

## **MINUTES**

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY 22 APRIL 2020 18:30**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Birnie (Chairman)  
Councillor Ransley  
Councillor Riddick  
Councillor Rogers  
Councillor Silwal (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Stevens  
Councillor Beauchamp  
Councillor Timmis  
Councillor Taylor  
Councillor Woolner

#### **Officers:**

James Doe	Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration
Emma Walker	Group Manager – Environmental and Community Protection
Craig Thorpe	Group Manager – Environmental Services
Alex Robinson	Strategic Planning Manager
Olivia Halper	Urban Design Officer

Sharon Burr	Corporate & Democratic Support Officer
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#### **Others**

Councillor G Sutton	Portfolio Holder - Planning & Infrastructure
Councillor J Banks	Portfolio Holder - Community & Regulatory Services

#### **82                    MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

#### **83                    APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**84                    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**85                    PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None.

*The Chairman advised that he would be start discussions at Item 7, to allow the officers attending only for the Performance Reports to leave the meeting after their items as Item 6 is likely to be lengthy. The minutes have been presented in numerical order.*

**87                    DACORUM STRATEGIC DESIGN GUIDE**

JDoe introduced Alex Robinson, Strategic Planning Manager and Olivia Halper, Urban Design Officer who will be taking Members through the report in detail.

JDoe introduced the covering report as an important piece of work commissioned between DBC and St Albans with some input from Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. There will be some major sites coming forward for development through the emerging Local Plan. JDoe stressed that all that is being considered this evening is the draft of the consultation is for Dacorum only, St Albans will be following their own consultation in line with their own procedures. Any views of the committee will be reported to Cabinet.

Officers are looking to publish draft plan by November of this year, dialogue with potential developers of those sites has started on a without prejudice basis on how to bring those developments forward. This document will set out how we expect developers to design those sites so that the expectations of the Council are clear.

JDoe welcomed any feedback/questions, which can also be submitted by email after the meeting . Such post meeting feedback will be incorporated in what is fed back to Cabinet.

Alex Robinson displayed the presentation 'The Dacorum Strategic Design Guide' on screen and guided Members through the document and presentation.

Cllr Silwal commented that the report refers to work being carried out in 2020 and asked; will you be able to do that work while this pandemic is ongoing? ARobinson responded that a lot of work can be carried out remotely from home so work can continue. The only area that may be impacted will be public consultation and that will be programmed in to fit around current constraints of COVID-19 pandemic.

Cllr Birnie referred to smaller developments . As he understands it. this document refers mainly to larger developments and the developer has to comply with how an application should be developed. But there is nothing relating to individual or smaller developments. He asked whether they come under the Design Guide. ARobinson

confirmed that the Design Guide will be applicable to all developments, regardless of size.

Cllr Beauchamp said that he considers this to be an excellent document. He requested that when it is issued in a final form, Members should receive a hard copy, as it is very difficult to read these long documents on a laptop.

Cllr Timmis referred to documents being replaced and asked, how are they going to be changed (referring specifically to conservation areas and listed buildings). ARobinson confirmed that allocation of conservation areas and listed buildings will not be changed.

Cllr Timmis asked about conversion of agricultural buildings. ARobinson confirmed this will be picked up within the style guide.

ARobinson added that the intention is to bring the guidance up to date, streamline and consolidate it, as at the moment there are various relevant documents spread across different areas. We are not anticipating any big changes.

Cllr Birnie addressed JDoe and asked; do we make considerable money from pre-app consultation and will this not undermine that income by asking the developer to come up with the sort of thing we would be asking our Planning Officer to be advising? JDoe responded that this will become another part of the pre-app process which we will still provide advice on development planning.

Cllr Beauchamp raised a concern for the long term that consideration should be given to the types of properties in developments as there seems to be very little scope for future expansion as families grow. JDoe agreed this is important and it is a challenge as developers have their own plans. But it is important to allow scope for property owners to change the street scene to suit their own needs. We would hope that if a developer is following the guidance provided, we should build in that flexibility.

Cllr Beauchamp asked; who will be responsible for the maintenance of roads, open spaces, communal areas etc? Management companies charge for this if they are not adopted by Local Authorities. Who will co-ordinate this if multiple developers are involved? JDoe responded that although there is reference to this subject within this document, it will have to be something the Council looks at as a separate policy. There are a whole range of models out there such as community trusts that can provide the right solution. ARobinson added that one of the requirements under this section is that developers are proactive and set out a long term plan on this matter. We have not been prescriptive on how they should do it, but we are asking them to think about it and come up with proposals that are viable in the long term and we will challenge where we feel it appropriate.

