

MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

14 JUNE 2022

Present:

Members:

Councillors: England
Foster
Harden (Chairman)
P Hearn
Riddick
Rogers (Vice-
Chairman)
Stevens
Taylor
Timmis
C Wyatt-Lowe

Officers:	Richard LeBrun	Assistant Director - Neighbourhood Delivery
	Dawn Rhoden	Regulatory Services Operations Team Leader
	Alex Robinson	Assistant Director - Planning
	Ben Stevens	ASB Officer
	Craig Thorpe	Head of Environmental Services
	Emma Walker	Head of Environmental Protection

Also Attendance:

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 **MINUTES**

The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Though the minutes were an accurate recording, Cllr Banks highlighted that during the previous meeting she had informed Cllr Wyatt-Lowe that revenue from fixed penalty notices for public space protection orders was split equally between Dacorum Borough Council and district enforcement. After further investigation, Cllr Banks wished to correct this, as after expenses the split was 22% to Dacorum Borough Council and 78% was retained by district enforcement. Cllr Banks apologised for misleading members of the council. The previous minutes would be updated accordingly.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were noted from Cllrs Sutton, Beauchamp and Wilkie.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

4 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

No matters had been referred.

6 **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ANNUAL REVIEW**

It was explained that this matter had been withdrawn from the agenda and deferred due to a change in process

7 **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE Q4**

CThorpe presented the salient points from the report.

Waste services operations continued to suffer from COVID-related absence plus a national shortage of drivers, but had nonetheless managed to provide a successful full service. Fewer mechanical sweeper drivers had been available due to drivers having been redeployed to waste collection, and difficulties were still being encountered with recruiting new drivers with 7 current driver vacancies.

Over the last few months annual refresher training had been delivered to 110 frontline staff and a further 90 Council staff, plus agency staff. Driver CPC training had also been provided to the 30 drivers on waste services. An ISO14001 report had revealed several issues to be resolved in relation to the depot. CSG assisted the tree contractors in the 3 storms that occurred in March.

DBC had worked alongside other organisations on town cleaning, particularly targeting graffiti on all structures.

The A41 was deep cleaned and all traffic islands were swept before grass cutting operations were recommenced in April.

The Splash Park was recommissioned and opened earlier than in previous years. Some maintenance was required, though the park was operating well.

95 standard trees and 900 whips had been planted across the borough and 60 new planted troughs had been supplied, along with further plants and a green canopy. Several organisations had contributed further plants, work and best practices.

Bunkers Park and Chipperfield Common had retained their green flag status and other parks would be judged later in the year.

The River Gaye project had been pushed back to the following year.

On education awareness, Christmas Tree recycling had been a large success with 6,000 trees having been collected and chipped.

Several 'Nappy Natter' events had been held with success, with a view to changing mothers' behaviour in terms of reuse of nappies.

3 successful clothes swaps had been very popular with the public.

130 new street champion registrations had been received, with a total of 628 registered champions as of 31st March. It was clarified that the total number of active champions each week was in the 400's, though champions were regularly contacted to monitor engagement levels.

324 individuals took part in the Great British Spring Clean.

Primary and secondary school talks continued with a brand-new pack.

Over 11,000 requests for services had been received by the customer services department at Cupid Green depot. An outline of the individual services requested and delivered was then provided including clinical waste and sharps collection.

In terms of performance, the figure for WR001A was slightly higher than target due to a number of agency drivers being deployed and several vehicles without the required in-cab technology to monitor assisted collections. As such, with new staff recruitment this was expected to be alleviated.

Garden waste collections had been lower than target in Winter, though this was to be expected and reflected a requirement for more seasonal variance in the targets.

The report was noted, and the floor was then opened for questions.

Cllr Timmis expressed gratitude for the update and Cllr Timmis then asked, in relation to sharps collection, Cllr Timmis was surprised to hear that sharps were being delivered and collected by DBC and asked why this was the case, and whether this related in any way to fly tipping and a report highlighting high areas of drug use in the Dacorum area. In response, it was highlighted that in years past DBC had collected a large amount of clinical waste, though now this had been referred to other services. It was clarified that these clinical waste requests were not due to illicit drug use but rather were health care related. Sealed sharps boxes were collected in a purpose-built vehicle and disposed of via incineration at a local facility.

