

# Public Document Pack



## **SUMMONS**

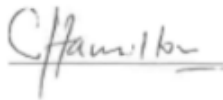
### **EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**Tuesday 15 October 2024**

**Council Chamber - The Forum**

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You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the Dacorum Borough Council in the County of Hertfordshire to be held in the Council Chamber - The Forum on Tuesday 15 October 2024 at 7.30 pm to transact the business set out below.



**CLAIRE HAMILTON  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**Contact: Democratic Services  
ext 2209**

# AGENDA

## 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

## 2. ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive announcements and business brought forward by the Mayor, the Chief Executive or the Group Leaders

3.1 By the Mayor:

3.2 By the Chief Executive:

3.3 By the Group Leaders: Any apologies for absence

## 3. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

To consider and approve the revised committee membership (this report will follow as a supplement)

## 4. CABINET REFERRALS (Pages 4 - 6)

To consider the following referrals from Cabinet:

### 4.1 Local Plan

*Subject to approval of recommendations at the Cabinet meeting being held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The report and recommendations can be viewed via the Cabinet agenda (Item 8)*

Cabinet agenda link: [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 14th October, 2024, 10.00 am \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/agenda-for-cabinet-on-monday-14th-october-2024-10.00-am)

4.2 CA/71/24 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024

**Provisional Financial Outturn 2023/24**

4.3 CA/82/24 10<sup>th</sup> Sept 2024

**Dacorum Borough Council Corporate Plan: "Our Plan For Dacorum 2024-28"**

**5. PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATES** (Pages 7 - 22)

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

- 5.1 Leader of the Council (*No verbal update due as this business was transacted at the Council meeting held 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024*)
- 5.2 Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Operations
- 5.3 Portfolio Holder Place
- 5.4 Portfolio Holder People & Transformation (including Climate and Ecological Emergency)
- 5.5 Portfolio Holder Corporate and Commercial Services
- 5.6 Portfolio Holder Housing & Property Services

**6. MOTIONS** (Page 23)

To consider the following motion proposed by Cllr Julie Banks;  
Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

**7. BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING** (Pages 24 - 26)

To consider any business referred from the previous meeting

# Agenda Item 4

## **Item 4 – Cabinet referrals**

### **4.1 CA/XX/24 THE LOCAL PLAN**

14<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Subject to approval of recommendations set out to the Cabinet meeting being held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The report and recommendations can be viewed via the Cabinet agenda (Item 8).

Cabinet agenda link: [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 14th October, 2024, 10.00 am \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://dacorum.gov.uk)

### **4.2 CA/71/24 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2023/24**

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024

#### **Decision**

Tote the 2023-24 provisional financial outturn position.

Ro approve the HRA revenue budget virements for 2024/25 set out at section 7.9 of this report.

#### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

3.To **recommend to Council to approve** the General Fund reserve transfers for 2023/24 and 2024/25 set out at section 8.1 of this report.

#### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

4.To **recommend to Council to approve** the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserve transfers 2023/24 set out at section 8.2 of this report.

#### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

5.To **recommend to Council to approve** the supplementary capital budget requests relating to 2023/24 and 2024/25 set out at section 9.4 of this report.

6.To approve the HRA capital virement relating to 2024/25 set out at section 9.5 of this report.

#### **Corporate Priorities**

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment

Building strong and vibrant communities

Ensuring economic growth and prosperity

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

Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery

Climate and ecological emergency

**Statutory Officer Comments:**

**Monitoring Officer:**

No comments to add to the report

**Deputy S151 Officer:**

S151 and Deputy S151 comments are contained in the body of the report. This is a Deputy s151 Officer report

**Advice**

N Howcutt introduced the report.

**Recommendation agreed**

**4.3 CA/82/24 DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN: “OUR PLAN FOR DACORUM 2024-28**

10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Decision**

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

Cabinet recommended the Corporate Plan “Our Plan for Dacorum 2024-28” to Council for adoption

**Corporate Priorities**

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment

Building strong and vibrant communities

Ensuring economic growth and prosperity

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

Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery

Climate and ecological emergency

**Statutory Officer Comments:**

**Monitoring Officer:**

The Corporate Plan is the overarching plan which sets the strategic direction for the Council and outlines the priorities for the next 4 years. The plan will enable sound decision-making within the framework of the plan and ensure that the Council can monitor progress.

**Deputy S151 Officer:**

The Corporate Plan was developed in parallel with the Council's wider financial planning and reflection of the Medium-Term financial sustainability was considered in the creation of the overarching 2024-2028 Corporate Plan.

**Advice**

A England introduced the report.

**Recommendation agreed**



## **5. Cabinet Member Updates**

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

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

- 5.1 Leader of the Council *(No verbal update due as this business was transacted at the Council meeting held 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024)*
- 5.2 Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Operations
- 5.3 Portfolio Holder Place
- 5.4 Portfolio Holder People & Transformation (including Climate and Ecological Emergency)
- 5.5 Portfolio Holder Corporate and Commercial Services
- 5.6 Portfolio Holder Housing & Property Services



## Council Briefing Note –

### NEIGHBOURHOOD OPERATIONS

The New Neighbourhood Operations Directorate is working on several projects and initiatives.

#### **1. Neighbourhood Management**

##### *1.1 Green Flag Award and Anglia in Bloom*

We have retained our long-standing five Green Flag Awards for Bunkers Park, Canal Fields, Chipperfield Common, Tring Memorial Garden and Jellicoe Water Gardens, and are pleased to have added Gadebridge Park to this list, meaning we now have six Green Flag Awards in the borough. For the first time, we participated to Anglia in Bloom awards and we achieved Gold for Gadebridge Park and Jellicoe Water Garden, and Silver Gilt for Tring Memorial Garden.

