

MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

21 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Beauchamp
England
Foster
Harden (Chairman)
P Hearn
Riddick
Rogers (Vice-
Chairman)
Stevens
R Sutton
Taylor
Timmis

Officers:

Also Attendance: Cllr Barratt and Cllr Anderson

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 MINUTES

Cllr Harden noted minutes from meetings held on 14th June and 6th July.

Cllr England confirmed his concerns regarding minutes from the meeting held on 14th June were now resolved.

The minutes for the meetings held on 14th June and 6th July 2022 were formally approved

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Cllr Wilkie and Cllr Wyatt- Lowe.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No new declarations of interest were declared

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Cllr Harden confirmed there was no public participation, though they did have members of the public viewing the meeting virtually

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

Cllr Harden confirmed that no matters had been referred to the Committee

6 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1

RLeBrun took the report as read, first noting that the Covid report was incorrectly listed as an appendix, and confirmed that the missing KPIs would be circulated once they had been correctly taken from the system.

RLeBrun provided an overview of services, advising that a full service has been maintained despite driver shortages. Agency member induction training has been conducted and it has been agreed that agency staff will be brought in early at weekends for training to ensure they can begin work immediately. Scheduled collections took place on Good Friday, the Great Compost Giveaway was successful, and the service caught up well after the spring bank holiday. It was also noted that special village collections and electrical compliance testing and fire risk assessments have also been carried out, and an asbestos audit was also carried out at Tring depot. Training has been carried out for Clean Safe Green with 4 staff members now trained for the grab lorry, and a new grab lorry will be arriving to help address fly-tipping. Work has been ongoing with the splash park as well as ensuring that football fields are ready for the football season, and grass cutting has taken place.

The service has had a number of vacancies though work is ongoing to fill these, including working with summer temps and helping move them to permanent positions, and exploring other options to fill vacancies to ensure more sustainable succession planning.

On open spaces, trees and woodlands, work is being carried out to assess viability at Bunkers Park for future projects, including the Chilterns Beechwood project. The tree planting for the Queen's Jubilee was a success, and there has been good attendance at the Herts Tree Officer Forum for discussions around procurement around the tree maintenance service. Work is ongoing to expand the Wild Flower Map. On educational awareness, 10 tons of compost were given away for free to residents. 320 volunteers took part in the Great British Spring Clean, taking 219 bags of rubbish and 167 bags of recycling, and work is ongoing with Street Champions and friends

groups. 4,000 packets of wildflower seeds have been given to residents as part of Biodiversity Day. 96 new Street Champions have registered and numbers continue to increase. 2 primary school talks have also been given to help encourage participation. On resourcing and administration, there have been 8,993 service requests, Clean Safe and Green has had 1,202, and there were 1,237 requests for sharp box collections.

Cllr Timmis congratulated RLeBrun on the positive report. On planning for the Chilterns Beechwood project, Cllr Timmis asked for clarification on this. ARobinson advised that there would be a report further on the agenda.

Cllr Timmis noted that they have seen a substantial increase in fly-tipping in recent weeks in her area, of which 2-3 have had official-looking plastic square bags and asked if this could be followed up further. RLeBrun agreed to follow this up with Cllr Timmis and asked that the councillor forward on the photographs she has. Cllr Sutton commented that she has also seen large plastic bags in Chambersbury Lane.

Cllr Sutton commented on tree planting, noting that additional trees were to be planted in the orchard in North End and queried if this was continuing. RLeBrun agreed to speak to Luke Johnson, the team leader for Trees and Woodlands, and respond to Cllr Sutton with further information.

Cllr Hearn commented on the missing fence and gate, noting that this has been an issue since the beginning of the year and asked when this would be resolved. RLeBrun agreed to chase this up and confirmed that he would also follow up on communication.

Cllr Beauchamp noted his appreciation for the Clean Safe and Green team's action to clear away the rubble. Cllr Beauchamp referred to the 2 benches removed from the church grounds and asked where they had been relocated to. RLeBrun stated that he was unsure where they had been put and that he would check this with Rob Cassidy. RLeBrun added that he would be attending a meeting to discuss the churchyard tomorrow.

