



Public Document Pack  
**FINANCE AND RESOURCES  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
AGENDA**

*Scrutiny making a positive difference: Member led and independent, Overview & Scrutiny Committees promote service improvements, influence policy development & hold Executive to account for the benefit of the Community of Dacorum.*

**TUESDAY 7 JULY 2020 AT 6.30 PM**

**MICROSOFT TEAMS - MICROSOFT TEAMS**

The Councillors listed below are requested to attend the above meeting, on the day and at the time and place stated, to consider the business set out in this agenda.

Membership

Councillor Herbert Chapman  
Councillor Guest  
Councillor Tindall  
Councillor Adeleke  
Councillor Barrett  
Councillor Arslan  
Councillor Mahmood

Councillor Mahmood (Chairman)  
Councillor Sinha  
Councillor Townsend  
Councillor Claughton  
Councillor Symington  
Councillor Taylor

For further information, please contact Corporate and Democratic Support on 01442 228209

**AGENDA**

1. **MINUTES** (Pages 3 - 9)  
To confirm the minutes from the previous meeting
2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
To receive any apologies for absence
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of interest

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered -

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent

and, if the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest, or a personal interest which is also prejudicial

- (ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter (and must withdraw to the public seating area) unless they have been granted a dispensation.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Members' Register of Interests, or is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal and prejudicial interests are defined in Part 2 of the Code of Conduct For Members

[If a member is in any doubt as to whether they have an interest which should be declared they should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer before the start of the meeting]

#### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

An opportunity for members of the public to make statements or ask questions in accordance with the rules as to public participation

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

#### **6. ACTION POINTS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

No outstanding action points from the previous meeting.

#### **7. GARAGE PROGRAMME UPDATE (Pages 10 - 14)**

#### **8. COVID-19 IMPACT PAPER (Pages 15 - 34)**

#### **9. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 35 - 37)**

## MINUTES

### FINANCE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 JUNE 2020

**Present:**

Cllr Adeleke	Cllr Suqlain Mahmood (Chairman)
Cllr Barrett	Cllr Sinha
Cllr Chapman	Cllr Symington
Cllr Cloughton	Cllr Taylor
Cllr Guest	Cllr Tindall
Cllr Sobaan Mahmood	Cllr Townsend (Vice Chairman)

**Also Present:**

Councillor Elliot – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources  
Councillor Williams – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services

**Officers:**

M Brookes	Assistant Director – Corporate and Contracted Services
L Roberts	Assistant Director – Performance, People and Innovation
N Howcutt	Assistant Director – Finance and Resources
B Hosier	Group Manager – Procurement and Contracted Services
B Trueman	Group Manager – Technology and Digital Transformation
F Hussain	Group Manager – Legal and Corporate Services
T Angel	Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting started at 6.32 pm.

The Chairman advised that there had been a few requests for items on the agenda that were too late to be included. One of the items was the climate emergency. He said there was an interesting debate on the topic at the last Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee for those that were interested, but a report covering the financial aspect would come to this committee in due course. Another request was to cover the financial support scheme and this has been scheduled for July. Lastly, there was a request for a report on the financial implications of Covid-19. He advised there was a Cabinet report on that subject this month and that report would also come to the next meeting of this committee. The financial implications of Covid-19 will form part of the quarter one performance report for this committee in September.

**OS/001/20 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 were agreed by the members present and will be signed by the Chairman at the next available opportunity.

**OS/002/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**OS/003/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**OS/004/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

**OS/005/20 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO A CALL-IN**

None.

**OS/006/20 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2019/20**

N Howcutt introduced the item and apologised that this report was coming after the Cabinet report. He summarised the key areas of the report; the General Fund position at year end was showing a balanced position as a provision outturn. The HRA was showing a significant surplus in year of £884k – a large amount of that was because of year end calculations to do with bad debt provision. That surplus goes back into the HRA to fund future capital works. The overall capital position as of year-end had £0.4m of re-phasing which was a very small percentage of our overall capital programme which will take place in 20/21, and an end of year £2.4m overspend which was primarily across the three largest capital projects in the year; Tring swimming pool, the multi-storey car park in Berkhamsted and Bunkers Cemetery. Those three projects are either completed or near completion so there will be no additional spend past April/May. He welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Tindall referred to paragraph 4.2 relating to additional insurance costs for premises. He sought clarification if that was various small claims or a few bigger claims and if they were likely to be recurring. N Howcutt advised that it was a collection of small claims and he would provide Councillor Tindall with additional details.

**Action: N Howcutt**

Councillor Tindall said he was concerned that we didn't recruit for Apprentices until November and queried why. He also asked what was happening to our Apprentices during the pandemic. N Howcutt said he had an Apprentice in the finance department and they were working as normal and from home like everyone else. He felt that giving them additional support from home was slightly more difficult but we were working with them as much as possible to support them via virtual channels.

L Roberts advised that the recruitment for Apprentices was due to start mid-year and that was down to getting the scheme set up and identifying what services were required. She confirmed that no Apprentices had been furloughed and they were working from home like many other individuals.

Councillor Symington referred to page 13 relating to £55k for repairs to sports centres. She asked for clarification on what it was for and how that fits in with the arrangements with Everyone Active. N Howcutt advised that the costs were paid out at the beginning of the financial year and related to the parts of plant and equipment that are a DBC responsibility.

Councillor Cloughton referred to paragraph 7.2 and the HRA surplus of £884k. He asked if there was an option for councillors to decide where that money goes. N Howcutt advised that the bottom line surplus is transferred to the capital funding

reserve. He said no decision would be made at this point on how those funds are spent, but as part of the budget setting process the capital programme and funding is approved.

Councillor Guest asked if we had any figures on the impact of Covid-19 for car parking charges. N Howcutt advised that car parking income was the only visible impact of Covid-19 for 19/20 as there was a significant reduction of £25-30k in the last ten days of March. He said they're unable to breakdown how much of that reduction was enforcement and how much was lack of use of the car parks. He added that the figures for 20/21 would be significantly lower and would be detailed in the Cabinet report once finalised later this month.

Councillor Barrett drew attention to the £130k for the ageing fleet in waste services. He noted there was another £190k relating to maintenance of ageing fleet. He asked if those two figures should be combined or if they related to different areas. N Howcutt advised it was two different elements as they had to hire more vehicles because there were ageing vehicles not being used, and secondly the maintenance of the existing ageing vehicles. He said although additional costs had occurred this year, we're in a transition period whilst new fleet were coming on board. He added that due to Covid-19 and the capacity issue of workers in each vehicle, we need more fleet at the moment so we will see some pressures in 20/21 which were unexpected.

Councillor Barrett referred to the additional £200k for commercial waste and asked what percentage that was of our overall commercial waste income. He then asked what the service improvements were that were suggested in the report. N Howcutt explained we had made improvements through the year and now have a better understanding of our trade waste. He suggested it wasn't good news for 20/21 as far less clients were working in the retail and food industry due to Covid-19. He said he would need to come back to him on the exact percentage. **Action: N Howcutt**

Councillor Chapman sought clarification on paragraph 7.3 relating to recovering £160k of Housing Benefit. N Howcutt explained that this is where we have more Housing benefit subsidy tenants in supported housing than we had budgeted to get so we receive more income.

Councillor Taylor referred to page 21, lines 2.16 and 2.17 regarding the over spend at Swing Gate Lane. He asked if the contamination and archaeology were known about when the agreement was signed with the developers. N Howcutt said he would need to investigate with the project lead and come back to him.

**Action: N Howcutt**

Councillor Tindall referred back to the discussion about the waste services fleet. He said he couldn't understand why we had a gap between our vehicles ageing and our new vehicles being ready for use. N Howcutt said it was a very difficult procurement that extended the delivery timeframe.

B Hosier advised that we went out to tender on two occasions – on the first occasion we didn't obtain what we needed to so we had re-do the specification to go back to the market. He said that was the better option rather than to award a contract that wouldn't have suited the council in the longer term.

