said that over 6,000 people are on the housing register and 90% of them are not actively looking at any one time for a property, there could be very many reasons for this of course, if someone is in tied accommodation or it's likely in the medium to long term to come to an end, they would perhaps early on the tenancy put their names down on the waiting list. N Beresford advised that anyone who is currently active on the housing register can only be active if they have an identified housing need, so if they have accommodation that's available for their continued occupation, they wouldn't be deemed to have a housing need, so couldn't be active on our register, so their application would be rejected. Currently we have 6,500 people on the register all with an identified need, that could be under-occupation, overcrowding, a medical or mobility need to move to an alternative property. Everyone who is currently active has an application that's been assessed against the Policy and has a need to move, but of that there is a significant proportion that are not proactively taking steps to move from their current home.

Cllr Hollinghurst asked if there is anything we do for people in tied accommodation. N Beresford confirmed that if someone is living in tied accommodation and they are able to continue to live there and it's suitable, but if they are given notice to leave that accommodation, then yes we would support them to look at alternative accommodation. Social housing or private sector housing but that would be dependent on the identified housing need. Ultimately if they have a high level of priority due to medical social need or other dependent children then they would be high priority, but if we are talking about a single person with no level of vulnerability then our support would be limited.

Cllr England said that he thought O Jackson has spoken thoughtfully and with evident care and concern for older people, he has worked in that industry and knows what you were saying and the way you put it was striking. Cllr England asked if you are able to approach the question of trying to encourage people to make that move in a positive socially aware/orientated way, in his experience there are people who are quite social people and for them supported housing can be fantastic because you are guaranteed to have people around that will be glad you're there, if you are a talker and you can persuade those people, almost as a community service, or something they might feel that they can do for their community to actually move into one of those schemes. I know there is probably a limited number of those people, but sometimes they can bring friends with them. O Jackson replied that some of the schemes are really vibrant, others less so, it really depends on whose living there at the time, we do actively encourage people that do live in the wider community to engage and play a role in the schemes. Quite often tenants living outside of schemes will come to those where facilities are available. O Jackson added that a lot of it will depend on us promoting the service and dispelling some of the myths and stigma that goes with it. We hear comments such as what time do they lock the doors at the schemes and that's a comment we've heard a number of times. We've worked with some of Natasha's team to look at ways of publicising and marketing.

Cllr England mentioned that sometimes the problem is with the stock of housing, it's not that it's just unpopular, but it's actually no longer fit for purpose, particularly tends to be with the first floor flats, because they are not accessible for some people and other people are concerned about the ground floor because they think it's going to be less safe. This is all obvious stuff and you'll be on top of this, it's sometimes important to realise that it's not that it's unpopular and it's not getting bids, there's a reason behind it.

Cllr Griffiths mentioned the point about the wider community being encouraged to come in to our schemes, like an awayday so that they get involved and that gets over those barriers of people not understanding what our EPD's are about. It also breaks down isolation and that is one of the biggest issues for elderly people in the community in that their partner dies and they become introvert and I think that is the best way that we can break it down. What I'm basically saying is, if any of you come across residents in your area, they don't have to be tenants, I think supported housing schemes can do more than just home people, they can reduce the isolation and then the general community coming in and out, that will dispel the myths a lot quicker than us putting a poster up. If a conversation goes on between those people, then families will learn and the whole conversation will become a lot easier and it won't feel like your pushing a stone up the hill. To reiterate if you are out there and you come across someone who would benefit from an introduction to one of the schemes, please contact Oli.

N Beresford advised that there is a new part-time post starting in the service in November for Supported Housing Needs Officer, we are working really closely with Ollie's team to market sheltered housing stock and in particular identify people who are on the mutual exchange list who may be wishing to downsize or move to alternative housing and try and match them with people who are under-occupying and trying to facilitate moves that way and they shall also be doing some assisted bidding, the benefit of this postholder is they have a background in working in the sheltered housing service, so they understand the schemes and ways of working and will be able to work really closely with the team and hopefully we will see an increased take up.

Cllr Stevens asked where the review will be looking at alternative uses, does this mean something like Farm Place which was redeveloped a few years ago, he understands this was a scheme that was difficult to let and the Borough made the decision to redevelop it, it now looks very attractive and there are lots of different types there, not just the elderly. O Jackson advised that we've highlighted some properties that we don't feel are suitable for older people, that can be a number of problems, access to the property, where it's positioned geographically and the provision of services close by, so we've reviewed all of our dispersed housing stock and there a number that we don't feel are suitable for older people going forward. We need to marry up where there is less demand, so the conversation about what we do with those properties needs to take place. The emphasis is about a planned approach, previously it's been adhoc with one property in a block of four being changed to general needs which creates issues with managing those properties. We are looking at if they are suitable for older people as they are now and will they be in the short term and long term and the conversations about what's the best use for them.