Cllr Taylor remarked that there was little reference in the report to street cleaning and concerns raised by residents over a lack of it. RLeBrun acknowledged that they were behind on street cleaning due to awaiting replacement of equipment, and though he believes they have now caught up, he noted the concerns. Cllr Taylor confirmed that he would email RLeBrun with particular areas of concern and it was agreed he would follow up on this.

Cllr England noted the growth in new Street Champions, though following the Great British Tidy Up, only half a bag was collected on average by each person, and he asked if they know what percentage of new Street Champions become established and

what percentage of litter the initiative is dealing with. RLeBrun confirmed that he would take the action and look to provide accurate information. On active Street Champions, RLeBrun advised that it depends on how many collect equipment and how many they then hear from on training. Cllr England commented that he is part of the Facebook group and that a high profile member, Mr Watts, who has been passionate about being a Street Champion and recently did his last litter collection and had noted that he was disillusioned about it. Cllr England stated that the Street Champions programme is an initiative that allows people to work with the council and requires communication. RLeBrun agreed, stating that there is interaction with them and they can potentially reach out to the member to better understand the issues.

Cllr England commented that he was uncomfortable with how numbers are presented and the focus on the more positive numbers, adding that they should discuss the reality of the situation as the focus should be getting value as well as ensuring people see the council working with others. Cllr Barratt responded that they always report the active figures and that these figures are available. Cllr Barratt added that they should be focusing on the positive aspects of Street Champions rather than any negatives.

Cllr Rogers commended RLeBrun's report, noting its brevity, focus and relevant information, and asked that more reports follow this example.

Cllr Rogers noted the previous invitation for councillors to visit Cupid Green and stated that he would like to attend. It was agreed that this should be picked up again to help councillors better understand the facility.

Cllr Riddick extended his thanks to the team at Cupid Green for their work on St Albans Hill. On litter-picking, Cllr Riddick noted that one of the team was mowing ahead of litter-picking, though otherwise he commended the work that took place. RLeBrun noted the work completed by the team and thanked the councillor for his comments.

Cllr Foster noted her thanks for the new playground in Canal Fields, stating it has been well received by residents, and thanked the team for keeping it clean. RLeBrun thanked the councillor for the feedback.

Cllr Foster queried where the re-wilding areas are in Berkhamsted. RLeBrun confirmed that he would check the specific sites and that he would also feedback on future plans to help manage expectations.

Cllr Foster commented on street cleaning, noting the issue of blocked drains and the issue posed by on-street parking. RLeBrun confirmed that they attempt to coordinate efforts with HCC and that on-street parking has been an issue across the borough, particularly following Covid. Work is ongoing to coordinate with HCC.

Cllr Foster noted requests from residents to replace trees and that the response from Luke Johnson's team was that there is a 7-year waiting list to assess sites for trees. RLeBrun confirmed that this is being addressed and that they have looked at this with the new Deputy Chief Executive, and they are looking at what services can be brought in-house to respond to issues sooner through having a more flexible service in conjunction with contracts that will be renewed next year.

Cllr Beauchamp asked RLeBrun to ask Simon for his plans on maintenance of the River Gade in Gadebridge park, noting that there is now a risk of flooding in the southern and northern ends of the park if action isn't taken soon. RLeBrun confirmed that this would be raised.

Cllr England commented that he had spoken to a Clean Safe and Green litter picker in his local park, who was upset that fresh graffiti had appeared on the Co-op, and he thanked the team for addressing this.

Cllr England asked if it was possible to recap on the roles that are affected by the LGV driver shortage. RLeBrun confirmed that the shortage has not affected them as they took action last year, though the issue was needing to pull drivers from other areas to empty bins, which then effects the work that Clean Safe and Green can do. RLeBrun advised that the issue has been resolved, though they are looking to build up a pool of drivers to avoid the issue in future, though Clean Safe and Green is not affected by a lack of drivers currently. The focus is on waste collection and what the impact will be if there are shortages.

