

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

23 NOVEMBER 2016

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Mahmood (Chairman)
Gbola Adeleke
Banks
Mrs Bassadone
Conway
P Hearn
Fethney
Silwal
Timmis
W Wyatt-Lowe
England

Griffiths (Portfolio Holder for Housing),
Harden (Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services)
Marshall (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

Officers:	Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director - Housing
	Robert Cassidy	Parks and Open Spaces Officer
	Barbara Lisgarten	Legal Governance Team Leader and Deputy Monitoring Officer
	David Austin	Assistant Director - Neighbourhood Delivery
	Richard Baker	Group Manager - Financial Services
	Julia Hedger	Group Manager - Strategic Housing
	Sara Railson	Old Town Hall
	Karen Haswell	External – Youth Connexions
	Julie Still	Group Manager – Resident Services
	Kayley Johnston	Member Support Officer (minutes)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

65 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Housing and Community OSC meeting on 22 September and 12 October 2016 were agreed by members

66 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies received.

67 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There was no declaration of interest.

68 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None

70 **Q2 BUDGET MONITORING FINANCIAL REPORT**

R Baker introduced the report providing details of the projected outturn for 2016/17 as at Quarter 2 for the: General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme full details can be found in the report.

R Baker was happy to take questions.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 3, overarching targets, and asked if this can be made more difficult.

E Brooks stated that it's a difficult area; they only sell garages that are hard to let. There are more people in garages now than expected.

Cllr England asked if there were stock conditions on garages.

B Brooks response was that he was unsure as estates dealt with that. They decide which ones can be disposed of.

Cllr England asked what the cost of a garage was.

E Brooks stated that it was between £10-£11 per week however they could charge more.

Cllr Mahmood asked if the garages were wide enough for car storage.

E Brooks stated that he accepts that most people renting garages are not using them to store a car in, most garages are tight and that they might not be suitable for the cars on the market today.

Cllr Mahmood referred to page 5, 3.1. Employees - £81k over budget for staff, is that shared across the services, what exactly does it mean?

R Baker said that it's related to the vacancy provision that we put against all salaries and 5% allowance for staff turnover.

Cllr Mahmood referred to the over budget item, 3.2. The last line, we have balanced out so why are we seeing this so early on, how do we monitor this.

R Baker stated that they have 2 schemes, 1 which has previously been approved and rolled forward. The other is the strategy review.

Cllr Mahmood referred to item 4.5, maintenance which is nearly half a million pound over budget.

E Brooks stated that this is the figure at the end of quarter 2; things have moved on since then, quite a lot of work with the officers from the housing team. There was £200,000 worth of work that had been coded into revenues which is actually capital works. So works that should have come out of another budget where they were underspent have now been re coded to the capital works programme.

Cllr Mahmood asked what 4.7 meant.

R Baker explained that it's basically when budgets are moved from one area to another and to align the capital budgets to what they forecast to spend. What they look to do is increase the revenue budget in line with current spend and reduce the capital budget but the underspend is there.

Cllr Adeleke referred to page 7. 4.7. As part of Capital programme being reviewed, the tactic used is delaying some jobs. One of his residents has been waiting 2 years for a door replacement. How effectively are tenants being advised?

E Books stated that that type of incident isn't really the type that R Baker explained. They are talking more along the lines of works that aren't urgent. What you're referring to is likely to be an error in the system.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

71 Q2 HOUSING REPORT

E Brooks introduced the quarterly housing report highlighting the following;

- KPI's
- Latest version of the housing services plan and the risk register.
- Empty homes continue to improve.
- Performance TL15 which is ASB this should be red; this is due to no data.
- Section 5 HRA capital programme, the boilers are done by Sun Realm not Osborn's

E Brookes said that with regards to tenant's involvement they have a new strategy which was brought to this committee a few months ago. Since then they have had their first meeting which was a success. He also informed the committee that he had

done some work shadowing with the front line officers in the service to see what works they do and what issues they face. This has been very reassuring and is very impressed with the standards of works and communication.

E Brookes was happy to take questions on the report

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe referred to section 215, this doesn't make sense and hopes it can be corrected.