##### *1.2 Playground Refurbishment Programme*

The programme continues and playgrounds have now been refurbished at Apsley Lock, Croft Meadow, Flaunden, Tower Hill and Woodhall Farm – these have been well received by locally. Work has also commenced on the playground at Durrants Lane. Of the two sites where we had to go back to market, Miswell Lane and Warners End Upper Valley, both have now been approved for award and are working through the Council governance processes. Work at these sites is anticipated commencing in October.

##### *1.3 Trees and Woodlands*

Following a procurement process, the council's DBCs new tree work contractors are Gristwood & Toms Ltd and John O'Connor Ltd.

Both contractors will be carrying out works on DBC land within urban areas, with John O'Connor also completing works in DBC woodlands. Gristwood & Toms will be progressing our tree planting programme. Both companies are highly regarded within the industry, both based with Hertfordshire, and can provide a range of additional services, such as pest control and grounds maintenance operations, should these be required.

The first batches of urban works were issued in August and will then be issued monthly thereafter. Woodland works and tree planting will be progressed over the autumn/winter period. Work continues on an Ash Dieback strategy for the borough, and this will be progressed through Autumn and Winter.

##### *1.4 River Gade restoration*

The Environment Agency have now moved the River Gade restoration project into the delivery stage. A project start-up meeting took place on 22 August. The latest update from the Environment Agency regarding the programme of works scheduled for September includes vegetation clearance, tree works and the digging of a new channel.

The project is expected to progress during autumn and winter, with completion expected in spring.

#### **2. Waste and Recycling**

2.1 The percentage of household waste recycled (including composting) is a national indicator which the community recognise as a measurement of success and one which continues to feature heavily in national statistics when it comes to judging the efficacy of local, regional and national waste management strategies. Dacorum Borough Council continues to be performing well in relation to



recycling rate, it has increased its recycling rate from 50.5% to 51.6% and it is one of the top 5 authorities in Hertfordshire in that respect.

2.2 As well as working with residents, Dacorum provides several opportunities for schools and youth organisations across the borough to learn more about waste reduction, recycling and composting which promotes the value of recycling and encourage residents to re-use and recycle.

### **3. Environmental Health**

#### *3.1 Air Quality Action Plan*

The Air Quality Action Plan is being drafted with the Air Quality Lead at Hertfordshire County Council and will be presented at Scrutiny in the Autumn.

#### *3.2 Fly tipping*

The team continues to be very effective in environmental crime enforcement. A company has been successfully prosecuted following a fly-tipping offence in Dodds Lane, Hemel Hempstead in September 2023. Eco Clear Waste Management Ltd of Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley pleaded guilty to the unauthorised deposit of controlled waste and was ordered to pay over £13,000.

Dacorum Borough Council is part of the Hertfordshire Fly Tipping Group (HFTG). This is a multi-agency taskforce including the borough, district and county councils as well as Hertfordshire Constabulary, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Herts Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency and the National Farmers' Union.

These organisations have come together to improve how Hertfordshire responds to fly-tipping. The HFTG is delivering improvements in enforcement capability across the county, as well as rolling out new technology to assist in identifying and prosecuting fly-tippers.



## Council Briefing Note

### PLACE PORTFOLIO

#### Planning Services

Service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Work continues between DBC and HCC on the Local Cycle Walking Infrastructure Plan. A stakeholder engagement session, attended by around 30 people took place on 17 September with a consultation to follow. The timescales on this work have been updated due to the pre-election period.
- As reported to SPAE earlier this month, the percentage of all planning enforcement priority first site visits (PE04) has gone up to 94.7% against a target of 100%, up from 78.4% for Q4 and 65.8% for Q1 in 2023/24.
- The additional resources from Reserves for the Enforcement team have enabled them to continue to lower total live caseload. Currently, there is no enforcement backlog, which means that all cases can be visited within expected timeframes.
- Furthermore, the Enforcement service remain focused on dealing with the most harmful breaches of planning control. A total of 6 formal Notices were served in Q4 (4 Enforcement Notices and 2 Temporary Stop Notices). (In addition, a further 4 Enforcement Notices were served in July alone). Interviews for the now vacant Assistant Director for Planning post are scheduled for 8 October.

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

- Bovingdon Neighbourhood Plan was approved by Full Council 17 July for formal adoption, following the very positive poll result.
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document will proceed to consultation this autumn: dates are just being finalised.

#### Place and Enterprise

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- UK Shared Prosperity funded projects completed or nearing completion – Keens Field Flower Shield, People's Park feasibility study in Berkhamsted, and the Maylands Masterplan. Funding will also be used to support the delivery of Christmas lighting in the towns and neighbourhood centres
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Hemel Imaginarium. Working with partners, successful 'pop up' summer activities in Hemel Town Centre were delivered. This included a Summer of Sports delivered by Apex 360, a big screen in the town centre with deckchairs for the Olympics, with follow up screening for the Paralympics, and a 2 day freestyle bike ride workshop in Market Square
- The final report for the Maylands Masterplan has been received. The plan sets out the 20 year vision and a design guide setting out aspirations for the business park. The reports will be presented to Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

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

- Health Campus – A report was approved by Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> July detailing next steps and with recommendations to take the project forward and DBC's funding commitment of up to £200k for the next stages in feasibility work. This is being taken forward with the West Herts Teaching Hospitals Trust and the Herts and West Essex Integrated Care Board
- The first Dacorum Strategic Business Board will be held at a breakfast event at Shendish Manor on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- The Hemel Place Strategy is being reviewed in order for the document to be finalised, alongside a review of the Think Hemel website.

