CABINET AGENDA

TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2025 AT 7.30 PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 2 - THE FORUM

Membership

Councillor Adrian England (Chair)	Councillor Robin Bromham
Councillor Simy Dhyani (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Caroline Smith-Wright
Councillor William Allen	

For further information, please contact Democratic Support or 01442 228209

AGENDA

1   MINUTES   (Pages 3 - 6)

        To confirm the minutes and decisions from the previous meeting

2   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

        To receive any apologies for absence

3   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4   PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

An opportunity for members of the public to make statements and ask questions in accordance with the rules as to Public Participation

5   REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet

MINUTES

CABINET

10 December 2024

Councillors:	Adrian England	Leader of the Council
	William Allen	Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial
	Simi Dhyani	Portfolio Holder for Housing
	Caroline Smith-Wright	Portfolio Holder for Climate & Ecological Emergency
	Robin Bromham	Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Officers:	Nigel Howcutt	Chief Finance Officer
	Mark Brookes	Democratic Services Assistant Manager
	Catherine Silva Donayre	Strategic Director Corporate & Contracted Services
	Darren Welsh	Strategic Director Housing
	Aidan Wilkie	Strategic Director People & Transformation
	Ryan Glanville	Assistant Head of Housing Operations
	Oliver Jackson	Head of Housing Operations
	L Fowell	Democratic Services Assistant Manager

The meeting began at 7.30pm

CA/105/24   MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

CA/106/24   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No Apologies were received

CA/107/24   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Allen declared that he was a member of Community Action Dacorum, they are mentioned in the Mayoral Services item in the agenda.

CA/108/24   PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

CA/109/24   REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet.

CA/110/24   FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

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CA/111/24   TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2024/25 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT

Decision

RESOVLED TO RECOMMEND

Cabinet **recommended that Council** accept the 2024/25 Treasury Management performance report.

Cabinet **recommended that Council** not include balances held in the reserve account as part of investment balances in the short term.

Advice

Recommendation agreed

For full discussion please see the video minutes.

CA/112/24   SOLAR TOGETHER HERTFORDSHIRE: ROUND THREE

Decision

Cabinet approved progression with the third round of Solar Together Hertfordshire bulk-buy scheme in current contract with iChoosr.

Advice

Recommendation agreed

For full discussion please see the video minutes.

CA/113/24   STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER Q2 2024/25

Decision

Cabinet endorsed the Q2 2024/25 update on the Strategic Risk Register.

Advice

Recommendation agreed

For full discussion please see the video minutes.

CA/114/24   TENANCY AGREEMENT REVIEW

Decision

That Cabinet agreed the summary of proposed changes as set out in Section 2 and detailed in Appendix 1 and agrees to proceed to formal tenant consultation

Advice

Recommendation agreed

For full discussion please see the video minutes.

CA/115/24   MAYORAL SERVICE

Decision

Cabinet

1) Noted the overview of the Mayor's support service as highlighted in the report.

2) Agreed the development of a Mayor's Future Fund (MFF) working in conjunction with Community Action Dacorum (CAD) as set out in section 4 and delegate's authority to the Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council to finalise the Service Level Agreement to oversee the operation of the MFF.

3) Noted the Mayoral Events Programme as set out in section 5.4.

Advice

Recommendation agreed

For full discussion please see the video minutes.

CA/116/24   EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To consider passing a resolution in the following terms:

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Part 1 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during the items in Part 2 of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that, if members of the public were present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council and third party companies/organisations.

Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, paragraph 3.

CA/117/24   TOTAL ASSET MANAGEMENT CONTRACT BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Please see Part 2 restricted Minutes

CA/118/24   COUNCIL TAX BASE REPORT

Decision

RESOVLED TO RECOMMEND

1. **Cabinet recommended to Council** the making of the determination in paragraph 2.17 of this report, to widen the categories of unoccupied properties on which an additional council tax premium is charged with effect from 1 April 2026.

Advice

Recommendation agreed

For full discussion please see the video minutes.

Agenda Item 6

CABINET FORWARD PLAN

	DATE	MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION	Decision Making Process	Reports to Monitoring Officer/ S.151 Officer	CONTACT DETAILS	BACKGROUND INFORMATION
	11/02/25	HRA Business Plan		23/01/25	Hannah Peacock Head of Strategy, Quality & Assurance Hannah.peacock@dacorum.gov.uk	
	11/02/25	Climate & Ecological Emergency Fund		23/01/25	S Choudhury Head of People & Transformation Shaj.choundhury@dacorum.gov.uk	
	11/02/25	Council Tax Setting Committee		23/01/25	Mark Brookes Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk	
	11/02/25	Budget		23/01/25	Nigel Howcutt Chief Finance Officer Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk	
	18/03/25	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy		27/02/25	Natasha Beresford – Assistant Director – Housing Operations & Safe Communities Natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk	
	18/03/25	Annual Pay Policy Review		27/02/25	Matt Rawdon – Assistant Director People Matt.rawdon@dacorum.gov.uk	
	18/03/25	Parking Enforcement Contract Award		27/02/25	Ian Ross Head of Neighbourhood Management Ian.ross@dacorum.gov.uk	
	18/03/25	Senior officer Pay Policy		27/02/25	Matt Rawdon – Assistant Director People Matt.rawdon@dacorum.gov.uk	
	29/04/25	EDI Strategy		07/04/25	Matt Rawdon – Assistant Director People Matt.rawdon@dacorum.gov.uk	
	29/04/25	Air Quality Action Plan		07/04/25	Sarah Stefano Manager – Environmental Health Sarah.stefano@dacorum.gov.uk	
	29/04/25	Facilities Management Contract Award		07/04/25	Andrew Linden Head of Commercial Housing Contracts Andrew.linden@dacorum.gov.uk	
	20/05/25	Data Strategy		19/05/25	Yvonne Salvin Head of Digital Yvonne.salvin@dacorum.gov.uk	
	20/05/25	PSPO Renewal		19/05/25	Sarah Stefano Manager – Environmental Health Sarah.stefano@dacorum.gov.uk	
	Sept 2025	Local Cycle Walking Implementation Plan		tbc	James Doe Strategic Director – Place James.doe@dacorum.gov.uk	Moved from Jan 2025

Cabinet

Report for:	Cabinet
Title of report:	Supported Housing Strategy
Date:	28/01/2025
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Property Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Supported Housing strategy Appendix 2 – Supported Housing strategy action plan Appendix 3 – Dacorum standard Appendix 4 – Tenancy engagement report Appendix 5 – Community Impact Assessment
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	**CIA** – Community Impact Assessment **HTIP** – Housing Transformation and Improvement Programme **DBC** – Dacorum Borough Council **HSLT** – Housing Senior Leadership Team **PH** – Portfolio Holder **SLT** – Strategic Leadership Team **TLC** – Tenants & Leaseholders Committee **SHTF** – Supported Housing Tenant Forum **HCC –** Hertfordshire County Council **HRA –** Housing Revenue Account **GF –** General Fund

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Oli Jackson, Head of Housing Operations

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Oliver.Jackson@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228229 (ext. 2229)

Corporate Priorities	• **Community engagement:** Engage with residents and partners to have a real say on our services and the borough

	• **Service improvement and delivery:** Running the Council efficiently and putting residents at the heart of everything we do • **Clean, safe and green:** Provide a clean, safe and green-focussed environment • **Homes to be proud of:** Enable well-maintained and affordable homes, where people want to live
Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	To present the draft Supported Housing Strategy to Cabinet members and seek approval
Recommendation(s) to the decision maker(s):	Cabinet members to review and approve the Supported Housing Strategy and associated appendices.
Period for post policy/project review:	Subject to legislative changes and periodic reviews thereafter, review period 2030

1   **Introduction/Background**:

The supported housing service provides housing and enhanced housing management services to those over the age of 60 in the borough. The service consists of approximately 1800 properties, making up nearly a fifth of the total council housing stock.

Many of the Council's properties were built from the 1960's onwards, due to this, and the changing demographic needs in the borough, key decisions around investment and long-term viability regarding will need to be made.

The draft Supported Housing strategy, which focuses solely on Council owned designated housing for those over the age of 60, will provide the direction for an in-depth review of the current service and which will align with HTIP and the Strategic Asset Review.

2   **Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report**:

National demographic projections determine there will be a significant increase in the number of older people in the UK. Within this, it is anticipated there will be a greater increase in those aged 85+, and those living with lifelong health conditions including mobility issues and dementia. This is reflected locally within the borough.

Furthermore, an understanding of the impact of social isolation on older people is growing, and the effect on mortality is now being likened to other risk factors such as smoking and obesity. There is also a clear link between the provision of good quality housing and the ability of older people to access health, social care and wellbeing services.

It is therefore necessary for Dacorum Borough Council to have a housing offer for older people that meets current and future need.

The aim of the Supported Housing Strategy is to provide the direction of travel for the service in terms of the services that are available to meet the needs of our tenants, and the properties in which they live.

Strategic Asset Review:

The strategy will feed into the Supported Housing Review workstream, which is part of the Council's wider Strategic Asset Review (SAR) – a significant programme of work exploring how Council assets can support the development of new homes, secure financial returns for the Council, and contribute to its wider regeneration and placemaking agenda.

The Supported Housing Review workstream will evaluate the Council's current supported housing stock:

- To understand the current condition of its supported housing schemes and how they meet defined industry standards.
- It will assess long-term financial viability of schemes - including rental income against future repair and maintenance liabilities.
- It will provide options for re-development where, if viable, this would better meet the evidenced housing need and/or contribute to the wider aims and objectives of the Strategic Asset Review.

The Council has previously engaged with consultants to review its Supported Housing stock, the findings from those reviews have helped to shape the strategy. Research regarding current and future demand for different types of housing for older people has also influenced the draft strategy.

The strategy:

The commitments contained within the strategy are as follows:

Commitment 1: We will promote independence and tailor our service to ensure it meets the individual needs of our tenants.

We will

- Ensure that promoting independent living is the primary focus of the service.
- Regularly assess the level of service that our tenants need and work with our tenants to co-design the service moving forwards.
- Regularly complete 'outcome star' assessments to identify areas that our tenants need help with and to demonstrate what progress is being made.
- Support the delivery of regular activities to combat the impact of loneliness and social isolation. This will be done through activities that will allow people of all ages to socialise together, working alongside external agencies to provide as many activities as possible.
- Work with tenants to remove obstacles that prevent them from getting involved in activities, such as transport, cost and lack of support.
- Signpost tenants and support them to access appropriate services, including those that support tenancy sustainment.

Commitment 2: We will provide accommodation that meets the needs of our supported housing tenants both now and in the future.

We will

- Work with tenants to identify opportunities for local groups to use our properties for activity that will benefit our tenants, such as community and faith groups.
- Ensure that all properties meet EPC 'C' rating by 2050.
- Continue to carry out the renewal of our community alarm replacement programme in all supported housing properties.
- Work with others to ensure that our tenants' adaptive needs are met, including, through Mutual Exchanges.
- Where appropriate, support our tenants to move to a more suitable property.
- Consider design principles with our current tenants when investing in our properties.
- Continue to ensure all Supported Housing is affordable and within local housing allowance.
- Continue to refurbish internal communal areas of our buildings.

Commitment 3: We will review the suitability of our supported housing stock.

We will

- Include our Supported Housing stock in the strategic asset review.
- Review our properties' locations in terms of access to local service and public transport links.
- Assess our properties against industry-defined design principles.
- Work in conjunction with our Property and Development teams to consider the long-term viability of schemes.
- Consider whether any of the accommodation would be better suited for another use.
- Work with others to identify opportunities to enhance the accommodation.

Commitment 4: We will enhance our partnership working to deliver the best services possible.

We will

- Continue to work with Hertfordshire County Council to consider the opportunity to increase the number of flexi care units within the borough.
- Continue to provide regular engagement opportunities for tenants to work with us to shape services.
- Continue to develop relationships with the voluntary sector to ensure that tenants are aware of the services available.
- Continue to work closely with statutory services to signpost and support tenants to access specialist services including Adult Care Services and Mental Health support.
- Continue to work with our Tenancy Management and Anti-social Behaviour teams to reduce the impact of ASB on our tenants

- Continue to reduce the carbon output from communal areas of Supported Housing schemes by installing hybrid communal heating systems which incorporate air source heat pumps.
- So far, ten of our Supported Housing Schemes have Solar PV installed and six have Hybrid Heat. We will continue to integrate these measures to help reduce our carbon outputs.

Supported Housing strategy action plan (appendix 2)

To deliver the strategy, a draft action plan has been developed that will provide the opportunity to monitor delivery against agreed timescales. The action plan will be reviewed at regular points to ensure that it reflects workstreams required to deliver the strategy.

Dacorum supported housing standard (appendix 3)

The assessment of schemes against a defined standard is crucial to the delivery of the supported housing strategy. Appendix 3 is a draft Dacorum Supported Housing standard.

The Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles are a set of core design principles that are recognised by the industry for new build accommodation as meeting the needs of older people. Alongside this there are some recognised design principles for those living with Dementia.

The Dacorum Supported Housing Standard brings together a number of these principles and has been developed alongside teams within the Council. It is anticipated that this could be the key tool for assessing our schemes against the standard to contribute to discussions about long term viability.

Engagement with tenants (appendix 4)

To develop the strategy, a series of in person events were held at schemes throughout the borough. Further to this, tenants were sent a survey to complete asking their opinion on some key areas.

As a result of this engagement, the following areas were developed:

- Greater focus on social activities.
- Commitment to take a scheme-by-scheme approach to refurbishment.
- Commitment to completing replacement programme for community alarm equipment.
- Focus on communal areas and the benefit they can have on tenants' wellbeing.

3   **Options and alternatives considered**

a)   Agree the draft Supported Housing strategy and the associated appendices – recommended.

b)   Continue to provide Supported Housing services without a dedicated strategy – not recommended due to the changing demographic needs of our local communities and the need to review current provision of housing.

4   **Consultation**

Consultation was undertaken with the Tenants and Leaseholders Committee (TLC) and the Supported Housing Tenant Forum (SHTF), to agree the approach to develop the strategy and how progress would be monitored. This was followed by scheduled consultation with the wider supported housing tenant population through surveys and in person sessions, Appendix 4 captures the responses.

Once our tenants' views had been captured and the strategy had been drafted, the document was taken through the internal approval process which included going back to TLC and SHTF to seek further comments from tenants.

Due to the impact the strategy could potentially have on meeting the projected need for flexi care housing within the borough, consultation was also carried out externally with Hertfordshire County

Council and key stakeholders via the Herts Strategic Supported Housing Board, the Dacorum Supported Housing Strategic Board and the Registered Providers Forum.

5   Financial and value for money implications:

A large proportion of the activity needed to deliver the strategy will be undertaken within existing budgets, which will be monitored closely at service level to ensure value for money is achieved.

Additional financial implications will arise when the schemes have been assessed against the standard and longer-term investment needs are established.

6   Legal Implications

Legal implications will arise through the strategy if any of the assets were to be permanently transferred from the HRA to GF. This would only occur in circumstances where schemes were ultimately deemed unsuitable for their current use and were not viable to be considered of development purposes or change of use for alternate social housing. Any potential transfer would be subject to significant operational, financial and legal consideration with members.

7   Risk implications:

Keys risks of not introducing the strategy include:

- Current provision not meeting future demand.
- Inability to let properties.
- Asset management approach not meeting the investment needs of properties
- Inability to meet the growing adaptive needs of tenants.

8   Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

Equalities and Community Impact

A CIA has been completed and is annexed to this report, please refer to Appendix 5. The CIA identifies predominantly positive to neutral impacts arising from the draft Supported Housing Strategy.

9   Sustainability implications:

Introducing the Supported Housing Strategy provides an opportunity to consider several sustainability implications, including those related to climate change and health and wellbeing.

Climate Change

- **Energy Efficiency**: The strategy commits to providing energy efficient properties and to reduce the carbon footprint within the communal areas

Health and Wellbeing

- **Reducing social isolation:** The understanding of the impact of social isolation, especially on older people, is growing, and the strategy provides an opportunity for enhanced focus in this key.

- **Wellbeing:** The commitment to work in partnership with both statutory and voluntary stakeholders will continue to focus on enhancing the wellbeing of our tenants through collaboration.

- **Health and social care:** There is a commitment from DBC to work with HCC to increase the number of flexi care properties within the borough, where those with an identified personal care needs can receive services without the need to move to residential care homes.

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

Officers across multiple teams within housing will be involved in the delivery of the strategy, including Housing Operations, Property and Strategic Housing and Delivery. Corporately, involvement may be required from other team including Finance, Planning and Communities.

11 Statutory Comments

Monitoring Officer:

The Strategy should help to ensure that the Council's supported housing is provided and maintained to the appropriate regulatory standards.

S151:

No further comments to add to the report,

12 Conclusions:

The Supported Housing strategy establishes a strategic framework for the future long-term provision of Supported Housing within the borough and has been developed with tenants and a range of other key stakeholders.

The commitments within the strategy focus on the Council's tenants through the provision of tailored, outcome focused services that will encourage and support independence. Health and wellbeing is central to the strategy and demonstrates our commitment to working with others to enhance older tenants' lives.

Crucially, there is a focus on the Council's assets by committing to develop a long-term approach to investment and by ensuring the schemes are included in the broader SAR, so that opportunities for reprovision and development are not missed.

Supported Housing Strategy

2025-2030

Contents

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our new Supported Housing strategy, developed with stakeholders with whom we will continue to work to ensure that this strategy is delivered.

Locally and nationally the population is getting older, so it is important that Dacorum Borough Council has an older persons' housing offer that is safe, affordable, energy efficient and that has services that can meet the wide range of needs of people who live in our accommodation.

We recognise that - for many - Supported Housing means more than just the property in which they live. Our tenants have told us that living in a community that has the space to mix with others is very important to them.

For some, getting older can mean that they need other services to help. Our Supported Housing service works proactively with other service providers, both voluntary and statutory, to ensure that our tenants can get the help they need.

Supported Housing is a key service that helps many tenants to remain living independently as they get older. The service available to our tenants and the properties in which they live needs to be able to match those needs both now and in the future.

We want our tenants who live in Supported Housing to feel valued, and we recognise the role that our service has in achieving this.

Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder – Housing & Property Services

Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 sets several commitments that we will need to meet to fulfil its aims. The Supported Housing Strategy will sit alongside the Housing Strategy and will support the delivery of these commitments.

Our Vision

That people living in Dacorum have a safe, warm and affordable home that meets their needs; homes are energy-efficient and tackle the Climate and ecological emergency.

The Supported Housing Strategy supports the Council's vision and priorities of:

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

Climate and ecological emergency

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment

Building strong and vibrant communities

National Context

The number of older people living in England is increasing. Over the next 20 years it is estimated that the population of England aged over 85 years will double to over 3 million people.

As people get older, their health can deteriorate, they are less able to travel and their housing needs change, which creates challenges for local authorities and other public services. With an increasing percentage of older people compared with the working-age population, providing these services is likely to become even more difficult.

Older people also tend to be lonelier due to social isolation. Issues such as being less able to move

around easily often mean that older people stay at home and have less contact with others.

We also know that loneliness can lead to older people using services such as their GP surgery to interact with other people. Changes in legislation have pushed local authorities and public services to recognise the importance of a 'person centred approach'. This stops services taking a 'one size fits all' stance and recognises that every person will have their own needs and aspirations. Services must adapt to fit people's needs. An example of this is The Care Act (2014) which introduced statutory responsibilities to promote wellbeing and keep adults at risk safe.

Nationally, service-providers now understand the impact that being lonely and isolated can have on older people. Additionally, the crucial role housing plays in improving health and wellbeing is recognised. To help people keep their independence, grow their support networks and stay well we must shape our housing offer to overcome these widespread and growing issues.

Local Context - Demographics

Dacorum is the largest district within Hertfordshire. In line with national trends the number of older people within the borough is growing with data suggesting that the 75+ age group will increase by 64% by 2041. This is comparable with projections at a county level.

Within this it is also anticipated that there will be a noticeable increase in the numbers of older people who are living with a disability, with cases of Dementia and mobility problems increasing significantly.

Local Context – Supported Housing Supply

We have a range of Supported Housing properties throughout the borough, which offer current and future tenants the choice of where they would like to live. Most of our properties were built before the 1980's.

We will continue to consider the number of properties we have available against current and future needs alongside ensuring that these properties are fit for purpose, affordable and that

our residents have access to a wide range of facilities and social activities. This could mean that in the future we will consider that some of our properties are not viable. However, we recognise that the population is ageing, so we will consider the future demands for this specialist housing before making any decisions and ensuring they are great places for people to live independently surrounded by like-minded individuals, whilst receiving whatever support they need.

It is important that the design of our properties meets the needs of our tenants both now and in the future, in terms of the design and layout of the properties. The Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) and dementia friendly design principles provide guidelines to ensure that new build supported housing meets the changing needs and priorities of an ageing population.

Whilst none of our properties are classed as new build and have therefore not been designed specifically to meet these principles, having assessed our schemes a proportion of them do align with these principles. Through our Strategic Asset review we will identify further opportunities to meet these standards and work with other providers.

Our Supported Housing properties are intended to be available for applicants who are aged 60+. In some circumstances, we will consider applications from those under the age of 60 who have a specific need, with applicants assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Flexi care Housing option

When people's needs can't be met within their own home, or a Supported Housing property, we want to be able to offer our tenants choice about where they live. This aligns with Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC's) Supported Accommodation Strategy pledges to offer alternatives in each area so that people have the choice to continue to live as independently as possible. One alternative is flexi care accommodation which enables tenants to continue to live independently whilst receiving the care they require.

We currently have one flexi care scheme within the borough. Projections show that this isn't enough to meet the needs of the borough's older people. In future, it is likely that the demand for more flexi care schemes will continue to grow.

It is Dacorum Borough Council's intention to support the growth of flexi care provision in the borough through partnership working with HCC and through the delivery of the Affordable Housing SPD / Local Plan.

Local Context – Supported Housing

Our Supported Housing makes up approximately one fifth of the total number of properties that the Council owns and is split into three groups:

Scheme-based properties.

Self-contained one and two-bed homes on a designated site. Typically, schemes will have a range of communal facilities such as communal lounges, offices and laundries which offers opportunities for enhanced social activity. We regularly look to arrange activities with our residents across all our schemes for social inclusion, we also encourage residents to bring new activities to their schemes themselves. A Supported Housing Officer is allocated to each of our schemes, providing enhanced housing management services to our tenants and carrying out building safety checks.

Community properties

Smaller blocks of flats or rows of bungalows, these properties don't have any communal facilities provided on site, however our community residents are encouraged to access schemes and relevant activities and have an allocated Supported Housing Officer.

Flexi care at a designated scheme

Flexi care housing offers more support and care than is available than in supported housing. There is one flexi care scheme in the borough. A flexi care scheme is like a Supported Housing scheme but has an onsite care team based in the building. This means that tenants living there can access the onsite care team to meet their individual needs whilst remaining as independent as

possible. This dedicated team assist our tenants with care packages so they can continue to live in their own home.

It has been estimated that for each person living in housing with care settings, the financial benefit to NHS was approximately £2,000 per person per year (Housing LIN). This highlights the positive role of supported housing in helping to mitigate the challenges facing the health and social care sector, whilst enabling people to live independently for longer.

Anyone living in our Supported Housing properties can access an enhanced level of service compared with those living within our General Needs housing stock to provide independent living with access to any relevant services the tenant may require. We work closely with our internal teams and external agencies to ensure all our supported housing tenants can access varied services to provide the support they require, this could be assistance with benefit payments, tenancy sustainment, care and wellbeing services.

We want our supported housing properties to be seen as an attractive housing option for older people in the borough. As well as ensuring that are properties are safe and well maintained, we want them to be vibrant hubs of the local community. We acknowledge that the impact of social isolation and loneliness can be as significant as other risk factors such as smoking or obesity, and therefore we will ensure there are opportunities for our tenants to mix with one another regularly. We will work with others to ensure that typical barriers that prevent older people from getting involved are identified and where possible, resolved.

We follow Dacorum Borough Council's robust safeguarding guidelines to ensure all tenants are safeguarded in the appropriate way. We regularly liaise with our Clean, Safe and Green Team to provide well-kept green spaces for our tenants to enjoy. Should a tenant wish to move from a larger general needs property our Housing Needs Team can assist them with moving into supported housing, often providing a financial incentive to do so. Details of the service that Supported Housing tenants can access is described in more

detail at
www.dacorum.gov.uk/supportedhousing

Local Context – Asset Management / Long Term Viability

Our Supported Housing properties need to support independent living for our
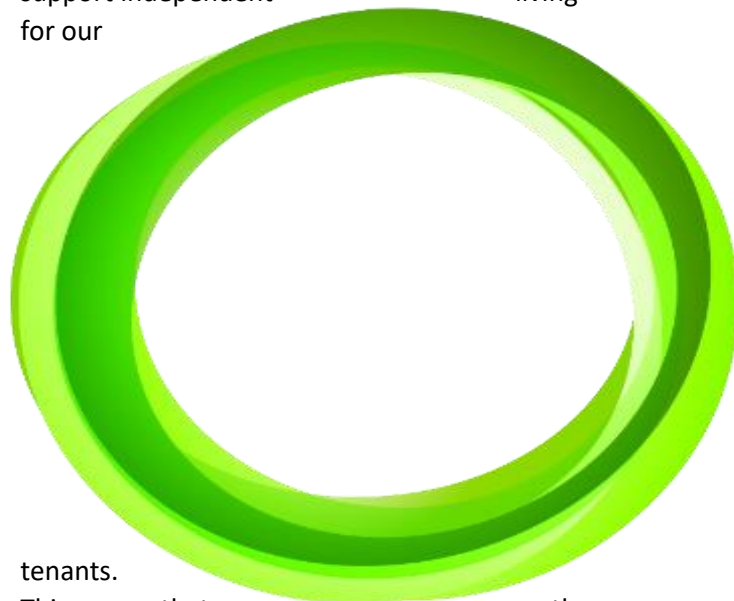
tenants.
This means that they need to be safe, well maintained and accessible. As already mentioned, some of our properties were built several years ago and - in some cases - meeting the needs of our tenants will become challenging in the future.

This strategy will align with our Asset Management Strategy to identify the long-term investment needs of Supported Housing properties. Where schemes require significant investment, or where the schemes are deemed not to be suitable for older people due to an inability to adapt them, we may consider whether the schemes are viable to continue as specialist housing for older people.

Our properties play a vital role in supporting our tenants to live independently and in their ability to access a range of services such a social care, health and wellbeing services.

Therefore, alongside the consideration of the design principles and future investment needs of our properties, we will also consider several other factors when looking at long term viability. These will include, but are not limited to:

- Public transport links

- Proximity to health services.
- Proximity to leisure, cultural and religious services.
- Demand.
- Provision of internal and external facilities.
- Financial performance.

Commitments:

To develop this strategy, we considered several key changes in the housing sector on both a national and local scale, as well as the needs of the service and our communities to ensure we are delivering what is needed for our residents:

Based on this, we have developed four outcome-based commitments:

Commitment 1: We will promote independence and tailor our service to ensure it meets the individual needs of our tenants.

Commitment 2: We will provide accommodation that meets the needs of our supported housing tenants both now and in the future.

Commitment 3: We will review the suitability of our supported housing stock.

Commitment 4: We will enhance our partnership working to deliver the best services possible.

Commitment 1: We will promote independence and tailor our service to ensure it meets the individual needs of our tenants.

We will

Ensure that promoting independent living is the primary focus of the service.

Regularly assess the level of service that our tenants need and work with our tenants to co-design the service moving forwards.

Identify areas that our tenants need support with and monitor progress against these areas, to achieve the outcomes that our tenants want. This assessment and monitoring will be led by our tenants and are called 'Outcome star' assessments.

Support the delivery of regular activities to combat the impact of loneliness and social isolation. This will be done through activities that will allow people of all ages to socialise together, working alongside external agencies to provide as many activities as possible.