Cllr England congratulated those involved on maintaining bin collection levels and expressed gratitude for the planting of a tree that had been centre of the recent Jubilee celebrations. Cllr England then asked whether there were plans to achieve green flag status for more local parks. There are no plans to put in place the management programmes – some quick wins are available, but the required management plans and organisation would be time-consuming.”

Cllr Foster echoed the praise for the work carried out. The Cllr then commented on the ISO14001.215 audit carried out at Cupid Green depot, which had identified some compliance problems. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe wished to know the nature of these problems and what impact they had had on service delivery. It was explained that ISO14001 related to the proper storage and disposal of waste. This accreditation had been a considerable achievement, though it had been rescinded due to Council-wide decision making and as a result some of the paperwork was no longer up to the standard of an external auditor. It was stressed that Cupid Green depot remained compliant with the Environment Agency's requirements, though work was to be done to update and improve the paperwork.

Cllr Foster then enquired in relation to the employment of sweeper drivers, highlighting several local issues that required more extensive work than sweepers were able to carry out, and may present an issue in any future storms. In response, it was highlighted that 8 LGV drivers had been trained and pay and employment terms and conditions had been enhanced which should aid retainment of drivers in waste collection. It was also hoped that in future even more drivers could be recruited.

Cllr Foster then asked a third question in relation to which schools were involved in the previously mentioned educational awareness schemes, and also whether any trees had been planted outside of Hemel. In response to the question on plants, it was highlighted that details of recent planting locations would soon be made available online. It was also pointed out that local wards were able to submit bids for wildflower patches to be planted in their areas. It was also highlighted that this was to be balanced with the use of public spaces for other uses such as dog walking.

Cllr Rogers commented on the traffic light reporting system used in the report, asking whether it was possible to incorporate a graph to indicate trends over time. It was agreed that this would be done in future.

Cllr Rogers also asked in relation to a visit for Councillors to visit Cupid Green depot. In response, it was highlighted that this was certainly a possibility.

Cllr England then asked how best to inform the grass-cutting services that grass-cutting was needed in a local ward or area. In response, it was highlighted that this was currently rather vague but work was being done to make grass-cutting vehicle tracking information more readily available online. The window for grass-cutting was between 4 and 6 from the previous cut, though most crews were managing to cut grass every 4-5 weeks.

Cllr Foster asked, given the current emphasis on litter, the significance of zero litter inspections having been conducted. It was clarified that this had not been possible due to resourcing issues during COVID, however it was hoped that inspections would resume in time.

Cllr Timmis asked, in relation to educational awareness and the recent Nappy Natter events and clothes swaps, if these were localised to Hemel Hempstead and, if so, whether these could be carried out in conjunction with other local organisations across the Borough to widen the coverage of these operations.

Cllr Timmis also asked what the cost of A41 cleaning operations were. It was highlighted that the bulk of the cost was due to traffic management. It cost £1,100 per day to employ Hertfordshire County Council's traffic management services for such an operation, so this was generally done on a single day to minimise costs given a budget of £25,000, and also when the Hertfordshire County Council contractor used traffic management services in order to cut the grass.

Cllr Timmis opined that, where possible, services should be rolled out across the Borough and not just in Hemel.

Cllr Stevens, in relation to the clothes swaps, pointed out that a local environment group in Berkhamsted also ran similar local schemes.

It was also asked that in future reports, commentary be provided on any issues allocated a 'Red' indicator status.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION PERFORMANCE REPORT Q4

The salient points from the report were presented by EWalker.

Sarah Stefano had been appointed Team Leader for Environmental Health, beginning her role on 31st January 2021 and replacing her predecessor Paul O'Day.

The team had continued to support COVID-19 related tasks, with 320 self-isolation checks carried out in January, along with other local work to aid transition to the Living with COVID plan. Test and Trace officers had however transferred to the Partnerships team to assist with vaccination planning and support.

Work was undertaken to meet targets for the food safety recovery plan presented in October 2021. New contractors had been brought in to deal with the pandemic-related backlog. A steady flow of new food business requests was being received and work was being done in relation to pest-related closures.

Rebecca Connelly had won the Performance Award for her outstanding contribution to setting up and running a COVID-19 test and trace service, and her instrumental role in designing a food safety recovery plan amid the pandemic.

The title of Health and Safety Champion was awarded to Chris Connelly of Clean, Safe and Green after his considerable efforts in this area.

