



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 1 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 7.30 PM**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, THE FORUM**

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 Arslan  
Councillor So Mahmood  
Councillor Su Mahmood

Councillor Sinha  
Councillor Townsend  
Councillor Cloughton (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Symington  
Councillor Douris (Chairman)  
Councillor Freedman

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

**AGENDA**

1. **MINUTES** (Pages 3 - 7)  
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 (Page 8)**

#### **7. QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - FINANCE & RESOURCES (Pages 9 - 25)**

#### **8. QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (Pages 26 - 32)**

#### **9. QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (Pages 33 - 47)**

#### **10. QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - PEOPLE & TRANSFORMATION (Pages 48 - 55)**

#### **11. TRANSFORMATION UPDATE (Pages 56 - 126)**

#### **12. COMPLAINTS POLICY (Pages 127 - 140)**

#### **13. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 141 - 142)**

## MINUTES

### FINANCE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 OCTOBER 2022

#### Present:

|                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Cllr Adeleke           | Cllr Suqlain Mahmood |
| Cllr Chapman           | Cllr Guest           |
| Cllr Cloughton         | Cllr Symington       |
| Cllr Douris (Chairman) | Cllr Tindall         |
| Cllr Freedman          | Cllr Townsend        |

#### Officers:

Nigel Howcutt (Chief Finance Officer)  
James Doe (Strategic Director, Place)  
Catherine Silva-Donayre (Strategic Director, Corporate & Commercial)  
Clare Dempsey (Financial Planning & Analysis Team Leader)  
Trudi Angel (Corporate and Democratic Support Officer)

#### Also in attendance:

Cllr Andrew Williams (Portfolio Holder, Commercial Strategy and Delivery)  
Cllr Graeme Elliot (Portfolio Holder, Corporate Services)

The meeting started at 7.30 pm.

#### 1. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by the members present and then signed by the Chairman.

#### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

#### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

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

None.

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

The Chairman made a plea to officers to ensure that their action points were completed before the next meeting to avoid delays.

## **7. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)**

N Howcutt presented an outline of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The latest iteration of the MTFS employed a framework largely unchanged from previous versions. The new challenges involved, firstly, macro-economic factors. Inflation was around 10%, and was projected by some sources to increase to as high as 12%. DBC and Hertfordshire County Council were in discussions with Unions over salary measures including pay rises and other allowances such as an additional day of annual leave. This varied slightly across different agencies.

Overall, the macro-economic climate had led to an additional £1.2 million of expenditure in DBC's budget. Borrowing rates were projected to be around 2.6% higher, which would mean DBC's investments would require a greater return in order to be cost-effective.

Underpinning medium-term government funding assumptions was the expectation that funding would decrease, and the MTFS would impact this, though DBC had been ahead of other Councils from a funding perspective and was not expected to fall behind the curve. As a result of this, DBC was not expected to be a priority in terms of any additional funding from central government.

In reaction to these financial pressures, measures in several areas were provided for in the MTFS. Of note, several measures were in place to enact a projected £1.4 million saving on the delivery of waste management services.

The effects of the Covid pandemic continued to be reflected in use of local services, including car parking.

£300k of additional income was anticipated from additional reserves made available for investment, given increasing interest rates.

Plans for the development of a local leisure centre had been postponed until 2023-24, with the associated expenditure thereby not taking place in 2022-23.

A decision had been made to fund the vehicle replacement programme through capital and internal borrowing, which was a prudent financial move but would not affect the overall funding for the programme.

A large amount of efficiencies would need to be delivered over the coming year, and any shortcoming in this regard would require additional capital reserves.

It was expected that there would be a Government revaluation as expected in 2022-23, but that an interest rate reset would not take place.

In terms of the reserves position, the reserves were intended for one-off expenditures. DBC had not committed as much in 2021-22 as it had in previous years, relying on its core reserves. A 20% reduction had been seen in the Councils' reserves in the last 20 years, meaning DBC now had less resilience than it had historically. This was broadly attributed to the need for additional expenditure to meet the demands of Covid.

The change and transformation agenda set out extensive measures to reduce expenditure across the Council. The commercial programme would aim to increase income and diversify income streams.

Reserves continued to be used for one-off expenditures and were at present sufficient to meet the Council's objectives, though there was a risk in the longer term and so the priority was to enact a sustainable medium-term plan.

In summary, the latest MTFs was twice the size of the usual programme, owing to the demands of the current economic climate, and would require focused work across the Council from agencies and officers in order to deliver this.

The Chairman thanked N Howcutt for his presentation, and acknowledged the need for such a programme in the current economic environment. The floor was then opened to questions.

Councillor Mahmood said he felt reassured by the presentation and asked for N Howcutt's view on the outlook in the upcoming period.

In response, N Howcutt lamented the need for efficiencies across various services as a result of the current economy. The current MTFs was a result of an additional 6 months of hard work from the entire team, and N Howcutt was optimistic about the Council's ability to deliver this ambitious plan, though there was also a great deal of uncertainty in the medium term. Moreover, it was pointed out that the MTFs complemented the wider range of plans being implemented across the Council.

Councillor Mahmood asked what the contingencies were, should setbacks be encountered in the delivery of the MTFs.

N Howcutt outlined the extensive deliberation process behind the MTFs, and the contingency plans around service delivery and use of reserves, assuring Councillor Mahmood that significant contingencies were in place.

Councillor Adeleke asked whether the assumption that the Government would increase council tax every year was a realistic one.

N Howcutt responded that an assessment of need is carried out each year on local authorities and their ability to collect income. It is expected that an increase will be made each year to avoid a budget deficit and local authorities don't have much choice in that decision.

In response to further questions from Councillor Adeleke, N Howcutt pointed out that 90% of the Council's services were procured through contracts. The vast majority of these were capped at a total expenditure. An extensive process was in place to predict the increases in these contractual expenditures year-on-year, and to ensure the utmost optimisation of cost and effect.

In response to a query from Councillor Tindall, N Howcutt explained the plans for the Negative Revenue Support Grant to be rolled out to DBC, which had previously not gone ahead due to Covid, were now anticipated to be re-explored.

Councillor Tindall also highlighted the suggestion that the current Government may reduce funding for Councils and tell local authorities to increase their funding by raising Council Tax.

N Howcutt pointed out that no indication had been received from the current Government, though this was to be expected given that the current Prime Minister had been in post for only a few weeks.

Following several queries regarding specific figures underpinning the MTFs, N Howcutt gave reassurance that a partnership was in place with all stakeholders, with quarterly strategic board meetings and ongoing collaboration and appropriate scrutiny groups in place to ensure oversight over all relevant areas.

Councillor Townsend asked for further elaboration on the £1.6 million in savings that had been identified for 2023-24.

N Howcutt outlined the measures that would add up to this figure. Key areas included treasury management returns, the change in the capital management programme, the commercial strategy and transformational savings particularly in the vehicle management area.

Councillor Townsend then asked for more information on how the changes to waste management would lead to the large anticipated figure.

N Howcutt pointed out that this was an extensive programme of changes that a brief summary would not do justice. A report would be released in November regarding the changes in waste management, which would thereafter be submitted to the various scrutiny committees.

In response to a query from Councillor Freedman, N Howcutt reassured members that they would have oversight over the rigorous deliberation process underpinning the changes to be made, particularly in relation to the commercial strategy. N Howcutt also welcomed ideas and input from all Councillors and, by extension, to the public in terms of changes and efficiencies that might be introduced.

Councillor Guest suggested that efficiencies didn't have to mean cuts in services and asked N Howcutt to expand on his definition of the term 'efficiency'.

N Howcutt emphasised that efficiency was defined as delivery of the same level of service with fewer resources, and did not equate to a reduction in service delivery.

Councillor Mahmood asked how the impact on residents and the community was worked into the design of the Council's strategies.

N Howcutt mentioned that both policy and the assessment and deliberation processes in place ensured that local stakeholders were at the heart of the strategies designed and adopted by the Council.

Councillor Elliot thanked N Howcutt and his team for a clear and concise presentation. He said DBC were a prudent council and he was confident we could work through all the challenges we were facing.

The Chairman thanked N Howcutt on behalf of the committee for his presentation.

N Howcutt pointed out that, though he had presented the MTFs, the document he had presented was a reflection of the hard work of everyone involved behind the scenes.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman asked members to let him know if they had any requests for additional items on the work programme.

Councillor Tindall asked for a presentation on CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy).

The Chairman responded that reports on CIL would go to the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SPAE OSC). He reminded members that they could attend any of the OSC meetings if they wished to.

J Doe advised that the governance arrangements for CIL were being reviewed and the policy would need to go through SPAE OSC, Cabinet and Council for scrutiny and approval. He said he would circulate the link to the current policy to assist members with their queries. **Action.**

The meeting ended at 8:56 pm.

**Finance and Resources OSC Action Points - October**

| <b>Date of meeting</b> | <b>Action point</b>  | <b>Responsible officer</b> | <b>Date action completed</b> | <b>Response</b>   |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 04/10/22               | <p>Item 8: Work Programme</p> <p>J Doe advised that the governance arrangements for CIL were being reviewed and the policy would need to go through SPAE OSC, Cabinet and Council for scrutiny and approval. He said he would circulate the link to the current policy to assist members with their queries.</p> | J Doe                      | 05/10/22                     | <p><a href="https://democracy.dacorum.gov.uk/documents/g529/Public%20reports%20pack%2029th-Nov-2016%2019.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10">https://democracy.dacorum.gov.uk/documents/g529/Public%20reports%20pack%2029th-Nov-2016%2019.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10</a><br/>Pages 35 – 85. Agenda Item 9 CIL Governance.</p> |





# Finance and Resources

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Report for:</b>   | Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee  |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  |  |
| <b>Date:</b>   |  |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Cllr Graeme Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources   |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I  |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | Appendix A – Finance and Resources Qtr 2 Performance Report<br>Appendix B – Revenues and Benefits Qtr 2 Performance Report<br>Appendix C – Finance and Resources Operational Risk Report |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  | Previous performance reports to Scrutiny.  |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> | F&R OSC- Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.  |

### Report Author / Responsible Officer

Nigel Howcutt, CFO.



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|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Corporate Priorities</b> | A clean, safe and enjoyable environment<br>Building strong and vibrant communities<br>Ensuring economic growth and prosperity<br>Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need |
|-----------------------------|--|

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery<br>Climate and ecological emergency                                      |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All Wards  |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | To provide Committee with analysis of quarterly performance within Finance & Resources for the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 2022/23. |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | That Committee notes the contents of the report and the performance of Finance & Resources for Quarter 2, 2022/23.                 |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        | Reports Produced Quarterly.  |

## 1 Introduction:

Operational Risk and Performance reports are presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis. They provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise performance against a range of key indicators.

## 2 Quarter 2 Performance and Operational Risk report:

- A. This report outlines the 2022/23 Quarter 2 (July – September) performance of the finance and resources division. Members will find enclosed appendices that represent the finance and resources division, Appendix A Finance and resources Qtr 2 performance report and Appendix B Revenues and Benefits Qtr 2 Performance report.
- B. The Performance appendices attached in Appendix A and Appendix B detail the current performance against a range of agreed Key Performance Indicators. These report detail that;
- 6 core KPI's are green, where performance is achieving or exceeding current targets,
  - 2 core KPI's are amber, where performance is achieving or is close to achieving expected levels of service provision.
  - 1 red KPI where performance requires improvement.

The red KPI is FIN02A and relates to the time taken for debtors to pay.

- **FIN02a Time taken for debtors to pay** – This has been adversely impacted by several government Covid policies that has either limited or prevented the standard debt collection processes.
  - The Council has more historic debt resulting from the pandemic where either businesses have chosen to repay debt through payment plans which take longer to pay back, or have not been paying their debt as previously expected.
  - The service expected debt recovery actions to be back to normal in 21/22 but government policy has meant debt recovery processes are still not back to what the industry would call “normal”. Improvement has been made throughout 22/23 with year on year performance improving by over 15%. As of October covid debt recovery policies relating to commercial leaseholds change significantly and hence the service expects to see an improvement in quarter 3.
- C. The Qtr 2 Operational risk register is attached in Appendix C. At present there are no red rated operational risks and there were no changes made to the risk scores when compared to Quarter 1, the appendix details mitigation strategies, risk targets and updated commentary.

**3 Financial and value for money implications:**

Poor performance or increased risk would indicate areas of concern and potential lack of best value and these services and processes are reviewed as part of the ongoing Corporate financial monitoring framework and reflected in the budget monitoring reports presented to scrutiny and cabinet.

**4 Legal Implications**

N/A

**5 Risk implications:**

The process of reviewing and reporting performance and operational risks is part of the wider risk management processes undertaken by the council, to ensure risk management and mitigation is undertaken where required and follows the strategic risk strategy outlined by the council.

**6 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

No Community or equalities assessment has been undertaken specifically as part of this report, the services and the service delivery processes are assessed periodically to ensure these services reflect the council's policy on service delivery.

**7 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

N/A

**8 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

N/A

**9 Conclusions:**

The performance and risk is outlined in the appendices and summarised in the report, and the committee are asked to note the report.

| Measure Code | Measure Name  | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT   | Comments  |
|--------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|---|
| FIN01        | Percentage of creditor trade invoices paid within 30 days | 99.8%               | 96.0%               | 99.8%               | 96.0%               | 99.5%              | 96.0%              |  | 30 Sep 2022<br>Performance against this indicator continues to be strong due to efforts from officers across the Council and the Council's Accounts Payable team.   |
| FIN02a       | Time taken for debtors to pay                             | 52.7                | 40.0                | 51.7                | 40.0                | 61.4               | 40.0               |  | 30 Sep 2022<br>Performance against this indicator continues to be adversely impacted by the pandemic. Debtors are taking longer to pay, with a higher proportion paying via instalments. Performance has improved on the previously reported period. Government restrictions on commercial debt recovery ended at the end of March 2022. Protections for eligible debtors remained in place until the end of September 2022 which means recovery activity has been restricted until the end of this period. We continue to engage with the Council's debtors to maximise income collection as far as possible, mindful of the economic impact of the pandemic and cost of living on our residents and businesses. |

| Measure Code | Measure Name   | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT | Comments   |
|--------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|--|
| FIN03        | General Fund expenditure - outturn forecast against budget | £21,481,000         | £20,492,000         | £20,306,000         | £20,306,000         | £21,260,000        | £20,107,000        |     | <p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>The position reported is that as at the end of August, the latest approved position.</p> <p>There are pressures against General Fund budgets in the following areas: waste services income and expenditure and car parking income . These are partly offset by additional expected income over target against commercial property and investment income.</p> <p>The financial position of the Council is closely monitored and formally reported to Members on an quarterly basis via OSC and Cabinet.</p> <p>More detailed information on the financial position for the Council can be found in these reports. The first report for 2022-23 went to Members in September / October 2022.</p> |
| FIN04        | HRA expenditure outturn forecast against budget            | £60,378,000         | £60,198,560         | £60,199,000         | £60,199,000         | £57,955,000        | £58,513,600        |     | <p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>The position reported is that as at the end of August, the latest approved position.</p> <p>There is an expenditure pressure within the service relating to Council Tax on void properties.</p> <p>The financial position of the Council is closely monitored and formally reported to Members on an quarterly basis via OSC and Cabinet.</p> <p>More detailed information on the financial position for the Council can be found in these reports. The first report for 2022-23 went to Members in September / October 2022.</p>  |

| Measure Code | Measure Name   | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT | Comments  |
|--------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|---|
| FIN05        | HRA income - outturn forecast against budget                       | £60,811,000         | £60,199,000         | £60,199,000         | £60,199,000         | £57,954,000        | £58,514,000        |     | <p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>The position reported is that as at the end of August, the latest approved position.</p> <p>Forecast investment income is above target for the HRA.</p> <p>The financial position of the Council is closely monitored and formally reported to Members on a quarterly basis via OSC and Cabinet.</p> <p>More detailed information on the financial position for the Council can be found in these reports. The first report for 2022-23 went to Members in September/ October 2022.</p>   |
| FIN06        | General Fund Capital Expenditure - outturn forecast against budget | £12,177,026         | £22,854,000         | £22,854,000         | £22,854,000         | £11,699,852        | £11,699,852        |     | <p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>The position reported is that as at the end of June, the latest approved position.</p> <p>The General Fund capital programme is reporting slippage (where is spend previously expected in 2022-23 is now forecast to be incurred in future financial years), largely related to the Berkhamsted Leisure Centre development.</p> <p>The financial position of the Council is closely monitored and formally reported to Members on a quarterly basis via OSC and Cabinet.</p> <p>More detailed information on the financial position for the Council can be found in these reports. The first report for 2022-23 went to Members in September/ October 2022.</p> |

| Measure Code | Measure Name   | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT | Comments   |
|--------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|--|
| FIN07        | HRA Capital Expenditure: outturn forecast against budget | £68,514,391         | £68,514,391         | £67,920,000         | £67,920,000         | £38,413,483        | £43,042,993        |     | <p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>The position reported is that as at the end of June, the latest approved position.</p> <p>The HRA capital programme is currently forecast on budget.</p> <p>The financial position of the Council is closely monitored and formally reported to Members on a quarterly basis via OSC and Cabinet.</p> <p>More detailed information on the financial position for the Council can be found in these reports. The first report for 2022-23 went to Members in September/ October 2022.</p> |

| Measure Code | Measure Name  | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT | Comments  |
|--------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|---|
| RBF01        | Average time taken to respond to a benefit-related contact from a resident. | 14.64               |                     | 12.82               |                     | 9.28               |                    |     | <p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>The summer period has always been a challenge for the Service. However, the double bank holiday in June put work in a position that has been difficult to recover from. Normally, much of this recovery would happen during September, however the Service has been impacted by some long-term sickness that has reduced capacity.</p> <p>The use of hotels for temporary accommodation has led to additional, more complex work. Often, a customer only stays a few nights at a hotel before they are moved to a different one, resulting in the Service having to process a new claim and multiple changes for a customer at the same time.</p> <p>Full case reviews continue to be resource intensive as they are identifying large numbers of historical un-notified changes. Not only is it time consuming getting the information from residents, it is also complex to re-calculate entitlement.</p> |
| RBF01 (N)    | Total days taken to decide new benefit-related contact in period            | 35,659              |                     | 22,974              |                     | 29,153             |                    | n/a |   |
| RBF04        | NNDR (Business Rates) in-year collection rate                               | 51.2%               | 46.7%               | 26.7%               | 27.8%               | 46.7%              | 47.3%              |     | <p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>The collection level is currently at its strongest position since the pandemic, although still slightly lower than at the end of September 2019. However, we are yet to see the impact of energy price increases on businesses, and so we remain uncertain about how this may affect the collection level across the rest of the year.</p>  |



| Measure Code | Measure Name   | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT   | Comments  |
|--------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|---|
| RBF05        | Council Tax collection rate  | 56.5%               | 56.1%               | 30.0%               | 29.0%               | 56.1%              | 57.0%              |  | 30 Sep 2022<br>The collection level is showing continued improvement towards pre-pandemic levels, although it has not yet returned to them. The uncertainty over the cost of living and increases in energy bills means that we are unclear as to whether this trend will continue during the remainder of the year.  |
| RBF06        | Average time taken to respond to a council tax related contact from a resident | 20.24               |                     | 12.24               |                     |                    |                    |  | 30 Sep 2022<br>The work needed to process the Energy Bills Rebate has been carried out by officers in the council tax team, and so this has led to a build up of 'normal' work. The increased average time this quarter is a reflection of this reduced capacity, but we anticipate that performance should start to recover during quarter 3 following the ending of the Energy Bills Rebate scheme. However, this is also depends on the impact of the wider economy, and the possibility of increased contacts from residents with concerns about paying their bills over the next few months. |

Risk Register Summary Table

| Risk Name  | Risk Owner    | 30 Sep 2022           |                      |        |  |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------|--|
|  |               | RM01 Risk Consequence | RM02 Risk Likelihood | Status |  |
|  |               | Actual                | Actual               | Actual | Update   |
| Council Tax & Business Rates collections rates drop below budget | Nigel Howcutt | 3                     | 3                    | 9.00   | The collection level is showing continued improvement towards pre-pandemic levels, although it has not yet returned to them. The uncertainty over the cost of living and increases in energy bills means that we are unclear as to whether this trend will continue during the remainder of the year.  |
| Delays and errors in the processing of Benefits claims           | Nigel Howcutt | 2                     | 3                    | 6.00   | The impact of the current economic uncertainty has resulted in increased benefit queries and complexity of benefit related queries, some of which are not necessarily part of the Dacorum benefits responsibilities. As part of the cost of living symposium the service worked with stakeholders across the sector to try to improve signposting and ensure the sector supports the most vulnerable by communicating clearly and effectively. |
| Delays to Capital programme                                      | Nigel Howcutt | 3                     | 3                    | 9.00   | As part of the Quarter 2 financial monitoring processes and in combination with the start of the 2023/24 budget setting cycle a review of current and future capital projects is underway to re assess costs and pressures given the current inflationary pressures. At present there is no financial risk expected in 2022/23 but a concern over future contract and tendering needs further assessment.                                      |
| Failure to optimise income generated by commercial assets        | Nigel Howcutt | 3                     | 3                    | 9.00   | The commercial income projections for 2022/23 are reported as part of the Corporate financial performance framework and at present the commercial property portfolio is projecting to exceed current budgeted levels.  |
| Variances in General Fund revenue budget                         | Nigel Howcutt | 3                     | 3                    | 9.00   | The quarter 1 financial performance report presented to scrutiny and cabinet in September detailed a financial pressure on the current general fund. The quarter 2 financial performance will be reported to cabinet in November and the early signs are that there are increases in income from treasury activity and commercial property that will improve the financial projections.  |

| Risk Name  | Detail                         | 30 Sep 2022<br>Status  |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Council Tax & Business Rates collections rates drop below budget | Risk Owner                     | Nigel Howcutt  |
|  | Portfolio                      | Finance & Resources  |
|  | Risk Description               | Council Tax & Business Rates collections rates drop below budget.  |
|  | Inherent Score                 | 9 ▲  |
|  | Mitigated Score                | 9.00 ●   |
|  | Target                         | 6.00   |
|  | Comments                       | The collection level is showing continued improvement towards pre-pandemic levels, although it has not yet returned to them. The uncertainty over the cost of living and increases in energy bills means that we are unclear as to whether this trend will continue during the remainder of the year.  |
|  | Controls & Assurances          | <p>The following controls aim to identify as quickly as possible if the Council is falling behind on its collection rates target for the year. If a problem is identified, the Council is then able to invoke a range of options to minimise the ongoing negative impact on collection.</p> <p>Profiled monthly collection rates are monitored monthly - see KPIs RBF04 and RBF05. Reasons for variances are then investigated in order to address problems quickly as possible.</p> <p>Direct debit payment is recommended for all customers – a pre-filled instruction is sent to all non-DD payers with their annual bill or a first bill for a new taxpayer. The direct debit method reduce the risk of under-collection because it eliminates the risk of a payer forgetting to make a monthly payment.</p> <p>In quarter 4 of 2021/22 and quarter 1 of 2022/23 the service saw the largest growth in direct debit initiations. This improves the consistency and reliability with which residents pay their council tax.</p> <p>There is an active programme for taking formal recovery action against non payers and this is monitored monthly and overseen through quarterly performance reporting</p> |
|  | Evidence Risk is being managed | <p>The processes for collection of council tax and business rates have been consistent over time and the budgeted collection rate levels have been achieved.</p> <p>The collection rates achieved are above national averages and specifically business rates collection was in the upper quartile of national performances.</p> <p>The service has been able to increase the volume of CT payers that are received through Direct Debits and has also developed 10 and 12 monthly payment processes in the last few years.</p>  |