Work with tenants to remove obstacles that prevent them from getting involved in activities, such as transport, cost and lack of support.

Signpost tenants and support them to access appropriate services, including those that support tenancy sustainment.

Commitment 2: We will provide accommodation that meets the needs of our supported housing tenants both now and in the future.

We will

Work with tenants to identify opportunities for local groups to use our properties for activity that

will benefit our tenants, such as community and faith groups.

Take the opportunity to improve schemes, by enhancing facilities and creating additional or redesigned units as part of our strategic asset review.

Ensure that all properties meet EPC 'C' rating by 2050.

Continue to carry out the renewal of our community alarm replacement programme in all supported housing properties.

Work with others to ensure that our tenants' adaptive needs are met, including using Mutual Exchanges.

Where appropriate, support our tenants to move to a more suitable property.

Consider design principles with our current tenants when investing in our properties.

Continue to refurbish internal communal areas of our buildings.

Continue to ensure all Supported Housing is affordable and within local housing allowance.

Commitment 3: We will review the suitability of our supported housing stock.

We will

Include our Supported Housing stock in the strategic asset review, so that properties no longer suitable for supported housing are de-commissioned or repurposed for alternate use.

Consider opportunities, through the strategic asset review to commission new supported housing and / or flexi care accommodation.

Review our properties' locations in terms of access to local service and public transport links.

Assess our properties against industry-defined design principles.

Work in conjunction with our Property and Development teams to consider the long-term viability of schemes.

Consider whether any of the accommodation would be better suited for another use.

Work with others to identify opportunities to enhance the accommodation.

Through the review of suitability of our stock, we will undertake an analysis of the charges related to services provided to ensure they are reflective of the provision.

Commitment 4: We will enhance our partnership working to deliver the best services possible.

We will

Continue to work with Hertfordshire County Council to consider the opportunity to increase the number of flexi care units within the borough.

Continue to provide regular engagement opportunities for tenants to work with us to shape services.

Continue to develop relationships with the voluntary sector to ensure that tenants are aware of the services available.

Continue to work closely with statutory services to signpost and support tenants to access specialist services including Adult Care Services and Mental Health support.

Enhance our relationship with health, social care and voluntary sector partners to respond to concerns that can affect older people, such as frailty, dementia, social isolation and hospital discharge.

When identifying opportunities to enhance service delivery, additional charging will be minimised to ensure affordability for residents - whilst ensuring VFM

Continue to work with our Tenancy Management and Anti-social Behaviour teams to reduce the impact of ASB on our tenants

Continue to reduce the carbon output from communal areas of Supported Housing schemes by installing hybrid communal heating systems which incorporate air source heat pumps.

So far, ten of our Supported Housing Schemes have Solar PV installed and six have Hybrid Heat. We will continue to integrate these measures to help reduce our carbon outputs.

Governance and monitoring:

This Strategy will be supported by an action plan (attached at appendix 1).

The strategy will be reviewed annually, to respond to changes in guidance and legislation, and any changes in trends relating to need and demand for housing and services.

This strategy is a dynamic document and will be reviewed as required in the event of a major change in legislation, external economic and social factors, or guidance. In addition to the action plan, we have identified key performance measures that will be reported upon to demonstrate the outcomes being achieved on the commitments.

Accessibility of Document

Our aim is to make our services easy to use and accessible for everyone. We will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments needed for you to contact us, access our policies, or any requests to provide responses in other formats. Depending on the individual's needs, these might include:

- Using larger print, or a specific colour contrast
- Giving more time than usual to provide information or comments on a complaint
- Using the telephone rather than written communication
- Communicating with a person through their representative or advocate
- Arranging a single point of contact
- Having an 'easy read' version of the document

If you would like to contact us about reasonable adjustments or alternative formats, please email edi@dacorum.gov.uk or call us on **01442 228000**

If you prefer to write to us, send your letter to:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team
Dacorum Borough Council
The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP1 1DN

You can find information on Advocacy support here: https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/contact-us/advocacy-support

Conclusion

This strategy demonstrates the commitment of Dacorum Borough Council and its partners to make sure that our Supported Housing service meets the needs of our tenants both now and in the future.

Through our commitments and the actions set out, we show how this can be delivered.

Supported Housing strategy

Draft action plan

Commitment 1: We will tailor our service to ensure it meets the individual needs of our tenants.

Action	Responsible	Target
We will collect and use our tenant's data to help us to develop services. This will include communication preferences and equality, diversity and inclusion data to ensure that services are accessible.	Supported Housing manager	Ongoing
Critique our service against other providers so we can stay abreast of changes and best practice in the sector.	Supported Housing manager	March 2025
Focus on how tenants benefit from services by capturing outcomes rather than focusing on support.	Supported Housing manager	September 2025
Engage regularly, and by a variety of means, with our tenants, prospective tenants and stakeholders to shape the service they receive.	Supported Housing manager	Ongoing
Through regular, agreed contact with our tenants, monitor the level of support that is needed.	Supported Housing Lead Officers	Ongoing
Introduce a 'Menu of activities', based on what our tenants want.	Supported Housing Lead Officers	Ongoing
Explore funding opportunities for regular activities / engagement sessions	Corporate graduate	February 2025
Continue to work with the voluntary sector and community groups to increase their involvement in the service.	Corporate graduate	Ongoing

Commitment 2: We will provide accommodation that meets the needs of our supported housing tenants both now and in the future.

Action	Responsible	Target
Provide appropriate community alarm equipment for our tenants.	Supported Housing manager	Ongoing
Improve the energy performance of our properties.	Supported Housing manager	Ongoing
Develop the Dacorum 'standard' of Supported Housing.	Head of Housing Operations	March 2025
Make sure our tenants are aware of opportunities through the mutual exchange policy and are supported through this process.	Supported Housing manager	April 2025
Develop a scheme-by-scheme approach to refurbishment of communal areas.	Supported Housing Lead Officers	June 2025
Identify opportunities to improve schemes as part of the strategic asset review.	Strategic Asset Project Team	Ongoing
Enhance external spaces.	Supported Housing Manager	Ongoing

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Commitment 3: We will review the suitability of our supported housing stock.		
Action	Responsible	Target
Use information about our schemes to plan investment and improvements.	Head of Housing Operations and Supported Housing Manager	June 2025
Review our schemes to see how they support access to the following: • Shops • Public transport • Health services • Community services • Leisure services	Supported Housing Lead Officers	August 2025
Develop scheme rating to identify where there are concerns about long term viability, and, through the Strategic Asset review – identify opportunities to de-commission or repurpose.	Head of Housing Operations	Ongoing
Consider supported housing stock through the strategic asset review.	Head of Housing Operations	Ongoing
Identify opportunities for new supported housing and / or flexi care schemes through the strategic asset review	Head of Housing Operations	Ongoing

Commitment 4: We will enhance our partnership working to deliver the best services possible.		
Action	Responsible	Target
Develop the relationship with statutory services and identify joint working initiatives.	Head of Housing Operations and Supported Housing Manager	Ongoing
Work in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to identify opportunities for additional flexi care schemes	Head of Housing Operations and Supported Housing Manager	Ongoing
Work with HCC and other providers at a borough level to improve how we work together	Head of Housing Operations	Ongoing

	and Supported Housing Manager	
Work with HCC to achieve their goals in providing social care to residents of the borough.	Head of Housing Operations and Supported Housing Manager	Ongoing
Participate and support initiatives that focus on health and wellbeing.	Head of Housing Operations and Supported Housing Manager	Ongoing

Dacorum 'standard' – Supported Housing

Housing for older people must conform to national guidelines on accessibility, they must also be built in accessible locations that give people the ability to age – making sure that accommodation has easy, safe access to local shops and services can help people to remain independent.

The council's aim is to provide quality homes that are safe, secure, enable independence and create thriving communities. Our Dacorum standard will also ensure that properties, and the facilities promote health, wellbeing and inclusion.

Adaptability	Property: • Properties should be wheelchair accessible or have the space to adapt to be wheelchair accessible. • Bathrooms should have a level access shower or wet room. • Properties should be designed so current and future adaptations can be made to meet the assessed needs of tenants Communal • Handrails along walls can help with mobility and should have at least a 20% colour contrast between the rails and the walls.
Energy efficient	• All schemes have an EPC 'C' rating or above • Homes are energy efficient and well insulated. • Where schemes have communal boilers, heating charges can be applied based on usage rather than apportionment • Ability to have green roofs • Properties are well ventilated and able to avoid overheating.
Care ready	• Schemes have telecare / digital community alarm equipment • Schemes have space for care teams to be located with ease.
Accessibility	• Entrance to individual properties is level access. • Entrance to scheme main entry doors is level access. • Communal facilities have level access. • Lift access provided throughout. • Lifts have large buttons. • Hearing loops installed. • Lifts have braille
Navigation	• Signage should be eye level • Signage should be fixed to the door / area it refers to, not an adjacent wall • Different areas of the building should be 'defined' to aid navigation (different coloured walls / landscaped with pictures or themes). • Signs should be placed at key decision points for someone who is at the building/area for the first time. • Signs should be clear, in bold face with good contrast between text and background. • Block capitals should be avoided on signs
Communal facilities	• Schemes have communal facilities. • Communal facilities are accessible for those with mobility impairments. • Communal facilities are clearly signposted.

	• Furniture should look like traditional furniture • Guest rooms are provided • Laundries are provided • Lounges should support social interaction • Communal space navigation should consider dementia friendly principles. • Communal facilities should support the involvement of partners. • Facilities should support participation in health and wellbeing activities
External space	• External space is provided. • External space is level access. • External space should encourage social interaction • There should be adequate external storage for mobility scooters and bikes. • Parking should be adequate and have the required level of blue badge spaces. • There should be adequate seating within external spaces. • External spaces should enhance opportunities to be active • Design, planting and maintenance of external spaces should increase the number of those using it. • Through planting, focus will be on preserving (and encouraging new) wildlife habitats, as well as introducing colour, shade and shelter – providing a welcoming outdoor space. • Opportunity for sensory gardens to be introduced into external spaces • Use of outdoor space and facilities, will provide opportunity for tenants to participate.
Lighting	• Homes should have plenty of natural light • Communal areas should have plenty of natural light, enhancing wherever possible connection to outside spaces • Main entrances and communal areas should be well lit

Respondent Demographics and Sampling Method

We gathered the survey responses using CX Feedback. We chose to use this tool as it allowed us to efficiently sendout large quantities of surveys and analyse the responses quickly..

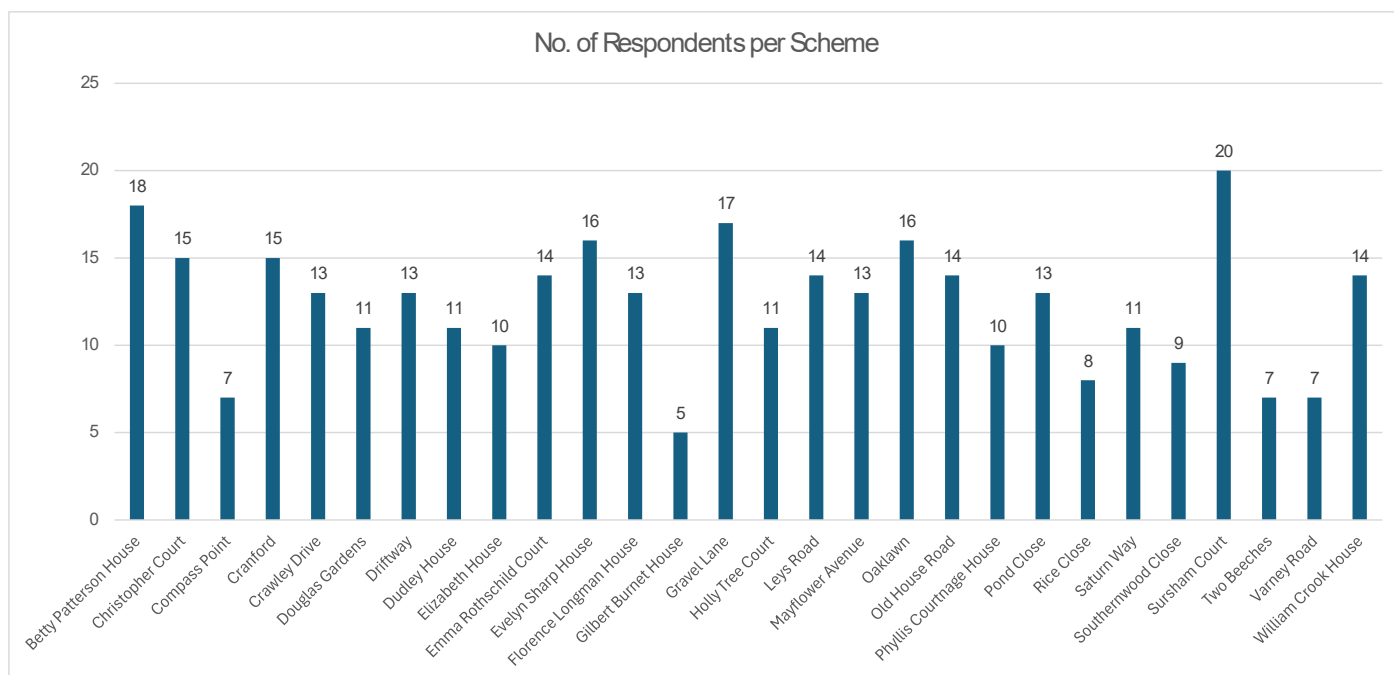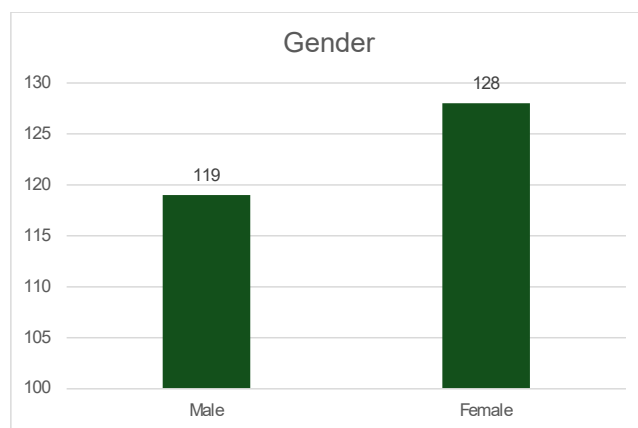The Supported Housing team identified the respondents and provided a list of SH tenants.

The next step was to combine two contact lists; the list supplied by SH and data from Orchard. Doing this meant EDI data could be considered when reviewing the survey results.

We certified that the data from both lists corresponded by performing quality checks.To do this we cross referenced from both lists using the mobile number to verify their identity.

If it matched, we could add the UPRN number was added to a survey invite. If it did not match or could be verified, then it was not added.

These checks allowed us to successfully match approximately 1500 of the 2000 tenants. However, the lack of available and/or accurate data shared between systems (in this case Inform and Orchard) made it more difficult and time consuming to verify tenant data between the two systems.

This data allowed us to analyse general demographics of the respondents, as seen below.

Respondent Age Breakdown

Gender

No. of Respondents per Scheme
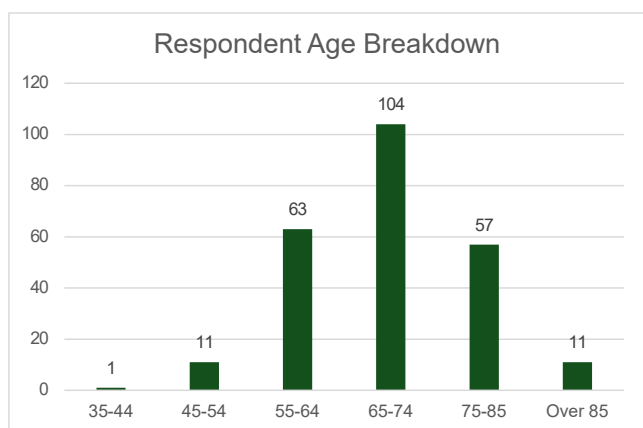
Demographic Representation

Representation

Age Group	Responses	Invites
(DOB missing)	29%	26%
35-44	0%	0%
45-54	3%	2%
55-64	18%	16%
65-74	30%	26%
75-85	17%	21%
Over 85	3%	10%
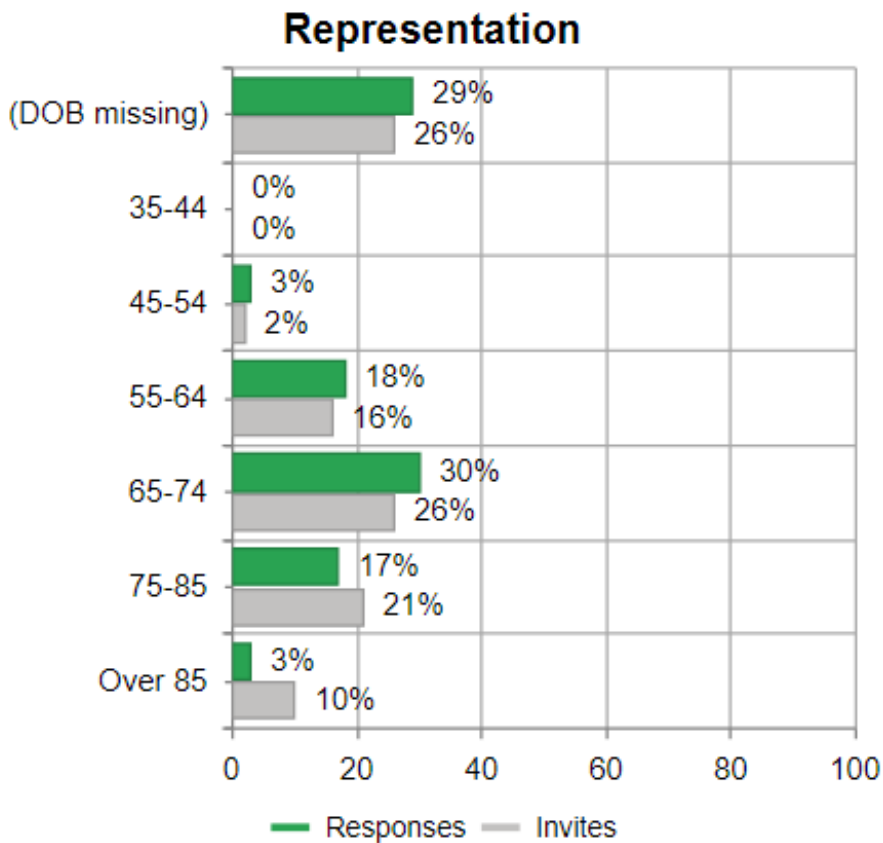
This graphs shows the representation of the respondents compared to the represnetation of all invited tenants.

Good representation will look like the green bar matching same % (or length) as the grey bar.

This shows a fairly decent show of representation of SH tenants by age.

Next time, would aim to get more responses from the 'Over 85s'. This could be tailoring communication methods for those who are older and may not use technology.

Please note there DOB missing shows that the data is either not available in Orchard or we could not match Inform records to Orachard records.

Important Factors for Tenants

Q: When thinking about supported housing, what is most important to you?
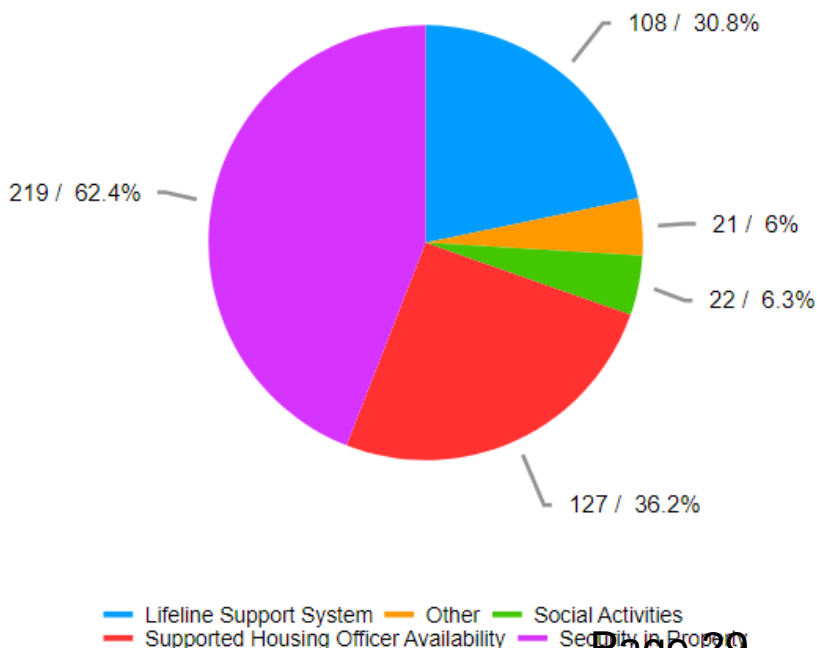
- 108 / 30.8% — Lifeline Support System
- 21 / 6% — Other
- 22 / 6.3% — Social Activities
- 127 / 36.2% — Supported Housing Officer Availability
- 219 / 62.4% — Security in Property

This question gave the respondents a multiple choice to select the factors they thought were most improtant about living in Supported Housing.

This shows that tenants value feeling secure in their property, having a supported housing officer available and the lifeline support system.

Supported Housing Officer Tenant Feedback

Q: How satisfied are you with the service your supported housing officer provides?

- ■ Very Satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied ■ Dissatisfied
- ■ Very Dissatisfied
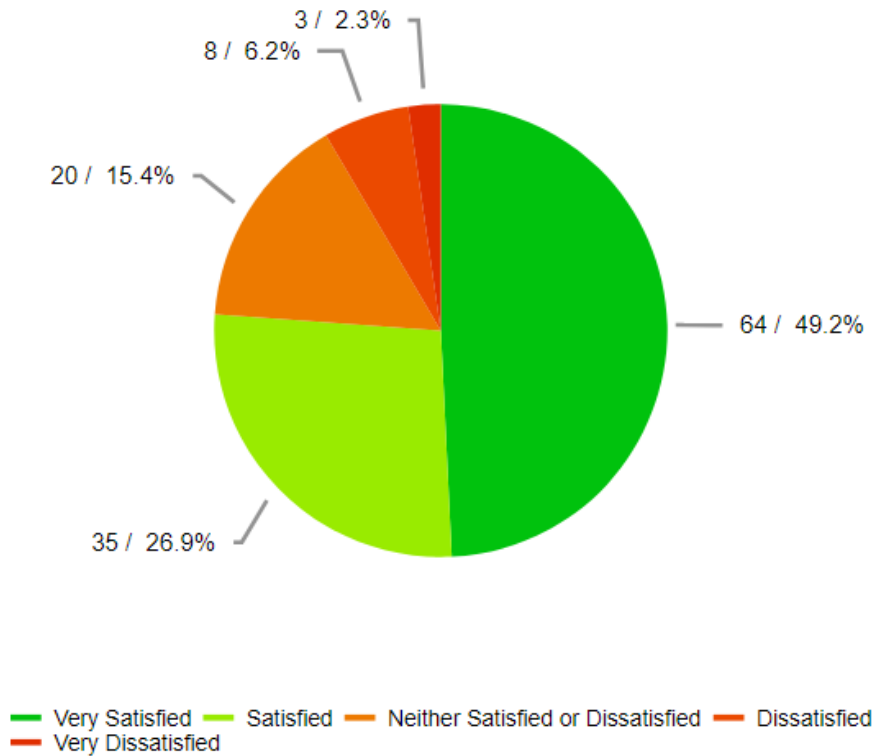
This question gave the respondents the choice to select their satisfaction levels. This ranged from 'Very Dissatisifed' to 'Very Satisfied'.

We can see that of the people who responded, 76.1% of tenants were happy with their Supported Houseing Officer.

Further analysis may be able to hint at or highlight reasons for tenants dissatisfaction.

Q: What do you expect from your Supported Housing Officer?

Comment: SHO Requirements
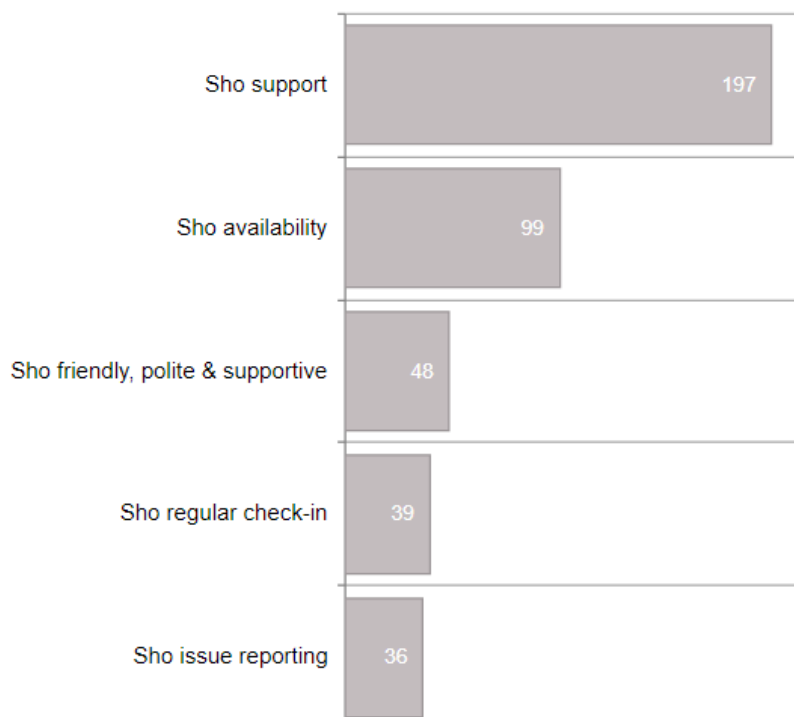
This question was open ended for tenants to give a their thoughts without any prompts of a multiple selection.

All comments were reviewed and a relevant tag was assigned to easily show the comments content.

The to the right shows the total number of comments per tag and therefore shows the top 5 things that people want from their SHO.

Preferred Activities

Q: Are there enough social activities in your scheme

All to date

Are there enough social activities in your scheme?


No
158 / 45%

Yes
193 / 55%

This question gave the respondents a multiple choice to select the factors they thought were most improtant about living in Supported Housing.
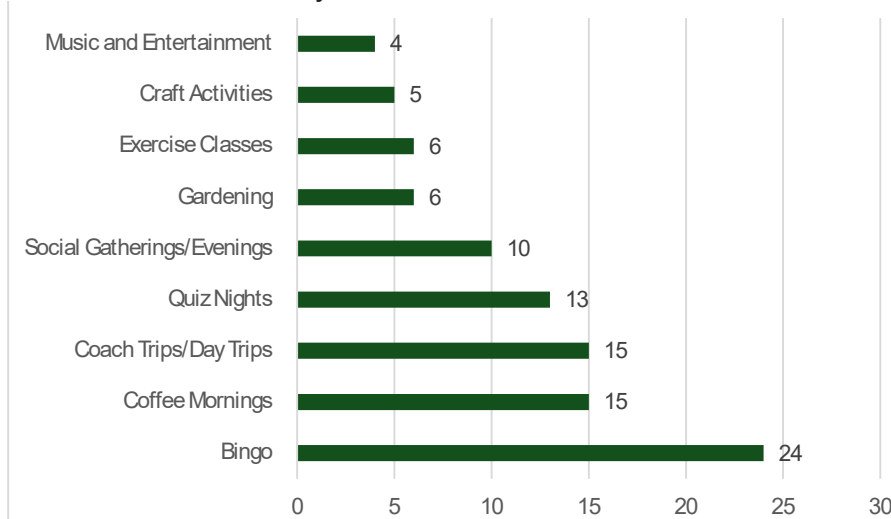
This shows that tenants value feeling secure in their property, having a supported housing officer available and the lifeline support system.

What activities would you like to see?

Activity	Count
Music and Entertainment	4
Craft Activities	5
Exercise Classes	6
Gardening	6
Social Gatherings/Evenings	10
Quiz Nights	13
Coach Trips/Day Trips	15
Coffee Mornings	15
Bingo	24

This question was open ended for tenants to give a their thoughts without any prompts of a multiple selection.

