

Foreword: Leader and Chief Executive

Welcome to the Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2012-2015, 2013/14 update.

The purpose of this Plan is to set out the Council's vision for the Borough of Dacorum, showing the Council's priorities for our communities, and how we intend to deliver success on those priorities to 2015.

As community leaders we share the aspirations of our communities and citizens and will use our resources to influence service delivery across a wide range of partner agencies and business to optimise the quality of life enjoyed by all of our residents. We know that our citizens regard having a decent home and decent job opportunities locally as essential to their quality of life.

On the local economy, our new partnership 'Destination Dacorum' is focused on economic well-being to position Dacorum as a place to do business. In support of that aim the Council has launched a 'Dacorum - Look no Further' campaign to promote the area and to attract inward investment.

As we focus on these priorities our residents rightly expect us to continue to deliver all front line services as effectively and efficiently as possible, whether these are provided directly by the Council, or are delivered on the Council's behalf. In this respect the Council itself has a range of services delivered directly.

(information on these services can be found on our website[LINK](#)

Our challenge, working with others, is to deliver on our agreed priorities whilst maintaining other front line services, within limited resources and at a difficult time for the national economy. We intend to meet that challenge head on, and know that making local choices about services and how they are delivered will exercise our collective effort over the coming years.

This Plan focuses on our main priorities and how we deliver them. If you wish, or need, to delve further there are links to other documents, all of which contribute to the Council's ambitions.

It is a great responsibility, and a huge privilege to serve the people of Dacorum.

Signed Leader

Signed Chief Executive

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To be completed when plan is finalised

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Vision

In 2010, following consultation with our communities, the Council adopted a vision, and five priority areas, or themes. The Council is committed to...

...working in partnership to create a Borough which enables the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper.

This requires the Council to play a pivotal community leadership role in orchestrating the efforts of a huge range of organisations, and individuals. We will create and sustain the conditions for local growth.

Our Priorities

Our vision is supported by 16 key aims under five priorities:

Building Community Capacity
Safe and Clean Environment
Affordable Housing
Regeneration
Dacorum Delivers (internal operations)

These priorities and aims will remain in place to 2015.

Whilst all of these are important for our communities, and to the Council, the focus on affordable homes, regeneration and the local economy is imperative. Only by enabling a supply of local jobs, with skills to match, can people enjoy other aspects of their lives. We know that our own housing stock is ageing, and we are proud to be retaining these homes in-house, and investing heavily in improvements. This, coupled with our role in securing the development of affordable housing will improve what is offered to local people.

Growth in the number of affordable homes, and accessible jobs, has to be accompanied by investment in the local infrastructure (such as transport, education, and health service provision). The Council's approach to regeneration is very much with that in mind. This requires strong relationships with other agencies, nationally, within the wider region, and locally to get the best deals for Dacorum. Day to day local services, to keep the place tidy and safe, whether by direct provision, external provision, partnership or self- help, will not be taken for granted. We know that attention to detail locally makes a lot of difference to the way residents feel about living in Dacorum.

The Council has a proud record of working with the voluntary and community sector. In these difficult times, and with public resources under significant strain, that record will need to be sustained. Beyond the more formal arrangements with leaders in that sector, there is a broader agenda for self- help and volunteering. This 'capacity building' is essential if our communities are to achieve the quality of life they aspire to.

Finally, 'Dacorum Delivers' captures a wide range of activities to ensure that the Council is efficient, effective and modern. This builds upon a reduction in the size of

the organisation over recent years. Over the coming years we will need a flexible organisational response to what services are provided, and how.

OUR PRIORITIES - WHAT WE ARE AIMING FOR

The following section sets out specific aims under each priority heading for the year ahead. Delivering these aims requires a mixture of direct delivery, buying in service providers, emerging models such as social enterprise, and extensive partnership working.