He also said that he had received a complaint regarding a relative who had passed and how DBC didn't deal with it appropriately, he asked what the process was in terms of leeway for the deceased and their families.

E Brooks said that this didn't seem common courtesy and that there is discretion for these circumstances. He confirmed he will look at this individual case so he can make comment.

Cllr Conway said that work is done to a high standard but they are a bit naughty sometimes they say they will turn up and they don't.

E Brooks said sometimes they do have issues with missed appointments however they are less frequent than what they were. Over the last 3-4 month they haven't had any issues with this.

Cllr England was gratified to see an early start on voids

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

72 Q2 RESIDENT SERVICES REPORT

J Still introduced the report stating that there wasn't much new to add.

J Still highlighted the following;

- Success of the summer programme.
- Neighbourhood action, not very well attended
- Adventure playground is still well attended
- CCTV being busy and cameras increased.
- Safeguarding training being delivered to Osborne'

J Still was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe spotted an error on page 48; there was no label on the bottom row.

Cllr Harden confirmed that it should say domestic abuse.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe referred to page 51 14.2 are you happy that your contractors are safeguarding correctly.

J Still said that our duty is our contractors and as far as we are concerned, there is room for improvement. However we are ahead in terms of others. We monitor the percent of staff trained and how often.

Cllr Timmis informed the committee that she was at the Environment Committee last night. There have been a lot of destructions at the skate park; would it be part of your area to have CCTV put up? This could become dangerous for other young people there.

J Still stated that they were aware and they are taking a problem solving approach in dealing with this. There are agencies involved doing outreach work and in addition to that they are working with the police. CCTV has been a consideration and mobile CCTV as an immediate response.

Cllr Mahmood asked what they had been doing to achieve a high success rate at the adventure playground.

J Still said that's it's always been well attended especially in the school holidays as its unpaid childcare so parents can go to work.

Cllr Mahmood referred to the pitches, are they well attended.

J Still said that they are proving to be very popular generating a bit of income for the playgrounds too.

Cllr Mahmood said he has been looking at what they are doing in the next quarter and due to the rise in anti-social behaviour we have an anti-social behaviour team, is there something they can pro-actively do.

J Still said if there is any specific area of any anti-social behaviour identified then they do look at what can be done in those areas. There is going to be more joint working and going forward they are hoping to be able to provide much more.

Cllr Adeleke said that there had been a recent incident with travellers in Chaulden parking in the cricket club. There was an issue last year in Grove hill we don't want a repeat of this in playgrounds.

J Still stated that there is a procedure for travellers which they have to follow strictly. If that happens then the policy enables them to be moved on quickly. In terms of preventing it the Clean, Green and Safe Team will put as many barriers down as possible. Sometimes this isn't enough and can be cut and damaged.

Action: None.

Outcome: Report was noted

73 YOUTH CONNEXIONS

Karen Haswell introduced herself to Members as the new Team Manager for Youth Connexions Dacorum and St Albans District. She has recently taken over and explained that she is aware of some issues in the Dacorum area and plans to tackle them including joint working which hasn't been done In the past.

Karen highlighted the following;

- XC remains the main centre in Dacorum
- There are 23 projects on the go
- Concentrating on a clean slate
- Working closely with the Councillors in their areas.

K Haswell was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr England asked how many number of NEETS are there in Dacorum.

K Haswell said, 146 as of today. In the County we are 3rd lowest, St Albans is the lowest.

Nationally Hertfordshire has one of the lowest NEETS rates.

K Haswell will send the needs over, the percentage of needs and the target after 30th Nov. They are doing door knocking and surveys to find out the needs.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to the bottom of page 60, Adeyfield. How did it go? And what does DAC stands for

DAC stands for Dacorum Team, it's where the target support team work out of. The building is being used for youth projects.

The numbers are low; they are doing targeted leaflet droppings to houses, then following that up. Approximately 8-10 people, it is low but it hasn't been going on long.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe asked to be kept informed.

Cllr Mahmood thanks K Haswell for coming as the committee were concerned. In terms of reaching out to the younger people, are you contacting local schools?

K Haswell confirmed that they were in every school on the information advice and guidance site as a commissions servicer accept Ashlyn's. Going forward a youth worker is paired up with schools, they do lunch time sessions to raise the profile of what projects there are.