All comments were reviewed using AI to quickly group and count how many times each activity was mentioned. If more than one activity was mentioned in a comment it would count each activity individually providing more accurate data.

What brought Tenants to Supported Housing?

Q: What do you expect from your Supported Housing Officer?

10 Most Mentioned Reasons for Being in SH

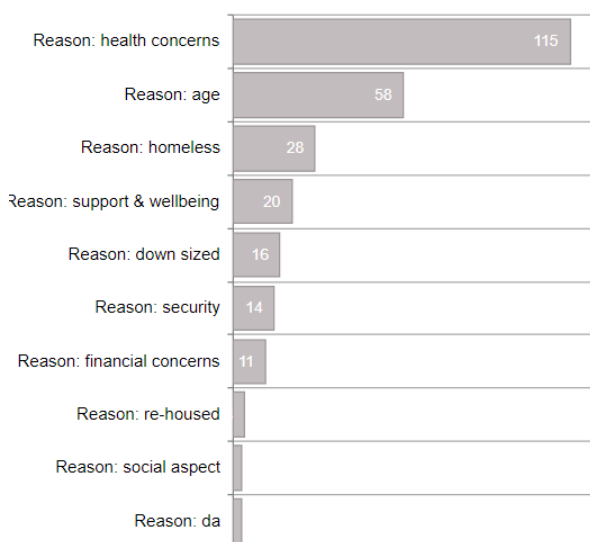| Reason	Count
Reason: health concerns	115
Reason: age	58
Reason: homeless	28
Reason: support & wellbeing	20
Reason: down sized	16
Reason: security	14
Reason: financial concerns	11
Reason: re-housed	
Reason: social aspect	
Reason: da	

This question was open ended for tenants to give a their thoughts without any prompts of a multiple selection.

All comments were reviewed and a relevant tag was assigned to easily show the comments content.
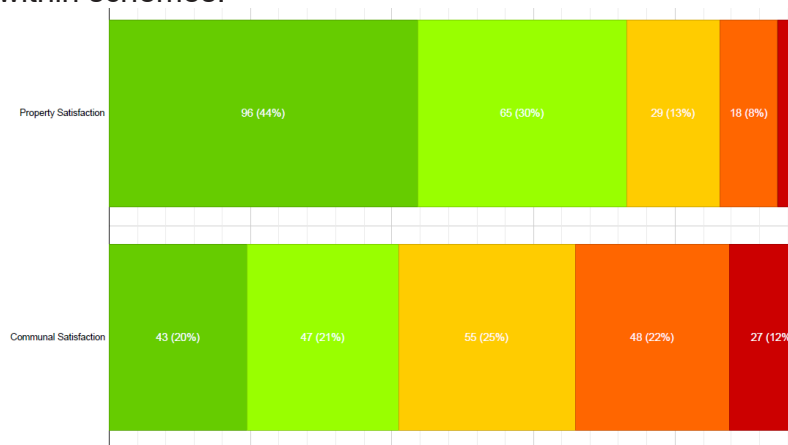
Property Satisfaction

Overview

For this question the responses were tagged either positively or negatively. Adding these tags created smaller, accurate segments for the data to be analysed.

Please note there is a difference with the level of detail for each section below. Reviewing the positive comments reveal they are simply more generic and therefore easier to group together in a single theme. Whereas, in the negative comments people specified their own unique issue or problem, leading to a wider variety of issues under a broad theme.

Out of the 146 responses, 94 were positive and 52 were negative.

So, despite tenants providing more detail around subject matter they found negative, two thirds of the responses say they are satisfied with their property.

We can see from the preliminary results that tenant satisfaction is higher with their properties than the communal areas within schemes.

The graph below shows the levels of tenant satisfaction for the properties they live in.
This information can be used as a rough estimate for satisfaction levels due to the amount of respondents per scheme. We would require more data from each scheme to give a more accurate view. However, this is an interesting start. Preliminary results show a good level of satisfaction in schemes.
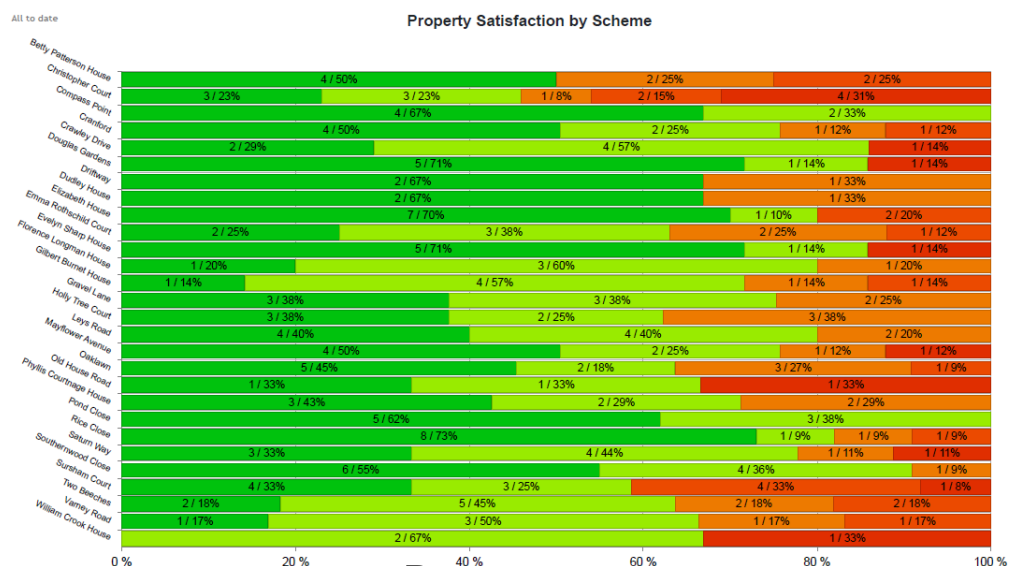
The Findings

The Positive Property Comments
Property satisfaction is currently quite high. Three quarters of tenants in SH are satisfied with their property.

Looking through the comments we can see the most mentioned factor is due to the quality of their living conditions. The most common theme of these comments revolves around happiness with their properties being accessible, the right size and good communal areas.

Other key aspects of satisfaction are around easy access to local amenities with shops, doctors and transport links all mentioned regularly by tenants. Having a sense of community and support is also an important factor for residents. This can come in the form of tenants helping each other, the SHO being available to help tenants where they can and tenants generally getting along well with each other. Tenants feeling safe and secure has been a general statement people have given. When a reason has been supplied, this has been relating to an alarm system or lifeline system in place as they feel someone is there for them when they require it.

The Negative Property Comments
Tenants who showed disatisfaction with their comments focused on three main areas of repairs and maintenance, community and social issues and property issues.

Repairs and Maintenance
Tenants have an issue with how quick the repairs process is. Some tenants have said repairs can take months or even years in one case mentioned. Damp and mould and heating and insulation within their properties were mentioned 5 times each.

Community and Social Issues
These issues are varied but include soundproofing/noisy neighbour issues, the feeling of cliques within communities at social events and younger people in the community. These are not prevalent but they are cleary certain issues for some people.

Positive Comments

Positive Comment Themes

Quality of Living Space (Number of Comments: 47)
- Comfortable and Suitable for Needs

Location & Accessibility (Number of Comments: 31)
- Good proximity to Amenities, Shops and Public Transport

Community & Support (Number of Comments: 14)
- Friendly & Supportive Neighbors
- Supportive Housing Officers

Security and Safety (Number of Comments: 13)
- Feeling Safe and Secure

General Quality of Living Conditions

- Comfortable and Suitable for Needs

"A warm clean flat. Communal areas inside OK outside could be better."

"Nice secure community and not too far from shops and doctor."

"It's an affordable place that I can call home and have the security of knowing that it will be kept in good condition."

"Clean, well maintained and maintenance issues dealt with. Excellent communal areas that are very underutilized due to lack of social activities."

Location & Accessibility

- Proximity to Amenities, Shops and Public Transport

Good location to shops, bus and rail service. Also good location for canal walks and green spaces

"Love location access to shop and near bus stop."

"Near to shops, doctors, and buses."

Pretty satisfied as noted all amenities are all easily within reach

"Access to shops and public transport is reasonable. The property is a good size though the kitchen is rather small."

Community & Support

- Friendly & Supportive Neighbors
- Supportive Housing Staff

"Support and advice very good. All Dacorum departments very helpful and friendly and work to a good standard."

"Great support officer and shops locally."

"We have a very accessible warden and lots of activities arranged by our community hall."

"Great service by our regular warden."

"Tumie is proving to be excellent in her duties, providing confident, understandable explanations, when needed, and always happy to help with a smile and empathy."

Security and Safety

- Feeling Safe and Secure

"I feel safe, if I have ever had any issues such as repairs everything is resolved very quickly."

"It's comfy and suitable for my disablement needs. Should anything need repair it's usually pretty prompt."

"I feel secure with the alarm system."

"Very pleased with size and security."

"Feel safe and secure. It's quiet and well maintained."

"Feel safe. Repairs carried out in a reasonable time."

Negative Comments

Negative Comment Themes

Repairs and Maintenance
- There is a sense of dissatisfaction with the timeliness and completeness of repairs. This includes a few persistent issues with damp and mould. (Number of Comments: 21)
- Requests for better thermal and sound insulation. (Number of Comments: 5)

Community and Social Issues
- Feelings of unwelcomeness at communal activities. (Number of Comments: 5)
- Issues with noise due to poor soundproofing. (Number of Comments: 5)
- Communication Issues (Number of Comments: 4)
- Young people moving in alters the social dynamics within the scheme. (Number of Comments: 2)

General Property Issues
- Properties are small with kitchens and storage space frequently mentioned. (Number of Comments: 10)

Repairs and Maintenance

"Waiting for jobs to be done like mould in the shower room/toilet area"

"Waiting two years to get my flat repaired [mould]"

"Lack of ergency [sic] of doing repairs"

"Few problems with my ceilings, nothing being done. Also been waiting for new bathroom all checks have been done and still no date."

"Lived here 16 years had a problem with damp. Work has been done over the years but it always comes back. Reported a leak in the roof February still not been fixed"

"My bathroom refurb is incomplete. We need better insulation and windows."

"My kitchen is falling apart it's about 25 years old and it's not fit for purpose but can't get it replaced."

"I had a new light fitted an it was smaller than the previous one, they were supposed to come back and paint the ceiling this never happened & it has looked a mess since."

"I am reasonably happy with my property get frustrated about repairs that get ignored although I kept ringing to chase them up. For example shed roof repair that needs aspotos removal before repair been waiting one year, cracks on kitchen wall needs a surveyor to see"

"Lots of damp on outside walls."

"Damp all the time my carpet gets wet"

Housing Facilities and Renovations

"Due to poor sound proofing, and neighbours inconsiderate behaviour I experience constant intrusive noise from surrounding flats"

"We are not allowed to have a mobile scooter (which i have) we are unable to charge it."

"Property is too small for a disabled person. Very cold in winter, poorly insulated. Kitchen layout poor."

"I was told before COVID that I was going to get a new kitchen,so I went out and bought new white appliances ready for when this was going to happen,after Covid another man came round and said yes you will get a new kitchen and also a new bathroom that's been a few years ago now"

Community and Social Issues

"I live next to a family of 5 and a dog I only have front windows which look over there property & the noise is sometimes unbearable"

"Things could be better rats people keeping ferrits and selling as business also some gardens look like rubbish tip"

"Nothing ever going on and seems very clicky also housing officer not about much"

"To much gossiping going on in them, making people feel very uncomfortable when they have to walk passed,I try and walk around so I don't have to go near any communal areas."

Communal Area Satisfaction

Overview

In our survey to tenants we asked them how sastified they felt with their communal area specifically.

Once these results came in, it was clear that there was a clear distinction between communal areas indoors and outdoors. For more precise feedback comments were tagged in CX Feedback to create smaller segments.

> It's very dated and could do with a fresh coat of paint and flooring - kitchen equipment is on its last legsv
> 🏷 INSIDE COMMUNAL AREAS ✖

> Like the lounge, washing room
> 🏷 INSIDE COMMUNAL AREAS ✖

> Overgrown hedges making it difficult for wheelchair users
> 🏷 OUTSIDE COMMUNAL AREAS ✖

> Nice area if you want to sit out and chill
> 🏷 OUTSIDE COMMUNAL AREAS ✖

Comments were then grouped by tag. The groups of comments were input in to ChatGPT (anonymously) to give an overview of the themes.

The following informationn is based on the AI analysis. But required a human who knew the data to verify its accuracy.

The graph below shows the overall satisfaction for communal areas seperated by scheme. This can be used as just arough estimate. There is not enough data yet for a true representation of a communities satisfaction level.

Communal Area Satisfaction by Scheme
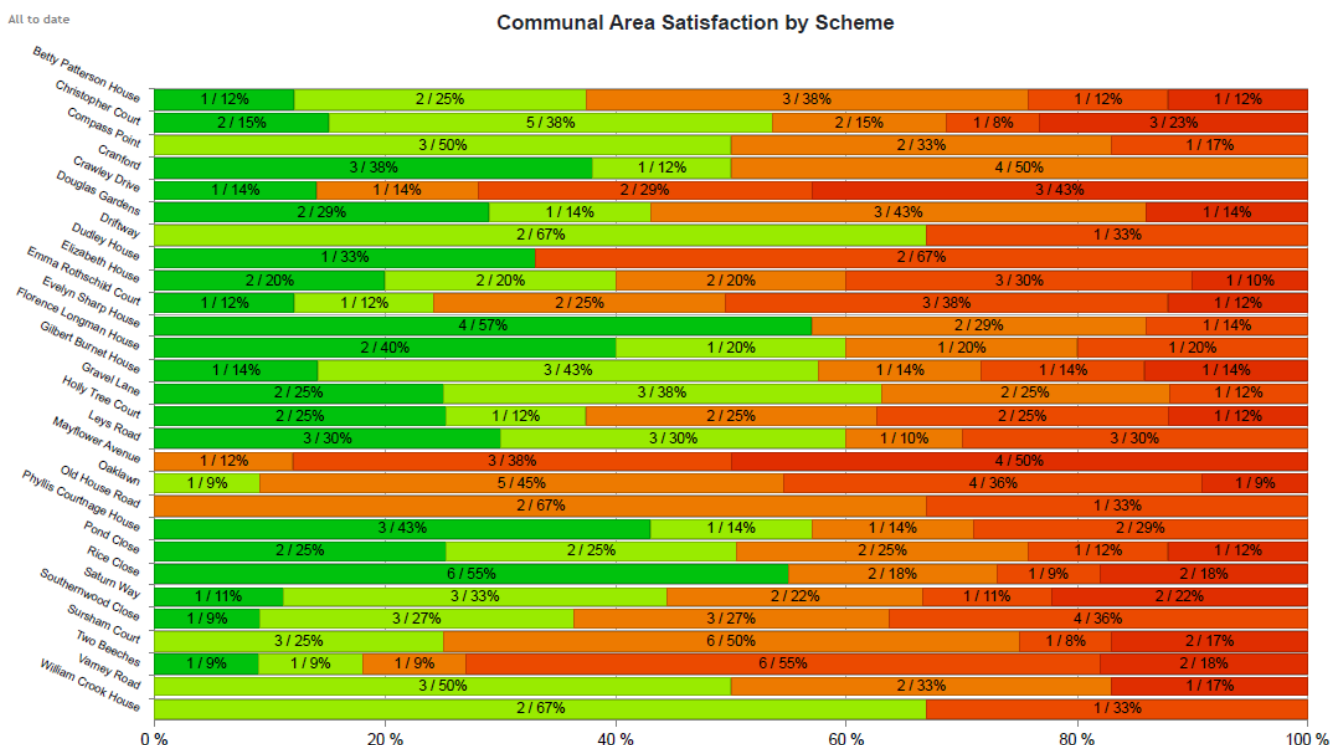
The Findings

Internal Communal Areas

At this moment in time, satisfaction looks like people who are happy with the quality of their facilities.

Whether this be the lounge or laundry rooms, however, there are still a few people who want to see upgrades to laundry rooms, kitchens and general decorating level.

Dissatisfaction relates to the cleanliness of schemes and specific items requiring an upgrade. In short tenants are saying cleaning falls short of their expectations and some washing machines and kitchen equipment require an upgrade.

Satisfaction of internal areas could potentially be improved overall by:

- Improving cleanliness in communal areas of certain schemes
- Upgrading/adding more equipment within the laundry rooms and kitchens of certain schemes

External Communal Areas

A third of the respondents gave a dissatisfied comment about window cleaning and/or grass cutting services.

Tenants dissatisfaction lies with the irregularity of both services exacerbated by the fact rents and service costs have increased. Tenants feel like they have not seen an improvement or good enough level of service

Satisfaction of external communal areas could be improved by:

- Increasing comms to scheme residents when these services are taking place (IF they re taking place regularly)
- Providing a schedule of when the services are due to visit.
- Explain why the frequency is what it is

Internal Communal Areas Comments

Internal Communal Areas - Number of Comments: 20
- **Friendly, Safe Community** - It has been mentioned that people feel safe within their scheme
- **Practical Facilities** - Tenants are satisfied with the practical aspects of the facilities (i.e. lounges and laundry rooms) but the decor could be updated or improved.
- **Cleanliness of Communal Areas** - Very simple c responses stating it's clean and tidy.

Internal Communal Areas - Number of Comments 25
- Cleanliness **-** The lounges and corridors are specified as areas requiring attention.
- Facility Upgrades and Maintenance - Multiple requests for new/more washing machines and tumble dryers within certain scheme

Internal Communal Area - A Friendly, Safe Community

"Everyone around here very friendly."

"I feel safe living here."

"Clean spacious friendly."

"Community hall that we've got is there quite pleasant it's open to everybody on the scheme."

"There is a lot of interaction with tenants."

Internal Communal Area - Practical Facilities

"I have nothing but praise for the practical services: laundry room, window cleaning, COUNCIL grass cutting, too much of tenants' own gardening and grass cutting."

"Like the lounge, washing room."

"Good lounge"

"It's nice to have the hall available to visit on coffee mornings etc."

"It's nice to have the lounge, I'm very pleased to have a laundry room on site"

"Good facilities although the decor could be more thought out."

"It's a clean building and very good facilities for washing and drying."

"They are ok but a little dark but I like the drying areas at the end of the floors"

Internal Communal Area - Cleanliness and Facility Upgrades

"Not cleaned enough, & all windows & sliding doors in downstairs lounge are Blown, & blinds are broken they look a mess."

"The main issues revolve around the cleaning services. The armchairs in the lounge are in dire need of cleaning"

Communal lounge is suitable but toilets ,kitchen and laundry need updating.

"It's very dated and could do with a fresh coat of paint and flooring - kitchen equipment is on its last legs"

"Ok, but need tumble dryer as 30 flats and 2 washing machines and one tumble dryer."

"Some areas need updating, new carpets on corridors, lift seems old, guest room needs new carpet and new bedding, and a TV."

"Electric doors are needed on the laundry room and bin areas, as people with walking aids and wheelchairs have difficulties accessing these areas."

"Could do with new up-to-date laundry machines."

External Communal Area Comments

Outside Communal Areas - Number of Comments: 35
- **Community Gardens and Spaces** - Around half of the 35 responses state that it is an enjoyable place to spend time either by themselves or with other residents.
- **Cleaning and Maintenance** - There is a small sense of positive satisfaction with the maintenance of outside communal areas. However, this seems to be tenant-led

Outside Communal Areas - Number of Comments: 101
- Gardening and Window Cleaning Services - Tenants have expressed dissatisfaction towards grass cutting and window cleaning services. They state payments/rent have increased but there is a lack of service.
- General Repairs and Maintenance - A very small amount of tenants have specified that paths or surfaces are uneven causing a trip hazard.

Outside Communal Area - Community Gardens and Spaces

"Lovely gardens. Good-sized community hall."

"Nice area if you want to sit out and chill."

"The grounds are well maintained and provided a life during Covid lockdowns where, weather permitting, we held distance coffee mornings."

"There is a lot of space to relax and have peace and quietness."

Outside Communal Area - Cleaning and Maintenance

"Im satisfied they are clean. I'm satisfied they are maintained."

"Always clean and in good repair."

"Clean and tidy."

"Communal areas in my block are well kept."

"Very clean."

"Very clean due to the tenants."

Outside Communal Area - Window Cleaning and Grass Cutting

"Not happy with the frequency of grass cutting and yet to see a window cleaner."

"Not had my windows cleaned this year yet. Nor grass cut."

"Think maybe with the grass cutting, it could be done more often than every 6 weeks in summer months."

"Grass uncut. Leaves and debris everywhere. Plants overgrown."

"Window cleaning isn't regular enough and only does the front windows and not the back. It's assumed that I am able to clean the inside but because I am disabled this is not possible."

"All ok apart from the window cleaning could do better"

"The grass needs cutting more often. The weed that grow between the paving slabs need removing as they get very slippery when wet."

"Grass uncut. Leaves and debris everywhere. Plants overgrown. It is a disgrace and embarrassment."

"Windows only cleaned outside once in 3 years. Tenants cut grass but are becoming unable to carry on."

The grass needs to be cut more in the warmer months and the grass cuttings need to be picked up and disposed of.

"We are charged every week for window cleaning but this has never been done in the 10 months I've been here and neighbours said its never done."

"Garden work not done (sic) grass not cut only two times a year"

"Communal grass needs to be cut more than once every 5 weeks"

Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Template

Policy / service / decision	Supported Housing Strategy

Description of what is being impact assessed

What are the aims of the service, proposal, project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?

Stakeholders; Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc

It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) own and manage approximately 1800 properties that are designated for those over the age of 60. These properties are called Supported Housing. Eligible tenants who move into supported housing have access to an enhanced housing management service, provided by our Supported Housing Officers (SHO's), and a 24 hour community alarm.

Local and national demographic projections suggest that the older population will grow significantly in the coming years, with a particular increase in those over the age of 85. Therefore DBC need to have a housing offer that is safe, well maintained and to support people to live independently.

Some of our Supported Housing properties were built a number of years ago and therefore, in some cases, the accommodation may not be able to meet our tenants accessibility or adapted need. Furthermore we are aware that having services that encourage and promote wellbeing, and that can reduce social isolation, are important for our tenants.

The Supported Housing Strategy sets out our vision for the delivery of housing for older tenants in the borough. While it is a standalone strategy, that only applies to designated housing for older tenants, it will be developed and delivered alongside the Housing strategy and the Strategic Asset Review (SAR).

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?

We have considered the following data / information when considering how the Supported Housing strategy may impact on protected groups:

South West Herts Local Housing Needs assessment 2024.

FFT consultancy report.

Inner circle consultancy report.

Rental Housing for an ageing population – APPG, Housing and Care for Older People.

Housing our Ageing Population: Positive Ideas (HAPPI 3) - Making retirement living a positive choice – APPG, Housing and Care for Older People.

Census 2021

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? .

Tenants and Leaseholder Committee (TLC)

Supported Housing tenant forum.

Supported Housing tenant meetings.

Corporate Leadership team (CLT)

Housing Senior Leadership team (HSLT)

Strategic Leadership team (SLT)

Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Herts Supported Housing Strategic Board

Dacorum Supported Housing Strategic Board

Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- *The PCs of <u>Marriage and Civil Partnership</u> and <u>Pregnancy and Maternity</u> should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.*
- *Use "insert below" menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).*

Protected group	Summary of impact *What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?*	Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome
Age	- The strategy will improve the delivery of suitable housing for older people and will enhance the support offer available to tenants. - Older people's views have helped to shape the strategy with a focus on areas that are important to them, including security, health and wellbeing and social interaction.	☐	☐	☒
Disability (physical, intellectual, mental) *Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness & Learning Disability Guide*	- The strategy pays particular focus to providing accessible properties that are suitable for those with a physical disability. - The strategy makes clear our approach to providing accommodation that the supports the wellbeing of tenants through partnership working with specialist voluntary and statutory services.	☐	☐	☒

	• Through the strategy, DBC outline our approach to supporting the development of additional flexi care properties within the borough.			
Gender reassignment	• No provisions directly affect tenants undergoing or having undergone gender reassignment. • The strategy is inclusive and equitable for all tenants, with no anticipated adverse impacts.	☐	☒	☐
Marriage and Civil Partnership	• The strategy applies equally to tenants regardless of their marital or civil partnership status.		X	
Race and ethnicity	• The strategy promotes the involvement of community and cultural groups within schemes. • Data will continue to be collected to help shape services that meet the needs of those from a range of racial and ethinc backgrounds.	☐	☐	☒
Religion or belief	• The strategy promotes the involvement of community and faith groups within schemes. • Data will continue to be collected to help shape services that meet the needs of those from a range of religious backgrounds.	☐	☐	☒
Sex	• The strategy treats all tenants equitably regardless of sex, with no commitments disproportionately affecting one group. • Existing processes for reporting domestic abuse remain a priority and are supported by the service.	☐	☒	☐

		Red	Amber	Green
Sexual orientation	• The strategy treats all tenants equitably regardless of sexual orientation, with no commitments disproportionately affecting one group.	☐	☒	☐
Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.	• **Carers:** Improved facilities within the housing stock will support carers to provide vital services in a appropriate environment. • **Low income:** The strategy commits to considering opportunities to remove obstacles for involvement such as cost and transport. • **Loneliness:** There is a focus on reducing social isolation within our housing stock through the regular provision of social activities and through the involvement of other services. • **Rurality:** Properties are provided within all areas of the borough, including rural areas and our approach will be tailored to that particular area.	☐	☐	☒

Negative impacts / outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken *(copy & paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)*	Date	Person responsible	Action complete
N/A			☐
			☐

If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.	
Completed by (all involved in CIA)	**Lauren Dowsett** **Oli Jackson**
Date	**13/12/2024**
Signed off by *(AD from different Directorate if being presented to CMT / Cabinet)*	**Matt Rawdon (Assistand Director – People)**
Date	**13th December 2024**
Entered onto CIA database - date	
To be reviewed by (officer name)	
Review date	

Report for:	Cabinet
Title of report:	Scrutiny: Recommendations following the Review of Scrutiny by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny
Date:	28th January 2025
Report on behalf of:	Councillor William Allen, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Review report from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) (appendix 1) Scrutiny Scoring Criteria (appendix 2) Committee Timetable for 2025/26 (Appendix 3) Community Impact Assessment
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

Report Author / Responsible Officer
Mark Brookes, Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services)
✉ 📞
Catherine Silva Donayre, Strategic Director (Corporate & Commercial Services)
✉ 📞 Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228236 (ext. 2236) Catherine.silvadonayre@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228332 (ext 2232)

Corporate Priorities	**Community engagement**: Engage with residents and partners to have a real say on our services and the borough.

	Service improvement and delivery: Running the Council efficiently and putting residents at the heart of everything we do.
Wards affected	ALL
Purpose of the report:	For Cabinet to consider the recommendations for the future operation of the scrutiny function and alignment of Cabinet and Council meetings.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That Cabinet: (1) Recommends Council considers and agrees the action plan supporting each recommendation in the report. (2) Recommends that Council agrees the proposed revised committee timetable (Appendix 3)
Period for post policy/project review:	The changes proposed in this report will be kept under continuous review and reported to Cabinet and Council if further changes are required.

1. Background

1.1 In the autumn of 2023, the Council commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to undertake a review of the Council's scrutiny function. The review took place between October and December last year and resulted in the report and recommendations attached as Appendix 1. The review was largely positive about how Scrutiny is carried out at the Council, recognising a good level of engagement and a willingness for the scrutiny function to develop and evolve. The report puts forward suggestions for change so that the function can become more productive and effective.

1.2 The report sets out the recommendations from CfGS in bold in section 2 below and an action plan has been drafted, by the author of this report, to propose how the Council can put the recommendations into best effect.