Building Community Capacity

We aim to

- Work with the Voluntary and community sector to encourage civic participation
- Keep communities well informed and consulted on local issues, encouraging involvement and self help
- Help look after the interests of vulnerable and deprived groups/communities
- Actively promote and develop the use of neighbourhood action teams and increase attendance at neighbourhood meetings to stimulate engagement.
- Encourage businesses to consider Corporate Social Responsibility potential
- Provide opportunities for involvement of citizens in service delivery models such as social enterprise

Safe and Clean environment

We aim to

- Work with partners to maintain low crime rates and fear of crime
- Ensure that our town centres and neighbourhood shopping centres are safe and vibrant places
- Reduce the incidence of Anti- Social Behaviour
- Increase the reporting and recording of hate crime to raise awareness, and reduce incidence
- Value, and strive for, community cohesion, as a necessity for all residents
- Have safe places for children to play (with increased attendance at adventure playgrounds) , and for Young People to 'hang out'
- Continue to achieve 'Green Flag' accreditation for the environment of our local neighbourhoods
- Maintain public open space in neighbourhoods
- Minimise waste and optimise recycling levels
- Reduce CO2 emissions where we have control – and lead by example where we do not
- Reduce consumption of natural resources by the Council itself, and setting the pace as community leaders

Affordable housing

We aim to

- Increase the supply of affordable housing in the Borough

- Reduce the number of homelessness people in the Borough.
- Reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation (by building a minimum 33 bed space homelessness hostel by March 2015).
- Provide a well maintained Council housing stock, through ambitious programme of investment that improve the health and wellbeing of tenants and the wider community, concentrating not only on maintenance of internal fixtures, but also looking at the fabric of the building, and physical improvements to communal areas.
- Ensure that any housing growth is accompanied by proportionate infrastructure development, such as local transport, schools, health services and open space.

Regeneration

We aim to

- Maximise use of the Council's own assets and powers to deliver growth in businesses and growth locally
- Create the conditions for local job opportunities through our housing programmes
- Secure the regeneration and development of Hemel Hempstead town centre, based on our new Town Centre Master Plan
- Secure regeneration and development at Maylands Business Park, based on the Maylands Master Plan
- Secure the best possible infrastructure development so that people have a vibrant economy accompanied by good schools, transport, health services, quality of environment, open spaces, and leisure provision – backed up by the Local Planning Framework, the Community Infrastructure Levy, and our Infrastructure delivery Plan
- Create the conditions that keep businesses in the area and attract new ones – as the place to do business
- Work with others to develop the qualifications, aspiration and skills to match those local job opportunities, including apprenticeship offers
- Improve the entertainment offer in the Borough
- Carry out a programme of environmental improvements, working with the Hemel Hempstead Partnership, in order to make the town centre a more attractive place to visit and enjoy, thereby improving the economic health.
- Work with others to attract more tourists into the Borough, to enjoy what we have here, and to spend time in the area

The Council's Economic Development Strategy, and actions, can be found here ...[LINK](#)

Dacorum Delivers

We aim to

- Provide citizens/consumers with access to services they want /need as efficiently as possible
- work with central Government and partners on behalf of our communities to secure the maximum resources possible for investment locally

- Continue to review the way we deliver services and the overall organisation in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness in all that we do
- Work with others to look at more effective ways of delivering services which meet customer expectations.
- Engage with all of our communities on priority setting, budget choices, 'place shaping' and service delivery
- As representatives and advocates of our communities, to play a key role in collaboration with others, to get the best outcomes for local people in areas such as health, education, children services, lifelong learning/social mobility, transport and adult care
- Engage all stakeholders in managing change, addressing challenges and spotting opportunities to do things differently
- Invest time in learning and development for our elected members and our staff to provide an effective business focused on customers
- Be clear on our priorities, how we fund them, performance and accountability

OUR PRIORITIES - HOW WE WILL DELIVER

To support our aims we have developed a set of key performance indicators by which our progress towards our aims will be measured, a programme of critical projects to deliver change and a set of principles to guide future planning.

Key performance indicators

In order to monitor our performance in delivering our Corporate Plan, we assess our services against a set performance indicators which are divided between our five corporate priorities. These reflect the outcomes that we want to achieve for our communities.