Cllr England commented on the paved footways on housing land in several areas are overgrown and asked if this was being addressed. RLeBrun explained that there has been an issue between the agreement between Clean Safe and Green and housing contractors, though this is now back in place and there is a catch up on work across other areas. RLeBrun confirmed that Chris Connelly has a priority list of areas they are inspecting and will work on these and, going forward, they will ensure they are identifying areas better to keep them maintained. Cllr England reassured the officer that they were not looking to criticise people involved and that they recognise a good system is required for the borough. RLeBrun agreed, noting that the majority of success is a result of the people involved and that they are putting a framework in place to ensure the systems work so they can manage expectations and allow successes to be noted on a more regular basis.

Cllr Harden noted the collection of over 1,000 paid-for bulk collection per annum and that the end of the report refers to 449 bulky-item requests in Q1, and asked if they have already achieved 50% in Q1. RLeBrun confirmed this was correct, though they

don't have a target on this and bulky-item collections tend to be seasonal so the number is expected to drop in Q2. Cllr Harden queried if the figures were normal for Q1, to which RLeBrun confirmed that they are.

Cllr Harden thanked the Committee for their interaction on the agenda point and the report was noted.

ACTION: Cllr Timmis to follow up fly-tipping issue with RLeBrun.

ACTION: RLeBrun to check on status of tree planting in the orchard in North End and report back to Cllr Sutton.

ACTION: RLeBrun to chase up missing fence and gate and report back to Cllr Hearn.

ACTION: RLeBrun to check where benches from the church are being stored or relocated to and report back to Cllr Beauchamp.

ACTION: Cllr Taylor to email RLeBrun about areas of concern regarding street cleaning to allow RLeBrun to follow this up further.

ACTION: RLeBrun to contact Mr Watts, if possible, regarding being a Street Champion and look to gain specific feedback.

ACTION: RLeBrun to check location of re-wilding sites in Berkhamsted and report back to Cllr Foster.

7 PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1

ARobinson took the report as read and presented the following highlights. It was noted that Q1 planning income has increased, largely as a result of 2 specific planning applications, though planning applications are down overall due to restrictions currently in place. Whilst performance has improved since the last quarter, the service is still under considerable resourcing pressure. The Committee's attention was also drawn to section 2 of the report on the Q1 service highlights, including article directions to protect office space, ongoing work to support planning resilience work streams, work with the government to pilot a number of digital system reforms, and money collected as part of the Community Structure Levy.

Cllr Beauchamp referred to item 2.8 of the report, noting the commissioning and feasibility study on e-scooters, and asked if considerations also be given to pedestrians. Cllr Beauchamp noted an incident where a resident couldn't hear an e-scooter coming up behind them, and asked if they should be encouraging people to break the law by driving them on pavements. ARobinson agreed the user conflict is a

key issue to address. On the legality point, ARobinson stated that the government are looking at if this can be decriminalised in the future, and the study will help them see if the scooter system can be run should it be made legal. ARobinson also noted that this is a small part of a larger transportation strategy.

Cllr Beauchamp asked if the responses to the consultation would be within the public domain. ARobinson advised that the results would feed into the wider transport strategy and could update members of the Committee on the findings of the report if this was requested.

Cllr England commented on a visit to Cambridge, an area with high bike usage, and that Dacorum is not a space for human-powered cycling, which has resulted in it becoming a pedestrianised town. Cllr England stated that if they would need sensible provision for people as well as learn as a community to coexist as an increased use of bikes, e-bikes and scooters would help solve parking challenges that residents currently face.

Cllr England queried if there is a strategy for the use of CIL and Section 106. ARobinson advised that the position of the council is that it would not spend any CIL until the infrastructure delivery plan was in place. There has been a delay to the plan, and while the current decision is not to bring forward any spending of the core CIL funds, members have access to a portion of CIL that can be spent freely. ARobinson noted the ongoing conversation regarding the release of core funding and stated that the infrastructure commitments will be significant so CIL money needs to be spent correctly to maximise the impact it can have on the borough. A comment was raised, stating that they are yet to spend the core CIL money because they know they will not receive what is required and prioritisation will be required once the CIL money has been pooled. It was also noted that they may look to release a small part of the CIL money, though this will be as part of the prioritisation process and is further complicated that some parts of the area's infrastructure is handled by another council.