1.3 In summary, the review did not suggest that the current model of three scrutiny committees is changed, but that these committees focus on thematic work rather than dive into more operational/performance detail, achieved by an annual plan for each committee.

1.4 It is proposed that Scrutiny committee meetings will be tied into the programme of Cabinet and Council meetings and reduced to five Scrutiny meetings a year for each committee plus the Scrutiny budget meeting in December with an optional second meeting in January or February if there are any material changes to the budget presented in December.

1.5 It is proposed to realign the timetable for Cabinet and Council to follow the scrutiny cycle and reduce the number of Cabinet meetings from 11 to 5. Provision will be made in the Committee Timetable for an additional 5 'contingency' Cabinet meetings in case they are needed for urgent business, which cannot meet publication deadlines for the main meetings, but otherwise these meetings will not be used.

Council will continue to have 5 meetings plus the Annual Council as it does at present. Audit Committee will also be reduced from 6 to 5 meetings for consistency.

1.6 It is proposed that a new Members' portal will be developed to share service performance information, service updates, report scrutiny progress and for Member development and training, which will allow more time for scrutiny meetings to focus on broader corporate and strategic matters, which can add greater value to the Council.

Background: frequency of meetings and agenda sizes

1.7 Currently, the Council has seven main Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for each committee plus two joint budget scrutiny meetings, eleven Cabinet meetings, and five full Council meetings plus Annual Council. The Council also has six audit meetings.

1.8 Over the period from September 2023 to July 2024, Cabinet averaged 6 reports per meeting with an average meeting duration of 20 minutes. Finance and Resources OSC averaged 6 items over 7 meetings during this time frame with an average meeting time of 1h:13 mins, Housing and Community OSC 6 reports with an average meeting time of 56 minutes, Strategic Planning and Environment OSC (SPAE) averaged 5 items a meeting with an average meeting time of 1h:51 mins The number of reports for Scrutiny meetings includes the quarterly performance reports which would be removed from agendas but a more condensed performance report will still come twice a year to scrutiny meetings. Full data is set out at the end of this report for each meeting over the last 12 months; including the start and finish times for each meeting.

2. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendation 1

Consider how the scrutiny committee structure could be reprofiled to allow for more in-depth scrutiny work. *We recommend that the current structure of three committees is maintained but are clearly articulated and that the frequency of formal meetings is reviewed to provide the space for more Member led strategic scrutiny to take place. (Whilst noting that this could require review of all Council committees).*

2.1   Summary of action plan proposals:

   ❖ Reduce to five Overview and Scrutiny meetings per committee plus one budget meeting, with an optional second budget in January/February meeting if there are material changes to the budget presented in December.

   ❖ Realign Cabinet and Council to follow each Scrutiny meeting, reducing the number of Cabinet meetings to five per annum from eleven (plus 5 contingency meetings) Council to five, plus Annual Council (remains the same number) and Audit to five meetings from six.   Please see annexed to this report a proposed revised committee timetable for 2025/26.

   The timing of the implementation of the new timetable will take effect from May 2025, if agreed by Members.

   ❖ Committee to focus on more strategic thematic issues and reduce time spent on service performance updates.

   ❖ Quarterly Performance reports for service areas to be distributed via a newly developed Members' Portal so Members can raise questions through the Portal and receive answers, as required, outside meetings.   Following feedback from Members through Group briefings, it is proposed that there will still be two meetings each year which will have a dedicated section for formal performance reporting.

2.3   The review recognised that there is a tendency at the Scrutiny committees for Members to focus too much into the operational detail of the services rather than on more strategic issues.   This can mean that the meetings become too bogged down in the details of delivery, which can be addressed elsewhere (see below).

2.4   To address this, it is recommended that an annual plan is drawn up for each Scrutiny Committee; with a plan for the key areas upon which the committee wishes to focus over the year; Scrutiny chairs will need to liaise in advance of the finalisation of the plans to ensure that there is no duplication across committees. There will still remain the opportunity to add pre-Cabinet scrutiny reports as currently exists.

2.5   At present, each Scrutiny Committee meets nine times in each municipal year. This is very frequent and the review identified that this was more than many councils and has significant implications upon the time required from Members and officers and the Council resources that this frequency consumes.   It is proposed that, in future, each committee meets five times per year (plus a budget scrutiny meeting) and that these meetings precede the Cabinet meetings (also reduced in frequency to five main meetings); which will in turn be followed by meetings of Council.

2.6   If this proposal is adopted, it is proposed that the meetings are divided into two distinct parts. The first part will cover scrutiny of the relevant Cabinet reports. The second part will be devoted to discussing the thematic work of the Committee. Examples of the type of thematic work may include focussed review of the work or particular service areas within the remit of the Committee, delivery against corporate plan objectives falling within the remit of the Committee, new or growing areas of customer demand in the area.   These are just a few examples, but themes will be developed and discussed with Scrutiny chairs/vice chairs and agreed with the wider Committee.

2.7 These changes will also free up time for Members to have specific working/task and finish groups to look into the identified issues in more depth if required and should add value to the scrutiny function.

2.8 Finally, whilst it is not felt a good use of time for Members to go into operational performance detail at committee, it is recognised that it is entirely right for Members to be aware of performance matters across service areas. Accordingly, details of performance across the Council will be available through a new Members' Portal, which will enable Members to raise questions with the relevant senior officer if they have concerns and for answers to be provided through the Portal. Performance reports may also assist Members to consider particular work areas where they may like to request a specific 'deep dive' report at a future meeting. It is still proposed that that Scrutiny committees allocate part of two of their meetings annually to consider service performance against key performance indicators and this will be considered further as the workplans are developed.

3. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendation 2

Developing regular communication between Scrutiny Chairs. *This could be achieved through default position of sharing work programmes and insight on working practices. This should also engage the Chair of Audit and Cabinet Members to highlight future issues and the part which Scrutiny could play in testing and shaping these forward plans.*

3.1 Summary of action plan proposals

❖ Scrutiny chairs/vice chairs to agree overall work programme and programme for each committee. This will involve attendance at one main work planning workshop each year plus quarterly reviews where initial work plan ideas will be developed.

❖ Workplans will be shared electronically on the Members' Portal to ensure that Chairs have oversight of each other's workplans and eliminate duplication.

3.2 The review pointed out that there was insufficient communication between the Scrutiny Chairs, risking duplication across the work programmes of the three committees. To reduce the risk of this the chairs will meet before the work programmes are finalised at an annual work planning workshop to agree what the overall thematic scrutiny programme should look like over the following year. Quarterly work planning review meetings with take place with Chairs and lead service officers (Strategic Directors, ADs or Heads of Service) to review workplans and ensure they are up to date. Workplans will then be shared amongst all Chairs on the Members' Portal.

3.3 Quarterly meetings of chairs can monitor progression, aided by a portal for chairs and vice chairs set up on the Members' portal so that the overall workplan and progress for each committee can be more easily monitored.

4. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendation 3

Develop an awareness raising programme for Members and Officers. *This should be in addition to the current package of learning and development support for Elected Members and Officers across the Council. Wider awareness raising should be explored to build, refresh and enhance organisational knowledge and understanding of the role, purpose, and powers of scrutiny. This should be built into induction training for new Elected Members and include officer support for drafting and presenting reports to committee.*

4.1 Summary of action plan proposals

❖ Induction training for all new Members will be provided as part of the Member development programme. This is currently part of the Member induction programme and will be retained.

❖ In addition, the Members' Portal will be used to give a range of short written briefings and video training opportunities on relevant scrutiny matters.

❖ Opportunities will be considered for short briefings before scrutiny meetings where appropriate. For example, this could be scrutiny governance/process training, general scrutiny skills, or finance updates if required.

4.2   As the review recognised, the Council already has a substantial Member training programme. However, building in short briefing sessions, whether in person or on-line, on matters which are of relevance to the functions of the committee or relating to matters the committee will be discussing at the meeting, or possibly at forthcoming meetings, will be actioned.

5.   Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendation 4

Review the process for developing work plans for each Scrutiny committee. Engaging Members, Officers, partners, and the public to inform work programming and to prioritise the topics for review in a proportionate way. This should include planned space for the detailed scrutiny of forthcoming decisions alongside the capacity to conduct in-depth scrutiny outside of the formal meetings.

5.1   Summary of action plan proposals

❖ February - Annual call for workplan ideas for Councillors and the public
❖ March/April - Annual work planning workshops with Scrutiny chairs/vice-chairs to help select and prioritise workplans.

Members will still be able to raise ideas for new items at each meeting, which will be subject to assessment in accordance with the workplan selection tool to help select and prioritise workplan matters (see proposal in see Appendix 2).

5.2   The idea behind this is to enable Scrutiny Committees to focus on the activities that will impact most beneficially on the Council's corporate priorities and/or matters of significant local concern. This will need to be adjusted from time to time in line with other changes so that alignment is achieved across the Council's activities and overall priorities.

5.3   The workplan selection tool will enable Scrutiny chairs/vice chairs to prioritise the different ideas and select appropriate items to ensure time for more in-depth scrutiny into items which can make a real difference to the Council.   The annual workplan will give officers advanced notice and time to develop reports.

5.4   The annual 'call' for workplan ideas will give an opportunity for the public and Councillors to submit ideas for scrutiny – this could be done through the Council's on-line engagement platform, which can then be assessed through the workplan selection tool and agreed between chairs/vice-chairs and senior officers for agreement by Committee.   It will also allow chairs and vice-chairs the opportunity to consider inviting individuals, groups or stakeholders to appear at Committee to give their views on matters where relevant and agreed with senior officers.

6.   Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendation 5

Create a regular information digest for all Elected Members. This would provide the opportunity for Members to be cited on performance data and other high-profile work which is for information rather than taking up space on the formal agenda. This digest should also be used to identify those issues which may require further in-depth investigation.

6.1   Summary of action plan proposals

❖ This will be achieved through the development of a new Members' Portal.

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6.2 The greater use of the Members' Portal referred to above will provide a resource for Members. It is intended that this will be developed (as outlined above) to include performance information on services (similar to current performance reports but more concise) to enable Members, should they wish, to both interrogate this information and be interactive, enabling Members to raise questions and issues, and make suggestions, directly through to the relevant senior officers.

6.3 Members will be able to identify through the portal, the performance information that they would find most useful and comparison data can be developed, enabling benchmarking internally as well as externally. Details of and knowledge shared in the training sessions referred to above will also be included on this portal.

6.4 The Portal will also be used to promote training opportunities; provide on-line video recordings of training provided for review and enable Members to track training they have attended and are required to attend (mandatory courses).

7. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendation 6

Review the content and detail for scrutiny reports and briefings. This would ensure consistency of communication and reporting formats as well as help focus on purpose of an item for consideration by scrutiny and expectations of the level of detailed contained within agenda packs. This could be done alongside Elected Members and officers so that all parties were clear on expectations and content.

7.1 Summary of action plan proposals

- ❖ The template for Scrutiny meeting agendas and reports will be reviewed in the light of the finalised action plan for the other recommendations (including Recommendation 7 below).

- ❖ The aim will be to create a more inclusive template, which can prompt debate and discussion.

- ❖ The structure of performance reports/updates to go on the Portal will also be reviewed and agreed with the Performance Team to ensure they are concise and give members an overview of the service area.

8. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendation 7

Reviewing how the recommendations are made and how impact is measured. This could include a process for any recommendations made being captured and reported back to Scrutiny to show how Cabinet has reflected on comments made and to orientate towards outcomes-focused meetings. This recommendation will be important following the review of work programming and the space having been provided for in-depth scrutiny work.

8.1 Summary of action plan proposals

- ❖ Committee agendas will include standard agenda items noting how recommendations from Scrutiny have been progressed, if they have been acted upon, and what the impact has been.

8.2 The review reflected that there was comparatively little public participation in the work of the Committees. This can be improved by identifying experts who could add value when the Committee is considering certain issues. More public participation, and the wider communication about the desire for this and how it can be achieved, both in looking at subjects and assessing impact from scrutiny work, would broaden the involvement with the public and enable greater resident input into the work of the Council.

9. Audit Committee

9.1 Whilst the report mentioned the role of the Audit Committee, it did not contain any recommendations about its operation. Nonetheless, the role of the Audit Committee is an important one and one that is rightly separate from both Cabinet and Scrutiny.

9.2 It is recommended that there be greater oversight of workplans between Audit and Scrutiny chairs to ensure that there is no duplication of work. This can be facilitated through the Members' Portal. It is also recommended that the frequency of Audit Committee is reduced to five meetings from six so that meetings can be timetabled in a consistent format to Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council meetings. This recommendation has been discussed with the S.151 officer who has no specific concerns subject to agreeing final timetabling.

10. Options

10.1 The Council could decide to continue with the current way in which scrutiny operates or could decide to adopt a different approach other than that recommended by the review.

10.2 Consideration has been given to other formats for scrutiny including reducing the number of Scrutiny Committees to one or two main committees rather than the current three. The CfGS believed that the current structure of three committees worked well and whilst some authorities do adopt different approaches, including some who only have one committee, the view of CfGS is that this can cause work planning issues as there may not be enough capacity to adequately scrutinise the full range of services that the Council provides. A smaller one or two committee structure may also mean Councillors could become disenfranchised as some will not be involved in the scrutiny process at all and would therefore miss the opportunity to become involved in strategy, policy and project development and to scrutinise matters which really matter to their constituents.

11. Consultation

11.1 There has been consultation with the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet Members as these proposals have been developed.

11.2 The recommendations have also been considered by the Council's three scrutiny committees who have considered and debated the proposals in detail.

11.3 The comments received from scrutiny committees are summarised below, but are not intended to be a full verbatim record of all comments:

- ➢ Positive comments over the development of the Member's Portal and how effective this could be for Member communications.
- ➢ Concerns highlighted that the Committee should not lose focus on performance.
- ➢ Concerns over reducing the number of meetings – will there still be time to debate all of the issues properly?
- ➢ Positive comments over current training for scrutiny, and an acknowledgement that more 'bitesize' training opportunity could be beneficial. Training should be available for all members (experienced as well as new members).
- ➢ Members acknowledged that workplans should be member driven.
- ➢ Greater involvement of the public was welcome, but it needs to be managed effectively
- ➢ Ideas for the development of workplans were welcome, but committees and Chairs need to make sure that all committee members are involved in work planning and can bring forward ideas for scrutiny.
- ➢ Greater focus on strategic matters rather than service performance was welcome
- ➢ Some concerns raised whether the proposals would make a difference, but there was a willingness to work with the proposals and keep them under continuous review.

11.4 All of the comments received will be kept under review as the proposals are implemented and trialled in the early months of the new municipal year and changes agreed with scrutiny chairs where appropriate.

12. Financial and value for money implications:

The changes proposed in the report will be cost neutral to the Council, but there may be some savings in officer time due to the reduction in the number of meetings; however, this time will be redirected in other areas to ensure greater focus on the development of workplans and focused scrutiny reports.

13. Legal Implications

The Council must, by law, have a scrutiny function and this will continue to be provided within the new framework proposed. The aim is to increase the quality of the scrutiny function, and this will be kept under continuous review to ensure that the changes are effective.

14. Risks

The role of scrutiny is important and a statutory function in a Local Authority that operates an executive model of governance, such as at Dacorum. It is a way of the wider Council holding the executive to account and so the scrutiny function must be kept up to date and must operate as effectively as possible. If sufficient resource is not devoted to the support of scrutiny, the governance of the Council is at risk with reputational and other consequences, including a lack of public confidence.

15. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

There are no negative Equalities, Community Impact or Human Rights implications arising from this report. Impact assessment is annexed to the report. A reduction in evening meetings should assist some members and officers who have caring and/or work commitments.

16. Sustainability implications.

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

17. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

There are no implications arising from this report.

18. Statutory Comments

Monitoring Officer:

This is a report of the Monitoring Officer in his service capacity as Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services and therefore comments have been incorporated within the report.

S151:

The proposed action plan and revised committee timetable is not expected to have an impact on major financial decision-making processes going forward, with the standard Cabinet and Council authorisations and approval processes unchanged.

19. Conclusions

The report highlights a number of recommendations which aim to develop the Council's scrutiny function. The recommendations, if agreed, will be kept under review and further changes proposed to ensure that the function continues to adapt and improve.

Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny meetings (excluding Joint Budget)

01/08/2023 to 31/08/2024

	Meeting Date	Start time	Finish time	Meeting duration	No. of reports
Cabinet	12/09/23	19:30	19:44	00:14	7
	17/10/23	19:30	19:57	00:27	8
	21/11/23	19:30	19:40	00:10	3
	12/12/23	19:30	19:50	00:20	6
	30/01/24	19:30	19:45	00:15	7
	13/02/24	19:30	20:00	00:30	10
	19/03/24	19:30	19:33	00:03	4
	23/04/24	19:30	20:00	00:30	5
	21/05/24	19:30	20:00	00:30	6
	18/06/24	19:30	19:38	00:08	4
	23/07/24	19:30	20:00	00:30	8

Cabinet average duration of meeting = 00:19
Cabinet average number of reports per meeting = 6

	Meeting Date	Start time	Finish time	Meeting duration	No. of reports
Finance & Resources OSC	05/09/23	19:30	20:35	01:05	7
	03/10/23	19:30	20:21	00:51	4
	07/11/23	19:30	20:44	01:14	6
	09/01/24		Meeting cancelled		
	05/03/24	19:30	21:17	01:47	8
	04/06/24	19:30	20:30	01:00	5
	15/07/24	19:30	20:56	01:26	5

F&R OSC average duration of meeting = 01:13
F&R OSC average number of reports per meeting = 6

	Meeting Date	Start time	Finish time	Meeting duration	No. of reports
Housing & Community OSC	13/09/23	19:30	20:20	00:50	8
	11/10/23	19:30	19:58	00:28	5
	08/11/23	19:30	20:10	00:40	5
	17/01/24	19:30	21:09	01:39	5
	13/03/24	19:30	20:30	01:00	9
	05/06/24	19:30	20:06	00:36	3
	15/07/24	19:30	20:55	01:25	5

H&C OSC average duration of meeting = 00:56
H&C OSC average number of reports per meeting = 6

	Meeting Date	Start time	Finish time	Meeting duration	No. of reports
Strategic Planning & Environment OSC	06/09/23	19:30	21:10	01:40	6
	04/10/23	19:30	21:10	01:40	4
	01/11/23	19:30	20:40	01:10	5
	10/01/24	19:30	22:40	03:10	3
	06/03/24	19:30	21:52	02:22	8
	11/06/24	19:30	20:10	00:40	3
	15/07/24	19:30	21:45	02:15	7

SPAE OSC average duration of meeting =   **01:51**
SPAE OSC average number of reports per meeting =   **5**

Mark Brookes
Monitoring Officer
The Forum
Marlowes
Hemel Hempstead
HP1 1DN

31 January 2024

Dear Mark,

Scrutiny Improvement Review – CfGS consultancy support

I am writing to thank you for inviting the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to carry out an evaluation of Dacorum Borough Council's scrutiny function. This letter provides feedback on our review findings and offers suggestions on how the Council could develop its scrutiny process.

As part of this feedback stage, we would like to facilitate a series of workshops with Members and Officers to reflect on this review and to discuss options for improvement.

1.   Introduction

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny were invited by Dacorum Borough Council to conduct a Scrutiny Improvement Review and this work took place between October and December 2023.

The Council had not undertaken a comprehensive review of its scrutiny arrangements for some time. With a recent change in administration and several newly elected Councillors, this review provides an ideal opportunity for the Council to reflect on existing practice and to identify where improvements might be beneficial.

We want to acknowledge at the outset an appreciation of the positives that emerged through our work. These include:

- Officer support is recognised and valued.
- Members are engaged in the formal meetings / good level of questioning skills.
- There is a willingness to embrace change and think about how to do things differently.
- Both Officers and Members have a desire to learn from best practice elsewhere.
- There is a firm commitment from Members to link scrutiny work to issues that are of relevance to local people.

77 Mansell Street London E1 8AN
telephone **020 7543 5627** email **info@cfgs.org.uk** web or @cfgscrutiny

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In terms of political support, member engagement, and council senior leadership support, there are strong building blocks upon which scrutiny could successfully develop. However, there is a sense that the function lacks impact, and therefore it is not as valued as it could and should be. In addition, there is recognition that work programming across all scrutiny committees needs to be focussed and aligned to the council's priorities with flexibility to consider emerging areas of concerns, especially those arising from residents.

2.   Methodology

The review explored the following:

- **Structure.** What might the most appropriate structure be in terms of improving outcome delivery and taking account of resource pressures?
- **Culture**. What is the mindset and mentality underpinning the operation of the overview and scrutiny process?
- **Working practices**. How is information is prepared, shared, accessed, and used?
- **Impact**. How to ensure that scrutiny is effective and that it makes a tangible difference to the lives of people in Dacorum through improving outcomes.

CfGS's scrutiny improvement reviews (SIRs) follow a standard methodology, which involves some flexibility to incorporate whatever bespoke elements authorities need to take account of local circumstances. The standard methodology can be found at www.cfgs.org.uk/sir .

Full details of the evidence gathering;

- The survey was sent to 85 individuals (51 Elected Members and 34 Officers)
- 39 people (13 Elected Members and 23 Officers) completed the survey which was a 25% of Members and 68% of the Officers that it was circulated to;
- carried out 17 conversations; 11 Elected Members (including Leader, Deputy Leader and a number of Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs and their Deputies) and 6 officers (including Chief Executive, Monitoring officer and S151 officer)
- reviewed agendas, minutes and reports of overview and scrutiny committee meetings:
- observed recorded meetings;
- explored work programming and topic prioritisation;

The review was conducted by:

- Cath Buckley – Senior Governance Consultant, CfGS
- Annette Aitkin – Researcher, CfGS

Quality assurance was provided by Ian Parry, Head of Consultancy, CfGS

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3.   Findings

3.1   Structure

This section examines the current structure and what might the most appropriate structure be in terms of improving outcome delivery and taking account of resource pressures.

There are currently three overview and scrutiny committees in Dacorum which follow a thematic approach. These committees support the work of the Cabinet and Council as a whole and are overseen by the Democratic Services team who support these committees alongside a range of other regulatory committees and responsibilities.

Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- o The purpose of this committee is to perform the overview, scrutiny and policy development role in relation to all matters and business associated with the Cabinet Portfolio for Finance and Resources.
- o There are 14 Members on the committee (including the chair and the vice-chair.
- o Between January 2023 and September 2023 this committee held 5 meetings (January 2023's meeting was cancelled).

Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- o The purpose of the committee is to perform the overview, scrutiny and policy development role in relation to all matters and business associated with the Cabinet Portfolios for and Housing and Property Services, excluding general fund property which is covered by the Finance and Resources committee.
- o There are 14 Members on the committee (including the chair and vice-chair).
- o Between January 2023 and September 2023 this committee held 6 meetings.

Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- o The purpose of the committee is to perform the overview, scrutiny and policy development role in relation to all matters and business associated with the Cabinet Portfolios for Place and Neighbourhood Operations.
- o There are 14 Members on the committee (including the chair and vice-chair).
- o Between January 2023 and September 2023 this committee held 6 meetings.

Non Statutory Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee
In addition to the above committees, the Council also operates a non statutory Health Scrutiny Committee. Whilst the review did not explore this committee in great depth, it was clear that it has potential to add value, however there is some work to do to ensure that its functions link into the wider health and social care environment and do not seek to duplicate activity elsewhere.

Audit Committee

There were mixed levels of understanding in relation to the Council's Audit Committee. Some of those interviewed viewed this committee as part of the Overview and Scrutiny function, rather than as a regulatory board. There is clearly some work to do to ensure that all Elected Members have regard for these two distinct roles. In practice we would look to see Audit consider whether the policies and procedures were working, and scrutiny consider whether the policies and procedures that the Council has chosen to implement are the right ones and having the desired outcomes. Both functions could use management information to form the basis of these deliberations and might share their findings with each other. Good practice could see a discussion over how best to consider an issue – whether it is a scrutiny or an Audit concern with a default position of sharing work programmes. Working together enables agreement on the issues that can be passed between committees, avoiding duplication, and could also consider engaging Members of the Audit Committee on scrutiny task groups or in budget scrutiny. CfGS have produced guidance for Councils on this matter which can be accessed by clicking this link.

Research from previous reviews conducted by CfGS has found that committee structures can be a sticking point in relation to the quality of scrutiny's work and impact. There is often a belief that if structures are altered then the effectiveness of scrutiny will increase, but this is often not the case. Our research highlights that there is no 'ideal' scrutiny structure or optimum number of committees. There is no connection between the size and number of committees and their effectiveness, but there is a clear connection between having a clarity of purpose and a function that adds value and realises impact.

The overall thematic approach to structure in Dacorum is akin to that of many other borough councils of similar size and demographic. However, the frequency of meetings is higher than in most other councils, whilst this did not provide a concern to those spoken to, we did hear that Members are keen to conduct more in-depth scrutiny outside of the formal meeting space. As such, there may be opportunities to reduce the number of formal meetings that take place to provide the space for more in-depth scrutiny (review panels), however it is understood in Dacorum that this may also entail reviewing the frequency of other Council committees.

Additionally, whilst the three main overview and scrutiny committees follow a thematic approach, this structure does cause a degree of confusion amongst some Officers in relation to where each item should be taken. This could be due to a recent staffing restructure which has posed some issues with alignment between the work of committees and the Councils directorate areas. Dacorum's Constitution clearly sets out the remits however, there requires some further communication to aid wider understanding of where specific issues should be scrutinised.

3.2 Culture

This section explores the relationship between scrutiny Members and Cabinet, the interface between Members and Officers and whether relationships are effective. It also explores the mindset and mentality underpinning the operation of the overview and scrutiny process.
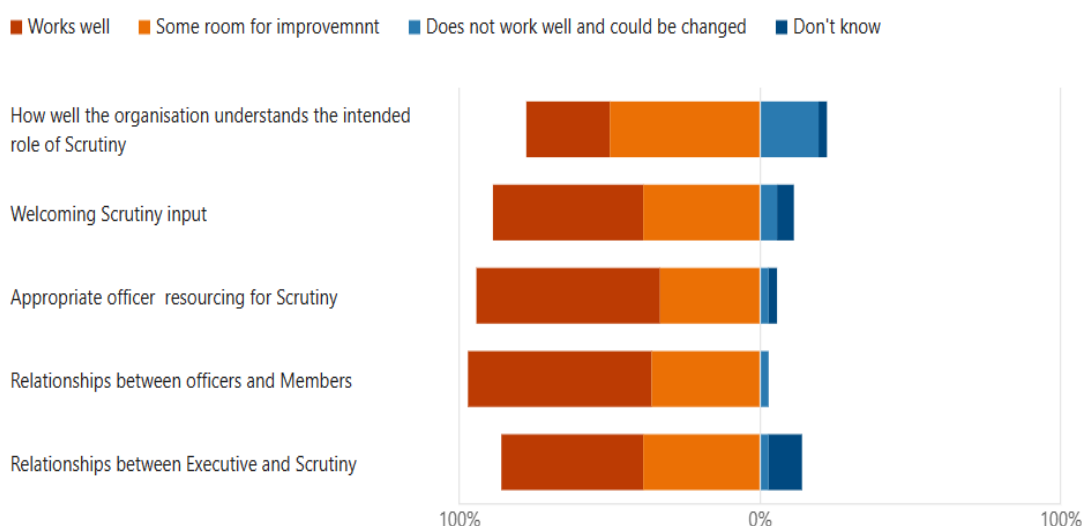
The chart below demonstrates the aggregated responses in the survey to questions about culture. This shows that there is some room for improvement in terms of how well the organisation understands the intended role of scrutiny. Conversely half of respondents thought that Scrutiny input was welcomed at the council, with 39% of respondents expressing that there was some room for improvement in this area.

Overall, it appears that officer resourcing for scrutiny is appropriate, however 33% did feel that there was room for improvement. It is important to note that there is no dedicated scrutiny officer post in Dacorum and the function is currently supported by democratic services officers who also manage a range of other committees and responsibilities.