The table shows targets for 2014/15 and performance results for 2012/13. We will publish the results for 2013/14 in the autumn in our annual report. A suite of more detailed performance information is maintained which is regularly reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. These reports are available on the Council's website:

<http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/council-democracy/committee-meetings>

Building Community Capacity

KPI	Apprentices placed in Dacorum businesses per year	Occupancy at business centre, including at least 5 'move on expansions' and 5 new companies taken on	Delivery of Superfast broadband to Maylands business by 2015	Attendance at Neighbourhood action meetings	Young people involved in democracy events
2014/15 target	40	95%	95% of businesses	1500	1300
2012/13 result	30	100%	By the end of 2013 should be 95%	1314	1138

Safe and Clean Environment

KPI	Unjustified missed bins	Dog fouling reports responded to within the set timescale of 7 days	Fly tipping reports responded to within the set timescale of 7 days	Satisfaction with the response to ASB	Attendance at adventure playgrounds	Reduction in electricity use from operational buildings (excl. Civic Centre)
2014/15 target	1200	90%	90%	100%	75,000	5%
2012/13 result	2,167 bins	154/162 95%	775/816 94.98%	3/3 100%	71,017 attendances	New measure set 2013, following installation of new meters

KPI	Reduction in gas use from operational buildings (excl. Civic Centre)	Reduction in water use from operational buildings (excl. Civic Centre)	Number of air quality management areas in the Borough (to stay the same)	Single occupancy car use reduced
2014/15 target	5%	5%	3	2%
2012/13 result	New measure set 2013	New measure set 2013. Cumulative total inc HHCC decreased by 13%	3	New measure

KPI	Reduction in fuel consumption from the Council's fleet	Recycling rates
2014/15 target	5%	50%
2012/13 result	New measure	46.84%

Affordable Housing

KPI	Plan and deliver an increased average of new homes a year:	(Including in the 500) New affordable homes a year	(Included in the 500) New council built homes by March 2015	Provide a new homeless hostel by March 2015
2014/15 target	500	150	71	41 beds
2012/13 result	481 (from CTB1)	61	New indicator	New indicator

KPI	length of stay in B&B
2014/15 target	Maximum six weeks
2012/13 result	Average stay: 2.4 weeks

Regeneration

KPI	Increase in jobs in Dacorum per year	New businesses attracted to, and setting up in the area per year
2014/15 target	500	10
2012/13 result	400	12

Dacorum Delivers (internal operations)

KPI	Percentage of credit trade invoices paid within 30 days	Major Planning applications completed on time	Average time taken to re-let a council property	Tenant satisfaction with repairs
2014/15 target	95%	60%	35 days	97%
2012/13 result	95.7%	53.13%	33.35 days	98.36%

PLANNING AHEAD

Major Programmes and Projects

We have put in place prioritised a set of programmes and projects that are critical to success on our priorities because they contribute to one or more of the following:

- Maximise use of all assets/resources that can be made available locally
- Help to generate and sustain a vibrant economy
- Provide decent, affordable homes for local people
- Position the Council as a leader for value for money, efficiency and effectiveness.

Details of these programmes and projects are provided at Appendix A. Monitoring of the programme will continue through the life of this corporate plan.

Key principles

During 2012/13 the Council's leadership team has been developing a set of 'policy guidelines' to inform the Council's approach to policy development over the coming years. These guidelines will be applied by the Council as a whole in assessing future strategy and initiatives. **See Appendix B**

The external environment within which the Council operates is dynamic. The 'localism' agenda is emergent, and how the Council responds to that will develop. In support of economic well-being, the Council has published a policy statement promoting the idea that the Council can agree to the disposal of assets at less than market value when there is a compelling case for improving local economic wellbeing.

LINK.

More broadly the leadership team is watchful of a range of scenarios that may have a significant impact on the role, and shape, of local government. We believe that the Council is well placed to respond.

Progress and Review

The vision and priorities will remain in place to 2015. At that stage the Plan will be reviewed and adjusted.

