



# 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 13 OCTOBER 2020 AT 6.30 PM**

### **MICROSOFT TEAMS\***

\*This meeting will be held remotely via the Microsoft Teams application. Should any members of the public wish to join this meeting, please contact [member.support@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:member.support@dacorum.gov.uk) by 5pm on Monday 12 October.

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

Councillor Suqlain Mahmood (Chairman)  
Councillor Sinha  
Councillor Townsend (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Claughton  
Councillor Symington  
Councillor Allen

For further information, please contact Corporate and Democratic Support.

### **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 (Pages 10 - 11)**

#### **7. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

Report to follow

#### **8. COVID-19 UPDATE (Pages 12 - 24)**

#### **9. NEW NORMAL PROGRAMME UPDATE (Pages 25 - 30)**

#### **10. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 31 - 32)**

## MINUTES

### FINANCE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 SEPTEMBER 2020

**Present:**

Cllr Adeleke	Cllr Sobaan Mahmood
Cllr Barrett	Cllr Sinha
Cllr Chapman	Cllr Symington
Cllr Cloughton	Cllr Tindall
Cllr Suqlain Mahmood (Chairman)	

**Also Present:**

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

Councillor Elliot – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

**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
C Baker	Group Manager – Revenues, Benefits and Fraud
F Hussain	Group Manager – Legal and Corporate Services
F Jump	Group Manager- Financial Services
B Trueman	Group Manager – Technology and Digital Transformation
T Angel	Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting started at 6.32 pm.

#### **OS/001/20 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 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**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Guest.

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

The Chairman declared an interest as he is a Director of a company based in Dacorum which had received a grant from the council.

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

Councillor Cloughton said he had received an email from B Hosier but was still waiting for the detailed calculations of the pay-back period for the Berkhamsted multi-storey car park and asked if that could be carried over. M Brookes said he would review the information that B Hosier had previously sent to Councillor Cloughton and would provide further details if possible.

Councillor Symington said some of her unanswered queries from the previous meeting hadn't been picked up as action points. She felt frustrated and questioned the process of how we deal with action points, especially when a member is dissatisfied with the response received from an officer.

Following a discussion about how to resolve the issue, the Chairman suggested the following:

If the minutes are published before the next meeting and a member feels there is anything inaccurate or incomplete, they should raise it before the next meeting.

Any unresolved issues can be followed up with the responsible officer separately.

Any points that need to be followed up will continue to be marked as action points in the minutes. The Chairman will highlight these during the meeting to ensure clarity.

The action points raised by Councillors Cloughton and Symington will be carried over to the next meeting.

### **OS/007/20 QUARTER 1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

N Howcutt highlighted that due to timing issues the report was slightly out of date, however most of the numbers and significant issues still remain. He advised that the general fund had a pressure of £5.8M; the caveat of that was at the time of producing the report we were unaware of how much we may receive from the Governments lost income reimbursement scheme. He suggested it could be approximately £1.2M from the guidance released last week but we wouldn't know the exact figure until later on this year. The HRA has a projected surplus of £900k, the underspends and overspends are also linked to coronavirus. In regards to Capital, there has been increased expenditure of £0.5M around waste services vehicles to support social distancing and an enhanced wheelie bin roll out.

He explained that a large section of our overspend is linked to loss of income; investment property income is the largest at £2.7M followed by car parking income at £1M and garages income also at £1M. These figures will change throughout the year but there is still lots of uncertainty from now until year-end. He summarised that although the projections seem quite stark, they are directly related to coronavirus and will be monitored on a monthly basis.

The Chairman asked if the projections were a worst case scenario approach. N Howcutt replied the projections were prudent but realistic due to the uncertainty. He said only time would tell.

Councillor Tindall referred to capital slippage at points 1.3 and 1.4. He asked if we were monitoring that and being careful not to make any firm promises. N Howcutt

advised that capital was monitored on a monthly basis to keep as up to date as possible and we were also working very hard with our partners to ensure they have the capacity to deliver. He explained that all work that was planned for this year wasn't forgotten and will need to be rescheduled as soon as possible. He said we were trying to deliver what we can alongside government guidelines and will continue to work effectively and maintain the capital programme as much as we can.

Councillor Tindall referred to paragraphs 5.2 and 8.2 concerning the waste services fleet and sought clarification on the reason for the overspend. N Howcutt explained that the procurement of the new fleet took longer than expected so we had to hire more vehicles and also put more maintenance in to the existing vehicles. He advised that approximately £40k was for additional vehicles to allow us to support social distancing to keep our workforce safe.

Councillor Symington sought clarification on the makeup of investment property income. N Howcutt advised that tables one and two were our entire commercial assets portfolio from local neighbourhood shops to commercial assets such as The Forum and Marlowes. The key will be quarters three and four when all government grants would have been paid to businesses, the eat out to help out scheme ends and with the furlough scheme unrolling. He said they didn't know what to expect over the next few months but they were projecting a 50% collection for the second half of the year. He added that they had distributed a business survey and 94% of our commercial asset portfolio said they were severely or significantly impacted by coronavirus which was concerning.

Councillor Symington asked if there was a policy that surrounded helping with commercial rents or if it was dealt with on a case by case basis. N Howcutt advised that the commercial assets team would carry out rent reviews and deal with payment plans. If someone exceeded that or was looking for a rent reduction or rent holiday it would be escalated to N Howcutt or J Deane to review. Anything in excess of £10k would be escalated and reviewed with the Portfolio Holder or higher depending on the organisation. He said we hadn't offered anything outside of business as usual at present.

Councillor Symington asked how much we would have to eat into reserves by the end of the year if the projected figures were the reality. N Howcutt replied that Dacorum were very strong and allowed reserves to be set aside for these kind of circumstances. Last year we put another £2.7M in to reserves, most of which was ring-fenced and allocated for projects but we do have a strong balance sheet that we can rely on in-year. He added the reserves couldn't be relied on year on year as they would quickly diminish but we were financially able to deal with this crisis.

The Chairman asked if the car parking figures were based on the first six months of the year. N Howcutt advised we lost 85% of car parking income in quarter one due to lockdown. We projected a 50% reduction in income for the remainder of the year but it is difficult to predict whether the figure will be higher or lower especially if another lockdown is enforced.

