

Public Document Pack



SUMMONS

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Wednesday 17 April 2024

Council Chamber, The Forum

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the Dacorum Borough Council in the County of Hertfordshire to be held in the Council Chamber, The Forum on Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 7.30 pm to transact the business set out below.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Claire Hamilton'.

**CLAIRE HAMILTON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**Contact: Democratic Services
ext 2209**

AGENDA

1. MINUTES (Pages 4 - 20)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting of the council

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To consider questions (if any) by members of the public of which the appropriate notice has been given to the Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services)

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive announcements and business brought forward by the Mayor, Leader, and the Chief Executive.

4.1 By the Mayor:

4.2 By the Chief Executive:

4.3 By the Group Leaders: Any apologies for absence

5. CABINET MEMBER UPDATES (Pages 21 - 36)

Members of the Council may ask the Cabinet member any question without notice upon an item on the report as published in this agenda;

5.1 Councillor Tindall Leader of the Council (verbal update only)

5.2 Councillor Bromham Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Operations

5.3 Councillor England Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Emergency

5.4 Councillor Wilkie Portfolio Holder Place

5.5 Councillor Weston Portfolio Holder People & Transformation

5.6 Councillor Capozzi Portfolio Holder Corporate and Commercial Services

5.7 Councillor Dhyani Portfolio Holder Housing & Property Services

6. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING (Pages 37 - 45)

To consider any business referred from the previous meeting

7. CABINET REFERRALS (Page 46)

To consider the following referrals from Cabinet:

7.1 CA/33/24 Senior Officer Pay Policy 19th February 2024

8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

There are no referrals from Overview & Scrutiny Committees

9. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

To consider any proposals for changes to committee membership

10. CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

To consider any proposals for changes to committee dates

Agenda Item 1 Public Document Pack

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

28 FEBRUARY 2024

Present:

MEMBERS:

Councillor Tindall (Leader) Councillors, Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Banks, Barradell, Barry, Bhinder, Bristow, Bromham, Capozzi, Cox, Deacon, Dhyani, Douris, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Gale, Guest, Hannell, Hobson, Hobson, Johnson, Link, Link, Maddern, McAreyve, Patterson, Pesch, Pound, Pringle, Reynolds, Riddick, Santamaria, Silwal, Smith-Wright, Stevens, Stewart, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Weston, Williams, Williams and C Wyatt-Lowe

OFFICERS:

CIHamilton	Chief Executive
MBrookes	Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services
NHowcutt	Chief Finance Officer
CONeil	Democratic Services Manager
CDempsey	Financial Planning and Analysis Manager
LFowell	Democratic Services Lead Officer
JGowlett	Desktop and AV Support Analyst

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2024 were agreed.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Mayor introduced Mr Mike Ridley, who submitted a question to be addressed to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Ron Tindall.

Mr Ridley read out his question as follows;

'Bearing in mind that in the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Master Plan the Market Square was earmarked as a "Leisure Zone", and now that the square has been provisionally allocated for the delivery of a Health Campus, what are the Borough's plans for delivering a leisure zone, including a much called-for multi-purpose Arts Venue, which would enliven the Town Centre with a crowd drawing cultural community asset, funded perhaps by section 106 or CIL money from the developers of the Hemel

Garden Community and the increased income from Council Tax that the population expansion will yield?’

Cllr Tindall responded by advising that The administration is keen to improve Hemel Hempstead’s cultural and leisure offer. Last year we published the new Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Vision which recognises this and one of the eight objectives we have set is specifically aimed at doing this. The previous Town Centre Masterplan was published over ten years ago now, in 2013. Much of its aims have been achieved. It didn’t propose a ‘Leisure Zone’ on the former Market Square, but set out proposals to allow for “a range of leisure, retail, business and cultural facilities with new housing” in that part of the town centre.

Circumstances have changed over the past decade, and this is why we have brought forward a revised strategy for the next stages in Hemel Town Centre’s future. Delivery of a new Health Campus, working with our NHS partners, presents an important opportunity for the town and would secure the regeneration of the former Market Square.

But we remain committed to growing the cultural and leisure offer to our residents, visitors and businesses. The new Town Centre Vision sets an ambitious framework for the future to harness investment and deliver ambitious regeneration. We are working with the development and investment sector to deliver this vision, which includes leisure uses and supporting development of the evening economy.

Officers will be embarking on the production of a cultural strategy for the whole of Dacorum this year, with a particular focus on how we can improve the offer in Hemel Town Centre, and a new Head of Arts and Culture is joining the Council next week to lead on this work.

Furthermore we will be delivering the Hemel Imaginarium – an exciting programme of community activities and meanwhile uses to drive footfall and activity in the town centre, many of which will have an arts, culture or sports based theme. We are delivering this working with partners such as Sunnyside, Frogmore Paper Mill, Apex 360 and Hemel BID.

Over the course of this year, therefore, we will be looking forward to both developing the new cultural strategy and seeking to make provision for the arts, culture and new leisure wherever possible as the town centre changes and develops. We look forward to engaging the community and our partner organisations through the Hemel Place Board in these plans as they evolve.

Securing developer contributions through the section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy routes will have an important part to play and we will of course be seeking to maximise these wherever possible. The outward expansion of the town through Hemel Garden Communities is some years off as our new Local Plan progresses and masterplanning work for this transformative programme continues.

Cllr Tindall summed up by expressing his hope that when we get through the next year or two and we can indulge in discussion on how we can develop the activities of the town over all.

The Mayor invited Mr Ridley to ask a supplementary question, to which he responded; I am wondering, with all these ideals, if the Borough has thoroughly investigated the merits of a health hub versus an arts centre on what is known as the market square as

this would revitalise the town centre taking into account both the daytime and night economy?

Cllr Tindall responded that ideally we would like both, but unfortunately at the moment the only option in prospect is the health campus as the NHS have been very willing to engage and talk with us. The financing of a health campus versus an arts and leisure facility are completely different and we would hope that over the coming years most of the funding for the health centre will come from central government. When it comes to an Arts and leisure centre, we have a new officer joining us next week; to know what we want and to set those important conversations with interested parties, it is necessary to get this officer in post and then look at what the gaps are in this provision across the Borough to develop a robust plan going forward.

The Mayor thanked Mr Ridley for his question and Cllr Tindall for his response.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1 The Mayor welcomed newly elected member Cllr Smith-Wright.

The Mayor congratulated Cllr McArevey who is a local nurse, and one of two local nurses put forward for an NHS Hero Award with Hertfordshire Heart. The Mayor celebrated the notable achievement of Cllr McArevey who was the winner of this award.

The Mayor invited the Democratic Services Officer to address the meeting with housekeeping announcements.

4.2 The Chief Executive, Claire Hamilton, announced the following;

“A borough by-election was held on Thursday the 15th of February 2024 in the Tring West and Rural Ward.

I can confirm that there was a 27.2% turnout and the candidate elected was Caroline Smith-Wright of the Liberal Democrat party.

I would also like to inform members that the Police and Crime Commissioner election will be held on the 2nd May 2024. Notice of election will be published on 15th March which is when the pre-election period will commence.”

4.3 The Leader, Cllr Tindall, also expressed the best wishes of the Council to Cllr Birnie who has recently been taken unwell.

The Group Leaders tendered apologies on behalf of Cllrs Birnie, Wilkie, Pringle, Mitchell and Walker. Cllr Pringle subsequently joined the meeting at 19.57.

5 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES

5.1 Leader of the Council

Cllr Tindall advised he was pleased to advise that Cllr Cappelletti has agreed to be the Cabinet members for Corporate & Commercial and will be taking up the post directly following this meeting.

Cllr Tindall further advised a change in reporting for the Climate & Ecological portfolio which will now report to the SPAE OSC rather than the F&R OSC.

The Mayor advised that updates from the individual Portfolio Holders have been circulated with the agenda and invited questions.

5.2 Climate & Ecological Emergency

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe asked; is your use of Net Zero based on Co2 alone or does it include Carbon equivalent, methane and other gases?

Cllr England referred back to the Climate Emergency Strategy produced under previous administration, confirming all the measurements of Carbon are Co2e, that 'e' stands for equivalent and that does include methane and other fast gases, which are gases which don't exist very long in the environment but do a lot of damage while they are there.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe followed up and asked; presuming then that the polices take note of this and that you have thought of what measures you can carry out to achieve that whole package of reductions?

Cllr England responded that plans are developing and are dependent on resources, but absolutely all the gases are included in what we are trying to do. Cllr England added that we are also trying to prevent the escape of money; a lot of money to be saved and generated through the activities we are looking to deliver over next few years.

Cllr Douris referred to page 6 of the Portfolio Holder's update, where it says 'residents can save up to £720 a year following 4 simple steps', and asked the Portfolio Holder; can you please justify to us what those 4 simple steps are?

Cllr England advised he does not have that information in his head but will arrange for the Social Media Team to circulate.

Action: Cllr England to arrange for the 4 simple steps information to be provided to Democratic Services for distribution.

Cllr Barradell asked, when do you hope to be back on track with the carbon budget forecast?

Cllr England responded with his view that this is a difficult question, in particular the previous administration need to explain why they got so far off track in last few years.

Cllr England explained that the situation is, if you look at chart carefully, it starts to dip quite sharply around 2019/20 as that is when the improvements we are looking for are supposed to start. It is not a steady linear progression to zero, instead it drops much more steeply in first 5 years if all measures are put in place. It is a reality that the steps taken by central government are wrecking the chances we have of meeting the specified line, but we are going to do our best.

Cllr England advised there are two aspects to this; making a decision and putting resources behind it. The current situation demonstrates that historically, we haven't been 'meaning it', both at this Council level and, crucially, in central government, which was apparent having attended a net zero conference last summer where universally, cross party, it was agreed that central government are not doing enough.

5.3 Place

There were no questions.