Russel Hamm was a finalist for a Performance Award for his work on safety systems throughout the pandemic.

The Operations team had been busy throughout Q1, securing an animal welfare warrant and successfully rehoming several animals.

Following the presentation to the Animal Welfare service of another Golden Pawprint award to the Animal Welfare service, MP Gagan Mohindra had visited and had been provided a presentation by lead officer Rachel Smith.

9 fixed penalty notices had been served for fly-tipping in Q4, and 4 abandoned vehicles removed. There were 3 outstanding warrants in place for defendants who had failed to appear in court, being regularly pursued in conjunction with four different police forces.

On Monday 24th March, 9 people were ordered to pay fines for littering offences and breaching public space protection orders, after failure to pay fixed penalty notices. These had been the first prosecutions of this kind issued by the Council.

Ben Stephens was the finalist for the Innovation Award for an innovative approach leading to engagement third-party enforcement organisation.

The Neighbourhood Delivery service were finalists for Team of the Year for 2021.

The report was noted, and the floor was then opened for questions.

EWalker was congratulated for her Excellence in Leadership Award in 2021.

A question was raised regarding the Corporate Health & Safety Team and reporting of accidents. Clarity was requested on the statistics provided, particularly in relation to apparent duplication of some figures. In response, EWalker clarified that the apparent duplications between slips, trips and falls and strike by object were different incidents. The numbers appeared higher than in previous years due to an increased number of types of incidents now recorded. EWalker also agreed to clarify some differences in figures between slips, trips and falls and strikes by object.

Cllr England, in relation to the figure of 41% of noise cases closed within 60 days, asked whether the 41% represented the easiest cases to close and what happened with the other 59%. EWalker responded that several senior individuals were out of the office, so the majority of the remaining 59% had not yet been closed for administrative reasons, but that operationally in many cases nothing more remained to be done.

Cllr Hearn asked how any vacancies the department had currently. EWalker responded that there was one vacancy in the permanent establishment and 4 in the temporary establishment.

The Chair thanked all those officers having received awards for their contributions.

9 PSPO & ENFORCEMENT REVIEW

The report was taken as read, though several points were highlighted. Over 1,500 abandoned vehicles had been reported, resulting in 45 vehicles being removed and destroyed. The Abandoned Vehicle Policy released in 2021 had improved understanding among officers and vehicle owners alike.

On crime, a marked increase in fly-tipping had been seen in comparison to the previous year. There had also been several operational difficulties owing to an increase in drug related fly-tipping, use of hired vehicles, and court no-shows. 59 waste crime FPNs had been issued, with a total of 4 prosecutions. Dacorum

Borough Council continued to be a leading authority within Hertfordshire in this domain and maintained a good working relationship with court authorities.

Deployment targets were in place for each ward.

To clarify a point in relation to the earlier question from Cllr Timmis, it was made clear that drug-related fly tipping involved cannabis, rather than drugs requiring the use of sharps.

The report was noted, and the floor was opened to questions.

Cllr Timmis was disheartened to see the increase in fly-tipping, and particularly drug-related fly-tipping, and especially in the north part of the district which was Cllr Timmis' ward of Wapping. Cllr Timmis was surprised not to have been informed of this previously. She also remarked on the number of court no-shows and wished to see greater action taken by the police given the destructive and criminal impact of fly-tipping. In response, it was stressed that Dacorum Borough Council, police authorities and other authorities north of the Hertfordshire border were working to curb the local increase in fly-tipping.

EWalker asked Cllr Timmis whether she had any suggestions as to specific actions she would like to see. In response, Cllr Timmis highlighted that 2 individuals prosecuted for fly-tipping had been caught thanks to covert surveillance. Increased police presence and advertisement of surveillance as a stronger deterrent were also recommended. It was also added that Dacorum was working closely with Luton authorities to ensure that further action was taken. EWalker pointed out that the number of covert cameras had been increased in recent times, along with authorisation to place these in areas identified as hotspots. EWalker however pointed out the difficulty of catching individuals given the unpredictable nature of the crime. Efforts were also being made to influence local police authorities to encourage police presence, though DBC could not direct police agencies, who themselves had resource issues. EWalker also commented on the costs associated with court cases and also theft of camera equipment and the need for sufficient resources for the camera footage to be perused. It was also highlighted that 12 fixed penalty notices had been issued last year which was a proportionate response and allowed the avoidance of court proceedings.