The Chairman noted an increase in salaries of £355k and queried what this was for. N Howcutt advised there was an additional pressure on neighbourhood delivery where we had been helping the county council with food deliveries and assessing those in need in the community. We have also projected additional staffing needs to support the coronavirus response in revenues and benefits and environmental protection.

Councillor Tindall queried the overage payment for paradise fields. N Howcutt advised we purchased land at paradise fields from Homes England on the basis to provide a certain number of properties and that was what the land was valued on. We have now produced a definitive end plan and that has more homes than expected so it was positive news.

Councillor Adeleke asked what our financial impact would be long term if we were to have a second wave of coronavirus and another lockdown. N Howcutt advised we have put in place projections that would allow us to continue to deliver as we are now. If there was a long term lockdown it would have further impacts on income streams, car parking, commercial property income, etc. but we have gone for a prudent, middle ground approach as everything is so uncertain.

Councillor Symington referred to paragraph 4.2 regarding payments to Everyone Active. She said she had previously asked about relief of the management fee at the July meeting but queried if they had received additional payments. N Howcutt clarified that the £205k was the initial payment members were made aware of at the previous meeting for the top-up of furlough pay, and the additional payment of £320k covered July to September and was for reopening the centres as quickly as possible. He referred to the Dacorum Coronavirus Impact Act which states we have to support our contracted providers.

N Howcutt asked if M Brookes had anything to add about Everyone Active. M Brookes advised we didn't have the figures yet as Everyone Active had only been open again for just over a month so there wasn't much he could update on at present.

Councillor Symington asked which of the Everyone Active figures would have been reported at the July meeting. N Howcutt replied the relief of the management fee and the top-up of furlough pay. Councillor Symington said that wasn't what was said in the minutes. N Howcutt said he would have to go back and check the papers but the financials had been published and made widely available. **Action: N Howcutt**

The Chairman sought clarification on paragraph 5.1 regarding 20 waste services employees self-isolating for 12 weeks. N Howcutt advised that was the volume of staff that met the shielding government guidance for the first three months.

The Chairman asked if the £2.2M repairs and maintenance budget would be savings or if it would be carried over to complete any outstanding works. N Howcutt advised it would be in-year savings but the work would still need to be completed next year. The Chairman felt it wouldn't be possible to double up the works and spend this year and next year's budget and asked if some of that money could be used as savings. N Howcutt advised they had started looking at the budget setting for 2021/22 so they would be discussing that in detail and putting together a programme for what is deliverable. He said they would need to put that money aside until then. The Chairman suggested it was just something to keep in mind during the budget setting process.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

N Howcutt drew attention to the 6 red KPI's. He advised that they all linked to coronavirus and ran through each KPI to give some background. He welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Symington referred to the KPI for time taken for debtors to pay. She queried at what point it would become a bad debt. N Howcutt advised it would usually be 30 days of non-payment but we have been flexible due to coronavirus and the fact that we weren't sending out reminders or enforcing payment. He added that the government had issued guidance on when you could and couldn't chase debt and how you should do it.

The Chairman said he had found the use of red font on the papers really useful to highlight key points in the report.

Councillor Tindall said he trusted that we were taking a sympathetic and sensitive approach to our neighbourhood shops so they don't have to close down. N Howcutt felt that we were a caring landlord and always try to communicate with our tenants and understand their concerns. He advised that ward members would always be made aware if we had a significant issue in the neighbourhood areas.

Councillor Adeleke referred to the government guidance on debt recovery. He asked if there was a time limit for this or if it was left open. N Howcutt explained we were now enforcing and collecting debt in line with government guidelines but we wouldn't be able to instruct enforcement agents if we needed to. In terms of guidance, most has come to an end in recent weeks but there was nothing to stop government from bringing additional policies or guidance that we would have to adhere to.

The Chairman asked if there were any policies to stop tenants sub-letting commercial properties. N Howcutt advised there was a strict policy in place that doesn't allow any of our commercial properties to be sub-let. He said our process was open and transparent and all our vacant properties go to the open market so everyone has a chance to bid. The Chairman had concerns about sub-letting in the borough and asked if the estates team could carry out a review on landlords with multiple properties. N Howcutt advised we regularly check our properties and enforcement has taken place within the last 12 months for tenants that have tried to sub-let our properties and adjoining maisonettes. The Chairman asked that it continued to be monitored.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/009/20 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT – CORPORATE AND CONTRACTED SERVICES**

M Brookes introduced the report and highlighted that quarter one had been dominated by coronavirus. He highlighted the key points within the report which included the redesign of The Forum to make it safe for staff to return to work, the work the procurement team had carried out with our partners and to assist with the reopening of our leisure centres, the work corporate and democratic support had carried out to ensure committee meetings continued virtually and finally the legal and licensing teams have continued to support clients and work with licensed premises on safe reopening's.

Councillor Tindall said he visited The Forum on a regular basis and felt extremely comfortable with the changes. He congratulated the officers on their hard work redesigning the building to keep everyone safe. He then asked if we had projected how many staff we would be able to allow in at any one time whilst the pandemic continued. B Hosier advised there were 240 seats within the five coloured zones including the Herts CCG and 160 of those seats would be for council staff only. He said he counted the seats every day and today for example there were 100 staff members in the building so we still had plenty of capacity.

Councillor Tindall asked if there were any services lacking due to not being able to work in the office. B Hosier felt lockdown had proved that most roles could be carried out from home. He asked L Roberts if she had anything to add. L Roberts advised they were carrying out some work for learning from lockdown. She had one-to-ones with group managers and it became clear that all services were able to continue with staff working from home. She said they had tried to be flexible so that those individuals that struggled to work from home could return to The Forum and those that preferred to work from home could continue to do so.

Councillor Tindall asked for reassurance that we were monitoring the mental health of our staff during this difficult time. L Roberts advised we had launched a health and wellness briefing note for all staff informing them where to get internal and external support and one-to-ones between staff and their managers was still continuing virtually. She added that we had also had a good response from the staff survey.