5.4 People & Transformation

There were no questions.

5.5 Corporate & Commercial Services

Cllr Elliot referred to the statement within the update that 96% of our commercial properties are occupied and asked; how many of those are on payment plans?

Cllr Tindall responded that he does not have that information in front of him but commented that officers work very hard to make sure that the businesses, most of which are located in neighbourhood centres around hemel, maintain a good rent record and are thriving. There are a number of measures put in place to help them if they run into trouble.

Cllr Tindall confirmed that he will ask the question of how many of the 96% of occupied properties are on payment plans and feed that information back.

Action: Cllr Tindall to arrange for the data regarding number of tenants in commercial properties that are on payment plans to be provided to Democratic Services for distribution.

Cllr Elliot responded that, as a follow on from that, he would also like to know the bad debt provision for the commercial asset side.

Cllr Tindall responded that he would also arrange for that information to be provided.

Action: Cllr Tindall to arrange for the data regarding bad debt provision for commercial assets to be provided to Democratic Services for distribution.

Cllr Guest asked; has the Portfolio Holder read the budget consultation result summary where 78% of respondents were least in favour of charging more for green waste collection?

Cllr Tindall responded that he did review it and advised that it was necessary to take a view; on the one hand there is a need to achieve a balanced budget and keep services in line with the increased cost, particularly after Prime Minister Truss wrecked the economy a year or two ago. Also, we have a duty to maintain as low an increase as possible in order to not put additional pressure

on our residents with cost of living pressures; we believe we struck the right balance.

Cllr Guest responded; as this budget proposes to do exactly what 78% of those who replied said they didn't want it to do, how can this administration claim to be a listening administration?

Cllr Tindall responded that they listened overall to residents, both those who responded to that survey and those that provided feedback by other means. Took account of current budget proposals, took account of the fact central government has not provided sufficient funds for this year, as in previous years, for local government across the board. We have had to rely on other charges and means of income, as did the previous administration. This increase doesn't go into large amounts of money.

5.6 Housing & Property Services

Cllr Guest advised that some weeks ago herself and Cllr Pound attended a meeting between Dacorum Borough Council officers and residents of the Great Sturgess sheltered housing scheme, at which officers said the supporting people charge for residents in schemes with a Supported Housing Officer will be increasing from £6.90 a week to £21.00 a week phased in over 5 years and asked; why is this being done?

Cllr Dhyani advised that for more than 10 years we have not been charging in line with the actual costs/charges, no review had been carried out, this is a build-up we now have to recover. It is a service we provide to supported housing residents in terms of having warden services. Previously there were some government grants which were withdrawn, but we had continued to give that discount to residents. When we reviewed and found a large gap to make up, we decided instead of charging residents the large difference in one year, it will be a gradual increase over 5 years to ensure it doesn't hit as hard as it could. Consultations were held within the schemes and residents have expressed they understand and support the increase.

Cllr Guest commented that after the funding was removed in 2011 the previous Conservative administration froze the supporting people charge, but in its first budget the new Liberal Democrat administration is increasing it progressively over next 5 years. Cllr Guest asked the Portfolio Holder; are some of the most vulnerable, elderly members of the community the right ones to choose to raise funding in this way?

Cllr Dhyani responded by asking; what then do you propose we do to bring this in line? What we are charging for these services has fallen behind; the funding will not come from elsewhere; they are well received services that residents want to continue receiving. Based on what we have heard from residents, there are not any concerns about this increase.

Cllr Williams commented that later in the meeting we will be asked to approve a rent increase of 7.7% as part of the budget, commenting that whilst he does not disagree with the increase, he has been advised that tenants have today received letters advising them of the increase. Cllr Williams asked; do you think it is right that tenants are being advised of this increase before it has been agreed by Full Council?

Cllr Dhyani responded to confirm that letters have gone out, advising she would be happy to provide a copy and advising that they have hosted quite a few visiting sessions for residents to help if they don't understand, having checked with residents this has been well received.

Cllr Williams responded to advise that was not his question, clarifying that he was asking if it is appropriate that the democratic process has been bypassed and residents have been notified prior to Council making a formal budget decision.

Cllr Dhyani responded that this has been brought before Tenants Leaseholder Committee and as she understand, has also been reviewed at scrutiny committee, therefore believe it has been through the correct process, but happy to discuss with officers and get written response to circulate.

Cllr Williams advised, that with respect, the question has not been answered.

Cllr Tindall commented that an offer has been made to discuss this outside meeting and to provide a follow up response; we will need to find out what officers have done so that information can be provided.

The Mayor commented that this response should also include clarification that this went through scrutiny as suggested. The key matter is; was this letter informing them of something or consulting with them on the Boroughs intention of potential increase?

The Mayor asked Cllr Williams if he accepts that action?

Cllr Williams confirmed he would accept it, but expressed he is not content that it was an appropriate answer, or that the Portfolio Holder has answered in an appropriate way so not content.

The Mayor asked Cllr Williams if he is happy that the Portfolio Holder will look into whether the scrutiny process has been followed properly and confirm if the letter was consultative or informative?

Cllr Tindall raised a point of clarification that the question Cllr Williams posed was; should this letter have gone out before the Council had taken a decision on the budget item that refers to the contents of that letter; that was Cllr Williams question and we will undertake to establish what happened and what the process was, as well as what happened in previous years, to respond to that point.

Action: Cllr Dhyani to arrange for confirmation of whether the rent increase letter sent out was informing residents of a rent increase, or consulting on the potential for a rent increase.

Cllr Santamaria addressed the Portfolio Holder and referred to the number of ways engagement has been increased, with opportunities for residents to scrutinise aspects of our work, asking; can you please tell us how residents are responding to this change in approach and tell us of any improvements it has yielded?

Cllr Dhyani responded that we have delivered lots of sessions to create more engagement with residents. There is a new initiative started by repair team,

where once a week residents can drop in to discuss issues with officers directly. Also held a walk in session on 30th Jan to help people with rent, allocations policy etc. We want to build a good relationship which will help us find our right strategy for the future.

5.7 Neighbourhood Operations

Cllr Anderson advised that he understands the Portfolio Holder nearly had a bicycle accident riding over the entrance to Gadebridge park opposite Marlowes, with the new barrier down, and he himself nearly went into it in his car with the barrier up because it wasn't big enough to secure the park, but big enough to cause significant damage if I did not stop. Cllr Anderson asked; does the Portfolio Holder agree that the new barrier does not increase security of the park and has in fact reduced the safety and needs to be replaced with a proper barrier that does the job properly?

Cllr Bromham confirmed it is an observation he has made previously about that barrier, the issue has been raised with officers and he expects it to be actioned soon as he agrees the barrier is not as visible as it should be.

Cllr Douris referred to the of electric trial 26 ton dust carts and asked; what are the vehicle charging arrangements are for those, how long it takes to charge and where this will happen?

Cllr Bromham confirmed the vehicles are charged in the depot overnight and commented that as a service they are learning all the things that will need to be taken into account when we fully electrify with new generation of bin lorries. There is limited power available, the grid connections are one of the big challenges for the bin lorries; to be charging large number of vehicle's. We have learned other things about operation of an electric fleet, such as they are very good in start stop operation but use a lot of charge to go all the way to Watford to unload; all this will need to be taken into account when we design our new depot or depots.

Cllr Douris asked; can you give me a reasonable idea of how many times they have been out on runs and roughly how many miles they have done?

Cllr Bromham advised they have been running for a couple of weeks on full rounds. In terms of exact mileage, that will become part of a report on the whole trial of these vehicles, therefore do not feel there is any benefit in reporting very specific things like that at the moment but instead propose we wait to the end of the trial to report all significant findings.

Cllr Maddern advised that in her capacity of Herts County Councillor she has received a lot of complaints from people about the removal of all the dog waste bins all the way along canal by The Canals and River Trust.

Cllr Bromham responded this is an important issue, approximately 45 bins have been removed by The Canals and Rivers Trust, motivated by reduction in funding from central government; they cannot afford to service them anymore. The Canal and Rivers Trust approach is a towpath code to take rubbish home, but in urban areas we do understand there is still an issue and to that end one of the things I am trying to drive is procedure and efficiency, one of which is a database mapping all the bins in the Borough, each with a photograph and detail of what type of bin it is. We can look a t where the bins have gone from

towpath and ensure there is a good network of bins , accessible also by road, one of officers in my portfolio is having regular meetings with The Canals and Rivers trust for this and a lot of other issues.

Cllr Adeleke advised his question also relates to bins, specifically dog waste bins and referred to the report where it states you are carrying out the mapping of dog bins and asked, is there any plan to increase or decrease the number of bins or is it just a mapping exercise?

Cllr Bromham responded that there is no objective to increase or decrease but to provide overview of where bins are located.

Cllr Adeleke asked if it would be possible to get an additional dog waste bin in Chipperfield. It was suggested that this matter be picked up with the Portfolio Holder outside the meeting.

6 BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

There were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting, as detailed in the written update published as part of the agenda for this meeting.

7 CABINET REFERRALS

Cllr Tindall introduced the Cabinet Referrals

CA/99/23 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The recommendations were agreed by the Council

CA/106/23 VCS COMMISSIONING – GRANT APPROACH

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

CA/108/23 COUNCIL TAX BASE REPORT AND SUPPORT SCHEME

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

CA/09/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

CA/18/24 BUILDING SAFETY POLICY

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

CA/19/24 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

CA/20/24 HRA BUSINESS PLAN REFRESH

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

CA/23/24 BUDGET

I stand to present this budget as the leader of a new Liberal Democrat administration, the first change in political administration for 22 years. Since the last budget was set a year ago, the council and the economic outlook has also changed and changed significantly. The wider economic and political outlook remains very uncertain with a general election looming during the period of this budget.