Councillor Claughton drew attention to the large increased costs for Berkhamsted multi-storey car park detailed on page 20. He queried the total cost for the project including management fees of the temporary car park. He also asked how long it

would take to pay for itself and what the projected life of the structure was. B Hosier said he didn't have the figures to hand but knew exactly what the figures were so he would share those figures with members as soon as possible. **Action: B Hosier**

Councillor Claughton noted there were issues with the speed of processing complaints within the Property and Place service. He felt it would be useful to know what the issues were. The Chairman suggested Councillor Claughton could read the minutes from the last Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the issue was discussed during that meeting. He then asked the officers to note Councillor Claughton's comment and provide further information to him if they had it.

Councillor Barrett asked what the tender price was for the multi-storey car park. B Hosier advised it was £4,370,599. Councillor Barrett referred to page 25 and said he understood it to be £1.162m. He asked for clarification on the original budgeted figures in the finance report. N Howcutt advised that figure would have been the planning of the car park prior to the procurement of the project and the revised budget was set post the procurement of a provider. Councillor Barrett asked if we entered into a fixed price contract. B Hosier explained that we did and a huge amount of the pricing was fixed but Brexit did have an effect and there were certain aspects that we couldn't get fixed prices on.

Councillor Guest asked if the issues had been resolved for the Rossgate shops structural works and improvements. N Howcutt said the works would take place in 20/21 and there were two stages; works at the front of the properties and works at the rear.

The Chairman asked if we had allowed some contingency in this financial year to take in to account Covid-19 implications, the impact of social distancing and the increases in project costs. N Howcutt explained they were reviewing all revenue expenditure, income streams and all capital projects and looking at remodelling and re-profiling where they can. He said the Covid-19 report that was going to Cabinet this month will outline the initial forecasts on revenue and capital, and outline the initial reactions to funding and reserves.

The Chairman sought clarification on what transfer payments were and why they varied so much. N Howcutt advised that transfer payments were generally payments made on behalf of other bodies such as the government. Benefits are a good example as we receive the funds and pay out to those eligible.

The Chairman queried why third party payments went up by 250%. N Howcutt explained it was where we had paid someone to do something we would usually do ourselves and it was normal to see fluctuations. He said the percentages can be misleading and procuring services from a third party was often a more cost effective and efficient way of delivering a service. The example used is where DBC previously delivered the building control service and now we procure from Herts Building Control.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/007/20 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT – CORPORATE AND CONTRACTED SERVICES**

M Brookes introduced the item and highlighted the successful court activities. He drew attention to the reports of project work and also the Berkhamsted multi-storey

car park moving to completion in the next couple of months. He welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 37. He sought clarification on card payments and the suspension of three months. B Hosier said the office was closed so we were unable to take card payments. He advised that we had put the instalment payments on hold and there were no additional costs being incurred by the customer.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 42 on FOI requests. He felt it wasn't satisfactory to just say they were 'missed' and asked for more detail. M Brookes advised that his service managed the process and distributed to the relevant departments for them to respond. He said the 'missed' comment was just to identify which department was responsible for not responding. Councillor Tindall asked for more detail in future and M Brookes noted his request.

Councillor Barrett queried if we would have lost the £400k in legal costs if we hadn't have won the case against Tesco. M Brookes advised that we seek advice on the strength of a case before proceeding so if there was a risk of not being successful they wouldn't have gone ahead with it.

Councillor Symington sought clarification on the consultation for TRO's (Traffic Regulation Orders) on Berkhamsted High Street adjacent to Manor Road. B Hosier explained that there was a TRO outside a chemist on the High Street and they're consulting to move a parking bay in line with the other parking bays. He said they needed to hold a consultation on any changes to TRO's.

Councillor Symington referred to the parking restrictions on Water Lane and queried if the time limit was reverting back from 2 hours to 4 hours and if they needed to consult on that. B Hosier said he would need to investigate the matter and come back to her.

**Action: B Hosier**

The Chairman asked why there had been delays in responding to stage 1 complaints. M Brookes advised that there had been slippage which was partly due to Covid-19 but he was also reviewing options for complaints and looking at ways to streamline and improve the process. He said it was a tricky area and complaints can often be complicated but they were looking at ways to increase performance. L Roberts added that there had been issues with the complaints relating to Property and Place but a new Group Manager, Jason Grace, was now in post and he had a lot of experience which she believed would help improve the performance of the service.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/008/20 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT – PERFORMANCE, PEOPLE AND INNOVATION**

L Roberts introduced the report and advised that they did start to see the impact of Covid-19 towards the end of March. She said they continued to monitor and address issues around sickness through the scrutiny panel. She advised that a Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire was circulated to all staff to understand how they're feeling and the responses were due to be analysed. The response rate was 47%.

With regards to ICT and digital services, she said we were very dependent on them at the moment and the use of Microsoft Teams had been very successful. She

advised that our website user statistics were similar to the previous quarter but they expected that to increase with the offices being closed.

The Chairman asked if we had confirmed Covid-19 cases in DBC. L Roberts replied she couldn't be sure but if we did have confirmed cases it would have only been a couple.

Councillor Tindall said he understood we had recruited a Climate Emergency Officer and asked for more details. M Brookes advised an offer of appointment had been made to an internal individual that had a lot of experience but he couldn't give any more information at this stage.

Councillor Taylor referred to page 47 regarding robotic process automation and asked for more information. L Roberts explained they had run some pilot projects but these had been delayed due to having to pause for 8 weeks because of Covid-19. She said as of this week they were restarting and one of the projects had successfully posted 25,000 historical records on to the housing system which had proved extremely valuable. She advised that two of the other projects were in finance; one was how to code utility bills and the other related to invoice numbering. The final project was the most complex and related to case work on a multitude of systems. She said this would save a lot of officer time, particularly those in the Environmental Health team.

Councillor Taylor asked how co-operative departments were of automating their services. L Roberts advised there was a slight hesitation at first but actually the response had been fantastic and because of the success of remote working during the pandemic, she felt that departments weren't as scared of the changes anymore.

The Chairman asked if there was a plan for staff to start returning to work. L Roberts explained that they were still encouraging staff to work from home as much as possible, particularly those without childcare provision due to school closures. She advised that B Hosier had been preparing the building for reopening in July to ensure we comply with social distancing measures. M Brookes added that they will be limiting the amount of people in the building at one time and producing rotas for each service. A full list of measures can be found in the forthcoming Cabinet report.

Councillor Tindall queried if it was cost effective to open The Forum if we don't have to. M Brookes advised that we were trying to comply with Government guidance in terms of giving staff the ability and option to work where they want to. He said they hadn't looked at it as a cost benefit exercise. He added that any costs incurred were good health and safety investments for the future.

L Roberts said there had been discussions with Group Managers about learning from lockdown so we can provide flexibility for our staff moving forward.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/009/20 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT – FINANCE AND RESOURCES**

N Howcutt summarised that 13 out of 16 KPI's were green and the remaining 3 were amber which were mainly due to timing issues. He said there were no significant areas of concern in terms of performance. He highlighted that the



operational risk report was prior to Covid-19 so the next report will reflect higher scores and risks.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 13 on Council Tax and Business Rate collections. He wondered whether the risk score should be higher. N Howcutt advised they were reviewing the 20/21 operational risk register. He said they do expect businesses to find it harder to pay their rates in 20/21, but equally half of our business rates have been paid by the Government so the risk may be lower than perceived.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/010/20 WORK PROGRAMME**

The following changes were made to the work programme:

July

Add Garages update – L Roberts

Add Covid-19 update – N Howcutt

September

Add New Normal – L Roberts

N Howcutt said he was building a timetable for MTFS (Medium Term Financial Strategy) and would come back with a date as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked members to let him know if there was anything they would like to see on the work programme so it can be discussed with the appropriate officers.

The meeting ended at 8.28 pm.