The Chairman referred to page 43 regarding case FFEI Ltd vs DBC and asked if the case was dropped. M Brookes advised we didn't believe there was merit in their claim but a consent order was agreed to save costs to all parties on the basis that the council was not at fault.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/010/20 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT – PERFORMANCE,  
PEOPLE AND INNOVATION**

L Roberts introduced the report and drew attention to the performance data and KPI's. She summarised the key areas within the report and welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Symington said Councillor Tindall had asked the question she was going to ask about the mental health of staff earlier on in the meeting but she wanted to echo his points and reiterate the importance of the topic. She then referred to the black lives matter reports in the media and asked if the council had any policies to deal with these issues in the community. L Roberts advised that we had an equality and diversity policy to address any concerns and that has been discussed with the leadership team. We also monitor our social media channels to make sure everything that is commented on or about is appropriate. She said she hadn't been made aware of any specific issues or impact on the council.

Councillor Adeleke asked how staff were assisted on the leadership programme and if it was limited to management only. He also asked if staff could be funded to take on external training courses. L Roberts explained we had a series of online courses that were open to anyone in the organisation to improve individual skills and we also supported and funded external courses. She advised that the new normal leadership



programme would be discussed with the new chief executive once she has commenced her role.

Councillor Adeleke queried the impact coronavirus had on our sickness levels. L Roberts said there was a big impact at the beginning of lockdown due to shielding guidelines but in terms of sickness levels she would need to come back to members with the figures. **Action: L Roberts**

The Chairman asked if there were any plans to improve our website. L Roberts advised they had done some signposting which was co-ordinated with HCC. She asked B Trueman if there was anything he wanted to add. B Trueman suggested it was possibly time for a review of the website but he welcomed any feedback in the meantime on any particular issues. He advised the website was split between his team and the communications team but he was happy to be the point of contact. He added that they were constantly adding functionalities and ensuring transactional contact can be made through the council.

The Chairman asked if we were working more efficiently now or previously. L Roberts felt that was a difficult question to answer and to measure. She said overall the performance was good but different, and we have been able to provide flexibility to staff and staff were happy and productive.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/011/20 ALLOTMENTS**

N Howcutt introduced the item and advised that this report was due at the March meeting but was cancelled due to coronavirus. He summarised the key points within the report and welcomed questions.

Councillor Tindall referred to the project at Windmill Road and noted that the report said there was little demand for these plots which was incorrect. He advised that Councillor England had a list of local residents that were waiting for these plots. N Howcutt explained that it was a timing issue and at the point of the report being published we had no demand for these plots but he had since spoken with Councillor England about the demand from local residents. Councillor Tindall asked if the minutes could include the up to date figures which N Howcutt agreed he would provide. **Action: N Howcutt**

Outcome:

The report was noted.

**OS/012/20 WORK PROGRAMME**

There were no changes to the work programme.

The meeting ended at 8.34 pm.

**Finance and Resources OSC Action Points**

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Action point</b>	<b>Responsible officer</b>	<b>Date action completed</b>	<b>Response</b>
7 July & 8 September	Councillor Claughton asked for the detailed calculations of the pay-back period for the Berkhamsted multi-storey car park.	B Hosier/M Brookes	Ongoing	
7 July & 8 September	Councillor Symington advised that her queries relating to the consultation for the Water Lane car park were still ongoing.	B Hosier	Ongoing	
8 September	Councillor Symington asked which of the Everyone Active figures would have been reported at the July meeting. N Howcutt replied the relief of the management fee and the top-up of furlough pay. Councillor Symington said that wasn't what was said in the minutes. N Howcutt said he would have to go back and check the papers but the financials had been published and made widely available.	N Howcutt	14 September	Mark Brookes has responded to members in detail on EA payments made. The information was confidential and commercially sensitive so cannot be disclosed to any third parties or discussed in any public forum.
8 September	Councillor Tindall asked if the minutes could include the up to date allotment waiting list figures which N Howcutt agreed he would provide.	N Howcutt		As of the 1 <sup>st</sup> October the waiting list for allotments is 603.

8 September	Councillor Adeleke queried the impact coronavirus had on our sickness levels. L Roberts said there was a big impact at the beginning of lockdown due to shielding guidelines but in terms of sickness levels she would need to come back to members with the figures.	L Roberts	1 October 2020	There has been two members of staff that have had Coronavirus. This is was at the beginning of the pandemic.
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# Agenda Item 8



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> October 2020</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<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>	1. To provide the Committee with an update on the projected financial impact of Covid-19.  2. To highlight the work and support the Council has been carrying out across service areas in relation to Covid-19.
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive and note:  (a) The projected financial impact of Covid-19 for 2020/21 as set out in section 1.  (b) The service updates provided in section 2.
<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>  Financial Implications are covered in section 1.
<b>'Value for money'</b>	<u>Value for money</u>

implications	<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.
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.
Monitoring Officer/ S.151 Officer Comments	<p><u>Monitoring Officer comments</u></p> <p>The Monitoring Officer continues to monitor the key issues raised by legislative changes and relevant government guidance and ensure that effective policies and procedures are in place to assist services to continue to deliver during the pandemic and subsequent recovery phase.</p> <p><u>S151 Officer comments</u></p> <p>The Financial Implications section of the report have been written by the S151 officer and will continue to be monitored as actual costs become clearer. Members will be regularly updated on the financial implications of Covid-19 as they develop.</p>
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>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 1.1 This section provides an update on the Covid-related financial pressures detailed in the June Cabinet report which were reported to the Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> July. It does not include the business-as-usual pressures that emerge over the course of the year, which will continue to be reported to Members through the scheduled Budget Monitoring reports.
- 1.2 The forecasts in this report have been updated to reflect five months' worth of current year data, as well as the most recent announcements from Government on the financial support that will be provided to councils over the course of the year.
- 1.3 As at the end of August, DBC is forecast to face a net General Fund pressure in the current financial year of around £2.5m (down from the £5m pressure forecast in May). This is a net position, incorporating the following:
- Additional expenditure £1.8m – offset by £1.8m of Government grants, as detailed in the previous report (see section 1.10)
  - Lost income £4.1m – offset by £1.6m from the Government income guarantee scheme, detailed later in this report (see section 1.7)
- 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 kept under review as the year progresses and more clarity emerges on both the scale of the final pressure and the options available to mitigate it.
- 1.5 Falling collection rates for both Council Tax and Business Rates could create funding issues in future years. However, the technicalities of these funding streams means that the current year's budget will not be affected.
- 1.6 The HRA is currently forecasting a full-year surplus of c£900k. This is a net position, with an expected increase in the bad debt provision to be partially offset by reduced expenditure of £2.4m.