Cllr England countered the previous comment, stating that given the current state of inflation, CIL will reduce if not spend for several years and should therefore be considered. It was noted that they would not spend all the CIL to avoid it devaluing and that inflation is expected to improve.

Cllr Timmis commented on the use of acronyms within the report, noting item 2.7 of the report regarding ESRI pilots using GIS analytics, and asked if these could be explained further. ARobinson apologised for this and confirmed that the specific references for ESRI and GIS are regarding the software used for mapping and digitising data. The project uses ESRI who use a more interactive type of software and they are exploring if this would be a better system to use.

Cllr Stevens returned to the questions regarding e-scooters and urged some warning around pilots, referring to a pilot running in Canterbury where the portfolio holder pulled the pilot due to improper use of e-scooters and bikes on pavements and resulting in injuring a pedestrian.

Cllr Stevens referred to the comment in the report regarding planning resilience in section 2.3 and asked for further clarification on this. ARobinson explained that this is to recognise resourcing issues within the planning service, as there are across the country, and that they are exploring different ways to address this. There are a number of initiatives being explored, such as pooling resources with HCC and restructuring, as well as using IT differently and identifying efficiencies within existing processes. Cllr Stevens noted the report on mitigation strategies and assessments, and asked if this would add to the workload. ARobinson confirmed that it would and that they would look at this further.

Cllr Harden referred to section 3.10 of the report, noting the '100% defending planning appeals in Q1', and suggested that this be highlighted as a compliment to officers and Committee members in being able to successfully defend it. Cllr Harden commented that it was positive to see this figure increase from Q4 and asked that the Committee's appreciation be communicated to the team. Cllr Anderson advised that they have just lost an appeal, though he noted the hard work carried out by officers. Cllr Hearn echoed Cllr Harden's comments and noted the work done by the team. ARobinson thanked the Committee for the recognition, particularly during this period of significant challenges.

Cllr Hearn noted the difficulties in recruiting and asked for a further update. ARobinson advised that recruitment is an issue across Hertfordshire and task and finish groups are being set up by HCC to look at this further. Recruitment campaigns are in place and they are struggling to recruit senior officers as they are moving into the private sector, therefore the strategy is to recruit more junior staff and attract younger candidates, though this means it will take longer to train these members of staff. ARobinson advised that this is a long-term issue and that they will need to reconsider who they are recruiting, training, and also looking creatively at how to work with joining authorities.

Cllr Hearn asked if junior officers are receiving the support and mentoring that they require. ARobinson confirmed that this has been recognised, and whilst there are benefits to working remotely, they are ensuring this is not to the detriment of those earlier in their careers. The balance is ensuring people have flexibility for officers whilst ensuring that those in more senior roles are accessible so they can develop their staff.

Cllr Beauchamp commended the current planning officers, commenting on how responsive they are and asked that this be passed on to the team. Cllr Beauchamp echoed Cllr Hearn's comments regarding mentoring, stating that this is key to bringing people up to the level of more experienced officers and that this has to be done in-person.

The Committee noted the report.

8 CHILTERN BEECHWOOD MITIGATION STRATEGY

RLeydon introduced himself to the Committee as the Strategic Planning and Regeneration Team Leader, noting that his main role is focused on the delivery of the local plan, resulting in the mitigation strategy that would be presented.

ARobinson began by noting that he would be presenting a draft document and asked the Committee to note the progress made on the development of the strategy.

ARobinson noted the restrictions introduced 6 months ago around granting planning consent as a result of the recreation impact on the Beechwoods, and that the team have developed the mitigation strategy for the area to allow restrictions to be lifted. The report provides an update on the 3 strands of the mitigation strategy being developed, (1) progress on the SAM tariff, (2) the identification of the SANG sites and preparation of these as compensation sites, and (3) the update on the Gateway Projects. ARobinson reiterated that this is an ongoing process and there are a number of unresolved issues still being worked on, though the mitigation strategy is at a position to be discussed with members.

