

MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

14 JUNE 2016

Present:

Members:

Councillors: G Adshead
E Collins
S Hearn
Hicks
Howard
Ransley
Riddick
C Wyatt-Lowe (Vice-Chairman)
Fisher

Officers:	David Skinner	Assistant Director - Finance & Resources
	James Doe	Assistant Director - Planning and Regeneration
	Craig Thorpe	Group Manager - Environmental Services
	Chris Troy	Group Manager - Regulatory Services

Also Attendance:

Councillor Janice Marshall
Councillor Graham Sutton

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

113 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 April 2016 were confirmed by the members present and signed by the Chairman.

114 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anderson and Ashbourn.

115 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

116 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

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

None.

118 **PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2016/17**

D Skinner introduced the report which highlighted the provisional outturn for 2015/16, which was consistent with the quarter 3 position. It was a positive story for the council as they were looking to have any underspend of £400k for the year.

With regards to revenue, D Skinner reported that there was a surplus of £115k as Herts County Council (HCC) had given a reward for the recycling rates. There was also a surplus for the waste transfer site following the efficiencies made of £95k.

Finally, with regards to the Capital Programme, it was noted that there had been a slippage in the year regarding the Water gardens and Town Centre access projects.

Questions & Answers

Councillor Riddick referred to the £400k savings, but noted the overspend of £200k for employees. He asked if this was included. D Skinner explained that the £400k savings was a net figure and therefore took the savings into account.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe asked if the council was proactive in addressing residents concerns for damage caused by tree roots. Craig Thorpe said it was difficult to know when tree roots would cause a problem. He assured members that they had enough resources for the work undertaken.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe referred to the summary page of the report and asked what the 'Corporate Objectives' section meant to officers.

D Skinner said that the corporate objectives were agreed and revised as part of the corporate plan, which expires in 2020. For this report and the objective of delivering an efficient council, it meant that the council were making the best use of the resources available.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe asked how the Portfolio Holder was kept informed of how the officers were delivering the aspirations. Councillor Marshall explained that she holds regular meetings to review the budgets and any opportunities made available.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe felt that this approach worked well and was a good model to follow.

Councillor Marshall added that the Overview aspect of the committee's role should be utilised too.

Outcome

The committee noted the report

119 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Craig Thorpe firstly apologised for a few minor errors within the report. He highlighted the following areas:

- Waste Services; successful pick up after Christmas, project work begun on bulky waste charges, waste haulage efficiencies, refresher training for frontline staff, installed digital radio systems
- Waste Development; 'No food waste' stickers on every household residual bin has resulted in an 85 tonne increase in food waste in the month of March. In February, a team of 16 Environmental Operatives from the Clean Safe and Green team litter picked and collected 10.5 tonnes of litter and bulky rubbish from the A41 in six days. The Clean Safe and Green Department encouraged 1,336 people from across the borough to take part in Keep Britain Tidy's biggest ever clean-up of the country for Her Majesty The Queen's 90th birthday in April.
- Clean, Safe and Green; work on the Phoenix roundabout has begun, a number of housing landscapes have been completed. A New 'Reactec' system has been installed and is working. This is used for monitoring of Hand Arm Vibration
- Personnel & Sickness

Questions & Answers

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe was encouraged to see the improvements to the sickness figures.

Councillor Adshead asked how much was spent on collecting fly tipped items. Craig Thorpe explained that there were 2 staff on rapid response, however if none are reported then they are allocated to litter picking. There are no further charges for disposal of these items.

Councillor S Hearn asked the regularity of patrols along the A41 for the removal of animal casualties. He believed that some could be there for up to 3 days. He also asked how often laybys are attended to.

Craig Thorpe explained that the removal of animals from the carriageway was HCC's responsibility.

With regards to the laybys, Dacorum teams did travel along the road daily and litter picked on a weekly basis. They are trialling 'big belly' bins, which have a satellite to give notice when it needs to be emptied.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe added that members could help by reporting fly tipping to the correct departments. This could also enable members to monitor performance of such teams.

Councillor Hicks referred to the sickness figures and he expressed great sympathy for the teams. He asked how much of the improvement was permanent or seasonal. Craig Thorpe found it difficult to comment on, he was sympathetic to crews however trends can now be monitored through the First Care process.

Councillor Howard asked if the return to work interviews had made any difference. Craig Thorpe noted that there had always been return to work interviews, however they had not always been stringent in monitoring them. He now has regular meetings with HR to highlight any areas of concern.

Councillor Riddick asked if there was any cover for bank holidays and weekends in order for people to call to notify of roadkill. Craig Thorpe said there was no cover available for weekends. If however the roadkill was on a highway then this would be HCC's responsibility as DBC only dealt with verge issues.

Councillor Hearn asked if it was permitted for a refuse lorry driver to get out to help the crew. Craig Thorpe explained that historically the driver was part of the crew and would help. Nowadays you would find that drivers usually stay inside the cab. They are advised to always stay near the vehicle if they do have to get out.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe asked if there were any benchmarking figures for sickness, with other neighbouring authorities. Craig Thorpe replied that a project had recently looked at sickness figures for surrounding authorities however he had not yet seen the results.

Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe felt that it would be useful to see these results at a future meeting.