# Agenda Item 7



Report for:	<b>Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of meeting:	<b>7 July 2020</b>
Part:	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	<b>Garage Programme Update</b>
Contact:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrew Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services</li> <li>• Linda Roberts, AD People, Performance and Innovation, Author/Responsible Officer</li> <li>• James Deane, Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Garage Programme Sponsor</li> </ul>
Purpose of report:	The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of the Garage Programme review.
Recommendations	Note the progress of the programme and the impact of COVID-19 on this programme.
Period for post policy/project review	Propose another update with proposed investment strategy in November 2020
Corporate objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building strong and vibrant communities</li> <li>• Ensuring economic growth and prosperity</li> </ul>
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u> The review is essential to ensure the garage asset maximises revenue and is appropriately aligned to demand, so that alternative use options can be considered for the generation of capital receipts or alternative revenue streams. The review is being funded from reserves on the basis of spend to save.</p>
'Value for money' implications	<p><u>Value for money</u> The review is being undertaken at market rates for this nature of professional services support.</p>
Risk implications	There is an active risk register for this programme review which is managed by the Programme Board.

	The main risk for the Council relating to Garages is without any intervention they will be a continued decline of revenue. There is a reputational risk to the Council for the perceived poor management of the garage stock.
Community Impact Assessment	Community Impact Assessment carried out on 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2020.
Health and safety Implications	There are no specific H&S concerns in this review as such. However Health and Safety implications will be full considered as part of the recommendations that will be developed once the review is complete.
Consultees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts from within Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesley Jugoo, Empty Homes Team Leader</li> <li>• Theresa Miles, Garage Management Officer</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lucy Tash, Accountant: Housing, DBC (for budgets)</li> <li>• Ben Trueman, GM - Technology &amp; Digital Transformation, DBC (for ICT systems)</li> <li>• Charlotte Courtney, Project Manager, Orchard Systems</li> </ul>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>CMT – Corporate Management Team  CPW – Community Protection Warning  CPN - Community protection Notice</p>

## Executive Summary

1. The Garage Programme review commenced in November 2019 with the appointment of an external Programme Manager to lead the review and implement improvements.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the completion of the development of a mobile tool to collect garage survey data. This is due to the supplier furloughing staff until the beginning of June and the Council's priorities were focused on the transition to remote working and the immediate response to the lockdown and new ways of working. Due to the availability of Orchard staff to work on this development the upgrade work will not be completed until it is done over the weekend 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July
3. Tenders were sent out to known external surveyors and the successful bidder was Aitchison Rafferty. They too had been severely impacted by the lockdown restrictions but will be able to start this work w/c 6<sup>th</sup> July. Based on the numbers of surveys to be done (6,855) they expect this week to be completed by 20<sup>th</sup> August.
4. The Garages team continues to process garage applications and returns whilst this work is being done. This will also help inform on the demand for garages and if this changes as a result of the impact on the local economy of COVID-19. During this period (April to first two weeks in June) there has been 263 e-form enquiries, 93 offers made, 60 commencements with 56

terminations. The DBC surveyors who have been unable to go into tenant buildings have carried out 756 inspections.

5. Once the surveys are completed and the data mapped against demand this will inform and shape a garage investment strategy proposals and priorities.
6. It is planned to present this investment strategy for scrutiny and to Cabinet in November 2020.

### **Introduction**

7. There have been a number of issues with the rental and management of Garage assets in Dacorum. Constructed around 1950/1960 a lot of the stock requires maintenance and investment, but it has not been known where this should be best spent. Although the garages as assets belong to the General Fund, they have been historically managed by the Housing directorate of the Council.
8. The Garage Programme review commenced in November 2019 with the appointment of an external Programme Manager to lead the review and implement improvements.

### **Progress**

9. The approach and progress of the review was presented at the joint scrutiny meeting in February 2020. This report is an update of progress since February and shows the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had on this project.
10. The main focus of the programme at the time of the outbreak of COVID-19 was:
  1. Completing the development of an IT tool to collect garage survey data and feed it directly in the ProMaster system (part of the Housing system Orchard).
  2. Send out a tender to known external surveying firms to enable the surveys to be done much more quickly than just relying on our internal surveying capability.
  3. Continue to process applications and returns of garages and setup new rental agreements.

### **Development of a mobile applications to capture garage survey data**

11. The Council's contract Project Manager had instructed the software supplier (Orchard) in February 2020 about the changes that were required to enable the mobile application to work for DBC. In early March Orchard informed DBC that the tool would require an upgrade of the underlying database. The first part of this work was done w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> March but this coincided with the introduction of lockdown restrictions.

12. The Council's contract Project Manager was stood down on 30<sup>th</sup> March and at this time Orchard furloughed staff as we received emails with out of office message referring to them being unavailable until 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. We had no consultation with Orchard in regard to this and so the work was put on hold, as their staff were unable to work if furloughed. In addition Orchard was in the final stages of an acquisition by a US company MRI, which was announced on 31<sup>st</sup> March, so they were unlikely to make any adverse information in respect of the COVID impact public at that stage.
13. In addition to Orchard's availability the Council's priorities were focused on the transition to remote working and the immediate response to the lockdown and new ways of working. There was a need to suspend any development work to ensure that all IT was focused on the support of the current environment to ensure that wholesale homeworking and necessary resilience was delivered.
14. At the end of May (27<sup>th</sup> May) we resumed contact with Orchard as this coincided with their planned to return to work. At this point there was still much work to be done to complete the upgrade. We received an email with a planned return date of 22<sup>nd</sup> July due to limited capacity for the upgrade team which we replied was unacceptable. We have now had this scheduled for over the weekend of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July. This coincides with the wholesale survey work being starting w/c 6<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **Tendering for external surveying capability**

15. At the end of March a tender was sent out to three known firms of surveyors for them to bid to survey the garages on the Council's behalf. Surveying had continued with the internal team but it had made slow progress due to their other housing work commitments.
16. The tenders were reviewed in May as during April the Councils was focused on the transition to remote working and the immediate response to the lockdown and new ways of working.
17. Aitchison Rafferty (were successful with their tender and in consultation with them and the return of their staff to work it was agreed that the survey work would start w/c 6<sup>th</sup> July with an aim to complete all the garage stock that had not been updated (6,855 garages) by our internal team by the end of August. It was confirmed that this work can be done whilst maintaining COVID-19 guidelines.

#### **Continue to process applications and returns of garages and setup new rental agreements**

18. Although the development of the mobile tool was suspended during lockdown the Council's Garages Team continued to process garage applications and make garages available for rental. During this period (April to first two weeks

in June) there has been 263 e-form enquiries, 93 offers made, 60 commencements with 56 terminations. The DBC surveyors who have been unable to go into tenant buildings have carried out 756 inspections.

19. This is a good performance from the team that they have managed to respond to residents requests. However depending on the severity of the recession, there is a risk that garages may represent an early cost saving for a household in financial difficulties. Garages relinquished now could have a medium-term financial impact on the Council as they may prove challenging to re-let. This will be factored into the ongoing garage programme and subsequent investment strategy.

### **Next steps**

20. A meeting was held this week (22<sup>nd</sup> June) between Orchard and DBC to finalise the arrangements for the work to be done on the upgrade and completion of the mobile tool. This will be closely monitored during the next couple of weeks to ensure that it completed on time.
21. There are plans for Aitchison Rafferty surveyors to come to The Forum to receive training in the mobile application before they commence with their surveys.
22. Once the surveys are completed and the data mapped against demand this will inform and shape a garage investment strategy proposals and priorities.
23. It is planned to present this investment strategy for scrutiny and to Cabinet in November 2020.



