



Council Briefing Note 15th November 2023

**CORPORATE AND COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO –  
COUNCILLOR RON TINDALL**

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

#### **Financial Services**

The Audit Committee have reviewed the draft audited financial statements and draft Audit findings report, that at present provides a clean set of accounts, which are just awaiting HCC pensions review to conclude. The team have continued to lead on the Corporate financial performance framework, including the delivery of the quarter 2 financial report to Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny.

#### **Revenues and Benefits service**

The service continues the process of consultation into possible council tax support changes, for further consideration by the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet. It continues to offer advice, signposting and support to residents in regards to Council Tax, benefits and financial support.

#### **Legal & Democratic Services:**

A Polling District & Polling Place review has now been completed and the community have been consulted on the current location of all polling places and the current polling districts. The outcome of the review has been discussed at the Electoral Review Committee and the updated Polling District & Polling Place Order will be recommended for approval by full Council.

The Legal Team are progressing a project to carry out a statutory compliance review as part of ongoing assurance that the Council is meeting all of its full statutory duties. This review involves all services throughout the Council and will provide a comprehensive overview of all statutory and discretionary services.

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) has been commissioned to carry out a review of Dacorum's Scrutiny arrangements, with a particular focus on decision-making and the role of Overview and Scrutiny. Chairs and Vice Chairs of all scrutiny meetings will be contacted for interview and an on-line survey for all councillors and relevant officers has been made available to complete. The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete and will remain open until 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

#### **Commercial Development**

The informal consultation on the proposed increases to parking tariffs and changes to charging policies was undertaken during September and October.

### **Strategic or significant operational matters for Council to be aware of:**

#### **Financial Services**

The approval of the 2023 MTFS at Cabinet has set the foundations and core assumptions for the 2024/25 budget setting process. The first budget report will be presented at Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in early December.

### **Legal & Democratic Services:**

The next Police and Crime Commissioner election will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2024. Preparations are already well underway with polling stations and staff being contacted and reserved for election date.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) have begun the electoral review for Dacorum. Various Officer and member briefings have been held in order to raise awareness.

### **Commercial Development**

Garages – The Garage Service continues to be focused on delivering an increased income target for 2023/24, with a net increase of an additional 82 garages being rented so far this year. Work is also underway to focus on repairs in areas where there is known demand.

Parking – Following the conclusion of the informal consultation on proposed changes to parking tariffs and charging policies, the responses are being reviewed, and Cabinet will consider the proposals again in December, following presentation of a report to Finance & Resources OSC in December.

Procurement – A review of procurement and contract management processes is underway, to assure these continue to support the Council in securing best value in the services, works and goods it procures. Plans are also progressing on contract management training to ensure officers continue to effectively manage the Council's contracts.

Commercial – Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) continue to be installed in certain Council car parks across the Borough. Over the next few weeks and months, residents will start to see an increase in the number of EVCPs being installed and becoming operational, which will support the Council's commitment to climate change.

Commercial – Work has recently started on a Garage Portfolio Asset Review, which forms part of a wider review of the Council's Strategic Assets. The Garage Asset Review focuses on opportunities to make best use of the portfolio going forward, which is an important income stream for the General Fund. That will include evaluating opportunities for driving growth from the existing garage assets, as well as potential opportunities for alternative use of some of the garage sites to support additional commercial income generation and wider strategic objectives.

### **Commercial Occupancy & Income**

Commercial Occupancy levels remains high at 95.73% whilst Income M6 equates to £3,484,725 with a budget target of £3,462,950 so over by £21,775 or 0.6%.

### **Poppy Fields Cemetery**

The team has worked with the Legal Team on terms for the Joint Committee Agreement (overarching governance document) to the West Herts Joint Crematorium Committee in respect of land at Poppy Fields being used by the Crematorium operation. A final draft is in circulation.

### **Commercial Rents Audit**

TIAA have undertaken an Audit. The Auditor's Report awarded the team a 'Substantial Assurance' assessment, which is the highest result possible. Audit Committee took place on 20<sup>th</sup> September and the report was presented there by Finance with Property Services in attendance.

### **Bennetts Gate Window Renewal & Concrete Repairs**

There is capital budget for a window renewal programme, which comprises the residential elements above the shops, concrete render repairs & redecoration to pillars. The works will commence as soon as Herts County Council grant scaffold licences as the footpaths outside the building are adopted highway and Herts County Council permits are required. Once works commence, it is anticipated the programme will take 10 weeks to complete.

### **Boxmoor War Memorial.**

The Building Services Team are arranging the annual wash and clean of the memorial in advance of Remembrance Sunday.

### **Moor End Road, Watergardens Jellicoe Fountain.**

The Fountain, which is managed by Clean, Safe & Green has been out of order for a number of weeks. Following investigation by the Building Services Team, it was discovered that the pump motor that serves the fountain had burnt out. Building Services instructed contractors to remove the pump and undertake extensive repairs and re-install it. The Fountain is now working as intended.