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

- 1.7 The most significant financial threat continues to be lost income due to falling demand for Council services. Despite now having the benefit of 5 months of in-year data, forecasting the year-end position for these income streams remains far more challenging than under normal circumstances. The forecast year-end position could alter dramatically over the second half of the year depending on factors that cannot be estimated within any certainty and that are beyond the Council's control, e.g. the potential for future national or local restrictions/lockdown period and the unknown severity of any recession.
- 1.8 Since the June Cabinet report, Government has released detail of its Sales, Fees & Charges (SFC) scheme, which underwrites a portion of income losses for certain council income streams. Councils must meet the first 5% of all income losses, but Government will underwrite 75% of the remaining losses. Significantly for DBC, this scheme does not apply to rental income. This means that the Council's two highest income streams, Commercial Property and Garages, are not eligible for support.
- 1.9 The table below provides an update on the Council's key income streams highlighted in the June report.

Income stream	Budget	May Forecast	August Forecast	Commentary
Investment Property	£5.4m	£2.7m	£4m	There is a clear trend emerging on rental collection from commercial properties with year-on-year collection rate down 5% at the end of June, falling to 14% by the end of August. There is a significant risk that collection issues will continue to escalate throughout the year as Government grants received by traders early in the pandemic are exhausted; the furlough scheme comes to an end; and, the impact of the expected recession begins to bite. This forecast is based on 50% collection rate for the remainder of the year.
Garages Income	£3.6m	£2.7m	£3m	Garage income has held up well against budget for the first 5 months of the year, and occupancy levels have not decreased. Whilst still exposed to the threat of recession, due to the relatively strong performance thus far the forecast income loss for the remainder of the year has been reduced to 20% from an initial estimate of 25% loss.
Car Parking	£2.8m	£1.8m	£2.5m	As expected, the nationwide lockdown had a dramatic impact on parking revenue, with income at 15% against budget as at the end of May. Since then there has been a positive trend with income picking up throughout June (35%) and July (63%). The y-t-d position of £600k under budget and an assumption of 80% of budget for the remainder of the year is consistent with the original estimate of £1m under budget for the full year. This is offset by c£700k under the government scheme.
Planning Fees	£1.2m	£0.9m	£1.1m	The first 4 months of the year have been on budget. The income remains exposed to fluctuations in the property market and this forecast assumes a 25% under budget for the remainder of the year.
Commercial Waste	£1m	£0.75m	£0.9m	The timing of bills means that a clear y-t-d trend has not yet emerged. The original assumption of 25% shortfall remains in place, partially offset by the government scheme.
Temporary Accommodation	£950k	£950k	£950k	Demand has increased dramatically, but unlikely to see significant increase in income as the Council's own TA capacity becomes fully utilised.
Leisure	£500k	£200k	£360k	The leisure sector has been hit dramatically by lockdown; revenues continue to be impacted as social distancing limits visitor capacity; and, membership numbers will take many months to recover to pre-Covid levels. Unlikely that any management fee will be received this year, but £360k govt. income offset.
Civic/Sports/APG hire	£300k	£150k	£260k	Income continues to be hit by social distancing. The original forecast of 50% reduction against budget is updated only by the partial offset under the Government scheme.
Search Fees	£230k	£120k	£190k	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>£10.3m</b>	<b>£13.3m</b>	

## Pressure on General Fund expenditure

1.10 The areas forecasting significant expenditure pressure remain the same as those reported in June, and, at present, the total remains within the £1.8m of Government grant funding received. The updated figures are as below:

Expenditure Type	Pressure	Commentary
Waste Services	£750k	The initial staffing and vehicle cost pressures in the first months of the pandemic are now starting to ease, and waste tonnages are returning to pre-Covid levels. However, the Council has collected increased recycling tonnages at exactly the time that the global market for recyclates has fallen further, which has led to increased costs of disposal. This trend is likely to continue throughout the year.  There remains a risk of further additional costs depending on future lockdowns that may be implemented either locally or nationally.
Supplier Support Packages	£525k	This comprises payments to key suppliers that were subject to approval under Part 2 legislation. Members can find more detail under PH Decision Sheets dated 31 March and 20 July 2020.
Office-based staff	£250k	Estimated figure across the council to cover future increased demand for services.
Facilitate compliant ways of working	£275k	This includes modifications to Council buildings e.g. screen dividers for desks; automatic door installations; investment in mobile IT, etc.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1.8m</b>	

## Pressure on Council Tax collection

1.11 At the end of August year-on-year collection rates were down 1.7%, with 46.3% of the annual total having been collected, compared to 48% at the same stage last year. This is marginally down on the 1.4% shortfall reported at the end of May, but the position has not deteriorated in the three months since the end of June. It is not unexpected for collection to be down on last year given the number of taxpayers rearranging their payments for later in the year. The final year-end position will depend on the extent to which reprofiled payments catch up in February and March.

1.12 The mechanics of the Council Tax Collection Fund mean that a short-fall in the current year collection rate will not result in a budgetary pressure for the Council until next financial year. The twin risks posed to future years' funding by falling collection rates and reduced tax base growth will be addressed within the MTFs assumptions which will be reported to Cabinet in October

1.13 The potential cashflow risk arising from poor collection rates was highlighted in the June report, i.e. the statutory requirement to continue paying HCC the budgeted monthly precept even if the actual amount of cash collected by DBC was way below the budgeted amount. Based on current collection rates and the Council's cash position, this risk is currently considered low.



## Pressure on Business Rates collection

- 1.14 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% 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. Assumptions on future years' impacts will be included within the MTFS reported in October.