| Risk Name  | Detail                 | 30 Sep 2022<br>Status   |
|--|------------------------|---|
|  | Consequences / Impacts | <p>Distribution of collection fund to other preceptors is based on the budgeted collection level, if collection falls short this could lead to a cashflow issue within the Council's finances. The fund distribution is balanced after the end of the financial year.</p> <p>Reputational risk if collection rate falls significantly – this could also impact on future years' council tax base leading to increased budget pressures.</p> <p>Financial risk in relation to business rate retention scheme if rates collection falls below government set baseline.</p>  |
| Delays and errors in the processing of Benefits claims | Risk Owner             | Nigel Howcutt   |
|  | Portfolio              | Finance & Resources   |
|  | Risk Description       | Delays and errors in the processing of Benefits claims  |
|  | Inherent Score         | 12 ▲  |
|  | Mitigated Score        | 6.00 ●  |
|  | Target                 | 6.00  |
|  | Comments               | The impact of the current economic uncertainty has resulted in increased benefit queries and complexity of benefit related queries, some of which are not necessarily part of the Dacorum benefits responsibilities. As part of the cost of living symposium the service worked with stakeholders across the sector to try to improve signposting and ensure the sector supports the most vulnerable by communicating clearly and effectively.  |
|  | Controls & Assurances  | <p>The controls in place aim to mitigate this risk by closely monitoring performance to assist with effective decision-making around resource allocation. This is a heavily process driven service area and close monitoring also helps to identify bottle necks in the process which need to be improved to optimise performance. By subjecting the process to this regular in-depth scrutiny the Service is able to reduce the probability of the risk crystallising, hence the reduction between the Inherent Risk score (4) and the Residual Risk score (2) after the controls have been taken into account.</p> <p>Quality checking and individual performance management is in place. These mean that each officer has targets for their personal productivity and accuracy, and information from quality checks is fed back in order to sustain improvement.</p> <p>Average time taken for processing new claims and changes in circumstances forms part of monthly monitoring which is deemed good practice.</p> <p>Processes are in place to expedite cases where the customer is vulnerable or facing eviction. These processes start when a case is identified within benefits, or by customer services, homelessness, housing etc. The service work in partnership with other council services and external bodies to achieve good outcomes for the residents.</p> <p>Monthly meetings are held between senior officers within Finance &amp; Resources to monitor detailed performance levels at each stage of the claims process, and quarterly performance meetings with the S151 are undertaken.</p> <p>This enables intermediary targets to be set for discrete elements of the process, which in turn enables the more effective monitoring which has resulted in significantly improved performance over the last 6 months.</p> |

| Risk Name                   | Detail                         | 30 Sep 2022<br>Status   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
|                             | Evidence Risk is being managed | <p>Prior to pandemic the KPI's for the housing benefit service in 2019/20 were all achieved with new performance records set along the way.</p> <p>The 20/21 and 21/22 financial years saw a surge in new cases and changes to existing claimants. The service have had to introduce new ways of working to deal with the new cases during covid. The performance on changes to existing housing benefit cases has remained strong with performance in the second half of 21/22 being the strongest achieved in over 18 months.</p> <p>The annual housing benefits audit and audit returns have all being approved by auditors and the processes have received substantial assurance.</p>   |
|                             | Consequences / Impacts         | <p>This risk links to the corporate objective Dacorum Delivers, focussing on an efficient and effective council.</p> <p>Customers could suffer personal hardship resulting from delays or errors in the processing of claims.</p> <p>Significant reputational risk associated with high-profile errors.</p> <p>Staff time spent on addressing unnecessary errors leads to duplication of effort and is an inefficient use of resources.</p> <p>Government subsidy for housing benefit expenditure is based on external audit certification of the claim made. There is financial risk if errors on cases are identified during their testing.</p> <p>Communications with claimants needs to be well written and jargon-free in order to reduce the risk of repeat queries which puts pressure on limited staff resources.</p> |
| Delays to Capital programme | Risk Owner                     | Nigel Howcutt   |
|                             | Portfolio                      | Finance & Resources   |
|                             | Risk Description               | Delays to Capital programme   |
|                             | Inherent Score                 | 8 ▲   |
|                             | Mitigated Score                | 9.00 ●  |
|                             | Target                         | 6.00  |
|                             | Comments                       | As part of the Quarter 2 financial monitoring processes and in combination with the start of the 2023/24 budget setting cycle a review of current and future capital projects is underway to re assess costs and pressures given the current inflationary pressures. At present there is no financial risk expected in 2022/23 but a concern over future contract and tendering needs further assessment.   |

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| Risk Name | Detail                         | 30 Sep 2022<br>Status   |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---|
|           | Controls & Assurances          | <p>The controls that have been implemented to mitigate this risk target the robustness of capital bids both at the time they are submitted and throughout the delivery phase of the projects.</p> <p>In particular, scrutiny is focused on those elements of the capital bid that experience indicates are the primary cause of delays to capital projects. These include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How robust are the assumptions on the estimated duration of the procurement exercise?</li> <li>• How realistic is the estimated time taken for contractors to deliver the works?</li> <li>• How realistic are the assumptions on officer availability to manage the project on time?</li> </ul> <p>The rationale behind this approach is that an increased culture of challenge will lead to more realistic programming of future capital projects, and therefore a reduced likelihood of slippage.</p> <p>The following controls are in place with a view to developing a culture of scrutiny and challenge for officers to improve the accuracy of future bids:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly meetings take place between accountants and budget holders to monitor progress against original timeframes and costs;</li> <li>• Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) receive a quarterly report on the progress of capital projects against anticipated timeframes;</li> <li>• Performance Group comprising Chief Officers and cabinet Members receive a monthly report on the progress of current projects;</li> <li>• Reports go to Cabinet and all Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSC) every quarter. These reports have been redesigned to focus on the more immediate risk of in-year delivery, highlighting higher risk areas to invite closer scrutiny from Members.</li> </ul> |
|           | Evidence Risk is being managed | <p>The General Fund and New House Building capital programmes have been maintained throughout the pandemic and covid recovery period. The timeframes have extended as a result of covid, and the capital programme has been adjusted accordingly. There has been no significant financial pressures realised to date as a result of the capital programme being delayed.</p> <p>The recent increase in capital project costs has been maintained within existing contingency budgets, it is expected that future procurement of construction partners will exceed historic cost expectations.</p>   |
|           | Consequences / Impacts         | <p>Many of the major projects within the Capital Programme are fundamental to delivery of the Council's corporate objectives. Therefore significant delays can impact on the achievement of the corporate plan.</p> <p>Financial decision-making is negatively affected if the timing of projects in the Capital Programme is wrong. This can result in lost investment income or increased interest costs as the Council moves closer to the point where it will need to borrow.</p> <p>The estimated delivery date is considered as part of the decision to allocate capital funds to one project over another. If estimated timings are not accurate, there is a risk that the allocation of funds is not being decided on appropriately.</p> <p>If inaccurate project management is tolerated, there is a risk that the culture of financial management across the Council will be negatively affected which will have consequences for wider financial decision-making.</p> <p>Not delivering major projects within the timeframe to which it has committed itself exposes the Council to reputational risk.</p>   |

| Risk Name   |  | 30 Sep 2022   |
|---|--|---|
| Detail  |  | Status  |
| Failure to optimise income generated by commercial assets | Risk Owner   | Nigel Howcutt   |
|   | Portfolio  | Finance & Resources   |
|   | Risk Description   | Failure to optimise income generated by commercial assets   |
|   | Inherent Score   | 12 ▲  |
|   | Mitigated Score  | 9.00 ●  |
|   | Target   | 6.00  |
|   | Comments   | The commercial income projections for 2022/23 are reported as part of the Corporate financial performance framework and at present the commercial property portfolio is projecting to exceed current budgeted levels.   |
|   | Controls & Assurances  | <p>The following controls aim to mitigate the risk of under-performance of the Council's commercial assets by maintaining good communication links between relevant Council services, and by regularly monitoring performance against targets (see KPIs CP01 and CP02) to ensure that underperformance is identified and addressed as quickly as possible. The existence of these controls has led to the 'Inherent Probability' of this risk occurring reducing from a score of 4, which is shown in the Residual Probability (i.e. after controls implemented) being a 3.</p> <p>Estates officers responsible for negotiating rent reviews hold monthly meetings with the Debtors team to track current bad debtors. This increases their understanding of the economic pressures businesses are facing, and how it can impact on council income.</p> <p>There are currently InPhase performance targets to maintain the number of voids (empty properties) below 5%, and to keep the rent arrears below 10%. Failure to meet either of these targets would prompt further investigation.</p> <p>A plan for further debt recovery once the current government covid policies ends in October 2022 ae being developed.</p> |
|   | Evidence Risk is being managed   | <p>In 2019/20 the commercial property service achieved occupancy of 96.2% with rent arrears of only 7%. This performance is above the targeted KPI levels and well ahead of commercial expectations, and followed an equally strong 2018/19.</p> <p>In 20/21 the occupancy level remained strong at 95% with arrears increasing to 15% in 20/21, and up to 20% in 21/22 in response to the pandemic and in particular government covid restriction policies in relation to rent arrears and evictions. Arrears are still at circa 20%, significantly below the market average for the retail sector of circa 60% for this period.</p> <p>The service have increased the number of payment plans and alternative methods for debt collection in this period and this has meant debt levels have remained below sector averages.</p>  |
| Consequences / Impacts                                    | <p>The council has a significant portfolio of commercially let properties, which provides one of the council's largest sources of income.</p> <p>Council officers must attempt to maximize income from these assets whilst avoiding the risk of vacant properties and increasing bad debts, which could arise if rents are set too high, and would jeopardise the council's achievement of its corporate objectives of Regeneration and Economic Development.</p> <p>The continuing recession and the difficulties it brings for local businesses increases the likelihood of this risk crystallising, and the current government covid policies reduce the services levers to deal with growth and debt recovery.</p> |   |

| Risk Name                                | Detail                         | 30 Sep 2022<br>Status  |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Variances in General Fund revenue budget | Risk Owner                     | Nigel Howcutt  |
|  | Portfolio                      | Finance & Resources  |
|  | Risk Description               | Variances in General Fund revenue budget   |
|  | Inherent Score                 | 12 ▲   |
|  | Mitigated Score                | 9.00 ●   |
|  | Target                         | 6.00   |
|  | Comments                       | The quarter 1 financial performance report presented to scrutiny and cabinet in September detailed a financial pressure on the current general fund. The quarter 2 financial performance will be reported to cabinet in November and the early signs are that there are increases in income from treasury activity and commercial property that will improve the financial projections.  |
|  | Controls & Assurances          | <p>The following controls aim to reduce the probability of there being a variance in the General Fund Revenue Budget by ensuring that there is strong challenge put to Budget Holders on the robustness of their assumptions, from a range of audiences.</p> <p>It is intended that these controls will increase the opportunity for flawed assumptions to be exposed as soon as possible, as well as incorporating a stronger culture of financial management across the Council leading to continuous improvement in the setting of accurate budgets.</p> <p>The annual budget-setting process consists of an ongoing scrutiny process in which senior officers from across the Council, together with the Financial Services team, challenge the following year's budget bids from Group Managers.</p> <p>This scrutiny process is augmented by the Budget Review Group (BRG), consisting of CEX, S151 officer and the Portfolio Holder group, which provides early Member-level challenge.</p> <p>There are two opportunities for OSCs to scrutinise the budget proposals and directly question the relevant officers before the budget report is finalised and considered by Cabinet and Council.</p> <p>Once approved, in-year budget performance is managed through monthly reporting to the SLT which underpin quarterly reports to Cabinet and OSCs.</p> <p>The Council's Financial Regulations provide a guide to all budget-holders and are subject to annual review.</p> |
|  | Evidence Risk is being managed | <p>The Financial Performance for 2021/22 was in line with budgeted expectations, and the reserves support provided from the economic recovery reserve was in line with 2020 expectations.</p> <p>The first quarter of 2022/23 is showing an initial financial pressures of circa £800k that will need to be mitigated and managed accordingly.</p>   |



| Risk Name | Detail                 | 30 Sep 2022<br>Status  |
|-----------|------------------------|--|
|           | Consequences / Impacts | <p>Accurate, well-controlled budgeting relates directly to the corporate Objective creating a modern and efficient council. Indirectly, through the financial decision-making process, this links to the achievement of all of the Council's corporate objectives.</p> <p>Inaccurate budgeting negatively affects the Council's ability to make evidence-based decisions. A significant underspend at year-end could indicate that funds have been needlessly diverted from a competing priority. A significant overspend at year-end could result in reserves being used to support lower priority objectives. Both of these could result in reputational damage for the Council.</p> <p>Failure to address the causes of inaccurate budgeting could negatively impact the Council's culture of financial management, which in turn increases the risk of poor financial decision-making.</p> |

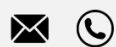


## Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Report for:</b>   | Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee             |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  | Quarter 2 Performance Report – Legal and Democratic Services      |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2022                                     |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Councillor Graeme Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I   |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | Quarter 2 Performance Report                                      |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  | None  |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> |   |

### Report Author / Responsible Officer

Mark Brookes, Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services)



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|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Corporate Priorities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clean, safe and enjoyable environment</li> <li>Building strong and vibrant communities</li> <li>Ensuring economic growth and prosperity</li> <li>Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</li> <li>Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery</li> </ul> |
|-----------------------------|---|

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | Climate and ecological emergency  |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All   |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | To provide Members with the performance report for quarter two in relation to Legal and Democratic Services |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | That Members note the report.   |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        | Quarterly   |

- Members will find enclosed with the report the Inphase performance data for Legal and Democratic Services. A number of indicators which were previously in this report have been removed to management only as they were consistently at 100% and are therefore now reported to the Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services) for performance monitoring only. The indicator for Freedom of Information requests will be reinstated to this report for next quarter.
- The only Operational Risk which falls within this area is CE\_R01 Failure to deliver successful elections and there have been no changes to this risk during the second quarter.
- The services included in this report are those services which fall under the Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services), which are Legal, Licensing and Corporate Support (which includes the combined teams of Members Support, Electoral Registration and Corporate Support).

#### **The Legal Team**

- The Legal team frequently represent the Council in the courts and tribunals, leading on injunctions, prosecutions and defending employment tribunal cases and judicial review proceedings. In the last quarter the Legal team presented the following cases in court:-

| <b>Matter</b>          | <b>Client/type</b> | <b>Case Detail</b>   |
|------------------------|--------------------|--|
| PSPO Breach (spitting) | DBC -V- Cornwall   | Fine £107, victim surcharge £34 and costs £185.55<br><br>Total:- £326.55         |
| Littering prosecution  | DBC-v-Gomm         | - Fine £40 (littering) £60 (Obstruction), victim surcharge £34 and costs £185.55 |

|                         |                     |   |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---|
|                         |                     | Total:- £319.55   |
| Fly-tipping offence     | DBC-v- Nevin        | Fine £480, victim surcharge £48 and costs £599.47<br>Total:- £1127.47 |
| Fly-tipping prosecution | DBC-v- Martin Nevin | Fine £320, victim surcharge £34, costs £599.47                        |

### **The Licensing Team**

#### 5. Updates as follows

- Animal Licensing has seen several new applications to register business for boarding kennels and breeding licenses. There are also three possible enforcement investigations on going in respect of breaches of regulations by licence holders and unlicensed animal boarders.
- The team have one officer, Phil Nolan who has almost completed his 12 month course to enable him to complete Animal Licensing reports and enforcement he has undertaken this course in addition to his normal enforcement work.
- September has also seen all pavement licenses renewed and several new licenses applied for. There have also been several objections to these licenses from members of the public and Departments within the Council. This has resulted in at least one pavement licence being refused due to ongoing issues.
- Officers are also engaged in the daily issue of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licenses being renewed and new Licenses being issued, also taken place are random inspections of vehicles and drivers within the Dacorum area.
- September is also a busy time for Caravan sites within the area most of which will have to see their regulations and conditions updated this is an ongoing procedure involving the visiting of all sites and issuing invoices for the coming year.

### **Corporate and Democratic Support**

#### 6. Despite summer recess taking place for the duration of August, during Quarter 2, Corporate and Democratic Support carried out the following:-

- Delivered 2 Full Council meetings, which were live streamed via YouTube
- Supported 21 committees (including agendas & minutes)

- Supported 6 corporate meetings (including Portfolio Holder updates)
- Supported 3 appeals hearings
- Processed 15 Portfolio Holder Decisions
- Processed 4 Officer Decisions
  
- 2 Member Development sessions that were due to take place had to be re-scheduled to take place in Qtr 2 were deferred;
  - 21<sup>st</sup> July – Domestic Abuse Policy (moved to October)
  - 13<sup>th</sup> September – Cultural Awareness Training (to be rescheduled)
  
- Administered the Corporate Complaints System, carrying out assessment, processing, summarising and allocation of;
  - 131 Stage 1 complaints
  - 8 Stage 2 complaints
  - 275 Service Requests

### **Mayoralty**

During Q2, we marked the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the service supported the delivery of activities to commemorate and remember Her Majesty, as well as delivering a ceremony to deliver the proclamation of King Charles III.

Dates were agreed with Pendley Manor to host the 2023 Mayors Civic Reception. Plans are also underway to hold the Mayor’s 2023 Civic Service.

The Mayor attended 18 engagements, both within Borough supporting local community & business events and at events hosted by Mayors & Chairs across Hertfordshire

The Deputy Mayor attended 4 engagements on behalf of the Mayor

### **Digital Print & Post Room**

During Qtr 2 the team;

- Processed and franked a total of 73,170 outgoing mail items, at a total cost of £37,082 (includes HVCCG & CAB which is recharged)
- Processed and banked 609 cheques with a total income of £140,171.90
- Received and banked 19 emergency cash transactions with a total value of £15,080.28

### **Electoral Services**

7. During Quarter 2, the following changes were made to the Electoral Register:-

Additions 944

Deletions 1142

Changes 179

Movers 1061

In addition to registration, the following audits were carried out:

- Manual checks on the over 76 markers have been completed with 5000 electors records checked and updated accordingly.
- Checking all overseas electors have completed some form of absent voting and emailing all of those that haven't persuading them to do so with a link to the electoral commission proxy and postal vote applications

### **Staff Training**

Throughout Q2, a variety of individual and team training and networking took place, including:

- Attending boundary maintenance review training provided by Xpress, the ERS software provider.
- Attending two Eastern Branch Meeting regarding the upcoming elections in May 2023 and received updates from the Electoral Commission, DLUHC and the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA)
- A member of the team provided some internal training of CSU staff ahead of the annual canvass. To date 4 staff have been trained. The CSU have also been offered the opportunity for refresher training on Electoral Services in general.
- The Team Leader attended the AEA & DLUHC Seminar on the Elections Act. A very informative day explaining the aspects of the Act coming into effect in 2023 (Accessibility of Polls and Voter ID)
- The team took part in the Electoral Services Technology discussions, which looked at the systems and processes in place and how they can link to others within the council. In additions the team recorded the volume of calls received to see if there's any further work to be done with the support provided by the CSU.

### **Staffing**

The Electoral Services Lead Officer vacancy was successfully filled and an existing team member was the successful candidate. This therefore created a full time Electoral Services Officer vacancy within the team. The recruitment process has progressed and the advert will be published in due course.

### **Annual Canvass 2022**

Annual Canvass begun in Q2 by the completion of all annual canvass preparations, production of the risk register and project plan and all register checks. The National Data Matching exercise was completed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, and all Local Data matching was completed by the 8<sup>th</sup> of August.

Preparations have started for the annual canvass 2022. The project plan, risk assessment and timetable have been produced and all relevant dates communicated and agreed with the printers. Route 1 properties were then sent the Canvass Communication A (CCA) on the

22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2022 and Route 2 properties were issued with the Canvass Communication B (CCB) form on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2022.

During September, 9296 reminder canvass forms were sent to all non-responding route 2 properties.

The canvass is running to plan and all forms received are being processed accordingly.

The team are now preparing for the door knock canvass stage, which will start at the end of October. All canvassers have been appointed and the training for them prepared.

### **Elections 2023**

Election preparation have begun ahead of the May 2023 polls, a whole team meeting along with Members support took place in July 2022 to discuss all aspects of the elections and tasks to be undertaken. A full audit of the election stores also took place to check stock of all equipment required. The team have begun work on the staffing database, contacting a portion of staff on various aspects in order to cleanse the staffing database further ahead of next year's polls. This has included requesting election staff's proof of their right to work in the UK and asking all existing Poll Clerks if they would be interested in taking on the Presiding Officer role.

The Elections Project board had its first meeting, which was an introduction to the elections in 2023, the new requirements of the Elections Act and had a look through the project plan.

The team debated processes and suggested ways of working, many of which will be incorporated into the planning and delivery stages.

Notification was received with regards to the Boys Brigade HQ being unavailable for the elections in 2023. Therefore work has begun to consult on an alternative polling station.


### **Hemel Hempstead BID ballot**

Work begun to assist with the Hemel Hempstead BID ballot due in November 2022, all project meetings have taken place to ensure the smooth running and successful collaborative working that is required.

All key dates have been agreed with the printers and the election timetable produced.

### **Kings Langley Neighbourhood Planning Referendum**

Work begun around assisting with the Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan Referendum proposed for later this year. Planning is in the final stages and the election timetable will soon be implemented.

| Measure Code | Measure Name  | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT   | Comments   |
|--------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|--|
| DPA01        | Percentage of Data Protection Act requests met in 31 days | 92.59%              | 100.00%             | 90.00%              | 100.00%             | 87.50%             | 100.00%            |  | Two Departments that missed DPA Targets;<br>Legal Governance - complex request that involves Police matters<br>Regulatory Services |





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## Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Report for:</b>   | Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee                             |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  | Quarter 2 Performance Report – Commercial Development                             |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 1 November 2022   |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Councillor Andrew Williams, Portfolio Holder for Commercial Strategy and Delivery |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I   |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | Quarter 2 Performance Report  |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  | None  |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> |   |

### Report Author / Responsible Officer

Ben Hosier – Head of Commercial Development



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|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Corporate Priorities</b>                          | A clean, safe and enjoyable environment<br>Building strong and vibrant communities<br>Ensuring economic growth and prosperity<br>Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need<br>Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery<br>Climate and ecological emergency |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All   |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | To provide Members with the performance report for quarter four in relation to Corporate and Contracted Services.   |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | That Members note the performance of the service as set out in the report.  |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        | Quarterly   |

1. This report provides an update on the performance during Q2 of the Commercial Development Service
2. Procurement Activity

The Procurement team are currently supporting the delivery of a number of commissioning and tendering activities.

#### Q2 - Commissioning Activities

| Project   | Status   | Service                           | Duration                     | Total Value |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Nurse-led Absence Management (WBC Framework)                          | More analysis of the benefits of a nurse-led approach needs to be undertaken given the cost savings that could be achieved by an in-house absence management system. A paper will be presented to SLT. | People and Transformation         | 4 years                      | £100,000    |
| Car Salary Sacrifice Scheme   | Commissioning report presented to Commercial Board in October, specification & tender docs need to be approved by Commercial Board to progress to tender stage   | People & Transformation           | 4 years                      | £192,000    |
| Housing Benefit Resilience Service                                    | Commissioning in progress  | Revenues Benefits & Fraud         | 4 Years                      | £540,000    |
| Supply, Installation and Maintenance of the Multi-Functional Printers | In the early stages of the commissioning process. To include the Reprographics machine which expires 30/09/2023.   | Corporate and Commercial Services | 5 years                      | £150,000    |
| Mobile Phone Communications   | Commissioning process commenced  | Corporate and Commercial Services | 5 years                      | £150,000    |
| Parking Enforcement Contract Compliance & Business Process            | Commissioning in progress but linked to Smart Parking project  | Commercial Development            | 10 years (5 years + 5 years) | £3,970,000  |
| Parking Enforcement Integrated Systems & Software                     | Commissioning in progress but linked to Smart Parking project  | Commercial Development            | 10 years (5 years + 5 years) | £,920,000   |

| Project                                       | Status                                    | Service                        | Duration                             | Total Value |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Tree Maintenance Service Lot 1                | Commissioning in early stages of progress | Environmental Services         | 5 years                              | £575,000    |
| Tree Maintenance Service Lot 1                | Commissioning in early stages of progress | Environmental Services         | 5 years                              | £200,000    |
| Community Alarm Monitoring Contract           | Commissioning in progress                 | Housing Management             | 5 Years                              | £366,678    |
| All voluntary sector contracts                | Commissioning in progress                 | Place Communities & Enterprise | 5 Years                              | TBA         |
| Facilities Management Service                 | Commissioning in progress                 | Property Services              | 5 Years (plus 2 x 1 year extensions) | £2,436,000  |
| Furniture for sheltered accommodation         | Commissioning in progress                 | Housing Management             | 5 years                              | £400,000    |
| Laundry Equipment for Sheltered Accommodation | Commissioning in progress                 | Housing Management             | 5 years                              | £120,000    |
| Public Planning Notices                       | Commissioning in progress                 | Development Management         | 28 months                            | £128,000    |

## Q2 - Tendering Activities

| Title of Tender  | Service Area                | Contract Duration               | Estimate Value £ |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Telecommunications Services  | Digital                     | 3 years (plus 2 year extension) | £325,000         |
| Temporary Agency Staff   | People                      | Up to 15.1.24                   | Up to £2,000,000 |
| Supply of Liquid Fuels   | Environmental Services      | 2 years (plus 2 year extension) | £1,000,000       |
| Election Management System Licence Agreement                         | Legal & Democratic Services | 3 years                         | £45,000          |
| Supply, Installation & maintenance of Stair lifts and Ceiling Joists | Housing Property Services   | 5 years                         | £1,000,000       |

### 3. Procurement Compliance

Following a Procurement Assurance internal audit report, the recommendation was to update the Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee with any non-compliance procurement activities.