Cllr Mahmood was concerned about going to the XC since there is a perception that you get all the privilege people going there, how do we reach out to all?

K Haswell said that the XC is due to be re vamped, they are waiting on plans to be finalised.

It will be far more user friendly. Which will include:

- Change of kitchen to provide independent living skills
- Washing facilities so that care leaves can do their laundry.
- Moving away from the corporate feel

Cllr Mahmood asked if they now had the necessary support to pay the outstanding community centre bills.

K Haswell said yes this won't be happening again and she appreciates how different things were in the past. There is a good support team now and they aim to run a professional service.

Cllr Mahmood referred to his personal experience, being intimidated in these places. Is there now the right training/people so that we don't get any anti social behaviour?

K Haswell said there are still some people that need to look at their career options, they are doing training with people that aren't doing well. They will be recruiting differently. And they do have boundaries, code of behaviours and expectations. Some of the projects are working really well. They are currently re addressing the open access ones.

Cllr Mahmood asked if Bennetts End Youth Club was still closed.

K Haswell said no its re opened, they did have problems with pigeons and rats, which is now sorted. They are offering the Duke of Edinburg and open access sessions from there.

Cllr Hearn said when they look at Youth clubs they found they follow the curriculum to much, the problem in the past is that kids work so hard at school and they need somewhere to go and be relieved of that.

K Haswell agreed and said a good youth worker would help.

Cllr Adeleke asked how many staff there is. His son got involved with the Harpenden one and the majority of staff are young. It's important to connect with the young ones. He looks forward to the next update as he believes it will be goo news.

Julie Still to stay in contact with K Haswell so if Members have questions later on, hopefully J Still can answer them.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

74 OLD TOWN HALL UPDATE REPORT

S Railson introduced the report highlighting the following;

The new website

Engaging with customers

The usage of the facility and services

New creative stands

Catering issues

Future plans for the Old Town.

S Railson was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe referred to the bottom of page 96 and wondered how viable this was in winter.

S Railson said there has been a list from the high street and traders and they have noticed there has been a drop off in football. In the report they make the point that they are fortunate that they have a turnover of guests in our café. If they have a

performance then they have those customers there. Once they are there they are buying refreshments.

There is potential there to make another income stream for the Old Town Hall, it has taken a lot of time and resources in getting it set up, it can be a positive but does take a lot of work.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said can it be opened in the evening for meeting rooms.

S Railson said absolutely there are a number of rooms which could be used. It would just take a conversation.

Cllr Adeleke commended S Railson for what you have achieved over the past 4 years since they last met. The cellar could be capitalised more.

S Railson said it is a useful multifunctional space it does represent one of the reasons for the uplift in use across the whole facility. It is used on a regular basis for private higher; they are turning over a lot of business in the cellar.

Cllr England congratulates them on their new website. The pie chart does show a successful effect.

Cllr Harden refereed to the pie chart which is great, seeing the change in the year of where the web has increased, will this impact sales on the counter.

S Railson said that going forward they will need to look at resources and how the staff can be utilised better. Cost is there biggest overhead.

Cllr Mahmood said have you thought about raising the costs to better balance the budget.

S Railson said that they are in parity with competitors, we are not encountering any resistance to pricing there is some movability going into the financial year, however they don't want to suffer a back lash from it, all factors are considered and there is some promise for this. We want to ensure people are getting value for money.

Action: None

Outcome: The report was noted.

75

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP REPORT

J Still gave apologise on behalf of Dave Moore who was due to present the report today. The report focuses on the position of Dacorum Borough Council within the County and major variances and increase in crime. There has been a concern in residential burglaries; we are 7% above average. Vehicle crime is the second area of concern and this is on the joint action group agenda, this is reviewed to see what actions can be taken.

Criminal damage is another area of concern, this includes graffiti.

J Still was happy to take questions on the report.

Cllr Adeleke referred to criminal damage the CCTV is green, to what effect is that being used.

J Still said that CCTV used increasing to identify individuals, where crime is reported they will come the CCTV room and asked for evidence; this is then reviewed and processed.

Our CCTV operates are proactive and identify perpetrators of crime.

Cllr Adeleke asked if it picks up night crime.