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> July 2020</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>COVID-19 IMPACT PAPER</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Andrew Williams, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Contracted Services  Author/Responsible Officer:  Sally Marshall Chief Executive  James Deane Corporate Director (Finance and Operations)  Mark Gaynor Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration)  Mark Brookes, Assistant Director (Corporate & Contracted Services)
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To provide Members with an update on the projected financial impact of Covid-19.</li> <li>2. To set out a proposed Covid-19 recovery framework.</li> <li>3. To highlight the work and support the Council has been carrying out across service areas in relation to Covid-19.</li> </ol>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Members note:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The projected financial impact of Covid-19 for 2020/21 as set out in section 1.</li> <li>(b) The proposed recovery framework as set out in section 2.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. That Members note the extension of the voluntary sector contracts as set out in paragraphs 3.2 – 3.5 and the new one year contract to DENS as highlighted in paragraph 3.7.</li> </ol>
<b>Corporate objectives:</b>	The financial impact and the Council's response to Covid-19 will impact all of the Council's Corporate Objectives.
<b>Implications:</b>	<u>Financial</u>

'Value for money' implications	<p>Financial Implications are covered in section 1.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>Covid-19 will have various value for money implications which will be assessed as proposals develop to respond to the issues raised.</p> <p>The Council's initial response has focused on continuity of service provision and support for key groups and organisations – the measures implemented are aimed at assisting the recovery and minimising the long terms impacts as much as possible.</p>
Risk implications	Due to the significant impact of Covid-19, a new strategic risk has been entered into the Council's Strategic Risk Register, which is annexed to this report.
Community Impact Assessment	The Council's response to date has tried to ensure minimal service disruption to the community. The recovery phase of the Council's response will continually assess its impact on the community to ensure a balanced and effective response and this will be directed through the various recovery groups.
Health and safety Implications	The Council has acted promptly and put in place appropriate measures to ensure that staff, councillors and the community are protected from Covid-19 whilst trying to ensure minimal service disruption. This will continued to be assessed through the recovery stages.
Consultees:	Leader of the Council, Councillor Andrew Williams
Background papers:	<p>Coronavirus Covid-19: Guidance for Local Government</p> <p>Procurement Policy Note 02/20 – Supplier Relief due to Covid-19</p> <p>Report to Cabinet 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None

**\* Members will note that this report was reported to Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and the recommendations in that report were agreed. However, due to the significant financial and operational issues raised in the report, officers wanted to ensure that members of this committee were fully briefed on the key issues.**

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 1.1 This section of the report identifies the financial pressures the Council is likely to face specifically as a result of the coronavirus. It does not include any other pressures that are likely to emerge over the course of the next 12 months.
- 1.2 Although some financial pressures have already begun to impact the Council, these are still relatively early days and the majority of the forecast pressures are estimates of how budgets might be affected over the longer-term. As a result, all of the forecasts in this report are subject to potentially significant change and should be considered high-risk.
- 1.3 Based on current information, DBC will face an estimated General Fund budgetary pressure in this financial year of around £5m resulting from the implications of



coronavirus. This is a net position after £1.6m of Government support grants have been taken into account. Income is forecast to be down by c£5.6m and expenditure up by c£1m.

- 1.4 Currently, there are no indications that further Government support will be made available to local authorities. Whilst use of reserves may be an option for DBC to cover the predicted shortfall, they are all currently earmarked for future projects and their use would have longer-term implications for the Council's future ambitions. This will be modelled over coming weeks.
- 1.5 Collection rates for both Council Tax and Business rates are expected to fall over the coming months. The technicalities of these funding streams means that this is unlikely to impact the current year's budget, but it is likely to reduce future years' funding.
- 1.6 The HRA is currently forecasting a full-year pressure of c£500k. This is a net position, with falling income of £2.9m expected to be partially offset by reduced expenditure of £2.4m.

#### **Pressure on General Fund income streams**

- 1.7 In common with the vast majority of district councils, the financial pressure for DBC is driven more by lost income than increased expenditure. The 9 primary income streams within the General Fund are budgeted to generate £15.9m in 20/21, just over half the cost of running the Council's services. The extent to which they will be affected by coronavirus will be determined by several drivers, including:
  - Duration of lockdown measures, e.g. car parking numbers, leisure
  - Ongoing health of local economy, e.g. commercial rents, planning applications, search fees
  - Service type, i.e. is it essential expenditure for a struggling business/individual, e.g. garages
- 1.8 Forecasting the full year impact at this stage is challenging because the impacts of the different drivers are likely to take effect over different timeframes, e.g. some may be extreme but largely concentrated within April to June, whereas others may continue to build over the full year.
- 1.9 The following estimates are based on information available at the end of May but are subject to change depending on future government guidance and/or the general health of the economy:

Income stream	Budget	Reduction	Duration months	Loss of income	Notes
Investment Property	£5.4m	50%	12	£2.7m	Arrears up by 60% (£350k) y-o-y. There is likely to be continued pressure on this income stream as tenants exhaust reserves and seek to arrange repayment plans, and as the expected recession threatens the survival of small businesses. Survey recently undertaken with tenants to ascertain business health and inform a targeted collection strategy.
Garages Income	£3.6m	25%	12	£900k	No material impact at this stage, but, depending on the severity of the recession, there is a risk that garages may represent an early cost saving for a household in financial difficulties. Garages relinquished now could have a medium-term financial impact on the Council as they may prove challenging to re-let. This will be factored into the ongoing garage project.
Car Parking	£2.8m	75%	6	£1m	Income down c85% as at the end of May. This income stream is heavily lockdown dependent - whilst restrictions are in place the reduction is severe, but it may bounce back quickly when restrictions are relaxed, particularly if demand/availability of public transport is reduced.
Planning Fees	£1.2m	50%	6	£300k	Down 20% on profiled budget as at the end of May. Significant reductions are anticipated for the remainder of the year due to impact on household incomes and developer nervousness over longer-term implications for the housing market.
Commercial Waste	£1m	50%	6	£240k	Anticipated pressure on income from businesses no longer operating and increase in bad debtors. This will be recession-dependent and will be monitored through the broader economic recovery.
Temporary Accommodation	£950k	0%	6	£0	Demand has increased dramatically, but unlikely to see significant increase in income as the Council's own TA capacity becomes fully utilised. Work continues with Estates to identify whether further income opportunities exist.
Leisure	£500k	40%	12	£200k	Management fee waived for the first 5 months of year as Supplier Relief (c£200k). Potential requirement for further Supplier Relief in future. Even when restrictions are lifted, it will take time for memberships to increase to pre-virus levels. High risk income stream.
Civic/Sports/APG hire	£300k	100%	6	£150k	Driven by the lifting of government restrictions. Recent announcements indicate that there is little chance of material income gains over the period before September. May see some, but may also see income depressed for much longer.
Search Fees	£230k	50%	12	£120k	Housing market likely to stagnate for at least the next 12 months as households await a more clearly emerging economic picture.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15.9m</b>			<b>£5.6m</b>	<b>At this stage it's estimated that DBC will experience 35 – 40% income reduction in 20/21.</b>

## Pressure on General Fund expenditure

1.10 Additional cost drivers arising from the virus include:

- One-off costs to ensure work conditions are compliant with government guidance, e.g. partition screens on desks; head phones for remote meetings etc.;
- Service based costs incurred to maintain front-line services in the face of new challenges or increased demand, e.g. agency staff to replace vulnerable waste collection staff; and potential additional costs around increased demand for Revenues & Benefits, and Homelessness.

1.11 With detail still emerging, there will be further decisions to be made between Revenue and Capital, or General Fund and HRA, but an early, high-level estimate of additional cost to the Council in cash terms is shown in the table below:

Expenditure Type	Pressure	Duration (months)	Notes
Waste Services	£550k	6	Primarily due to increased agency costs arising from: over 20 staff isolated for 12 weeks in high-risk groups; rolling 2 or 3 on self-isolation; additional smaller truck required to access residential roads congested with increased numbers of residents working from home; additional truck hire to facilitate social distancing between crews on rural rounds; waste tonnages up by c30% due to increased working from home.
Office-based staff	£200k		Estimated figure across the council to cover future increased demand for services.
Facilitate compliant ways of working	£250k		This includes modifications to Council buildings e.g. screen dividers for desks; automatic door installations; investment in mobile IT, etc.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1m</b>		

## Supplier Relief

1.12 Central Government has issued guidance to local authorities (known as PPN0220) to provide 'Supplier Relief' (SR) to contractors at financial risk as a result of the virus. Essentially, the guidance is for councils to continue paying for services they would ordinarily receive, but that have had to be temporarily suspended due to social distancing restrictions.