Number of times the Procurement Standing Orders have been set aside during Q2

| Contract                           | Justification  | Responsible Officer |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Community Alarm Monitoring Service | <p>Request to approve an exemption to comply with the Council's Commissioning and Procurement Standing Orders and extend the current Community Alarm Monitoring Service for a 12 months period to allow the Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To allow the organisation more time to look at commissioning process and other options available.</li> <li>• Carry out a pre-procurement market engagement with suppliers on developments within the market and any new innovations and provisional costs;</li> <li>• Obtain input from tenants;</li> <li>• To consider other models for the delivery of a community alarm monitoring service.</li> </ul> <p>This will allow sufficient time for the department to review alternative models for service delivery and future proofing of the service with a view to obtaining best value for money. The current contract was due to expire on 27th June 2022, by extending for twelve months it will now end on 29th June 2023</p> <p>The decision was made to extend the contract for a further 12 months as opposed to a 6 month extension to allow the Council enough time to look at other options available such as bringing the service in house or commissioning to an external agency and making sure the service users safety is not compromised whilst carrying out the process</p> | Oliver Jackson      |

Non-Compliant expenditure during Q2

| <b>Contract</b>                               | <b>Annual Value</b> | <b>Reason</b>        | <b>Responsible Officer</b> | <b>Mitigation</b>   |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Fixed Telecommunications                      | £65,000             | Contract expired     | Vacant Post                | New tender submissions being evaluated – contract award likely in next few weeks  |
| Supply of Sacks for Environmental Services    | £40,000             | Contract expired     | Richard Le Brun            | Recommissioning of new supply commenced in June 2022  |
| Temporary Agency Staff                        | £2,000,000          | Contract(s) expired  | Matt Rawdon                | Corporate project - commissioning process signed off by Commercial Board in July 22. Awaiting to direct award to Crown Commercial Services framework suppliers. |
| Car Salary Sacrifice Scheme                   | £48,000             | Contract expired     | Matt Rawdon                | Recommissioning of new service commenced in June 2022   |
| Verge Hardening Programme                     | £350,000            | Contract expired     | Karen Proudfoot            | There is a need to obtain authority to extend the current agreement   |
| Supply of Bins & Caddies                      | TBC                 | No contract in place | Richard Le Brun            | Commissioning of new supply to commence   |
| Haulage of Waste from Cupid Green             | TBC                 | No contract in place | Richard Le Brun            | Commissioning of new contract to commence   |
| Supply & Fitting of Tyres to Commercial Fleet | TBC                 | No contract in place | Richard Le Brun            | Commissioning of new supply to commence   |
| Supply of Grounds Maintenance Equipment       | TBC                 | No contract in place | Richard Le Brun            | Commissioning of new supply to commence   |

#### 4. Parking Services

During both the Covid pandemic and the ensuing recovery period, the demand for both on and off street parking spaces across Dacorum was significantly reduced. Data from both Q1 and Q2 in 2022 shows that the number of sessions when compared to the same quarter in 2019 are approximately 10% lower. It is becoming clear that customer parking behaviours appear to have changed as a result of Covid.

##### Parking Sessions

| 2022/23    | Apr     | May     | Jun     | Jul     | Aug     | Sep     | Oct | Nov |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----|-----|
| On street  | 12,432  | 13,141  | 12,805  | 12,979  | 12,003  | 12,540  |     |     |
| Off Street | 93,041  | 98,072  | 93,253  | 98,490  | 93,716  | 95,135  |     |     |
| Total      | 105,473 | 111,213 | 106,058 | 111,469 | 105,719 | 107,675 |     |     |

| 2019/20    | Apr     | May     | Jun     | Jul     | Aug     | Sep     | Oct     | Nov     |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| On street  | 16,817  | 17,681  | 17,184  | 18,060  | 16,154  | 16,261  | 17,774  | 17,423  |
| Off Street | 97,975  | 105,540 | 102,656 | 105,040 | 102,356 | 103,193 | 88,121  | 86,099  |
| Total      | 114,792 | 123,221 | 119,840 | 123,100 | 118,510 | 119,454 | 105,895 | 103,522 |

| Difference | Apr    | May     | Jun     | Jul     | Aug     | Sep     | Oct | Nov |
|------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----|-----|
| On street  | -4,385 | -4,540  | -4,379  | -5,081  | -4,151  | -3,721  |     |     |
| %          | -26%   | -26%    | -25%    | -39%    | -35%    | 30%     |     |     |
| Off Street | -4,394 | -7,468  | -9,403  | -6,550  | -8,640  | -8,058  |     |     |
| %          | -4%    | -7%     | -9%     | -6%     | 9%      | -8%     |     |     |
| Total      | -9,319 | -12,008 | -13,782 | -11,631 | -12,791 | -11,940 |     |     |
| %          | -8%    | -10%    | -12%    | -9%     | -11%    | -11%    |     |     |

**The number of parking sessions during Q2 in 2022/23 against the same period in 2019/20 (Pre-Covid) is running at a 10% increase.**

The number of PCN's being issued continues to be significantly lower than pre-covid levels, some of this has been caused by a reduced level of Civil Enforcement Officers working on the contract due to recruitment difficulties (this is a national issues across the industry), and some of the reduction is down to the drop in parking sessions as a result in customer parking behaviour. The reduced CEO level has resulted in SABA paying the Council a penalty as stipulated in the contract, for Q1 this figure was £11,632 and for Q2 this figure was £23,270.

##### PCN's Issued

| 2022/23    | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| On street  | 427 | 432 | 406 | 290 | 289 | 426 |     |     |
| Off Street | 347 | 268 | 302 | 281 | 165 | 203 |     |     |
| Total      | 774 | 700 | 708 | 571 | 454 | 629 |     |     |

| 2019/20    | Apr   | May   | Jun   | Jul   | Aug   | Sep   | Oct   | Nov | D |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|---|
| On street  | 576   | 660   | 632   | 683   | 792   | 624   | 581   | 523 | 3 |
| Off Street | 437   | 686   | 659   | 658   | 592   | 599   | 633   | 340 | 3 |
| Total      | 1,013 | 1,346 | 1,291 | 1,341 | 1,384 | 1,223 | 1,214 | 863 | 6 |

| Difference | Apr  | May  | Jun  | Jul  | Aug  | Sep  | Oct | Nov | D |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|---|
| On street  | -149 | -228 | -226 | -393 | -503 | -198 |     |     |   |
| %          | -26% | -35% | -36% | -58% | -64% | -32% |     |     |   |
| Off Street | -90  | -418 | -357 | -377 | -427 | -396 |     |     |   |
| %          | -21% | -61% | -54% | -57% | -72% | -66% |     |     |   |
| Total      | -239 | -646 | -583 | -770 | -930 | -594 |     |     |   |
| %          | -24% | -48% | -45% | -57% | -67% | -49% |     |     |   |

The number of PCN's issued during Q2 in 2022/23 against the same period in 2019/20 (Pre-Covid) is running at a 58% decrease.

### TRO's

- **Marlowes (North)** – Proposal to introduce Pay to Park bays, No waiting restrictions, No waiting/no loading restrictions, and Disabled badge holder only bays.

The formal consultation has concluded and our consultancy (ADL) have provided their formal consultation report, which is available to view on the [Councils results of completed consultations web page](#) along with documentation in the form of the Statement of Reasons, the Notice of Proposal, the draft TRO, the TRO schedule, and the initial letter with plan.

The decision to progress the scheme has been made, and ADL have put together a works package. We have now just started the advertising & Implementation stage. The scheme is set to go live on Friday 4 November 2022. Parking Services are in the process of getting the TRO signed and sealed by the legal team. The 'Notice of Making' will appear in the Hemel Hempstead Gazette next Wednesday (19<sup>th</sup>) and site notices will be placed on the 18<sup>th</sup> October (evening). ADL will instruct Murrills to programme the work for the days leading up to the 4<sup>th</sup> as they will need to install the machines, fit the signs and carry out the lining works which will no doubt be a couple of days work.

One solar powered Pay to Park payment machine has been received and added to the two already in store in The Forum. Saba have an IPS engineer booked to undertake the re-commissioning process for these three machines.

- **Waterhouse Street** - Proposal to reduce the taxi rank from the end of the southernmost bus stop to the pedestrian crossing to be replaced with disabled badge holder only bays restricted to a three hour maximum stay with no return within three hours and also Pay to Park bays.

The consultation has concluded and our consultancy (ADL) have provided their consultation report, which is available to view on the [Councils results of completed consultations web page](#)

Received decision from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Contracted Services after reading the consultation report, and we have decided to make revisions to the proposal, which are:

1. Instead of proposing Pay to park bays on the western side of the road after the pedestrian crossing, we propose to keep the existing taxi rank, although only five standard vehicles in length\* please see the revised proposal in the map below  
*\* A standard vehicle length would be equal to the length of a family car such as a Ford Focus*
2. Proposing 8 disabled badge holder only bays on the western side of Waterhouse Street, instead of proposing 7 disabled badge holder only bays restricted from Monday to Sunday from 8am to 8pm to a maximum of 3 hours parking with no return within 2 hours.

The County and local councillors have agreed to the proposed changes and we have received the draft TRO, schedule, statement of reasons, and plan from ADL. We are now making plans for the statutory consultation, which will include a public notice within the Hemel Hempstead Gazette within the next few weeks.

- **Station Road, Hemel Hempstead** – Proposal to extend the no waiting at any time double yellow lines to protect the grass verge & footpath and for general safety reasons further to Cllr Riddick’s correspondence with Parking Services.

The Advertising and Implementation stage has been completed. The TRO is signed and sealed. The TRO went live on Friday 30 September 2022, and we enforced on the same day. We can now issue PCNs to any vehicles seen parked on the road, path, or verge in the location. Since the TRO went live we have issued 5 PCNs to vehicles seen parked on the grass verge in contravention of the parking restriction. There have been no other reports of vehicles parking there, and Parking Services believes the introduction of the double yellow lines has been really successful as recent site visits show no vehicles currently parking on the grass verge.

- **The Denes, Hemel Hempstead** – Proposal to limit the existing parking bays outside the shopping areas to two hours with no return within two hours Monday to Sunday  
8:00am - 7:00pm further to Cllr Maddern’s correspondence with Parking Services.

Our consultancy (ADL) have undertaken a site visit and assessment and have engineered a scheme design that is agreeable to the local stakeholders in the area including no waiting at any time on the junctions of Pinecroft/The Denes, Barnacres Road/Georgewood Road, Barnacres Road/The Denes.



Our consultancy (ADL) has undertaken an informal resident/business consultation to introduce the proposed restrictions. The consultation is advertised on the Councils [Waiting restrictions \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](http://dacorum.gov.uk) web page. The consultation period ended for the public on Friday 19 August 2022. However, one of the statutory consultees (Nash Mills parish Council) have requested an extension as they wish to discuss this in their meeting which was agreed and we have now received their comments in which they have requested that we extend the proposed double yellow lines on Georgewood Road to prevent verge parking on the bend of the road. Parking Services has instructed ADL to include this as a recommendation in their consultation report, which should be received in November and will be shared with councillors for comment.

- **Anchor Lane, Hemel Hempstead** - Further to Cllr Allen and Herts Police's correspondence with Parking Services, Parking Services propose to introduce No Waiting at Any Time (Double Yellow Line) restrictions at the junction with Heath Lane up to the end of the current No Waiting 'Mon-Fri 8.30am-4.30pm' (Single Yellow Line). There are currently three restrictions in a small area on Anchor Lane, Parking Services are proposing to make the area less confusing to motorists, and to help to prevent parents parking (and driving) along the pavements at school drop off and pick up times.. Also at the junction of Beechfield Road and Anchor Lane the proposal is to introduce additional no waiting at any time restrictions in order to prevent parking close to or on the mini roundabout.

Our consultancy (ADL) have undertaken a site visit and assessment on Friday 22 April 2022 and have engineered a scheme design that is agreeable to the local stakeholders in the area. Parking Services are proposing to introduce no waiting at any time (double yellow) lines on Beechfield Road including protection for the Anchor Lane/Beechfield Road junction. Correspondence has taken place between Councillors and Parking Services to extend these double yellow lines from the Beechfield Road/Anchor Lane junction to outside number 38 Beechfield Road as currently residents are parking their vehicles on the grass verge, which we are proposing to stop.

Parking Services has received the decision to pursue with the scheme and have instructed ADL to start the informal residents consultation. ADL are currently making those arrangements.

- **Elm Grove, Berkhamsted ('F' Zone)** - Proposal to introduce a residents only Controlled Parking Zone in order to formalise current parking habits to avoid obstruction currently caused by inappropriate parking by commuters visiting the town centre.

Our consultancy (ADL) have undertaken a site visit and assessment on Friday 22 April 2022 to engineer a scheme design that is agreeable to the

local stakeholders in the area. Proposed for restricted time to be Mon-Sun 8am-8pm with the zone named 'F'. The proposed 'F' zone would have the same restricted hours as our existing 'C' zone. Therefore, we propose 700 hours of visitor sessions for residents with a maximum of 3 permits per household.

The call in period has expired and we are currently informally consulting residents and business on a proposal to alter the existing parking arrangements at Elm Grove, Berkhamsted, consisting of the introduction of:

- 1) A permit parking area (Controlled Parking Zone F) - permitting only permit holders to park in that area.
- 2) Additional no-waiting-at-any-time (double yellow line) restrictions - to prevent parking on both sides of Elm Grove.

### **The proposals**

The proposals are in response to concerns being raised about non-resident vehicles (consisting of shoppers and commuters) parking on Elm Grove meaning residents are unable to park near to their properties.

These measures are also being proposed for the following reasons:

- To prevent double parking on Elm Grove
- To enable residents to park close to their homes by preventing commuters/shoppers parking on the road (whom would not be eligible for a permit)
- To prevent parking at the junction of Elm Grove and A4251 High Street
- To generally improve the safety and navigability of Elm Grove for road users

The proposed changes and plan are set out in the document available on the Councils web page: [Waiting restrictions \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](http://dacorum.gov.uk)

The consultation has concluded and our consultancy (ADL) have provided their consultation report, which is available to view on the [Councils results of completed consultations web page](#)

The report is currently with County and ward councillors for comments as to whether we pursue to the formal statutory consultation.

- **Old Fishery Lane, Berkhamsted** - Proposal to introduce no waiting at any time restrictions (double yellow line) on Old Fishery Lane. Currently vehicles are parking at the end of the road, on the turning head and outside homes. DBC & HCC have received complaints from residents that they cannot use their drives. There has also been a canal boat fire and the fire brigade struggled to get as close to the fire as they wanted. Therefore, Parking Services has offered to introduce the restrictions, if HCC provide the funding to do so. HCC have agreed and invoice sent. Parking Services has raised an EDRS to start the process to introduce the proposed restrictions. The timeline is as follows:

Time Scale;

Date Notification received: 15/09/22

Day 1 - 21 (16-09-2022-10/10/2022) With S151 Officer & Monitoring officer for comments

Day 22 (10/10/2022) (Decision sent to Portfolio Holder, Overview & Scrutiny Chairman/Vice chair and Group Leaders/Deputy Leaders and ward councillors for information and consideration)

Day 29 (17/10/2022) Signed Copy with Member Support = Decision Published

Day 36 (24/10/2022) 5.00 p.m. End of 'Call-in' Period decision may be implemented if no 'call-ins' received

(Day 1-29 includes weekends and Bank Holidays.










Day 29-36 (call in period) includes weekends but excludes Bank Holidays).

## 5. Leisure Contract

Attendance figures for leisure centres at Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead and the athletics track at Jarman's Park are shown below. The overall attendance figures pre-pandemic were 20,000 per week on average.

### Weekly Attendance Data

## Dacorum Leisure Contract 2022

| Week Commencing              | Gym   |   | Group Ex   |   | Swimming  |   | Outdoor   |   |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week Commencing              | Hemel   | Berkhamsted   | Hemel  | Berkhamsted   | Hemel   | Berkhamsted   | Berkhamsted 3G  | Track   | Total   |
| 2019/20 Average              | 132   | 56  | 2,898  | 816   | 1,672   | 415   | N/A   | 557   | 6,546   |
| 2021/22 Q1 Weekly Average    | 1,887   | 1,399   | 1,271  | 381   | 2,464   | 1,221   | 852   | 517   | 9,992   |
| 2021/22 Q2 Weekly Average    | 1,414   | 881   | 1,934  | 571   | 4,283   | 1,374   | 836   | 471   | 11,764  |
| 2021/22 Q3 Weekly Average    | 1,192   | 773   | 1,704  | 538   | 3,370   | 1,136   | 717   | 274   | 9,704   |
| 2021/22 Q4 Weekly Average    | 1,401   | 926   | 2,131  | 687   | 3,923   | 1,420   | 831   | 433   | 11,752  |
| 2022/23 Q1 Weekly Average    | 1,309   | 1,048   | 2,024  | 650   | 4,580   | 1,466   | 795   | 980   | 12,852  |
| 2022/23 Q2 Weekly Average    | 2,836 <sup>1</sup>  | 1,072   | 1,799  | 611   | 5,021   | 1,488   | 809   | 612   | 14,248  |
| Direction of Travel last Qtr |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Average Attendance           | 1,453   | 879   | 1,966  | 608   | 3,616   | 1,217   | 807   | 549   | 11,095  |

<sup>1</sup> Increase in attendance at gym in Hemel is mainly due to the installation of entry scanning facility

Financial support from the Council to EA ceased from 2022/23 and an agreement on the management fee for 2022/23 was negotiated resulting in the Council receiving an annual figure of £430k, invoiced on a monthly basis (£35,833).

The management fee is approximately 50% of the contractual management fee for 2022/23, but it is recognised that the leisure industry is still recovering from the pandemic and attendance has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

6. Garage Service

The information below shows the number of terminations and commencements that have been completed within Q1.

|                         | 01/04/2022 | 11/04/2022 | 18/04/2022 | 25/04/2022 | 02/05/2022 | 09/05/2022 | 16/05/2022 | 23/05/2022 | 30/05/2022 | 06/06/2022 | 13/06/2022 | 20/06/2022 | 27/06/2020 | Total |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------|
|                         | Wk 1       | wk2        | Wk 3       | Wk 4       | Wk 5       | WK6        | Wk 7       | Wk 8       | Wk 9       | Wk 10      | Wk 11      | Wk 12      | Wk 13      |       |
| <b>Terminations</b>     | 13         | 10         | 10         | 6          | 5          | 11         | 18         | 9          | 10         | 7          | 8          | 8          | 10         | 125   |
| <b>Commencements</b>    | 42         | 25         | 15         | 10         | 5          | 20         | 9          | 9          | 10         | 9          | 8          | 7          | 13         | 182   |
| <b>Difference</b>       | 29         | 15         | 5          | 4          | 0          | 9          | -9         | 0          | 0          | 2          | 0          | -1         | 3          | 57    |
| <b>Occupied Garages</b> | 5222       | 5237       | 5242       | 5246       | 5246       | 5255       | 5246       | 5246       | 5246       | 5248       | 5248       | 5247       | 5250       |       |
| <b>Void Garages</b>     | 1916       | 1901       | 1896       | 1892       | 1892       | 1883       | 1892       | 1892       | 1892       | 1890       | 1890       | 1891       | 1888       |       |



The information below shows the number of terminations and commencements that have been completed within Q2.

|                          | 04/07/2022 | 11/07/2022 | 18/07/2022 | 25/07/2022 | 01/08/2022 | 08/08/2022 | 15/08/2022 | 22/08/2022 | 29/08/2022 | 05/09/2022 | 12/09/2022 | 19/09/2022 | 26/09/2022 | Total |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------|
|                          | Wk 14      | Wk 15      | Wk 16      | Wk 17      | Wk 18      | Wk 19      | Wk 20      | Wk 21      | wk22       | Wk 23      | Wk 24      | Wk 25      | WK26       |       |
| <b>Terminations</b>      | 7          | 6          | 6          | 6          | 12         | 10         | 11         | 6          | 10         | 8          | 10         | 8          | 9          | 109   |
| <b>Commencements</b>     | 12         | 12         | 6          | 5          | 4          | 12         | 8          | 13         | 8          | 10         | 16         | 6          | 16         | 128   |
| <b>Weekly difference</b> | 5          | 6          | 0          | -1         | -8         | 2          | -3         | 7          | -2         | 2          | 6          | -2         | 7          | 19    |
| <b>Occupied Garages</b>  | 5255       | 5261       | 5261       | 5260       | 5252       | 5254       | 5251       | 5258       | 5256       | 5258       | 5264       | 5262       | 5269       |       |
| <b>Void Garages</b>      | 1883       | 1877       | 1877       | 1878       | 1886       | 1884       | 1887       | 1880       | 1882       | 1880       | 1874       | 1876       | 1869       |       |

7. Commercial Programme

Members of the Committee have been made aware of the Commercial Programme that has commenced over the summer. The Full Business Cases are being finalised over the autumn/ winter 2022-23 and results of these will be reported in due course to Members, including the Finance & Resource Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

| Project   | Lead Officer                  | Project Sponsor(s)           | Directorate                     | Additional Comments  |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Phase 1</b>                                    |                               |                              |                                 |  |
| Smart Parking                                     | Ben Hosier                    | Catherine Silva<br>Donayre   | Corporate & Commercial Services |  |
| Light Industrial Units                            | David Barrett<br>Richard Rice | James Doe                    | Place                           |  |
| Commercial Waste                                  | Richard LeBrun                | Sarah Pemberton              | Resident Services               | This work has been transferred to the Waste Transformation Programme   |
| CCTV  | Karen Proudfoot               | Richard LeBrun               | Resident Services               |  |
| Fees and Charges                                  | Fiona Jump                    | Nigel Howcutt                | Corporate & Commercial Services | To be presented as part of the budget setting process  |
| Environmental Shared Service                      | Emma Walker                   | Richard LeBrun               | Resident Services               |  |
| Commercial/ Housing Property Services Integration | Mark Pinnell<br>Richard Rice  | Sarah Pemberton<br>James Doe | Resident Services<br>Place      | Early work on this FBC has led to work being taken forward by Housing & Property to review further. A report will be proposed around this in due course. |
| <b>Phase 2</b>                                    |                               |                              |                                 |  |
| Fleet EV  | Craig Thorpe                  | Richard LeBrun               | Resident Services               | This has been transferred into the Waste Transformation Programme.   |
| Developer Account                                 | Alex Robinson                 | James Doe                    | Place                           |  |
| Planning Enforcement Shared Service               | Alex Robinson                 | James Doe                    | Place                           |  |
| Legal Shared Service                              | Mark Brookes                  | Catherine Silva<br>Donayre   | Corporate & Commercial Services |  |
| Homes & Contents Insurance Service                | Fiona Jump                    | Nigel Howcutt                | Corporate & Commercial Services |  |

| Measure Code | Measure Name                                     | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT  | Comments  |
|--------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--|---|
| FIN12        | Garages Income ytd budget against ytd actual     | £1,692,336          | £1,701,667          | £811,724            | £816,800            | £1,627,677         | £1,636,563         |   | <p>30 Sep 2022<br/>Garage income is only 0.5% below budget for Q2, we will review the income figures over the next few months.</p> <p>31 Jul 2022<br/>The Q1 income is only very slightly below the target (less than 1%). The Service will monitor the actual income to target over the remainder of the year.</p>   |
| FIN13        | Car Parking Income ytd budget against ytd actual | £1,106,879          | £1,356,640          | £566,400            | £678,320            | £1,106,943         | £1,386,495         |  | <p>30 Sep 2022<br/>Car parking income is almost 20% below budget at Q2, the usage has still not picked up since the Covid lockdowns and customer behaviours appear to have changed.</p> <p>31 Jul 2022<br/>The income levels for Q1 are 16.5% below target. The usage in car parks has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels and it is looking like motorists parking behaviours have changed in-line with more remote and flexible ways of working that have been introduced since the pandemic. The Service will continue to review and monitor this position over the remainder of the year.</p> |



## Finance and Resources

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Report for:</b>   | Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee   |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  | Quarter 2 Performance Report –<br>People<br>Transformation<br>Digital and ICT<br>Communications |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 1 November 2022   |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Councillor Graeme Elliot  |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I   |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  |   |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> | KPI – Key Performance Indicators  |

#### Report Author / Responsible Officer

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|--|--|
| <b>Corporate Priorities</b>                          | A clean, safe and enjoyable environment<br>Building strong and vibrant communities<br>Ensuring economic growth and prosperity<br>Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery<br>Climate and ecological emergency |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All wards  |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | 1. To provide the Q2 performance information for monitoring and information  |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | 1. That Members note the report and identify any areas where they require additional information   |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        | N/A  |

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This paper will provide an update on service performance over Q2 2022/2023 for People, Transformation (including CSU and Climate and Ecological Emergency), Digital and ICT, Communications, and also highlight key achievements over this same period.