## **Communities and Leisure**

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Everyone Active the Council's leisure contractor has invested £410,000 in new fitness and gym equipment at Hemel and Berkhamsted Leisure Centres. The new spaces opened to the public in September and is part of the Council's approach to encouraging people of all ages and abilities to stay fit and healthy.
- Usage at the Leisure centres - during 2023-2024 usage at the three leisure facilities exceeded 900,000 visits. The Qtr. 1 usage for 2024-2025 saw an increase of 6,200 on last year.
- The adventure playground service saw over 7,359 children and young people visits during the 6 weeks of the school holidays.
- The Council has been awarded a grant of £49,000 by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to refurbish two outdoor courts in Tring (Pound Meadow). The works are due to commence in spring 2025 and will see the Council working with Tring Tennis Club to promote the courts and generate increased participation by local people.

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

- Community Grants Review August 2024 – the Council has undertaken a review of the grants scheme and has updated the criteria in line with best practice. In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the maximum grant award for the Community Grants has risen from £3,000 to £4,000. Alongside the review a new Training Bursary has also been created to support the sports, arts and community organisations develop their volunteers and unpaid coaches.
- Household Support Grant Round 6 – the Council has been awarded a further £50,000 to support residents with food and pre-paid energy vouchers. This must be spent by March 2025 and will be distributed through a combination of voluntary sector organisations e.g. DENS. Age UK and directly by the council.
- Engagement to inform the Leisure Strategy review will take place over the autumn/winter. This will include Dacorum Sports Network and local and regional bodies.
- Healthy Hub Project - We have continued to support residents physically and virtually with our 'Healthy Hub Dacorum Core Offer' on health and wellbeing. Our last quarterly reporting shows that between April-June 2024, we saw a total of 1,183 residents use our health and wellbeing offer, with one noticeable rise in foodbank use which 136 residents claiming food parcels.

## **Arts and Culture**

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Subways Public Art - Plough Roundabout – Painting of the mural took place in July and has been very well received with comments from users that it helps them feel safer
- Dacorum 50Fest – Community groups taking part in creative workshops week beginning 23 September, ready to join in the Parade as part of the event on Sunday 29 September

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

- Old Town Hall Theatre – Marketing of the new season’s programme is well underway, including a brand new Christmas Show in December produced specially for the Old Town Hall through an agreement with the UK’s leading children’s theatre company Little Angel Theatre
- Despite the usual lighter programme of events over the Summer at the Old Town Hall Theatre, customer satisfaction averaged 98% over the period
- Engagement with the public and the cultural sector to inform the Arts and Culture Strategy will take place during the autumn/winter. This will include a Borough-wide survey and workshops for community groups.

### **Hemel Garden Communities**

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Hemel Garden Communities continues to develop evidence and policies to support the Local Plans, across both Dacorum and St Albans.
- Having concluded a landscape assessment, the Framework Plan has now been finalised. The landscape assessment workstream will ensure the boundaries for Land North of Hemel Hempstead are robust. The work has demonstrated capacity for around 10,500 dwellings across Hemel Garden Communities whilst reflecting landscape sensitivities.
- In parallel, various workstreams are being developed that will inform a future Supplementary Planning Documents to ensure the qualitative output of future development plans. This includes green infrastructure; health and wellbeing; a strategic design code; and, stewardship strategies.
- Work is also progressing on land assembly and delivery strategies, which will be important in delivering comprehensive development across Land North of Hemel Hempstead and securing developer contributions to site-wide infrastructure.
- The HGC Councillor Review Group met on 12<sup>th</sup> September to consider key workstreams and an upcoming workshop and site visit is planned for 24<sup>th</sup> September on the topic of stewardship. Further engagement activities are being planned for the new year, post the proposed Regulation 19 consultations.

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

- The Crown Estate have entered into a Planning Performance Agreement for Land East of Hemel Hempstead, which falls primarily within St Albans’ boundaries. A plan for Dacorum resident and Councillor engagement is being developed and DBC Officers are actively involved in the pre-application process.
- An initial consultation was held in July for a proposed Community Garden at the Junction of Cherry Tree Lane and Redbourn Road, just over the boundary within the St Albans District. This includes a proposed new access to the Nickey Line. An application has been submitted to St Albans District Council for consideration. If approved, The Crown Estate plan to commence implementation in November 2024. The Crown Estate intend to partner with Sunnyside Rural Trust to deliver this project
- Briefings on the HGC programme have been held with Victoria Collins MP (Harpenden and Berkhamsted) and David Taylor MP (Hemel Hempstead).



## Council Briefing Note

### PEOPLE AND TRANSFORMATION PORTFOLIO

#### People and Transformation

##### People

- Leadership Training for all tier 4 managers has been completed.
- We have set up a staff values and behaviours delivery group to help further embed these within the Council's desired culture. A new management 121 approach launched to further embed aligned staff behaviours. The next schemes to be approved include mentoring, staff volunteering and staff recognition.
- We are working closely with the Depot management team to drive down sickness – reviewing data to identify trends and exploring interventions such as physio offer, and health and safety practices.
- A revised Drug, Substance and Alcohol Policy was approved by TUs and SLT, which has been relaunched with training for staff and managers.
- We are devising with managers, staff and TUs a new mandatory managers development training programme – to be launched in the Autumn.