## Summary of General Fund budgetary position and potential mitigations

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

Increased expenditure	£ 1.8m
Less Government Grant	(£ 1.8m)
Lost income	£ 4.1m
Less Government income offset	(£1.6m)
<b>Net financial cost</b>	<b>£ 2.5m</b>

- 1.16 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 could plug the budgetary gap. Options for managing the longer-term financial risks of Covid will be reported within the MTFS in October.

## Housing Revenue Account

- 1.17 As at the end of August, the HRA is forecasting a full-year surplus of c£900k a result of Covid. The principle areas of variance are an increase of the bad debt provision of c£1.1m, offset by reduced expenditure of £2.2m on the repairs budget due to reduced access to tenants' homes. The threat to the HRA is significantly lower than the General Fund, as delays to rental income are likely to be short term whilst tenants transfer to Universal Credit.

## **2 RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY SUPPORT**

- 2.1 Members will note that this is the third update report on the Council's response to Covid-19 and this part of the report will highlight some of key work and support that the Council has provided across its various services to ensure continuity of service and recovery resilience. This report covers the period July to September 2020.

## Managing the pandemic

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

- 2.2 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). The Covid 19 Health Protection Board also meets weekly to work on implementation

of the Covid 19 Outbreak Plan, this has representation from the SCG, RCG, County, Public Health England, Police, CCG and Health Service.

- 2.3 The Dacorum recovery continues to be managed by the Incident Management Team (IMT) which has been managing the pandemic to date and meets at least twice weekly to review all key issues.
- 2.4 There is continued and effective liaison between work streams at county and borough levels and daily updates are received from the Health Protection Board including infection rates for the county and borough, which enables targeted and coordinated work to be undertaken to manage any local outbreaks.
- 2.5 The Environmental and Community Protection team continues to be engaged in local Track and trace, and dealing with complaints surrounding businesses Covid Secure Status. To illustrate the intensity of the work, from the 27<sup>th</sup> August to the 3<sup>rd</sup> September the team have contact traced 56 positive cases of Covid 19, contacted significant contacts and visited workplaces associated with these cases in a bid to halt the spread of the disease in the Dacorum Area. The cases initially were in the Tring and Berkhamsted area with younger adults, although there have also now been further cases arise in the Hemel Hempstead area.

### **Support to Communities**

- 2.6 Officers continue to liaise 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. A fortnightly meeting has been arranged to discuss key issues, which has highlighted the financial challenges as well as insights into community issues arising from Covid-19.
- 2.7 In addition, officers have supported Herts help in delivering food parcels to vulnerable/shielded residents and a support letter was sent to Dacorum residents from Herts CC and Dacorum detailing various different pathways for a vast range of issues.
- 2.8 Dacorum Health and Wellbeing board has changed its agenda to focus on Covid-19 recovery with our key partners – Police, Community and Voluntary Sector, etc.

### **Learning from Lockdown**

- 2.9 The New Normal Programme team met with every Group Manager from across the Council to understand what changes implemented as a result of Covid-19 had worked, what could be improved and what changes should be continued once lockdown is eased completely.
- 2.10 Overall, although the lockdown happened very quickly the Council was able to modify its working practices quickly to ensure that those services that were not stopped due to the pandemic were able to continue and provide support to the community. This was largely as a result of earlier investment in remote and agile working practices and technology. In addition, a number of other activities were undertaken that are not part of normal responsibilities.
- 2.11 Based on the feedback received and taking into account the results of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire, the following observations have been made:

- (a) The Council is able to adapt ways of working and continue to deliver quality services during a period of significant change and concern.
- (b) MS Teams has been invaluable and officers have been able to continue to deliver their services whilst working from home. All Group Managers felt that it should continue to be used post the pandemic and have seen how it helps collaborative working.
- (c) MS Teams has assisted regular teams meetings and project work with external parties as it ensures more people can attend, makes coordination of diaries easier, and saves on travel time.
- (d) Feedback has been that for operational meetings, the flow of the meeting is improved in MS Teams as there is an etiquette of allowing people to speak one at a time and raising hands to ask questions. The meetings can be focussed and hence cover more ground in the same amount of time as a normal meeting. Although there are also some limitations where a greater degree of interaction is required or where the meetings involve larger number of participants.
- (e) Enabling managers to support flexible/agile working arrangements has been much appreciated by officers through the pandemic and enabled them to maintain an improved work/life balance. Managers feel that this has not impacted their team's productivity overall and so should be considered to continue as this will support individual officers in achieving their maximum potential. It will be necessary to develop and review key performance indicators to be able to assess any impact on service delivery in the medium to longer term.
- (f) Flexible working arrangements may also assist recruitment as candidates may not be so focused on the location they live in terms of proximity to Hemel Hempstead. However, it is stressed that all working arrangements need to take into account the requirement to provide the necessary level of presence in the Forum to ensure continuity of service delivery and the ongoing development of services whilst ensuring that complex and vulnerable customers are able to access services appropriately. This will vary between departments and needs to be managed by the relevant Group Manager.
- (g) The need to change business processes to enable home working has enabled both officers and managers to reflect and see what further improvements can be made. Many managers expressed a desire to automate and digitise further to remove non-value adding tasks.

2.12 The outcomes of the feedback will be considered by the New Normal Project Board and Corporate Management Team to agree which practices and procedures the Council should continue and to evaluate how services can be developed, balanced with the needs of the service and the Council's priorities.

## **Leisure**

2.13 Officers have been working with the operator of Hemel and Berkhamsted Sports Centre, Everyone Active to agree measures for reopening with appropriate health and safety measures in place. Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted Sports Centres as well as Jarmans Park Athletics Track both reopened to the public and clubs in late

July and feedback from service users has been positive.

- 2.14 The required health and safety measures and changes in customer behaviours have meant that the income generated by the centres is significantly less than pre-covid levels whilst operating costs remain broadly similar. A support package with Everyone Active was agreed for July, August and September to enable the centres to open, provide continuity of service and protect local jobs. The details of the support package are set out in the Part II Officer Decision dated 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Further support is likely to be required until the end of the financial year as a minimum and this is currently being reviewed once August and September's income figures are known.
- 2.15 Match funding has been confirmed from Sports England for consultancy support to assess the short to medium term impact of Covid-19 on all the Council's leisure facilities and this includes working with Dacorum Sports Trust to consider the impact on Little Hay Golf Club and the XC Centre.