Cllr Adeleke mentioned that most of the accommodation is over 50 years old and we have to take a conscious look at the whole, maybe reduce the number, recommend improvements and scatter them about so reduce the number but make them more attractive. O Jackson said we are looking at all those factors and long term viability, it's a challenge because everyone recognises that the population is getting older and we would assume that the demand for supported housing would increase to reflect that. Certainly any decisions about the long term viability will be considered. The building itself we will look at how it can be adapted, is it relatively low investment to get it to where people need it to be. It may be the view that some of it may not be fit for purpose anymore, but there is a number of steps that need to be taken before we come to any conclusions.

Cllr Griffiths said that she will be 60 soon and she certainly doesn't feel ready for an EPD, should we also be looking at the age of our EPD's, should be move it in line with getting official retirement pension. It's currently 60 or 55 if you are a vulnerable adult, should we look at that. The Chairman mentioned that we'd previously reduced the age. N Beresford confirmed that the age criteria is reduced where there is a medical vulnerability but we still get people in their 40s saying they want sheltered housing, it's one of the things Oli is involved in key workstream review with Strategic Housing team and to look at increasing the income threshold on the allocations policy.

Cllr Bassadone commented that she reads the obituaries in the daily telegraph and most of the people who die in their 80's and 90's, a larger percentage of them living alone at home.

76 THE ELMS CONTRACT

N Beresford and O Jackson presented the report and asked Committee for any questions.

Cllr England asked if the contract on The Elms had been similar to the contract to Osborne or Sunrealm that we would have awarded them additional years on the basis on the years that they've performed so far. N Beresford said that there had been no contract breeches or issues but the type of contract we have with this building is very different, one of the reasons that a five year contract was issued for this building was the pace that the world of homelessness and services is moving at the moment. It was felt this was a timely break in terms of the contract. The provision is in extremely high demand, homelessness is continuing to grow significantly, rough sleeping has doubled in Dacorum, it's not reducing and so we really need to ensure that the service that is being delivered is meeting the current requirements and as it stands at the moment, the contract that we have, isn't fully reflective of some of the good practice tools that central government would be expecting from a local service to be delivering. We are continuously having to add and flex and work with other partners to bring in additional resources. That's why we've been successful with rough sleeper initiative funding this year, because we have a limitation in the current services that are being delivered.

The Chairman wanted to know what additional resource you are having to bring in. N Beresford said that as a local authority area we are one of the districts across Hertfordshire that up until recently hadn't had any street outreach functionality, that put us in very high focus from central government, that means that outreach

functions when they are needed are undertaken by internal staff who aren't trained in delivering outreach functions, typically Homeless Officers or Housing Officers working with support of Anti-social Behaviour Officers and PCSO's or partners from other agencies, often they are paid on an overtime basis or working flexibly to enable them to deliver those services. We need in isolation street homeless counts and we ask other local services, like DENS, to put on enhanced daily services to support some of those initiatives and we work continuously in conjunction with our partners through the Homeless Forum to look at what additional support they can give to homeless clients. In the past year that's meant that we have bid for and been successful for additional cold weather funding to enable us to put on enhanced package of support, which includes transport to and from the Night Shelter, additional meals in the daytime and provisions for clients that we are working. More recently that's also led to us being successful with the rough sleeper initiative funding, which does now mean that we will have dedicated outreach workers and a community drug and alcohol worker engaging locally with our rough sleepers.

Cllr Griffiths said that it's important to remember that The Elms was brand new five years ago, so it was all very new to us, it was a learning curve to us as well and that's one of the reasons why we didn't go into a much longer contract. Like Natasha said the worlds moving on anyway but we were starting from a very low base of experience.

N Beresford also confirmed that it's important for Members to pick up on that the current contract doesn't maximise any benefits to the Council. The Council bears all full repairing liability, which is unusual in terms of other contracts. Additionally any surplus income that's made from the contract doesn't currently come back to the Council, it goes to the charitable organisation and these are things we will be looking to address throughout the provision of the new contract, ensuring our liabilities are managed effectively. Where there is surplus income we would like to ensure it is reinvested back into homeless services, which as I mentioned we are having to bid centrally for government funding and as an organisation we are obviously asked to consider the way that we are delivering services. As a service manager it's very important that any surplus money is reinvested back into service delivery.