Meanwhile the Council will publish an annual progress report each autumn tracking progress on the outcomes and milestones contained within the Plan in respect of key performance indicators, priority programmes and delivery arrangements as shown.

KEY CONTACTS for further information

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ANNEX A – development programme

The following delivery programmes, chosen locally to drive the vision and priorities require a significant, long term effort, and will be supported across the Council as corporate imperatives.

PROGRAMME	What is it?	Milestones or measures for success
Public Service Quarter – transforming the business	A modern Civic hub in Hemel Hempstead town centre, incorporating a range of local agencies, aligned to the Council’s change programme, that will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizen focus with enhanced access, adapting to new technology - Modern library, lifelong learning, and information - Commercial and third sector possibilities - Flexible and agile working for DBC staff, and those of other agencies 	In place by April 2016 Reduced costs to DBC
Affordable Housing	A programme to deliver affordable housing in the Borough. This will be a mix of council homes and Housing Association homes, with a range of tenures to meet the varied needs	150 affordable homes per year Council homes new build Phase 1 will deliver 71 new housing need homes and a minimum 33 bed space hostel. Use of the private sector housing supply will be maximised by continuing with the new Private Sector leasing Scheme, and the Deposit Guarantee Scheme. Partnership working with local Housing Associations to maximise new affordable housing developments. Focus on activities to prevent homelessness, to

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		enable the Borough to cope with rising demands
‘Destination Dacorum’ – economic well-being	A Board comprising a range of local partners, working together on six ambitions, centred on economic well-being, enshrined in the Board’s plan – ‘A Better place to live, work and enjoy’	Ensuring delivery of the work programme of the Board Annual Community Fair for a wider range of organisations, agencies and community groups Dacorum – ‘Look No Further ‘ initiative’

The following projects are medium to long term activities which collectively contribute to local development, homes, infrastructure and regeneration.

PROJECT	What is it?	Milestones or measures of success
Local Planning Framework	A ‘blueprint’ for development – to encourage investment and development in Dacorum, and to protect its high quality environment in areas of restraint	Core Strategy adopted by DBC in September 2013 In place to 2031
Community Infrastructure Levy	A new policy to secure funding from developers to help provide the infrastructure that the Borough needs to support growth.	Programmed to come into force in October 2014 Potential (levy)income of circa £2m per annum for infrastructure delivery
Dacorum Development Programme	Comprehensive programme of regeneration and improvement projects, including the Hemel Evolution project for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre; Maylands regeneration and development; and the wider economy /local infrastructure.	This is a four year plan 2011-2015. Success will be the visibility of new homes, jobs and environmental improvement
Housing repairs, maintenance and	Procurement of a contract to deliver a high quality repairs, maintenance and improvement service for the	In place by 2014 Increase Tenant satisfaction

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<p>improvement - procurement</p>	<p>Council's housing stock, and enhance the quality of life enjoyed by tenants.</p>	<p>Deliver a more strategic and planned service, through a 'total asset management' approach. Enhance customer experience with repairs calls handled directly by the contractor, to speed up the response, avoid duplication, and improve efficiency 5 star gas servicing contract will include replacement, breakdown and servicing. This will include ensuring that no boiler is older than ten years at the end of the contract period.</p>
<p>Hemel Hempstead Old Town and Old town Hall</p>	<p>Creation of new one-way system and public realm Improvements. Improvement to the Cellar and the Gallery Bar</p>	<p>Public realm improvements delivered in the financial year 2013/14 Completed in summer 2014 Theatre attendance and revenue HH Old Town footfall</p>

The following projects cover optimising resources, sustainable funding, and compliance. Some have now been completed.