The new administration is still developing and revising the council's corporate plan for the next four years and on publication this will set out the main strategic outlook and objectives of the new administration.

The economic and financial challenges brought by Covid were significant, and the creation of the economic recovery reserve provided a structured financial response to set the foundations for the 2024/25 budget. With the UK economy officially in a time of recession the council has many challenges, but will be positioned in the medium term to continue back to full economic health, as we recover both from the covid period and the Trussonomics of 2022.

Amongst a very challenging economy, Dacorum Borough Council has played a key role in extending help and support to our businesses and communities at a time they needed it most, and the proposed budget for 24/25 continues that investment. The 2024/25 proposed budget continues to support our day-to-day services, amid so much financial uncertainty. I have no doubt that this consistency and reliability will be reassuring for residents across Dacorum, but in particular for the most vulnerable within our community.

Support for Business.

It is a tribute to Council staff, particularly those within the Revenues & Benefits Team and the Economic Development Team that they have constantly evolved to support the local businesses. A key enabler of this has been the development of the Economic Recovery Board and the Hemel Place Board to bring together major businesses, stakeholders and the council to drive forward the key requirements to support business growth.

In addition to this, the Council has worked closely with its commercial tenants throughout the last year to ensure it does all it can to support them through the post pandemic period, which has resulted in occupancy levels remaining incredible high at circa 96%. The next stage of the recovery phase is supporting businesses with the debt they now hold as a result of covid.

The Council will continue to work closely with its public and private sector partners over the coming months to ensure we do as much as possible to help the local economy in what are very testing times with the ongoing cost of living pressures felt by businesses and residents.

Budget context

Over the last 10 years, this council has successfully risen to the challenge of saving over £8m whilst simultaneously protecting and improving the front line services we provide to our residents. This budget outlines plans to achieve a further £1.6m, through income generation in 2024/25, continuing the strong financial stewardship principles.

The short-term future of local authority finance will remain uncertain until the end of the current parliament later in the year, when it is expected that the next Government will undertake a Local Government Finance Review. This in itself may bring uncertainty to

future District Council budget cycles as the new Government addresses major public sector demands in health, social services and education.

This is why this council has proposed a budget for 2024 with a strong focus on sustainability, and continuing to deliver its corporate priorities into the medium-term. We have already made significant strides towards balancing the budget in future years, having reduced the MTFs savings targets in the medium term from £2.8m to £2.1m. Continuing to invest in the Borough

Despite the extent of the financial challenges we are facing, the council is in a strong position to propose a highly ambitious capital investment programme ... in excess of £253m over the next 5 years ... to further enhance the services we provide to our residents, and the environment in which they live.

Some of the areas identified for capital investment include:

£180m investment in our existing and new housing stock, which continues to provide high quality homes for tens of thousands of people across our borough

£41m investment in various ventures which combine social benefit with financial return, including significant investment in Leisure services and facilities in neighbourhood facilities.

£4m Investment in supporting the local community sector to develop their community services, including the support to Dens and the ongoing development and enhancements of football pitches and adventure playgrounds.

£16m continued ongoing investment in the Council's vehicle fleet, driving the desire for greener vehicles to support the delivery of our frontline services.
Council Tax.

As part of the budget for 2024/25, the Council is proposing to increase Council Tax by 2.99% or £6.66 p.a. for a Band D property, which equates to 13 pence per week.

Central government is likely to consider each council's ability to raise tax when deciding how much funding it will provide in the future ... in simple terms, Government is likely to reduce future funding by an amount that it expects the council to raise through increasing its council tax.

Proposing this increase in line with government expectation means that we have done all we can to protect Dacorum's overall funding position for future years.
Housing

In line with Government guidance the council is proposing to increase housing rents by 7.7%. This is in line with government expectations of increasing rent by CPI plus 1%. The average rent for a council property in 2024/25 will be £137.32 per week.

Despite the recent period of enforced rent reductions, and the below inflation rent cap of 2023/24 the Council has continued to make housing delivery one of its key priorities, and the Council recently completed its 379th new home.

This trend will continue ... the Council has a further 264 new Build homes on site at present.

We are also investing in the infrastructure that will enable us to deliver our housing obligations to the most vulnerable in our community in the best way possible.

The council has been awarded several Homes England grants to support the new social house build programme, in total the council has achieved funding grants from Homes England of £9m to support the delivery of over 180 homes.

In Conclusion

Unquestionably, the Council faces significant financial challenges in the years ahead as we play our role in supporting residents and businesses in a tough economic environment.

However, this Council can enter this period feeling confident that with the commitment of its Members and staff we will continue to deliver for our residents.

I am pleased to move the budget and council tax proposals as set out before you.

The following statements were made:

Cllr Andrew Williams

I feel quite flattered that he praises so many of the achievements that were put in place by Conservative administration prior to May and indeed the budget we have before us this evening is mainly a role forward of last years budget, indeed it seems the only area the Lib Dems have tried to make a change is in car parking charges and that has not gone very well with a least three attempts and one cabinet member losing her position due to it being such a farce and it is still not concluded.

My group will support the budget this evening at we feel it is the duty of Cllr's to agree a budget but we do not support the proposed increase in the charge for Green Waste collection, the decision to introduce the charge last year was budgeted to bring in a estimated income Of £600k but the final income was over £1.5M which has saved the administration from being in the red this year and given the high level of take up we do not feel the increase is justified.

In summary we support the budget as so much is unchanged, we can reflect that the first year of the Lib Dem administration has been a wasted one”

Cllr Michela Capozzi

I support the proposed budget for 2024/25.

I would like to acknowledge the time, hard work and tenacity of the Officers who have compiled the reports and figures to ensure we have a balanced budget to keep Dacorum Borough Council financially viable.

At a time when we see colleagues in other Councils across the country struggling to fund the ever-increasing demands on their ever-decreasing funding, I am proud that Dacorum will continue in to the next financial year on solid footings.

Hard decisions have had to be made. Our Central Government funding for 24/25 has increased, year-on-year, by 5.1% for Dacorum; well below inflation and the budget-busting cost increases we have experienced this financial year. Of the £67m business rates we collect in 23/24 – we keep a miniscule £3m, that's less than 5% - the rest going to central government and other preceptors.

With the lack of core funding we have had to review our other sources of income. There may be some criticism of the decisions we have made. But we are a listening Administration and we heard residents' concerns and suggestions and used them when making decisions.

For example, car parking charges will be increasing; after 4 years of not being raised the review was due but we heard residents' concerns about the impact on local businesses and the night time economy. So we worked hard to balance the much-needed income from these assets with protecting businesses and have maintained an element of free parking in all towns and villages.

This year, the Garden Waste Subscription attracted a 70% take-up creating an income of £1.5m - but the service cost £2m to deliver, leaving a deficit of £500k. So, the garden waste subscription is increasing to £50 in 24/25 to help recover some of the costs, but residents have asked for a mid-Winter collection and so we are looking to see if there is a cost-neutral solution to meet this need.

I am excited to see a reserve of just over £1m being identified for our Climate Change initiatives. A newly established portfolio by the Lib Dems after taking on the Administration in May 2023 to demonstrate our commitment to responding to the climate emergency, this budget will kick-start the delivery of actions, until now not deemed a priority, that will lead to significant annual savings in energy for the council and our residents, as well as creating a greener and cleaner Dacorum. Some may say £1m isn't nearly enough – and they would be right; others might say that the £1m would be better spent elsewhere; but financial balance is needed to ensure we can deliver our services and corporate vision to secure Dacorum's future and that is what this budget achieves.

Cllr Barbara Pesch

The Labour group will not oppose the budget but we would like to raise our concerns with several items

- a. We are very disappointed to see that the green bin charge has been increased, we had hoped that if it was not removed it would at least have been kept the same as at present.
- b. We would like to show our concern with the proposed maximum allowable increase in council house rents, we consider an increase of almost £10.00 per week is too much especially with the current economic situation.

Cllr Lara Pringle

I am proud to be a member of the new administration, with so many talented colleagues in post. I look forward to what we can deliver for our residents in the years ahead. It is unfortunate that our hands are economically tied by the government at Westminster, who have committed no additional funding to local government. Particularly at a time when so many of our residents are facing a cost-of-living crisis, struggling to heat their homes and feed their families, brought on by the irresponsible and ideologically driven economic disaster of Trussonomics. By this time next year, a general election will have taken place and we hope to have a new government which is committed to getting on with the real business of government, the business of serving the people of this country.

A Recorded vote was conducted on the 2024-25 budget. The budget was approved.

The recorded vote was as follows:

All 47 members present voted for, no against, no abstentions.

Members in attendance below

Councillor Tindall (Leader) Councillors, Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Banks, Barradell, Barry, Bhinder, Bristow, Bromham, Capozzi, Cox, Deacon, Dhyani, Douris, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Gale, Guest, Hannell, Hobson, Hobson, Johnson, Link, Link, Maddern, McAreyve, Patterson, Pesch, Pound, Pringle, Reynolds, Riddick, Santamaria, Silwal, Smith-Wright, Stevens, Stewart, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Weston, Williams, Williams and C Wyatt-Lowe

CA/24/24 CHILTERN BEECHWOODS SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION MITIGATION STRATEGY AND SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREENSPACE UPDATE.

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

CA/25/24 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The recommendations were agreed by the Chamber

8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REFERRALS

There were no referrals from Overview & Scrutiny for consideration.

9 POLLING DISTRICT & POLLING PLACE ORDER 2024

The Leader, Cllr Tindall introduced the report and proposed the recommendations contained within.

Decision: The recommendations as set out in the report were unanimously agreed.

10 COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Leader, Cllr Tindall, introduced the report and proposed the recommendations.