Respondents thought that the relationships between Officers and Members worked well (61% of respondents). Relationships between Members and the Executive are more mixed, with a near equal split between those who thought that this worked well (47%) and those who thought that there was some room for improvement (39%). This indicates that there could be some specific issues rather than a more widespread concern. In terms of responses from Officers and Members there was no significant difference between the viewpoints held in relation to culture.

8. Culture- Thinking about your recent experience, how well do you think these elements work:

More Details

Legend: Works well | Some room for improvemnnt | Does not work well and could be changed | Don't know

Categories:
- How well the organisation understands the intended role of Scrutiny
- Welcoming Scrutiny input
- Appropriate officer resourcing for Scrutiny
- Relationships between officers and Members
- Relationships between Executive and Scrutiny

Axis: 100% — 0% — 100%

Findings from the survey, desktop research and conversations showed that the scrutiny function has the conditions to improve and succeed, during the conversations there was a realisation from both Members and Officers that scrutiny performance could be more effective and productive and there was a willingness and commitment to make changes to allow this to happen.

There is recognition that since the change of political control, there are several newly elected Councillors who lack experience and knowledge of ways of working. And whilst this can be of concern to some, it can also be a positive in terms of bringing new ideas and fresh perspectives. We heard a definite will to embrace change and explore new ways of working and look at best practice from elsewhere, a range of such examples can be drawn from the CfGS publication, [The Good Scrutiny Guide](). There is a good level of buy in amongst Councillors and it will be important to harness this and support the newer Councillors to increase their knowledge of the council, its services and ways of working so that they are able to navigate governance systems and fully understand their role within it. Whilst training has been provided in relation to the role of scrutiny, audit committee and specific training for leading and chairing scrutiny, these have not always been well attended.

Member-officer relationships are overall positive. Both the survey and interview evidence highlighted strong working arrangements and a sense of mutual respect. There is faith in the senior leadership team and Members express the view that they are fortunate in having excellent dedicated Officers to support them. However, in a more strategic sense, there are mismatches in perception and expectation on how scrutiny is carried out. The frequency of meetings produces support problems for Officers preparing reports for those meetings and it is not always clear to Officers why reports are being requested, and communication of Members' objectives in bringing items to committee does not always happen.

Scrutiny's success is dependent on the right Members, with the right capabilities and attributes, leading and managing the scrutiny function. Scrutiny Chairs have a vital task in leading the committees, setting the culture and working together to uphold high standards of behaviour and good cross-party working. There is an opportunity for the Chairs to work together to share learning between one another with the option to also engage with the Chair of the Audit Committee on a regular basis (as highlighted in 3.1) and also for the Chairs to explore how they can develop further into their roles as committee leaders.

3.3   Working practices

This section discusses the practices in place that support the scrutiny function and relates to how items are selected and how information is prepared, shared, accessed and used.

Working practices- Thinking about your recent experience, how well do you think these elements work:
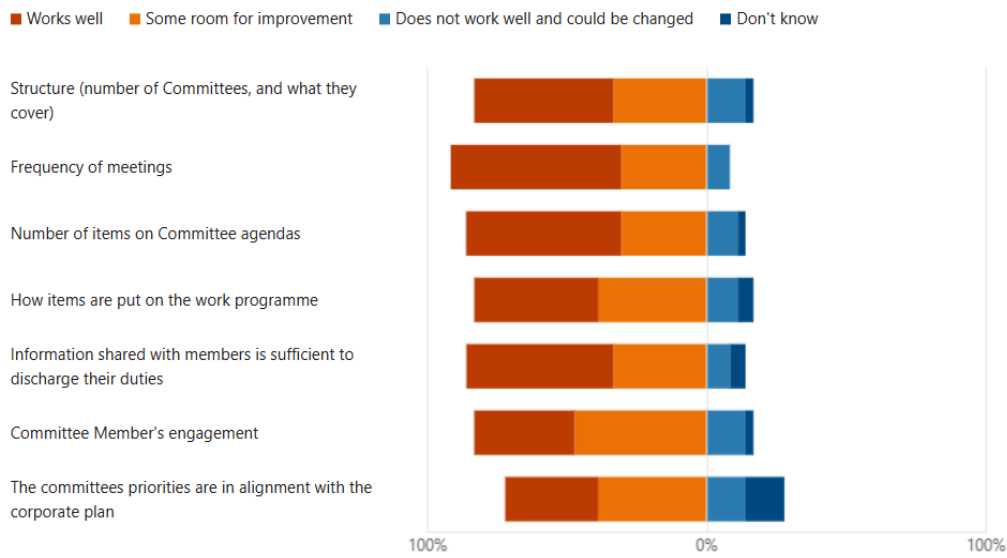
Responses to the survey indicated that people generally feel that working practices are effective. However, there is room for improvements to be made in relation to committee member engagement (53% of officers stating there is some room for improvement and 17% stating that it does not work well, and 38% of Elected Members stating that there is some room for improvement and 8% stating it works well). In relation to the alignment of priorities of scrutiny to those within the Corporate Plan there is also room for improvement (43% of officers stating some room for improvement and 13% stating that it does not work well or that they don't know, and 31% of Elected Members state this area requires some improvement, with 16% stating it does not work well and 15% stating that they do not know).

Feedback from the conversations undertaken indicated that there are a number of Elected Members who are unhappy with the information supplied within agenda packs, and whilst the survey highlighted people are largely satisfied that the information is sufficient for Members to discharge their duties, our 121 conversations indicated that sometimes this information is too detailed. We would concur that too much detail in scrutiny can become counter-productive and detract from scrutiny's ability to be strategic. It will be important for the committees (led by their Chairs) to be clear about content sought in report and presentations and to be able to feed this to those drafting the documents so that they are always linked to the objectives sought from the area under consideration and contain the level of detail that the committee feel is appropriate for them to fulfil their duties.

Analysis of previous minutes showed that Members are engaged in the formal meetings, make valid contributions, and pose a range of detailed questions to witnesses. There is a tendency for committees to operate as though they are holding Officers to account, rather than the Cabinet Members. At times, the detail focused on is operational rather than strategic and whilst some scrutiny Members do make effort to be strategic and focus on the areas of importance, this sometimes falls short. Scrutiny can very often become an information exchange or become too operational to add value to the bigger strategic issues. This can be addressed through better topic selection that is more closely aligned to the Council's strategic priorities.

We found that without some refocusing Scrutiny could drift towards a performance management role and the practice of receiving quarterly performance reports is not something that all Members or Officers see as the purpose of scrutiny or where it can offer useful value. We would concur, as often by the time such data reaches committee, it is likely already to be out of date. Whilst it is important that scrutiny assesses performance information, there also needs to be useful commentary provided as to where and how scrutiny's oversight can be utilised. Quarterly reports might be used as a source of insight to support topic selection rather than an opportunity to conduct line by line data analysis, that rarely leads to valuable recommendations being made. This shift in approach would assist the committees in adding value to council policy and strategy through greater emphasis on the big challenges and opportunities ahead. We would suggest that, instead of taking performance information to committee as a default position, Elected Members receive it informally, perhaps as part of a wider information digest which they can use to drive and inform their regular work.

Refining the approach to work programming would achieve better results from scrutiny's work. There are comprehensive tools that other local authorities apply to improve work programming and raise the productivity and impact of scrutiny. Some Councils invite practical suggestions from members of the public and other stakeholders in dedicated planning sessions, or via an online consultation. This is a way to get a sense of what others feel is important for Councillors to be reviewing, and used alongside a meaningful overview of management information to inform deliberations can provide a long list of potential topics where scrutiny can add value. This process is aligned with best practice in section 6 of the Statutory Scrutiny Guidance. Once the long-list is created each scrutiny committee can determine the topics that they wish to scrutinise using a prioritisation tool that highlights which items have the potential to add most value, the use of such a tool justifies how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others. This will also support greater member-ownership of the scrutiny agenda and provide an opportunity to build in the voice of the public into the work of Dacorum's scrutiny committees.

3.4   Having an impact

This section explores ways to demonstrate that scrutiny is effective and that it makes a tangible difference to the lives of people in Dacorum, through helping to shape policy, decision-making and improve outcomes.

Currently there is limited evidence of impact arising from scrutiny's work. The graph below shows that there are a substantial number of 'don't know' responses when people were considering impact. This is a far higher proportion than the other categories, suggesting that scrutiny itself is not aware of how, or even if, it can evidence having had impact.

Impact monitoring is an area that many Councils struggle with, however it is a relatively simple process to look at recommendations that scrutiny have made and whether they have been accepted and implemented. Longer term, consideration could be given to speaking to people inside and outside the council about the work that scrutiny has carried out to gather some tangible examples of scrutiny's impact. Being able to articulate how scrutiny adds value to the work of the Council helps to further build on the work of the function and helps others to see its potential for improving services for local people.

Impact- Thinking about your recent experience, how well do you think these elements work:
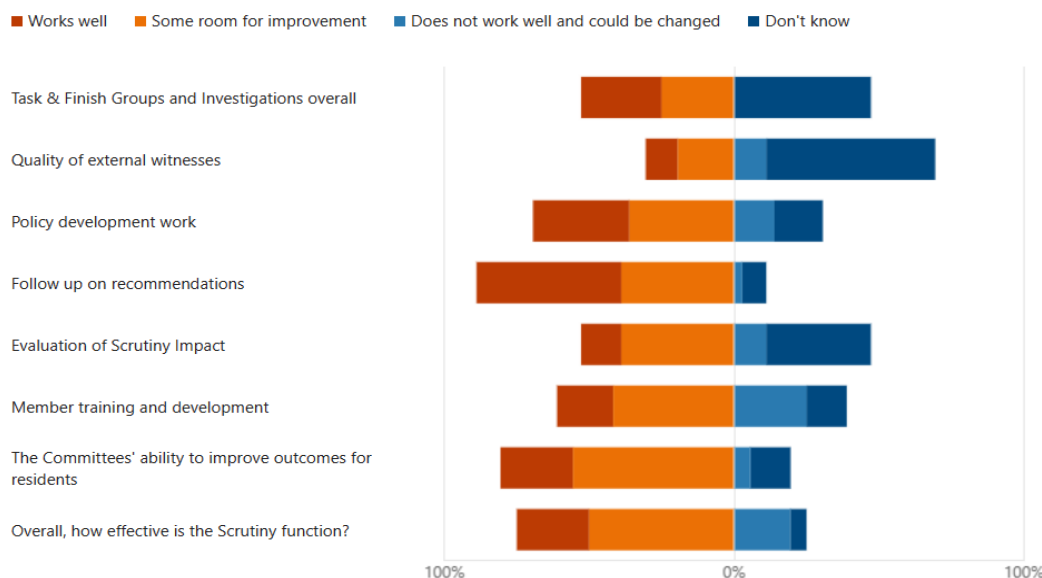
Our research concluded that further work could be done to encourage public participation and to build a wider range of perspectives into scrutiny's work. Insights gained from the survey found a lack of expert witnesses being invited to scrutiny committee meetings. Similarly, public participation is minimal and our conversations with Members also showed that there is

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telephone **020 7543 5627** email **info@cfgs.org.uk** twitter **@cfgscrutiny**

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interest in exploring how scrutiny can amplify the voice of the public and better engage with residents and the community.

It is considered best practice to involve local people in the work of scrutiny as a way to help connect the council to the community it serves. Scrutiny could explore and experiment with ways to allow greater access, openness, and involvement with the public. This might include scrutiny a reasonable and well justified used of site visits in the community, inviting the public to offer ideas for work plans, and greater use of social media channels for resident input and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work. We heard that this had happened in the past, but less so recently.

4.   Recommendations

4.1   Structure

Recommendation 1

Consider how the scrutiny committee structure could be reprofiled to allow for more in-depth scrutiny work. We recommend that the current structure of three committees is maintained, but are clearly articulated and that the frequency of formal meetings is reviewed to provide the space for more Member led, strategic scrutiny to take place. (Whilst noting that this could require review of all Council committees).

Recommendation 2

Developing regular communication between Scrutiny Chairs. This could be achieved through default position of sharing work programmes and insight on working practices. This should also engage the Chair of Audit and Cabinet Members to highlight future issues and the part which Scrutiny could play in testing and shaping these forward plans.

4.2   Culture

Recommendation 3

Develop an awareness raising programme for Members and Officers. This should be in addition to the current package of learning and development support for Elected Members and Officers across the Council. Wider awareness raising should be explored to build, refresh and enhance organisational knowledge and understanding of the role, purpose, and powers of scrutiny. This should be built into induction training for new Elected Members and include Officer support for drafting and presenting reports to committee.

Recommendation 4

That consideration is given to providing a short term investment to the scrutiny function. This will help to ensure that the actions and recommendations arising from this report can be implemented and that 'added value' scrutiny can take place.

4.3   Working practices

Recommendation 5

Review the process for developing work plans for each Scrutiny committee. Engaging Members, Officers, partners, and the public to inform work programming and to prioritise the topics for review in a proportionate way. This should include planned space for the detailed scrutiny of forthcoming decisions alongside the capacity to conduct in-depth scrutiny outside of the formal meetings.

Recommendation 6

Create a regular information digest for all Elected Members. This would provide the opportunity for Members to be cited on performance data and other high-profile work which is for information rather than taking up space on the formal agenda. This digest should also be used to identify those issues which may require further in-depth investigation.

Recommendation 7

Review the content and detail for scrutiny reports and briefings. This would ensure consistency of communication and reporting formats as well as help focus on purpose of an item for consideration by scrutiny and expectations of the level of detailed contained within agenda packs. This could be done alongside Elected Members and officers so that all parties were clear on expectations and content.

4.4   Having an impact

Recommendation 8

Reviewing how the recommendations are made and how impact is measured. This could include a process for any recommendations made being captured and reported back to Scrutiny to show how Cabinet have reflected on comments made and to orientate towards outcomes-focused meetings. This recommendation will be important following the review of work programming and the space having been provided for in-depth scrutiny work.

5.   Thank you and acknowledgements

Thank you to all the Officers and Members who took part in this review, your openness and willingness to share your views have helped to shape the recommendations made. It is hoped that this work enables you to build on existing good practice and help to ensure that all Officers and Members are invested in making scrutiny a success in Dacorum Borough Council.

Scrutiny topic selection

(On a scale of 1-10 where 10 strongly agrees with the consideration).

CONSIDERATIONS	Suggestion 1:	Suggestion 2:	Suggestion 3:	Suggestion 4:	Suggestion 5:	Suggestion 6:	Suggestion 7:	Suggestion 8:	Suggestion 9:	Suggestion 10:
Is it a key public issue and community concern?										
Is it strategic & significant?										
Is it related to the Council's corporate priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan?										
Is it a matter which the Council's complaints data suggests is a significant issue?										
Will it deliver results for local people?										
Of concern to partners and stakeholders? Reference results from public consultation										
Does it relate to a failing service or dissatisfaction with a council service?										
Are there sufficient resources to effectively scrutinise the topic?										
Does not duplicate work of other committees?										
Will the recommendations lead to effective outcomes?										
Can the council implement or influence the outcomes?										
TOTALS										

The scoring **is a guide** to help you remember which proposals scored highly against the considerations for topic selection.

The highest 'score' does not necessarily mean that a topic will be selected but it may help inform your final selection.

Proposed Council, Cabinet OSC cycle - Meeting Timetable 2025-2026

	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	
MON					1			1						MON
TUES			1		2			2 Cabinet						TUES
WEDS			2		3	1		3 Audit				1		WEDS
THURS	1 HCC Elections		3 DMC		4 Member Development	2 Standards		4	1 Bank Holiday			2		THURS
FRI	2		4	1	5	3		5	2			3 BANK HOLIDAY	1	FRI
SAT	3		5	2	6	4	1	6	3			4	2	SAT
SUN	4	1	6	3	7	5	2	7	4	1	1	5	3	SUN
MON	5 BANK HOLIDAY	2	7	4	8	6	3	8	5	2	2	6 BANK HOLIDAY	4 BANK HOLIDAY	MON
TUES	6	3 SPAE OSC	8 Cabinet	5	9 SPAE OSC	7 Cabinet	4 SPAE OSC	9	6 Licensing Cabinet Contingency	3 Cabinet	3 SPAE OSC	7 Cabinet Contingency	5 Licensing	TUES
WEDS	7	4 F&R OSC	9	6	10 F&R OSC	8	5 F&R OSC	10 Joint Budget	7	4	4 F&R OSC	8	6	WEDS
THURS	8	5 H&C OSC	10 Member Development	7	11 H&C OSC	9 Member Development	6 H&C OSC	11 DMC	8 DMC	5 DMC	5 H&C OSC	9	7	THURS
FRI	9	6	11	8	12	10	7	12	9	6	6	10	8	FRI
SAT	10	7	12	9	13	11	8	13	10	7	7	11	9	SAT
SUN	11	8	13	10	14	12	9	14	11	8	8	12	10	SUN
MON	12	9	14	11	15	13	10	15	12	9	9	13	11	MON
TUES	13	10 Licensing	15	12	16	14	11	16	13 SPAE OSC	10 Licensing	10 Licensing	14 Licensing	12	TUES
WEDS	14 Annual Council	11	16 Audit	13	17 Audit	15 MDSG	12	17 Council	14 F&R OSC	11 MDSG	11	15 MDSG	13 Annual Council	WEDS
THURS	15	12 DMC	17	14	18 DMC	16 DMC	13 DMC	18	15 H&C OSC	12	12 DMC	16 DMC	14	THURS
FRI	16	13	18	15	19	17	14	19	16	13	13	17	15	FRI
SAT	17	14	19	16	20	18	15	20	17	14	14	18	16	SAT
SUN	18	15	20	17	21	19	16	21	18	15	15	19	17	SUN
MON	19	16	21	18	22	20	17	22	19	16	16	20	18	MON
TUES	20 Licensing	17 Cabinet Contingency	22 Licensing	19	23 Cabinet Contngency	21	18 Cabinet Contingency	23	20 Member Development	17	17 Member Development	21	19	TUES
WEDS	21	18 Health & Wellbeing	23 Council	20	24 Health & Wellbeing	22 Council	19 Member Development	24	21 Audit	18 Council	18 Audit	22 Council	20	WEDS
THURS	22 DMC	19 Standards	24	21 DMC	25 Call-in contingency	23	20 Call-in contingency	25 Bank Holiday	22 Call-in contingency	19	19 Call-in contingency	23	21 DMC	THURS
FRI	23	20	25	22	26	24	21	26 Bank Holiday	23	20	20	24	22	FRI
SAT	24	21	26	23	27	25	22	27	24	21	21	25	23	SAT
SUN	24	22	27	24	28	26	23	28	25	22	22	26	24	SUN
MON	26 BANK HOLIDAY	23	28	25 BANK HOLIDAY	29	27	24	29	26	23	23	27	25 BANK HOLIDAY	MON
TUES	27	24	29	26	30 Licensing	28	25 Licensing	30	27	24	24 Cabinet	28	26	TUES
WEDS	28	25 MDSG	30	27		29	26	31	28 Health	25	25	29 Health	27	WEDS
THURS	29	26 Member Development	31 DMC	28		30	27		29 Standards	26 Member Development	26 Standards	30 Member Development	28	THURS
FRI	30	27		29		31	28		30	27	27		29	FRI
SAT	31	28		30			29		31	28	28		30	SAT
SUN		29	31	31			30				29		31	SUN
MON		30									30			MON
TUES											31			TUES

School holiday dates are shaded

Council
Cabinet
Overview & Scrutiny meetings

H&C OSC = Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
SPAE OSC = Strategic Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee
F&R OSC = Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee

DMC - Development Management Committee
MDSG = Member Development Steering Group

Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Template

Policy / service / decision	Scrutiny Review

Description of what is being impact assessed

What are the aims of the service, proposal, project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?

Stakeholders; Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc

It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact

In the autumn of 2023, the Council commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to undertake a review of the Council's scrutiny function. The review took place between October and December last year and resulted in the report and recommendations set out in the Cabinet report. The review was largely positive about how Scrutiny is carried out at the Council, recognising a good level of engagement and a willingness for the scrutiny function to develop and evolve. The report puts forward suggestions for change so that the function can become more productive and effective.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?

(include relevant national/local data, research, monitoring information, service user feedback, complaints, audits, consultations, CIAs from other projects or other local authorities, etc.). You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.

Evidence was gathered following a councillor and officer survey and individual interviews.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? *If you have not consulted other people, please explain why? You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

There has been no consultation with protected groups at this stage, but all proposed changes will be kept under continuous review to ensure that there are no negative impacts on any protected groups arising from the proposals.   The proposal presents changes to the scrutiny function which involves less evening meetings so the impacts should be only neutral or positive.

Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- *The PCs of <u>Marriage and Civil Partnership</u> and <u>Pregnancy and Maternity</u> should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.*
- *Use "insert below" menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).*

Protected group	Summary of impact *What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?*	Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome

Age		☐	☒	☐
Disability (physical, intellectual, mental) *Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness & Learning Disability Guide*		☐	☒	☐
Gender reassignment		☐	☒	☐
Race and ethnicity		☐	☒	☐
Religion or belief		☐	☒	☐
Sex		☐	☒	☐
Sexual orientation		☐	☒	☐

Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, care leavers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.		☐	☐	☒

Negative impacts / outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken (copy & paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)	Date	Person responsible	Action complete
Not applicable.	Select date		☐
	Select date		☐
	Select date		☐
	Select date		☐

		Select date		☐
		Select date		☐
		Select date		☐
		Select date		☐

If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.	
Completed by (all involved in CIA)	**Mark Brookes, Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services**
Date	**09/01/25**
Signed off by *(AD from different Directorate if being presented to SLT / Cabinet)*	**Nigel Howcutt, Chief Finance Officer**
Date	**09/01/25**
Entered onto CIA database - date	

To be reviewed by (officer name)	Mark Brookes, Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services
Review date	09/01/26

Report for:	Cabinet
Title of report:	Shopmobility Contract Service Review 2024
Date:	28 January 2025
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Adrian England, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Place
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	1. Opening Hours, Hire Fees and Comparison Table 2. Service User Case Studies 3. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) November 2024
Background papers:	• Commercial Board Report - 5 November 2024 – Shopmobility Review • Commercial Board report – March 2024 – Contract Extension Offer • CAD Annual Report 2023-2024 – Shopmobility Service • Budget Information on the Service
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	DBC - Dacorum Borough Council PH - Portfolio Holder SLT - Strategic Leadership Team SPAE - Strategic Planning and Environment Committee CAD – Community Action Dacorum

Responsible Officer

James Doe – Strategic Director, Place

james.doe@dacorum.gov.uk

Diane Southam – Assistant Director, Place

diane.southam@dacorum.gov.uk

Report Author

Christopher Fennell – Head of Communities and Leisure

Chris.fennell@dacorum.gov.uk

Corporate Priorities	**1. Community engagement:** Engage with residents and partners to have a real say on our services and the borough **2. Service improvement and delivery:** Running the Council efficiently and putting residents at the heart of everything we do **3. Vibrant communities:** Foster arts, culture and leisure opportunities **4. Sustainable future:** Take action on the Climate and Ecological Emergency **5. Clean, safe and green:** Provide a clean, safe and green-focussed environment **6.Homes to be proud of:** Enable well-maintained and affordable homes, where people want to live **7. Proud and thriving borough:** Realise our potential as a great place to live and work with a thriving business community
Wards affected	All wards
Purpose of the report:	The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Shopmobility Service Review and to seek feedback and support for the recommended grant approach for the renewal of the Shopmobility Service as detailed in Section 4.3.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That Cabinet agrees a new 2 year Service Level Agreement to Community Action Dacorum for the Shop Mobility Service on the terms set out in the report.
Period for post policy/project review:	The SLA will be reviewed on an annual basis and in line with the voluntary sector commissioning framework

1. Background

1.1. The core objectives of the Shopmobility Service are to:

- Enable those residents and visitors with long- and short-term mobility issues to maintain/regain their independence
- Give everyone equal access to town centre services and activities
- Reduce social isolation and improve the health and wellbeing of residents
- Promote accessibility for all

1.2. The Hemel Hempstead Shopmobility scheme has been operating from Level A of the Blue Car Park in the Marlowes Shopping Centre since 1992. Originally managed and operated by Dacorum Borough Council, Community Action Dacorum (CAD) has been delivering the service with a grant from DBC since May 2006. From December 2017 onwards CAD has been delivering the service as a contractor following the move from grant funding to a competitive tendering process.

1.3. The Voluntary Sector Commissioning process was reviewed in 2023, with a subsequent move to a direct grant award process agreed by Cabinet in December 2023. The decision was taken to exclude the Shopmobility Service from that process in order to be able to undertake a review of the potential market for alternative operators and to undertake a review of the service provision

1.4. In March 2024 the Council agreed to a 1-year extension of the contract to allow the authority to undertake a review and benchmarking exercise of the shopmobility service. The current contract arrangements with CAD will expire on 31 March 2025.

2. Methodology of the Review

2.1 As part of the service review, officers have undertaken a detailed desktop research exercise regarding other areas offering a shopmobility service e.g. Watford, St Albans, Central Bedfordshire (Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard) and Harrow. Those organisations identified in the study were by their nature small scale charities specifically set up to deliver the shopmobility service to residents.

2.2 The research has identified that there is no national operator or franchise model for the delivery of a shopmobility service and therefore no central repository for the collection of data and information.

2.3 Whilst undertaking the research, some of the organisations contacted were unwilling to share the financial and operations information requested, only Watford Borough Council provided the level of grant offered to deliver the service. Our research also identified that not all areas offer a shopmobility service e.g. Three Rivers District, Hertsmere and Central Bedfordshire. This research information is details in Appendix 1 below.

2.4 The Hemel Shopmobility Service benefits from being part of the wider CAD organisation and structures. CAD, as a bigger charity, is able to offer additional levels of resources e.g. financial, management and governance to the management and delivery of the service.

2.5 Should the Council wish to continue supporting a Shopmobility service, based on the research, it is recommended that the Council continues with the arrangement with CAD, and moves to a direct grant award under a Service Level Agreement. This brings it in line with the previously agreed approach for the four main Voluntary Sector Services grants.

3. Background Information on the Service

3.1 The total cost of the service is circa £64,400 pa (as detailed in Appendix 1 – Background Information). Sales and other income are £6,700, CAD contributes £15,700 towards the service costs and the Council pays £42,000 pa or 65% of the total costs to operate the service. The review process discovered Watford BC will pay an annual grant of circa £35k in 2024-2025 to Shopmobility Watford and St Albans DC no longer provides any funding outside of the occasional small revenue grant. Post covid 19 recovery - The decrease in demand for the service (Table 1 – Shopmobility Usage) had a financial impact and CAD experienced a decline in revenue, at a time when some of their costs increased due to those associated with the need to implement additional safety measures. CAD undertook a review of how the service was being used and the demand on different days and agreed to change their service delivery model moving from opening on 6 days per week to 4 days per week with the service being delivered the service has remained at 4 days per week with one member of staff reducing their working hours. CAD's aim is to gradually expand to normal operations as their numbers increase so that they can transition back to full capacity.

3.2 User data from CAD usage statistics are detailed below in Table 1. The operational year for the service runs December to November. At present an average 49 uses of the service on a weekly basis (2,518 users in 2023/24 /51 weeks). The usage in 2019 – 2020 was similar to the levels of usage report by Watford Shopmobility, at its height the Hemel scheme 146 people were using the service on a weekly basis.

3.3 Usage data from the Watford scheme stated that 7,665 people used the service in 2022–2023 = 150 uses per week (7,665 uses /51 weeks). The high levels of usage at the Watford scheme could be attributed to the fact there are no shopmobility services offered in the neighbouring areas and that people/users are drawn to the large shopping mall in Watford as a destination.

		Table 1 - Shopmobility Usage					
Year	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025 (YTD)
Total	7,421	7,469	2,368	1,149	2,182	2,518	1,672
Variance -/+	N/A	+48	-5,101	-919	+1,033	+336	TBC'd

Based on the 22/23 usage information, the £42,000 grant equates to £16.68 per use.