##### Digital

- Roll out of 760 new laptops has started. New starters are being issued with new devices when they join the council and users with the oldest devices will get their new kit first. We expect the full roll out to be completed by the end of March 2025.
- New Wi-Fi has been installed at the Forum. The upgrade will improve speed, coverage (so less drop out time) and security.
- New docking stations have been set up on all desks at the Forum. The new docks work with current laptops as well as the new kit being rolled out.
- Docks and Wi-Fi will be installed across all our building by the end of the year including Cupid Green Depot, Old Town Hall, Tring Victoria Hall, Woodwells Cemetery, Poppy Fields Cemetery, Berkhamsted Civic Offices.

##### Customer Services and Complaints

- New Persistent & Unreasonable Behaviour Policy introduced to enable the Council to effectively deal with unreasonable customers that is impacting on staff resources
- Submitted Ombudsman Annual assessment and supported the submission of Annual complaints report to the Housing Ombudsman
- Complaints policy has been updated to align to the new Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Improved on call wait time performance measures for March/April (busiest time for the year), in comparison to the same time last year

- Successfully managed the annual Green Waste Subscription service renewal during the busiest time of year when the Council Tax bills and Rent increases also took place
- Reviewed Operator calls in Customer Service to improve customer journey on calls to have their enquiry dealt with at the first point of contact
- Improved all Integrated Voice Recognition scripts to provide customers with a smooth journey to having their enquiries dealt with, introducing self-service to reduce down call wait times

#### PMO / Performance /Transformation

- Further improvement made to our integrated voice recognition (IVR) service, improving access to Benefits and Business Rates via our IVR. We have seen a significant increase in text requests so customers can be sent a weblink directly to the online form they need to complete rather than sitting in a call queue. Between April and July, 1,483 text messages have been sent out to customers to allow them to self-serve
- We have commenced delivery phase of our Transformation program and implementation of our Digital Platform. Live projects to improve service delivery include Garage rentals, Complaints and Freedom of Information requests, Waste Services, Revenue & Benefits, Housing Repairs and Clean Safe and Green. These projects will aim to enable customers to interact with the council more easily and effectively whilst streamlining and create efficiencies within the back-office processes.
- We continue to work on improving our corporate Programme Management Office (PMO). All Projects across the PMO have now been identified and key information baselined and is now being reported against. All directorates have programme boards in place to ensure critical oversight of all our key projects and new reporting templates and reporting process put in place to support this oversight and accountability.
- A new suite of KPIs, including a clear approval process for making edits to these KPIs, was presented and approved at Cabinet in June 2024. We have worked on embedding these new KPIs across the Council, including the creation of a new performance management handbook and delivering training officers. Officers across the Council now have a deeper understanding of performance management which will lead to greater accuracy when updating these measures and greater assurance to the leadership team and Members.

#### Communications and Engagement

- External Communications – Continued support across all services, supporting on communication, marketing and engagement activities for corporate projects, campaigns and operational service delivery (e.g., Parking Consultation (10-31 July); Hemel Hempstead Health Campus; Refurbished play areas; Summer of Fun events programme etc.)
- 50 Fest to celebrate 50 years of Dacorum - This year marks the 50th anniversary of Dacorum borough. To celebrate, we will be hosting 50 Fest on Sunday 29 September 2024, from 11am to 5pm in Hemel Hempstead town centre. The event will spread across the town centre, including the Market Square and Water Gardens. The highlight of 50 Fest will be a spectacular parade, featuring a wonderful array of colourful handmade puppets, led by community groups and performers. The puppets are being made in collaboration with local community groups and Handmade Productions and have been inspired by animals and nature associated with the local area, including red kites and foxes. In Market Square, there will be a variety of local market, food and drink and community stalls to explore, and tables to sit down and enjoy some refreshments. There will also be a wide range of entertainment and activities on offer in Market Square and the Water Gardens, including a BMX stunt show, acrobatic street dancers, Cloud 9 inflatables, high ropes and fairground stalls. Hemel Hempstead Business Improvement District (BID) will also be hosting its fantastic Hullabaloo alongside the event, offering live entertainment and activities to enjoy in Hemel town centre.



## Council Briefing Note

### CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC EMERGENCY PORTFOLIO

- Our CEE programme is firmly in delivery mode. A variety of projects, led across the Council, are progressing well and are monitored through our CEE board.
- We will publish our full emissions report in October. This will show our progress to date on reducing organisation emissions, which are down 29.8% from 2022/23 thanks to HVO in the fuel mix, down 42% from baseline 2018/19. More details will be included in the report.
- The council has been awarded £61k from the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) Salix/Department of Energy Security and Net Zero to decarbonise our buildings. The priority sites are old or large gas-heated buildings, like the Civic Centre in Berkhamsted, Victoria Hall, and Maylands Business Centre. This project, already in flight, will conduct building audits and feasibility studies, preparing the Council to apply for further grant funding to install the suggested measures.
- We are delivering several projects which aim to make our buildings more energy efficient and these are progressing well:
  - 173 off-gas grid properties have been identified for various improvements to improve their energy performance levels and bring them to a minimum EPC C rating.
  - Four sheltered housing blocks are being renovated this year to install a hybrid heating system and solar panels, with plans for four each year to 2030.
  - Works on properties in Kings Langley and Berkhamsted to decarbonise the buildings have been completed as part of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund project. New works have also started at other sites.
- Installation of EVCPs in car parks is well advanced. 12 sites are completed and live, three are due in September, and six more are due to go live later this year.
- The CEE team is preparing for the annual Dacorum Climate Action Network (DCAN) event on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
- We are also working with DCAN to involve them more in policy and project development and to better use their expertise, energy and skills to help progress towards our ambitions. This includes a refreshed round of green grants focused around three goals: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions; creating more sustainable communities; and improving biodiversity. These will open to applications at the DCAN event, with promotion planned for October.