J Still said that most crime happens in residential areas. If they have a spate, mobile cameras can be put up and these are a deterrent.

Cllr Timmis is there a relationship with increased crime due to no street lights.

J Still said she hasn't had any up to date information on this but the last time she had a report on this, there wasn't any indication on this. J Still confirmed that she will check this information.

Cllr Harden said that research was looked at County wide in regards to lighting over the last few years, the average time of day for burglaries was 4pm this is the most lightly time people were burgled.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

76 PARK BYELAWS REPORT

D Austin introduced the report informing Members that the report had previously gone to SPAE Committee, so we welcome your views this evening.

D Austin highlighted a few things;

The proposed Byelaws, 7 parks only, shown in paragraph 7, page 67.

Paragraph 14 give you a sense of the byelaws and the types of activates they can enforce.

There is also some provision in paragraph 16 for them to put in licencing activates like boot camps.

Page 66 there is a process outline for Members following approval by the Council, there is still a process to go through in terms of consultation and is still subject to approved by the secretary of states.

D Austin pointed out that on page 69 the authority does have an enforcement policy so it's important we need to operate within the principles of the policy.

D Austin was happy to take questions along with R Cassidy and B Lisgarten.

Cllr Bassadone asked, when people camp in Bunkers park, what action can be taken that night.

R Cassidy said that the Police can act on Byelaws, it would probably be best to call them.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe said he is questioning why only 7 areas? Why are we excluding fields and parks? Is it not easier or forward thinking to include all parks as you run the risk of needing it for other areas?

B Lisgarten said at the last Environment OSC this was raised that we should widen the scope of the Byelaws, this can be done. Part of the process is to carry out the assessment to see if it's viable.

Cllr Banks was going to make the same point, in Grove hill there are two parks that are likely to be abused and only one is on the list.

B Lisgarten when they first looked at this the list it was very long and had to be reduced, if you feel there is a need to incorporate both areas this can be decided amongst officers and that can then be included.

Cllr Adeleke asked, if we go ahead with all this, just on the enforcement side, page 7 of 23 the agencies that are responsible for enforcing these Byelaws include virtually everyone who you can think of, who exactly will be enforcing these Byelaws.

R Cassidy said that it will be the Clean Safe and Green Team who are hoping to get some people trained up, so Supervisors and Enforcement Officers can enforce this. It's not just about enforcement it's about giving guidance of what people can and can't do. R Cassidy said he sees these things happening on a day to day basis and normally just informing someone what they can and can't do is more than enough.

Cllr Fethney referred to the legal process, are we going to the Secretary of State for all cases or just if someone objects. What kind of law does this then represent.

B Lisgarten said that in terms of Byelaws themselves they are local, automated or local people. In the hierarchy of things you have statutory things in parliament then statutory instruments which are extra bits which allow Cabinet Officers to do various things and underneath that are Byelaws which are for specific areas. This identifies the problem areas and if we need to legislate, where Parliament hasn't and there aren't any other laws then we should be allowed to do it. The reason why it goes to the Secretary of State is to ensure that we are not duplicating anything that they have done.

Cllr England wanted to echo the point made by other Councillors to expand the areas. He asked if drones count as aeroplanes.

B Lisgarten said she looked into this and drones are in a different category to aircrafts, they have their own rules and regulations. The link is in the report.

Cllr Timmis asked, when people go to these parks how will they know what is restricted.

Will there be a list on each park.

R Cassidy said there may be a sign saying DBC Byelaws with reference to their website. Having a sign saying don't do this is very off putting.

Cllr Timmis said that people aren't going to look at the website before they go to the park.

R Cassidy said no, but if he saw someone doing something they shouldn't he would say sorry you can't do that people go to our website and look further into the Laws. They are also consulting with the Public so people maybe aware of this.

Cllr Marshall said that this point was taken up with the Planning Committee. It's trying to find a way of publicising our parks in an attractive way, there is works to be done.

Cllr Mahmood asked why now, what was the driver for this.

R Cassidy said that he started this 5 years ago when he started with DBC. It seems the right way to go to and when speaking to other authorities it's worked for them.