Outcome

The committee noted the report

120 PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

James Doe apologised to members for the report being late, however there had been some inaccuracies within the Corvu system which he wanted to correct. He raised the following points from the report:

- Building Control – the income was strong and they have exceeded the target, however it hasn't been an easy year due to the increase in workload. Staff retention has been difficult and therefore the service has had to use agency staff.
- Planning applications – workload has increased, there were 2500 applications in 2015/16 and the income had also increased by 30% to £950k. Teams work pro-actively with applications in order to get it right first time

Questions & Answers

Councillor Ransley asked where DBC's priority stood between planning for new houses and encouraging new businesses within the estate. James Doe said that they encourage housing within urban areas. They can only encourage businesses to get apprenticeships in local businesses.

Councillor Riddick was interested to note that Building Control performance had increased, however the service was down on staff.

Councillor Riddick referred to the refusal rate for planning applications compared to the fact that not all appeals are successful. He asked what the difference was on those received.

James Doe replied that the council's defence rate for appeals was very good.

Councillor Riddick asked if any further resources could be added to the planning enforcement team.

James Doe replied that the team were already relatively resourced and they were dealing with many issues. He noted that there were no further resources available. He added that a national issue was the level of evidence needed to take enforcement action and it must be correct to avoid any compensation claims.

Councillor Hicks said that members of the public have expressed concerns around the accessibility of planning officers.

James Doe explained that people can apply to the team for a pre-application advice meeting or they can seek officer guidance by booking an appointment. The teams' objectives were to hit targets and ensure positive performance.

Councillor Hicks asked how councillors can oppose applications within the borough.

James Doe explained that they can use the relevant policies if needed, for example a site is an area used for a designated purpose.

Councillor Hearn referred to the core strategy which makes requirements to have provisions for traveller sites, but he asked how this compared to the need for locations.

James Doe explained that the core strategy was the requirement to undertake the need as a whole borough, but the exact locations were done more locally.

Councillor Hearn continued to ask if it was clearly established that Dacorum needed more traveller sites.

James Doe replied that there had been a localised study which resulted in a requirement of 17 sites for the borough. The surrounding areas and locality would be looked at, but he assured members that the sites identified for Dacorum's needs were met.

Councillor Fisher asked for an explanation as to how the application process works.

James Doe told members that advice was on the council's website. He added that the process was transparent, directly affected neighbours are contacted and all details of the application are available on the website and in the office.

James Doe then gave a presentation to the committee showing the end of year review.

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe was fascinated to see the amount of work going into the regeneration of the town.

Councillor Collins asked what the parking arrangements were for the Symbio site application.

James Doe replied that there would be an underground automated/electrical system.

Outcome

The committee noted the report and thanked James Doe for the very professional presentation.

121 REGULATORY SERVICES Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Chris Troy talked through the report with members, noting that the main objectives had been achieved. He highlighted the following areas:

- Environmental Protection
- Corporate Health & Safety
- Private sector housing
- Environmental management system
- Dog Warden
- Food Safety Inspections
- Disabled Facility Grants

Questions & Answers

Councillor Hicks asked if the council received any income from the Final Management Order (FMO) premises once they had been taken over. Chris Troy confirmed they did and tenants now occupied the premises and costs were being redeemed.

Councillor Hicks asked if audits would be carried out for councillors using iPads. Chris Troy said that risk assessments would be needed for all users and it would depend on the definition of a user. Intermittent use of an iPad is unlikely to fall into the definition of a user but for example regular use over 3 hours could do. If this was the case advice would be required from our H&S Lead Officer.

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe said it was up to the individual councillor as to how long they used the iPad for and said there should be a degree of common sense used rather than using further resources. It was highlighted that it was different for an employee who is required to use ICT equipment whilst at work.

Outcome

The committee noted the report

122 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PRESENTATION

Chris Troy gave a presentation to the committee as to what the service covered, highlighting the following points:

- Food safety
- Food hygiene rating system
- Infectious disease
- Air quality
- Sources of air pollution
- Air quality strategy
- Statutory nuisance
- Contaminated land and use of water supplies
- Health & Safety enforcement
- Emergency planning and Business Continuity
- Housing
- Envirocrime
- Health protection and Public health
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Questions & Answers

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe thanked Chris Troy for the thoroughly comprehensive presentation.

Councillor Hicks asked how the team knew where the hotspots were for mapping pollution.

Chris Troy said that they can get a feel for the area looking at traffic flows and the layout of streets but it is true that LA's don't have sufficient monitoring data across districts and that's why it's important that we are signed up to the Herts AQ Strategy. There may be an opportunity to share mobile samplers across districts.

Councillor Sutton asked how the team coped with cross cultural issues for example: Halal and Kosha premises as they could well be controlled by their local leader/Rabi. Chris Troy explained that all premises had to comply with food safety legislation and this doesn't differentiate between businesses.

Councillor Fisher asked if Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) were registered with DBC and how any problems came to light. Chris Troy noted that only those properties above 3 storeys have to be licenced. There is a government proposal to licence all HMO's possibly in future.

Councillor Howard noted that some food retail outlets were recently flooded. She asked how the teams were involved in such cases in checking they were ok to re-open.

Chris Troy said once they are made aware of a situation like this they will visit and inspect the site.

Outcome

The committee noted the report

123

WORK PROGRAMME

The committee noted the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 9.50 pm