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

- 2.16 During August 2020, eighty-four of the 780 businesses that took part in the original business intelligence telephone surveys between April and June were re-surveyed. Sixty-seven of the 251 businesses that previously reported being in crisis were re-surveyed. Of these, thirty (44.8%) felt they were still in crisis, thirty-six (53.7%) now described themselves as ticking over and one business had been sold to new owners (whom it was not possible to contact).
- 2.17 The most common reported concerns for these businesses were, as before, loss of turnover (almost 100% of the businesses), reduced productivity (86.3%) and cash flow (81.8%). 39.4% of these businesses were concerned about potential closure of the business and 37.9% were concerned about the possible need for redundancies.
- 2.18 Overall, 311+ redundancies have occurred from the total job count of 1328 for the businesses surveyed (around 23%). However, it should be noted that 250+ of these redundancies were from one employer . 146 self-employed staff had also been let go.
- 2.19 Fifty of the previous "crisis" businesses still had staff furloughed, accounting for 187 staff. A total of 200 staff had been un-furloughed, although 119 of these were on flexible or part-time furlough, to enable the business to cope with fluctuating and unpredictable demand.
- 2.20 Only 24 of the 67 business (36%) were continuing to work from home and only 11 (16%) were planning to make this part of their working conditions permanently.
- 2.21 37.3% of the previous "crisis" business were able to describe adaptations to the business. These adaptations varied according to the business, but included online or virtual services, increased marketing effort or seeking new types of customer.
- 2.22 Businesses were asked a new question this time, on how the pandemic had affected their long-term business plans. The majority felt that they were only able to focus on survival, reducing costs and trying to keep going/keep staff employed. Many reported a substantial impact on turnover, setting the business back many years in terms of its development and growth.
- 2.23 As previously reported by businesses, they found it difficult to know what support they would need ongoing, however those that answered most commonly stated that

some form of financial assistance was what was needed. This was in the form of future grants, business rates relief or reform or help with staff costs. A minority mentioned training or business advice/mentoring as helpful in the future.

- 2.24 In addition to those businesses surveyed that had been in crisis, sixteen businesses that had been ticking over and one that had been thriving were also re-surveyed. Of those ticking over, two were now able to describe themselves as thriving again. One was a discount tyre company that feels a recession will be good for them and the other provides surveying and project management services and has found business to have increased post lockdown. The business that was thriving previously provides Legionella consultancy services and continues to thrive. The previous survey can be accessed on the link below:



BusinessSurveyAug2  
020CMT.pptx

- 2.25 The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership is leading on the economic recovery for Hertfordshire and has published its Economic Recovery Plan, *Unlocking Hertfordshire*, in response to COVID-19. This plan builds on the emergency measures which were taken at both local and national levels.

Its purpose is to chart a clear route through the short-medium term economic effects of the pandemic and define actions in response. It aims to accelerate recovery over the next 6-18 months, but it will also position Hertfordshire for sustained and good economic growth in the years thereafter.

The plan is structured around main three delivery packages. These are focused on:

- **Enterprise and Innovation;**
- **Skills and Creativity; and**
- **International Trade and Investment**

To ensure that progress is made towards the longer-term aspirations set out in the draft Local Industrial Strategy (and previously the Strategic Economic Plan), two transformational programmes will be also advanced.

These are:

- **Equipping Hertfordshire's places for mid-21st century working and living**
- **Connecting Hertfordshire for mid-21st century working and living**

Across both transformational programmes, Hertfordshire LEP will work alongside other partners to ensure that progress is made. In particular, the intention is that many of these broader commitments should be advanced through the emerging Growth Deal which is being negotiated through the Hertfordshire Growth Board.

Hertfordshire LEP Board will oversee the delivery of the Economic Recovery Plan and it will monitor its progress closely. Given the uncertainty of the situation and the process of EU transition, this plan is, and will remain, a live one. The LEP intends to review it in the autumn and early in the new year.

## **New Build**

- 2.26 Work on the schemes on-site at the time of lockdown ceased for a relatively short period of around three weeks but re-started with a reduced capacity to ensure social distancing and safe working. Two schemes were completed Williams House and

Howe Grove House (Northend and Westerdale) providing twelve new homes and Martindale (65 homes) and Magenta Court (29 homes) are due for completion and letting in the next few weeks. Work has continued in getting new schemes out to tender and in for planning.

### **Property and Place**

- 2.27 Following re-mobilisation of Osborne, who during lockdown were carrying out emergency repairs only, has allowed ordinary repairs work to restart though understandably a backlog built up whilst these could not be done. Gas Servicing and testing did continue and compliance has remained over 99%.

### **Support to Individuals**

- 2.28 Risk assessments have been developed to enable the supported housing officers to recommence face to face, doorstep visits to all tenants in sheltered schemes and have met with over 1600 tenants and made referrals to support agencies such as AgeUK, adult care or citizens advice for 128 individuals, who had been negatively impacted throughout the lockdown. Sheltered schemes continue to have additional cleaning of all communal areas and regular telephone contact has been made with all residents who are anxious about face to face contact.
- 2.29 The income and tenancy sustainment teams have been providing advice and support to those households in financial difficulty or with complex needs through the impact of Covid-19 and the numbers requiring support continue to increase month on month.
- 2.30 The number of presentations to the Homelessness service reduced slightly in July, but increased in August, which is ordinarily a quiet month. The Council submitted a bid to Ministry Housing, Communities and Local Government for Next Steps Accommodation Funding, to assist with move on accommodation and recovery plan. The bid is currently being assessed and if successful would provide funding for up to 38 additional units. Dacorum were initially allocated £29,000 of MHCLG funding specifically to assist with homelessness, however to date we have spent in excess of £76,000 on the immediate and ongoing response.
- 2.31 At the time of writing this report there are still 160 households in Temporary accommodation and all available units are being occupied with a further pipeline of 11 referrals to be assessed. Over 620 households have been provided assistance and support since the beginning of the Pandemic.
- 2.32 The Council have seen an increase in anti-social behaviour cases, and in quarter one the number of live cases per 1000 properties was 8.38, compared with 7.24 per 1000 properties before the lockdown.
- 2.33 Domestic Abuse cases have been prevalent since the start of lockdown and even with the easing of restrictions the team continue to support a number of individuals fleeing domestic abuse. There had been 123 cases in the first seven weeks, since the end of March.