Cllr England commented that cigarette waste was still above 95% of all litter, and hoped to see this figure drop below 80% by September. Cllr England said "At the last SPaE, Chair Cllr Birnie had expressed his disappointment that the report did not include information about complaints being reviewed, stating that the public should not feel persecuted and they should know how many complaints are received. It was noted that this level of detail would be provided as part of the Q4 report." Cllr England asked if officers could be more specific, and "Will you have a picture in detail at the end of the pilot?"

Ben Steven replied that it differs greatly, urban/rural and by footfall and they would have a detailed picture at the end of the pilot.

Cllr Foster requested further information on the education package discussed in the report, and particularly which schools were involved. In response, it was explained that one package targeted primary schools. However, there was a more correlated

littering issue with secondary schools, and so presentations were planned to be delivered to a range of schools. Further documentation could be provided on this. A pack was distributed to the education awareness team, who would visit schools to deliver a presentation and involve pupils in activities.

Cllr Foster then asked whether information was available outlining when and where district enforcement had patrolled.

On the topic of abandoned vehicles, the Chair commented that 1,508 were closed without a removal necessary. The Chair then suggested that more work could be done to educate the public about reporting such cases. In response, it was highlighted that automated letters were being devised.

The Chair appreciated that there was collaboration with landowners to improve the service yards. It was added that a concerted effort had been made to identify and engage with private landowners, particularly around waste accumulations and uncontained commercial waste. Work was also being done to place the onus on the landowners to carry out any required clear-ups, along with regular inspections and visits from DBC. It was added that a number of partnership meetings had been held on this subject, with other local organisations involved in visiting and inspecting sites.

The Chair then asked why some PSPOs appeared in brackets in the report. This was erroneous and would be remedied. It was also commented that one PSPO had been issued to an individual for dropping a sweet wrapper. Investigation would be carried out to ascertain why a littering notice was not instead served to this individual.

On a further query from the Chair, it was clarified that the figure provided was a cumulative sum of the fines across all individuals, but that this was not distributed evenly between all 9 recipients of the fines.

Cllr England asked what happened to the 19% of FPNs that were not paid. In response, it was explained that these remained in the system and, should they not be paid, further warnings and eventually prosecutions would be served.

Cllr England then asked whether there was any information on complaints reviewed by district enforcement. In response, it was pointed out that only one such complaint had been received.

EWalker explained asked if Cllr England was referring to complaints about district enforcement or representations about fixed penalty notices.

Cllr England referred to Cllr Birnies previous point that he was disappointed that the report did not include information about complaints being reviewed.

EWalker confirmed that they had only received one to date and that had gone to the officer.

EWalker then summarised a report in relation to the upcoming expiry of the PSPO on dog control, explaining the significance of this and outlining the various options available.

A consultation had been conducted in March 2022 on various public restrictions in relation to dog control. An overwhelming majority of survey participants supported the proposed PSPOs.

A significant number of requests had been received in the previous year in relation to dog behaviour, and a number of FPNs had been served.

The report also outlined that the legal requirements for continuing the PSPO were required, and there was evidence that dog control related issues remained a public problem and there was justification for the PSPO to be continued, with some exceptions regarding particular local facilities.

Cllr England expressed disappointment with the questioning style used in the survey in relation to the above PSPO, opining that the survey had been designed to lead respondents to support the continuation of the PSPO. It was then suggested that there was insufficient evidence that the current PSPO was proportionate to the scale of the problem, though Cllr England was in support of the continuation of a PSPO in relation to dog control. In response, EWalker pointed out that there was likely underreporting of incidences related to dog control, and that in any case the PSPO was intended as a deterrent rather than a stick with which to strike responsible dog owners. Cllr England then rephrased his comment to clarify that his challenge was in relation to the tone of the survey, which in his view overstated the problem related to dog control. He also opined that some of the rules underpinning the PSPO were unreasonable and might be made less stringent. In response, Cllr Banks pointed out that she did not recognise Cllr England's comments. She expressed her support of the PSPO and felt that the residents of Dacorum deserved to be protected by it. She also outlined several testimonies from local residents. In addition, Cllr Foster suggested that the National Trust may be approached to reconsider their previous decision to exclude certain land from the PSPO.