Cllr Ransley added, when talking about a place for all, management fees can sometimes price people out of the market. JDoe responded that this document is principally about design and how these areas will look. All these concerns will be picked up as part of the Local Plan.

Cllr Stevens requested a change; in Pt 2 Design Principles, an addition to Cls 6.3 that follows from: 6.3.5 Shared Access To Apartments Provided On The Principal Frontage. He requested that Letter Boxes should be accessible from the pavement and at a height to comply with Royal Mail standards. ARobinson responded that he understands the point being made, but this may sit more comfortably in the detailed design guide.

Cllr Woolner posed a question regarding 7.2 – cycle parking and commented that these should be readily accessible.

Cllr Rogers referred to residential parking and the issues seen where the parking availability doesn't reflect need. He asked whether this will be taken into account in relation to the number of bedrooms in a property. Cllr Birnie commented that he does not feel this sits within this design document and should be raised in discussion of the Local Plan. JDoe confirmed this will be coming to Members as a separate document and added that parking, access and movement has to be looked at in great detail.

Cllr Birnie referred to the Industrial Development section and commented that there doesn't appear to be a great deal of detail. The examples that have been given concentrate on parking of private vehicles on these sites and there appears to be no discussion about works vehicles. Cllr Birnie added that he considers one of the biggest issues we have in Hemel Hempstead is overnight parking of commercial vehicles in residential streets. Cllr Birnie added it would be useful to have a strategy on this. JDoe responded that the parking of commercial vehicles, light vans or HGVs, will need to be addressed in the same way. A Transport Strategy & Plan for the whole of Hemel Hempstead is being developed.

Cllr Ransley referred to the need for a transport hub – perhaps a shuttle or tram service which could be part of the design plan. A Robinson acknowledged the point, advising that focusing on Hemel Hempstead we are preparing a sustainable transport plan to explore the way we move around the town in the future and what options would be suitable to do that.

Cllr Timmis commented that the document appears to focus on urban communities and overlooks the rural village communities, of which there are many in Dacorum. There is a need to keep the rural aspects, the greenbelt and areas of outstanding natural beauty in mind and the document does not address this. JDoe responded that when there is a requirement for small scale development in the country side, there will be policies in the Local Plan to deal with this. The document in front of you tonight focuses primarily on large groups of developments.

Cllr Taylor asked, how do we go about getting our ideas incorporated into these documents? JDoe responded that the document is as it is, but there will be a more detailed document that will deal with the details around parking, cycles etc. There will need to be some form of regular review process moving forward and it is a question of building that into our work programmes in the coming years. As things develop those ideas and changes of circumstance can be fed in.

Cllr Beauchamp commented regarding walkable neighbourhoods, commenting that much of the document refers to the provision of cycle ways and the importance of segregating cycles away from cars, which is very important, but there is little in the document about how pedestrians will be segregated from bicycles. JDoe responded that this forms a part of the Local Plan. The Council has to take into account the County Council's policy which gives clear direction on encouraging other forms of transport, particularly active travel, by which they mean cycling and walking. Attractive routes to walk may be required to encourage people to do so.

Cllr Silwal referred to the climate crisis and asked what measures affecting this are being taken into consideration? A Robinson responded the document includes a number of areas that we are asking developers to look at. There are various construction methods and standards that will need to be adhered to. It also sets out requirements around planting, the use of sustainable drainage systems and

biodiversity. The Local Plan will also include a sizeable chapter on climate change and how we as an authority are looking to respond to that.

Cllr Birnie proposed a resolution to be sent to Cabinet that;

“The draft DSDG is a well-structured and exhaustive guide that should;

1. Save the Council time and money by placing the onus on developers to show in advance how applications conform to Council policy
2. Guide developers on the preparation and presentation of major applications
3. Inform decision making on planning applications by providing clear material grounds for decisions which therefore will be less liable to successful challenge at appeal than at present.”

However, further work needs to be done on guidance for smaller and “in-fill” developments.”

Proposal agreed nem con.

Cllr Sutton offered his sincere thanks to JDoe and team for preparing this fantastic report. Cllr Sutton welcomed Members views and will welcome any further views on this report in the coming weeks.

## **88**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

CThorpe referred to the Performance Report Q3, which covers Aug to Dec 2019.