## COUNCIL BRIEFING NOTE

### CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO

#### Financial Services

##### Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

- The finance service is supporting the external auditors through the audit of the 2023/24 Financial statements that is due to be completed in September.
- The first quarter finance performance has been presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny with the general fund reporting a positive financial performance.

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

- Development of the 2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy and proposed 2025/26 Fees and Charges are nearing completion for Cabinet approval in October.

#### Revenues and Benefits service

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

- The Revenues and Benefits Service restructure was rolled out in July and the service has continued to work efficiently and effectively throughout the process. Overall performance KPIs are showing an upward trajectory post implementation.

#### Legal and Democratic Services

##### Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:

Service achievements/ strategic or significant operational matters from the last month:

#### Electoral Review

- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) electoral review is ongoing for Dacorum.
- Having completed phase 1, consultation has begun on warding arrangements. This consultation period began on the 7 May and originally ran until 15 July. However, due to the snap General election being called, the consultation period was extended until 9 September.



- Work amongst the political parties has been ongoing in order to submit proposals for the warding arrangements which has a deadline of 9 September for responses. It has been agreed with the Electoral Review Committee that each party will submit their own responses.

### **Parliamentary election**

- The Parliamentary election was called on the 22 May 2024, for it to take place on the 4 July.
- This was an immense task for the elections team, who were still processing payments, audits and statistical data returns for the May PCC election. The task set was to successfully deliver the General election in 6 weeks (a task which usually requires 6 months).
- Below are a few key statistics involved in the successful delivery:
- In the first 4 weeks of the election being called:
  - Over 6200 new people applied to be on the electoral register
  - A further 300 overseas electors applied to be registered.
  - A further 4000 electors requested a postal vote
  - A further 700 electors requested a proxy vote.
  - Over 100 people applied for a Voter Authority Certificate.
- 84 polling stations booked across 63 sites (we booked the sites for the Hemel Hempstead constituency and also those for the Harpenden & Berkhamsted constituency, run by St Albans District Council)
- Over 400 staff were appointed to the various election jobs required
- 5 candidate nominations and deposits were processed
- 9219 postal votes processed
- 44,277 ballot papers verified and counted

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

- The Scrutiny review is complete and recommendations will be presented to all three scrutiny committees in October before being reported to Cabinet on 22 October.

### **Commercial Development**

#### **Significant service achievements since the last Council meeting:**

- New Parking Proposals – The statutory consultation commenced on Wednesday 10 July 2024 and closed on 31 July 2024. The consultation was also advertised in the local press. A high-level summary response to the statutory consultation was produced by the consultant and shared with officers in mid-August. There was a range of common themes that came through as objections, but the number of responses received was small when compared to the number of residents and businesses in Dacorum, with the exception being in Kings Langley, where there had clearly been a focus on raising objections to the changes. After sharing the summary reports with the Portfolio Holder, it has been agreed that there was nothing raised through the statutory consultation that had not been considered by the Administration and would stop the Council from proceeding. The Portfolio Holder has proposed that the project progresses to the next stage of the process to implement the proposed changes.
- EVCP Programme – The implementation of the EVCP programme continues to progress with several Connected Kerb locations being connected during July & August. Osprey commissioned the Hub charge point in the Water Gardens South car park.

- Garage Portfolio Review – The drafting of Phase 1 end report is underway – due to be sent to the Project Sponsor in early Sept for initial review. The sites deemed initially suitable for potential alternative use are being scoped ready for Phase 2 (Feasibility). A Garage Management Strategy is being drafted for the retained stock and will support the delivery of the Fees and Charges proposals. There is now a clear programme outline across all garage projects that will lead to the development and delivery of the Garage Business Plan
- Commercial Income Review – Sprint 2 outcomes and opportunities were presented to CSP and SLT. Fees and Charges proposals for garages and parking were presented to C&C PH and to Neighbourhood Services PH for information. Next stages of this review are to complete the scoping for the delivery phase and outline the programme to see this through to completion.

**Strategic/significant operational matters the service would like Full Council to be aware of:**

- New Parking Proposals – A Portfolio Holder report has been produced for progressing the proposed changes to parking tariffs and charging policy to implementation.
- EVCP Programme – The Connected Kerb programme continues to connect and commission sites during September. It is also expected that the DNO will provide connection dates for the remaining sites during September.
- Parking Enforcement and Smart Technology Re-commissioning – The tender documentation was published in late August and advertised on national portals requesting expressions of interest from the parking enforcement market. The tender has a closing date of early November.
- Procurement, Commissioning and Contract Management procedures have been reviewed in preparedness for the Procurement Act 2023 which is due to go live in October. The Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders will also be updated and presented to SLT in September. Further detail and timelines to be shared with PH in September.
- Commercial Income Review
  - Further work to scope programmes for ongoing pricing strategy reviews for garages and parking, facility hire and commercial waste reviews.
  - Fees and charges options to be further progressed ready for early September.