1.13 The rationale behind the guidance is that alongside the broader economic benefits of company survival, the contractor will be able to recover more quickly after the restrictions, thereby reducing the risk of interruptions to public services in the longer-term.

1.14 Any payments made as SR are at the expense of the individual council, and future reimbursement from Government is not expected. It is incumbent on the supplier to demonstrate that they are in need of SR and at the discretion of the council as to

whether payment should be made. At this stage only the Council's leisure provider has received SR.

- 1.15 DBC has set up a governance process to assess each claim individually. Specifically, the Council is seeking assurance that the company has taken all appropriate steps to maintain service provision; that it has exhausted all alternative measures of support available to it; that SR is required to ensure its survival; and, that its potential demise would negatively impact the borough's residents. Final approval rests with the Chief Executive, advised by the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, through formal Officer Decision.
- 1.16 The use of public funds to benefit a private company is an extremely finely balanced judgement. In order to reconcile these competing interests, DBC has adopted an approach of providing support through interest-free loans rather than non-refundable payments. It should be noted that even an interest-free loan from the public sector to a private company represents a legally and ethically complex area, and any applications from contractors will be thoroughly scrutinised to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.
- 1.17 This approach meets the spirit of the guidance, i.e. supporting those companies at greatest risk to remain afloat in the short-term, whilst at the same time reflecting the Council's own financial pressures and the need for proper stewardship of public funds.
- 1.18 On this basis, whilst there may be a cash flow impact, other than the example of Leisure income foregone, it is not currently expected that any future Supplier Relief granted by the Council will have a material budgetary impact.

#### **Pressure on Council Tax collection**

- 1.19 At the end of April, Council Tax collection rates were only marginally down, at 10.10% of the annual total, compared to 10.73% at the same stage last year. Throughout May, however, the year-on-year collection rate continued to fall at roughly the same rate, and ended the month at 18.9% compared to 20.3% last year.
- 1.20 Whilst a 1.4% reduction in year-on-year collection rates at the end of May is a cause for concern, it's not yet possible to extrapolate it with any confidence into a forecast year-end position. At the start of the lockdown period, a significant number of residents sought to maximise the financial flexibility the DBC Council Tax policy offers – they chose to reduce from 12 monthly payments to 10, and to delay their first payment until June. As a result of these changes we would expect the collection rate to be lower at this stage this year than it was last year.
- 1.21 The Council will only be able to gauge whether these residents are able to make their updated payments, and consequently whether there is likely to be an ongoing collection problem, when the June collection data becomes available. It could be that all residents will make their payments on time and that the collection rate will catch up with last year's, or it could be that some are unable to make payments and we start to see a clear trend of increased arrears starting to emerge.
- 1.22 It is, however, likely that over the course of the year there will be an underlying trend of collection rates falling below budget for the following reasons:

- The Council's tax base over the course of the year, will be lower than forecast due to the supply of new homes falling below previously anticipated levels, and an increasing number of households qualifying for Council Tax Support; and,
  - Reduced collection rates are an inevitable consequence of the constraints on household spending that accompany a prolonged recession, which is universally forecast for the coming months and years.
- 1.23 The way the Council Tax Collection Fund works means that even with a collection rate below budget, there will not be a budgetary pressure for DBC in the current year. A reduced tax base will however reduce Council Tax income next year and continue to have funding implications into the medium-term. The Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions for future years will be reviewed as current year trends start to emerge and more accurate modelling can be undertaken.
- 1.24 It's worth noting that the same Collection Fund mechanism that protects DBC's Council Tax income in the current year also gives rise to a cash-flow risk for DBC. In common with DBC, the other Council tax preceptors in Dacorum will not be affected in the current year by a fall in the collection rate. This could have cash-flow implications for DBC in future months as we continue to pay budgeted amounts of cash over to other preceptors despite the fact that we have actually collected less money.
- 1.25 This risk is being monitored and is the subject of ongoing discussion across all councils within Hertfordshire. At present, the risk sits exclusively with district councils (who collect the Council Tax) rather than the County Council, which takes by far the highest proportion of the income (79% in Dacorum). In the event that a cash-flow problem does begin to emerge, one option is for the risk to be borne proportionately by preceptors rather than sit solely with the districts.

### **Pressure on Business Rates collection**

- 1.26 Government has already covered the financial implications of the additional rate reliefs it has awarded to the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality sectors, but future Business Rates collection is likely to be impacted by the expected recession.
- 1.27 From a budgetary perspective, DBC will not be impacted in the current financial year by falling collection rates. This is because the grant DBC receives from Government is based on '*assessment of need*', with a maximum of 7.5% (c£250k) of the grant at risk if Business Rates collection falls below a baseline level. The at-risk element is based on the previous year, so any contraction of the local economy won't impact DBC until next financial year.
- 1.28 The medium-term funding risk to DBC of an ongoing and severe recession will depend on the extent to which Government links individual local authority funding to local economic growth. Government was scheduled to roll out a new funding mechanism next year (based on its Fair Funding Review), but has recently announced that this will now be suspended for at least one year. Funding arrangements for next year have yet to be announced.

### **Government Support Grant**

- 1.29 DBC has received grant funding of £1.6m from Government's Local Government support package of £3.2bn. There is not currently any indication that there will be

further funding. Indeed, Government has emphasised in recent announcements that councils will need to meet much of their own virus-related costs.

- 1.30 However, this is an evolving picture and councils are being asked to submit periodic returns to Government outlining the scale of financial pressures – the figures in this report will be submitted in mid-June. The nationally consolidated position is being used by the Local Government Association and the District Councils' Network to lobby Government for increased financial support.

### **Summary of General Fund budgetary position and potential mitigations**

- 1.31 Based on the forecasts in this report, DBC faces a potential in-year Covid-related budgetary pressure of:

Increased expenditure £ 1.0m

Lost income £ 5.6m

Less Government funding (£1.6m)

**Net financial cost £ 5.0m**

- 1.32 Based on information available at the time of writing, the use of earmarked reserves is a potential option for the Council to meet these financial pressures within the current year. However, this would be at the expense of the future projects the reserves were created to support (in some cases to finance schemes which are fundamental to meeting future savings requirements). In extreme circumstances, use of reserves would plug the budgetary gap and keep the Council afloat.
- 1.33 The updated Medium term Financial Strategy is currently scheduled for July. However, depending on the timing of government announcements, and the establishing of more robust in-year trends, it may be recommended to reschedule for September Cabinet to enable the production of a more meaningful document. Members will be kept updated on modelling progress and the emerging financial picture over the coming weeks.

### **Housing Revenue Account**

- 1.34 As at the end of May, the HRA is facing an estimated a much lower full-year net pressure of c£500k, comprising a rental shortfall of £2.9m partially offset by a reduction in expenditure of £2.4m.
- 1.35 Forecasting the full year impact based on the rent shortfall as at the end of May is problematic due to the increasing number of tenants moving onto Universal Credit, and the subsequent processing period of up to 5 weeks before new claimants receive payment.
- 1.36 One would expect that some of the current pressure is a timing issue that will catch up once the claims start to be approved, (there were over 200 new UC claimants in April alone). However, this catch-up element is likely to be offset by an underlying trend of increasing arrears that will accompany the impending recession.
- 1.37 Whilst the HRA will see some areas of increasing expenditure as a result of Covid (e.g. rent collection), in overall terms the necessary suspension of a significant portion of the non-essential repairs and maintenance within the homes is currently resulting

in a forecast revenue underspend of £2.4m (20% of budget). At this stage it is not anticipated that contractors will have the capacity to increase future planned works, even if restrictions are eased to permit previous levels of access.