PROJECT	What is it?	Milestones or measures of success
<p>Localisation of Council tax and introduction of Universal Credit</p>	<p>Implementation of welfare reforms. The reforms include the development of a local council tax support scheme following the abolition of the national council tax benefit scheme. The project also includes several reforms to the existing national scheme of housing benefits administered by the Council, such as the</p>	<p>Preparation of a draft Localisation of Council Tax support scheme (LTCS) Aug 2012 Consultation on the draft LCTS Oct 2012 Approval of LCTS Jan 2013 Implementation of LCTS & Welfare reforms Apr 2013 Implementation of transitional arrangements for</p>

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	implementation of the social size criteria ('bedroom tax') the benefit cap and transitional arrangements for the implementation of Universal Credit	Universal Credit – phase 1 Oct 2013
Local Government Resource Review	Preparation and implementation of the outcome of the Local Government Resource Review including local retention of local business rate growth and reforms to Local Government Finance.	Completion of NNDR1(details of business rate tax base) for return to Government Dec 2012 Receipt and analysis of Local Government Finance Settlement Dec 2012 Implementation of Computer software updates; accounting records and submission of returns according to Government timetable during 2013/14
Financial Delivery Plan (Medium Term Financial Strategy)	Implementation of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. Strategic, coordinated response to a range of financial challenges and opportunities, with the objective of maintaining services at a level required by local people, and enabling the Council to fund its economic well-being priorities.	CSR expected autumn 2014 - Anticipated Government Comprehensive Spending Review - Reduced central government funding - Changes to central government funding - New Homes Bonus - Self- financing Housing Revenue Account Framework for 2013/14 budget process by December 2012 Requirement to set Council tax based on retention of business rates February 2013 Localisation of Council tax support, with 10% reduction. April 2013 Receipt and analysis of Local Government Finance Settlement 2013/14 – Dec 2012
Environmental Management System	Externally accredited EMS that demonstrates commitment to environmentally friendly policies and actions	In place December 2012. Longer term promoting and sharing best practise for the area

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CCTV	Putting in place a wireless network and upgraded CCTV control room	In place by March 2013 Improved safety, and reduced fear of crime
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Annex B

Policy Framework: Guiding Principles

To deliver Strong, effective and visible community leadership

The primary and overarching role of the Council is to provide local leadership for the area.

The Council will act in the interests of communities to a) to deliver, or facilitate delivery, of valued services and b) to bring influence to bear on other bodies (private, public and voluntary) who have an impact on the wellbeing of the area.

Acting within the principle of localism and devolution, this principle implies that the Council will make decisions based on a reasonable assumption that it has the necessary powers, and will therefore only seek permission where that permission is clearly required.

The Council strives to offer best value for all that it does.

To put the Citizen at the Heart of Everything we do

Ultimately the Council's purpose is to provide services for its citizens, and for visitors.

All plans and Strategies start from that perspective.

To Maximise the use of DBC assets for well –being

The Council will seek maximum value in all of its land and property transactions. In pursuit of 'best consideration' it will also take account of the wider community interest in pursuit of social and economic well-being, and act accordingly where there is a compelling case to negotiate undervalue (L G Act 1972 and Circular 06/03)

This principle underpins the community leadership role and is in the context of the Council being able to fulfil delivery on its top priorities.

To target resources in two key priority areas

DBC has identified two primary strategic goals

- Housing led regeneration, with affordable housing
- To promote economic well-being

The Council will ensure that these priorities are core to the external role of the Council as leaders and stewards of the area. This will result in the area of Dacorum being considered by the business community and developers alike as a place to do business.

They will also be a core focus of strategic process and strategic planning within DBC. This will include corporate planning, community planning, revenue budget and capital programme.

These priorities will command the collective support of DBC leadership, continuing with cross cutting Executive member and Director level positions.

To develop consistent evidence based decision making

Evidence will be developed and consistently utilised as appropriate for all policy making, and resource allocation.

This will enhance the Council's ability to make choices, and to ensure that resources are effectively targeted. The Council will also establish stronger evidence on minority groups.

This principle will be enhanced by, and heavily reliant upon, collaboration with partners.

To agree and monitor a critical set of 'key indicators' for top priorities

The aim is to set a small number of key indicators (15 - 20) expressed as outcomes, which will be integral to the Corporate Plan and provide the Council and citizens with a focus on delivery. This will also enable a snapshot of progress at any time.