Cllr Timmis stated that the purpose of the mitigation is to attract people away from Beechwoods and put alternatives in place, noting that the issue is SANGs can't replace the Chilterns Beechwood. ARobinson explained that the basis of the mitigation strategy is to take pressure away from the area somehow and the SAM tariff will help put mitigation measures in place. This will include a number of interventions, such as protection zones, though a lot will also be around education and having people on site to educate residents and visitors to use the site responsibly. ARobinson acknowledged that they could not replace Ashridge and that SANGs would help provide alternative spaces that people can use for dog-walking or running to help take pressure off Ashridge.

Cllr Timmis commented on the additional pressure that would be put on the area if they intend to proceed with housing plans and asked what measures are being put in place to address this. ARobinson advised that the focus of the report is on how to lift the moratorium. On the wider issue of the local plan, ARobinson noted the number of

reforms to the planning system and housing numbers, and that the local plan will have to look at this. Cllr Timmis responded that the main challenge is the number of people and that the mitigation should include how to reduce the number of people, such as addressing the number of houses being built in the area. It was noted that that it had already been stated that they could not compete with Ashridge and instead the focus is to work with the National Trust to make Ashridge less attractive, which DBC can help with through the local plan. Cllr Timmis acknowledged the aim to encourage people elsewhere and that she felt they should look at housing as part of the mitigating actions to reduce the number of people visiting the area.

ARobinson agreed that further discussions are required regarding the impact of housing growth on the area and that this will form part of the local plan, and that the current focus is how to put a protection process in place to release some of the development that has been on hold for 6 months, which has had a significant economic impact. Cllr Timmis thanked the officer for his response and reiterated that mitigating effects must include the numbers of people they are moving into an area that they are also trying to protect. RLeydon responded that the mitigation strategy is a process being followed for the local adopted plan and national policy as applied today, and the same legal process will need to be applied to the local plan going forward, and the next step will be to consider this within the context of the new local plan and whether it is sufficient.

Cllr Beauchamp commended the document. Cllr Beauchamp advised that he had spoken to someone running a survey in Gadebridge Park and asked if they could receive the outcome of this survey. It was noted that a number of surveys are being run across different parks.

Cllr Beauchamp referred to interactive map on page 52 of the report and the avoidance zone on page 54, noting that both maps are the same. It was noted that the link was the same for both items. RLeydon advised that the link presents both zones on a single map. Cllr Beauchamp stated that the report implied it would show the 500m zone. RLeydon confirmed that the expectation is the map will be upgraded once the strategy is implemented.

Referring back to Cllr Beauchamp's comments on the surveys being conducted, ARobinson confirmed that this data would be made available and he noted item 3.13 in the report that identifies the 3 sites the council has identified as SANG sites. In addition to paying the SAM tariff, developers will also need to contribute towards SANG sites and the surveys are to help understand the capacity of these sites and what additional capacity these sites can serve. This will then allow the team to understand what current backlog of development, and it is estimated that around 2,500 homes are currently on hold, can be released once the moratorium is lifted.

Cllr England commented that he found it hard to engage with the report in its current form and stated that he would need to wait for Part B. ARobinson acknowledged that there is key information missing from the report, such as the overall tariff, which is subject to ongoing negotiations with the National Trust and other authorities, and they hope these discussions will be brought to a conclusion soon. On Part B, ARobinson stated that this will deal with the administration and processes, with the main items of the mitigation strategy looking at the overall figure, what this means per dwelling and how much capacity there will be on SANG sites. ARobinson noted that this information wasn't yet available and would be brought back to the Committee when it is. Cllr England asked when this was likely to be. ARobinson confirmed that capacity surveys should be concluded in early October, discussions regarding the overall tariff are ongoing though should be concluded within the coming weeks.

Cllr England noted the reference to Appendix A and explained that it was difficult to understand the clause in Part A without seeing the appendix, which will be part of Part B. ARobinson advised that Appendix A will be a more operational document. RLeydon agreed, explaining that Part B will set up the operational process.