- 1.38 The HRA capital programme of major works, e.g. bathrooms and kitchens etc, has also been affected by restricted access to homes, and is currently forecasting slippage of 30%, c£5.5m, into next financial year.
- 1.39 Members will be updated throughout the year.

## **2. COVID-19 RECOVERY FRAMEWORK**

- 2.1. This part of the report sets out a framework to commence the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. The framework detailed here provides broad parameters and objectives for the working groups once established and once partners and stakeholders are engaged.
- 2.2. Recovery is an integral phase of the emergency management process and can be defined as:
- “The process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency”*
- 2.3. As a Borough council we hold the statutory, regulatory and licensing levers to help start to rebuild the economy and help business to stabilise, adapt and grow. We also hold key relationships with the County Council, other borough and district councils, Hertfordshire Growth Board and bodies such as the Local Enterprise Partnership and Homes England, which means that we are very well positioned to collaborate and deliver a comprehensive recovery programme.
- 2.4. Recovery does not necessarily mean restoration to the normality that existed before the pandemic. It needs to recognise that things may not be the same again and acknowledge that it can be a long term process, but also develop the opportunities, which have evolved through the pandemic.
- 2.5. The process will also need to align with existing work streams such as the Council’s change management programme, ‘New Normal’ and an opportunity is also presented to realign the terms of reference for the corporate officer working groups to ensure that they align with the recovery programme and can continue post recovery phase.

### ***Core Principles***

- 2.6 The principles of our recovery phase should include:
- Ensuring that the process enables and supports our communities and economy to recover and develop from the pandemic’s impacts.
  - Consideration of the changing needs of affected groups over time, and allowing for a long term process.
  - Active participation from the affected communities, businesses and stakeholders.
  - Integration between the work stream groups with the county wide recovery structure

### ***Linkages to Wider Local Resilience Forum Recovery Structure***

- 2.7 In respect of the current pandemic, a Hertfordshire wide Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) has already been established. The RCG is a multi-agency officer group with clear linkages and reporting lines to the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), and at an appropriate time, it will assume primacy.
- 2.8 Individual agencies will also establish their own recovery processes and internal groups, and it is important that the Council establish a suitable framework to enable us to link in to county wide structures, whilst leading a co-ordinated effort in respect of our own communities.
- 2.9 The Dacorum recovery structure will, like the county structure, have commenced work immediately but will then takeover from the Incident Management Team (IMT) which has been managing the pandemic to date at an appropriate time.
- 2.10 Continued and effective liaison between similar work streams at county and borough levels should be undertaken to ensure that objectives and work streams are aligned to ensure consistency

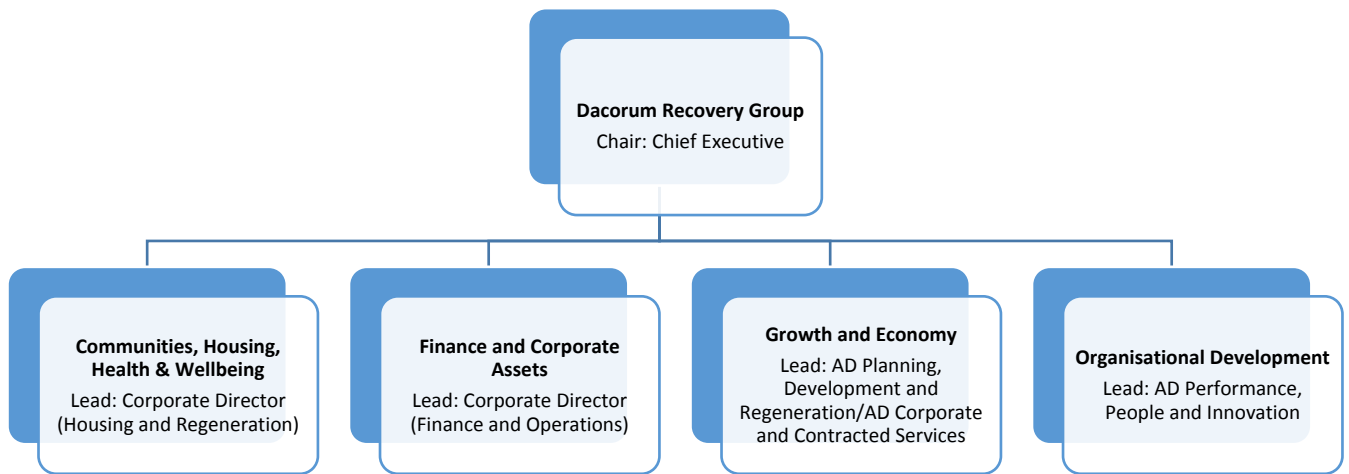
### ***The Role of Members***

- 2.11 Members will have a key role in the recovery process. The key aspects of Member roles include:
- Being a focus for community concerns and a conduit to recovery structures.
  - Identifying issues within their own wards.
  - Building/utilising local community links.
  - Providing visible community leadership.
  - Maintaining liaison with other local elected representatives.
  - Maintaining community and business liaison.
  - Encouragement and support to those working on recovery in their communities and businesses.
  - Consideration of recovery proposals and making appropriate democratic decisions connected to these.

### ***Proposed Recovery Structure for Dacorum***

- 2.12 The proposals for the delivery of the recovery strategy is set out in the structure on the next page, along with draft terms of reference for each group in appendix A-E.
- 2.13 The work of these officer groups will inevitably overlap with the current officer corporate working groups, Corporate Growth and Infrastructure Board, Community and Wellbeing, Property Management Board, the Climate Change and Sustainable Environment Group, therefore a review of the terms of reference of these groups will be undertaken to take account of this.





- The groups will be supported as necessary by appropriate teams, including Regulatory, Legal, Finance, Communities, Communications (and others as required) where appropriate.
- There may be officer task and finish work steams set up under each group.
- Portfolio Holders will be briefed regularly and reports will be presented to Cabinet for action as required.
- Finance and Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committees will have oversight of the whole recovery programme including budgetary impact. The Housing and Communities OSC and the Strategic Planning and Environment OSC will receive reports on their specific service areas.

### **3 RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY SUPPORT**

3.1 This part of the report highlights some of key work and support that the Council has provided across its various services to ensure continuity of service and recovery resilience since the outbreak of Covid-19.

#### **Support to Communities**

##### *Extension of voluntary sector contracts*

3.2 Officers have been liaising with community and charitable organisations which provide services to residents in the borough to start to assess the short to medium term impact of Covid-19. The key issues highlighted are increased demand for services and requirement for additional funding to support the need.

3.3 The Council currently directly supports via commissioned contracts the following organisations:

- Citizens Advice Dacorum
- Age UK Dacorum

- Community Action Dacorum (in partnership with the Volunteer Centre Dacorum)
  - Relate Dacorum, Watford and Three Rivers (in partnership with Mediate Herts)
- 3.4 The combined annual value of these contracts is £481,000 and they all expire within the next 12-18 months. This is therefore the time that officers would normally start the re-procurement process.
- 3.5 In order to give these organisations greater financial security during these unprecedented times when demand on their service has and will continue to increase, it is proposed to extend their current contracts for a further 2 years from the end of their current term. This will provide financial security and enable focus on service provision rather than a new procurement process. The financial stability will also enable our partners to be in a stronger position when applying for future financial grants.
- 3.6 In addition to the above, the Elms Homeless Shelter management contract was awarded to DENS in May 2015 for a 5-year period, which expired at the end of April 2020. This has been extended for 2 months to take it up to the 30th June 2020.
- 3.7 It is proposed that a new 1-year contract is issued to DENS, with the option to extend this for a further year.
- 3.8 Hertfordshire County Council are undertaking a review of temporary accommodation countywide, as part of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Development Programme. The review will consider opportunities to address disproportionate demand and availability of accommodation and improve collaboration. One option that is being considered as part of the review by HCC is to centrally control and procure services across the County. If this option is adopted, it will be necessary to consider the impact of this on any future procurement of the Elms contract and therefore by providing a 1 year contract, it will enable the outcome of the review to be fully considered.
- 3.9 DENS have also been pivotal in supporting the Council at the current time in its response to the local homeless community in relation to Covid-19 and therefore the extension will give them greater security and enable them to focus on service delivery rather than a procurement process.

