



Financial Services

- The external Auditors have concluded the audit of the 2022/23 financial statements, with no initial adverse findings.
- The first quarter corporate financial monitoring report has been presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet.
- The treasury management service are working effectively at investing the council's resources and achieving good returns on investment, to the benefit of the councils 23/24 financial performance projections.

Revenues and Benefits service

- The service has continued to support new housing benefit, council tax support and discretionary housing payment applications and make changes to continuing awards.
- It continues also to administer council tax and business rates accounts for residents and businesses.
- Proposals have been developed for amends to the 24/25 Council Tax support policy. If agreed, the proposed changes would provide benefit to the borough's lowest income residents, without significant cost, and will also enable more efficient administration of the policy. Cabinet approved the start of a consultation process with preceptors in September, which is now underway.

Legal and Democratic Services

Electoral & Democratic Services:

- Annual canvass has now begun, and all properties have been sent relevant forms. Around 75% of the borough were Route 1 properties (meaning the whole household matched with the DWP checks) and around 25% of the Borough were a Route 2 property, which means at least one member of the household did not match with the DWP. Reminder forms to properties who do not respond, will be distributed on the 26th of September. Anyone who receives a reminder form must reply.

Legal Services:

- The Legal Team have been developing a project to carry out a statutory compliance review, to assure that the Council is meeting all of its full statutory duties.

Licensing:

- The Licensing Enforcement Team have been active, with a number of enforcement investigations over the summer period, and on the 22nd August the Licensing and Health and Safety Enforcement Sub-Committee met to consider an allegation of dangerous driving. The Driver was given 7-week suspension for pulling away from the kerb while the rear door was open and a mother was still strapping her baby into the car seat.
- Phil Wortley the Licensing Team Leader has now retired, and Sally McDonald is stepping into the role on an interim basis until a recruitment exercise can be complete.

Commercial Development

Parking:

The Parking Service introduced 3 Traffic Regulation Orders over the summer, with the aim of improving parking and traffic management. These were as follows:

- **The Borough of Dacorum (Various Roads, The Denes, Hemel Hempstead) (Waiting Restrictions) Order 2023**
The effect of the Order was to introduce the following waiting restrictions at and on various roads in and around The Denes, Hemel Hempstead:
 - Additional no waiting at any time (double yellow line) restrictions on Pinecroft, The Denes, Barnacres Road and Georgewood Road
 - Making the existing two advisory disabled parking bays in The Denes mandatory at any time
 - Making the existing limited waiting bays in The Denes time restricted to Monday to Sunday 8am to 7pm, two hours, no return within two hours.
- **The Borough of Dacorum (Old Fishery Lane, Hemel Hempstead) (Prohibition of Waiting at Any Time) Order 2023**
The effect of the Order was to introduce new no waiting at any time (double yellow line) restrictions on both sides of Old Fishery Lane from its junction with Chaulden Lane for its entire length.
- **The Borough of Dacorum (Waterhouse Street, Hemel Hempstead) (Disabled Persons Parking Places) Order 2023**
The effect of the Order was the replacement of a section of the existing taxi bays with new disabled parking bays. These will be in use Monday to Sunday, 8am to 8pm, three hours, no return within two hours.

Update on strategic and significant operational matters:

- Garages – The garage service continues to be on track to deliver the increased income target for 2023/24, with a net increase of an additional 54 garages being rented so far this year. Work is underway to plan repairs that will make more garages available to residents, particularly in areas where there is known demand.
- Parking – Proposals were put to Cabinet in September for an informal consultation on proposed changes to parking tariffs and charging, following presentation to Finance & Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- Procurement – A review of procurement and contract management processes is underway, to assure they continue to support the Council in securing best value in the services, works and goods it procures. This will include contract management training to ensure officers continue to effectively manage the Council's contracts.
- Commercial – Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) have started to be installed in certain Council car parks across the Borough. Over the next few weeks and months, residents will start to see these EVCPs installed and operational, which will support the Council's commitment to improving access to and the availability of charge points and addressing climate change.

Commercial and General Fund Property Services

- Commercial rents audit outcome – The audit has reported an audit rating of Substantial Assurance, which confirms there is a robust system of internal controls operating effectively to ensure that risks are managed and objectives achieved.
- Works are progressing at Bennetts Gate Neighbourhood Centre to replace the windows and complete concrete repairs.
- A fire drill evacuation was undertaken at The Forum on the 10th August at 15:00 pm. Overall, this was a satisfactory exercise to check that the procedures we have in place are working effectively and regular exercises will continue to be undertaken.

Update on strategic or significant operational matters:

- Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) - The Commercial Portfolio has been inspected for the presence of RAAC and it has been confirmed that there is no RAAC present in any General Fund commercial asset.
- Cupid Green playing fields – Following the major sewage works undertaken a few years ago the land utilised by Thames Water has not been reinstated. This is a complex legal issue which officers are progressing with the aim to bring the land back into public use and members will be kept updated.