Cllr Hollinghurst commented that he was surprised to see that the average is about four months and asked if we are happy or disappointed with that. NB confirmed that the average stay is correct, approximately between four and six months, but we do have some residents, one resident in particular that we met last week, who's been there for nearly two years, because there isn't appropriate move on accommodation for that client. They continue to be proactively supported by Dens and other agencies. Four months is reasonable stay and I would say that's a good length of stay, if we have someone staying in excess of that it's because they are not ready to move on and we want to ensure they are ready to move on in a proactive way. There are some limitations in terms of some of the specialist types of accommodation that clients need to move on into, when we look at temporary accommodation at the moment, our own temporary accommodation, our average length of stay is nine months, so the average length of stay in the hostel is less and that does bring its own challenges, because we are already, despite being a 44 bed hostel, typically on any given night running a waiting list of up to eight clients.

Cllr Hollinghurst enquired if there was a problem with County Council Social Services funding. N Beresford replied that both her and Oli run services that have funding

from County Council, housing related support, this year services across several workstreams, flexicare housing, complex needs, homelessness and mental health are receiving 5% funding cuts and that will impact directly on the services that are being delivered to any of those clients and in particular to Dens clients. Next year Dens will potentially receive less to deliver their contract and it may impact on the way that services are delivered and it will mean they may need more charitable donations or they may look to the Council to help or find additional grant funding.

Cllr Adeleke wanted to know where the donation of £1,000 had come from. N Beresford clarified that these are figures from Dens in respect of their approved signed off accounts, these would be donations they receive from individuals and they are not explicitly explained to us.

Cllr Stevens visited Dens and knows one of the Trustees, he believes we have a very good service and the Council should take great pride in what you've achieved. Homelessness is increasing and the problem is adding provision means you've got to build more hostels, managing the contract is two separate issues. Dens provides a very good service but you've mentioned that you want to get some skim out of the monies generated, if you look at the income in the accounts, it is barely viable, so whatever surplus its generating it's re-investing in what Dens does and that ought to be supported, if we take the funding away then we have to support them in different ways. What Cllr Stevens would like to see, looking at the options number two is probably the least painful long term option for us in the sense that, we know what happens when you outsource contracts on buildings, repairs and everything else slides, the action of continuing with an organisation like Dens is that they are able to bid for funding to add services that they need. Leaving them as an operator is the type of organisation we need to have in the long term. Also the residents we have, the support that they need, some of them need mental health support, I'd like to suggest that one of the things that we do as a Council is lobby the CCG to allocate funds to the mental health service, so that we have dedicated staff, some of whom will visit Dens residents and mentor them through their problems. N Beresford said that in terms of the income that's gained, I note what you said and currently yes, it's not a significant amount of money that is gained in terms of surplus income. One of the areas that we want to ensure that money is not refocussed back into Dens area of business, but it's refocussed back specifically into the Elms clients, because at the moment that money may not be spent directly on management of the Elms but Dens generally and it's really important that it goes back into delivering services to the Elms, that enables us as an organisation to continue to deliver services directly to those who specifically need it through the hostel. In relation to the repairs, clearly we need to scope out all the options and that's what Oli will do in partnership with colleagues from Property and Place, Legal and the Asset Management Team, to consider the way in which the building is managed to make sure we maximise the use of the asset, but also that we are giving due regard to fire risk assessing and all the other compliance elements, that we need to make sure are managed effectively.

C Thomas mentioned that in terms of mental health, it is a key area around a complex group of individuals with particular mental health needs that are difficult to address and they make working with those client groups very difficult for staff at the Elms. The Mental Health Working Group was set up as a sub of our Homeless Forum, Wendy Lewington of Dens is the Chair, we have representation from the CCG, the Police, Community Safety and the Community Mental Health team, the primary focus of the group is to develop a specific pathway and way of working to

address the needs of each particular cohort of vulnerable people, it's not about changing the way the entire mental health service works, it's about how the mental health services work in general for the majority of people who access those services, but for these particular people who are extremely complex and that framework doesn't work for them, we want to have in Dacorum a particular way of working for those people to ensure their needs are addressed. We do need further work but that is a piece of work we are actively undertaking.

Cllr England mentioned the percentage of evictions and wondered what the actual numbers were. N Beresford advised that the figures would need to be confirmed as we don't have the specific figures. Cllr England asked if it was a big or small number. N Beresford said that it was likely to be quite a large number for a number of reasons, Carly has been working very closely with the Hostel Manager to redefine some of the KPI's especially in relation to positive move on. There are a number of reasons why someone might lose their accommodation, it could be a recall to prison, breach of their licence, or endangering another resident or member of staff and safety is absolutely paramount. N Beresford will provide a more detailed breakdown.