## 2. People

2.1. The total days sickness absence for quarter 2 is less than the previous quarter and similar to quarter 2 last year.

2.2. Detailed analysis shows the main contributors to sickness absence were medical infection (CV-19 related), musculoskeletal, surgery and mental health issues. HR work with management to assess cases to understand the reasons for the absence so that a tailored approach can be devised. For cases of work-related sickness, mechanisms are in place to identify the 'possible cause', so that managers can find solutions to alleviate these pressures whilst still setting expectations of work delivery. Alternatively, for cases including home life stressors, there are many support processes in place such as: occupational health; counselling; sign posting to external support; and our new mental health first aider programme.

2.3. The sickness scrutiny group continues to meet monthly to assess all sickness absence and looks to identify trends and areas of concern. Any such cases will be escalated to a more formal route as per the policy. This group also monitors return work interview compliance, as well as carrying out spot checks on whether managers are in regular contact with their staff while off sick.

2.4. The sickness scrutiny group continues to assess all long-term sickness cases each month to ensure the Council is doing all it can to support staff back to work, by ensuring we have the latest medical information from our Occupational Health team, looking at what adjustments we can make to roles and where cases need to be escalated to a formal process in line with the policy. We work closely with managers to ensure regular contact is made with staff who are absent from work as this is a critical aspect to help staff back to the workplace.

- 2.5. HR also continue to send out a fortnightly wellness offer which includes courses, webinars, exercise classes and other support. These focus on a dedicated topic and also link into national themes around wellness (the latest one has focussed on world mental health day). The Council continues to promote our mental health first aider programme, where we have a cohort of trained staff who can be the first port of call for our workforce should they need some assistance. We also offer free confidential helpline to staff where they can seek professional advice and counselling in certain cases. We also are continuing to run our staff engagement group which is focussing on health and wellbeing issues/solutions as well as how the return to the office is progressing.
- 2.6. HR has been undertaking further interventions which have been approved by the strategic leadership team to help reduce sickness absence, the key actions include: Implementing Mental Health First Aid awareness 'lite' course for all managers (training provider commissioned, to start in November 2022), having a physio on site for front line staff, working with H&S on musculoskeletal cases – to identify trends, appropriate PPE and training needs. We have also recently commissioned a clinical counselling service for front line staff who are dealing with traumatic/emotional caseloads, the pilot will be run in the homelessness team, and we will roll out to other teams if it is successful.
- 2.7. The staff turnover percentage of 12% is the same as the previous quarter. A healthy staff turnover rate in the UK is considered to be around 10% - 15%.

### **3. Transformation**

- 3.1. The Programme Management Office resource proposal that was highlighted in last quarter's report has been approved at SLT, and work is underway to recruit to two project roles. These roles will allows us to provide direct project management resource to key strategic projects, as well as advice and guidance for project managers delivering smaller projects based within the services.
- 3.2. The PMO will be supporting delivery of the Transformation Programme. Additional work has been undertaken this quarter to map the key strands of the programme, and to identify interdependencies between key tenets of the Transformation Programme including the Customer Strategy, People Strategy and ICT Digital Strategy. This is developing into a clear programme plan, which will be monitored by the Transformation Board to ensure delivery is progressing.
- 3.3. The implementation of the Customer Strategy is well underway, with service improvement workshops held to review significant customer-facing high-volume processes (such as reporting a housing repair, applying for the Housing Register, applying for Council Tax discount / relief, applying to report overgrown vegetation) with individual services and their customers to break the process down step-by-step and ensure the processes are made more effective, efficient and customer-focused. In the next quarter, the project team will map out the actions necessary to deliver significant improvements, the benefits that will be released as a result, and develop these into a programme of work to be delivered in early 2023.
- 3.4. As mentioned in the previous quarter's report, a review of how we handle complaints was completed in the first phase of the Customer Strategy. In this quarter, the project team have redrafted DBC's Complaints Policy with the key changes being to move handling stage 1 complaints from Heads of Service to Team Leaders and stage 2 complaints from Assistant Directors to Heads of Service and above, and to bring our complaint response times in line with revised Ombudsman policy. These changes will ensure that initial complaint responses are handled by the officers directly delivering the service and provides a wider pool of officers to provide responses which should increase the speed with which complaint responses are provided. The draft Complaints Policy will be submitted for Cabinet approval in November. Subject to approval, new procedures, templates and training support is being developed ready for a December launch.

3.5. An overarching Performance Management Framework highlighting the key expectations of officers on how they collate, manage, and report performance data and the role of the Corporate Performance Management Lead Officer within the Transformation Service in providing detailed analysis, robust challenge, and developing evidence-led service improvement activities will be launched across the organisation. Linked to this, the Performance Team has completed their review of KPIs across the organisation, which will be coming forward for approval at the relevant Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet later this year.

#### **4. Customer Services Unit (CSU)**

4.1. Call handling times have continued to increase this quarter (549.67 seconds vs. 541.00 seconds in Q1). Two full-time Customer Services Representatives have been recently recruited, with an additional acting up opportunity provided to a member of the team to provide in-depth training for the new officers as well as officers still completing the intensive training programme.

#### **5. Climate and Ecological Emergency**

5.1. In this quarter, the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Programme Lead has worked with key stakeholders across the organisation to develop an Electric Vehicle Strategy in order to provide a high level overview as to the direct and indirect actions that we will be intending to take, or have already begun working on. The document explains the proposed approach and objectives to encourage and enable the transition to EVs locally. This document will help to clarify to staff, residents, Members and local organisations what actions Dacorum is taking on Electric Vehicles. In the next quarter, once the strategy is approved, this will be published, and a robust implementation plan linked to the wider CEE Strategy Delivery Tracker will be established.

#### **6. Digital and ICT**

6.1. IT Systems availability (99.7%) continued to be positive within the quarter demonstrating the fundamental reliability of the Council's technology infrastructure. There was one short outage on the morning of 25<sup>th</sup> July. This was caused by an issue within the core network of our supplier (Virgin Media). They rapidly identified the cause of the issue and services returned in little over an hour.

6.2. The primary performance indicator (ICT01 - Percentage of incidents resolved in less than 2 days) was red within the quarter at 85%. This was a significant improvement over the previous quarter at 77%, which was itself a considerable improvement over the previous quarter's 61%.

6.3. The staffing position on the Service Desk improved over the quarter, not least with the imminent arrival of a new Head of Digital (replacing Ben Trueman who left last month), who is due to start in early November. This improved staffing position has significantly contributed to improved performance. Officers have targeted older calls, which has affected the KPI, but as these are reduced and newer team members gain expertise, performance against target should continue to improve.

#### **7. Communications**

7.1. It has been a particularly busy time within the Communication team. We have delivered an external communications programme supporting corporate projects and events across DBC services and partner organisations. This includes 397 social media campaigns through our corporate channels (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), 24 news articles, 13 press releases and over 160,000 emails via our digital publications portfolio.

Campaign/project summary includes:

- Operation London Bridge – Death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
- Commonwealth Games Queen’s Baton Relay
- Wendover Canal Restoration
- Article 4 Directions
- SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan
- Bunkers Park Crematorium
- Berkhamsted Dinosaur Trail
- Parks and open spaces retain Green Flags
- Canal Fields, Berkhamsted play area refurbishment
- New Zero Waste Map
- Hemel Hempstead War Memorial restored
- Residents’ telephone survey

7.2 We have also delivered an events programme including the Commonwealth Games Queen’s Baton Relay and Covid-19 Memorial Garden opening. We also delivered a programme of events for Operation London Bridge, including the laying of floral tributes and the proclamation of the new King, His Majesty King Charles III.

7.3 Internal communications are also ramping up in line with our increasing change ambitions. We have delivered an internal communications programme, including Staff Update Session, with an attendance of 200+ staff. Over the same period, we issued 27 internal communications campaigns across internal channels, such as our intranet, covering staff news, corporate information (projects and initiatives) and staff events.

7.4 We have delivered our publication programme of print and digital publications, including 12 issues of our weekly Dacorum Life - digital (12,307 subscribers) and 12 issues of Members News.

7.5 Social media and website statistics: Our social media channels continue to grow organically at a healthy rate compared to similar local authorities. This quarter sees the biggest increase in LinkedIn connections, reflecting increased activity and engagement from the business and professional community.

Dacorum Facebook – July to September 2022

Connections – 12,038 (increase of 300 from Q1 2022/23)

Link clicks – 5,541 (decrease of 4,652 from Q1 2022/23)

Posts – 178 (decrease of 42 from Q1 2022/23)

Dacorum Twitter – July to September 2022

Connections – 8,894 (increase of 53 from Q1 2022/23)

Link clicks – 787 (decrease of 232 from Q1 2022/23)

Posts – 169 (decrease of 39 from Q1 2022/23)

Dacorum LinkedIn – July to September 2022


Connections – 4,349 (increase of 254 from Q1 2022/23)

Link clicks – 409 231 (increase of 178 from Q1 2022/23)

Posts – 50 (increase of 15 from Q1 2022/23)

| Measure Code | Measure Name  | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT | Comments |
|--------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|----------|
| ICT01        | Percentage of incidents resolved in less than 2 days          | 85.20%              | 90.00%              | 67.81%              | 90.00%              | 85.00%             | 90.00%             | ✓   |          |
| ICT02        | Availability of primary systems (office hours)                | 99.77%              | 99.00%              | 100.00%             | 99.00%              | 100.00%            | 99.00%             | ✗   |          |
| ICT06        | Total number of incidents and service requests reported (ICT) | 2,590               |                     | 2,372               |                     | 2,914              |                    | ✓   |          |
| WEB03        | Number of Website Users                                       |                     |                     | 146,973             |                     | 175,776            |                    | ?   |          |

| Measure Code | Measure Name   | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT | Comments  |
|--------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----|---|
| HR02a        | Turnover of staff  | 12                  |                     | 12                  |                     | 17                 |                    | →   | Similar to previous quarters, 12%. Healthy staff turnover is considered to be around 10-15%.  |
| HR03         | Total days lost through sickness absence for the council (OSC) | 2,356.12            |                     | 2,488.90            |                     | 2,270.91           |                    | n/a | <p>The total days sickness absence is less than the last quarter and similar to the same quarter last year.</p> <p>The main contributors to this is musculoskeletal, COVID, surgery and mental health related sickness. The Council's Sickness Scrutiny Group continue to meet monthly to review sickness absence and highlight any causes for concern that may require further investigation or a formal meeting, along with reviewing long term sickness cases to ensure we are doing all we can to support people back to work.</p> <p>Work continues to progress on health and wellbeing initiatives (seminars/courses/support signposting, free fitness classes), additional counselling support services for specific areas (homelessness), mental health training for managers in areas of high sickness relating to this subject, physio support for front line staff and identifying trends in musculoskeletal injuries to establish what improvements may be needed in work place safety.</p> <p>It has been reported that across LA's in Hertfordshire the rise in sickness absence is a common theme.</p> |
| HR04a        | Total days lost through SHORT TERM sickness absence (OSC)      | 958.30              |                     | 1,030.77            |                     | 1,072.65           |                    | n/a | Please refer to comments in HR03  |
| HR04b        | Total days lost through LONG TERM sickness absence (OSC)       | 1,397.77            |                     | 1,458.13            |                     | 1,198.26           |                    | n/a | Please refer to comments in HR03  |

| Measure Code | Measure Name  | This Quarter Actual | This Quarter Target | Last Quarter Actual | Last Quarter Target | -4 Quarters Actual | -4 Quarters Target | DoT   | Comments                          |
|--------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| HR04e        | Short term sickness as a percentage of all sickness (OSC) | 40.67%              |                     | 41.41%              |                     | 47.23%             |                    |  | Please refer to comments in HR03  |
| HR04f        | Long term sickness as a percentage of all sickness (OSC)  | 59.33%              |                     | 58.59%              |                     | 52.76%             |                    | n/a   | Please refer to comments in HR03  |
| HR05         | Average days lost due to sickness absence per FTE (OSC)   | 1.11                |                     | 1.17                |                     | 1.05               |                    | n/a   | Please refer to comments in HR03. |



## Finance and Resources

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Report for:</b>   | Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee                                     |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  | Transformation Strategies –<br>People<br>Digital<br>Communications                        |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 1 November 2022   |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Councillor Graeme Elliot  |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I   |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  | Digital Strategy document<br>Communications Strategy document<br>People Strategy document |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> |   |

#### Report Author / Responsible Officer

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| <b>Corporate Priorities</b> | A clean, safe and enjoyable environment<br>Building strong and vibrant communities<br>Ensuring economic growth and prosperity<br>Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery<br>Climate and ecological emergency |
|-----------------------------|--|



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|--|--|
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All wards  |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | 1. To introduce our 3 core strategies which form part of our transformation programme, Future Dacorum. |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | 1. That Members note the report  |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        | N/A  |

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Over the summer, the Dacorum transformation programme, ‘Future Dacorum’, has focussed on building the foundations for successful delivery. The main pillars of this are 3 new strategies which seek to drive how we reform our approach to people, communications and technology. These strategies are attached for your consideration.
- 1.2. Each of these will play an integral part in transforming how we operate as a Council – ensuring we meet the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors effectively while operating in the most efficient way possible.
- 1.3. In turn, these strategies will become the basis for wider reform such as the delivery of our customer strategy, and live transformation projects in areas such as housing and waste. It is key that these services do not simply behave as corporate functions but play an integral and proactive role in enabling our best delivery, across all parts of the Council.

## 2. Digital

- 2.1. This strategy sets out our vision for technology at Dacorum Borough Council for 2022-2025, looking at how the Digital Service can understand and support the needs of the Council, its customers, members and staff, as they develop. It provides a set of constant technology design principles intended to guide the Council’s future decisions. The strategy highlights specific technologies that we expect to play a major role in transformation and provides indicative timelines for actions and projects based on the strategic approach.
- 2.2. The Digital Service at Dacorum, is responsive and primarily focused on maintaining operational services. It is a small team but members are dedicated and knowledgeable, often with many years of service at Dacorum. The Council’s infrastructure provides a secure and resilient environment, assured through third party testing and compliance, and both system and website availability are consistently excellent.
- 2.3. Previous strategic decisions, focusing on remote working, enabled the service rapidly and successfully to transition an essentially on-site workforce into a remote workforce, at short notice and with limited impacts to services, at the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 2.4. The Council has invested in customer facing technology, especially the development of MyDacorum, the portal for residents, but there are opportunities to do more. We have also deployed transformational technologies from collaborative tools, such as Microsoft Teams, to business process improvement software, such as Robotic Process Automation.
- 2.5. However, the Council has a complex and fragmented set of systems at a range of ages, with some approaching end of life support from vendors. Data is distributed across these systems in various formats

and with variable levels of integrity. This presents substantial business problems with officers often needing to access multiple systems to deal with customer queries and data still manually transferred between applications in some cases. It makes using the Council's extensive datasets for reporting and business intelligence purposes more difficult and increases the effort required to improve online transactions for our customers.

- 2.6. We need to move to a more strategic space. This will enable us to benefit from the opportunities created by a rapidly developing environment. Our fundamentals mean we are well placed to do this and our strategy sets out the 'what' and the 'how' of the next 3 years.

### **3. People**

- 3.1. Our People Strategy sets out how we will enable our workforce to have the greatest impact on our corporate objectives. It seeks to recognise and respond to the significant challenges which we face in this area, such as recruitment and retention, wellbeing and skills development.
- 3.2. In particular, it recognises the broader organisational transformation going on, particularly in terms of service development and commercialisation and the significant workforce implications of those changes. Without this strategy and supporting workplan, there will be significant delivery risks attached those programmes of work.
- 3.3. Leadership and organisational culture feature heavily in the strategy. There is ample evidence that these themes are critical to delivering a highly-functioning organisation. We are already progressing well in these areas with a live leadership development programme and a new set of corporate values. We will continue to prioritise this work.
- 3.4. Equally, external factors such as the cost of living crisis and the jobs market mean that recruitment and retention remains a live and significant issue for all public bodies. We are no different. Ensuring we are doing everything we can to compete effectively in the market (particularly for more specialist roles) while also providing a working environment within which our talent wants to stay and progress.

### **4. Communications**

- 4.1. Our Communications Strategy sets out how we will inform, engage and listen to our residents, partners and businesses. Again, the focus of the strategy is effectively delivering our corporate objectives and supporting service delivery and development.
- 4.2. Again, we are building on strong foundations but we now need to move into a more pro-active communications space and help lead the Council's communication activity as the way our residents behave and engage changes.
- 4.3. Digital mediums are becoming increasingly critical and, hence, feature heavily within the strategy. We are well-placed to deliver on these ambitions as we are already performing well in this space. However, this is a fast moving space and we will need to stay current as well as developing ways of harvesting resident sentiment within digital channels. Of course, it is critical that we recognise and respond to the fact that not all residents are digitally enabled – we need to make sure we speak and listen to these residents too. One size will not fit all.
- 4.4. The strategy also encompasses our wider work on events and filming which have now been brought into our communications team. This organisational restructure and the shared principles in the strategy will help us to develop our work in both those areas.

# DBC Digital Strategy

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# Our Vision

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## New Ways of Working

we will create a digital environment to help reduce our carbon footprint and reduce the need for fixed workspaces

## Customer Led

we will develop customer focused solutions, making our services more effective, efficient and easy to use

## Digital, Mobile and Cloud by default

if it can be done digitally then it should be

## Business Partnership

we will work with business teams to clearly articulate outcomes and needs for which IT will develop technical solutions

## Digitally Aware

we will create a 'digital mindset' in staff and members, so they are confident they can get the most out of our systems

## Insight Driven

we will use data to understand the needs of our customers better

## Safe and Secure

our services will be secure and compliant with data protection and other regulations.



# Strategy Goals

- Officers have confidence in the tools they use and can rely on them to deliver services.
- Officers can work where they need to, spending more time with their customers and less on low value tasks or in transit
- Improved customer experience and engagement at all stages of solution/service design. Customers can transact easily with the Council for routine interactions and commercial services
- Detailed and accurate information about the customer is available to officers when they make contact.
- The Council's data is less fragmented, more reliable and being used for intelligence-led decisions.
- The resilience and security of the Council's digital environment is strengthened.



# IT Business Partner

- A new role to build a stronger relationship between services and Digital
- Build on existing advances to work more closely with Housing
- Recognises the high priority of the service and the opportunities to use technology to support it.
- Understand the challenges and opportunities within the services
- Develop the right requirements for new cost-effective solutions
- Understand how solutions are being used after implementation
- Support planning & delivery of projects, ensuring they meet agreed expectations



# Technical Design Authority

- A virtual team of technology Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
- Maintain technology and architecture standards
- Assure requirements
- Carry out design reviews
- Review new innovative ideas
- Assess and manage technical risk



# Training and Supporting Our Staff

## Training

- Develop a new online hub for quick training snippets (video and pictorial)
  - Identify and work with SMEs within services to develop Line-of-Business application training materials
  - Comprehensive guides, tips & tricks for corporate systems



## ICT Champions

- Group of representative users across services
- Providing feedback and insight for improvements





# Local Government Digital Declaration

- Sign up to the Local Government Digital Declaration – a joint initiative by MHCLG (as was), GDS and a collection of local authorities:
  - Design services that best meet the needs of citizens
  - Challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
  - Protect citizens' privacy and security
  - Deliver better value for money
- Opportunity to work collaboratively and make use of support from GDS etc.