3.4 Hours of operation are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday - 10.00 - 16.00. In comparison to other providers, CAD is offering less hours of delivery than Watford and High Wycombe and St Albans. In the 2023 annual report CAD stated that the service has been impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic and the recent cost of living crisis, they hope to expand the hours of service once number increase and there is a demand for the service. Appendix 1 – details the hours of operation of other shopmobility services in the region.

3.5 Staffing and volunteers - Hemel Shopmobility operates with a combination of part time paid staff and volunteers. Salaries account for £38,000 pa which is 59% of the total expenditure costs to operate the service. It should be noted that the job titles denote the role and that they are relatively low paid roles. The staff team comprises:

- Manager (24 hrs per week)
- Assistant Manager (16 hrs per week)
- Shopmobility Assistant (8 hrs per week)
- Six unpaid volunteers – this number was as high as 14 prior to the Covid 19 pandemic

3.6 All the scooters and equipment are owned and maintained by CAD. The Hemel Shopmobility provides a range of vehicles for use by its members/users, these comprise:

- 32 Scooters of various sizes and capacity

- 2 Electric wheelchairs
- 20 Manual wheelchairs

4. Proposal and Options

4.1 Closure of the service

- Let the current contract expire on 31 March 2025 and not renew the contract. Without the funding from the Council CAD do not have the required income levels or budget to maintain the service.

- The service would close on 31 March 2025 and the three staff would either be made redundant or redeployed where possible into other CAD roles.

- There is likely to be a reputational impact if this service is closed

4.2 Retender the shopmobility service

- The review has identified that there is not a national organisation such as Everyone Active for the leisure sector, or a franchise structure regarding the shopmobility sector.

- The research has highlighted that the service will require a level of grant or subsidy in order to deliver the service in the future. Income from hires does not cover the staffing and operational costs.

- Any new operator would need to contribute resources and their own funds to manage the service based upon the analysis of the current CAD budget for 2024-2025.

- A further barrier to any new operator would need to buy the existing kit and equipment (wheelchairs and scooters) from CAD or purchase new units to deliver the service.

- There is a risk that there will be no tenders submitted through this exercise or that the costs will increase above budget availability. Research has indicated there is unlikely to be any other bids through this process and there is a risk that CAD doesn't submit a bid or submits a bid at increased level of cost.

- There were no other tenders submitted the last time the service was procured.

4.3 Implement a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) with CAD in line with the approach taken with the new Voluntary Sector Framework as detailed in the Cabinet Report of December 2023.

- It is proposed that the new SLA would be coterminous with the current Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework timeline and extension period, which funds CAD to deliver a variety of services on behalf of the Council.

- The SLA will be for 2 years commencing 1 April 2025 and subject to the same VCS extension and review period.

- The SLA will include KPIs and review processes, again in the line the approved VCS approach.

- The SLA would need to include a break clause (with sufficient notice period) to allow the Council future flexibility as it manages future budget challenges

- It is recommended that a decision is based on a first-year grant at the current funding levels (plus inflation as set out in 5.1), but that officers work with CAD to reduce running costs and therefore funding required by the council, such as –

    o Review the fees and charges for the service to reduce the operating overheads costs e.g. introducing an annual membership fee to use the service £5 or £10 pa. There is a risk that this will impact usage levels and so this will need to be considered.

    o Review the operating costs to determine if any savings can be made including staffing levels

    o Review the marketing and communications programme to promote the service e.g. review current hours of operations and signage in the town.

    o Seek additional funds via external funding or sponsorship.

    o Work with local businesses and the BID (Business Improvement District) to promote the scheme.

- This would be with the aim of reducing the grant requirement in the second year and moving towards a self-sustaining financial model.

5. Financial and value for money implications:

5.1 The recommendation approach can be funded from existing budgets. It is proposed that 24/25 and 25/26 inflation allowance is included in the first year's grant from April 2025.

5.2 It should be noted that there have been no inflationary increases paid for this service since the move to the procurement approach. Under the proposed approach, it is recommended that grants will be increased annually in line with the Council's budgeted inflation increases.

5.3 In the event that any reduction of running costs is achieved, it is recommended that the Service Level Agreement reflects that those savings are distributed between the Council and CAD proportionate to the contributions made.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 A new service level agreement/grant agreement with the appropriate service measures and indicators would need to be drafted and agreed.

6.2 Legal comments will be sought as these are developed.

7. Risk implications:

7.1 The review has identified that there is not a national organisation such as Everyone Active in the leisure sector, or a franchise structure regarding the shopmobility sector.

7.2 There is a risk that there will be no tenders submitted through this exercise or that the costs will increase above budget availability.

7.3 The introduction of a membership fee and increased daily usage fee could have a negative impact on usage and present a further financial barrier to those residents on low incomes that use the service.

7.4 An Equality Impact Assessment (EAI) has been undertaken on the service review and recommendation and no negative issues have been identified.

8. **Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

8.1 Equalities Impact Assessment reviewed. There are no negative/positive impacts arising from the EIA dated November 2024.

8.2 Human Rights – there are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report

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

- **Climate Change** - the service supports the Council's drive to reduce its carbon footprint as all of the equipment used as part of the service is electric.

- **Health and Wellbeing -** the service provides opportunities for residents and users to remain active and live an independent life.

- **Community Safety -** the service provider (CAD) will have regular contact with residents and users and will be able to report any incidents or concern to the appropriate authority.

10. **Council Infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD assets and other resources)**

There are no implications to the Council's infrastructure arising from this report.

11. **Statutory Comments**

Monitoring Officer:

The service will be covered by a new Service Level Agreement, which will enable the Council to continue to monitor performance and usage levels to ensure value for money.

S151 Officer:

The proposed partnership will be delivered within existing approved budgets.

12. **Conclusions:**

12.1 The new partnership arrangements for the shopmobility service proposes a new relationship with CAD to manage and promote the service via a outcomes-based approach which has already been adopted as part of the voluntary sector commissioning framework.

12.2 During 2025 DBC officers and CAD will work together to:

- o Review the fees and charges for the service to reduce the operating overheads costs

- o Review the operating costs to determine if any savings can be made including staffing levels

- o Review the marketing and communications programme to promote the service

- o Seek additional funds via external funding or sponsorship. Work with local businesses and the BID (Business Improvement District) to promote the scheme.

- o Seek to reduce the grant requirement from DBC and move towards a self-sustaining financial model.

Appendix 1 – Opening Hours, Hire Fees and Comparison Table

Opening Hours (Information taken from websites and email responses)				
Area	**Days and Hours of Operation**	**Total Hours of Operation**	**Staff Levels**	**No of Volunteers**
Dacorum	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday - 10.00 - 16.00	24 hrs per week	Manager (24 hrs per week) Assistant Manager (16 hrs per week) Shopmobility Assistant (8 hrs per week)	6
Watford	Monday - Saturday - 10.00 - 16.30	39 hrs per week	3 P/T Managers	14
Harrow	Monday - Thursday 10.00 - 16.00 - Friday 10.00 - 15.00 – Closed Saturday & Sunday	29 Hrs per week	1 Manager - 4 days per week	7
St Albans	Monday - 09.30 - 16.00 Tuesday - 10.00 - 14.00 Wednesday - 09.30 - 16.00 Thursday - 10.00 - 14.00 Friday - 09.30 - 16.00 Saturday - 09.30 - 16.00 Sunday - Closed	34 Hrs per week	1 P/T Manager	7
Buckingham Council (High Wycombe)	Monday - Saturday - 09.30 - 16.30	42 Hrs per week	5 - P/T including 1 Manager	7

Hire Fees Comparisons (Information taken from websites and email responses)		
Area	**Hire Fees**	**Membership Fee**
Dacorum	• Manual - £1.50 per day • Battery - £2.16 per day	N/A
Watford	• Free • £2 donation suggested for long term hire	N/A
Harrow	• Free • Small charge for long term use	£5
St Albans	• £1 per day	£10 pa
Buckingham Council (High Wycombe)	• Electric Scooters wheelchairs/scooters £3 per day, • Manual vehicles £2 per day including walkers • Travel scooters £100 returnable deposit - £10 per day - maximum 14 days • Wheelchairs - £50 deposit - £5 per day or £35 per week / walkers £20 deposit and £3 per night or £2 per day	£10 all users need to be members

Appendix 2 – Service User Case Studies

Hemel Hempstead Shopmobility Case Study - David
David has been a member of Shopmobility for many years since his arthritis started to affect his mobility making it difficult to come into town to shop or to meet up with friends.

Using Shopmobility means that David is able to access Hemel Town centre safely and relatively pain free. David commented about how friendly the staff and volunteers are at Shopmobility Hemel. Being a regular, they know who he is and which vehicle he prefers using so whenever possible they ensure he has that one.

When asked about the service David said *"all the staff and volunteers are so welcoming and helpful. Without the use of the scooters, I would not be able to go to the shops or socialise, I'm so grateful"*

Hemel Hempstead Shopmobility Case Study - **Vivienne**

Vivienne is relatively new to Shopmobility; one of the new clients since COVID. Having suffered from deteriorating health and mobility issues she recognised the need to be able to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible.

Vivienne uses Shopmobility to be able to access health and other related appointments such as at Specsavers which she would not be able to do without relying on other people without the Shopmobility office. One thing that Vivienne really has been grateful for is the uncomplicated service provided by the staff ad volunteers. "*Nothing seems too much and the pickup and drop off of the scooter is so easy!*"

Dacorum BC Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Template

Policy / Service / Decision	
	Hemel Hempstead Shopmobility Service

Description of what is being impact assessed

What are the aims of the service, proposal, project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?

Stakeholders: Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc

It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact

Background Information

The Hemel Hempstead Shopmobility scheme has been operating from Level A of the Blue Car Park in the Marlowes Shopping Centre since 1992. Originally managed and operated by Dacorum Borough Council, Community Action Dacorum (CAD) has been delivering the service since May 2006.

Hours of Operation

Shopmobility service hours of operation are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday - 10.00 - 16.00.

Equipment

The service provides a range of vehicles for use by its members/users, these comprise:

- 32 Scooters of various sizes and capacity, 2 Electric wheelchairs, 20 Manual wheelchairs

The Service Core Objectives

1 – To enable those (residents and visitors) with long and short-term mobility issues to maintain/regain their independence.
2 – To give everyone equal access to town centre services and activities.
3 – To reduce social isolation and improve health and wellbeing of residents.
4 – To promote accessibility for all.

1

The intension is to award a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) to CAD to operate and manage the Service on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council from 1 April 2025 and therefore a new EIA has been undertaken.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?
(include relevant national/local data, research, monitoring information, service user feedback, complaints, audits, consultations, EIAs from other projects or other local authorities, etc.). You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.

- Review of the Dacorum Shopmobility Service: March - October 2024 e.g. Other charities and organisations who deliver a similar service in Hertfordshire and our near neighbouring local authorities in Harrow LBC and Buckinghamshire Councils.

Review Headline Findings

- Post covid 19 recovery - The decrease in demand for the service had a financial impact and CAD experienced a decline in revenue, at a time when some of their costs increased due to those associated with the need to implement additional safety measures.
- CAD undertook a review of how the service was being used and the demand on different days and agreed to change their service delivery model moving from opening on 6 days per week to 4 days per week with the service being delivered the service has remained at 4 days per week with one member of staff reducing their working hours.
- CAD's aim is to gradually expand to normal operations as their numbers increase so that they can transition back to full capacity
- The review has identified that there is not a national organisation such as Everyone Active in the leisure or Biffa in the waste sectors, or a franchise structure regarding the shopmobility sector.

Partnership Meeting Arrangements
- Usage statistics and membership questionnaire and survey (via regular partnership meeting notes and 2023 - AGM report), Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and case studies supplied by Community Action Dacorum (CAD) who manage and operate the service on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council.

Current Levels of Usage

- At present an average 49 uses of the service on a weekly basis (2,518 users in 2023/24 /51 weeks). The usage in 2019 – 2020, at its height the Hemel scheme 146 people were using the service on a weekly basis.

Next Steps

- CAD are in the process of designing new signage plus creating a new marketing and communication plan which will help raise the awareness and to promote the shopmobility service in the shopping centre, Hemel Hempstead high street and wider town centre to try and encourage greater take up of the service to pre-covid usage numbers.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? *If you have not consulted other people, please explain why? You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

No formal consultation process has taken place with the identified protected groups; however, CAD undertake regular feedback and user satisfaction (informal and formal) with shopmobility users and members. The majority of the agreed performance indicators for the shopmobility service focus on outcomes for the users, what they think of the service, how the service supports them to have improved access to town centre facilities and how it contributes to their overall health and wellbeing.

Survey Results - June 2023
- 82% of people stated they 'Strongly Agree' – that using Shopmobility helps me get out and about and feel more connected with the local community
- 87% of people stated they 'Strongly Agree' – that Shopmobility helps me access town centre facilities easily
- 87% of people stated they 'Strongly Agree' – that Using Shopmobility improves my quality of life

The Council and CAD are responsible for ensuring they do not discriminate against protected characteristics within a community or any other setting.

The Council's appointed partner (CAD) has an Open Access policy to ensure that all sections of the community are able to access the Dacorum shopmobility service.

By agreeing to a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) with CAD to operate and deliver the shopmobility service, this will enable access to all sections of the local community alongside those people who are non-residents of Dacorum Borough Council.

Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- *The PCs of <u>Marriage and Civil Partnership</u> and <u>Pregnancy and Maternity</u> should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.*
- *Use "insert below" menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).*

Protected group	Summary of impact *What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?*	Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome
Age	The user evidence of the shopmobility service identifies that many members/users are predominantly older adults. That the members/users have a variety of mobility issues or are registered disabled or have a long-term illness. Therefore, the provision of the shopmobility service will have a positive impact on their ability to access the town centre, high street and continue to live an independent lifestyle. CAD and DBC operate an open access policy therefore all sections of the community can use the shopmobility service regarding of their protected characteristic.	☐	☐	☒

4

Disability (physical, intellectual, mental) *Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness & Learning Disability Guide*	As above	☐	☐	☒
Gender reassignment	There is no negative impact on the protected group – the open access policy from CAD and DBC policies.	☐	☐	☒
Race and ethnicity	There is no negative impact on the protected group – the open access policy from CAD and DBC policies.	☐	☐	☒
Religion or belief	There is no negative impact on the protected group – the open access policy from CAD and DBC policies.	☐	☐	☒
Sex	There is no negative impact on the protected group – the open access policy from CAD and DBC policies.	☐	☐	☒
Sexual orientation	There is no negative impact on the protected group – the open access policy from CAD and DBC policies.	☐	☐	☒

5

Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, care leavers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.	There is no negative impact on the not protected groups – the open access policy from CAD and DBC policies.	☐	☐	☒

Negative impacts / outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action to be taken *(copy & paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)*	Date	Person responsible	Action complete
Once the new SLA has been approved in 2025, DBC and CAD will continue to promote the Shopmobility service to people who live, work and study in the borough. CAD will also capture the user statistics and demographic information. CAD has been awarded a grant via the Dacorum Shared Prosperity Fund to produce and design new signage promoting the shopmobility in the shopping centre, Hemel Hempstead high street and wider town centre.	Select date	Christopher Fennell	☐

6

		Select date		☐
If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.				
N/A				
Completed by (all involved in EIA)	**Chris Fennell - Head of Communities and Leisure**			
Date	**25/11/2024**			
Signed off by *(AD from different Directorate if being presented to SLT / Cabinet)*	**Matt Rawdon (AD – People)**			
Date	**26/11/2024**			
Entered onto EIA database - date	**TBC'd**			
To be reviewed by (officer name)	**Chris Fennell - Head of Communities and Leisure**			
Review date	**25/011/2025**			

Cabinet

Report for:	Cabinet
Title of report:	Climate and Ecological Emergency Spending Proposal
Date:	28/01/2025
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Caroline Smith-Wright, Portfolio Holder for People and Transformation and Climate and Ecological Emergency
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	CEE – Climate and Ecological Emergency DBC – Dacorum Borough Council GSENZH – Greater South East Net Zero Hub HCCSP – Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership HGC – Hemel Garden Communities HRA – Housing Revenue Account SLT – Strategic Leadership Team

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Aidan Wilkie, Strategic Director People and Transformation

Oliver Burrough, Sustainability Projects Manager, Climate and Ecological Emergency

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Aidan.wilkie@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228569 (ext. 2569) oliver.burrough@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228011

Corporate Priorities	Sustainable future: Take action on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Clean, safe and green: Provide a clean, safe and green-focussed environment Community engagement: Engage with residents and partners to have a real say on our services and the borough

Wards affected	ALL
Purpose of the report:	For committee to review and provide feedback on the proposed spend of £1.16m of reserves for the CEE Programme.
Recommendation(s) to the decision maker(s):	That Cabinet recommends that Council approves the release of £1.16m of New Homes Bonus, currently held in reserve, for spend on sustainability projects as detailed in the report.
Period for post policy/project review:	Periodic updates to members

1. **Background**

   1.1. As part of the formal 2024/25 budget setting process the Council set up a Climate Change and Sustainability reserve to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Programme (CEE) to help deliver the objectives set out in the CEE Strategy. This paper sets out a consolidated spending proposal for the full amount.

   1.2. The proposals were developed across the Council through the CEE programme board. The draft proposal was initially presented to CEE Programme Board in July 2024. Feedback was received and responded to. Following consultation with the finance team and Strategic Asset review steering group, a revised proposal was agreed in October 2024. It has also been approved by the CEE portfolio holder.

   1.3. Dacorum Borough Council aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions as an organisation by 2030, and across the Borough by 2050. Excluding Council housing, Dacorum Borough Council itself contributes approximately 1% of overall carbon emissions from the Borough. This highlights the importance of engaging and empowering our residents to reduce their carbon footprint. The £1.16m funding allocation will be utilised to achieve the following aims:

   1.4. **Primary Aim: To accelerate the transition to net-zero carbon emissions.** This will be achieved through funding the delivery of projects which contribute to the "net-zero as an organisation by 2030" target.

   1.5. **Supporting Aim: Visible results.** We are committed to delivering outcomes which are measurable and visible to our community, generating positive news stories and fostering a sense of collective pride in our achievements.

   1.6. **Supporting Aim: Community support.** Through engagement and educational resources, to empower residents in making sustainable lifestyle choices and driving systemic change.

   1.7. Dacorum Borough Council's largest sources of emissions are the gas and electricity consumed by the buildings we own and operate; the fuel consumed by the vehicle fleet; and the gas and electricity consumed by housing assets we operate. The first two sources are in scope one, falling under the "net-zero as an organisation by 2030" target. The final source – emissions from housing assets we operate – falls under the "new-zero housing stock by 2050."

   1.8. The vehicle fleet and the fuel we use is not included in this spending proposal. This is because the costs involved in fleet decarbonisation are too large for a reserve drawdown of this size to have a notable impact. For example, an electric vehicle dustcart costs approximately £500k. Investment in vehicle fleet decarbonisation will come from alternative sources, such as the fleet replacement programme, and introduced over time.

2. **The CEE Spending Proposal**

   2.1. 69% proposed to be spent on achieving "net-zero as an organisation by 2030"

      2.1.1. The money will focus on initial preparation and some building works required to decarbonise our assets.

   2.2. 26% proposed to be spent on supporting the borough to reduce emissions, improve biodiversity, and create more sustainable communities.

      2.2.1. The proposed money will be used to grow the green community grant available to residents, for development of a Nature Recovery Plan, ongoing outreach with Dacorum Climate Action Network, and public realm improvements in Maylands Business Park.

2.3.   5% held in contingency provision reserve to meet any short-term opportunity

2.3.1.   5% of the total is held as contingency. This lets the CEE Team respond to new opportunities that can emerge quickly. It can also serve as contingency for named projects.

2.3.2.   Underspend from proposals in sections 2.1 and 2.2 will be retained in contingency.

2.4.   Governance/Pathway to approval of spend:

i.   Programme Board final review – 22 October
ii.   SLT – 6 November
iii.   SLT/PH – 19 December
iv.   SPAEOSC – 8 January
v.   Cabinet – 28 January/11 February
vi.   Full Council – 19 February

2.5.   Detailed governance of spending this proposed reserve drawdown is being developed in consultation with statutory officers Section 151 and Monitoring Officer. They will feed into the Climate and Ecological report ahead of Cabinet.

2.6.   Built Asset Feasibility and Building Improvements – £805K overall

2.6.1.   The proposal includes £400K for feasibility work, and £405K for building improvements. The allocation of £400K for feasibility was suggested by the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH), a public body that has supported Dacorum Borough Council with establishing a decarbonisation programme. This provides funding to investigate, where appropriate, the necessary works for built asset retrofit.

2.6.2.   The remaining £405K for physical building improvements can serve two purposes. First, to pay directly for building works. Second, to serve as match funding to grant applications to third parties, such as Salix, if there is no alternative funding available. The second route is preferred as it secures more overall funding for the work that delivers actual carbon reduction.

2.6.3.   The feasibility work includes surveys of the whole building fabric and its energy systems. This work will produce detailed designs which are required to create a work programme and a budget to start physical building works which will deliver energy efficiency and carbon emission reductions. Built assets in the General Fund represent a large part of Council emissions and are the priority for decarbonisation. This does not cover Council housing – there is separate HRA-funded work plan.

2.6.4.   This size of this allocation reflects its significance to our carbon footprint. Built asset feasibility will unlock opportunities to decarbonisation. Once we understand the detail of each site, a well-informed decision can be taken on future investment, which could make use of the various methods to fund decarbonisation of built assets. There are government funds available to support built asset decarbonisation, such as Salix Low Carbon Skills Fund (feasibility) and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (retrofit works). In addition, there are different funding routes available within the council, such as invest-to-save capital projects for qualifying assets.

2.6.5.   Decisions on where exactly this money is spent will be informed by the Strategic Asset Review, which holds up-to-date information on asset management and performance. There is no certain figure on the overall cost for built asset decarbonisation – it varies depending on technical feasibility and payback period.

2.6.6. The impact of this spend will be measured by observed reductions in energy use and payback period for council spend.

2.7. Community Projects – Green Community Grant – £180K

2.7.1. This proposal of £180k increases this budget to £30k per year to 2030, and broadens the grant amount available, to £3k, £5k, and £10k. The proposal widens the scope to cover higher cost energy reduction projects (e.g. low-carbon energy systems in clubhouses). Applications represent the priorities of resident groups and are highly visible.

2.7.2. In the past, Dacorum Borough Council has run three Green Community Grant campaigns, offering local organisations grants of up to £3k. The total annual allocation was £20k. These grants have helped deliver community facing initiatives, such as nature recovery efforts, repair shops to reduce waste, and thermal imaging cameras for simple home energy surveys, run by Town and Parish Councils. This proved popular: the value of applications always exceeded the money available.

2.7.3. The impact of the green community grants will be measured through an established procedure from previous rounds. This requests information from grant recipients who provide observations and evaluations. Previous grants and their evaluations have been recorded and will inform award of grants going forward.

2.8. Nature Recovery Plan – £60K

2.8.1. The Dacorum Nature Recovery Plan would support the high-level Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire, being developed by Hertfordshire County Council. It will develop a targeted action plan for Dacorum Borough Council to promote nature recovery across the Borough, working in partnership.

2.8.2. This allocation supports the third target of the Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy: "support the Borough in improving biodiversity."

2.8.3. Projects that could be identified by this work include tree-planting, habitat creation, private landowner engagement, change in Dacorum Borough Council-owned land-use (where appropriate and agreed). This impact could be measured with ecological surveys, or number of projects taking place in the district per year. A fuller understanding of nature recovery and biodiversity work will take time to observe.

2.9. Public Engagement – £30K

2.9.1. This ensures funding for a further six years of Dacorum Climate Action Network outreach and costs of events such as the annual conference.

2.9.2. Network members receive the latest information from the Council about policy, projects, and engagement. There is further potential to activate this engaged and informed group for enhanced partnership working. There are 106 organisation members, and 650 individual members.

2.9.3. The impact can be measured by the number of network members and level of involvement from members in outreach activities.

2.10. Maylands Area – £25K

2.10.1. Funding sustainable travel and public realm improvements identified in Maylands Masterplan theme "connected edges" and "connected middle." This would introduce safer active travel routes for pedestrians and cyclists through wayfinding and signage. Development of detailed design feasibility study for sustainable travel improvements in opportunity sites identified from Maylands Masterplan at:

- Site 1 – 55 Maylands Avenue public right of way improvements
- Site 2 – People Building 2 sustainable travel improvements
- Site 7 – Right of Way improvement

2.10.2. Maylands Business Park is dominated by vehicular transport. As part of the Local Plan, the Council is encouraging modal shift in transport. This proposal would support other projects already underway, funded by HCC, which include the Dutch-style roundabout on Boundary Way, Buncefield lane Quietway, and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

2.11. Summary of expected spend in Financial Years:

	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Built Asset Feasibility £400K	-	£100K	£100K	£100K	£100K	-
Built Asset works £405k	-	-	£105K	£100K	£100K	£100K
Green Community Grant £180K	£30K	£30K	£30K	£30K	£30K	£30K
Nature Recovery Plan £60K	-	£60K	-	-	-	-
Public Engagement: Dacorum Climate Action Network £30K	£5K	£5K	£5K	£5K	£5K	£5K
Maylands Area project £25K	-	£25K	-	-	-	-
Total	£35K	£220K	£240K	£235K	£235K	£135K

2.12. Considering the Council's primary climate target of "net-zero as an organisation by 2030," decarbonisation investment must take place before FY 2029/30. This has shaped the forecast spend displayed. This prepares the organisation to make the most progress towards this target.

2.13. Although the expected spend for built asset feasibility and building improvement covers much of the reserve allocation, spending decisions on these two categories will be shaped by the Strategic Asset Review. Therefore, planned spend is presented as spread over the six financial years (including 24/25 in that six-year period, but with no planned spend).

3. **Options and alternatives considered**

3.1. To support the CEE spending proposal of £1.16m of General Fund reserves.

3.1.1. This is the recommended option. It will allow the CEE team to focus on moving planned projects forward, including built asset decarbonisation – the priority focus for emission reduction and utility bill financial savings.

3.2. To revise the CEE spending proposal.

3.2.1. This would delay release of funds and impact various planned projects. This would bring significant implications for work already underway and planned in financial

years 2024/25 and 2025/26. The biggest impact would be a delay to the built asset feasibility and building works, both on direct Council spending and pursuing third party grants that require match funding. This will significantly delay achieving net-zero by 2030.

3.3. To reject the CEE spending proposal.

3.3.1. This would significantly restrict the CEE team's plans to achieve the targets set out in the CEE strategy. Planned activity such as green community grants would need to be reduced. Alternative funding would need to be identified for built asset feasibility and physical building works. This would place greater financial pressure on other general fund budgets around the Council and would delay progress on reducing our scope 1 emissions, significantly threatening the net-zero as an organisation by 2030 target.

4. **Consultation**

The proposals were developed across the Council through the CEE programme board. The draft proposal was initially presented to CEE Programme Board in July 2024. Feedback was received and responded to. Following consultation with the finance team and Strategic Asset review steering group, a revised proposal was agreed in October 2024. It has also been approved by the CEE portfolio holder.

5. **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

The spending proposal has been designed to deliver progress against goals in the CEE strategy. The fund will be monitored and evaluated for impact.

6. **Legal Implications**

N/A

7. **Risk Implications**

7.1. This fund will be overseen by the CEE board and managed directly by the CEE team. Risks and mitigations will be managed and monitored through those governance structures.

7.2. All expenditure on these projects will be subject to standard Council procurement requirements and financial regulations.

8. **Equalities, Community Impact, and Human Rights**

8.1. There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

8.2. Community Impact Assessment annexed.

9. **Sustainability Implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

Climate change: the CEE spending proposal will support the Council in reducing its own carbon emissions and engaging the community on climate action. This is in accordance with stated aims in the Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy. This aligns directly to the corporate goal "sustainable future" and "community engagement."