Cllr England commented that they had been told that the Beechwoods are at risk and that so far he could to see how they get back to equilibrium and how much is on planning for the future. ARobinson stated that the document sets out how to get back to equilibrium and address the development currently within the system. The future local plan will be had throughout the local plan process, with the mitigation strategy already in place, though it will be regularly reviewed. Once the local plan is adopted, there will be one document that sets out the whole process, and the current document focuses on how to bring them back to equilibrium.

Cllr England noted the reference to 6 projects and that he was unable to see in the report what these are. RLeydon advised that the 6 projects are different types of interventions. Cllr England stated that he was unable to judge if the projects are good value and whether they are dealing with the core problem. It was noted that there is less parking available and that they would either see illegal parking or that it would deter people from visiting, that the focus needs to be on preventing the environmental impact by people deciding to visit the area regardless.

ARobinson commented on the viability of the strategy, stating that the mitigations don't end once the strategy has been published and that there will be ongoing monitoring and will be reviewed at least every 3 years to ensure the council understands the impact of the tariff and SANG sites. If the strategy is not working, further interventions can be requested. It was noted that it should be reviewed

annually and that this could be relaxed if the strategy is found to have a positive impact, and that they should know when they have reached equilibrium.

Cllr Taylor asked when they plan to publish the full document with appendices. ARobinson referred back to his earlier comments, noting the ongoing discussions with the National Trust and other organisations on agreeing the exact figures, though these should be concluded in the coming weeks. Site surveys are close to being concluded and management plans need to be prepared for SANGs. ARobinson advised that they are still several weeks away from having all the information pulled together and that he hoped to present the final set of documents ready by late October or early November, subject to management plans being produced.

Cllr Taylor noted that the full document would set out a number of interventions and asked how long it would take for these to be put in place and the moratorium would be lifted. ARobinson explained that the lifted restrictions are likely to be geographically focused and parts of the borough will not have restrictions lifted. On the timetable, ARobinson stated that he hoped to start lifting restrictions within the next month, though this assumes that the current work already outlined are completed within this timeframe.

Cllr Taylor declared a potential interest, noting that he represents Berkhamsted Town Council on the Ashridge Estate Management Committee. Cllr Taylor asked if restrictions would be lifted on the outer areas. ARobinson confirmed that the 500m buffer area around Ashridge would effectively remain in perpetuity and they are unlikely to ever allow new residential development within that zone. The current intention is for 2 categories of development with smaller developments of 1-10 units and larger developments above 10 units. Smaller developments, subject to SANG capacity, capacity should be allocated to some of those sites across the borough, meaning a 5-unit scheme in Tring could have allocated capacity at Chipperfield, though this could not be done for a larger development. ARobinson advised that they should therefore be able to lift restrictions in and around Hemel Hempstead as this is where the SANG sites are located, and on a limited basis for smaller developments elsewhere in the borough, though SANG capacity will be limited and not all restrictions will be lifted immediately. A protocol will therefore be developed on which sites will be released first and will depend on the capacity within the SANG sites.

Cllr Taylor voiced his concerns about a lack of information on the SANG sites and that he was unsure of when restrictions were likely to be lifted, adding that they also need to consider when the Committee can scrutinise proposals to ensure SANG sites will meet the required needs and attract people away from Ashridge. Cllr Taylor commented that a SANG site in Hemel Hempstead would be unlikely to deter people

from Tring visiting Ashridge. ARobinson confirmed that that the report notes the 3 SANG sites as Bunker's Park, Gadebridge and Chipperfield, subject to capacity. Each of these sites will require a management plan, which are currently being prepared in-house in conjunction with Natural England and there is confidence that the management plans will be suitable. On the tariff, ARobinson noted the ongoing negotiations taking place, and whilst they will update the Committee on the conclusion of this, though once the tariff and SANG sites have been signed off by Natural England, this will be enough to discharge their legal function to protect Ashridge.