# Technology Design Principles

## DBC in the Cloud

we will use cloud-based systems (where possible) to increase ease of access, reliability and versatility

## Mobile First

we will look first to technologies which are mobile enabled, designed to be used anywhere

## Configuration not Customisation

we will configure "Out of The Box" solutions wherever possible

## Automate, Consolidate, Eliminate

we will automate low-value-add steps or joins in solutions and focus on eliminating manual steps wherever possible

## Reuse before Buy, before Build

solutions will be fully exploited, purchased only if necessary and then built only if there is a unique requirement

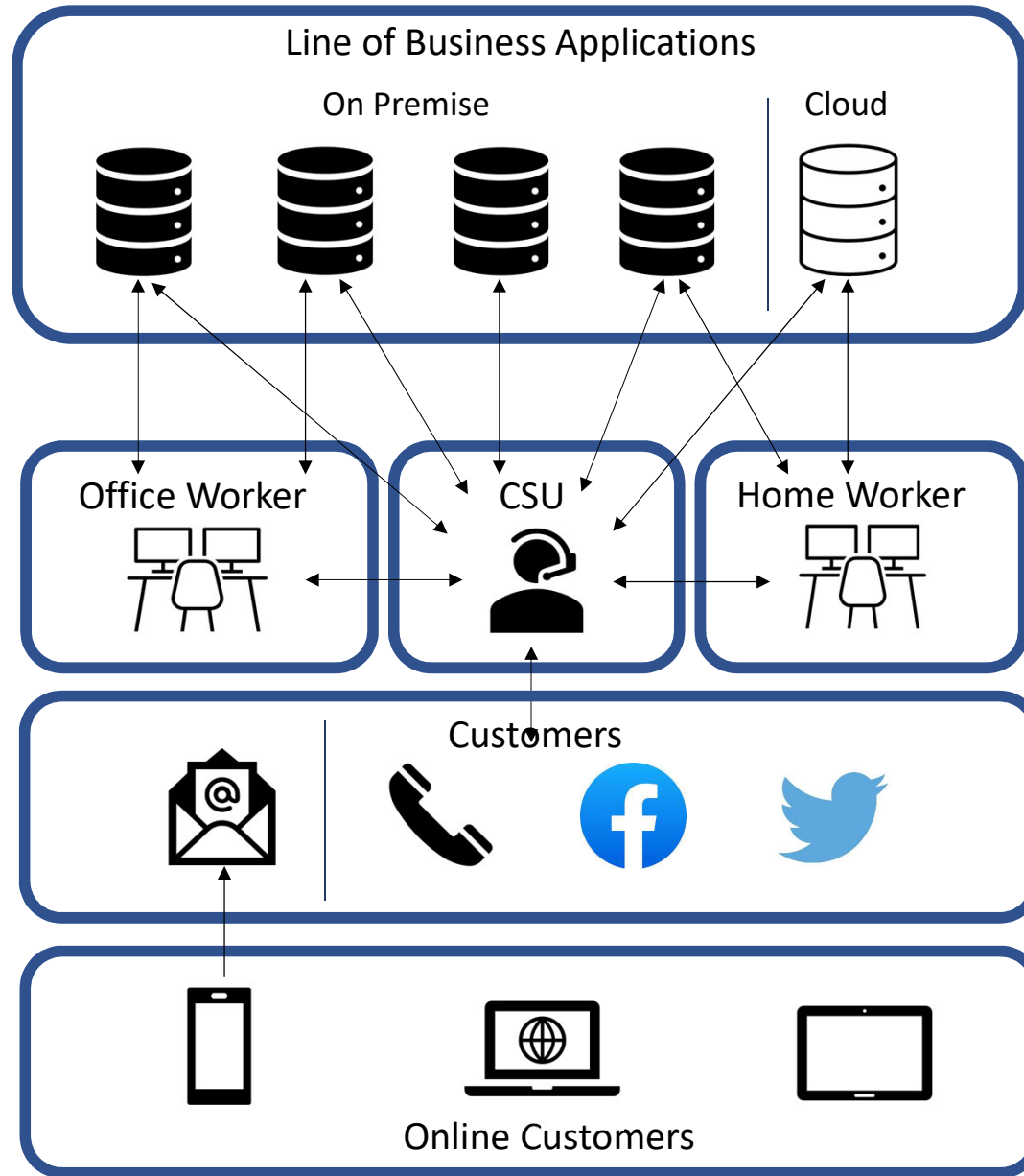
## Data as an Asset

data will be managed to ensure accuracy and quality to support informed decisions and analytical insight

## Security and Privacy

no solution will be deployed until we are sure that it complies with legislation and keeps our data safe

# Customer Focus

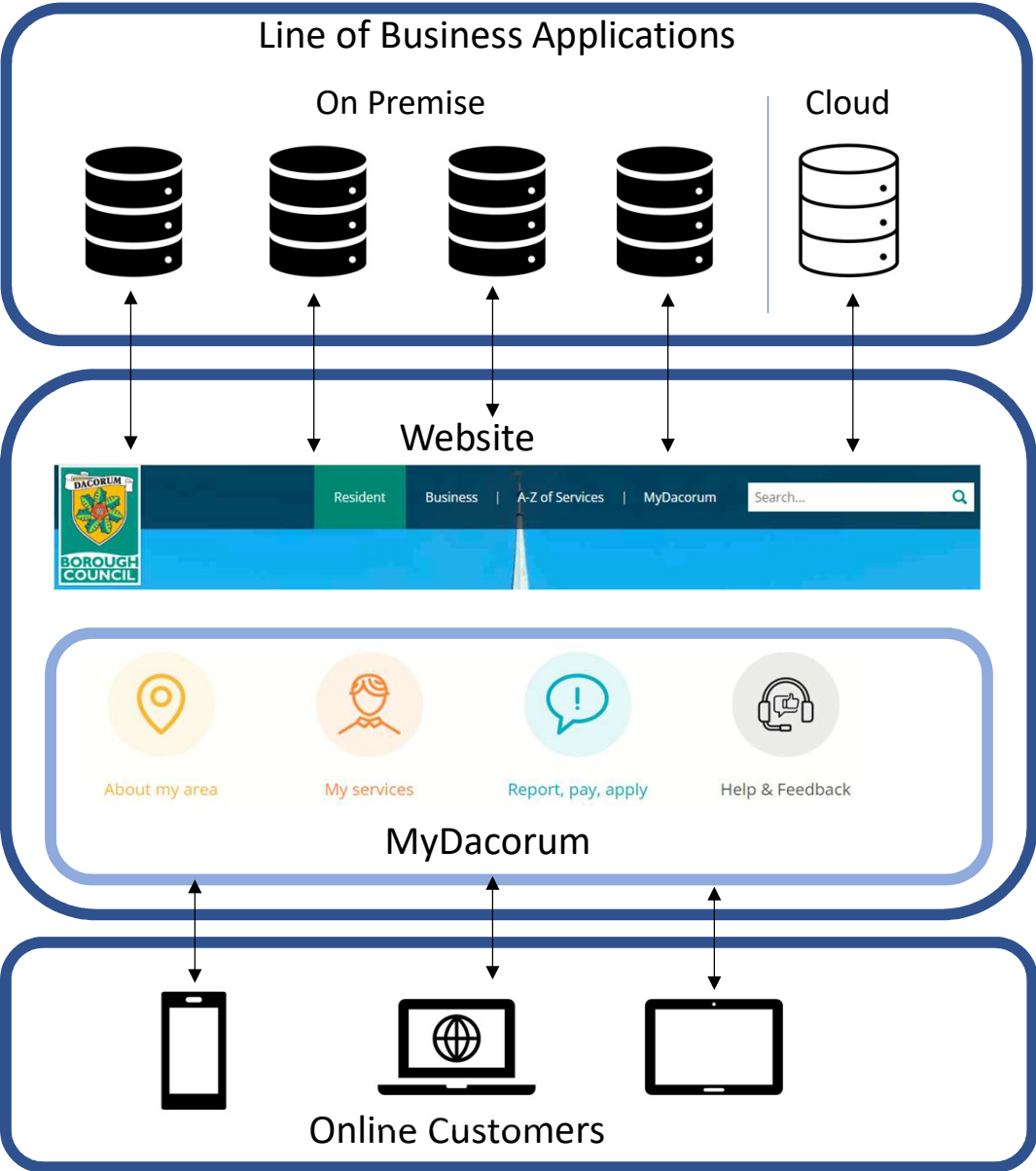


# Customer Focus - Website

- We will make access to key information and services as easy as possible
- We will use the MyDacorum portal to make our online services more directly relevant for our residents
- We will increase emphasis on straight-through-processes, enabling customers to book services directly through the website
- We will make it easier for the CSU to assist with online self-service
- We will work directly with customers to improve design and build feedback mechanisms in to understand customer satisfaction
- We will make the accessibility of our website a priority and a central consideration in all new development



# Customer Focus



# Customer Focus – Website

| Project                                  | Status  | Budgeted                               | Unbudgeted |
|--|---|--|------------|
| Build Customer Testing Group             | Forming, complete July 2022                                   | N/A                                    |            |
| Pest Control Appointment Booking Online  | With Service for testing – awaiting resource                  | (Multi-process licence) £10k per annum |            |
| Online Housing Repairs Reporting         | Initial build complete, requires service resource to progress | In-house                               |            |
| Automating Garage Applications (Phase 1) | Now live June 2022  | £12k one-off                           |            |
| Automating Garage Applications (Phase 2) | Scoping summer 2022   | N/A                                    |            |
| Tenancy Terminations Online              | With Service for testing – awaiting resource                  | In-house                               |            |
| MyDacorum – Housing Functions            | Live in February 2023   | In-house                               |            |
| Web Pay Portal Upgrade                   | Live in December 2022   | In-house                               |            |
| Implementing Improved Customer Journeys  | 2022-2024   |  | c. £150k   |

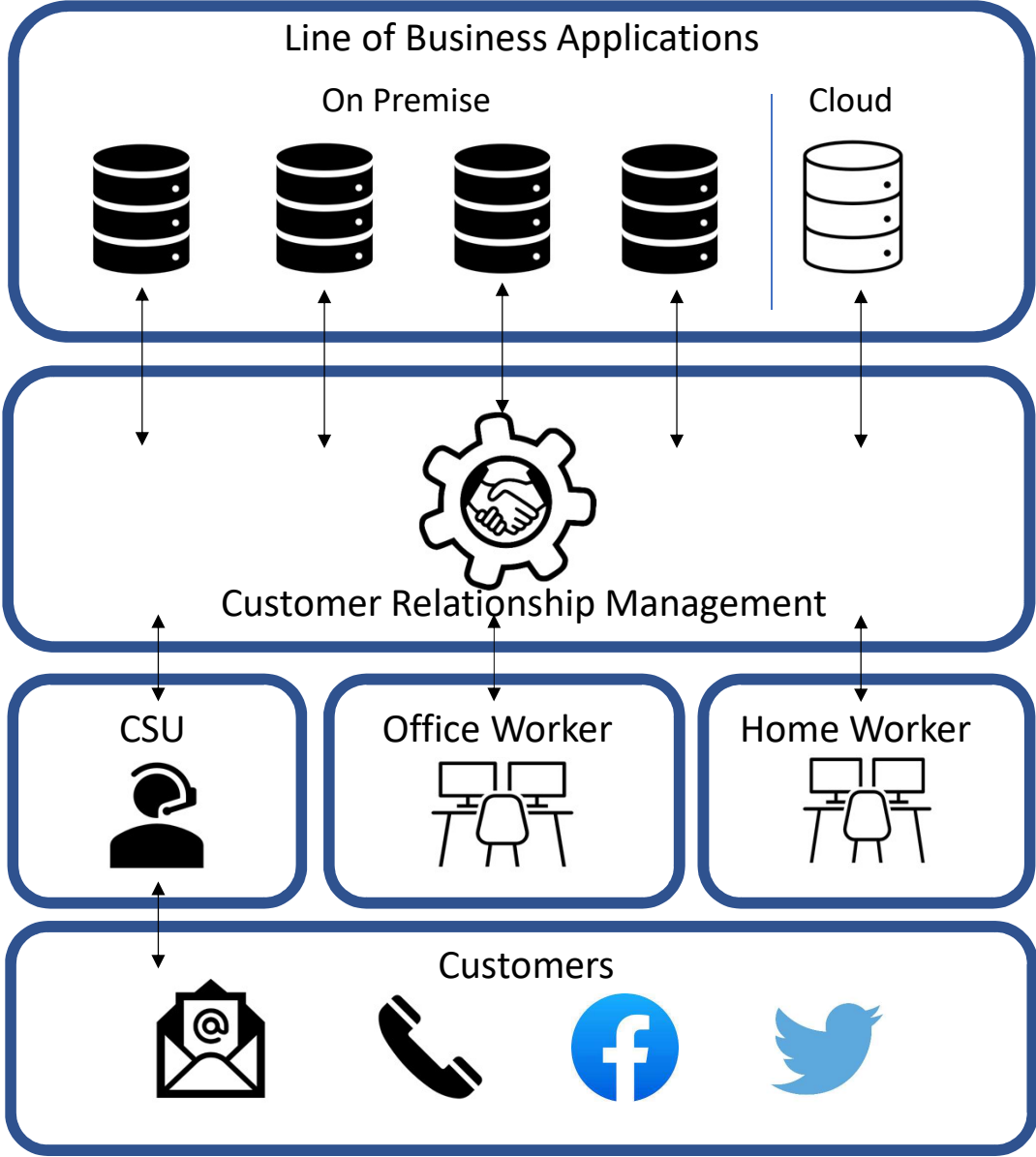


# Customer Focus – CRM

- Officers (especially in the CSU) work across multiple systems to address individual requests from our customers
- It takes longer to resolve issues, leads to more hand-offs to other services and requires more time invested in training officers.
- We will implement a cross-cutting CRM solution, providing a 360° view of the Council's customers
  - To drive more proactive updates and progress tracking for customers and officers
  - To record and analyse customer satisfaction
  - To provide a knowledge base, supporting “one and done”
  - To support “tell us once”
  - To track the Borough's business as well as individuals
- Can be a truly transformational project, providing a platform for consolidation



# Customer Focus





# Customer Focus – CRM

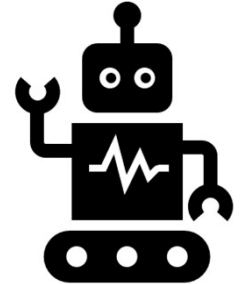


| Project                 | Timescale  | Budgeted                       | Unbudgeted   |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| New Cautionary Database | Build complete<br>Community safety paper to SLT in July 2022 | £4k per annum (Service Budget) |  |
| CRM Tendering           | Subject to Customer Strategy Implementation                  |                                |  |
| CRM Implementation      | Subject to Customer Strategy Implementation                  |                                | c.£1M – Investment case as part of Customer Strategy |

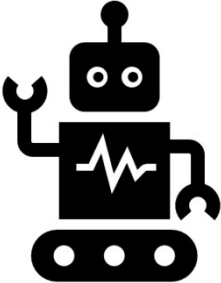


# Automation

- Provides a means to join up disparate systems and allows us to reduce the amount of time that officers spend on repetitive and low value tasks
- Our use of Automation has already delivered benefits
  - To the Tenancy team enabling the automated import and indexing of microfiche files, saving 830 hours of work
  - To the ECP team, indexing supporting documents and saving 15 hours of effort per month while reducing the risk of legal challenge
  - To the Property & Place team with the planned automated import of Asbestos Survey data, removing 1000+ hours of officer time and reducing the risk of legal/compliance challenges
- We will devise and deliver a new set of automation projects, working closely with DBC's services to understand where the greatest pain points currently lie
- We will use different forms of automation technology, including integration between applications, chatbots and Robotic Process Automation



# Automation



| Project                                     | Timescale            | Budgeted            | Unbudgeted     |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Orchard / Abrisas Integration               | Live in July 2022    |                     |                |
| Automation Review                           | Complete August 2022 |                     |                |
| Self-certification of Planning Applications | 2023/24              | Budget with service |                |
| Automation Projects                         | 2023-2026            | £190K one-off       | £10k per annum |



# Applications

- We make use of and support more than 60 separate applications, many meeting niche requirements
- They have varying levels of age, functionality, interoperability and reporting
- Does not make sense to build an Enterprise Resource Planning system for multiple services
- Will look to reduce number of applications in use
- We will use our design principles to lead an Application Review, looking to update and rationalise
- We will consolidate around common platforms, and especially CRM
- DBC will become a Cloud First organisation so when reviewing options we are likely to discount new investment in non-cloud technologies
- We will consider customer self-service an essential element when replacing systems



# Applications



| Project                                  | Timescale           | Budgeted                          | Unbudgeted     |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Applications Review                      | Complete July 2022  | N/A                               |                |
| Orchard Housing Upgrade to WEB           | Live in June 2022   | (Covered by Maintenance Contract) |                |
| Regulatory Services System Business Case | Complete July 2022  | N/A                               |                |
| Regulatory Services System Replacement   | Live April 2024     | £150k one-off                     | £50k per annum |
| Payments System Upgrade                  | Live June 2022      |                                   |                |
| Payments System Cloud Migration          | Live February 2023  | £10k per annum                    |                |
| New Corporate Health & Safety System     | TBD                 | £40k one-off (Service Budget)     |                |
| Community Safety Case Management System  | Live September 2023 | Budget with Service               |                |
| Email Migration to Office 365 (Cloud)    | 2023-2024 (Phased)  | (Covered by Enterprise Agreement) |                |



# Hybrid & Mobile


General Business




Teams OneDrive  
Outlook SharePoint

Line of Business Applications

On Premise | Cloud



Devices



Office Workers

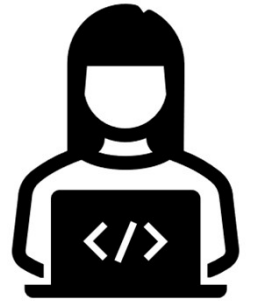


Home Workers



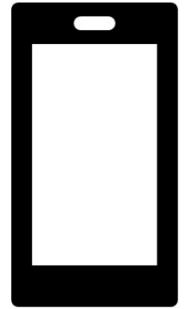
# Hybrid Working

- We have moved to hybrid working in the context of the pandemic
- We will always consider the user working remotely when designing solutions
- We will invest in technology that levels the playing field for those in the office or working from home
- We will invest in the right roles on the Service Desk to provide the best support
- Hybrid Council Meetings are here to stay and we will provide support to ensure they work well and are accessible to our residents
- Hybrid working is going to keep developing so we will review our offer frequently (e.g. Unified Communications)



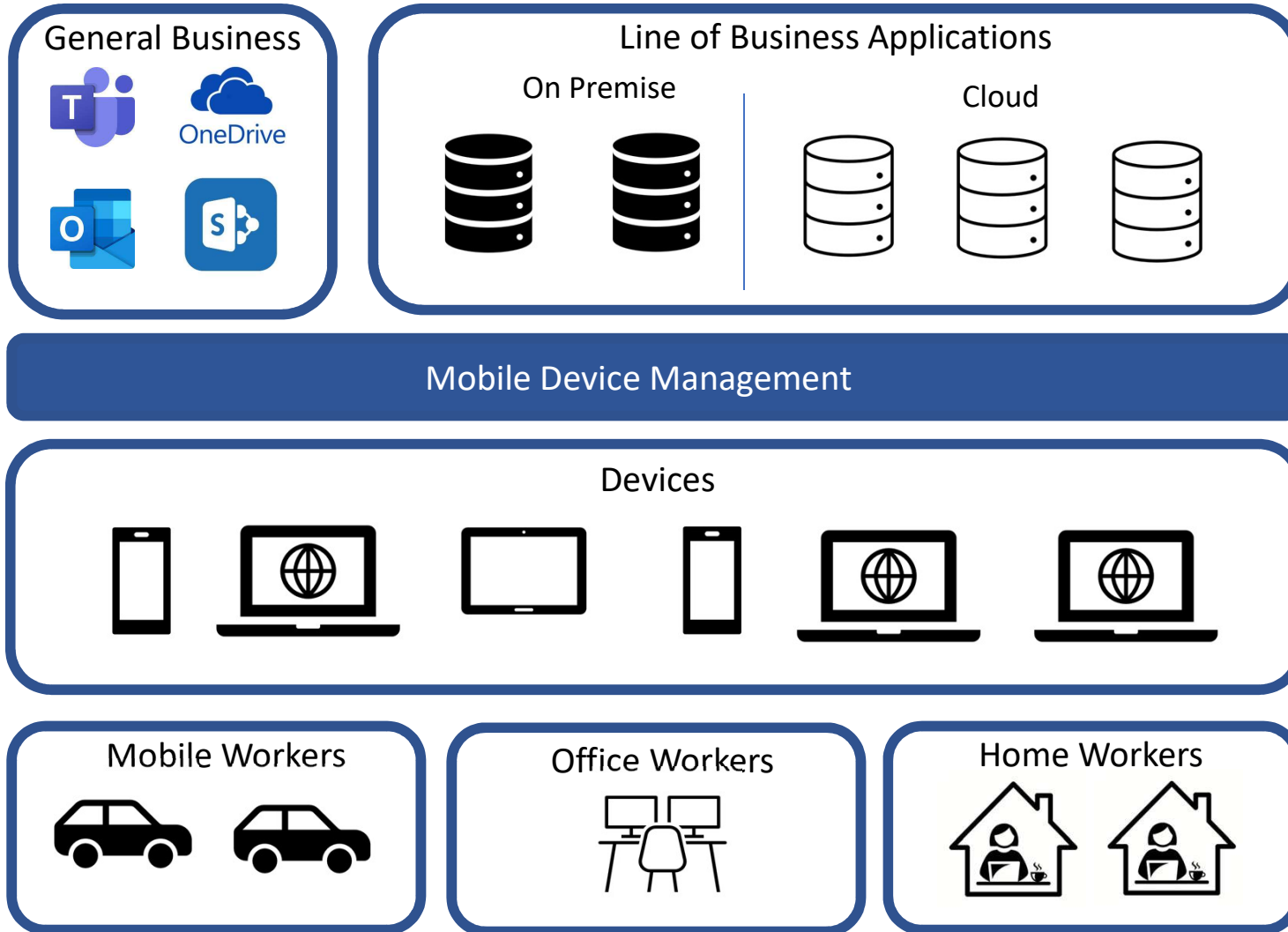
# Mobile Working

- Front-line Officers need to be able to spend more time in the field and with their customers
- We will, by preference, use mobile working modules available in the Council's line-of-business systems (Orchard etc.)
- New solutions introduced to the organisation will need to provide mobile capacity "out of the box."
- Buying cloud-based solutions will also make the path to mobile working more straightforward
- We will ensure that our officers have the right hardware for the job
- We will ensure that officers have the best connectivity available and that our technology allows for times when it is interrupted

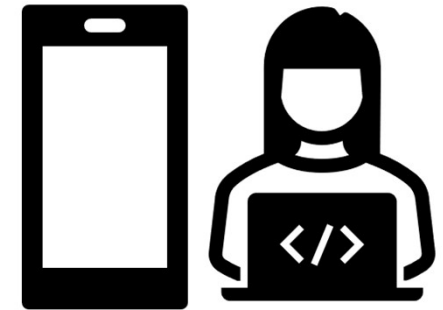




# Hybrid & Mobile



# Hybrid & Mobile Working

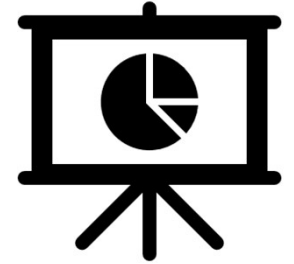


| Project                          | Timescale                 | Budgeted            | Unbudgeted |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Forum Upgrades                   | Complete June 2022        | Grant funded        |            |
| AV Support Officer               | In Post July 2022         | £40k per annum      |            |
| User Hardware Replacement        | April 2023 – October 2024 | £450k one-off       |            |
| Unified Comms Assessment         | Complete August 2024      | N/A                 |            |
| Idcs (Planning System) Mobile    | Live May 2022             | Budget with service |            |
| Orchard (Housing Officer) Mobile | Live December 2022        | £60k per annum      |            |

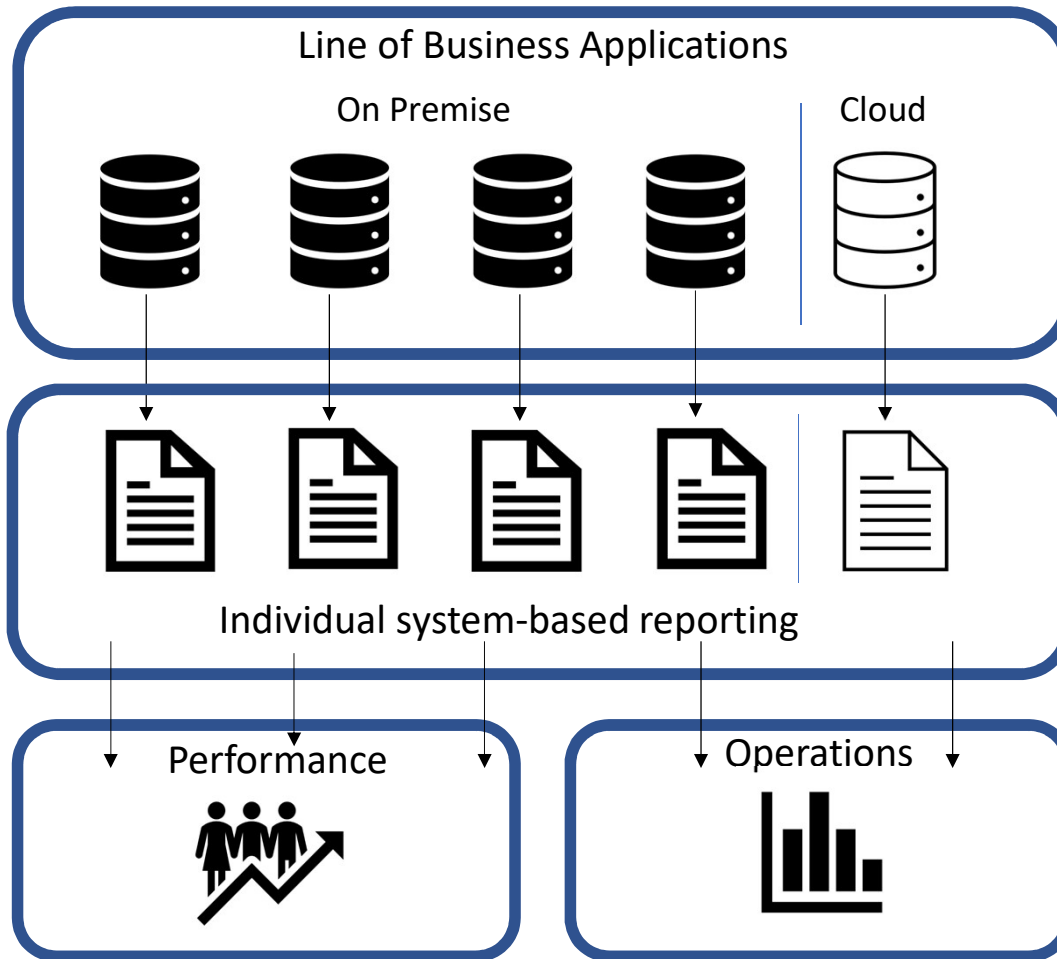


# Use of Data in DBC Today

- Data exists in multiple siloed systems, hard to integrate and interrogate consistently
- Each system has its own reporting tool
- Data is often of unknown / low quality
- Data, and more specifically, answers, are perceived as hard to get to, with a distrust of the data and systems
- We have great access to Finance data
- Performance data is available from more modern platform but still hand-cranked, taking repeated time and effort to generate
- The business has shown a real appetite for more insight on services
- Good experimental work has been delivered with partners as ad-hoc pieces (Garages, Parking, CSU, etc.) but ad hoc pieces leave no legacy