Cllr Stevens seconded the recommendations on the following grounds;

The Boundary Commission requires Councils to determine the number of Councillors based on 3 criteria: submissions are required to show how these are met;

- On Governance
- Our representative roles
- Discharge of our legal responsibilities

It is not a foregone conclusion that our recommendation for adopting an increase of 2 Councillors to 53 will be accepted. For the last Review in 2006 it reduced the number by 1 which is why we have 51 Councillors at present. Other Councils' submissions have larger changes imposed.

In deciding ward sizes and changes to boundaries, this will be reviewed as Phase 2 during the summer, the Commission aims to limit deviation from the average Councillor/Elector ratio by +/- 10%

The last review was in 2006, so in the 16 years to 2022;

- Numbers of electors increased by 6000 or only 6% to last FY 2022
- Data from our Strategic Planning Team leads to a forecast in period to 2030 of an increase by another 12,000 or 10%
- This implies around another 5 plus Councillors at similar elector/Councillor ratios. The recommendation is for only +2 as;
- Most of this increase will be in the central Hemel Hempstead
- The increases in other wards are relatively small over the coming years: the recommendation should result in relatively minor changes to boundaries for a limited number of wards. This stability I think is important to strengthen community's sense of place.
- Although we looked at other size options, we were conscious that a much smaller membership could increase challenges to Committee workload and ability to properly represent our electors.

The submission sets out how our Governance roles are discharged in some detail with the numbers of committees, numbers of meetings and members needed to discharge our responsibilities.

Cllr Stevens expressed the committee's thanks to our officers in steering us through this aspect of the Review in such a short period of time.

Cllr Stevens closed by advising, with the caveat that the Electoral Review Commission may have other suggestions, he proposes members adopt the 2 recommendations is set out in the Report.

Cllr Hannell spoke in support of the recommendations as follows;

As someone who has lived in Hemel Hempstead all their life, and who has no intention of living anywhere else, I have been privileged to sit on the electoral review committee, chaired by Councillor Stevens.

In May of last year I was elected onto a Council that had a healthy gender balance, not quite 50/50 but getting there, with a mix of citizens from different backgrounds, of all ages with different experiences. This combination makes for healthy, stimulating debates.

We were last reviewed by the Boundary Commission in 2005/06 and it is unlikely that we will be reviewed for another 15 years.

So tonight, we have the only opportunity in 35 years to reflect on Council numbers and decide what constitutes the right number for us, not just at present but in the future.

I reviewed 6 Councils who had recently gone through a Boundary Commission review. In total their electorate numbered almost two thirds of a million and they were represented by 273 Councillors to produce an average ratio of 1 Councillor for every 2442 electorate (1:2442).

However, on further analysis St Albans and Bracknell Forest Councils were more similar to our own in terms of an urban/rural mix. The ratio across these two Councils was just 1:2224

Under this recommendation the ratio will rise by 6% from the May 2023 figure of 1:2199 to a forecasted ratio in 2030 of 1:2344 but if we leave the number at 51 that rise will be 10.75% to a ratio of 1:2436.

Our constituents rightly expect a service from us their elected representatives. Emails and social media give them direct access to their Councillors. The aftermath of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis has left communities experiencing economic and social challenges. There has also been an increase in constituents and their families experiencing poor mental and physical health.

An ambitious and much needed house building plan will see a forecast rise in our electorate, particularly in central Hemel Hempstead and that will place a disproportionate burden on Councillors elected there.

Servicing our electorate through casework takes time and we should want to protect this mixture of citizens moving forward. To do that, we need to keep that ratio in check to allow those of us elected to not get overwhelmed and become less efficient and more importantly to encourage new citizens of all backgrounds to seek election without feeling that they too would be weighed down by an unreasonable workload.

Decision: The recommendations as set out in the report were unanimously agreed.

11 CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Leader, Cllr Tindall, advised of the following changes to committee membership;

Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny;

- Remove Cllr's CLink & MCapozzi
- Appoint Cllr's GStevens & CSmith-Wright

Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny;

- Remove Cllr MCapozzi
- Appoint Cllr CMCarevey

Development Management Committee;

- Remove Cllr Clink
- Appoint Cllr CSmith-Wright

12 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE DATES

There were no changes to committee dates.

13 COUNCIL TAX DECLARATION

The Leader, Cllr Tindall, introduced the report.

Decision:

The recommendations were taken to a recorded vote, all 47 members present voted 'for'; the vote was unanimously carried.

Members in attendance below

Councillor Tindall (Leader) Councillors, Adeleke, Allen, Anderson, Banks, Barradell, Barry, Bhinder, Bristow, Bromham, Capozzi, Cox, Deacon, Dhyani, Douris, Durrant, Elliot, England, Freedman, Gale, Guest, Hannell, Hobson, Hobson, Johnson, Link, Link, Maddern, McArevey, Patterson, Pesch, Pound, Pringle, Reynolds, Riddick, Santamaria, Silwal, Smith-Wright, Stevens, Stewart, Symington, Taylor, Timmis, Weston, Williams, Williams and C Wyatt-Lowe

The Meeting ended at 8.45 pm



5. Cabinet Member Updates

Members of the Council may ask the Cabinet member any question without notice upon an item on the report as published in this agenda;

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--|
| 5.1 | Councillor Tindall | Leader of the Council (verbal update only) |
| 5.2 | Councillor Bromham | Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Operations |
| 5.3 | Councillor England | Portfolio Holder Climate & Ecological Emergency |
| 5.4 | Councillor Wilkie | Portfolio Holder Place |
| 5.5 | Councillor Weston | Portfolio Holder People & Transformation |
| 5.6 | Councillor Capozzi | Portfolio Holder Corporate and Commercial Services |
| 5.7 | Councillor Dhyani | Portfolio Holder Housing & Property Services |



NEIGHBOURHOOD OPERATIONS – COUNCILLOR ROBIN BROMHAM

The new Neighbourhood Operations Directorate is working on several projects that will continue to strengthen operations and deliver quality services.

Future Neighbourhoods

One of the new initiatives that is being piloted is called Future Neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood working can take a variety of forms which focus largely on internal and organisational coordination and collaboration to ensure effective and efficient service delivery at a neighbourhood level. The initiative will support the development of a neighbourhood management model that aims to:

- Improve collaborative working across Council departments and teams
- Develop a way of working at a neighbourhood level that supports better engagement with ward councillors, residents and businesses
- Enable creativity in identification and resolution of issues at a neighbourhood level
- Use resources more efficiently
- Provide tangible outcomes which enhance wellbeing and pride in those communities

Phase-1 of this initiative has already taken place and included research into best practice for neighbourhood management and workshops and interviews with staff and Members. Each workshop and interview sought to understand existing approaches to neighbourhood management within Dacorum, exploring opportunities with different approaches to neighbourhood working. They also identified a pilot location within Dacorum to develop the model.

The location chosen for the pilot is the Heights, following criteria which included areas of deprivation, potential for regeneration, number of enquiries and casework and community safety priority areas.

Phase-2 will focus on assessing potential areas of improvement also building collaboration to facilitate delivery.

Other projects and initiatives within the Neighbourhood Operations directorate and their progress are listed below.

Neighbourhood Management

Arboricultural contracts

Officers have now completed the tender assessment for the Council's new arboricultural contracts. Four lots were let (2x general arboricultural lots, 1x woodland lot and 1x tree planting lot). These new arrangements, along with changes being made to the council's Tree Management Database, should allow works to be dealt with in a more efficient manner and allow better communication with councillors and residents. It is anticipated that the new contracts will go-live in May 2024.

River Gade restoration

The Environment Agency is working with Dacorum Borough Council and Affinity Water to restore the River Gade at Gadebridge Park, a globally rare and valuable chalk stream. The project will provide

multiple benefits, including improved habitats for wildlife, protection of water resources for people and the environment, and amenity for public to get closer to the river and enjoy nature. Representatives of the Environment Agency attended the Strategic Planning and Environment committee to present a more detailed plan of the works and timelines. It is anticipated that work will commence in Spring 2024.

Partnership working

The Clean, Safe and Green team and Parks team continues to work in partnership with local groups and the third sector. We are working with Sunnyside Rural Trust on several projects including planting schemes, litter picking and undertaking a trial restoring original aluminium nameplates from around the borough.

Officers and Sunnyside Rural Trust are also working on a Dacorum Borough entry to Anglia in Bloom (a sub-group of Britain in Bloom). The Anglia in Bloom launch event was in March 2024 and the Dacorum entry will focus on the excellent work Sunnyside Rural Trust have been doing in delivering planting schemes on housing land. It will also give the Council an opportunity to showcase sites such as Gadebridge Park walled garden and the Water Gardens.

Environmental Services

Herts Waste Partnership

Collaborative work continues with Herts Waste Partnerships relating the implication and implementation of the Simpler Recycling national guidance, the management of clothes swap equipment and events, monthly review of statistics and promotion of events including those linked to “national waste weeks”

The Partnership gives opportunity to share good practice and supports WasteAware social media campaigning.

Cupid Green –Waste Transfer site

During the week commencing 12th February the Environment Agency carried out a random inspection of our Waste Transfer Site at the Cupid Green depot. The depot passed the inspection with the auditors stating that is one of the best run sites they have seen.

Health, Safety and Resilience

An audit of Corporate Health and Safety took place in 2023. The audit found that the documented processes align with the mitigating arrangements set out in the corporate risk register. After a discussion with auditors, officers provided evidence of documentation and governance in place that supported a “Reasonable Assurance” rating.



Council Briefing Note 17th April 2024

CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY PORTFOLIO - COUNCILLOR ADRIAN ENGLAND

Dacorum CAN - we are saving waste, saving CO₂, and saving money.

Each month the numbers coming in give more cause for concern. In the first quarter of 2024 global average temperatures in each month broke previous monthly records. Each degree higher (we are now around 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial norm) means 7% more water can be held – and dropped – by the air.