#### *Community Grant Scheme*

- 3.10 Support is granted to various community based organisations via the Council's Community Grants scheme. The scheme funds local voluntary and community sector organisations and grass roots groups to implement projects to benefit the community in Dacorum. The overall annual budget is just under £60k. There are two schemes, one is limited to £500 and a larger scheme for awards up to £3k. In exceptional circumstances applications can be made for up to £10k.
- 3.11 The existing application criteria would preclude Covid-19 related recovery projects, however, in order to support such projects that are solely related to Covid-19 recovery, it is proposed to amend the application criteria for applications submitted after the first round this year (closing date June 25<sup>th</sup> 2020) for the remaining bid rounds of financial year 2020/21.

#### *Leisure*

- 3.12 Officers have been working with the operator of Hemel and Berkhamsted Sports Centre, Everyone Active to prepare for reopening with appropriate health and safety measures in place.
- 3.13 A support package has also been agreed with Everyone Active to ensure continuity of service and protect local jobs as set out in the Officer Decision dated 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.
- 3.14 Match funding has been confirmed from Sports England for consultancy support to assess the short to medium term impact of Covid-19 on our leisure facilities and subject to agreement with Dacorum Sports Trust this will also consider Little Hay Golf Club and the XC Centre.

### **Support to business and council contractors**

- 3.15 In May 2020, Government announced a national fund of £617m to provide financial support for small and micro businesses affected by the coronavirus, which were not eligible for the Small Business Grant Fund or the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund. This is known as the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund (LADGF).
- 3.16 Local authorities were made responsible for delivering grants to eligible businesses, and each council was allocated funds equal to 5% of the grants issued to local businesses under the Government schemes mentioned in the paragraph 3.15. The DBC allocation was £1.45m.
- 3.17 The DBC scheme aimed to assist as many small and micro businesses as possible, as quickly as possible, and through a scheme designed to be as transparent as possible. The principles inherent within the DBC scheme and the rationale behind the design are available within the Portfolio Holder Decision published on 3 June: <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/council-democracy/portfolio-holder-decisions/decisions-2020>
- 3.18 Officers in the Economic Development Team have also started to identify the issues faced by business and have issued a short business survey to consider the impact of Covid-19. This will help to formulate the start of a recovery strategy and action plan working with stakeholder partners including the Local Enterprise Partnership, Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors and Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Business Improvement District. Particular focus will also be given to the borough's key retail centres noting that retail sector will likely be one of the worst affected by the pandemic.
- 3.19 The Council has been working with our main contractors throughout the pandemic to ensure that contractors are financially robust to recommence services as soon as restrictions are relaxed.
- 3.20 Payment restructuring of two construction contracts has taken place and financial support in the form of an interest free loans has been offered but not accepted in respect of two other major contractors. As noted above, a support package has also been agreed in respect of the Council's main leisure operator.

### **Support to Individuals**

- 3.21 Officers continue to work with the voluntary sector, the County Council and the CCG/NHS on identifying individuals requiring additional support – which may be health, finance or safety matters – to provide assistance in the difficult transition back to a more normal life.
- 3.22 The Council is co-leading the Hertfordshire Accommodation and Recovery Cells, which primarily focusses on the coordinated response to homeless households placed across the County in relation to Covid-19. Each district has been asked to ensure that it continues to comply with the Dame Louise Casey request to bring ‘Everyone In’ and in Dacorum figures have fluctuated reaching a high of 185 households in temporary accommodation (though dropping as more voids have become available), a rise from 95 prior to the outbreak. Additionally districts have been asked to ensure that they are proactively engaging with all statutory and voluntary sector partners, to deliver a coordinated plan for recovery and ensuring that everyone who has been brought into interim accommodation during this emergency period, has a forward plan and offer of accommodation to prevent a risk of return to the streets.
- 3.23 All tenants of social housing, over 70 have been identified and contact made to offer support and obtain additional information in relation to those who are shielding. Food parcels have been delivered to those in need locally by officers from the Communities Team through both the County wide schemes Operation Shield and Sustain and also through the tenancy sustainment team. Sheltered schemes have had additional cleaning of all communal areas and regular telephone contact has been made with all residents who have requested support. Referrals have been made to the befriending scheme to reduce the impact of social isolation.
- 3.24 All lifeline customers across all tenures have been contacted and support and signposting to third sector partners and befriending services have been made and this work will continue whilst needed. The income team have been providing advice and support to those households in financial difficulty through the impact of Covid-19 and the numbers have increased month on month.
- 3.25 As part of our recovery plan, the Council are required to work proactively with all households placed into accommodation. Presently there is no indication of any additional funding that will be available to support with this. Dacorum were allocated £29,000 of MHCLG funding specifically to assist with homelessness (of which only half has been received) and, to date we have spent in excess of £39,000 on the immediate response.
- 3.26 As stated above the Council has experienced the highest numbers in temporary accommodation since 2016. Prior to lockdown there were 95 households in temporary accommodation and at the time of writing there are over 160 households. The Council’s Tenancy Sustainment team are contracted by Hertfordshire County Council under Housing Related Support funding to support 35 households in temporary accommodation and those in the first 6 months of their tenancy. Currently the team are supporting in excess of 200 households.
- 3.27 The Council will continue to provide a corporate coordinated response in relation to Domestic Abuse: Homelessness, Community Safety and Tenants & Leaseholders are all involved in engaging with residents in relation to this sensitive area. Domestic Abuse is on the rise and recent data provided by St Albans & Hertsmere Women’s Refuge, confirms that during the lock down period there have been 123 new domestic abuse reports in Dacorum. In the 7 weeks prior to lockdown there were 62 DA

referrals, for the same 7 weeks in 2019 there were 40 DA reports. It is imperative that the council develops and maintains a coordinated approach to support those households most in need and at a time when they are at most risk. As a result a review of Domestic Abuse services will be undertaken as committed within the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

### **Forum/staff occupied buildings**

3.28 Reviews have been carried out of all staff occupied buildings and changes proposed to ensure that staff can occupy buildings safely with appropriate distancing and hygiene measures when a phased return to the buildings commence. The main measures to be introduced include:

- Staff to sit diagonally from each other (4 staff on a bank of 8 – at the Forum).
- Maximum of 155 staff in the Forum (approximately 1/3 of full capacity) – Working from home rota to be agreed by managers
- Everyone entering the Forum will have their temperature screened and a process for what should happen if a high temperature will be agreed
- Shared seating areas and kitchens have been reconfigured
- Atrium and café to be open for takeaway only
- Visitor access to the Forum to be by appointment only – discussions are ongoing with the Library regarding their plans.
- Access to Forum to be via the pass door to the side of the main entrance and exit will be via the fire exit on the lower ground floor to ensure a one-way system can operate.
- One way system will be created around the Forum with appropriate markers
- Perspex screens (870 mm from desk surface) to be fitted to all desks and points of contact with customers/public (similar to what has happened in most shops).
- The use of lifts in the Forum are restricted to people that must use them and only 1 person is allowed in them at any one time.
- The opening hours for the Forum will be 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday to begin with and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- Appropriate 2 meter markings are placed on the floor at prominent parts of the building to remind everyone of the 'social distance' measures.
- Introduction of additional hand disinfectant/sanitising units around the Forum.
- Automated doors have been fitted to reduce the number of door handles needing to be touched.
- Staff will be responsible for their own coffee/tea mug and should keep it in their locker when not in use to ensure that only they use the receptacle.