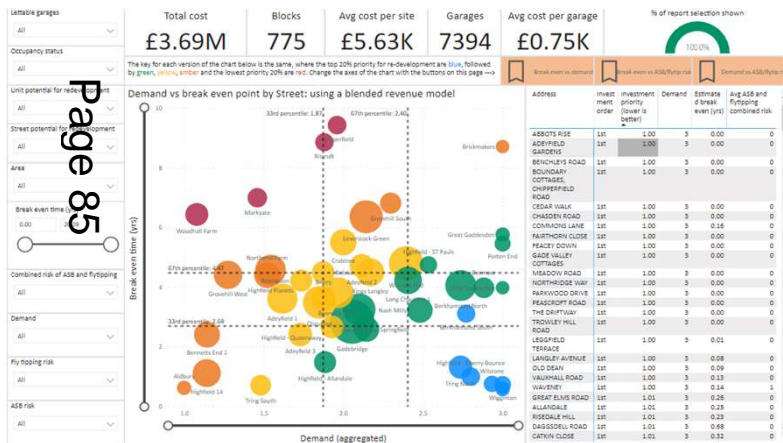
# Use of Data



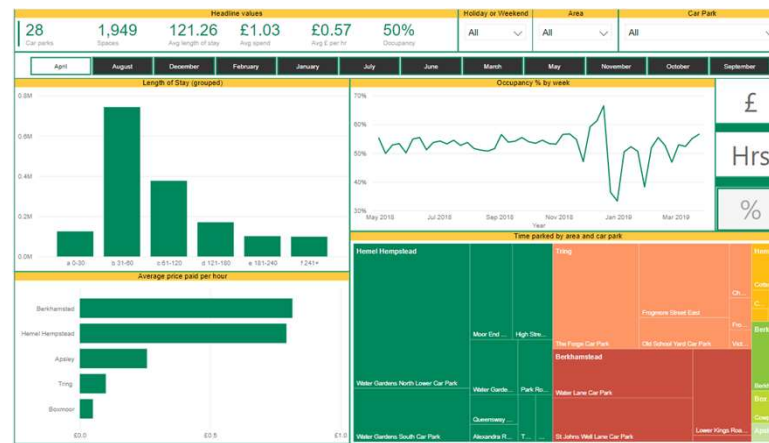
# Dashboards

- Good experimental work has been delivered with partners as ad-hoc pieces (Garages, Parking, HR, etc.) but ad hoc pieces leave no legacy

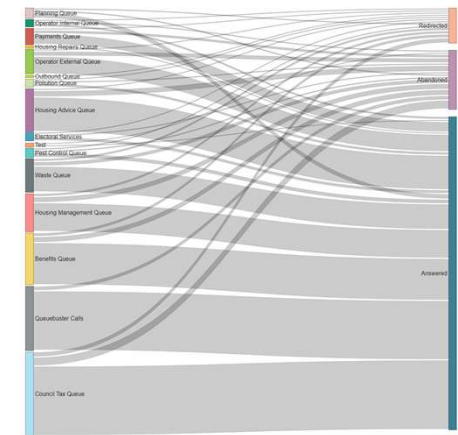
Garages investment analysis



Parking busy times and locations

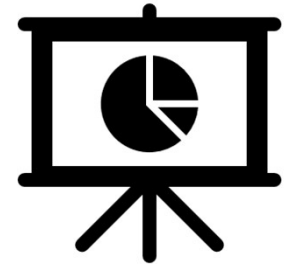


CSU calls answered by category

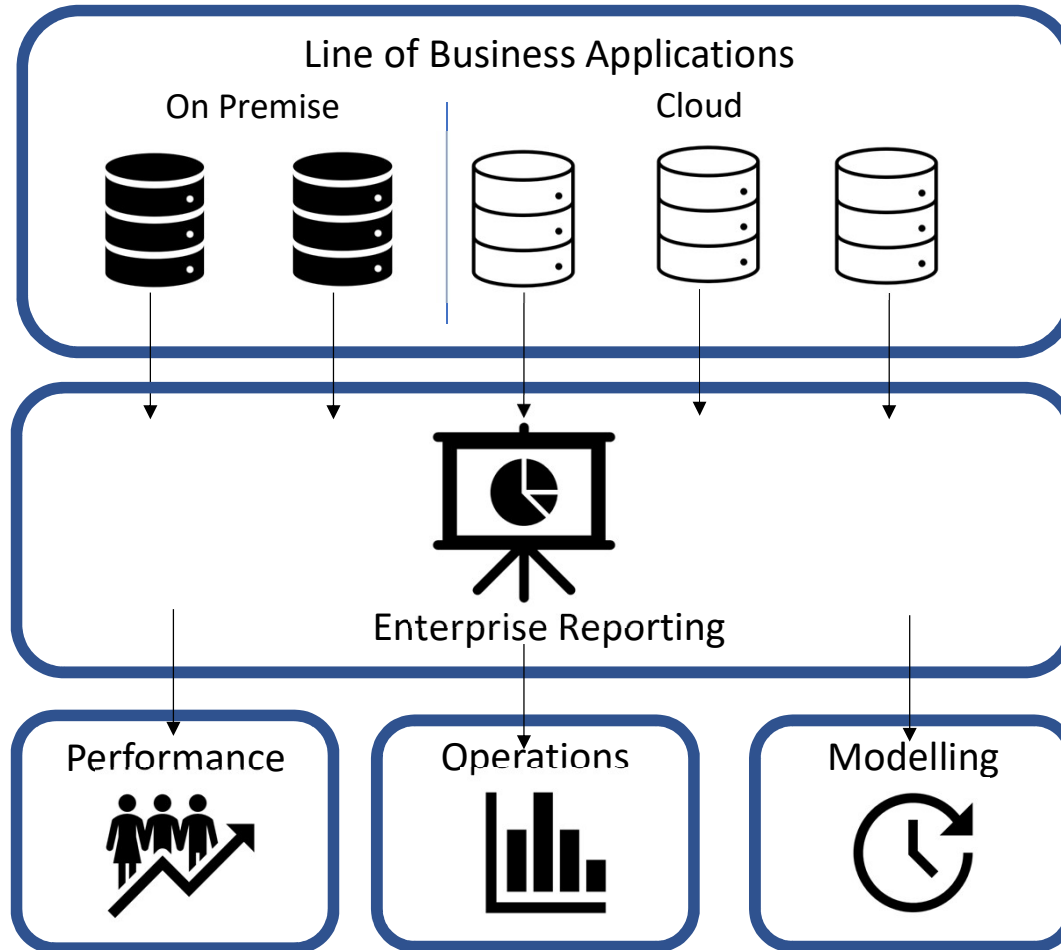


# Use of Data in DBC in the Future

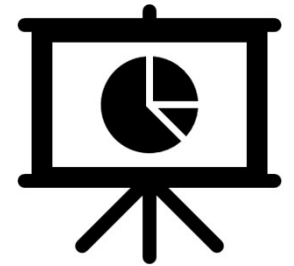
- **Vision:** We want to create a library of easily maintained and accessible insight. Organically growing the central data to suit the business needs
- **Business Led & Customer Focused:** The business understands the value of its own data, owns the outputs and design and drives our focus
- **Flexible:** Adapting to changes in priorities with a focus is on the current need
- **Scalable, cost effective:** Ramp delivery up and down with the appetite for enhancements
- **Trusted:** Minimum acceptability criteria established, with visibility of quality
- We will produce a business case for the adoption of Business Intelligence (Data Warehouse) technology ahead of a potential pilot in 2023/24.



# Use of Data



# Use of Data



| Project                          | Timescale            | Budgeted            | Unbudgeted |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Digital Mapping Software Review  | Complete August 2022 | N/A                 |            |
| Building Information Modelling   | Live August 2022     | Budget with service |            |
| Data Warehouse Business Case     | Complete August 2022 | N/A                 |            |
| (Potential) Data Warehouse Pilot | 2023-24              |                     | £40k       |





# Communications and Engagement Strategy

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2022-2025



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# Introduction

The following document sets out the overarching Communications Strategy for Dacorum Borough Council (DBC).

Our aim is to deliver a first class, effective and efficient communications service that is highly valued and respected by our residents, businesses and our stakeholders.

It has a clear focus on supporting the organisation's corporate priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-2025, and a strong and clear focus on stakeholder communication and engagement. This will help influence behaviours and engage stakeholders in matters that are important to them and our communities.

The strategy also aims to create greater awareness and understanding of the Council's wider activities and services.

This strategy sets out our approach for the next three years.

*Comms – the  
beating heart of an  
organisation*

# The role of communications

Working with colleagues across the organisation, effective communications contributes to raising the profile and enhancing the reputation of the Council.

In a world where anyone can communicate with large audiences via social media or other digital channels, it is more important than ever to communicate clearly and effectively to achieve 'cut through' with residents, businesses and other key stakeholders.

Failure to communicate effectively at all levels, particularly online, can leave a vacuum which will be filled by other voices, often spreading misinformation or to further personal or political gain.

## **A clear, strategic plan will:**

- improve and enhance our corporate reputation and build trust
- help to maintain and enhance the reputation of the Council
- demonstrate the value of the organisation to our residents, businesses and stakeholders
- help to deliver the organisation's priorities
- develop our staff as part of our 'Communications Forward' culture.

**Communications is at the heart of every part of an organisation.**

**It can influence, impact and make or break reputations.**

**Comms really is more than just the comms team, and is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation.**

# Our identity and brand

Corporate identity is who we are as a Council, including corporate design, culture, values and internal and external communications, creating an overarching identity for the whole organisation.

Brand identity is the collection of elements that portrays an image to our customers and relevant stakeholders. Our brands are more than a visual identity, it is our relationship with our customers and stakeholders, and how we are perceived.

Our brands are a promise to our customers, offering excellent customer service and an experience that matters, delivered by everyone within the organisation.

Our brands are therefore not only an external promise to our customers, but a means of delivering corporate priorities via internal brand-led behaviour and culture change.

## Our brands:

- Corporate brand
- Place brands
- Commercial brands (product/service brands)

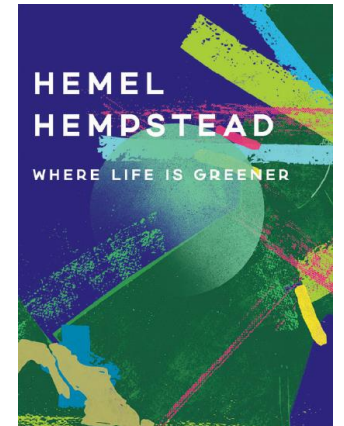
## Corporate brand:



## Place brands:



**Hemel**  
Garden  
Communities



# Our narrative and key messages

In today's complex and sometimes chaotic world, telling an organisations story simply, effectively and truthfully has never been more important. A good story – corporate narrative – allows us to share our vision, key messages and plans with employees, residents and other stakeholders in a powerful and compelling way.

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A successful corporate narrative will see everyone from members, managers and employees at all levels, telling the same story about the council to anyone who asks.

## Why is this important?

- It unites people behind a common purpose and direction
- Creates a context for change
- Makes sense of multiple initiatives and links the connections
- Aligns leaders to demonstrate a unified organisation
- Inspires people and creates pride
- Helps employees make sense of their roles in the organisation
- Challenges and changes employees' behaviour

## Our Customers

- To put the customer at the centre of our services in order to provide a positive and effective customer experience, and to empower our staff so they can deliver consistent and quality Council services.

## Our Places, and communities

- Hemel Garden Communities - Creating a greener, more connected New Town: a green network; integrated neighbourhoods; a self-sustaining economy; engaged communities.
- Hemel Place – where life is greener: where connections matter; a vibrant destination for enterprise; enhancing your wellbeing in Hemel.

## Our People

- The right staff, in the right place, at the right time, working in the right way.

## Our Commercial approach

- A Council which adopts a commercial mind-set across the organisation. We expect staff to think innovatively and deliver services differently. We will use commercial principles to maximise the impact of our assets (whether physical or intangible) to benefit our communities and strengthen financial sustainability.

# Communications objectives

The Council's strategic objectives are to deliver the six priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2020-2025. This allows us to work in partnership to create a borough which enables the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper and which delivers on the corporate priorities.

## Communications objectives:

- 1 Promoting the council's day-to-day work, ambitious plans and progress on the key priorities across a variety of traditional and digital channels, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity to reach all stakeholders
- 2 Embedding our commitment to care for the people and places in Dacorum, to create the best possible place to live and work throughout all communications
- 3 Training councillors, employees and partners in the communication skills necessary to become ambassadors for the Council
- 4 Leading the way in digital communications whilst ensuring that no resident is left behind or digitally excluded
- 5 Ensuring the council's communications are data-driven and responsive to residents' needs
- 6 Building relationships with a wide range of influential external communicators including local and regional print and broadcast media, popular local social media accounts, government, community and business groups

## Corporate objectives:

-  Ensuring economic growth and prosperity
-  Building strong and vibrant communities
-  A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
-  Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
-  Climate and ecological emergency
-  Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

# Our principles

The Government Communication Functional Standard was published in August 2019 to set clear, measurable expectations for the management and practice of government communication.

There are 12 principles at the heart of all government communication:

- **Strategic communication** – setting, co-ordinating and guiding the development and implementation of an activity in the right time frame.
- **Marketing** – using cross-channel communication activity to influence behaviour change.
- **Media relations** – explaining governmental activity to media partners to create public understanding and build trust.
- **External affairs** – building and maintaining relationships with external stakeholders.
- **Internal communication** – informing and engaging employees in a way that maximises their performance.
- **Behaviour change** – identifying barriers to desired behaviours and how to address them.
- **Communication in an emergency or crisis** – ensuring the timely flow of reliable, accurate and relevant information during a crisis situation.
- **Partnership marketing** – providing a cost-effective way to reach audiences and increase our impact.
- **Capability and capacity** – balancing the supply and demand for communication resources, including people and facilities.
- **Brand** – complying with identity guidelines safely and professionally.
- **Writing style** – making sure our communication is clear, concise and consistent.
- **Learning from experience** – evaluating our work to avoid repeating mistakes and develop improved practice.



# Our tactical approach

## Evidence Based Messaging

Three of our six corporate priorities are best communicated using evidence-based messaging:



Ensuring economic growth and prosperity



A clean, safe and enjoyable environment



Building strong and vibrant communities

By using visual evidence (e.g., before and after images of litter being cleared, images of new businesses on opening day, photos from community events etc.) we will ensure residents can see the results of the work the council is doing in each of these priority areas.

This visual communication should be member-led. Images should include the relevant cabinet member where possible so that the public can put a face to the council's delivery.

## Statistical Based Messaging

The other three priorities are best communicated using stats-based messaging:



Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery



Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need



Climate and ecological emergency

By highlighting key facts and figures (number of new homes, impact of climate change work, speed of service delivery etc.) we will ensure that residents are properly informed of outcomes rather than process.

As with evidence-based messaging, when using photos as part of this messaging, this should be member-led, and councillors and officers should be encouraged to share content on their own channels.

# Communications operating model

## Communications operating model

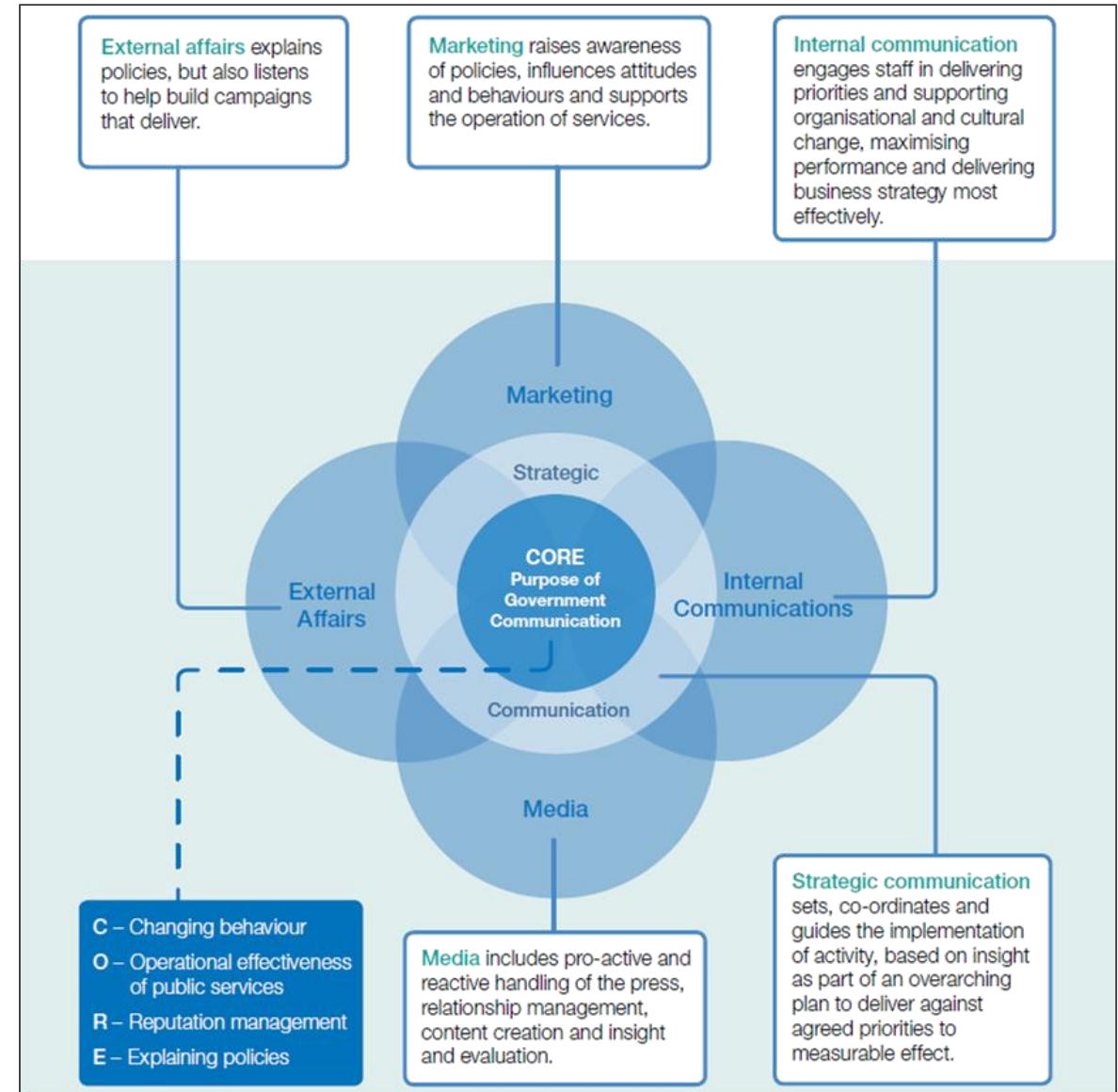
The new Communications and Engagement Service takes its lead from the Government Communication Service (GCS) operating model.

This model provides the structure of the required skills and capabilities for a high-performing communications and engagement service, to deliver on the Council's corporate priorities and ambitious transformation agenda.

### The CORE operating model covers:

- External affairs
- Marketing
- Internal communications
- Strategic communications
- Media

The remit of the DBC Communications and Engagement service extend beyond the CORE model, and also includes corporate/civic events and filming.



# Campaigns and digital communications

Digital communications sits at the heart of our service to residents, businesses and other stakeholders. Our customers expect us to provide services online with the same level of interactivity that they find elsewhere, and be able to access information digitally.

Each year we carry out hundreds of campaigns from large-scale corporate projects to service-specific campaigns, and have grown our audiences significantly across all of our digital channels (social media and digital portfolio on DotDigital).

From 2022 our approach to campaigns, across the organisation, will set out a clear methodology to plan and deliver effective and successful campaigns.

## Campaign methodology:

- insight and research
- clear and measurable objectives
- corporate strategy and service plans
- implementation of tactics
- measurement and evaluation

The future of government communication depends on the ability to connect with target audiences in a timely, appropriate and relevant way, giving them information and helping change behaviours in a way that fits in with their lives.

In this respect digital communications can enable the Communications and Engagement service to integrate more closely, connecting directly and quickly with influencers and audiences in a well-governed and planned way.

This means we need to master new techniques, including digital technologies, and remain at the forefront of the latest practice, revising and updating our skillsets to keep ahead of the extraordinary pace of change.

A programme of campaigns and digital communications will be planned each year, and will be outlined in the annual Communications Programme.



# Media relations

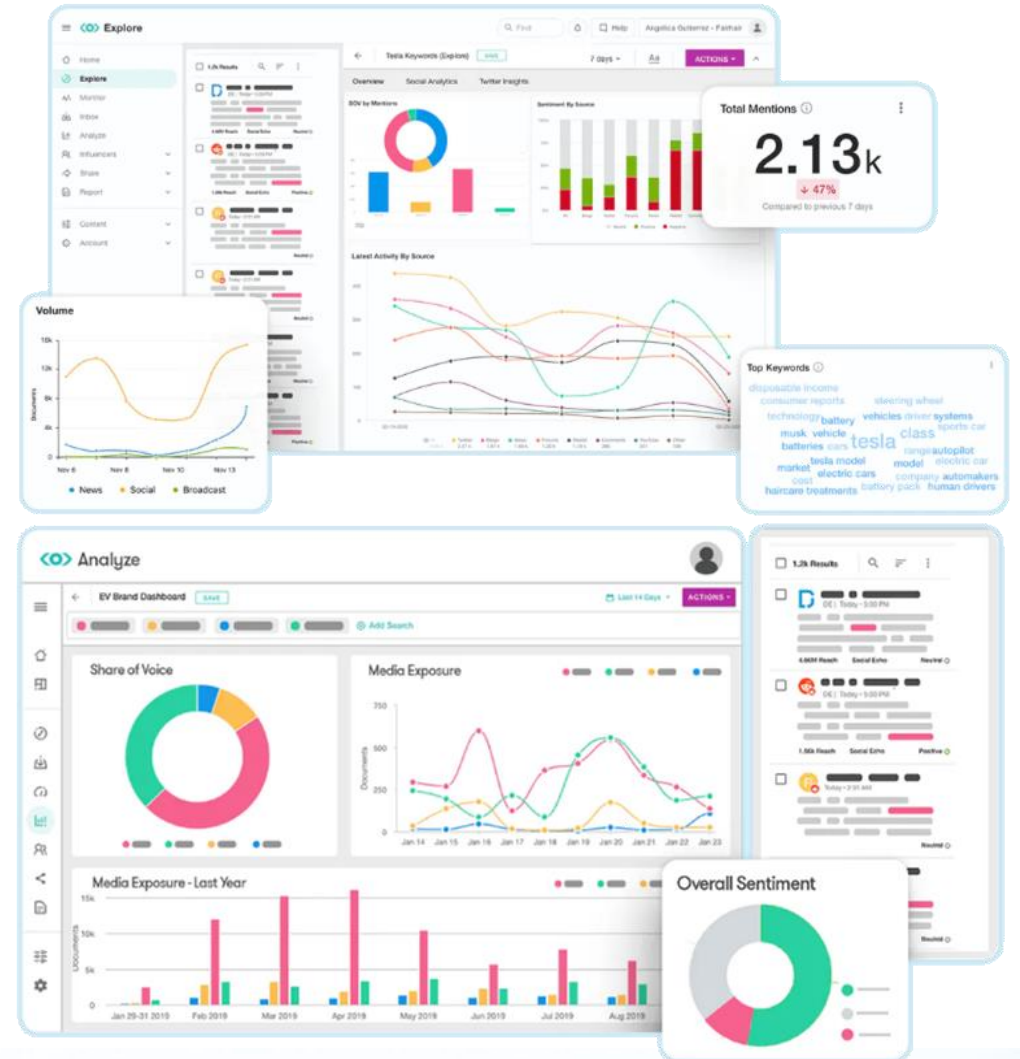
Our media relations function maintains and develops the Councils profile and reputation by raising awareness of its policies, projects and campaigns. This includes both proactive and reactive media relations (press enquires), and crisis management.