The world is changing, but we can make that change significantly easier for people by doing the “no-regrets” decisions – though Government investment is long overdue essential. Money for solar panels on the sports centres – really welcome - could have been saving the economy consumption, therefore money and carbon, for years before now; proper support for a decent bus network and a faster switch to EVs would save UK motorists on vehicle purchase and running costs – especially for the unnecessary second and third cars.

- [Climate and Nature Bill](#) – Dacorum are officially supporting Zero Hour’s Climate and Ecology Bill – a plan for a new UK law that addresses the full extent of the climate and nature crisis in line with the most up-to-date science.
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 2 - we are on site at 30 properties. Blackwell road, Kings Langley, completed earlier in April, and Curtis Way, Berkhamsted, scheduled to complete in May. The second phase of 45 homes will roll on from this, starting in Summer in Berkhamsted, Wigginton, and Tring.
- £22.4M has been allocated in the approved HRA business plan to achieve EPC C by 2035 in all social homes. A high-level plan has been put together for 24/25 and £1m allocated for this first year. During the first 5 years of the programme a balanced and targeted approach is being taken, prioritising those in fuel poverty, off gas grid properties, solid wall properties and system build/non-traditional properties.
- The Communities and Leisure Team were successful in a bid for £630,000 for the installation of solar panels at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre. The solar panels are estimated to generate 360kWh watts of renewable energy, which will play a significant part in reducing the leisure centre’s carbon footprint as well as lowering energy bills.
- Public engagement complete on LCWIP closed on 26th Feb. We had 269 responses on cycling map and 359 on walking map, majority from over 40s. The team are working on targeting youth groups and schools to obtain more diverse responses as well as analysing current responses. HCC and consultants WSP will be undertaking route audits in April before a prioritisation exercise takes place to inform the draft plan.
- The Council are currently exploring the feasibility of the provision of E-bikes with careful consideration of scheme size opportunities and risks. Work is taking place to develop the requirements for the scheme and this will be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet in June.

- A green screen will be installed in Nash Mills School this month. The new plant barrier is designed to reduce particulate pollution, and improve air quality, provide more privacy and improve wellbeing for those attending the school.
- Following creation of new wildflower meadow spaces over the winter, they are now being prepared ahead of spring growth.
- New wild honey bee hives installed, one in the Water Gardens, and two in Gadebridge Park. Bat boxes have also been installed in Water Gardens
- Tree and hedge planting – 1,000 whips have been planted at Bunkers Park in Pond Field this March, I joined a volunteer work party on 16th March to assist this project. This is year 4 of the councils current 5-year tree planting strategy which has seen 3500 whips being planted, with 1000 planned for the final year, next year. Two tree planting days were held recently, one with local volunteers and one with Henkel, a local business.

The Council now uses plastic free materials in tree planting, apart from the impermeable hydration bag needed for larger trees. There is currently no plastic-free alternative on the market for the hydration bag, but new products emerge every year.

- River restoration - The restoration of the river Gade, in Gadebridge Park, is funded, and the Environment Agency is going through internal governance procedures before getting shovels in the ground later in 2024. The river Bulbourne project, led by Affinity Water, is at an earlier stage. Affinity is producing more detailed plans for the stretch of the river in question.
- Rapid EV charging points are live at 5 sites, with Leverstock Green shops proving popular. Langley Hill fast charger and the charging hub are under construction and St John's Well Lane planned for install this month.

Fast chargers have been installed in 15 of 16 sites and the 16th, Water Gardens North is in progress, all sites to be installed by end of this month. The 'go-live' dates for the fast chargers are forecast for June due to lead in times with UK Power Networks.

- LEVI EV charging points - HCC are analysing mapping tools to determine suitable locations. They are prioritising residential areas, looking at footway access, the many resident requests are being mapped and taken into account, as well as the aim for residents to be within a 5 minute walk from a charge point. The team are conducting site visits in addition to this. HCC plan to send all districts and boroughs the partnership agreement to sign this month.
- Electric vehicles – DBC are trialling different electric vehicles to understand which are most suited for different routes and the drivers. So far we have trialled a refuse collection vehicle and a cage tipper. The trials are promising and show potential for the transition to an electric fleet.



Council Briefing Note 17 April 2024

PLACE PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SHERON WILKIE

Planning Services

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Development Management have commenced a series of Planning Officer sessions to focus on planning applications that are 'out of time' as part of the work associated with the £63,412 funding received from DLUHC (the Planning Skills Delivery Fund). A training programme is also being developed with Three Rivers District Council that will deliver landscape, design and ecology training to Planning Officers.
- The appeal against the Council's decision to refuse the development of 1,400 houses (and associated development) on Land East of Tring was dismissed. The Secretary of State went against the recommendation of the Planning Inspector in concluding that the harms to the Green Belt and the other harms (character and appearance of area, setting of AONB, heritage and loss of best and most valuable agricultural land) were not clearly outweighed by the very special circumstances (such as delivery of much needed market housing, affordable housing and extra care units, provision of self and custom build plots, recreational and community facilities, and enhancements to ecology and sustainable transport)
- The HCC team are analysing responses to the Local Cycle Walking Infrastructure Plan consultation that closed at the end of February. They will be carrying out route audits in April before a prioritisation exercise takes place to inform the draft plan. An update will be provided to SPAE OSC on this work after the pre-election period.
- The Strategic Planning Team are continuing to analyse responses to the Local Plan consultation and are working on finalising the evidence base required to demonstrate to the Planning Inspector that the final version is the best strategy for Dacorum. The Task and Finish Group has been set up and had two meetings before Easter, they will continue to meet approximately every two weeks up to June. The Duty to Co-operate meetings have started with our neighbouring local authorities and the team are working with statutory consultees on our Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will support the Local Plan.
- Officers are working on the next areas of SANG in particular looking at Margret Lloyd Park which is related to an adjacent housing delivery site and a new planning application is expected from Homes England within the next 9-12 months once they have a SANG solution.
- The Planning department have been successful in bidding for £80k for a design code. The Council has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with DLUHC and the work is likely to focus on Two Waters and Aspley, over the next 12 months.
- 5 Enforcement Notices have been served so far this year. It should be noted that the Planning Inspectorate are currently taking up to a year to deal with appeals against Enforcement Notices. This is evidenced in Dacorum by 6 out of our longest-running appeals relate to Enforcement Notice appeals. As at 18 March 2024 there are 328 live planning enforcement cases. Outstanding first site visits are now down to 5, meaning effectively that all new enforcement cases are being visited within the reported timescales.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- The Strategic Planning Team are supporting with next steps on Bovingdon Neighbourhood Plan. The plan has been considered for fact checking by the Planning Inspector, which Bovingdon Parish Council is now considering.
- The Strategic Planning Team are also supporting Great Gaddesden and Berkhamsted Neighbourhood Plans.
- The Development Management Team will be presenting the Markyate Conservation Area Character Appraisal to SPAES OSC, Cabinet and Council after purdah for adoption.
- The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document was supported by SPAE OSC on 6 March and will be presented to Cabinet and Council after the pre-election period before opening a four-week consultation period.

Place and Enterprise

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Following the success of Dacorum's Den 2023, preparations are now being made for the 2024 round of the initiative.
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Hemel Imaginarium. Officers are working with voluntary sector partners as well as the BID on proposals for meanwhile and activation plans for the Town Centre which will include 'pop up' summer activities. Once finalised a list of activities will be shared with members and communicated to residents through the usual channels. UKSPF spend is progressing according to target and profile.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- Health Campus – Officers are continuing to work with health colleagues to develop a Memorandum of Understanding and PID for the next stage of feasibility works
- Maylands Masterplan workstream – a presentation of current outputs was made to Herts IQ Board on 27th March, engagement with stakeholders and businesses commenced following Easter.
- On 7th March Officers hosted a visit from the Director for Housing Markets and Strategy and colleagues at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities where a presentation was given on the Town Centre Vision, HGC and the Local Plan followed by a town centre walkabout. This was to demonstrate in person the council's ambitions. This was very well received by the DLUHC officers.

Communities and Leisure

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- The Communities and Leisure Team were successful in a bid for £630,000 for the installation of solar panels at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre. This has been awarded from the £60m Swimming Pool Support Fund Phase II.
- Following Cabinet approval to a grant based approach to VCS funding, the new service level agreements and outcome measures have been agreed and signed by the partner organisations. The new services have commenced as of 1 April 2024.
- Reithfields and Coronations Fields Tennis Courts refurbishment project – official launch events on Saturday 6th and 13th April at Coronation Fields with a Easter Egg Hunt.
- Dacorum Shared Prosperity Fund, administered by Community Action Dacorum (CAD) and funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Round 1 – 12 local organisations/charities were awarded £70,000 in March 2024.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- Household Support Funding – Following the budget statement in March 2024, the fund has been extended for a further six months, DBC are awaiting the details of the extension.

- The Shopmobility contract (delivered by CAD) has been extended for 1 Year to allow the Council to conduct a service review and soft market engagement exercise to ensure that the authority is achieving best value for money.
- Recruitment to two posts is in process – Place Officers for Sport and Physical Activity and Funding and Partnerships. These posts will help to support the delivery of the leisure contract community outreach programme and support the voluntary and community sector commissioning framework.
- Officers have begun scoping work to deliver a new Leisure Strategy

Arts and Culture

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Dance Relgnite – funded by Arts Council England : Weekly workshops at The Old Town Hall continued until Easter as part of this partnership community dance project benefitting older adults. The performance will tour to ten local settings and culminate in the Relgnite Festival on 4th July at Eric Morecambe Centre in Herts, bringing together participants from five District areas.
- Subways Public Art - Lead Artist Anna Schofield is engaging with local communities including Astley Cooper School to develop designs for painting two subways. The aim is to enhance the appearance and experience of using the Plough Roundabout and Grovehill Subways to encourage pedestrian access. Looking to complete the painting work over the summer months.
- Old Town Hall Theatre – Recruitment is in process for five vacant positions. The Venue & Operation Lead Officer role has been offered and the Marketing & Sales Lead Officer role has been readvertised due to initial lack of suitable candidates.
- Old Town Hall Theatre - Customer satisfaction rating remains high (100% excellent/good in February)

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- Head of Arts and Culture, Diana Houghton, started on 4th March 2024
- Officers have begun work scoping a new Arts and Culture Strategy.
- Creative Hertfordshire - Discussion on creative evaluation methods is ongoing to better demonstrate the impact of arts on health and wellbeing.
- To mark Mental Health Awareness Week and also Creativity and Wellbeing Week, the Colourful Minds: Art for Wellbeing project will present an exhibition of participant’s artwork at The Old Town Hall in May. A Celebration Event will take place on 15 May. Invitations will be circulated after Easter.