KPIs for last month:

Not Applicable

**Commercial and General Fund Property Services**

- Despite a challenging environment our Commercial portfolio is circa 96.75% occupied but income levels are slightly below target due to service charge invoices still to be raised. Once the invoices are raised, it is anticipated income will be on target. Income is profiled for reporting purposes on a monthly basis, against which income received is recorded. The income target for Income target for Month 4 (July) is £2,558,633, report as July is the most recent closed month at the time of this update.
- July 2024 update - There are 150 commercial buildings and sites that DBC own and Property Services manage and report on for compliance under 6 main headings: Fire; Asbestos; Legionella; Gas, Electricity & Passenger Lifts. All areas are performing well.
- Bennetts Gate Window Renewal & Concrete Repairs. Snagging works to one flat are ongoing. The rest of the works are complete.

- Rossgate Window Works, Phase 2. The existing curtain walling panels to the front elevation of the precinct are almost 40 years old and at the end of their useful life. The Council is receiving an increasing number of complaints from the tenants that the windows are ill fitting, draughty and in some cases in very poor condition. Phase 1 which comprised the rear windows was completed in 2023. Following Officer & Commercial Board approval, Cardo and their window contractor, Winco Ltd, have been appointed to undertake the works. Following consultation, Ward Councillors Mitchell & Pound advised their preferred colour choice for the window panels has been confirmed and, in tandem, the Building Surveyor has submitted the required planning application which will take approximately 10 weeks. A receipt letter has been received requesting additional drawings which have been provided. Planning Decision due 3rd October. The Building Surveyor dealing is liaising with Cardo for a date to commence a pilot trial as contractors have said that it is a difficult job due to the odd detailing of the existing structure.
- Victoria Hall Ceiling. The Building Services team are arranging for scaffolding to repair roof leaks. A capital bid for extensive ceiling improvement works has been submitted as part of the annual Service Planning exercise. Due to the building's size and proximity to neighbours, the cost of scaffolding is likely to be expensive.
- 56/58 High Street. Freehold Disposal. Brasier Freeth are marketing the property for sale.
- Apsley Community Centre. The current Trustees/Management are refusing to engage with officers and members who are trying to secure access to ensure Health & Safety compliance checks are undertaken. Advice is being sought from the Legal Team on options to gain possession of the Centre or oblige Trustees to provide access for compliance.



## Council Briefing Note

### HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

#### Housing Operations

- The number left remaining on flexible tenancies has dropped below 1,000, marking a significant milestone.
- Applicants on the housing register who haven't bid in the last 12 months, have been written to asking if they wish to remain on the register. This helps us to improve our data, administration of the register and assess demand for housing.
- A downsizing focus group has been completed with existing tenants; this is to help inform our approach to under-occupancy through our Help to Move policy.
- Review of existing rent and licence fee functions to identify opportunities to achieve efficiencies in process.
- SH-Tunstall Remediation Notice has been closed due to significant improvement with the service and failsafe's being implemented.
- CCTV at 3 schemes has been arranged using capital grant funding.

#### Safe Communities

- Close liaison with community safety partners to monitor unrest and community cohesion concerns post national unrest/incidences.
- Collaborative cross departmental work to improve neighbourhood working and resident engagement.
- Service of 2 notice of intent to issue Civil Penalties (final yet to be served) totalling £12,500
- Warrant approved by St Albans Magistrates Court for entry into property in the Old Town for investigations in relation to a potential breach of a Housing Act 2004 Emergency Prohibition Order.
- Successful partnership working across the Homeless Prevention and Humanitarian Response teams has enabled 2 single persons (refugees) to be housed in a HMO from temporary accommodation.
- Community Safety hosted a well attended training session on prevent in the Forum for DBC Officers and our partners across Herts. Officers increased their knowledge and understanding of: terrorist organisations, radicalisation and the support available to them in order to tackle threats of extremism.
- A deployable CCTV camera was installed in Warners End to capture ASB and crime
- The CCTV Team supported the Neighbourhood Management service to mitigate the risk at Berkhamsted Car Park (Lower Kings Road). The team monitored the fire alarm for two weeks via their emergency help point until Neighbourhood Management were able to procure an external contractor to monitor the fire alarm.
- Service of 2 notice of intent to issue Civil Penalties (final yet to be served) totalling £12,500

## **Strategic Housing & Delivery**

- Randall's Ride development in Hemel Hempstead handed over at the end of July providing 30 new 1 and 2 bedroomed flats for social rent.
- The proposed changes the National Planning Policy Framework and other housing delivery related government announcements are being analysed by the Strategic Housing, Investment and Regeneration Team.
- Work has recommenced at Eastwick Row in Adeyfield with Bugler Development Limited on site as the Council's main contractor. The development is due for completion late summer 2025 and will provide 34 x 1 and 2 bed flats.
- Interviews with 11 organisations expressing an interest in working with the Council as part of an Investment Partnership took place at the end of July. The interviews are helping to inform the next steps in the formal process to select an investment partner.

## **Strategy, Quality and Assurance**

- The Regulator for Social Housing released their regulatory judgement on 14th August, giving Dacorum Borough Council a C2 grading. Areas for improvement are being fed into an action plan, which will be cross-referenced against other service improvement plans and HTIP.
- TPAS have delivered their Tenant Engagement Re-engineering Exercise report to HSLT, with key recommendations for how we can better engage with our residents. We are now developing this into an action plan with the key deliverables to deliver a new engagement framework and Get Involved Strategy.