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

- 2.34 Reviews have been carried out of all staff occupied buildings and changes made to ensure that staff can occupy buildings safely with appropriate distancing and hygiene measures and a phased return to the buildings has commenced. The main measures 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 – The library formally opened to the public in controlled numbers from the second week in September.
- 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 has been created around the Forum with appropriate markers
- Perspex screens (870 mm from desk surface) have been 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.
- 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

### **Town Centre, Shopping areas and public open spaces**

2.35 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 and this has now been implemented and the shopping centres have re-opened. Implemented 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 Business Improvement District to ensure shops are managing queuing appropriately and are opening/operating safely

2.36 Safe distancing and hygiene signs have been placed at the entrance to parks and open spaces and play areas which have also now been reopened.

### **3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

3.1 Members will note that this report comprehensively reports the actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the last quarter. The report also summarises the financial impact on the Council as currently forecast.

3.2 Officers will keep under review any impact on service delivery and associated financial implications arising from the pandemic, particularly leading into the period of preparation for any impact resulting from winter pressures. Officers will continue to provide appropriate briefings and reports to Portfolio Holders and elected members on a regular basis.





## Agenda item: 9

### Summary

Report for:	<b>Finance &amp; Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of meeting:	<b>13 October 2020</b>
Part:	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	<b>New Normal Programme Update</b>
Contact:	<p>Cllr Andrew Williams – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services</p> <p><b>Author/Responsible Officers:</b>            Sally Marshall – Chief Executive            Linda Roberts – Assistant Director (Performance, People &amp; Innovation)</p>
Purpose of report:	To update members on the continued progress of the New Normal Programme which is a council wide approach to continuous improvement and change.
Recommendations	The Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to review and note the progress made.
Corporate objectives:	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u>            The New Normal project has £93,495 that was drawn down from reserves in November 2019. Pilot projects were developed for both RPA and BPR and the results of the pilots are contained in this report</p>
'Value for money' implications	<p><u>'Value for money' implications</u>            The projects were funded from technology reserves. Further development of RPA projects will only be done through the production of successful business cases that will be reviewed by the Programme Board.</p> <p>The BPR work was impeded by lockdown however it was felt that where there is a requirement to provide a specific outcome, such as a specific requirement document for a new system to support a process, it would be better value for money to either use existing available business analysis</p>

	resource or if there is limited availability to use a business analyst contractor than the team approach used by Sopra Steria.
Risk implications	<p>Change occurs continuously by adopting a Council wide approach to change management it enhances the Council's ability to examine opportunities presented by change; to avoid duplication of effort and ensure the maximum services benefit from improvements.</p> <p>The main risk for this type of activity is that it is a programme of work that has to be managed. This has been mitigated by the development of a programme structure with clear sponsorship and direction, using existing approval mechanisms and will be widely communicated going forward.</p>
Community Impact Assessment	The content of this report does not require a Community Impact Assessment to be undertaken.
Health and safety Implications	No implications from this report
Consultees:	<p>James Deane (Corporate Director Finance and Operations)</p> <p>Mark Gaynor (Corporate Director Housing and Planning)</p> <p>Mark Brookes (Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services)</p> <p>Corporate Management Team</p>
Background papers:	<p>New Normal strategy approved February 2019</p> <p>New Normal programme update May 2020</p>
Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i>	<p>In February 2019 the Council approved the New Normal strategy. This strategy outlines the Council's approach to change management and recognises that the Council, its elected Members and Officers need to ensure a culture of continuous improvement is embedded within the organisation, given that society is continuously changing.</p> <p>The Council needs to be in a position to adapt its approach to service delivery to meet these needs. Whilst this is predominantly an internally focused strategy, its outcomes will affect the Council's relationships with its Residents, Communities and Partners.</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>BPR (Business Process Reengineering)</p> <p>RPA (Robotic Process Automation)</p>

## Background

1. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the progress of New Normal projects during March to May 2020. This was due to internal resources being focused on enabling services to be run whilst officers were working from home, as well as suppliers having staff furloughed.
2. This paper provides an update on the progress made since the projects resumed in May 2020, and look forward to other future projects.

## Progress Update

3. The areas of focus for the New Normal projects has been People and Technology.

## People Projects

4. A number of people related projects have been recently implemented all of which support the People Strategy and the people element of the New Normal Strategy.

### 4.1. Implementation of a new HR system (i-Trent)

The new HR system went live on Friday 26 June 2020. A number of virtual training sessions were delivered for both the Employee Self-Service and People Manager Self-Service areas of the system. So far, 119 managers have attended the people manager training and 64 people attended employee training. The overall feedback from officers has been very good as the system is very user friendly and the vast majority have not felt the need for training even though it was offered. Initially there were a number of queries on how the system dealt with annual leave but these were easily addressed.

The HR team is using the new system for reporting needs including using Business Objects (BO) for bespoke reports. The functionality for HR will increase as further modules go live.

### 4.2. Implementation of recruitment micro-site

A key outcome delivered during 2020 has been the implementation of the Council's new recruitment micro-site in January 2020. The recruitment micro-site was launched on the DBC internet site: - <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/recruitment>. This website has rich content with a modern focus aimed at attracting people to work for the Council and explaining the benefits as well as what they can expect from working with us. This includes promotional videos shot in The Forum and across the Borough featuring our staff from a range of services across the organisation including frontline staff from the Cupid Green Depot.