RLeydon clarified that the 3 SANG sites are the first 3 being looked at, and while they should assist with the moratorium being lifted, they will not solve all issues. RLeydon noted that they are the start of the process and they will look at other land in the borough in future, applicants can propose their own SANG sites, and they could look to have up to 10 SANG sites in a year's time.

Cllr Taylor acknowledged the comments and asked if planning permission could be granted without the Committee scrutinising the final strategy. ARobinson advised that the restrictions were put in place without Committee involvement, and when a developer submits a planning application, they have a duty to discharge the Habitats Regulation, and once the document is sufficiently developed, the planning authority can state they are comfortable that the mitigation is in place and can grant planning consent. ARobinson stated that this is a process rather than a decision and therefore there is a limited interface with the Committee. It was noted that a separate conversation needs to be had on the timetable around lifting restrictions and how this aligns with future SPAE meetings, adding that he would have concerns around publishing the document without a meeting taking place.

Cllr Harden asked if the document would go to Cabinet and Council for approval. ARobinson advised that this is a separate legal process that the council performs as a planning authority and therefore doesn't necessarily require a Cabinet decision. Other authorities are not taking this to Cabinet once signed off.

Cllr Harden asked if Committee members with pending concerns would have the opportunity to look at a final draft scenario. Cllr Anderson suggested that this become a standing verbal item at the next two meetings to allow officers to provide a verbal update on progress. Cllr Taylor noted that a large number of Berkhamsted and Tring residents use Ashridge, and if sufficient alternatives in this area are not made available, they will continue to visit Ashridge, and the Committee member stated that he wanted to see what mitigations would be in the area before developments proceed to ensure that the problem is genuinely being addressed. It was noted that the

moratorium would not be lifted across the whole borough immediately and that all available information had been brought to the Committee.

Cllr Harden noted ARobinson's comments, stating that whilst they can scrutinise the document, he queried what else they could contribute to the strategy that isn't within the legal framework. ARobinson noted that some items will be handled by Natural England and the National Trust, and the council's involvement is around SANG sites, though there is limited flexibility in coming up with these. ARobinson advised that there is a balance between getting the Committee involved and allowing officers to progressing the strategy quickly to get the moratorium lifted, noting that they could look at verbal updates and suggested that they consider this further offline.

Cllr Rogers referred item 2.4 on page 31 of the report and the statement that the majority of people who visit Ashridge are local. Cllr Rogers if research supports this. It was noted that this was based on distance from the site. Cllr Rogers commented that this was a note of concern as that the price of houses would go up with everybody in the area paying more for new houses if those using Ashridge is diminished. Cllr Rogers added that it will depend on how the National Trust markets Ashridge outside of the local area and that they may be paying for the improvement of facilities through an increase in house prices. ARobinson noted the data within the footprint ecology report and that around 75% of those who use Ashridge live within Dacorum, though a number of people from outside the borough also use the site. On cost, ARobinson advised that there would be an inevitable increase in development costs, though that will come off the land in the medium term and those currently in the system will need to pay a per-dwelling amount as per the mitigation.

Cllr Stevens commented on safeguarding SANG sites for 80 years and asked how they safeguard ownership over this time. ARobinson confirmed that the current strategy focuses on Ashridge and their own land, though there will be developers who come forward that will provide on-site SANG and they need to ensure that the long-term management of this is in place. There may be step-in rights for the council in future years and there will be a wider conversation on the council's role in stewardship, which is being looked at currently. ARobinson advised that any SANG has to be in place in the long-term and guidelines around this will be in place. RLeydon referred to items 3.5.3 and 3.5.6 on what is required to secure a SANG, including an agreement with the landowner that the site will be secured and kept in perpetuity. The management plan will include costs for at least 80 years.

Cllr Stevens stated that they have a poor history of monitoring and asked how they could ensure this process would persist. ARobinson advised that they have a legal obligation. Cllr Stevens countered that legal obligations can be changed. ARobinson stated that the current legal obligations, which are unlikely to change soon as the

protection of the site is enshrined within international law, state that the site will be protected and a legal framework is in place to ensure this. One requirement of this framework is for ongoing monitoring and a governance process will be in place to monitor SANGs and National Trust reports.