EWalker replied that the National Trust were consulted as part of the latest report, and correspondence from the organisation was still being awaited. Cllr Foster also drew attention to the issue of some dog owners walking more dogs than they were able to control, sometimes up to ten dogs at a time. EWalker highlighted that more consultation was required on the exact figure that would be chosen as the maximum number of dogs to be walked at a time, along with other considerations. Cllr Timmis acknowledged that many dog owners were responsible, though some weren't, and the deterrent of the PSPO was hoped to convince the latter group to be more responsible. Cllr Wyatt-Lowe opined that Cllr England's insinuation that the survey was leading was an unjustified one, and urged all councillors to support this policy which was backed by considerable public support. Cllr Hearn added that the report was very well-written and congratulated its authors.

In response to a comment from Cllr England that the rule that people with dogs must maintain a 3-metre distance from an unfenced play area was unreasonable, Cllr Stevens pointed out that most children's play areas in Dacorum were fenced. Cllr Stevens added that the 3-metre rule appeared not to be well-advertised, and asked that notices be placed in unfenced areas, particularly in Mill Street.

The Chair asked whether individual by-laws could be devised in relation to the maximum number of dogs that any one person could walk at a time. EWalker pointed out that this was possible, though further research and consultation was

required to establish the exact maximum number. It was added that several concerns had been raised by the public in relation to the number of dogs being walked by some individuals. Another option was to look at licensing schemes. To summarise, the Chair pointed out the difficulty of striking a balance between ensuring responsibility among dog owners, while minimising inconvenience to businesses that provided dog-walking services. Lastly, Cllr Hearn had asked officers to examine the option of a dedicated dog park where owners could take dogs off their lead, as a positive balance to restrictions elsewhere.

The PSPO report was noted.

10 TOWN CENTRE PSPO

RLeBrun took the report as read, though several points were highlighted.

The PSPO whose continuation was under consultation related to prohibitions around cycling and skateboarding in a defined area, as well as spitting, urinating and defecating in a defined area. In addition, the consultation had examined the issue of electric scooters in the town centre. Cycling and skateboarding were still perceived to be a problem, with a large majority of support for the inclusion of this. IT would not preclude people from dismounting and carrying their bikes or skateboards through the town centre. There was also overwhelming support for the provisions on spitting, urinating and defecating. The proposed addition related to prohibition of unauthorised electric scooters on a public highway within a defined area, excluding rental scooters and scooters for certain uses. It was recognised that a trial scheme for electric scooters may be introduced in the future, and the proposed addition to the PSPO did not preclude this. The approach would focus on e-scooters, but the PSPO could be amended to include manual scooters should this be deemed necessary at a later date.

As part of the consultation, many members of the public had suggested other additions to the PSPO, which would be reviewed and assessed in time, and the current provisions of the PPO would also be reviewed regularly during its three-year period of validity, should it be renewed.

The report was noted, and the floor was opened for comments and questions.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe pointed out that many members of the public felt threatened by the silent nature of e-scooters. She questioned why a by-law was not in place to ensure that all scooters and similar vehicles had an approach warning mechanism fitted. In response, this would be explored, though it was highlighted that the fitting of warning devices did not necessarily entail their use by the rider.

Cllr Stevens was pleased to see the proposed extension of the scope of the PSPO. He then pointed out the inconsiderate nature of a number of cyclists on canal walkways, and asked whether speed provisions for cyclists on canal towpaths might be included in the PSPO. Though this was possible, Cllr Stevens was advised that the capacity to enforce such a rule may prove challenging. Another avenue may be to approach the Canal & River Trust about what might be done in partnership, including changes to towpath layout or educational initiatives.

The Chair challenged how enforcement officers might enforce the PSPO in general given the speed considerations implied. In response, it was pointed out that within the town centre it was generally not possible to gain sufficient speed for this to pose a risk to the enforcement officers, though it was stressed that no officer would be expected to place themselves at risk of a collision. Other avenues may also be explored, such as speed bumps.

Cllr Rogers was concerned that the PSPO might undermine efforts to increase electric scooter and cycle use from an environmental perspective. It was pointed out that these considerations had been included within current deliberations.