Each year we issue hundreds of press/media releases. Our media work extends beyond the issue of traditional press releases, and operates across multiple channels (including social media) and multiple stakeholders.

In order to monitor our media programme, we make use of a media monitoring platform (Meltwater). Clear measurement of our media activity helps to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of our media operation.

In 2022 we will support elected members (Cabinet), senior and corporate leadership teams through media training, to ensure we have a wide range of spokespeople, available to explain our policies and address reactive issues with the media when they arise.

From 2022 our approach to media releases, across the organisation, will set out a clear methodology to plan and deliver effective and successful releases.



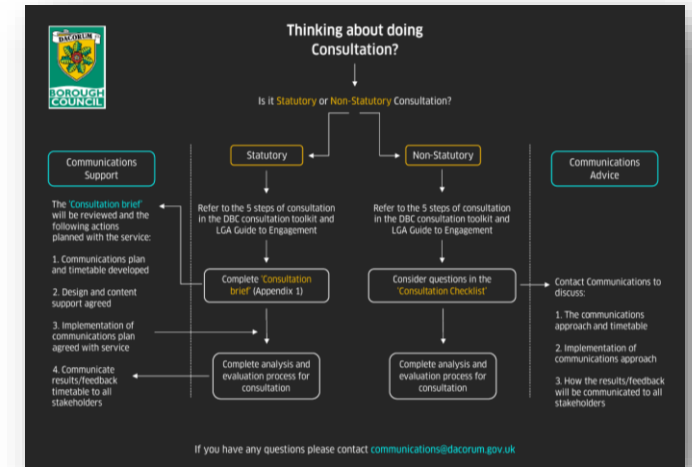
# Stakeholder engagement and consultation

The term 'engagement' is used to describe any activity that creates a stronger two-way relationship between the Council and the community. This runs from formal consultation to more deliberative and informal listening exercises. It can include co-production, crowdsourcing, events and public meetings.

Consultation is part of the democratic process. The Council believes it crucial to decision making that the views of local residents, businesses, user groups and other stakeholders are sought on what they want in respect of the local area, what priorities they identify and what they think of the Council's performance. Of course, councillors and council officers will always need to weigh the views expressed through consultation against a wide range of other factors: such as legislation and government guidance; demographic data; financial costs and environmental impacts etc.

We as a Council deliver our priorities by encouraging community involvement, developing participation and giving influence to the community, and we develop our profile and reputation by communicating, consulting and informing.

From 2022 our approach to stakeholder engagement and consultation, across the organisation, will set out a clear methodology to plan and deliver effective and successful engagement. This will be supported by an Engagement Toolkit and requirement to complete a consultation brief before the start of any consultation. A programme of engagement and consultation activities will be planned each year, and will be outlined in the annual Communications Programme.



**Local Government Association**

**New Conversations**  
LGA guide to engagement

- Contents
- Foreword
- Introduction
- Which hat are you wearing?
- Context
- Section One: The Basics**
- Section Two: Surpassing Expectations**
- Section Three: Pilot Projects**
- Further reading
- Glossary

# Commercial awareness and marketing

The purpose of marketing is to help fulfil operational and policy objectives by effectively understanding and meeting the needs of our customers. Marketing campaigns include research into customer behaviour, insight generation, strategic planning and the implementation of communication programmes across multiple channels.

## Marketing campaigns should:

- focus on delivering a high-quality end-to-end service and customer experience
- support the raising of awareness of policies, influence attitudes and behaviours
- aid the operation of services
- be based on reliable data
- use appropriate and validated creative techniques to influence attitudes and behaviours
- be founded on established behavioural science
- build confidence and trust in local government institutions and brands
- be measurable in terms of effectiveness and achievement goals

From 2022 our approach to marketing campaigns, across the organisation, will set out a clear methodology to plan and deliver effective and successful campaigns. This will be supported by a campaign checklist and requirement to complete a campaign brief before the start of any marketing campaigns.



# Internal communications

Communication with employees, or staff engagement, has established itself as a business function in its own right. Its evolution over recent decades into the refined discipline that it is today reflects its importance in the overall business strategy and impact on the bottom line.

Internal communications is about involving and engaging employees and must be based on principles of honesty and openness. Communication should always be two way where possible, but with larger dispersed workforces (such as Cupid Green and satellite sites) the Council will need to turn to other methods.

It is critical that the focus is on the recipient of the message i.e. in what context is the member of staff receiving this message, and is it relevant to them personally?

## Internal communications methods:

- Face to face
- Print
- Online (broadcast, new media, intranet)
- Events (staff awards, staff conferences/Town Halls etc.)
- Staff engagement/consultation

Whilst careful consideration must be given to the channels of internal communications, it is important not to overlook the content of the message itself. Instead of asking 'how will we communicate this?' ask 'why are we communicating this and 'what is the desired outcome?'

If staff do not have answers to the basic motivational impulse of 'what's in it for me?' they will simply be unable to hear what comes next. Real involvement only occurs when the personal implications are afforded equal significance. Only then can staff get to the questions of 'what's in it for us?' and 'how can I help?'

Where possible, corporate messages should come from the most senior and credible source (CEO, HR or Communications), or from the immediate line manager, in plain and simple language. In most situations a mix of channels will have the most effective outcome and it is important to choose the most appropriate channel for the message.

A programme of internal communications activities will be planned each year, and will be outlined in the annual Communications Programme.

# Publications, print and design

The Council manages a portfolio of print and digital publications issued throughout the year. The delivery of this portfolio is supported by a print and design function, covering all areas of design including print, marketing collateral, events, insignia and promotional items.

## Our publications aim to:

- Provide the Council and its services with a cost-effective (value for money) means of communicating with residents and stakeholders, and provide good quality, accessible information.
- Provide engaging and informative publications containing material of interest to all the diverse communities and age groups which make up Dacorum Borough.

From 2022 our approach to content curation, across the organisation, will set out a clear methodology to plan and deliver great content for our readers.

A programme for publications will be planned each year, and will be outlined in the annual Communications Programme.





# Corporate events

The Council manages a calendar of community and civic events throughout the year. Public events can be a great way to bring communities together, and supports the corporate priority of building strong and vibrant communities.

The Dacorum Safety Advisory Group (DSAG) brings together a number of statutory agencies with responsibility for safety and public protection in the Dacorum area, including Dacorum Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Police, Herts Fire and Rescue Service, and the East of England Ambulance Service, and allows event organisers an opportunity to obtain advice on their proposals from multiple agencies through a single channel.

From 2022 our approach to event planning, across the organisation, will set out a clear methodology to plan and deliver high profile events successfully. This will be supported by an events checklist and marketing/communications guide.

A calendar of community and civic events will be planned each year, and will be outlined in the annual Communications Programme.



# Our main communications channels

## Digital communications:

- Corporate website (800+ pages)
- Facebook (11,000 followers)
- Twitter (8,600 followers)
- LinkedIn (3,500 followers)
- Instagram (860 followers)

## Media

- Media contact database (300+ media contacts)

## Publications:

- Dacorum Life (print) – twice per year (Distribution: 70,000 copies)
- Annual Report
- Dacorum Life (digital) - weekly (12,000+ subscribers)
- Business Bulletin – weekly (2,500+ subscribers)
- Members News – weekly
- Corporate Plan
- Council Tax
- Business Rates

## Internal communications:

- Intranet
- CE messages (email)
- DBCall (email)
- Annual Staff Survey
- Staff WhatsApp (Broadcast Group) (350+ staff)

## Engagement and consultation:

- Residents online consultation group (900+ residents)
- Residents Satisfaction Survey

A detailed programme of all communications channels are outlined in the annual Communications Programme.

# Audiences

Local authorities are large complex organisations, and as such communicate with a wide range of audiences. Our primary audience is our residents. We will place them at the heart of all our communications activity. From 2022 we will scope out our audience engagement, across the organisation, to set out a clear stakeholder engagement plan. This will outline the planned activities and engagement channels for each audience.

## Summary of key audiences:

### Internal audiences:

- Members
- Council employees
- Trade Unions

### External audiences:

Residents  
Local businesses, business forums  
Local MPs  
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
Non-departmental public bodies  
Media (local press, broadcast, digital)  
Developers and landowners  
Town and Parish councils  
Third sector, community and voluntary organisations  
Education sector  
Health sector  
Investors  
Younger people  
Neighbouring Local Authorities

# Resources



**Head of Communications and Engagement**

## Corporate Projects and Events

**Comms Lead Officer**  
(Corporate Projects and Events) **(P/T)**

**Environmental Projects Lead Officer**

## Digital Communications and Engagement

**Comms Lead Officer**  
(Digital Communications and Engagement) **(P/T)**

**Comms and Engagement Officer (P/T)**

**Filming Officer**

**Events Officer**

**Enviro Awareness Officer**

**Enviro Projects Support Officer**

**Comms and Engagement Officer (P/T)**

**Web Comms Officer**

**Graphic Designer (P/T)**

**Digital Marketing Officer**  
15 month contract  
2022-23

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**(P/T) – Part-time**

# Professional development and learning

Our focus is on developing our skills and expertise across the full range of communications disciplines, driving innovation and ensuring value for money for the services we support.

In order to do so, we have to continuously develop our skills to stay abreast of changes in the communications, marketing and digital landscapes. This will be achieved through a combination of personal continuous professional development, membership of professional bodies and team training.

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## CPD cycle

- **Identify:** Understand where you've come from, where you are and where you want to be.
- **Plan:** Plan how you can get to where you want to be, with clear outcomes and milestone to track progress.
- **Act:** Act upon your plan, and be open to learning experiences.
- **Reflect:** Make the most of your day-to-day learning by routinely reflecting upon experience.
- **Apply:** Create opportunities where you can translate theory into practice and put your learning to work.
- **Share:** Share your learning in communities of practice to generate greater insight and benefit from the support of your community.
- **Impact:** Measure the overall impact your learning has had on the work you do.



Chartered Institute  
of Personnel and  
Development



The Chartered  
Institute of Marketing



The  
Consultation  
Institute



CHARTERED INSTITUTE  
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS



# Communications Strategy delivery plan

In order to deliver the Communications Strategy 2022-2025, the following outputs are required:

**Communications Strategy Action Plan**  
(delivery by Q2 2022/23)

**Communications Programme 2022/23; 2023/24; 2024/25**  
(delivery by Q1 each financial year)

**Working with Communications Guide (Staff)**  
(deliver by Q3 2022/23)

**Working with Communications Guide (Members)**  
(deliver by Q3 2022/23)

# Contact

Communications and Engagement  
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# Dacorum Borough Council

## People Strategy (2022 – 2025)



## Our Goals

Our People Strategy has four clear goals to help ensure our workforce are best placed to deliver our strategic objectives.

- Identify the key workforce challenges that DBC face in light of our strategic/transformational objectives and the national issues;
- Set out in detail our workforce ambitions: those things we need our workforce to be in order to achieve our strategic and transformational objectives;
- Deliver a linked programme plan of activity to deliver the strategy;
- Assess whether our current enabling functions and processes are optimally designed to enable the above outputs and, if not, propose an alternative delivery model and approach.

# Our Strategic Objectives

We are clearly focussed on our Corporate Plan priorities, our transformation programme and our commercial ambitions.

## Corporate Plan 2020-25

### Our Priorities 2020 - 2025

Our previous plans focussed on getting the building blocks in place to develop a borough that prospers and thrives, whilst funding regeneration to attract inward investors.

This plan builds on these foundations. In addition, the Council has committed to addressing climate change and adopting all reasonable steps, which cuts across the delivery of each of the Council's priorities which focus on the issues that matter most for residents:



A clean, safe and enjoyable environment



Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need



Building strong and vibrant communities



Climate and ecological emergency



Ensuring economic growth and prosperity



Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery

## 'Future Dacorum' Transformation Programme

- Customer focussed: Putting residents at the heart of what we do
- Evidence led: Our policy and decisions guided by "timely and accurate" data, driving continuous improvement
- Efficient & sustainable: Developing efficient, effective and sustainable approaches to service delivery, reducing costly processes and providing structures that are agile and fit for purpose
- The right culture: Developing a workforce that is high performing, highly motivated and with the skills and resources to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents.

## Place Programme

- Hemel Garden Communities: a green network; integrated neighbourhoods; a self-sustaining economy; engaged communities.
- Hemel Place – where life is greener: where connections matter; a vibrant destination for enterprise; enhancing your wellbeing in Hemel.

## Commercialisation

- We will continually identify and develop opportunities to commercialise existing and new services;
- Our partnerships (private and public) will be efficient and deliver best value;
- We will have a strategic commissioning and procurement approach that derives the maximum value from every pound spent;
- We will adopt the most effective delivery models to deliver best value services;
- When we need to charge for our services, we will price commercially, ensuring that this covers the cost of the service unless we have made a conscious and evidenced decision to subsidise;
- We will be commercially astute – we will understand the market for our services, and know how to make it work for us;

# Strategic Challenges

There are significant workforce related challenges being felt by all public sector bodies. They are having a very real impact in Dacorum and the fact they are being felt everywhere does not diminish our resolve to tackle them.

- **Move to hybrid working** - we have successfully implemented and supported a move to hybrid working. However we recognise that these ways of working can present very specific challenges for individual members of staff and can exacerbate feeling of detachment. It can also have a fluctuating impact on organisational productivity.
- **Recruitment and Retention difficulties** – we have seen a challenging market develop, particularly in ‘expert’ professions.
- **Mental health impact of Covid** – we have seen sickness rates rise particularly around mental health and recognise that staff are ‘running on empty’ after their pandemic endeavours.
- An over reliance on **agency staff** – As the direct employment market becomes more challenging, agency workers are being used more who can demand higher hourly rates.
- **Cost of living crisis** – Impact on physical and mental health for staff and residents
- **Reduction in Central Government funding** - increases in Inflation and rising costs resulting in a deeper look at service efficiencies and income generation opportunities.

# What does our data tell us?

## Our sickness rates...

- **44.8% increase of sickness days** from 2020/2021 to 2021/2022 excluding COVID
- **Environmental Services** has the **most** lost days lost due to sickness in 2021/2022 - approx. 50% of DBC lost days
- **Mental Health and Musculoskeletal** are typically the highest reason for absence.

## Agency Worker Spend

- Year on year this is increasing
- **High spend on staff vacancies**
- High spend on Covid-19 support/recovery

## Recruitment and Retention

- **High number of vacancies** open
- Increased number of **failed advertising campaigns**
- **National recruitment problem**, especially in professional roles
- Overall staff turnover is comparable to other years, remains healthy according to industry standard (10%-15%). However some **pockets of higher turnover**.

## Age Demographic

Approximately 70% of our staff are aged over 40 years old, highlighting an **ageing workforce**.

|           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| Under 21: | 0.7% (5)    |
| 21 – 30:  | 11.7% (89)  |
| 31 – 40:  | 20% (152)   |
| 41 – 50:  | 25% (190)   |
| 51 – 60:  | 29.5% (224) |
| 61 – 70:  | 12.2% (93)  |
| 71 plus:  | 0.9% (7)    |

# Our People Strategy Vision: *The right staff, in the right place, at the right time, working in the right way*

Our vision is to have a workforce that is high performing, highly motivated and with the skills and resources to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents. In return we want people who feel supported, engaged and have real opportunities to develop and learn. To enable this we need our leaders and managers to be fully equipped to support/grow our workforce along with creating a positive working culture where staff feel valued and have a sense of pride to be working for the Council. That's why we are committed to having a workforce that is:

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## **Agile & Responsive**

Able to adjust accordingly and adapt to change

## **Inclusive**

Engaging views of all to shape the future; provide equal opportunities; eliminate discrimination, have a workforce who represents the diversity in our local communities

## **People focussed**

Managers are able to work with their teams and hold people management as the heart of their role. Providing staff with trust and respect to undertake their roles

## **Commercial & Digitised**

Decisions and approaches are made through a commercial and efficient lens, focussed on service user satisfaction.

## **Accountable and brave**

High levels of accountability are present in order to transform the council into a high-performance organisation. Willing to be bold and brave

## **Customer and Evidence led**

Pragmatic, driven by the needs of our residents/businesses with decisions driven by the evidence available

## **Committed & Positive**

Committed to public service, the goals of organisation and the associated values, behaviours and standards of the Council.

# Grounded in our values

The culture of the organisation is fundamental to everything we do and our five key values set out how we want staff to communicate and relate to each other as well as with residents, Members and external partners.

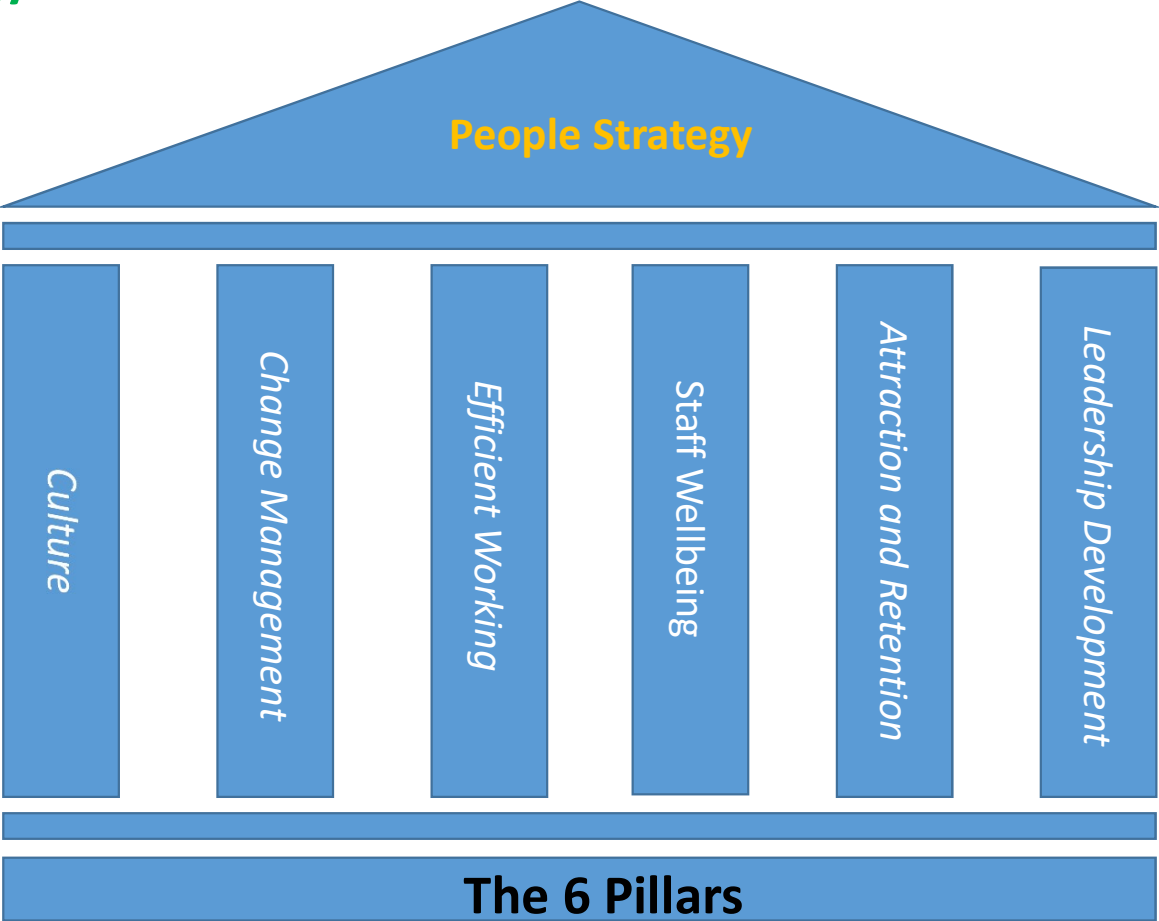
## Our expectations of each other at Dacorum



## Our agreed leadership expectations:

- Champion and drive through workforce change and provide opportunities for staff to be engaged on a range of corporate issues and to actively promote a culture of employee wellbeing, respect and support.
- Ensure that services are at the forefront in terms of innovation, delivery, quality, best practice, equality and inclusion.
- Break down service boundaries, to offer a seamless internal and external service to customers.
- Work collaboratively as part of the Council's leadership team to drive forward a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that effective budget, performance, risk management, project management, and learning from complaints/compliments becomes embedded as part of the Council's approach.
- Work collaboratively to ensure the development of a flexible and corporate organisation able to undertake, respond to, embrace, and absorb change. This includes creating an environment where teams can learn, thrive and perform.
- Promote an open and supportive culture which maximises the potential of employees.
- Provide leadership, support, challenge, and contribution to the Council's community leadership role.
- To be positive and challenge inappropriate behaviours and act within our policies on equality and diversity, financial issues and customer care.

# People Strategy Pillars



# The 6 People Strategy Pillars

- **Culture** – Promotion, embedding and development of values based culture. Bringing clarity around the associated behaviours, standards and support to the organisation as it holds itself accountable.
- **Change Management** – Ensuring our service delivery and transformation objectives are met through effective change manage support and enabling our staff to drive, embrace and adapt to change. This will focus on employee engagement, expert advice and exceptional process design.
- **Attraction and Retention** – Developing the Dacorum offer so we are doing our utmost to recruit, develop and retain the right people.
- **Leadership Development** - Developing leadership capability to support the overall culture and transformational change with particular focus on the development of managers.
- **Efficient working** – Ensuring that bureaucracy is minimised and where it exists, is proportionate to the risk. Where possible, processes are digitised and automated.
- **Staff wellbeing** – Providing staff with a culture that supports physical and mental wellbeing, so that staff feel safe, engaged and motivated to continue to provide excellent services to our residents.



# Pillar 1: Culture

**Culture** – promotion, embedding and development of values based culture. Bringing clarity around the associated behaviours and standards and support to the organisation as it holds itself accountable;

We will:

- Re-enforce our values across the organisation;
- Work with services to develop a framework of meaningful behaviours and standards
- Embed these formally in our ways of working and our processes;
- Role-model them these assiduously, praising when they are achieved, calling out and developing when we fall short;
- Be clear with our residents, businesses and partners as to the standards they should expect from us

## Pillar 2: Change management

**Change Management** – Ensuring our service delivery and transformation objectives are met through effective change manage support. This will ensure the objective and route is optimal and our staff are enabled to drive, embrace and adapt to change. This will focus on employee engagement, expert advice and exceptional process design

We will:

- Develop an organisational development (OD) capability to deliver our transformation objectives;
- Actively support managers and staff to lead and be part of the change journey
- Ensure that managers are fully equipped and have the right skills sets to effectively manage change
- Ensure processes and procedures are in line with good practice and are adhered to throughout the change process.
- Ensure staff are fully informed and understand the purpose of the change.

## Pillar 3: Attraction & Retention

**Attraction and Retention** – Developing the ‘Dacorum offer’ so we are doing our utmost to recruit, develop and retain the right people.

We will:

- Better understand the reasons for recruitment and retention challenges, accepting these may be different in different role types;
- Develop a strategy based on that evidence;
- Develop and communicate our Dacorum offer;
- Ensure agency staff are used in appropriate circumstances and process used is good value for money/effective.
- Work with services to ensure succession planning and talent identification is alive and embedded.
- Be alive to our aging workforce and how we can attract younger applicants to join us.

## Pillar 4: Leadership & Development

**Leadership Development** - Developing leadership capability to support the overall culture and transformational change with particular focus on the development of managers.

We will:

- Ensure that our senior leaders are supported to drive the level of change and service performance that the Council is aiming for;
- Support managers to be real people leaders, and hold managing people as the key element of their role;
- Developing leadership capability to support the overall culture and transformational change;
- Ensure managers have a clear definition and expectation of the role of the manager at Dacorum.
- Ensure that new recruits are competent in leading teams the Dacorum way.