## **Property**

- The total number of open repair orders has reduced from 2883 in April 2024 to 1867 at 9th August 2024 and is continuing to reduce.
- The number of repair orders older than 30 days is also falling, from 1104 in April to 343 on 9th August 2024. This is reducing the number of complaints received.
- Using CX Feedback we can see satisfaction with the repairs service has increased each month and currently averages at 71% since the introduction of CX feedback.
- All surveys are reviewed and anything that needs follow ups are sent to the relevant team, we expect this to further decrease complaints received.
- To further increase satisfaction, we are focusing on first time fix, as we know this is our main driver to increase satisfaction, which is currently 91% when there is a first-time fix.
- Every comment on a survey expressing dissatisfaction with a repair is followed up, which we expect to reduce the number of complaints.
- The planned maintenance programme is on track to be delivered. Roofing repairs are contributing to a significant pressure on the revenue budget, so we are looking at how we can help address this with an increased focus on renewals.
- Overall, the volume of known Decent Homes failures has reduced from 206 to 140 since the start of April as work is completed.
- Our annual programme of 2000 stock condition surveys and EPCs remains on track to be completed before December.
- The EICR programme performance continues to improve with only 1 dwelling where we cannot evidence an EICR certificate and 32 properties now out of target (8 are at legal stage).
- Of the 444 Flat Fire door inspections required, 384 have been completed with more appointment being made every week.

- There are currently only 38 outstanding high risk FRA actions across 1,102 blocks of flats. Of these actions, 19 have been issued to a contractor to resolve and the other 19 are on the planned works programme.
- All properties that were due a gas safety check by the end of July have been completed.

## **Motion proposed by Cllr Julie Banks;**

### **Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty**

#### **Council Notes:**

- The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Dacorum and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

#### **Council believes:**

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many across Dacorum sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

#### **Council resolves to:**

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and ask members to sign the petition themselves.
- Encourage the promotion of Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Hemel Hempstead, Tring, Berkhamsted and the villages are supported in claiming their entitlement.

Action reference	Date of meeting	Action	PH responsible for action	Strategic Director supporting with response	Distribution	Date of distribution	Next meeting publish deadline	Response/update
FC03	April 2024	<p>Cllr Banks referred to funding for playground refurbishments and asked if this be inclusive for children with disabilities.</p> <p>Cllr Wilkie confirmed this would be the case but advised she would take the question away to provide further information.</p>	Cllr Wilkie PH for Place		SLT & Cabinet	23/04/24	13/09/24	<p>Thank you for your enquiry. Below is a combined response covering playgrounds within the borough's parks and open spaces that are publicly accessible and adventure playgrounds that are not.</p> <p>With regards to the programme of playground improvements being delivered in our parks and open spaces: within each of the six playgrounds due for refurbishment, there is inclusive equipment proposed in each these playgrounds so hope that allays any concerns you may have.</p> <p>Going forward, we have an aspiration to improve accessibility to and within playgrounds in parks and open spaces, and we will be bidding for funds to do this in the future.</p> <p>Adventure Playgrounds (APG) are not open public access, and only available to APG users when there are staff on site. We do have accessible equipment at the playgrounds, where equipment exists. The equipment is designed to cater for people with disabilities, however, they are not 100% compliant due to access as there are no pathways. Playground staff do assist with access to the equipment if visitors are having difficulty.</p> <p>There is a review being scoped at the moment in relation to the APG service which will include facilities and this aspect will of course be considered as part of that review</p>
FC04	July 2024	<p>Cllr Guest addressed the Leader and commented that around beginning of this year we were told we cannot have portrait of HM King for chamber yet because Royal Images were diverted to other enquiries on HM health. Cllr Guest asked; how does that square with an email received a couple of months ago from Premier, a Christian Media organisation that stated that portraits of the king would be available to churches after they had been available to public bodies since February.</p> <p>Cllr Guest advised she has seen 2 portraits of the king at County Hall and suggested if County Council has a spare and she is able to acquire it, she would hope the Leader would be able to hang this in the chamber.</p> <p>Cllr England to seek an updated position and circulate a written response.</p>	Cllr England Leader of the Council		SLT & Cabinet	23/07/24	13/09/24	A picture is now in the chamber
FC05	July 2024	<p>Cllr Guest referred to the summer holiday schemes that will be held at the Adeyfield and Bennetts End adventure playgrounds and asked why are such schemes not being run at the Chaulden playground and also the Woodhall Farm &amp; Grovehill playground.</p> <p>Cllr Wilkie confirmed that she would circulate a written response</p>	Cllr Wilkie PH Place		SLT & Cabinet	23/07/24	13/09/24	All four Adventure Playgrounds are open from 9.30am to 5.30pm during the school holidays. There is a programme of activities at all four Adventure Playgrounds and the details of these are now on the Adventure Playground page of the Council's website. Unfortunately there was a delay in uploading the programmes for Chaulden and Grovehill due to a technical issue which is now resolved. We apologise for this delay and will endeavour to ensure future programmes are uploaded at the same time.
FC06	July 2024	<p>Cllr Timmis referred to pg. 12 of the PH report and the statement that the Markyate conservation area character appraisal is to be adopted by Cabinet and asked why, as a Ward Councillor, she was not informed of this.</p> <p>Cllr Wilkie advised that these are public papers that go through appropriate scrutiny; not sure would ordinarily go to a particular councillor but confirmed she would take that up with officers and will circulate the response</p>	Cllr Wilkie PH Place		SLT & Cabinet	23/07/24	13/09/24	There is no statutory requirement to consult Ward Members. The Parish Council were consulted as well as a wider public consultation carried out. The consultation happened in late Autumn 2022. It included a four-week public consultation carried out between 21st November and 21st December 2022 via the 'Commonplace' consultation platform and an exhibition was held at Markyate Baptist Church on Tuesday 29th November 2022, 3 – 7pm.