To ensure that all initiatives have strong links to top priorities

Any proposal for a new initiative or project will be tested against the Council's agreed top priorities. This is to ensure that the Council's capacity and capability is properly focused.

To evaluate all initiatives in order to inform future policy decisions

A rigorous examination of the outcomes of initiatives and one-off projects will help the Council to determine future policy and operational decisions, and be part of changing the way we work.

To promote early intervention as a way of working – whether alone or with others

The Council will take a positive approach to working on preventative work, aimed at reducing longer term costs, break cycles of dependency, and improve outcomes for citizens.

Much of this work will be in partnership.

To have simple and well understood accountability and governance for all policy

Readily identifying all key policies of the Council requires clarity on responsibility and accountability at member level and at officer level.

It is not necessary to compile a single compendium of all policies. However it will be possible, and necessary, to easily locate where specific policies reside.

To be open minded on models /methods of service delivery

The Council will continue with its pragmatic and opportunistic approach to a mixed economy of provision.

It is likely that over the coming years the Council will need to be more challenging on what services it provides and how it provides those services, based on citizen focus and value for money.

Community action and social enterprise are part of this picture

SUSTAINING DELIVERY

The Council has well established internal arrangements for running the business

effectively and efficiently, to sustain the delivery of services.

Corporate Groups

To ensure that the priorities/ aims and delivery programmes are synchronised four Corporate Groups are in place, reporting to the Corporate Management Team

- Regeneration and affordable housing
- Localism /community capacity
- Sustainable ,clean and safe environment
- Organisation Transformation

All operational activities are co-ordinated through these groups, and two other corporate groups

- Capital Strategy Steering Group
- Corporate Management Team

High Performance Environment – Performance Excellence

Dacorum Borough Council has engaged in a radical re-think about the way it delivers its services and to support staff to achieve the significant changes that are required to deliver the Council's Vision, reduce costs, improve how it uses its resources and improve citizen and customer satisfaction.

The continuous improvement programme leads cultural change within the organisation, helping to redefine attitudes and behaviours expected of the Council's employees, in a citizen focused organisation. These required attitudes and behaviours have been developed and are the integral criteria of the High Performance Environment. The Performance Excellence Process is linked to, and designed to help achieve, the Council's Corporate Priorities.

Reputation

The Council aspires to

- Be well known and have a respected profile and identity - locally, regionally and nationally
- Promote Dacorum as a place to be proud of, in which to live. work and enjoy
- Communicate with, consult, and inform citizens about the things that affect them
- Engage high quality staff, and providers, who put the needs of the community first

Reputation of place is fundamental to success on the Council's ambitions. The Council has established a '**Dacorum – Look No Further**' campaign which markets Dacorum as a place for business, retail and leisure. This campaign for inward investment is in conjunction with the 'Destination Dacorum' partnership.

Partnerships

In pursuit of its service delivery and wider community leadership role the Council continues to develop external relationships with organisations and individuals. Without that approach the Council would be unable to fulfil its ambitions for 'place'. It does mean that the Council must focus effort where it can achieve the highest impact on outcomes, consistent with the Council's priorities.

'Destination Dacorum'

This partnership led by the Borough Council, and chaired by the Leader, focused on economic well-being, is key to this Corporate Plan in respect of:

- our priorities and aims
- our means of delivery, and capability
- our approach

It is the primary partnership of place, has a Board membership of considerable local influence, and shares common ambitions, each with a lead person and lead agency.

- *A more vibrant destination*
- *A healthier destination*
- *A more prosperous destination*
- *A safer destination*
- *A better connected destination*
- *A greater destination*

'Destination Dacorum' hosts an annual Community Conference to engage and consult a wider network of stakeholders, Councillors, users and community groups. This undertakes the dual functions of ensuring accountability of the Board whilst capturing community intelligence. That picture of community intelligence is enhanced by a new 'facebook' network.

More on 'Destination Dacorum' arrangements, and plans, can be found here
.....**LINK**

Working with other partners and partnerships

The Council's ability to deliver its vision for place is based on effective leadership, and effective partnerships. All partnerships are there to take collective actions that make a difference to the quality of life of residents.