Cllr Marshall said that the Government did amend the legislation process earlier this year, it is easier to put in Byelaws, we have recently have growth in boot camps using the parks. It hasn't come to a crunch yet, but we want the Byelaws in our back pockets so we have that ability to enforce if we are in that situation.

Cllr Timmis said shouldn't boot camps be able to use them as they are local sports.

R Cassidy said the problem is they charge people for the boot camps so there making profit, sometimes our land has been damaged and residents aren't happy. This Byelaw says that we can charge them.

Cllr Mahmood said with the signage we need a bare minimum to satisfy the legal requirement.

R Cassidy agreed.

Cllr Mahmood said we want to ensure all parks are covered so we are not shifting the problems from A to B.

R Cassidy said it makes sense to have them all but it's the work involved.

Cllr Griffith said that when Byelaws are brought in people won't check to see what parks they cover, there will be some, but the majority once they know a Byelaws applies most people assume it cover all green spaces.

Cllr England, are there not Byelaws in existence that people need to abide by.

B Lisgarten said they do have some Byelaws and the report does mention them, in order for us to be open and transparent it would be good to have a sign.

Cllr Harden referred to those who do fitness what category does this come under in the draft.

B Lisgarten Byelaw 40 of the draft.

Cllr Mahmood asked if it affected the budget.

B Lisgarten said this was part of the assessment to see if it was viable, there is no guarantee it will go ahead as it maybe too expensive.

Cllr Mahmood gave thanks for an easy readable report.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

77 **NEW BUILD UPDATE**

Julia Hedger introduced the report giving a full update on the current housing development plan, at the end of the report it has covered some of the completed new builds that they have had over the last 18 months.

J Hedger was happy to take question.

Cllr Bassadone asked if the two units in Apsley had now been occupied.

J Hedger said yes, she understands that one is going to be an estate agency and a community café.

Cllr Griffith said that the challenge is that those units in storey street cant be let until planning permission is complete, the boulders that are blocking the road need to be removed before planning can go ahead. There is a site meeting this week to discuss this.

J Still said that they are programmed in for the end of Jan for completion.

Cllr Adeleke said that the new build is good publicity for the borough. What impact does this have on the waiting list?

J Hedger said that there are over 10,000 people on the active and deferred; we are losing homes due to the right to buy, so we are not increasing the stock we have. Affordable housing has increased; there is a lot of works going on in the Borough.

Cllr W Wyatt-Lowe what parking provision was built in Aspen Court?

J Still said they brought that site, there is parking provision in planning and there is also a car park across the road, we can review this after 12 months. When Aspen Court is complete there will be barriers put in place for parking, this protects the residents. Only 60% of residents that live there have cars, this is being monitored. Able House they brought planning permission for parking with the land, they have also converted another small area for parking. The same approach will be taken at Wood House.

Cllr Mahmood said that in Deaconsfield road the whole street has been developed apart from 1 or 2 gardens which are council houses. Could we look at individual sites to provide 2 houses if its feasible.

J Hedger said they do look at things like that when properties are empty, it's not cost effective but they look at every individual.

Cllr Griffith gave a suggestion, she is conscious that they haven't brought back a formal report back for housing in Gadebridge development.

J Hedger said that they don't have all the data and as soon as she does it will be brought to the committee.

Cllr Griffith said the committee would be interested in feedback from tenants.

Cllr Bassadone said that she had asked for feedback on this and you said all tenants were happy except one.

J Hedger said that was correct and that one person turned down the property as they felt it was too complicated.

The 9 residents have been visited and they are all happy, their bills are under £100 for the year and there has been no serious issues.

E Brooks said that since the programme started we have completed three schemes in total, the quality of build has been excellent in terms of the very few times we are having to go back to these properties to do repairs. The Council should be reassured that yes there were issues during the development the control on site has been robust and of good quality.

Cllr Timmis asked if they planned to build more.

J Hedger said that the builds were a trial, Hightown were struggling to deliver and they had the finances to do it, it was interesting and did cost DBC more but the tenants are benefitting from it. Currently they don't have the finances but once this has been reviewed in a few years it will be down to Members to decide if we have the finance and the sites to do it.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

78 WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017

Agreed

No items to be added.

The Meeting ended at 9.37 pm