Cllr England highlighted that the consultation reached 0.5% of the population, and suggested that evidence in support of the proposals was scant. Cllr England also took issue with the wording and design of the survey. He then suggested that an area might be defined within the town centre for people to traverse by bike or scooter, which might be a more universally acceptable solution. Cllr Banks was in support of the sentiments expressed by Cllr England, though she highlighted that they related to responsible cycle use, and that the PSPO was greatly needed in order to prevent antisocial behaviour.

Cllr Taylor asked whether it would be possible for a PSPO to impose speed limits for cyclists and scooter users. The Chair reiterated the challenge of enforcing such restrictions, especially given the need to measure speeds exactly, as well as the need for clear rules from the point of view of those trying to abide by them.

Cllr Banks advocated for the need to respect pedestrianised areas and not to build cycling lanes in areas that were currently fully pedestrianised.

Cllr England asked if there were any accident records from the Marlowes to back up this being necessary. RLeBrun responded that such records didn't exist simply because they wouldn't keep them, it was pointed out that the issue of irresponsible use of e-scooters and cycles at speed was a national issue and was in need of a solution.

Following the above considerations, the proposed PSPO for Hemel Hempstead town centre was approved.

11 PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION PERFORMANCE Q4

The report was taken as read, with the following salient points highlighted. During the Q4 period, a planning moratorium had been initiated, which affected the figures in the report. There was an extended text in section 2 highlighting key priorities that the department had undertaken in the previous quarter. Section 3 set out the majority of the key performance indicators. Namely, planning fee income was ahead of budget. However, there had been some decline in performance, primarily due to the planning moratorium.

The report was noted and the floor was opened to questions and comments.

Cllr Timmis asked for further details on the proposed fully automated committed development software to process town planning applications. It was explained that a

pilot programme had been secured with £350,000 from Central Government for a service that would improve the efficiency of the advice given to residents in respect of town planning applications, allowing members of the public to check in advance, prior to submission, whether their application was likely to be approved, with the aim of freeing up resources. Cllr Timmis expressed concern that residents may be able to bypass local authorities. In response, it was stressed that the proposed model was not a mechanism to circumvent the existing town planning approval mechanisms, but rather was a pre-application process to screen out those applications likely to be declined. Nonetheless, Cllr Timmis was concerned that this may give residents the impression that they could continue with proposed works despite their application having been declined. In response to this, it was clarified that the intention of the model being piloted was to deal with binary yes-or-no decisions that did not require town planning judgment.

Cllr Timmis also referred to the issue of an insufficient number of enforcement officers to meet the demand for enforcement issues in need of processing. As a result, many cases were in danger of expiring before they could be duly addressed. In response, the ongoing difficulties in this area were acknowledged. A senior enforcement officer had been appointed, though resourcing issues remained to affect the service. Recruitment efforts were ongoing, along with efforts to engage with partners to secure additional resources, and to make enforcement officer roles more attractive to prospective recruits. It was highlighted that there was widespread difficulty within the industry in terms of recruiting planning and enforcement officers.

Further on the issue of enforcement, Cllr Hearn seconded concerns at the lack of resources to sufficiently meet demand for cases before they expired. In response, it was explained that there was a 4-year rule and a 10-year rule, depending on whether the case involved a change of use. More broadly, enforcement plans were in place and the majority of site visits were conducted within the prescribed period, and all cases continued to be investigated. In summary, the lack of resources did not mean to say that enforcement officers were not investigating existing cases. Other solutions were also being explored, such as the removal permitted development rights in light of the practice of some landowners selling off plots of land. Cllr Hearn wondered whether high local house prices was having an impact on the ability to recruit individuals. It was acknowledged that this may be one factor among several, but no data was available to support this. It was added that work was ongoing across the county to address the industry-wide issue of recruitment into town planning roles.

Cllr Foster requested further information on the ESRI project. In response, it was explained that this was an exciting pilot to digitise and graphically present data relating to development contributions in respect of section 106 agreements.

The report was noted.

12 WORK PROGRAMME

The next meeting was scheduled for 6th July 2022. The agenda items for that meeting were outlined. Colleagues were encouraged to submit any further issues they wished to the Chair. Cllr England wishes to discuss the matter of air quality. The Chair pointed out that a report on this was scheduled for discussion in November 2022. In response to Cllr England's question of why this had been delayed, it was

explained that the steering group on this matter had been suspended due to COVID-19 and its next meeting was scheduled for later in June 2022.

13 **AOB**

The Meeting ended at 9.00 pm