10. **Council Infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets, and other resources)**

Retrofit of built assets is a goal of this spending proposal.

11. **Statutory Officer comments**

Focused on governance of spending proposal and future reporting requirements following release of this money.

Monitoring Officer:

Officers will need to agree appropriate reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committees so that the impact of the funding can be measured against the Council's Climate Change Commitments. It is suggested that this is done annually as a minimum.

S151 Officer:

The proposed outcomes and outputs from the projects outlined in this report are aligned with the strategic rationale set out for the Climate Change and Resilience reserve, hence it is appropriate to utilise these funds to finance these projects.

12. **Conclusion**

If Cabinet approves the report, the next step is to refer the CEE spending proposal recommendation to Full Council on 19th February 2025, for formal release of reserves.

Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Template

Policy / service / decision	Decision to approve release of £1.16m of reserves for CEE spending proposal

Description of what is being impact assessed

What are the aims of the service, proposal, project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?

Stakeholders; Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc

It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact

The aim of the proposal is to increase the council funding available for projects which will advance progress towards the Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy.
The desired outcomes of the proposal include a reduction in carbon emissions and energy bills for the council (from the proposed spend on decarbonisationw works), increased grant funding to community organisations for sustainability projects, and allocated funding for a Nature Recovery Plan.

People affected include the public and occupants of buildings we seek to retrofit (staff, Members, service users, third parties).
There is no obvious protected characteristic this proposal is relevant to.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?
(include relevant national/local data, research, monitoring information, service user feedback, complaints, audits, consultations, CIAs from other projects or other local authorities, etc.). You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.

N/A

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? *If you have not consulted other people, please explain why? You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

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The CEE team has consulted with the CEE Programme Board three times, the CEE Portfolio Holder(s), SLT, PH/SLT, and Strategic Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

This is an internal proposal, and the predominantly internal consultation reflects this.

Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- *The PCs of Marriage and Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.*
- *Use "insert below" menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).*

Protected group	Summary of impact *What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?*	Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome
Age		☐	☒	☐
Disability (physical, intellectual, mental) *Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness & Learning Disability Guide*		☐	☒	☐
Gender reassignment		☐	☒	☐

		Red	Amber	Green
Race and ethnicity		☐	☒	☐
Religion or belief		☐	☒	☐
Sex		☐	☒	☐
Sexual orientation		☐	☒	☐
Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, care leavers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.		☐	☒	☐

Negative impacts / outcomes action plan				
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.				

Action taken/to be taken *(copy & paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)*	Date	Person responsible	Action complete
N/A	Select date	N/A	☐

If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.
N/A

Completed by (all involved in CIA)	Oliver Burrough
Date	28/01/2025
Signed off by	Aidan Wilkie
Date	28/01/2025
Entered onto CIA database - date	
To be reviewed by (officer name)	

Review date	

Cabinet

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Report for:	Cabinet
Title of report:	Transforming Public Procurement Update & Impact – Procurement Act 2023
Date:	28 January 2025
Report on behalf of:	Cllr William Allen Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Commercial Services
Part:	Part I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Draft Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders
Background papers:	14 January 2025 Finance & Resources OSC - Transforming Public Procurement Update & Impact – Procurement Act 2023
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	CPSOs - Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders NPPS - National Procurement Policy Statement PA23 - Procurement Act 2023 WTO – World Trade Organisation

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Ben Hosier, Head of Commercial Development
Catherine Silva Donayre, Strategic Director of Corporate & Commercial Services

✉ ☎

Ben.Hosier@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228215 (ext. 2215)

Catherine.silvadonayre@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228215 (ext. 2332)

Corporate Priorities	Community engagement: Engage with residents and partners to have a real say on our services and the borough. Service improvement and delivery: Running the Council efficiently and putting residents at the heart of everything we do Sustainable future: Take action on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Proud and thriving borough: Realise our potential as a great place to live and work with a thriving business community
Wards affected	All

Purpose of the report:	For the Cabinet to consider and recommend to Council the changes and updates to the Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders (CPSOs), Financial Regulations and the Constitution as set out in the report

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That Cabinet recommends Council agrees:
	
	1. To the updates to the Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders (CPSOs) as set out below
	
	   a) That the content of the proposed CPSOs is separated out so that the principles, objectives, and ambitions remain, but the technical guidance is removed.
	
	   b) That the CPSOs are redrafted to simplify and improve the strategic governance and operational effectiveness as set out in section 2.3.2 of the main report.
	
	   c) That the 'Supplementary Instructions' attributed to the CPSOs, that set out the technical aspects of the commissioning and procurement activities for officer compliance, are drafted as separate documents as set out in section 2.3.3 of the main report.
	
	   d) That any future amendments to the CPSOs will be subject to the amendment protocol as set out in section 2.3.4 of the main report.
	
	   e) That the content of the CPSOs shall be based upon the procurement principles, objectives, and ambitions as set out in section 2.3.5 of the main report.
	
	2. That the Constitution will be updated to ensure that the Financial Regulations align with the financial thresholds stated on the CPSOs as set out below
	
	   a) Part 8 – Annex 1 Financial Regulations (Annex D Schemes of Delegation) increase value for Head of Service for contract letting from £75k to £99,999 and for Team Leaders from £25k to £29,999, and to increase approvals on Unit 4 for Team Leaders from £25k to £29,999.
	
	   b) Section 5: The acquisition of assets (Regulation E.5) increase value for Head of Service for total asset purchase price from £75k to £99,999 and for Team Leaders from £25k to £29,999

	3. That the Constitution will be updated as set out below: **a)** Part 8 – Annex 2 Procurement Standing Orders replace the existing CPSOs with the new updated version that incorporates the changes brought about by the implementation of the PA23. 4. That Cabinet recommends that Council delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential amendments to the Constitution to give effect to recommendation 1, 2 and 3 above.
Period for post policy/project review:	At least on an annual basis, or when updated national policy of legislation is released

1   Introduction/Background:

1.1   Following the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, the Government announced plans to transform the public procurement regime, aiming to improve the way public procurement is regulated.

1.2   Cabinet Office presented a green paper on Transforming Public Procurement to Parliament in December 2020 which began the consultation process.

1.3   The consultation culminated with the Government's new procurement regime which was introduced through the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23). This was laid in parliament in March 2024 to bring elements of the legislation and the wider regime into effect.

1.3   The new PA23 regime was established to go live on the 28 Oct 2024 through the introduction of the Procurement Directives 2024, providing a period of 6 months to allow for public sector organisations to implement and prepare for necessary changes.

1.5   On 12 September 2024, the Government announced that the proposed 'go live' date for the implementation of the PA23 was being delayed until 24 February 2025. It was stated that the main reason for this delay was due to the need to draft a new National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS), to align with the new Government's priorities, the current NPPS had been drafted by the previous Government.

1.6   This report highlights the key changes that the PA23 will impose, the support that the Cabinet Office have provided the public sector to implement these changes, impact these changes will have on the Council's procurement governance arrangements.

2   Key Issues:

2.1   Public Procurement Update

2.1.1   The PA23 is designed to overhaul the current public procurement process. It reforms the UK's public procurement regime to:

- create a simpler and more flexible commercial system.
- open up public procurement to new entrants.
- embed transparency throughout the commercial lifecycle.

2.1.2   These improvements require the Council to:

- Review and update existing procurement strategies & governance arrangements.
- Upskill and re-train staff.
- Improve planning of procurement resources and activities

The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money.

2.1.3   Cabinet Office have produced 47 written guidance notes to accompany the PA23, most of these have been released throughout the year, with plans for the remaining guidance to be published by January 2025.

2.1.4   The written guidance primarily focuses on the technical instructions that ensure delivery with updated legislative procedures when undertaking commissioning & procurement activities.

2.1.5 The written guidance establishes the different stages of the commercial cycle as being:

- Plan
- Define
- Procure
- Manage

The PA23 applies to each of these stages of the commercial cycle.

2.1.6 Specific written guidance focuses on the key principles, application, and ambitions of the PA23, which are more akin to policy and strategy development, it is this guidance that has been used to review the existing procurement governance arrangements – the Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders (CPSOs).

2.1.7 The review of the CPSOs also sought feedback from contracting officers, which identified that several found the current CPSOs are considered long and difficult to read, which has consequences for ongoing compliance.

2.1.8 The CPSOs have been updated to align with the new legislation and have also been considered as part of a wider review of procurement & contract management processes. The proposed CPSOs will now focus on key principles, application, and ambitions rather than the technical instructions for officers. This report sets out below recommendations on how the proposed CPSOs have been updated.

2.1.9 The delay with the publication of the last remaining documents of written guidance means that although the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' are being developed, they are unable to be completed until all written guidance and templates have been released.

2.2 Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders

2.2.1 The CPSOs have been redrafted to include the relevant aspects of the new legislation with the objective being to simplify them from an officer perspective and to improve the overall governance arrangements.

2.2.2 The content of the proposed CPSOs has been significantly reduced by focussing on the key principles, application, and ambitions within the main document, with separate technical 'Supplementary Instructions' concentrating on the specific commissioning and procurement procedures that officers will need to comply with.

2.2.3 The proposed CPSOs have been simplified as officers will only follow the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' that are relevant for the value of their procurement, rather than seeking the relevant instructions amongst all the technical instructions as is the case in the current CPSOs.

2.2.4 The Procurement Team has established an implementation action plan that has focused on updating procurement guidance and preparing the Council for the new legislation. This is built around the following themes:

- Process & Controls
- Roles and responsibilities
- Systems & Technology
- Governance
- Guidance & Templates
- Training
- Communication

2.2.5 Officers within Procurement have worked with colleagues in Legal and Finance to produce the proposed CPSOs and the recommendations in this report. Changes have been reviewed to ensure that they will align with the Constitution, Financial Regs and associated officer guidance. This updated version of the CPSOs have been presented to the Finance & Resources OSC and following this Cabinet will be recommended for approval and adopted by Council in February 2025.

2.3 Impact on the CPSOs

2.3.1 The new procurement legislation requires the CPSOs to be updated and also provides an opportunity for some changes to be recommended that will make the Council's commissioning and procurement arrangements more efficient and effective. These are set out below.

2.3.2 It has been identified that having the principles, obligations and objectives of public procurement and the technical guidance for all the commissioning and procurement processes combined in one set of CPSOs has led to officers finding them difficult to follow from a compliance perspective.

Recommendation

That the content of the CPSOs is separated out so that the principles, objectives, and ambitions remain, but the technical guidance is removed.

The CPSOs are redrafted to simplify and improve the strategic governance and operational effectiveness, by focussing on the following areas:

- *Legal Status*
- *Amendments*
- *General Principles in Public Procurement*
- *Application*
- *Setting Aside Standing Orders*
- *General Advice & Guidance*
- *Contract Type & Value*
- *Procurement Forward Plan*
- *Procurement Process & Exceptions*
- *Authorisation Levels*

2.3.3 The current CPSOs include guidance on many different types of commissioning & procurement activities, this has been identified as having caused confusion with officers who undertake these activities infrequently.

Recommendation
To agree that the 'Supplementary Instructions' attributed to the CPSOs, that set out the technical aspects of the commissioning and procurement activities for officer compliance, are drafted as separate documents:

- *Quotations - Contract values up to £29,999*
- *Quotations - Contract values up to £99,999*
- *Tenders - Contract values from £100k up to WTO Thresholds*
- *Tenders - Contract values over WTO Thresholds*

2.3.4 To ensure the strategic effectiveness of the CPSOs, it is proposed that the following amendment protocol shall be adopted.

Recommendation
To agree that any future amendments to these CPSOs will be subject to the following amendment protocol:

- *Any <u>major</u> changes to the CPSOs in the future will be presented to Council, after first being presented to Finance & Resources OSC & Cabinet.*
- *Delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director Corporate & Commercial to make <u>minor</u> amendments or corrections to the CPSOs in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Corporate & Commercial Services. Any changes are to be formalised through an Officer Decision Record Sheet.*
- *Delegated Authority is also provided for the Strategic Director Corporate & Commercial Services to approve the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' and to make any future amendments where they deem this appropriate. Any changes are to be formalised through an Officer Decision Record Sheet*

    2.3.5   To ensure that the strategic direction of the Council's commissioning and procurement activities align with best practice.

       <u>Recommendation</u>
       To agree that the content of the CPSOs shall be based upon the procurement principles, objectives, and ambitions of:

- *Procurement Legislation*
- *National Procurement Policy Statement*
- *The Council's Procurement Strategy and relevant sections of the Commercial Strategy*

2.4 Next Steps

    2.4.1   The project team will thoroughly review the remaining written guidance (when it has been released) to understand the implications on the Council, including the wider Constitution. A presentation of the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' will be presented to Commercial Board in January (subject to the written guidance being released) and will also include an overview of the officer awareness/training programme that will have been finalised by this stage.

    2.4.2   Subject to obtaining Cabinet agreement, the proposed CPSOs are planned to be approved and adopted by Council in February 2025. The PA23 will go live on 24 February 2025.

3 Options and alternatives considered

3.1   The Council does not have the option of not complying with any new legislation or national policies that arise from the PA23, as this will be the primary public procurement legislation.

3.2   The Council could continue with the approach of having the CPSOs updated as a single document, rather than separating out the technical guidance as 'Supplementary Instructions', but this is not recommended as it has been identified that they are more effective and clearer when they are separated out.

4 Consultation

4.1   Any changes to procurement process or procedure that arise out of the new legislation has included stakeholder engagement (Cabinet Office Green Paper on Transforming Public Procurement).

4.2   Any changes will also include officer awareness training and guidance to be produced, which will help with officer compliance and buy-in.

5 Financial and value for money implications:

5.1   It is not yet known whether any of the new duties and responsibilities that arise from the PA23 will have any financial implications for the Council, however it should be noted that officer duties across the Council will need to accommodate an increased emphasis on

transparency and contract management; with requirements for public sector bodies to publish more information about procurement decisions and contract performance.

5.2   The new legislation emphasises the importance of achieving value for money in all procurement activities. This means considering not only the cost but also the quality and sustainability of the goods, services and works procured.

5.3   There is a stronger focus on managing supplier performance, ensuring that suppliers meet their contractual obligations and deliver high-quality outcomes. This includes regular performance reviews and a more structured approach to contract management.

5.4   In turn, this could lead to the Council achieving greater value for money and the Council will need to ensure that it has strong contract management practices across its key contracts.

6   Legal Implications

6.1   The PA23 will have significant legal implications for the Council and these have been included in the proposed CPSOs and will be included in the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' when they are finalised.

6.2   It is very important to ensure that these CPSOs, the Financial Regulations, the Constitution, and any associated documentation i.e. An Officer Guide to Decision Making align to provide a consistent message.

7   Risk implications:

7.1   If the remaining written guidance is not released before early January, there is a high risk that the impact of this outstanding guidance may not be included in the update to the Council's CPSOs.

8   Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

8.1   Community Impact Assessment reviewed/carried out and annexed   - The CIA has not identified any negative impacts.

8.2   Human Rights – there are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

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

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

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

Consultation with statutory stakeholders will ensure that any implications on Council infrastructure are considered.

11   Statutory Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer:

The amendments proposed will ensure that the Council complies with the Procurement Act 2023 but will also provide more useable technical guidance to ensure that officers follow standing orders in all procurements and achieve value for money for the Council.

S151:

The proposal is to ensure that the Council complies with the Procurement Act 2023 and no direct financial implications are expected because of these changes.

The proposals include changes to the financial thresholds for Heads of Services and Team Managers that are both appropriate and considered. These changes are the first recent significant change in these thresholds and reflect the medium-term inflationary increases impacting the council.

12   Conclusions:

12.1   In conclusion, the above report provides assurance on the work that has taken place in relation to preparing the Council for the new procurement legislation:

12.1.2   There are a number of recommendations put forward in this report that Cabinet are being asked to support and recommend for approval and adoption by Council in February 2025.

PROPOSED
COMMISSIONING &
PROCUREMENT
STANDING
ORDERS

2025-2030

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

CHANGE CONTROL OF AMENDMENTS

Version	Approval Date	Officer	Approved by	Summary of Changes
V1.0	Nov 2019	Ben Hosier	Cabinet & Council	The Commissioning and Procurement 'Standing Orders' are adopted.
V2.0	Apr 2021	Ben Hosier	Monitoring Officer	Updated following the UK withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit).
V3.0	Apr 2022	Andrew Linden	NA	Amended the appendices to include appendix 11 and 12 as these were not working as embedded documents in Schedule 11.
V4.0		Ben Hosier	Cabinet & Council	Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders are updated to comply with Procurement Act 2023 and Procurement Regulations 2024 to simplify the 'Standing Orders' to improve effectiveness & governance

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

Glossary

Cabinet
The Cabinet is the part of the Council which is responsible for making most of the strategic and policy decisions.

Code of Conduct
Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way Councillors or employees undertake their duties.

Commercial Board
Nondecision-making board with oversight of commercial & procurement activity at Senior Officer level.

Concession Contracts
A concession contract is remunerated by third parties who are utilising the contract rather than directly by an authority.

Constitution
A document that sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures to be followed to ensure that they are accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Overview & Scrutiny Committees promote service improvements, influence policy development, and hold the Executive to account for the benefit of the whole community.

Financial Regulations
Financial Regulations provide the framework for managing the financial affairs of the Council. They apply to every Member and employee of the Council and to anyone acting on its behalf. All Members and employees must adhere to them at all times. Financial Regulations form part of the Council's constitution.

Framework Agreement
An agreement or arrangement between one or more procurers and one or more suppliers that establishes the requirement and contract conditions that will apply to future call-offs (contracts) that the procurer(s) may enter into during the period for which the framework agreement is established.

Council
Responsible for setting the policy framework, agreeing the budget, agreeing major strategic policies, and spending plans and making constitutional and other important decisions.

Government Commercial Function
The Government Commercial Function is a cross-government network procuring or supporting the procurement of goods and services for the government.

Local Government Act 1972
An Act of Parliament making provision with respect to local government and the functions of local authorities in England and Wales.

Local Government Transparency Code 2015
Places more power into citizens' hands to increase democratic accountability to contribute to local decision making process and help shape public services.
Transparency is the foundation of local accountability and gives people the tools and information they need to enable them to play a bigger role in society.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

Monitoring Officer
A Monitoring Officer is the statutory Officer responsible for the legal governance of a local authority in much the same way that a section 151 Officer is responsible for a Council's finances.

National Procurement Policy Statement
A statutory statement which allows the Government to set and communicate the wider policy objectives to which it expects public procurement to contribute.

Officer Decision Record Sheet
A record of a decision that would previously have been taken by a committee/sub-committee but has been delegated to an Officer.

PH/Portfolio Holder/PH Decision
A record of a decision by a Portfolio Holder delegated by the Leader of the Council in relation to their nominated portfolio area, in accordance with the constitution's principles of decision making.

Procurement Act 2023
An Act of Parliament that covers public procurement law in the United Kingdom that will reform the existing procurement rules.

Procurement Regulations 2024
A set of Regulations on public procurement that will bring in the elements of the Procurement Act 2023.

Public Procurement Legislation
Public sector procurement is subject to a legal framework which encourages free and open competition and value for money, in line with internationally and nationally agreed obligations and regulations. As part of its strategy, the government aligns procurement policies with this legal framework, as well as with its wider policy objectives.

Schemes of Delegation
As part of the Constitution, the Council delegates executive functions and decisions, this can be to a committee, Portfolio Holder, or Officer.

SLT
Strategic Leadership Team includes the Chief Executive and the Strategic Directors.

Service Contracts
Where a provider is providing time, effort, and expertise, e.g. cleaning services, consultancy, or advice.

Supplies Contracts
Where goods and supplies are purchased or hired; it also includes energy, water, and fuel.

Works Contracts
Where the carrying out construction or building repairs works or building refurbishments are required.

WTO GPA Thresholds
World Trade Organisation General Procurement Agreement financial levels where covered procurements need to be openly advertised.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

SECTION ONE

1. Introduction

1.1 These 'Standing Orders' set out how the Council undertakes and authorises expenditure and contracts with other organisations. This ensures that prior to any expenditure being incurred by the Council, there is, (subject to value) a clear identification and consideration of the need, whether the need can be satisfied internally, or if external support is required that results in third part contracts being awarded in a fair, open and transparent way.

The Council operates a devolved commissioning and procurement model, whereby services are responsible for their own commissioning and procurement activities and management of contracts. Central oversight and scrutiny, providing assurance on compliance and value for money is delivered through the Commercial Development team, and oversight of this at Senior Officer level through Commercial Board, and also SLT for significant decisions.

Senior Officers (Heads of Service and above) are accountable for all commissioning and procurement in their respective areas of responsibility. Anyone who buys on behalf of the Council, including staff, contractors, and consultants, are responsible for following these 'Standing Orders' and all relevant policies, guidance, and instructions.

These 'Standing Orders' must be considered along with the Council's Financial Regulations and Schemes of Delegation that form part of the Council's Constitution.

SECTION TWO

2. Legal Status

2.1 Public procurement is subject to a legal framework that aligns with internationally and nationally agreed obligations, regulations, and policies. In the United Kingdom, the primary public sector procurement legislation is the Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulations 2024.

2.2 Under this legislation, the Council is described as a 'Contracting Authority.' The term 'Contracting Authority' defines the entities that are covered by this legislation and forms the basis of the UK's international obligations under public procurement.

2.3 Under section 135 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is required to produce these 'Standing Orders'. These set out how the Council will award third party contracts for the provision of goods, services, or works and include a provision for securing competition for such contracts and for regulating the manner in which tenders are invited.

2.4 The Strategic Director Corporate & Commercial Services is responsible for keeping these 'Standing Orders' under review. Any amendments to these 'Standing Orders' must be undertaken as set out in Section 3 below.

2.5 The purpose of these 'Standing Orders' is to provide a clear governance framework for Officers and members to follow, to deliver an efficient, effective, and economic outcome when carrying out commissioning and procurement activities on behalf of the Council.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

2.6 These 'Standing Orders' set out the rules that must be followed by the Council for:

  i.   Undertaking any commissioning & procurement activity, which involves the procurement of goods, services, or works and / or,
  ii.   The award of any Concession Contracts.
  iii.   Setting up any Framework Agreement.

2.7 Officers carrying out commissioning and procurement activities on behalf of the Council must certify, at the time of any such activities, that they have read and understood the latest version of the ''Standing Orders'', this self-certification will be included in the quotation/tender requisition form for all notifiable activities above £30k.

2.8 Failure to comply with these 'Standing Orders' is in direct contravention of the 'Council's Constitution' and is, therefore, a disciplinary offence that may be classed as gross misconduct or breach of contract.

2.9 These 'Standing Orders' are complemented by technical 'Supplementary Instructions' that provide clear and simple processes to follow when undertaking commissioning and procurement activities. The technical 'Supplementary Instructions' must be adhered to unless otherwise approved in writing by the Head of Commercial Development.

SECTION THREE

3. Amendments

3.1 These 'Standing Orders' shall be subject to the following amendment protocol:

3.1.1 'Standing Orders'
  - Council shall be responsible for the approval of any <u>major</u> amendments to these 'Standing Orders.'
  - The Strategic Director Corporate & Commercial Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder will approve <u>minor</u> amendments or corrections where they are satisfied that it is appropriate to do so. These amendments will be formalised through an Officer Decision Record Sheet process.

3.1.2 Technical 'Supplementary Instructions'
  The Strategic Director Corporate & Commercial Services will approve amendments to the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' where they are satisfied that it is appropriate to do so. These amendments will be formalised through an Officer Decision Record Sheet process.

SECTION FOUR

4. General Principles in Public Procurement

4.1 These 'Standing Orders' support the procurement principles, objectives, and ambitions of:

  A. Public Procurement Legislation
      I.   delivering value for money
      II.   maximising public benefit
      III. sharing information for the purpose of allowing suppliers and others to understand the authority's procurement policies and decisions
      IV.   acting, and being seen to act, with integrity.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

B. National Procurement Policy Statement
    I.   value for money
    II.   social value
    III.   small and medium-sized enterprises
    IV.   commercial and procurement delivery; and
    V.   skills and capability for procurement

C. The Council's procurement strategy and relevant sections of the commercial strategy.

- Achieving 'community benefits' by creating social value to enable delivery of excellence in services to our communities
- Demonstrating 'leadership' by being transparent, accountable, trustworthy, and delivering high standards of equality and inclusiveness
- Obtaining relevant 'insight and intelligence' to identify and commission the right outputs/outcomes.
- Behaving 'commercially' through reviewing service delivery models (e.g. outsourced, shared service) to be the most efficient, effective, and economical
- Delivering 'early intervention' to prevent costs escalating or arising in the first place
- Effective management of contracts through regular review and proactive management of supplier performance, maximizing value for money and mitigating risk?

SECTION FIVE

5. Application

5.1 These 'Standing Orders' apply to the commissioning and procuring in all of the following areas, regardless whether it is funded from revenue or capital expenditure:

    a. Supplies Contracts
    b. Service Contracts
    c. Works Contracts
    d. Concession Contracts
    e. Framework Agreements

5.2 'Standing Orders' do not apply to:

    f. Grants – including strategic partners, annual grants and disabled facility grants etc.
    g. Employment contracts (e.g. the Council's own staff)
    h. Contracts relating to the purchase or sale of land.
    i. Appointment of legal counsel and the appointment of expert witnesses' in legal proceedings
    j. Financial services such as obtaining a loan.
    k. Vertical contract arrangements (previously referred to as Teckal), but only if specific control and activities tests are met (refer to Procurement Act 2023 Schedule 2)
    l. Horizontal contract arrangements (previously referred to as Hamburg), but only if specific control tests are met (refer to Procurement Act 2023 Schedule 2)

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

SECTION SIX

6.   Exceptions to 'Standing Orders'

6.1   These 'Standing Orders' will always apply unless an approval is granted to set them aside. Details of how to set these 'Standing Orders' aside are set out below.

6.2   Setting aside the requirement to comply with these 'Standing Orders' may only be made by Council, the Cabinet, or the appropriate Cabinet Portfolio Holder responsible for the service affected by the contract and then only subject to the following requirements:

   i.   The special circumstances requiring the setting aside of these 'Standing Orders' must first be reported to the Commercial Board together with a detailed justification for the proposed action, and
   ii.   The special circumstances justifying the reason to set aside these 'Standing Orders' must be noted and recorded along with the decision in the Council or Cabinet minutes or PH decision record.
   iii.   All instances and reason for setting aside these 'Standing Orders' will be reported to the Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

6.3   In the event that there is a requirement to set aside these 'Standing Orders,' advice should be sought from the Head of Commercial Development as to how to proceed.

6.4   The setting aside of these 'Standing Orders' shall not be permitted if the contract value breaches the financial thresholds as stated in the Procurement Act 2023 or as subsequently published. If a situation arises where a contract award would result in the Council breaching the financial thresholds you must immediately contact the Head of Commercial Development to discuss available options.

SECTION SEVEN

7.   General Advice and Guidance

7.1   Following these 'Standing Orders' and technical 'Supplementary Instructions' is the best defence against allegations that any commissioning and procurement activity has been concluded incorrectly or fraudulently. Officers and members undertaking commissioning and procurement activities must comply with these 'Standing Orders' and the technical 'Supplementary Instructions,' which set out the minimum requirements.

7.2   The technical 'Supplementary Instructions' provide separate detailed procedures that must be complied with for the following commissioning and procurement activities and values:

   - Quotations - Contract values up to £29,999
   - Quotations - Contract values up to £99,999
   - Tenders - Contract values from £100k up to WTO GPA Thresholds[1]
   - Tenders - Contract values over WTO GPA Thresholds[1]

   [1]World Trade Organisation Government Procurement Agreement currently Supplies & Services £214,904 (including Vat), Works & Concessions £5,372,609 (including Vat)

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

7.3 The technical 'Supplementary Instructions' have been designed around the approach to commissioning and procurement that has been set out by the Government Commercial Function, in that it identifies 4 separate segments of the journey:

- Plan
- Define   } Commissioning
- Procure   Quotation/Tender
- Manage   Contract Delivery

7.4 Before commencing any commissioning and procurement activity, and in the interests of good governance, Officers and members should:

7.4.1   Check to ensure that you have the necessary authority to commence the commissioning and procurement activity.

7.4.2   Check with the budget holder that there is a budgetary provision or an approved supplementary estimate in place.

7.4.3   Check with the procurement service whether there is an existing contract in place, which should be used.

7.4.4   Declare any personal, direct, or indirect, financial interests in any commissioning and procurement activity, failure to do so is in direct contravention of the 'Council's Constitution' and is, therefore, a disciplinary offence that could be classed as gross misconduct and could lead to a criminal conviction.