Hemel Garden Communities

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- A site visit to Chelmsford Garden Communities took place on 19th March, attended by Officers and Members of the HGC Councillor Review Group. The site is broadly comparable to Hemel Garden Communities, in terms of scale and active and sustainable travel targets, and provides some helpful lessons learnt.
- Following a successful Homes England funding bid confirmed in December 2023 (up to £190k, subject to expenditure during 2023/24), HGC has successfully drawn down the maximum extent of the available funding in support of the development of a series of workstreams addressing transport and the opportunities for active and sustainable travel; land assembly; future stewardship opportunities; and, design.
- Hemel Garden Communities continues to develop evidence to support the Local Plan processes, across both Dacorum and St Albans.

Strategic or significant operational matters which your service would like full Council to be aware of:

- N/A will be reported via wider DBP processes.



Council Briefing Note 17 April 2024

PEOPLE AND TRANSFORMATION PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR CAROLE WESTON

People and Transformation

People

- Leadership Training for all tier 4 managers has been launched and will conclude in the Spring
- We have set up a staff values and behaviours delivery group to help further embed these within the Council's desired culture – new management 121 approach launched to further embed aligned staff behaviours.
- The Menopause Policy has been launched and managers undertaking mandatory training. A staff session was held with specialist menopause Doctor: Over 30 people attended.
- Senior Officer Pay Policy approved by Cabinet.
- A revised Drug, Substance and Alcohol Policy approved by TUs, to be relaunched with training in April.

Digital

- Working collaboratively with Transformation and Finance, we launched Citizens Access – first phase of our wider Revs & Bens Project to provide customers with the self-serve abilities relating to Council Tax. Allowing customers to apply for discounts, set up/amend direct debits and report if they are moving in/out/within the borough.
- Bring your own device testing has now been completed successfully and user guides are now in draft.
- Members are strongly encouraged to undertake the email training to ensure that we remain secure as a Council.

Transformation

- Improved the telephony system for customers to ensure the information was current, accurate and giving customers quick and easy access to online information to fulfil their enquiries
- Call waiting times have fallen dramatically following a series of interventions and improvements.
- Joint working with Waste Services to prepare for the annual Green Garden Waste Subscription service, ensuring staff were recruited, trained and systems were in place for customers to renew with ease.
- Partnership working with DENS/Trussel Trust to allow Customer Service staff access to an online portal when issuing food bank parcels, this will provide customers with a quicker service when requesting foodbank parcels.
- Collaborative working with the Senior Housing Management team to establish a streamlined process for effective handling of Ombudsman queries to ensure timelines are met.
- Continue to work on our Performance Improvement Project – following OSC feedback on draft KPIs, we have been further reviewing our proposed measures. Improved internal governance structures have also been established to ensure performance levels are being scrutinised effectively by the leadership team and assurance on actions to improve performance where required.

- Continue to work on our Programme Management Office implementation – we have launched new reporting and project management templates and implemented new programme governance structures. This ensures all projects have the appropriate plans in place for delivery and accountability and assurance provided to the leadership team on a regular basis.
- Co-ordinated the corporate service planning process – supported all services to draft their annual service plans.

Communications and Engagement

- Launched Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean 2024 campaign - We are once again supporting Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean, the largest mass environmental action campaign in the UK. Last year, more than 1,100 local volunteers collected 600 bags of litter from around Dacorum. After the 2023 campaign, 96 per cent of people who took part agreed that they felt they had made a difference to their local area.
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – Successfully delivered the four week consultation with integrated communications campaign and engagement programme. The LCWIP, which is compiled by Hertfordshire County Council in partnership with ourselves, and aims to make walking and cycling more attractive and viable options than using a car, for shorter journeys or as part of longer trips. The feedback is being reviewed, with a final draft LCWIP being drawn up. There will be an opportunity to comment on this later in the year when a further public consultation is held.
- External Communications – Continued support across all services, supporting on communication, marketing and engagement activities for corporate projects, campaigns and operational service delivery. E.g. PCC Election.
- PCC Election – Communications and awareness campaign - There are also special restrictions on the Council's decision-making and publicity in the run-up to the elections on 2 May, sometimes known as 'purdah'. The Pre-Election Restricted Period (PERP) began on Friday 15 March 2024 and runs until Thursday 2 May 2024 (polling day), inclusive of both dates. During this period we are unable to use Councillors quotes or photographs in any publicity. The restrictions aim to make sure that local authorities do not appear to be using public resources to support any particular party or individual involved in elections, or to influence the outcome.
- Events programme – work continues on the delivery of the annual events programme. Upcoming dates for your diary are The Mayor's Garden Party (12 May 2024) and Armed Forces Day (29 June 2024). Calendar invites are sent out to all stakeholders in advance.



Council Briefing Note 17th April 2024

CORPORATE AND COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR MICHELA CAPOZZI

Financial Services

Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

- Unanimous approval of the 2024/25 Council budgets.
- Delivery of a very positive and assuring Grant Thornton 2022/23 Value for Money (VFM) audit presented to the Audit Committee in March.

Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:

- Preparation and processing of 2023/24 finances prior to year-end.
- Operational set up of the 2024/25 budget and corporate reporting framework.

KPI's for last month:

- Financial performance of the General and Capital Funds remains positive with an expected balanced budget at year end.
- The HRA remains in deficit for the 2023/24 financial year and the future pressures remain under careful monitoring.
- The number of debtor days remains outside the KPI target because of a combination of the ongoing historic commercial debt created by covid and the impact of the large amount of outstanding leaseholder debt as a result of the increase in the volume of capital works being undertaken.

Revenues and Benefits service

Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

- The year-end collection levels are in full flow aiming to achieve the highest possible in-year collection rate.
- The 2024/25 Council Tax billing process has been undertaken following February Council approval of council tax levels.
- The annual business rates billing for 2024/25 has been undertaken with businesses receiving their bills in April.

KPI's for last month:

- Benefit payments and changes response times exceed KPI expectations.
- The roll out of the first phase of citizen access modules for council tax queries is now operational, meaning residents can carry out some queries online if they wish, rather than calling the Council.

- The in-year collection rates are up year on year but still behind the pre covid targets set. New targets, given the reduced council tax collection rates for 24/25, have been outlined to Members.

Legal and Democratic Services

Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

Legal and Democratic Services

- The team has now successfully completed phase 1 of the Electoral Review & all required documentation was submitted to the LG BCE by the deadline. Work has already begun for phase 2, which runs from 7 May to 11 July.
- All new Election Act requirements are being rolled out ahead of the May polls & the team are making every effort to ensure the electorate are fully aware of the changes, in particular to postal & proxy voting, Overseas arrangements & the ongoing requirement for voter ID.
- The Legal and Housing Team successfully prosecuted an individual for failing to licence a House in Multiple Occupation. The defendant was fined £23,800 plus costs of £29,856.

Strategic or significant operational matters for Council information:

- Preparations are well underway for the PCC election on 2 May. All polling stations are booked, all staff have been contacted to fill the 350-400 roles & the plans for the verification & count are underway.

Commercial Development

Update on strategic and significant operational matters:

- Parking Tariff Policy Proposals– Proposals presented to Finance & Resources OSC and Cabinet in February 2024 and agreed to take forward to statutory consultation. Work is underway preparing for the statutory consultation, which will first take place with Herts County Council and then the wider public.
- Procurement – A review of procurement and contract management processes continues to progress, to assure they continue to support the Council in securing best value in the services, works and goods it procures. This will include contract management training to ensure officers continue to effectively manage the Council's contracts.
- Commercial – Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) continue to be installed in certain Council car parks across the Borough. Over the next few weeks and months, residents will start to see these EVCPs installed and operational, which will support the Council's commitment to improving access to and the availability of charge points and addressing climate change.
- Strategic Asset Review – a cross-directorate programme of work to undertake reviews of the Council's assets is currently underway. This includes an overarching strategic review of the Council's asset portfolio, as well as more in-depth analysis of certain asset categories, such as Housing, Supported Housing and Garage portfolio. It also includes an assessment of potential options that could support delivery of the Council's strategic objectives around Housing, regeneration and Place, and ongoing financial sustainability. Updates on these projects will be provided throughout the year as they progress, and an overall programme update will be provided to Finance & Resources Scrutiny in June 2024.

Commercial and General Fund Property Services

- Despite a challenging environment our Commercial portfolio is circa 96.88% occupied and income levels remain on target. Income target for period 11 £5,025,199.
- March 2024 update - There are 150 commercial buildings and sites that DBC own and Property Services manage. Compliance under 6 main headings: Fire; Asbestos; Legionella; Gas, Electrical, Passenger Lifts and pressurised Heating Systems Insurance inspections are reported as follows.