## Pillar 5: Efficient working

**Efficient working** – ensuring that bureaucracy is minimised and where it exists, is proportionate to the risk. Where possible, processes are digitised and automated and sit with the most suitable person.

We will:

- Review HR risk appetite, ensuring our investment is proportionate to the risk and/ or opportunity;
- Drive down on low-value processes, automating where we can and acting as a role-model of efficiency for the rest of the organisation;
- Empower and support our managers to be people leaders, reducing the need for multiple teams involvement in standard processes;
- Ensure that processes are delivered at the optimal grade and place within the organisation;
- Ensure that staff policies and procedures are aligned to council need, good practice and employment legislation.

## Pillar 6: Staff Wellbeing

**Staff wellbeing** - Providing staff with a culture that supports physical and mental wellbeing, so that staff feel safe, engaged and motivated to be at work and to continue to provide excellent services to our residents.

We will:

- Develop specific initiatives to support mental and physical health across the Council;
- Ensure the absent management policies and procedures are effective and in line with good practice, as well as being consistently applied;
- We listen to staff feedback to ensure our practices and initiatives are having the desired impact on staff wellbeing.
- To create workplaces that are safe and engaging.
- To create a culture that staff wellbeing matters and managers are fully equipped to support their staff in this challenging area.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Report for:</b>   | Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee   |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  | Complaints Policy   |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 1/11/2022   |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Councillor Graeme Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services                                 |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I   |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | Complaints Policy   |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  |   |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> | DBC: Dacorum Borough Council<br>CSU: Customer Service Unit<br>EDI: Equality, Diversity, Inclusion |

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>Report Author / Responsible Officer</b></p> <p>Aidan Wilkie, Strategic Director People and Transformation</p> <p>Hannah Peacock, Head of Transformation</p> <p> </p> <p>Aidan.Wilkie@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228569 (ext. 2569)</p> <p>Hannah.peacock@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228037 (ext. 2037)</p> |
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|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Corporate Priorities</b>                          | Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery               |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All Wards   |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | To update Members on the new Complaints Policy                          |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | That Members note the report, identify areas for further consideration. |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        |   |

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## **1 Introduction:**

1.1 One of the key work-streams within Dacorum Borough Council's Transformation Programme has been the development of our Customer Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in February 2022. The Customer Strategy outlined how we will engage with our customers to review where we have not met customer expectations, where we may be excluding customers and where we have low areas of customer satisfaction. The strategy set out how we will use the findings from this customer engagement to embed customer focus in everything we do and how we do it in order to achieve the overarching vision:

*"To put the customer at the centre of our services in order to provide a positive and effective customer experience, and to empower our staff so they can deliver consistent and quality Council services."*

1.2 During the development of the Customer Strategy, the project team reviewed the ways the Council engages with our customers. We completed a root-and-branch review of the current complaints process. This review identified several opportunities to improve the complaints workflow, increase communication at key stages of complaints, align the policy to revised Ombudsman guidance, and ensure customer feedback is fed into service improvement activities.

1.3 This review fed into the proposed draft Complaints Policy (Appendix 1). This paper will outline the key changes to the Complaints Policy and the reasoning behind the changes, before setting out how the revised Complaints Policy will be implemented across the organisation.

## **2 New Complaints Policy**

2.1 The new Complaints Policy incorporates changes to:

- Response times
  - The updated response times have been implemented to align to the Housing Ombudsman changes (date of change). The process of a complaint response has been changed. From moment of receipt, the customer will receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days, and receive a Stage One response within 10 working days of receipt (longer in exceptional circumstances, discussed with the customer). If a customer is unhappy with the Stage One response, they have 28 days to respond to DBC requesting a Stage Two response. From moment of receipt for a Stage Two response, the customer will receive such a response within 20 working days (longer in exceptional circumstances, discussed with the customer).
  - Instead of setting out a variety of separate complaint response times for different Ombudsman complaint processes, we have chosen consistency by prioritising the quickest complaint response times as provided by the Housing Ombudsman. The Policy recognises that the Council needs to act quickly to investigate and respond to the customer's complaint.
- Levels of responsibilities for complaint responses
  - The new reporting structure moves responsibility for complaint responses down the corporate hierarchy. The current policy sees Heads of Service and Assistant Directors responding to Stage One and Stage Two complaints respectively. The new policy moves these tasks to Team Leaders (Stage One) and Heads of Service and above (Stage Two). The benefits of this are that staff responding to individual complaints have a closer connection to direct service delivery, and it expands the pool of staff available to provide complaint responses. This will speed up our response times. The Complaints Policy puts trust in Team Leaders across the Council to respond to customers quickly and professionally. This demonstrates corporate behaviours: "We will be honest and act with integrity; we will support each other and work together; we will be accountable to each other to get things done."
- Customer contact
  - The priority of the new Complaints Policy is providing an effective customer experience that swiftly investigates and resolves the basis of their complaint. The Complaints Policy prioritises talking directly to residents over the phone in the first instance by the relevant officer. In every case, the responsible Team

Leader will call the customer to talk directly on the telephone about their issue. If a complaint can be resolved quickly and informally, this should be pursued.

2.2 The customer can challenge a Stage Two response at the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) or the Housing Ombudsman Service, within 12 months after the customer first complained.

2.3 The previous Stage One complaints process followed a 15 working day target for a response, led by Group Managers. This is considered too slow, and the target has often been missed. If the complainant could demonstrate why the process or outcome of Stage One was unfair, the complaints progressed to Stage Two. This was an independent review, led by an Assistant Director from a different service area, who provided a formal response within 20 working days. Alongside other changes to the Complaints Policy, response times will improve and meet the new 10 day timescale for Stage One responses.

2.4 The Complaints Policy has been simplified. Firstly, it addresses complaints only. Previous versions incorporated compliments and comments, which will now be submitted via our website (subject to the same accessibility requirements). Secondly, we reviewed the Policy from a "plain English" point-of-view, to make it easy for customers to understand the process.

### **3 Implementation**

3.1 Implementation of the new policy will require training for staff across the organisation. This is being designed by the project team and will be disseminated accordingly, prior to the launch of the new policy. Areas include:

- Introductions to the new Complaints officers and their responsibilities
- Demonstrations (in-person, Teams classes, and videos) on the new process for all Team Leads and Heads of Service
- Creating the role of a multi-directorate case owner for Ombudsman responses
- Leaver/starter notifications for Team Leaders and above from the HR service
- Staff-facing documents and processes for reference
- Incorporating new requirements into service plans, workflows, and team responsibilities

3.2 We will report and learn from the complaints received. This feedback will help us improve Council services, and should reduce the number of complaints we receive.

3.3 The launch date for the new policy is Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

### **4 Options and alternatives considered**

4.1 One option considered was leaving the Complaints Policy unaltered, restricting change to the response times. However, this would put DBC in contradiction to the Housing Ombudsman which could find against the Council.

### **5 Consultation**

5.1 The external project team (Ignite) is implementing the Customer Strategy, utilising their varied experience from other local authorities.

5.2 Key stakeholders at DBC have been consulted, such as the Customer Service Unit, and the new Complaints team within CSU, as well as services which currently receive higher proportion of complaints from residents, such as Property and Place, Development Management, and Waste.

### **6 Financial and value for money implications:**

6.1 The new reporting structure moves responsibility for Stage One responses to team leaders, which will increase speed of response and efficiency of the process. There is an expectation that minor efficiency savings will be realised, which will contribute to wider benefits realisation from implementing the Customer Strategy.

### **7 Legal Implications**

7.1 No Implications

### **8 Risk implications:**

8.1 No implications

### **9 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

9.1 The EDI officer has been involved in the development of the new Complaints Policy. This has led to new information for customers regarding advocacy support and reasonable adjustments.

**10 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

10.1 No implications

**11 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

11.1 No implications

**12 Conclusions:**

12.1 The new Complaints Policy will change how complaints to DBC are dealt with. The focus is on the customer and ensuring their experience of interacting with us is positive whilst we investigate their complaint. No matter the result, the customer must feel assured that we have followed a fair, rigorous, and detailed policy (within reasonable timescales) that is consistent with national guidelines. The Complaints Policy empowers officers to contact customers directly to resolve issues informally, as well as setting out in detail how to conduct a formal complaint response.



## **Complaints Policy & Procedure**

**December 2022**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 We always aim to provide good services, but sometimes things go wrong. This policy explains how you can complain about a service, and how we will make sure we deal with your complaint fairly.

## 2. Purpose of this policy

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- define what a complaint is
- explain who can make a complaint
- explain how to make a complaint
- explain the process we follow when dealing with a complaint, so you know what to expect

- 2.2 In short, we will:

- show understanding about the issues you raise
- treat all comments and complaints seriously, with an honest and open mind, and do everything we can to deal with them efficiently and effectively
- be as flexible as we can within the limits of the laws and policies we follow
- say sorry if something has gone wrong
- aim to resolve complaints as soon as possible
- keep you informed about the progress of your complaint
- respond to all the points that you raise, provide evidence for our decisions and explain them, using simple language and avoiding jargon

## 3. Complaints Policy

### What is a complaint?

- 3.1 We define a complaint as:

***‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents’***

- 3.2 Examples of complaints that we will deal with under this policy are:

- there has been a delay in providing a service
- we have made a mistake in the way we have provided a service
- we have failed to deliver a service - this could relate to quality, standard or service level
- we have not listened properly
- we have not followed our processes or policies
- we have not met our legal, statutory or regulatory requirements
- we have not delivered against a commitment or promise
- our staff have not been helpful or have not conducted themselves correctly

- 3.3 You can complain about any of Dacorum Borough Council services, whether they are delivered by our staff, contractors or other organisations employed by us.

- 3.4 It is helpful if you raise your issue with us as soon as possible, to help us to solve your complaint quickly. We will only accept complaints related to issues that happened more than six months ago in exceptional circumstances.

#### **What is not treated as a complaint under this policy**

##### **Informal complaints**

- 3.5 We encourage our staff to talk to customers and try to resolve problems first so that you do not need to submit a formal complaint.
- 3.6 Often, we can resolve an issue by putting the problem right straight away. We consider these types of cases as informal complaints and will resolve your issue using our established service request processes.
- 3.7 For example, you let us know that our waste collection team has not emptied your bin. If we have missed the bin, we would try to fix this by returning to empty your bin as soon as possible. We would not usually treat this as a formal complaint unless the problem happens repeatedly.

##### **Conduct of a councillor**

- 3.8 There is a separate process if you need to complain about the behaviour of local councillors (also called elected Members). This includes borough councillors and parish and town councillors within the borough of Dacorum. The Code of Conduct for Members describes the standard of behaviour expected of councillors. You can find the Code of Conduct and report an issue on our website:

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/complaints-about-councillors](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/complaints-about-councillors)

##### **Statutory appeals**

- 3.9 Some services have a separate appeal process if you think the Council has made the wrong decision. For these services, you should follow the appeals process instead of submitting a complaint. These include:

- **Appeal a Housing Benefit decision.** Our website has details on the procedure for appealing

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/benefits-appeal](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/benefits-appeal)

- **Appeal a Homelessness decision.** Our website has details on the procedure for appealing

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/housing/housing-advice-and-options/homeless-or-at-risk](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/housing/housing-advice-and-options/homeless-or-at-risk)

- **Appeal a refusal of planning permission.** Our website has information about the appeals process:

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/planning-appeals](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/planning-appeals)

- **Appeal a planning enforcement notice.** The government website has details of the appeals process and requirements:

<http://www.gov.uk/appeal-enforcement-notice>

#### **Services not provided by Dacorum Borough Council**

3.10 We cannot deal with a complaint about a service that the council does not provide. For example, Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for:

- Maintenance of roads and street lighting
- Adult Social Care provision
- Children’s services and education

You can read the Hertfordshire County Council’s complaints policy, and find out how to make a complaint on their website:

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/complaints)

#### **Complaints about government legislation or policy**

3.11 We will respond to complaints about Dacorum Borough Council policies. We will do our best to explain the policy and the reasons for it. For policy or legislation that is set by central government, we will direct you to your MP for a response.

### **4. Making a complaint**

4.1 The quickest way to complain is by using our online form:

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/complaints-form](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/complaints-form)

4.2 If you cannot use our online form, you can call us on 01442 228000.

4.3 If you prefer to write to us, send your complaint to: Dacorum Borough Council, The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 1DN

### **5. What happens when a complaint is made?**

5.1 Our complaints process has two stages.

#### **Stage One - Initial Investigation and response**

5.2 If you complain using the online form, we will send you an automatic email to confirm receipt.

5.3 If you complain over the telephone or via letter, we will send you a written acknowledgement within five working days of receipt.

5.4 The Team Leader responsible for your complaint will acknowledge and contact you after reading your complaint, to make sure we understand your concerns and what we could do to put things right. This will be within five days of receipt. If we can agree on a resolution with you at this stage we will close the complaint, subject to the agreed

action being taken.

- 5.5 If we cannot agree on a quick resolution your complaint will be investigated and responded to by the Team Leader within the service responsible.
- 5.6 **We will make a decision within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.**
- 5.7 If your stage 1 complaint is complex or requires a lot of investigation, we may need to extend this time limit. If we think we need more time to investigate, we will contact you to discuss and agree on a new date.
- 5.8 We will reply to you in writing (sent by email if we have your email address) and will clearly explain:
- the stage of the complaint
  - the nature of the complaint made
  - our decision
  - the reasons for our decision
  - actions we will take to put things right
  - how to escalate the matter to stage two if you are not satisfied with the answer
- 5.9 If you are dissatisfied with our response when you receive it, you can escalate your complaint to stage two of the process, either by responding to the email we will send you or writing to us within **28 calendar days from receipt of our response.**

#### **Stage Two - Internal Review**

- 5.10 If you want to proceed to stage two you must explain why you are not satisfied with our response.
- 5.11 If you cannot demonstrate why the process or outcome at stage one was unfair, incorrect or incomplete we can decide not to proceed to stage two. We will write to you to explain our decision and we will give you details of the ombudsman if you want to take the complaint further. An ombudsman is an independent person, not connected with the council, whose job it is to investigate complaints.
- 5.12 If we do accept your stage two complaint, we will appoint a Head of Service, or another appropriate senior officer, to investigate. This person will work in a different service area from those associated with the complaint. **You will receive a formal response within 20 working days, at which point we will consider the complaint closed.**
- 5.13 If your stage 2 complaint is complex or requires a lot of investigation, we may need to extend this time limit. If we think we need more time to investigate, we will contact you to discuss and agree on a new date.

#### **Escalation to the Ombudsman**

- 5.14 Once a complaint has been through the Stage One and Stage Two complaints process, if you are still unhappy with our response, you can choose to contact the relevant Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will accept complaints for up to 12 months after you first



complained to us.

- 5.15 **For complaints about our duties as a social landlord**, please contact the Housing Ombudsman. You can visit their website for more information on the process of escalating the complaint:

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

- 5.16 **For all other matters**, please contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. You can visit their website for more information on the process of escalating the complaint:

[www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

### **Involving a councillor, MP or another person in a complaint**

- 5.17 Sometimes customers ask their local councillor, MP or another person to complain on their behalf. If you do this, we will follow our normal process and respond directly to that person.
- 5.18 If you have raised a complaint with us first and then asked your councillor, MP or someone else to get involved, we will continue to respond to you. We will also provide a response to the councillor MP where they are involved.

## **6. Unreasonable behaviour towards our staff**

- 6.1 We will do our best to resolve complaints and you will be treated with respect throughout the process. We also expect our staff to be treated with respect and we do not accept any form of abuse or intimidation towards staff at any time, including the use of offensive language. Any abuse of staff will be dealt with robustly and the Council may report any incident to the Police or use the tools available to us to prevent further incidents occurring.

## **7. Reporting and learning from complaints**

- 7.1 We are committed to learning from complaints and using complaints information to improve our services. We will look at:

- the type of complaint
- the complaint outcome
- the timescales agreed
- whether timescales were met
- equality information about complainants

We will then:

- publish (anonymised) a summary of complaints and their outcomes on the Council's website, including:
  - information on the complaint outcomes
  - lessons learnt and what we have done to make sure this doesn't happen again and how we have improved services because of the complaints we have received

## **8. Data Protection**

- 8.1 When you make a complaint, we will log information about your complaint and your name and contact details. To investigate a complaint, certain customer information (like your name, contact details and details of the complaint) may be shared with other Council departments so that a response can be given. We may also use this information to improve our services. Information may also be shared with the relevant Ombudsman if they have received a complaint. All personal data will be held securely and retained in line with the relevant legislation. More information on how we use your information can be found here:

[Retention Guidelines for DBC \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://dacorum.gov.uk)

- 8.2 All complaints will be dealt with in line with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. The identity of the person making a complaint will only be made known to some or all of the parties stated above in order to consider the complaint.
- 8.3 The council aims to be transparent when responding to complaints but sometimes it is necessary to maintain confidentiality. Information will generally not be provided about third parties in line with the Data Protection Act unless asked to do so by a Regulator or Ombudsman.

## **9. Equalities and accessibility**

- 9.1 We will ensure our complaints process is easily accessible to all customers.

### **Accessibility**

- 9.2 If a customer is unable to access the internet, and therefore cannot view the online version of the Complaints Policy and connected webpages (see list below), the Complaints Officer will share physical copies of the necessary documents with the customer. These will be shared by post or at an appointment.

The connected webpages include:

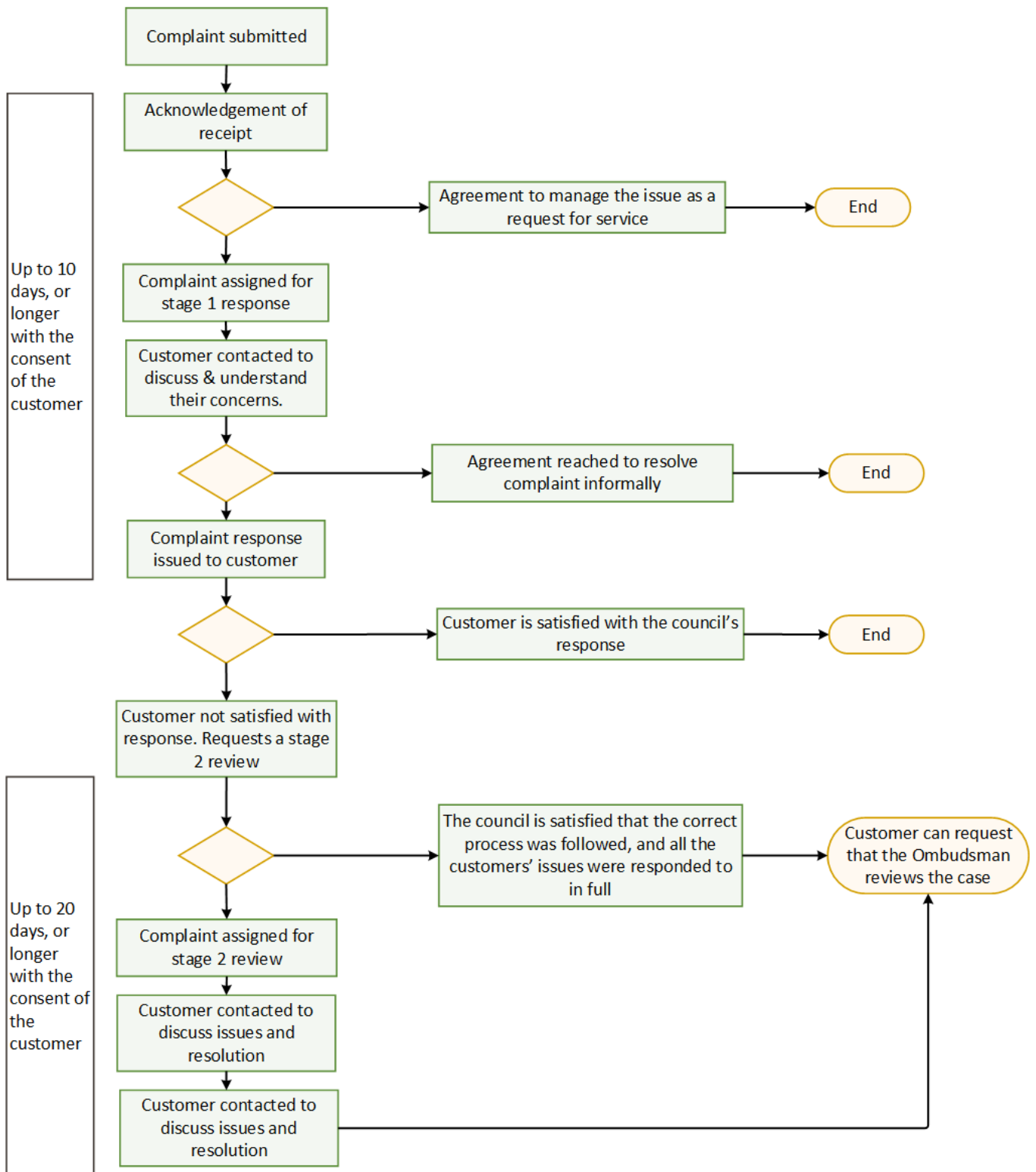
- Complaints about a councillor
- Statutory appeals pages (Housing Benefit, Homelessness Decision, Refusal of Planning Permission, Planning Enforcement Notice)
- Data retention guidelines
- Hertfordshire County Council complaints
- Housing Ombudsman
- Local Government Ombudsman

- 9.3 We are committed to equality and diversity in employment practice and service delivery. We aim to ensure that all our customers are confident of receiving fair treatment and equality of opportunity. This is irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, race, sex, and religion or belief.
- 9.4 Our aim is to have an inclusive environment for everyone, identifying and removing barriers in

our practices. Completing the Equality Monitoring Form will help us achieve this and will also help us meet our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

- 9.5 While it is voluntary to disclose this information, it will allow us to identify current and future needs, potential inequalities, including problems with accessing or using services and information.
- 9.6 Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will not be included as part of your complaint.

Appendix 1



Clerk: Trudi Angel (x2224)

## Finance and Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme 2022-23

**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                       |
|-----------------|------------------|---|--|--|
| 6 December 2022 | 28 November 2022 | Action Points (from previous meeting)   | Democratic Services<br><a href="mailto:Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk">Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk</a>          |  |
|                 |                  | *** Joint Budget***<br>*****  | Chief Finance Officer<br><a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>    |  |
|                 |                  | Leisure Contract (Part 2)   | Head of Commerical Development<br><a href="mailto:Ben.Hosier@dacorum.gov.uk">Ben.Hosier@dacorum.gov.uk</a> | To provide an update on the Leisure Contract |
| 4 January 2023  | 22 December 2022 | Action Points (from previous meeting)   | Democratic Services<br><a href="mailto:Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk">Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk</a>          |  |
|                 |                  |   |  |  |
| 1 February 2023 | 23 January 2023  | Action Points (from previous meeting)   | Democratic Services<br><a href="mailto:Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk">Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk</a>          |  |
|                 |                  | *** Joint Budget***<br>*****<br><br><i>Ideally no further items to be added</i> | Chief Finance Officer<br><a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>    |  |

| <b>7 March 2023</b> | <b>24 February 2023</b> | <b>Action Points (from previous meeting)</b>                 | Democratic Services<br><a href="mailto:Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk">Trudi.angel@dacorum.gov.uk</a>                                   |   |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--|---|---|
|                     |                         | <b>Budget Monitoring Report</b>                              | Chief Finance Officer<br><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>         | Chief Finance Officer<br><a href="mailto:Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk">Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk</a>                             | <i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i> |
|                     |                         | <b>Legal &amp; Democratic Services Q3 Performance Report</b> | Assistant Director, Corporate & Contracted Services<br><a href="mailto:Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk">Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk</a> | <i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i> |
|                     |                         | <b>People and Transformation Q3 Performance Report</b>       | Strategic Director, People and Transformation<br><a href="mailto:Aidan.wilkie@dacorum.gov.uk">Aidan.wilkie@dacorum.gov.uk</a>       | <i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i> |
|                     |                         | <b>Commercial Development Services Q3 Performance Report</b> | Head of Commercial Development<br><a href="mailto:Ben.Hosier@dacorum.gov.uk">Ben.Hosier@dacorum.gov.uk</a>                          | <i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i> |