He highlighted a couple of key projects that have run on into Qtr 4.

Food recycling roll out to flats; now completed.

At Christmas the service trialled not delivering physical calendars on wheeled bins; this went very well with a very good response and it was only necessary to send out 100 hard copy calendars to people who were not able to access calendars online.

Building works completed; a temporary structure at depot has been removed in favour of a roofed structure to keep the co-mingling dry.

Upgrade to welfare facilities for female staff and showers for male staff; completed.

Update in fleet workshop completed, which enables us to complete various works to vehicles that had to previously be outsourced.

Cllr Silwal asked; with regard communal bin areas, is there any plan to disinfect? Also is there enough PPE for Clean Safe & Green staff?

CThorpe responded that there are no plans in place to disinfect bins areas but if we need to there are the facilities available to do so. He confirmed there is plenty of PPE. Everyone is issued with gloves and sanitiser every morning. Vehicles are sanitised before they go out each day.

Cllr Timmis congratulated and thanked Craig on the speed of collection of fly tipping.

Cllr Birnie asked if there was any reason for the increase in food waste in Qtr 3.

CThorpe advised there was a rise in food waste disposal following panic buying due to the lockdown.

Cllr Birnie referred to assisted bin collection performance still being red and asked, is there a solution? CThorpe responded that the system that was previously used in the vehicles was out of date. New kit is now installed in all vehicles so that should improve. CThorpe commented that there is also a high number of agency staff at this time who do not have the assisted collection knowledge that established staff would have. This is a result of staff self-isolating due to COVID-19 symptoms or those self-isolating due to being in the vulnerable category.

Cllr Beauchamp asked when the fencing around the trenches in Gadebridge Park would be removed. CThorpe advised he does not have that information but would speak to the relevant department and come back with a response.

Cllr Birnie asked if there is a problem in Kylina Court with bins being near air intakes, commenting that he has received some complaints about smell from bins. CThorpe responded that he has not been made aware of any complaint and advised he would take the matter up with Cllr Birnie outside of the meeting.

Cllr Woolner commented that she has been very impressed and had lots of feedback that everyone is very pleased and grateful for all the work that is being done to keep up essential services by Environmental Services.  
Report noted.

## **89                      ENVIRONMENTAL      AND      COMMUNITY      PROTECTION      Q3** **PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chair referred to the report which all Members confirmed they had read. The Chair invited questions to Emma Walker.

Cllr Birnie referred to 635 fly tips in Qtr 3 and asked if that is an improvement on Qtr 2. EWalker confirmed she would have to look into that and come back with a response.

Cllr Beauchamp referred to fly tipping in the Town Centre and asked where that was? EWalker responded it was to the rear of the Old Market Square.

Cllr Birnie congratulated the food team for their sterling work.

Cllr Birnie referred to the accident that had to be reported and queried what the nature of the accident was. EWalker responded that it was a slip/fall accident resulting in broken bones and advised that in an accident at work there are always lessons to be learnt but there has been no contact from HSE on this matter.

Report noted.

## **90                      PLANNING,      DEVELOPMENT      AND      REGENERATION      Q3** **PERFORMANCE REPORT**

JDoe introduced the report and referred to the dip in performance in getting planning applications validated, advising that this was impacted by the delivery of new software in Development Management which required a holding over of people being able to make comments and register them on planning applications. There were staff dedicated to that project which did deplete the workforce at the same time that we experienced a peak in applications. That trend will likely continue into Qtr 4 but we should see an improvement in Qtr 1 2020/21.

Cllr Timmis referred to Item 20 on recruitment & retention and asked; why is it this cannot be addressed? It seems to be an ongoing problem? What can be done to attract high quality planning officers? JDoe responded there is an overall issue in this area of the professional market. As there is an ebb and flow in the quantity of applications coming, Dacorum does make use of agency staff as required. The good

news is that vacant posts are being filled and DBC turnover is lower than other Councils in the South-East.

Cllr Timmis acknowledged that there are a lot of red targets, but added her comment that Planning Enforcement has been excellent, in her experience.

Cllr Birnie referred to para.13 of the report and asked; is it too early for a report on HBC? JDoe responded that it would be appropriate to discuss when this could come back to OSC when we have some more meaningful data to consider.

Cllr Birnie asked; why is the indicator relating to appeals dismissed still at red? JDoe responded that he is working through this in some detail with Cllr Sutton and will come back on the matter.

Report noted.

**Meeting ended at 20:27**