The Council has a proud record of working with the ***Voluntary and Community sector***. This area of work is under review to develop a strategic partnership arrangement, for mutual benefit. The remodelling of services, alternative means of delivery, and continuing the move from grant giving towards service commissioning are all part of that picture.

Our efforts to sustain services, retain cohesive communities and build community capacity are critically linked to this relationship.

With the election of new ***Police and Crime*** Commissioners in November 2012, including one for Hertfordshire, the leadership and accountability is changing, as the

former Police Authority ceased to exist. The Council will be represented at member level on the countywide Panel holding the Commissioner to account and looking after the interests of Dacorum residents.

Our long-standing and successful partnership on ***Crime and Disorder Reduction*** will continue.

In addition to our local economic partnerships the Council works with the Countywide ***Local Enterprise*** Partnership, to promote the Hertfordshire position, and to secure the best possible outcomes for Dacorum.

Health and Well-being is addressed through a Dacorum partnership. The Council is working with the County Community Intelligence team on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Dacorum. This will help the Council to make the case for health services and resource allocation to areas most in need, and where health inequalities are most evident. Arrangements with the new county Health and Wellbeing Board are being determined. Significant levels of NHS 'commissioning' funding will flow through that route in future.

Beyond these bodies, the Council is involved in a number of partnership arrangements formal and informal, where these add value to the Council's aims for the community.

Equalities, deprivation and vulnerability

The ***Equality Act*** places a general duty on all public bodies. This came into force on 5 April 2011. Public bodies are to have due regard across all their functions to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between the different groups defined under the protected characteristics. In pursuit of these obligations the Council has identified four specific actions:

- Develop a more robust, sophisticated and usable set of equalities data on service users to get a better insight to their needs
- Develop a programme of service improvement aimed at enabling all people in Dacorum to have access to services, and opportunities to be involved in civic life. This programme will commence with a pilot project working with deaf people.
- Encourage the reporting and recording of hate crime, and hate related incidents, so that the Council, with partners, can respond in a way that supports residents, reduces incidence, and underpins community cohesion.
- Develop the Council's consultation database so that it becomes more representative of the whole community.

While Dacorum is generally a prosperous place we do have a number of wards that are ***disadvantaged*** within the context of the wider region. Our focus on economic well-being, regeneration and affordable housing is critical to the opportunities, aspirations and quality of life enjoyed by all residents.

As levels of funding decline over the coming years it is imperative that our most deprived and vulnerable communities do not slip further behind. This requires an approach that is strong on use of evidence, encourages self-help, neighbourhood action, engagement and capacity building. For those families most at risk a partnership approach is essential and the Council will work with all local agencies to promote early and sustained support. This joined up working will improve the outcomes and reduce overall longer term costs to the public purse.

Financial Management and the Council's Financial Position

The Council manages its expenditure through a Medium Term Financial Strategy which takes a forward looking three year view about the Council's income and expenditure. This allows for a strategic view to be taken about priorities, pressures and, at the current time, the need to make efficiencies and savings. This is updated and rolled forward every year as part of the annual budget setting process and is revised, as necessary, according to developments in the Council's environment.

Underpinning the MTFS is a clear Value for Money strategy and the need to seek the most efficient and effective ways of working. Service Plans will feed into the MTFS and budgeting process but will also reflect the requirements in terms of savings and changes agreed.

Financial management is governed by our financial regulations and is exercised by cost centre managers with the support of staff from Financial Services.

Performance Management

All have a part to play in the Council's success and converting our priorities into desired outcomes requires an understanding of where people fit. Individual performance management is managed through the Council's High Performance Environment programme, which means that all staff have an individual Performance Excellence Plan that clearly sets out objectives and personal development targets annually.

The Council records all of its performance management, risk and project management data on its corporate performance system – CorVu. This is centrally managed, with data input at service level and approved by the Leadership team. Performance and improvement is monitored monthly and quarterly at structured meetings between staff and Members.