Action: N Beresford

The Chairman said that having visited Dens, actually it would be good in this new term to arrange a visit for Councillors so they fully understand what it is they are looking at, we can hopefully timetable that in, apart from accommodation, they really get people ready to live independently and I don't see anywhere in the document where that's costed in, because there will be a monetary cost to losing that and it's probably been thought of, but to ensure that there is a value put on that when the tender is done, you know what I'm trying to say. Also in terms of point 2.4, she understood that this is still at exploratory stage, but having looked at some of the new contracts that went about two years ago for community centres, the repairs liability, there's no way that this is going to be commercially viable to take on and that was on a building much smaller than the Elms. The contract was asking the Community Centre to take on the full repairing liability but at the same time give them 50% of any profits that was made over £3,000. The Chairman hoped that you would do all the numbers for this and would have a conversation with the person doing that because it was not commercially viable and no-one would want to take that on. N Beresford confirmed that with resettlement said that hadn't been fully costed and it's an area we can look, one of the reasons why that's quite a challenge to fully cost it is because resettlement is almost done in tandem also done by the Housing Service, they work closely with the tenancy sustainment team and residents at the Elms are also given tenancy sustainment training, which is delivered by Dacorum staff, so it's a joint approach, but certainly something we can pick up. Oli is working closely with a number of teams in relation to looking at the initial scoping around the four options and we most certainly won't be doing any of the costings in isolation, we will be working very closely with Legal and Finance and HR, looking at all the different element. In particular when we come to the actual tender we will be looking at each of the different elements of the process and the same people won't be scoring every element of the contract submission, it will be different people for the relevant section, to ensure that it is completely open and transparent and scored fairly.

F Williamson added that there are a couple of other things that we need to be mindful of, one is the original contract term and procurement and whilst we acknowledge that the service Dens are delivering is really of high quality, we don't have any problems with performance, certainly they provide a lot of support and it's very much a

collaborative approach towards homelessness. This isn't about ruling Dens out of the equation, far from that, it's about really having to comply with procurement regulations but also making sure that the new contract, whoever is the successful provider, has absolute clarity over things like responsibility for repairing liabilities, especially around anything health and compliance, because we don't want to create a situation where should there be an incident that there is a question over who was liable and who had that responsibility. It's about providing clarity to whoever the provider is, rather than excluding any one potential provider.

Cllr Hollinghurst said that the points made by the Chairman about the fully repairing lease is a very good point indeed, surely there must be a half way stage between the situation we have at the moment and that extremely onerous commitment of the lease. Normally any commercial lease is well defined and clarity is important and it should, if there is to be responsibility for maintenance, a normal commercial clauses of the responsibilities, doors, windows, paint but not the foundations and not the leaking roof, not anything structural. F Williamson highlighted that the building was to remain our freehold asset so it's important that we know that we are maintaining it, so you are right, it's just really about providing the clarity in terms of responsibility. We are not proposing to make it onerous because we still have the structure of the building that we will be maintaining, but it's also about a recognition about whoever is the managing agent providing the service has to take the responsibility for the actions of the occupier. We appreciate through some of the reasons for eviction, that that can increase the risk of a potential incident occurring. That's why there needs to be the clarity.

The Chairman commented that there is a charity that she has done some work with recently and they did flag up that in other Borough's that some of the tenders haven't worked because they've gone for the cheapest possible option and you get repeat offenders that have failed to deliver services but they keep retendering so they keep getting the contracts, because they are the lowest. The Chairman really wouldn't want to happen in Dacorum because at the minute you have got a really good service, obviously needs updating because legislation is updated, but she is just mindful, especially as we're talking about so early on, if we could ensure we don't have to fall into those types of traps. If we lose the quality of the service it's only going to stretch you in other areas and also Dacorum is unique in some of what it offers for the benefit of the individual and also the community, we must not lose that.

Cllr Griffiths said she was quite proud of the contracts that have been issued in this Borough because it's not about the lowest price, it is about the quality, they are always weighted in different areas and it is about the quality, because there was quite a lot of contracts that were going to the lowest price, they would now not be issued in the majority of cases to the places we have issued them. Cllr Griffiths was very proud of that and as long as she is here that will continue in Housing definitely.

Cllr Griffiths also wanted to mention that whilst we are talking about Dens, like to highlight that in Members News, that if any of you have any items non-perishable food, etc, the housing team up on the second floor in the coffee area, a trolley and it all goes to Dens. N Beresford said that it's World Homeless Day tomorrow and the team are doing a number of events including a collection. The foodbank are running low on a number perishable items, sanitary items, cleaning fluids, tissues, etc and the team will be grateful for any donations.

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WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Griffiths would like to change the Voids report to Empty Homes report.

Action: S Turner to inform Member Support

The Meeting ended at 9.40 pm