### 4.3. Dacorum Apprenticeship and Graduate scheme

Following members support and investment as part of the budget setting cycle, during April 2019 to March 2020 we launched the new Dacorum apprenticeship and Graduate scheme. Fifteen people were enrolled an apprenticeship; eleven are employees who are upskilling in areas such as Finance and Planning, and in addition, we employed four new

apprentices in Human Resources, Finance and the Customer Services Unit.

In addition, a new apprentice was enrolled into ICT in April 2020, on a one year apprenticeship, and there are a further five employees due to start their formal training in September in Finance, Planning and Housing.

We employed under the Corporate Graduate scheme one graduate (who started October 2019). His first placement was with Housing and he is now on his second placement in Planning.

In addition a Graduate Environmental Health Officer started in the summer 2020, a law Graduate started in September 2020, a Planning graduate started in the summer 2020 and Housing is looking to recruit a graduate Housing surveyor shortly.

4.4. Coaching and mentoring scheme

A coaching and mentoring scheme has been developed which will be provided with support from West Herts College and will be available to all employees.

4.5. Future People projects

The HR team is planning the future implementation of further modules of the new HR system which include performance management, sickness recording and recruitment.

The team will also to launch a coaching and mentoring scheme following discussion and approval with the Council's new incoming Chief Executive.

The new Chief Executive will also review and develop the requirements for a refreshed leadership programme to fit with her strategic leadership direction for the next stage in the organisation's development. This will be prepared in consultation with staff and Corporate Management Team.

## **Technology Projects**

5. A number of technology related projects have been delivered all of which support the aims and ways of working of the New Normal Strategy.

5.1. Robotic Process Automation (RPA) pilots

Four processes were automated as part of the pilot project. The RPA for scanning microfiche of historic housing records into Orchard and improving the indexing of documents in the corporate document management system Information@Work for Regulatory Services were successful.

Although the Finance processes were technically successful there was insufficient evidence of volume and throughput of transactions for a sustainable business case to take the project forward into the live environment.

However, the business case supporting the indexing robot identified numerous benefits including freeing around 1,250 hours per month of

officer time to do more valuable work. This is particularly important as Environmental Services have been exceptionally stretched due to the impact of the pandemic.

Since approval by the programme board i work is being undertaken with the Council's suppliers, T-Impact, to move this robot into the live environment. It is targeted to go live to support the Environmental Health team by the end of October.

Following discussions with Housing staff three further processes have been identified which could benefit from being automated. They relate to

- Loading new tenant information into the Inform system
- Identification and location of compliance documents in a shared drive
- Monitoring of common housing inbox and automatic routing of enquiries to relevant Housing Officers using the "patch document".

These processes will be further investigated and business cases developed to support their automation as more than one process can be loaded on the robot we have already secured for indexing Information@Work process.

#### 5.2. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) pilots

The pilot projects looked in detail at two areas in the Council, the handling of Voids in Housing and mobile working for officers. Both project were severely impacted by the pandemic as not all of the workshops were completed before lockdown took place.

For Housing there was value in the entire team being involved in capturing the as-is process as it showed just how many different people are involved and made each group aware of their own role and those of others within the process. The "to-be process" was developed and many of the "quick wins" that were identified were implemented immediately, forming part of the approach of the Housing team in moving to working from home during lockdown. E.g. the use of key safes to remove the need to collect keys from The Forum.

Other improvements have been identified but these will take some time to achieve as they are dependent on changes to the technology used. It is currently difficult to identify the specific benefits from the improved process as there are now inherent delays due to the impact of Covid-19 secure guidelines when making property fit for re-let.

For remote working it was useful gathering the issues through a workshop that had representation from across all areas of the Council. It helped us to think about the types of hardware that would be useful to different types of user.

The follow-up work on this review was dropped very suddenly with immediate focus moving to ensuring the current environment was fully supported due to the reliance on technology through lockdown. With the position now more stable, a pilot is being developed to see how the use

of e-forms could help users in Regulatory Services to undertake inspections where paper forms are currently used. Time could potentially be saved from officers no longer having to enter that information into their systems when they are next in the office.

A business case will be taken to the programme board to establish the viability of any investment in the short term whilst the service seeks a replacement for the main system used in Regulatory Services, Civica APP (Flare), which is due to become unsupported in the next few years.

5.3. Future ICT Operating Model

A revised Technology Governance/Operating Model for ICT has been developed and the work to put this into effect will form part of the new ICT Service Plan.

### **Summary**

6. Members of the Finance and Resources Overview Scrutiny Committee will note that there has been significant progress on a range of key projects contained within the New Normal programme despite the impact of the COVID pandemic on the work programme, which has resulted in the need to reprioritise of some work-streams to ensure that they provide the greatest benefit to the Council in due course.

# Agenda Item 10

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
3 November 2020	23 October 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 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</b>  1 December 2020		<b>***Joint Budget***</b>  *****  <i>Ideally no further items to be added</i>	Corporate Director, Finance & Operations  <a href="mailto:James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk">James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
		<b>Garage Investment Strategy</b>	Assistant Director, Performance, People & Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
6 January 2021	29 December	Action Points (from previous meeting)		

	<b>2020</b>			
<b>Joint Budget</b> <b>2 February 2021</b>		<p><b>*** Joint Budget ***</b></p> <p>*****</p> <p><i>Ideally no further items to be added</i></p>	<p>Corporate Director, Finance &amp; Operations</p> <p><a href="mailto:James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk">James.deane@dacorum.gov.uk</a></p>	
<b>9 March 2021</b>	<b>26 February 2021</b>	<b>Action Points (from previous meeting)</b>		
		<b>Budget Monitoring Report</b>	<p>Assistant Director, Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p><a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a></p>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Finance &amp; Resources Q3 Performance Report</b>	<p>Assistant Director, Finance &amp; Resources</p> <p><a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a></p>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Corporate &amp; Contracted Services Q3 Performance Report</b>	<p>Assistant Director, Corporate &amp; Contracted Services</p> <p><a href="mailto:Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk">Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk</a></p>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		<b>Performance, People &amp; Innovation Q3 Performance Report</b>	<p>Assistant Director, Performance, People &amp; Innovation</p> <p><a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a></p>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>

**Items to be scheduled:**

- **Berkhamsted Sports Centre (M Brookes)**