Area	Description	Target	Performance	Trend
Fire	Percentage of properties covered by valid FRA	100.00%	100.00%	
Legionella	Percentage of water installations covered by risk assessment	100.00%	100.00%	
Asbestos	Percentage of known asbestos locations re-inspected	100.00%	100.00%	
Gas	Percentage of properties with valid gas or combustion certificate	100.00%	100.00%	
Electrical	Percentage of properties with satisfactory EICR	100.00%	100.00%	
Lifts	Percentage of passenger lifts with current examination certificate	100.00%	100.00%	
Heating	Percentage of properties with current insurance inspection	100.00%	100.00%	

Key Points

- All areas of compliance now being maintained

- **Bennettsgate Window Repairs** - Good progress to complete concrete render repairs and window replacements at Bennetts Gate although inclement weather has delayed the project by approx. 2 weeks. The render repairs are approaching completion and decoration works are underway. The project is forecast to be fully completed by mid-April 2024.
- **Victoria Hall Ceiling.** Concerns were raised due to the condition of the plaster and remedial patch repairs have been completed. We commissioned a consultant to review the ceiling who has advised that the structural condition of the roof is satisfactory, however has made recommendations to improve condition. These works will be completed during the 2025/26 financial year.
- **Nash Mills Recreation Centre** – the entrance road to the Recreation Centre has deteriorated leading to large pot holes and edge subsidence. This poses a potential health and safety risk for users. Following a successful capital bidding process, completed as part of the 2024/25 service planning exercise, funds have been approved and the works are planned to resurface the road week commencing 15 April 2024.
- **Riverbank, Two Waters Road** - A Council owned riverbank Near Two waters road / Durrants fishing lakes has been damaged by recent flooding. A contractor, Aquamaintain, who undertook a previous repair in 2016, have provided an estimated quotation for reinstatement works. The Property Services Team will continue to support and liaise with SPAR & Clean, Safe & Green colleagues.
- **Rossgate Windows Replacement Programme – Phase 2**
Subject to approval to appoint the contractor, it is anticipated that the works to undertake Phase 2 of the window replacement programme will commence during the summer months 2024 to take advantage of better weather and thereby minimising disruption for tenants. Phase 2 involves the replacement of windows at the front of the shops which are part of the integrated curtain wall system which adds design complexity. Phase 1 comprised the windows at the rear and this work completed last year. Designers and contractor staff have completed surveys of the existing cladding and windows to produce a design which has been priced and submitted for approval. In tandem, the Building Services Team are liaising with the Planning Department

on whether a planning application is required. It is intended to replace the curtain wall system on a like for like basis.



Council Briefing Note 17th April 2024

HOUSING & PROPERTY PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SIMY DHYANI

Housing Operations

- Completion of 'Planet Garden' for residents in partnership with Sunnyside.
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy developed in partnership with Community Safety Team to reflect new ASB Powers and presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 13 March.
- GIS mapping across HRA estates to refresh data for hard and soft landscaping (inclusive of high hedges and trees on amenity land), this will support review of grounds maintenance delivery and service charges.
- Finalised a filming protocol to enable consideration of filming on HRA sites.
- Engaged with HCC and Legal Services to support delivery of improvements to sustainable travel links.
- Responded to governments consultation on Social Housing Allocations.
- Revised mutual exchange policy to ensure best use of HRA stock.
- Delivered presentation in partnership with HCC & West Essex & Essex ICB colleagues in relation to Housing & Health.

Safe Communities

- Refresh of the Safeguarding Policy to provide clearer separation between Safeguarding responsibilities in relation to Children and Adults.
- Provided peer support to local registered provider in reviewing their anti-social behaviour framework.
- Installed additional deployable CCTV cameras to support enhanced monitoring of locality anti-social behaviour activity.
- Developed an internal locality-based problem-solving framework, to support the wider Community Safety Partnership governance structure.
- Supported a Police bid for additional funding to the Police & Crime Commissioner.
- Finalised a survey of all residents to inform the Community Safety Partnership priorities.
- Delivered presentation to Health & Wellbeing Committee to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse.

Property

- Fire safety upgrade works at two tower blocks in Eastwick Row have commenced. On completion of these works, internal decorations will also be completed. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of April.
- Fire remedial repairs project has delivered positive results and managed out over 100 risks to date. Phase two of the project is currently being developed
- Planning permission has been submitted for new hybrid heating system installations at Dudley House and Oaklawn
- 100% domestic gas compliance was achieved for a third month in a row
- Stakeholder event took place on the 14th March with the key decision makers for the future Repairs and Maintenance contract. Next steps are to provide an update of progress with the

new Task and Finish Group, engage with the market to see what the market has to offer against the Council's requirements and develop working groups for key stakeholders for key workstreams.

- We have now signed 27 contracts under the Interim Contract Strategy project.
- Osborne re-branding is now complete and they are now known as Cardo.
- Cardo have two damp and mould specialist operatives starting in April. Their focus will be on treatment of mould to reduce the number of open cases we currently have.
- RAAC removal/remediation programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of March 2024

Strategic Housing & Delivery

- Cabinet approved award of Principal contractor for Eastwick Row is Bugler Developments Limited. Contract documents are in the process of being prepared so that works can recommence in May.
- A new Local Connection policy for First Homes and all other affordable home ownership tenures was taken through Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 13th March.
- The Interim Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guide is progressing alongside the Local Connection Policy. Both are targeting Cabinet in May.
- A team from DHLUC visited the Council on the 7th March and as part of that visit they went to see the on-going construction of Mountbatten View in Paradise area of Hemel Hempstead which is due to complete in January 2025.
- The team are preparing several submissions for Inside Housing Awards 2024 to highlight the work of the Development Team and the schemes being developed.
- Strategic Asset Review – Tender submissions for the Housing Estate Review are currently being adjudicated.
- The recent Homes England scheme audit report will be going to the Council's Audit Committee to report the good rating received on the 20th March.
- The development programme for new build homes is progressing well and once Eastwick Row re-commences there will be 264 homes in construction – all for social rent.
- We received the results from the 'TPAS Smart plus' resident engagement review in January. We have a strong base to build upon but need a greater focus on governance and transparency and scrutiny. To assist we will continue working with TPAS to re-engineer services starting at the end of March 24.
- Housing Strategy has now been signed off. It has benefitted from broad consultation and has a clear Dacorum focus. There will be a formal launch towards the end of May.
- We have had notification from the Regulator that we will be inspected in Q1 of 24/25. We are therefore preparing for this inspection with the SQA team being the main point of contact for co-ordinating our response.

FULL COUNCIL – 2023/2024

ACTION POINTS FOR PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Date of meeting	Action point	PH responsible for action	Response / Investigation Ongoing
February 2024	Cllr England to arrange for the 4 simple steps information to be provided to Democratic Services for distribution.	Cllr England	<p>In answer to Cllr Douris’ question, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership’s WorthSaving campaign highlights that households can save up £720 a year by following four simple steps to save.</p> <p>These steps are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan - check what you have. • Shop for what you need. • Store in the best way. • Eat what you have. <p>https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/recycling-and-waste/wasteaware-campaigns/worth-saving.aspx</p>
February 2024	Cllr Tindall to arrange for the data regarding number of tenants in commercial properties that are on payment plans to be provided to Democratic Services for distribution.	Cllr Tindall	Number of Commercial Tenants accounts on Payment Plans is 228.
February 2024	Cllr Tindall to arrange for the data regarding bad debt provision for commercial assets to	Cllr Tindall	At the start of 2023/24 financial year the bad debt provision for commercial properties was £0.583m. In 2023/24 debts written off total £0.066m, leaving a provision of £0.517m. As part of the final accounts process for year end, the Finance Team and the service will review the level of debt and provision required and the provision will be topped up as

	be provided to Democratic Services for distribution.		required. The provision is set based on assumptions around the value of debt and the age of the debts for the service.
February 2024	Cllr Dhyani to arrange for confirmation of whether the rent increase letter sent out was informing residents of a rent increase, or consulting on the potential for a rent increase.	Cllr Dhyani	The rent letters issued to tenants were to notify of a change in rent charges and not a consultation on proposed charges. These letters were issued in line with the Housing Rent Standard requirement to give 28 calendar days' notice to tenants of rent increase. The new charges will be applied from the start of the new financial year. If any tenant has concerns about their rent they should make contact with their Income Officer to discuss this further.
November 2023	Cllr Barradell asked if there was data available of fixed penalty notices, specifically dog fouling outside of Hemel Hempstead and Berko.	Cllr Bromham	In the previous financial year, out of 3015 FPNs issued, 96% of FPNs were issued in Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted. 0.4% of the total were for dog fouling and 0.3% were for not carrying dog poo bags. 82% were for tobacco-related litter.
November 2023	Cllr Birnie asked if trading standards could offer regular reports on the selling of nicotine products to underage people	Cllr Bromham	Trading Standards (in Herts. County Council) said that vapes have been seized from 6 premises in Dacorum in current financial year and continue to do Test Purchasing for under age sales of vapes. Schools have been encouraged to report instances of children found in possession of vapes to a particular Herts CC email. HCC are considering how to share press releases on this topic to District/Borough Council Colleagues/ Members. I hope that UK government regulations will deter the use of disposable vapes among those who were not previously smokers and reduce incidence of these problematic devices in litter and waste-streams.
November 2023	Cllr Douris referenced the point in the report “: HCC are now talking to Dacorum Borough Council about how to get bus services up to 15 minute intervals (ie “just turn up”) in	Cllr England	HCC are now talking to Dacorum Borough Council about how to get bus services up to 15 minute intervals (ie “just turn up”) in Dacorum. HCC are looking to invest locally because we have signalled this is a priority. It will take time, but we are also activating partnership links with Intalink. ...and said that you were pleased I had used the plural. You then asked me which services:

	Dacorum” He asked if Cllr England could tell them which particular bus services these were		I look forward to inviting you to join me for a trip to and from Luton on the 721 and/or Stevenage on the 302, in the New Year?
September 2023	<p>Cllr Timmis asked if the electrical vehicle charging points will be limited in time or if cars can charge overnight.</p> <p>Cllr Tindall stated that this will depend on the particular charging point and that the portfolio holder could provide a more detailed response</p>	Cllr Tindall	<p>I’m delighted to see these first three Osprey EV charging points go operational earlier than expected. Tring leads this wave of modern infrastructure being installed right across Dacorum, helping local residents, shoppers and other visitors to be confident in leaving behind vehicles which require outdated fossil fuels.</p> <p>The following public car park locations are included in the current programme:</p> <p>Hemel Hempstead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wood Lane End car park • Alexandra Road car park • Queensway car park • Park Road • Bellgate neighbourhood centre • The Queen’s Square neighbourhood centre • Durrants Hill car park • Leverstock Green village shops • Water Gardens • Cowper Road • The Gables car park • Henry Wells Square • Bennetts End neighbourhood centre • High Street Car Park <p>Berkhamsted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St John’s Well Lane car park <p>Tring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frogmore Street (East) car park • Forge Car Park <p>Kings Langley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langley Hill car park

			Markyate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hicks Road car park
September 2023	<p>Cllr Douris commented on the proposal for some car parks to have a minimum charge based on a longer period of time and asked if this was correct.</p> <p>Cllr Tindall stated that he would arrange for a written answer to be provided</p>	Cllr Tindall	This is correct and is as set out in the proposals that went to Scrutiny and Cabinet in September 2023 and again in December 2023
July 2023	Cllr Symington to circulate cost of the strategic review to members.	Cllr Sally Symington	<p>The work streams planned for the Strategic Asset Review (SRA) are reported in the Report to Cabinet 20 June 2023 and listed in Table 1 on page 5. In total, the costs for the SAR are estimated at £516k. These are being partly funded from existing budgets provided for by the previous administration. However, there is a shortfall across the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of £95,500 and the General Fund (GE) of £115,500, giving a combined total shortfall of £211k. The HRA funding requirement is being funded by a one-off reduction to the 2023/24 HRA revenue contribution to capital and the GF funding requirement is being funded from the Dacorum Development Reserve.</p> <p>The Strategic Asset Review will enable the Council to make best use of Council assets to support the delivery of housing growth and regeneration throughout Dacorum; and to generate long term income streams that support service delivery for the benefit of Dacorum's communities.</p>
July 2023	Cllr Bromham to provide written answer regarding timescale for verge hardening.	Cllr Robin Bromham	<p>"I appreciate the amount of reported parking congestion we have on residential streets, and the effect that has, especially on pedestrians of restricted mobility. Our streets were not designed for the quantity and size/weight of modern vehicles.</p> <p>As this problem was neglected by the previous administration, and a backlog of potential schemes has built up, I have asked for policy options, based on evidenced parking congestion, desire-lines for pedestrians and co-ordination with the Local Cycling and</p>

			<p>Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which is now being progressed properly by the new administration.</p> <p>I believe that the LCWIP will serve to reduce the need for reliance on cars for local travel, and hence support the choice to reduce levels of multiple car ownership.</p> <p>Thus, I am investigating the provision of more parking on residential streets where the need is shown to be most acute, with an ability to restore to grass or planting in the long-term.”</p>
July 2023	Cllr Wilkie to provide written information on fast-tracking to Cllr Johnson	Cllr Sheron Wilkie	<p>Further to the question from Cllr’s Anderson and Johnson in Full Council meeting on 12th July , please find my written response to all members as requested.</p> <p>In November 2022 Planning Officers provided a Member Briefing Note regarding fast-track appeals after a request from the previous portfolio holder Cllr Anderson – please find attached.</p> <p>Cllr Anderson and Johnson asked at FCM on the 12th July;</p> <p><i>‘In the last year there have been two highly controversial planning appeals in Kings Langley that have been fast-tracked. The fast-tracking process has been used for some years, but this is the first time it has been used for cases where the officer’s recommendation has been overturned by Development Management Committee, and the decision to fast-track an appeal against the decision of Development Management Committee is made by Dacorum Planning Department, not the Planning Inspectorate. The fundamental problem with the process is that the appellant gets another opportunity to include disputed information, but neighbours and ward councillors who have objected to the application are denied a role in the fast-track process. They are denied a fair hearing. The previous portfolio holder banned fast-tracking controversial appeals, resulting from the first case, but this ban would appear to have been discontinued. Does the portfolio holder agree with me that fast-tracking these cases is fundamentally unfair, and will the portfolio holder reinstate the ban to stop this from happening?’</i></p> <p>As per the Member Briefing in 2022:</p> <p><i>‘A householder appeal is an appeal against the refusal of planning permission for development attached to a dwelling or within its grounds (i.e., householder planning applications); or against conditions attached to such planning permissions. The householder appeal service was introduced in April 2009 to streamline the procedure</i></p>

			<p><i>for householder appeals, with quicker timescales for making an appeal, and the overall appeal decision-making process". In other words, a 'fast track appeal' is simply the process by which <u>ALL</u> householder appeals are heard. In that sense Cllr Anderson has misunderstood the fast-track appeals process as this is not a process that Dacorum's Planning Department can choose.</i></p> <p>Cllr's Anderson and Johnson are correct that the appellant has a further opportunity to provide the Planning Inspectorate with their comments (their 'full case'). However, given the appellant will not previously have seen the Officer's report and the reasons for refusal it is in my view proportionate and proper that they have an opportunity to respond to these.</p> <p>Cllrs Anderson and Johnson are incorrect to say that there was a ban in place through the previous portfolio holder (Cllr Anderson), as it is not the Council / Planning Department that decides this process.</p> <p>As such, I have not lifted any such ban, nor do I have the powers to re-instate one.</p> <p>Moving on to the two specific cases referenced by Cllrs Anderson and Johnson:</p> <p>1) 22/00015/FHA: 36 Belham Road, Kings Langley WD4 8BY</p> <p>This appeal was allowed on 21.02.23. The Planning Inspector agreed with the recommendation of Officers and concluded that the development would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. The key section is as follows:</p>
--	--	--	--

			<p>6. I consider that the proposed two storey side extension incorporating the existing garage and extending to the rear elevation of the main house would be of a scale, height, bulk and design in keeping with the character of the existing house itself and the prevailing pattern of development along the street. The extended hipped roof would reflect the existing roof pitch and would be a visual improvement over the existing side dormer when viewed from the street. The size of the plot is ample to accommodate the increase in built form.</p> <p>7. The proposed first floor rear extension over the existing single storey extension would be relatively modest in scale with a hipped roof and would be in keeping with the main house. It would be visible from the rear windows of properties in Hempstead Road over the long rear gardens but not from the street.</p> <p>8. I conclude that the proposed extensions, together with the minor alterations to the chimney and rooflights and other openings, would not harm the character and appearance of the street scene or the wider area and that they are consistent with Core Strategy policies CS11 and CS12.</p> <p>Therefore, this is simply an example of where Planning is not an exact science. Members, as is their right to do, reached a different view on the harm caused by the development to Officers. This is not uncommon and not due to a fast-track appeals system.</p> <p>Design / impact on the character and appearance of the area are subjective assessments. Officers rely on their experience and knowledge of previous decisions to assess when a scheme tips the balance and becomes sufficiently harmful that it needs to be refused.</p> <p>Officers have checked through householder planning appeals since the beginning of 2021 and there have been 4 householder appeals resulting from DMC Members reaching a contrary view to Officers. Three of these appeals were dismissed with one allowed.</p> <p>2) 22/03760/FHA: 29 Langley Hill, Kings Langley WD4 9HA</p> <p>This appeal has not yet been determined. This one was refused for the following reason:</p>
--	--	--	--

			<p>Reason(s) for Refusal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development by virtue of the rear facing balcony, will result in overlooking of, and an unacceptable loss of privacy to neighbouring residential properties. As such, the development fails to comply with Policy CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy <p>It is the Planning Officers position that regardless of the Planning Inspector's conclusion, any impact resulting from this development is very localised and that this development is not controversial in a wider sense.</p>
<p>July 2023</p>	<p>Cllr Weston stated that she would provide a written reply to this question "What work was being done with Hertfordshire County to promote roles with young people"</p>	<p>Cllr Carol Weston</p>	<p>Hertfordshire County Council staff members regularly attend the Hertfordshire Head of Human Resources meetings and recruitment is a frequent item at the meeting. We had an external presentation on how to best use social media and LinkedIn to assist with recruitment. As a result we are now utilising a recruiter license which allows us to proactively contact candidates who match the job vacancy skill set and are open to work.</p> <p>There is other work continuing at the Council, which will support the recruitment/retention of young people. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of our national graduate development programme intake, from 1 per year to 3 per year. Continuing HR and management presence at career fairs We have a stage in recruitment approval process to ensure managers consider the option to amend the vacancy to a trainee/apprentice role. Bespoke marketing campaigns for graduate positions, latest one for the graduate environmental health officers. We received 12 applications. We offer apprenticeship training for staff and currently have 11 members of staff on apprenticeship courses. We offer a work experience programme for schools, this will be expanded in the next offer. We are exploring partnerships with local colleges/universities with an aim to provide a pathway to job opportunities with the Council.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have recently registered our interest in the planning graduate scheme run by the Local Government Association (LGA). This will be launched in the New Year.• The appraisal process now includes a succession planning element to ensure that future training is bespoke to the needs of personal career development as well as job related training.
--	--	--	--

Agenda Item 7

Cabinet Referrals

19th February 2024

CA/33/24 SENIOR OFFICER PAY POLICY

Decision

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

(1) Cabinet **recommends to Council** that it adopts the Pay Policy for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

(2) Cabinet agreed that any amendments to the Pay Policy throughout the financial year 2024/2025, which may be required as a result of legislative changes, can be approved by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Council's Monitoring Officer.

Advice

Recommendation agreed