FC07	July 2024	<p>Cllr Douris referred to the PMO and asked the PH for details of some of the benefits of the PMO transformation.</p> <p>Cllr Tindall confirmed he would circulate a written response.</p>	Cllr Tindall PH People & Transformation		SLT & Cabinet	23/07/24	13/09/24	<p>We have been working to improve our Programme Management Office, standardising Project management practices, improving governance and reporting arrangements and introducing centralised tools and templates to support project delivery across Dacorum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This work will help us deliver projects more consistently and effectively across Dacorum and improve quality, whilst ensuring proper governance by overseeing project progress, ensuring alignment with strategic goals, and providing regular reporting on performance.</li> <li>• The PMO improvement project forms part of our wider Future Dacorum transformation programme which aims to improve the way we deliver services to our customers whilst making us more efficient in the way we deliver those services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Customer behaviours have changed over the past few years and more and more people now want to access and transact with service providers through digital means. Our transformation programme aims to improve self-service and digital service delivery. This has a number of benefits; improving customer services, allowing us to deliver services more efficiently, reducing complaints and failure demand and ensuring services are designed with the customer at the heart.</li> <li>o Dacorum has an increasing population whilst facing increased budgetary pressures, which means we are likely to see increases in demand for council services with decreasing per head funding. Our transformation programme will help deliver productivity and efficiency benefits and contractual savings, allowing us to meet such budgetary pressures with minimal impact on service delivery.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We will keep members updated on progress through regular reports and updates to scrutiny</li> </ul>
FC08	July 2024	<p>Cllr Anderson referred to the parking charges consultation which is ongoing and asked; with respect particularly to his ward in Kings Langley where it is being proposed to introduce changes for the first time, not having been any before, what professional evidence did the PH use to base her decision to introduce charges in a location where there is not a demand for people to use the parking, where they will alternatively go down the road and park somewhere that they do not need to pay at all</p> <p>Cllr Capozzi advised that as there are multiple elements to that question, a written response will be circulated</p>	Cllr Capozzi PH Corporate & Commercial Services		SLT & Cabinet	23/07/24	13/09/24	<p>There is absolutely a demand for both the on-street and off-street parking in Kings Langley. Any time I drive along the high street every on-street parking space is occupied. If there was no demand, I doubt the feelings of having to pay for this service would be so strong. There is no evidence for the assertion that people will avoid Kings Langley high street in preference for an out-of-town retail park. Given that the offerings of the businesses on Kings Langley high street are quite bespoke and are in a more pleasurable and enjoyable environment compared to retail parks, the discerning shopper would almost certainly take advantage of the free off-street parking to continue their enjoyment of the high street, thereby leaving the paid, or free for 30-minutes, on-street parking for those passing through and wishing to make a brief stop. The percentage of completely free spaces in Kings Langley far exceeds any other area in Dacorum.</p>
FC09	July 2024	<p>Cllr Guest asked; when the Housing Dept decided to dig and plant flower beds on the green off Roseheath, why were local residents and Councillors not consulted or even informed first?</p> <p>Cllr Dhyani advised her understanding that officers had informed people locally but confirmed she would be happy to take this back to officers and seek a written response on what communication has taken place, given the Councillor does not feel she or residents have been informed</p>	Cllr Dhyani PH Housing & Property Services		SLT & Cabinet	23/07/24	13/09/24	<p>Works at Roseheath (amenity land between Merrow Drive and East Flint) is part of an ongoing initiative the Housing Service is carrying out in collaboration with Clean Safe &amp; Green and Sunnyside Rural Trust to improve and reinvigorate areas of HRA retained amenity land.</p> <p>The aim through creation of the 'Butterfly Garden' is to promote biodiversity and will be planted with flowers that will attract pollinators. Consultation for this and a number of other designs was undertaken via our Housing Engagement Open event in October 2023, which was well attended by residents and Members. At the event the Butterfly design was identified as the standout design by those in attendance as one they'd like to see delivered. Prior to commencement of works more extensive engagement was not undertaken – our Housing team have been working closely with local residents to keep them informed of the approach, in partnership with CSG, and Sunnyside have responded to enquiries. Due to the works to the garden coinciding with the pre-election period, limited communications were carried out - steps have been taken to improve upon this process in the future ensuring that ward members receive the relevant information in a timely way.</p> <p>To date the service has received positive feedback about the gardens progress and we look forward to inviting residents, and Members to the formal opening event. Officers are exploring the development of an A3 poster and map, which will increase awareness of the gardens and other award winning green spaces across the borough. The Housing Service will continue to work collaboratively to identify opportunities to enhance our housing green spaces, and promote diversity – we would welcome feedback from Members in relation to our approach.</p>

FC10	July 2024	<p>Cllr Mitchell referred to the play park in Gadebridge, referred to in the report as Warners End Valley and asked for confirmation of when the tender will be back (was due end of June) as this location is still not on the list for works this year; but it had been previously down to take place this year and residents had been informed as such.</p> <p>Cllr Bromham confirmed he would seek details for the specific site and asked for confirmation of the exact location.</p> <p>Cllr Mitchell clarified this is the park in Gadebridge on the dip, it is actually called Upper Warners End but is referred to in the report as Warners End Valley</p>	Cllr Bromham PH Neighbourhood Operations		SLT & Cabinet	23/07/24	13/09/24	The tender for Warners End Upper Valley (and Miswell Lane) were both received in late June. Both schemes have now been approved for award and are working through the Council governance processes. Work at these sites is anticipated commencing in October but officers will keep councillors whose wards these are in updated on start dates and progress.
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