Cllr England referred to item 5.2 and the suggestion that a review will take place in 3 years. Cllr England asked if this had been agreed between authorities or could be changed. RLEYdon advised that this was proposed by authorities in response to Natural England's experience elsewhere. The normal process is that the mitigation process is that they be reviewed every 5 years and it was felt this should be updated to 3 to align with other new local plans being prepared across authorities. Looking at 4.2.2, RLEYdon noted that it states future reviews can be brought forward if required, and some key indicators within the monitoring process could bring forward the review. Cllr England commented that he would prefer the first review to take place within a year. Cllr Harden noted the comment and asked that officers consider this. ARObinson confirmed that this could be discussed further with Natural England, though they need to allow time for interventions to take effect and a number of visitor surveys need to be commissioned, and while 1 year may not be enough, this will be discussed further.

Cllr Foster noted her concern about the report not coming back to the Committee and asked if the catchment area includes both local and SANG sites where they expect people to visit from further away. ARObinson confirmed that they would consider the involvement of SPAE further. On the catchment areas, ARObinson stated that the radius of influence depends on the size of the SANG. Cllr Foster noted that there could be development within the SANG catchment area but no facilities and asked if this would count. RLEYdon advised that there is an expectation that larger developments will deliver their own SANGs, and while there may be some facility provision, such as car parking, it won't be for the whole development.

Cllr Foster asked if a SANG on another development would count. ARObinson stated that some developers would provide a SANG to fulfil their own needs, and if a development is within 1-10 dwellings then the SANG does not need to be within the catchment area.

Cllr Foster commented on the intention of the strategy to bring back equilibrium, stating that every development site would have an impact on Ashridge, and if they want to deter people from Berkhamsted and Tring away from the area then they will need to create a gateway site. ARObinson explained that parts of the borough will have no immediate SANG solution, and current indications are that the Hemel Hempstead area will be covered, and they will need to ensure there is a continual stream of SANG sites coming forward to free up restrictions elsewhere.

Cllr Foster commented on monitoring, noting that the footprint report stated there should be ongoing monitoring with a survey conducted every 3 years and asked if this monitoring would be in place. ARobinson confirmed that there is a governance structure in place, which is in agreement with the other authorities, to monitor the implementation of SANG and SAM and they will report back on progress. In addition to that, footprint surveys will take place every 3 years, and this will allow them to assess the impact the measures are having on Ashridge. Cllr Foster asked if they could therefore have another moratorium in 3 years' time. ARobinson advised that there is also the potential that the restrictions are removed completely and that they could only speculate at this time, though he suggested the mitigations should allow them to ease restrictions in future.

Cllr Sutton asked how Bunker's Park could be improved upon. ARobinson noted that they need to find a balance for all sites to ensure sites aren't overused and degraded, adding that for the SANGs they are proposing, a considerable amount of new investment will be going into these sites.

Cllr Timmis referred to the monitoring, stating that if this is reported back to the Committee then scrutiny can take place. ARobinson advised that they could look at introducing KPIs to the quarterly report, measuring the income received for developers, and could report other items on an annual basis, such as progress the National Trust are having with intervention projects.

Cllr Harden thanked the Committee for their comments. The Committee thanked the officers for their work, noting the amount of time and resource spent on it.

ACTION: Cllr Harden, Cllr Anderson and ARobinson to discuss how to proceed with updates for the Committee.

ACTION: ARobinson to discuss review period with Natural England and report back to the Committee on any updates.

9 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Cllr Harden noted the work programme.

Cllr Timmis stated that there is little on climate change and asked that this be included, given the recent drought and concerns around flooding. Cllr Harden confirmed that this could be checked with officers. Cllr Harden queried if departments should come to the SPAE for the Committee to scrutinise their roles.

Cllr Timmis referred to the recent application passed by Luton Borough Council for Luton Airport as well as the larger planning expansion, and that she would report back on this.

There being no further business, Cllr Harden formally closed the meeting.

The Meeting ended at 10.00 pm