7.4.5   A Contracting Authority must take all reasonable steps to identify and keep under review any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest in relation to a procurement. This information should be documented in a conflicts assessment, which must include details of any actual or potential conflicts of interest the Contracting Authority has identified and any steps that the Contracting Authority has taken to mitigate such conflicts. A Contracting Authority must keep any conflict assessment under review, revise such assessments as necessary and when publishing any notices, confirm that a conflicts assessment has been prepared and revised.

7.5 All Council members and Officers must act in an ethical and professional manner whilst undertaking any commissioning and procurement activity

7.6 Members and Officers must seek to uphold and enhance the reputation of the Council by complying with the relevant 'code of conduct'.

7.6.1   Officers must comply with the Council's 'Code of Conduct for employees'. This can be found in the employment handbook under section 12 – conduct – code of conduct for employees.

7.6.2   Council members must comply with the Council's 'Code of Conduct for Councillors'. This can be found in the Constitution under Part 5 codes and protocols.

7.6.3   Maintaining a high standard of integrity in all business and commercial relationships both inside and outside the Council.

7.6.4   Maintaining high professional standards by promoting equal treatment, openness and transparency in all commissioning and procurement activity.

7.6.5 Rejecting any business practice, which might appear improper to a reasonable observer, e.g. where offers of gifts or hospitality could give the appearance of trying to obtain influence or favour. Any offer whether accepted or not must be declared to your manager.

7.6.6 Taking advice from your manager, any Officer from the relevant procurement team and/or the Monitoring Officer when in doubt.

7.6.7 Declaring any personal and/or financial interest and/or conflict of interests using the relevant forms in the 'code of conduct' documentation.

7.6.8 Maintaining the confidentiality of information with respect to any quotation or tender submissions.

7.6.9 Ensuring any information given by Officers or members in the course of their duties should be true, accurate and fair and never designed to mislead.

7.6.10 Bearing in mind the advantages of maintaining a continuing relationship with suppliers, contractors and consultants, members and Officers should avoid any arrangement which might, in the long term, prevent the effective operation of fair competition.

7.7 What is a contract?

7.7.1 Contracts are legally binding agreements and, in English law, to be binding, contracts need not be in writing (except for contracts for the sale or lease of land). A contract is made when one person offers to undertake or supply something to another person and that offer is accepted unconditionally by the person to whom the offer was made, who in turn, supplies value (which can be money or money's worth).

7.7.2 Contracts may be concluded in writing, by word of mouth, over the telephone, or even by performance. For example, the purchase of a newspaper from a shop, even if unaccompanied by a single spoken word, will constitute a legally binding contract from which legal obligations follow (e.g. to deliver the paper, to pay for it).

7.7.3 It is not the purpose of the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' to give a definitive guide on UK contract law. The user of the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' should, however, be aware that in any commercial dealings with a supplier, contractor, or consultant, his or her actions might be deemed in law to have constituted a fully binding legal contract on behalf of the Council. In any case, of doubt, advice should be taken from the Head of Commercial Development or Head of Commercial Housing Contracts.

7.7.4 Officers and members should ensure in all commissioning and procurement activities that the following matters have been complied with:

7.7.4.1 The general UK law and, in particular, the provisions of the Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulations 2024. Where the provisions of legislation conflict, the legislation will always take following precedence.

7.7.4.2 The Procurement Regulations 2024

7.7.4.3 The Council's Financial Regulations

7.7.4.4 These 'Standing Orders'

7.7.5 Local Government Transparency Code 2015. The Council has to publish details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase orders, frameworks, or any other legally enforceable agreement for values over £5,000.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

8. **Determining the Type of Contract and its Value**

8.1 It is important to determine between the following classifications of contract before you proceed:

8.1.1 "Supply" contracts are where goods and supplies are purchased or hired; it also includes energy, water, and fuel.

8.1.2 "Service" contracts are where the service provider is providing time, effort, and expertise. Service contracts, e.g. cleaning services, consultancy, fees, or advice.

8.1.3 "Works" contracts are contracts for the carrying out construction or building repairs works or building refurbishments.

8.2 Different thresholds apply to goods, services and works contracts. Where a contract contains a mixture of these elements (a mixed contract), a Contracting Authority will need to determine which threshold to apply and whether a mixed contract should have those elements separated into different contracts. If the contract is separated out, thresholds can be calculated separately for each separate contract (each of which will only fall within one such type).

If a mixed contract can reasonably be separated out, but a Contracting Authority chooses not to do so, the mixed contract will, where one element is above its corresponding threshold, be treated as above-threshold.

Further guidance and advice is available from the relevant procurement service with regard to the classification of supplies, services and works.

8.2 Calculating the Value of a Contract

8.3 Rules on estimating contract values are necessary as a result of there being different thresholds (and consequently different obligations on contracting authorities) for different types of contract.

8.4 A Contracting Authority must estimate the value of a contract as the maximum amount it could expect to pay under the contract:

8.4.1 The estimated aggregate value of a series of contracts or a renewable contract is entered into for supplies, services and/or works of a similar type, this must take into account both the annual value as well as the number of years it will operate for:

By way of example, a three-year contract to supply financial advice at **£50,000** per year will have an aggregated value of **£150,000**.
Whereas a three-year contract with the option to extend for a further two-years to supply financial advice at **£50,000** per year, will have an aggregated value of **£250,000.**

8.5 There shall be no artificial splitting of a contract to avoid the application of the provisions of the Procurement Regulations and/or these 'Standing Orders' or the technical 'Supplementary Instructions.'

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

9. Procurement Forward Plan

9.1 Forward Plan
The Procurement Forward Plan is a document that details all potential commissioning and procurement activity over a 5-year rolling period, in essence it is a pipeline of all procurement activities that may arise over a time period.

9.2 The purpose of the plan is to:

9.2.1 Allow the Council to sufficiently plan and carry out all commissioning processes prior to carrying out any tendering activity.

9.2.2 Allow the Council to ensure there is sufficient skills and resources available when carrying out tendering exercises.

9.2.3 To raise awareness of Council opportunities for the market to have ample time to prepare.

9.2.4 Enable the Council to optimise value for money through its commissioning and procurement activity.

9.3 To identify upcoming commissioning and procurement activities for inclusion on the Procurement Forward Plan, the Commercial Development team will analyse the Council's 'corporate contract register' and 'capital programme.' It is critical that the 'corporate contracts register' is kept up to date and Officers must ensure that they inform the Commercial Development team every time a contract is awarded above £5k.

9.4 Timescales

9.4.1 The Procurement Forward Plan utilises pre-determined timescales (based on the value and complexity of the project) to build a programme of work that allows for sufficient time to plan and undertake the commissioning stage, the tendering stage, and the contract award approval process in time for a new contract to be mobilised in time for the contract commencement date.

9.5 Procurement Pipeline

9.5.1 Contracting authorities to provide the market with information about current and future public contract opportunities by publishing a forward-looking procurement pipeline. The Procurement Act 2023 requires in certain instances the publication of pipeline notices.

- Where a Contracting Authority expects to spend more than £100M per year on its entire third party expenditure, then they must publish a procurement pipeline notice.
- This pipeline notice must include specific details of all contracts that have a total value of £2M or above.

9.5.2 The pipeline notice must be published within 56 days of the first day of the relevant financial year. Although not all contracting authorities will be required to publish pipeline notices they may choose to publish them voluntarily in support of transparency and good procurement planning.

9.5.3   This is of particular benefit to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) as it provides them with time to plan for future work, ensuring a competitive and diverse market.

9.5.4   It has been agreed that the Council may choose to publish a procurement pipeline notice each year, even though they do not have to comply with this part of the Procurement Act 2023 requirement. The Council believes that this may represent good procurement planning and that early identification of these opportunities will be beneficial for local SMEs and VCSEs. The value of the contracts to be included in the procurement pipeline are set out in the technical 'Supplementary Instructions.'

SECTION TEN

10.   Quotation Table – Contract Vaues up to and including £99,999

10.1   For contract values and purchases up to and including £99,999, quotations should be obtained in accordance with the table below:

Value	Requirements	Approval Process
Up to and including £29,999	▪ Please refer to technical 'Supplementary Instructions' for quotations up to £29,999	▪ Team Leader/Manager or above, is under a duty to seek value for money and take up quotations as appropriate for the supplies, services or works to be delivered. ▪ Team Leader/Manager or above must approve the award of contract by raising a requisition on the Unit 4 finance system. ▪ Team Leader/Manager must send through details of any contract award above £5k to the Commercial Development team for entry on the corporate contracts register.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS

From £30,000 up to and including £99,999	▪ Please refer to technical 'Supplementary Instructions' for quotations up to £99,999	▪ Head of Service or above, is under a duty to seek value for money and take up quotations as appropriate for the supplies, services or works to be delivered. ▪ Head of Service or above to approve award of contract by signing contract award certificate through the Commercial Development team. ▪ A requisition/purchase order must be raised through the Unit 4 finance system for the services, supplies or works. ▪ Head of Service must send through details of any contract award above £5k to the Commercial Development team for entry on the corporate contracts register.
Framework Agreement contracts Up to £99,999	▪ As a rule, framework contracts normally require an additional tendering process - even for lower values. You must contact the Commercial Development team for advice before calling off a contract from Framework Agreement	▪ Approval process to be the same as set out for values above (quotations)

10.2   Exceptions to Quotations

10.2.1 Prior authorisation from a member of the Commercial Development team is required to award a contract (up to and including £99,999) without undertaking any quotation process and only when one of the following situations apply:

10.2.1.1 A Framework Agreement that has already been awarded by other public sector bodies can be used by the Council provided that:

- the contract has been awarded to a single supplier, or;
- where there are multiple suppliers, a direct award is permitted by terms and conditions of contract; and the rules for a direct award have been complied with; and
- Use of the Framework Agreement has been approved by an Officer from the Commercial Development team.

10.2.2 Urgent supplies, services or works as necessary for the protection of life or property or to maintain the functioning of a public service for which the Council is responsible (or if there are a number of public service implications that also include any responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council).

10.2.3 Supplies, services, or works for the repair or enhancement of existing proprietary machinery, plant, equipment, software, and maintenance of any of these where there is no other reasonable alternative supplier.

10.2.4 The Head of Commercial Development or Head of Commercial Housing Contracts can approve an exception to obtaining quotations providing that a genuine justification be given.

10.2.5 In all of the above instances, the approval process set out in the table in Section 10 must be followed.

10.2.6 Delegated authority exists under the Constitution from Cabinet to the Chief Executive to approve funding for interim resource to deliver corporate priorities subject to a budget being approved in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and to report all expenditure and funding on a six-monthly basis to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio holder on the use made of this power.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT 'Standing Orders'

SECTION ELEVEN

11.1 Tendering Table for Contract Values of £100,000 and above

Value	Requirements	Process
Supplies, Services or Works From £100,000 up to WTO GPA Threshold	▪ Please refer to technical 'Supplementary Instructions' for tenders from £100,000 to the appropriate WTO GPA Threshold	▪ Assistant Director to approve award of contracts up to and including £250,000 by drafting an Officer Decision Record Sheet to approve award of contract. ▪ Strategic Director to approve contract award up to £500,000 by drafting Officer Decision Record Sheet. ▪ All contract values above £500,000 will require a PH Decision (unless delegated authority has been given by Cabinet or via a PH Decision). ▪ Requisition/purchase order must be raised through the Unit 4 finance system. ▪ Procurer must send through details of any contract award above £5k to the Commercial Development team for entry on the corporate contracts register.
WTO GPA Threshold and above	▪ Please refer to technical 'Supplementary Instructions' for tenders from the appropriate WTO GPA Threshold and above	▪ Assistant Director to approve award of contracts up to and including £250,000 by drafting an Officer Decision Record Sheet to approve award of contract. ▪ Strategic Director to approve award of contract up to £500,000 by signing a contract award certificate. ▪ All contract values above £500,000 will require a PH Decision (unless delegated authority has been given by Cabinet or via a PH Decision). ▪ A purchase order must be raised through the Unit 4 finance system for the services, supplies or works. ▪ Procurer must send through details of any contract award above £5k to the Commercial Development team for entry on the corporate contracts register.
Framework Agreement contracts £100,000 & above WTO GPA Threshold	▪ Please refer to technical 'Supplementary Instructions' for tenders from £100,000 to above WTO GPA Threshold	▪ Approval process to be same as set out for values above (tenders)
Collaborative Procurements	▪ Approval to collaborate on procurements to be approved by any Officer of the Commercial Development team. ▪ Tenders must be advertised in accordance with the rules of the lead authority. ▪ Details of contracts must be entered on to the contract register of the lead authority.	▪ Approval process for each authority to be as per the rules for that authority.

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11.2 TENDERING EXCEPTIONS

11.2.1 These tendering exceptions do not apply to contract values of WTO GPA threshold and above unless it is specifically stated. A contract award certificate, or Officer Decision Record Sheet or Portfolio Holder Record (depending on contract value) will need to be produced for any contract awarded using a tendering exception.

    11.2.1.1 If the value of the contract is above the threshold for presenting to Commercial Board, then a request to use these exceptions must be presented to Commercial Board.

    11.2.1.2 If the value of the contract is below the threshold for presenting to Commercial Board then a request to use these exceptions must be made to a member of the Commercial Development team.

11.2.2 Framework agreements that have already been awarded by other public sector bodies can be used by the Council provided such use is permitted by that Contract's terms and conditions and subject to the approval of any Officer from the Commercial Development team. Provided that the tendering of the framework has complied with the Procurement Regulations 2024, then this exception can be used for values over the WTO GPA threshold.

11.3 Tenders may also be dispensed with where the proposed contract genuinely falls within one of the following exceptions:

11.3.1 All contracts up to the value of £99,999 in respect of supplies, services, or works should be awarded following receipt of a quotation(s). Quotations must comply with relevant sections of these 'Standing Orders' and the technical 'Supplementary Instructions.' In any event, the placing of a purchase order must be carried out in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

11.3.2 Urgent supplies, services or works as necessary for the protection of life or property or to maintain the functioning of a public service for which the Council is responsible (or if there are a number of public service implications that also include any responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council). A record of the supplies, services or works together with the nature of the urgency must be passed to Commercial Board if above the threshold for presenting to them, or if below this threshold, then the Commercial Development team within five working days of the decision being taken.

11.3.3 Where supplies, services or works are available from Hertfordshire County Council or other public sector authorities under collaborative procurement arrangements. Provided that the tendering of the arrangement has complied with the Procurement Regulations 2024 then this exception can be used for values over the WTO GPA threshold

11.3.4 Supplies, services, or works for:
- Repair or enhancement of existing proprietary machinery, plant, or equipment;
- Software maintenance;
- Supplies, services, or works from government departments, government owned companies, public sector organisations and non-departmental public bodies (or similar organisations -this is not an exhaustive list);
- Where there is no other reasonable alternative supplier.

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11.4 Cabinet Portfolio Holder approval (or Officer approval if there is a delegated authority in place) has been obtained to extend an existing contract (subject to the existing Contract being capable and compliant of such an extension). If the original contract was tendered in accordance with Procurement Regulations 2024, then this exception can be used for values over the WTO GPA threshold.

11.5 Delegated authority exists under the Constitution from Cabinet to the Chief Executive to approve funding for interim resource to deliver corporate priorities subject to a budget being approved in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and to report all expenditure and funding on a six-monthly basis to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio holder on the use made of this power.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT 'Standing Orders'

SECTION TWELVE

12.1 Who has the Authority to Award a Contract

12.1.1 The formal Contracting Decision to award a contract will be based upon the following circumstances:

Decision Maker	Authority	Process
An Officer Up to £500,000	▪ A written delegated authority exists under the Council's Constitution to all Team Leaders/Managers for contracts up to and including £29,999, Heads of Service for contracts up to and including £99,999, all Assistant Directors for contracts up to and including £250,000 and all Strategic Directors for contracts up to and including £500,000. ▪ Other delegated authority for specific supplies, services or works for other values may be listed within the Council's Financial Regulations under the 'Scheme of Delegation' - schedules 2 & 3 or by delegated authority granted by Cabinet or Portfolio Holder.	▪ Authority already exists in the Constitution for awarding contracts up to and including £29,999, a requisition/purchase order must be raised on Unit 4. Team Leader/Manager must send through details of any contract award above £5k to the Commercial Development team for entry on the corporate contracts register. ▪ Where delegated authority exists, the Officer must inform the Commercial Development team of the contract award and the Commercial Development team will prepare a written contract award certificate (between £30,000 and up to £99,999) ▪ Assistant Director to approve award of contracts up to and including £250,000 and Strategic Director for contracts valued between £250k - £500k. In both of these instances, the Officer will need to draft an Officer Decision Record Sheet with the Procurement Report and send to the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer for comments. Once statutory comments have been received, and the Officer Decision Record Sheet has been published on Modern Gov, the Officer must inform the commercial development service for entry on the corporate contracts register.
Delegated decisions to specific Officers	▪ Where Cabinet has delegated a specific decision to a particular Officer for determination	▪ Where a particular Officer e.g. an Assistant Director has a decision delegated to them in the Council's Constitution, that Officer can submit an Officer Decision Record Sheet for values above £500,000.
Portfolio Holder Above £500,000	▪ The Council's scheme of delegation enables Portfolio Holders to award contracts above £500,000 in value in relation to their Portfolio. ▪ Where Cabinet has delegated a specific decision to a Portfolio Holder for determination	▪ A Portfolio Holder decision will be required in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The client department must prepare a Portfolio Holder Decision Record Sheet which must be submitted to together with the procurement report to 'Statutory Officers' for the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer comments; ▪ The Commercial Development team will prepare a procurement report detailing the procurement & tender process, the reason to award the contract and any relevant implications. ▪ The PH Decision process includes an internal approval process before the public consultation – 28 days. Allow a minimum of 6 weeks' extra time in your tender timescales for this process.

COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT 'Standing Orders'

Decision Maker	Authority	Process
Cabinet	▪ The Council's Constitution deems that the decision is a "key decision" and, therefore, it should be taken by the Cabinet.	▪ A resolution of Cabinet NB – It is anticipated that high risk or high impact contracts will be considered by Cabinet where there is a crosscutting benefit and/or implication of the award of the contract that could affect more than one portfolio.
Council	▪ The Council's Constitution reserves the power to Council.	▪ A resolution of Council NB – Council is only likely to be required to approve to award contracts where there are far- reaching benefits and/or implications to making a decision (e.g. redevelopment agreements etc.)

12.2 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, where there is any doubt as to who the appropriate decision maker is, then advice should be sought from an Officer from the Commercial Development team.

12.3 For more information concerning the Council's decision making process, you are strongly advised to click on the following link https://dacorumgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/dennis/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=4rnOhS&cid=22829485%2Dd91b%2D453c%2D8e25%2Da734dc326da3&FolderCTID=0x01200049F63486B5248545A4AA4E2D489A377D&id=%2Fsites%2Fdennis%2FShared%20Documents%2FCouncil%20and%20Democracy%2FDecision%20Making%2FOfficer%20Guide%20to%20Decision%20Making%20at%20Dacorum%20%28Final%20Jul24%29%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fdennis%2FShared%20Documents%2FCouncil%20and%20Democracy%2FDecision%20Making

SECTION THIRTEEN

13.1 Officers should read and familiarise themselves with the technical 'Supplementary Instructions' before commencing with any commissioning or procurement activity. These can be found on the Commissioning & Procurement Hub on SharePoint.

Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Template

Policy / service / decision	Procurement Act 2023 – Proposed Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders

Description of what is being impact assessed

What are the aims of the service, proposal, project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?

Stakeholders; Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc

It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact

Due to the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 in February 2025, the Council are required to update their procurement governance arrangements – in this instance the Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders (CPSOs).

The CPSOs provide guidance on key principles, application, and ambitions, whereas the technical supplementary instructions provide clear processes for officers to follow.

The objectives of the Procurement Act 2023 are set out below:

- create a simpler and more flexible commercial system
- open up public procurement to new entrants
- embed transparency throughout the commercial lifecycle

The change in legislation will primarily impact on businesses that want to contract with the Council, which could include local SMEs, which is supported by the objective of opening up public procurement to new entrants.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?

(include relevant national/local data, research, monitoring information, service user feedback, complaints, audits, consultations, CIAs from other projects or other local authorities, etc.). You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.

The legislation is unlikely to impact on protected groups, but has been introduced following Government consultation

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? *If you have not consulted other people, please explain why? You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

Cabinet Office presented a green paper on Transforming Public Procurement to Parliament in December 2020 which began the consultation process.
The update to the CPSOs is based upon the interpretation of this legislation and also includes feedback from officers who found the existing CPSOs too complicated to follow.

Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- *The PCs of Marriage and Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.*
- *Use "insert below" menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).*

Protected group	Summary of impact *What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?*	Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome

		Red	Amber	Green
Age	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on this protected group	☐	☒	☐
Disability (physical, intellectual, mental) *Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness & Learning Disability Guide*	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on this protected group	☐	☒	☐
Gender reassignment	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on this protected group	☐	☒	☐
Race and ethnicity	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on this protected group	☐	☒	☐
Religion or belief	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on this protected group	☐	☒	☐
Sex	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on this protected group	☐	☒	☐
Sexual orientation	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on this protected group	☐	☒	☐

Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, care leavers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.	The Act focuses on simplifying public procurement for public benefit, transparency, scrutiny, and value for money. The updated CPSOs have no bearing on these characteristics	☐	☒	☐

Negative impacts / outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken *(copy & paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)*	Date	Person responsible	Action complete
Not applicable.	Select date		☐
	Select date		☐
	Select date		☐
	Select date		☐

		Select date		☐
		Select date		☐
		Select date		☐
		Select date		☐

If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.	
Completed by (all involved in CIA)	**Ben Hosier**
Date	**13 December 2024**
Signed off by *(AD from different Directorate if being presented to SLT / Cabinet)*	
Date	
Entered onto CIA database - date	

To be reviewed by (officer name)	
Review date	

Cabinet

Report for:	Cabinet
Title of report:	Council Tax Setting Committee
Date:	January 28th 2025
Report on behalf of:	Councillor William Allen, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	None
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	SLT – Strategic Leadership Team

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Nigel Howcutt, Chief Financial Officer

✉ ☎

Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk 01442 228662 (ext. 2662)

Mark Brookes, AD Legal and Democratic Services

✉ ☎

Mark.brookes@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228236 (ext. 2236)

Corporate Priorities	• Community engagement • Service improvement and delivery • Vibrant communities • Sustainable future

	• Clean, safe and green • Homes to be proud of • Proud and thriving borough
Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	1. Cabinet to recommend to Council the creation of a new Council Tax Setting Committee.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	1. Cabinet recommends to Council the creation of a Council Tax Setting Committee. 2. That Cabinet recommends Council agrees to the terms of reference for the Committee as set out in section 2 of the report and delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the required changes to the Constitution to incorporate the Committee
Period for post policy/project review:	The Constitution is kept under continuous review by the Monitoring Officer and updates are proposed to Cabinet/Council when required.

1   Introduction

1.1   The Monitoring Officer is under a continuous duty to review the Constitution to ensure that it is up to date and provides an appropriate governance framework for all Council decision making.

1.2   Proposals for change may be prompted not only by formal internal reviews, but also by the Monitoring Officer, the Cabinet, other Members or officers and by public opinion.

1.3   The changes proposed in this report result primarily as a result of the change in Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) formal Council Tax precept approval timeline. The 2025/26 HCC formal council tax precept is expected to be approved on the 25th February 2025, circa 2 weeks later than previous years.

1.4   Dacorum Borough Council is the Tax billing authority for Dacorum Council tax payers and as part of this statutory responsibility the Council must approve the annual Council Tax Declaration form on behalf of Dacorum and its Precepting authorities, as set out in the

Local Government Finance Act 1992. The declaration cannot be formally approved by Dacorum Borough Council until all preceptors have formally issued their precept levels.

The Dacorum 2025/26 budget and Council Tax requirement is expected to be approved by members at full council on the 19th February. At this point historically the Council Tax Declaration would also be approved by full Council, but due to the change in HCC timelines this is not an option in 2025/26.

1.5   The proposed change to the constitution is to set up a Council Tax Setting Committee which will have one specific power to;

    1.   Set the Council Tax in accordance with chapter III & iV of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

2   Council Tax Setting Committee Proposals

2.1   Terms of Reference
The Council will appoint a Council Tax Setting Committee for the purpose of approving the Council Tax declaration where full council is unable to do so within statutory required timelines.

The Committee will have the responsibility as set below, where required:

    (a) Set the Council Tax in accordance with Chapter III & IV of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;

The functions of the Council Tax Setting Committee are to approve the overall level of Council Tax for the following financial year taking into account the precepts of all Major and Local Precepting Authorities.

2.2   Membership
The Committee shall consist of five members to be appointed by full Council to the Council Tax Setting Committee and shall be politically balanced in accordance with section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Chair shall be the Leader of the Council.

2.3   Quorum

The Quorum for a meeting of the Council Tax Setting Committee shall be three voting members of that Committee.

2.4   Proceedings of the Council Tax Setting Committee.
The sub committee will be used where the timetable for formal precepting partners council tax approval prevents the final council tax declaration being approved as part of full council. It is expected that there would be one meeting per annum of the Committee in February to approve the Council Tax Declaration report.

2.5   In addition, extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time, as and when appropriate. An extraordinary meeting may be called by the Chair of the Committee or by the Monitoring Officer if they consider it is necessary or appropriate.

2.6   Meetings of the Council Tax Setting Committee shall consider the following business:

(a) minutes of the last meeting;

(b) declarations of interest);

(c) any other business set out on the agenda for the meeting.

3   Options and alternatives considered

Dacorum uses the budget setting approval timeline as the approval of the annual housing rents as well and hence this needs to take place in the first half of February to ensure the annual housing rent bills can be issued in line with statutory requirements. The future HCC budget meetings are likely to take place at the end of February as they will be set to avoid future half term periods.

This is therefore expected to be an ongoing issue and hence the only other alternative option explored was for the council to set an annual extraordinary Council meeting at the end of February each year, in line with preceptor Council tax setting timelines, to approve the Council Tax Declaration submission. This would be a one agenda item meeting and it was considered an inefficient use of member time.

4   Consultation

There has been consultation with the Council's Strategic Leadership Team as well as senior Cabinet Members, group leaders and the finance and resources Overview and Scrutiny committee, to ensure that this approach is considered appropriate to enable the Council to operate effectively.

5   Financial and value for money implications:

There is no financial impact as a result of this approach.

6   Legal Implications

The scheme of delegation in Part 3 of the Constitution will need to be amended to include reference to this new Committee. Council will need to nominate members to the Committee in accordance with the political balance rules. At the time of writing this report that would require nominations from 2 Liberal Democrat, 2 Conservative and 1 Independent Councillor.

7   Risk implications:

Failure to have an effective process for setting the annual Council Tax declaration would contravene the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and could have a significant financial and reputational impact on the council if Council tax bills are challenged or unable to be issued appropriately.

10   Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

There are no Equalities, Community Impact of Human Rights implications arising from this report.

11   Sustainability implications.

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

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

There are no implications arising from this report.

13   Statutory Comments

This is a joint report of the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer and comments have been incorporated in the report

14   Conclusions:

The changes proposed in this report are required to ensure that the Council has an appropriate approval process for setting the Council Tax Declaration in line with the Local Government Finance Act 1992.