- A Forum user etiquette has been prepared to ensure all users are aware of the behaviors that must be observed in relation to appropriate hygiene and social distancing measures when in the building

### **Shopping areas and public open spaces**

- 3.29 Officers have developed an action plan for the main shopping areas across the borough including Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, Tring and Berkhamsted and neighbourhood centres. Proposed measures include:
- Safe distancing and hand washing signage
  - Utilising the large screen in the Marlowes for visual messaging
  - Continued closure of play areas
  - Enhanced cleaning regimes
  - Liaising with the Hemel Hempstead BID to ensure shops are managing queuing appropriately and are opening/operating safely
  - Liaising with Hertfordshire County Council to consider traffic intervention measures
- 3.30 Safe distancing and hygiene signs have been placed at the entrance to parks and open spaces and play areas will remain closed until further notice.

## **Appendix A: Suggested Objectives – Dacorum Recovery Group**

Act as a link with the county wide recovery structure.

Act as a link with the county wide SCG while it is running, feeding in recovery issues as required.

Provide strong, visible leadership.

Give a broad overview, ensuring that each agency's interests are represented.

Prepare community impact assessments that inform recovery priorities and activity work streams.

Set and monitor the borough wide recovery strategy, ensuring implementation.

Co-ordinate and monitor the work of the four recovery sub-groups, including their recommendations.

Agree the exit strategy criteria, and the timescales for achieving this.

Set and monitor the overall action plan arising from the recovery phase.

Communicate the work of the group and sub-groups to Members and other key stakeholders.

## **Appendix B: Suggested Objectives – Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group**

Support and facilitate the recovery and ongoing welfare of residents who have suffered hardship, loss and trauma as a result of the pandemic.

Review and adapt public open spaces ensuring that they are clean, safe and secure for public use.

Revitalise leisure, parks, sports promoting modal shifts towards walking and cycling to promote healthy communities.

Review and work with public facing business from a regulatory perspective to re-open safely and maximise capacity for public use.

Collaborating with county and health authorities to support track and tracing of Covid-19 and similar initiatives.

Review and put in place mechanisms to identify those with ongoing vulnerabilities and a strategy for addressing these needs working with contracted and non-contracted service providers as appropriate.

Review and plan to approach some of the issues that have arisen during the Covid19 lockdown such as increased Domestic Abuse, isolation and mental health difficulties and financial difficulties.

Feed in the work of the Recovery Group and ensure that this is properly communicated.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

Monitor the data relating to those with ongoing support needs and work with other agencies to develop support interventions.

Identify funding opportunities to assist in the recovery process.

Deliver and support appropriate memorial and thank you events and initiatives. Provide community reassurance through effective community leadership.

### **Appendix C: Suggested Objectives – Growth and Economy Sub-Group**

Work with partners to support the regeneration of businesses and the local economy through a jointly devised recovery strategy.

Provide support to local businesses in conjunction with partners (e.g. BID, Chambers of Commerce).

Reviewing existing planning and licensing powers to support business in the recovery process.

Collectively pursue relevant opportunities for funding.

Continue the work of the Growth and Infrastructure Board which has responsibilities for:

- Directing and overseeing the development of the Local Plan process
- Specifically focusing on the process and delivery of the major housing growth required both spatially and tactically
- Ensuring that the infrastructure that must accompany growth - transport, utilities, health, schools, open space, community needs and employment - are considered and delivered
- Development and delivery of an updated economic development strategy and action plan
- Monitoring housing and employment delivery and required actions
- Advising the use of resources available for infrastructure including CIL
- Reviewing the effectiveness of partnership arrangements
- Specifically leading on the development of the Enterprise Zone and relationship with the LEP
- Considering the potential of actual and possible very major development proposals
- Initial consideration and planning for the Council's own services to ensure future service needs can be met.

Planning and delivering direct market interventions such as new build Council housing to further kick-start the economy and support local business.

Review strategies for our town centres, including business development, attracting footfall and approach to key sites.



Review tourism strategies to attract visitors and assist and grow the hospitality sector  
Work with the LEP Economic Resilience Cell

Act as a conduit to central government where there are unmet support needs for businesses.

Actions to seek and encourage inward investment in the Borough

Maintain ongoing dialogue with local employers.

Support initiatives intended to support the recovery of local businesses.

Feed in the work of the Recovery Group and ensure that this is properly communicated.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

#### **Appendix D: Suggested Objectives - Organisational Recovery Sub-Group**

Restore service delivery to agreed business in a planned way.

Identify opportunities and inform future changes, such as modernisation and transformation, linking to the existing New Normal programme.

Ensure all Council offices are compliant with latest guidance and best practice and safe for staff and the public to return.

Ensure the consistent application of appropriate policies during the recovery phase.

Ensure the management of backlogs, identifying any extra resources required to restore normal services.

Identify employee support needs and vulnerabilities.

Ensure that employees are supported and that efforts are acknowledged. Ensure effective communications with council employees.

Capture learning through a process of debriefing, both single and multi-agency.

Ensure that there are appropriate memorial events for colleagues/Members who may have passed away.

Contribute towards wider consultations on legislative change etc

#### **Appendix E: Suggested Objectives – Finance and Corporate Assets Sub-Group**

Review, monitor, project and report the financial impact of the pandemic on Council Finance.

Support and facilitate the recovery of tenants of council commercial properties who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic.

Continue the work of the Property Management Board assessing development opportunities, and monitoring progress of agreed development projects to ensure the most efficient use of Council land assets and to help drive economic recovery.

Oversee and monitor the delivery of grants to business and report on outcomes.

Identify and monitor funding opportunities.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

# Agenda Item 9

Clerk: Trudi Angel (x2224)

## Finance and Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme 2020/21

*Scrutiny making a positive difference: Member led and independent, Overview & Scrutiny Committee promote service improvements, influence policy development & hold Executive to account for the benefit of the Community of Dacorum.*

Meeting Date	Report Deadline	Items	Contact Details	Background information
8 Sept 2020	28 August 2020	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		<b>Budget Monitoring Report</b>	Assistant Director, Finance & Resources <a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Finance &amp; Resources Q1 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Finance & Resources <a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Corporate &amp; Contracted Services Q1 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Corporate & Contracted Services <a href="mailto:Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk">Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Performance, People &amp; Innovation Q1 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Performance, People & Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>New Normal</b>	Assistant Director, Performance, People & Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
13 October 2020	2 October 2020	Action Points (from previous meeting)		

<b>3 November 2020</b>	<b>23 October 2020</b>	<b>Action Points (from previous meeting)</b>		
		<b>Budget Monitoring Report</b>	Assistant Director, Finance & Resources <a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Finance &amp; Resources Q2 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Finance & Resources <a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Corporate &amp; Contracted Services Q2 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Corporate & Contracted Services <a href="mailto:Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk">Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Performance, People &amp; Innovation Q2 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Performance, People & Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
<b>Joint Budget  1 December 2020</b>		<b>***Joint Budget***  *****  <i>Ideally no further items to be added</i></b>	Corporate Director, Finance & Operations  <a href="mailto:James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk">James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
<b>6 January 2021</b>	<b>29 December 2020</b>	<b>Action Points (from previous meeting)</b>		
<b>Joint Budget  2 February 2021</b>		<b>***Joint Budget***  *****  <i>Ideally no further items to be added</i></b>	Corporate Director, Finance & Operations  <a href="mailto:James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk">James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	

9 March 2021	26 February 2021	Action Points (from previous meeting)		
		<b>Budget Monitoring Report</b>	Assistant Director, Finance & Resources <a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Finance &amp; Resources Q3 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Finance & Resources <a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Corporate &amp; Contracted Services Q3 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Corporate & Contracted Services <a href="mailto:Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk">Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Performance, People &amp; Innovation Q3 Performance Report</b>	Assistant Director, Performance, People & Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>

**Items to be scheduled:**

- **Berkhamsted Sports Centre (M Brookes)**
- **Medium Term Financial Strategy (J Deane/N Howcutt)**