



Council Briefing Note 28 February 2024

PLACE PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SHERON WILKIE

Planning Services

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- DBC awarded Planning Skills Delivery Fund, totalling £63,412. An award towards planning application processing and skills training.
- Interviewed candidates for two graduate positions as part of the LGA backed Pathways to Planning initiative; we were awarded two positions as part of first cohort. Graduates will have LGA support as well as DBC support throughout their Planning Masters and training
- Launched the Local Cycle Walking Infrastructure Plan consultation which closes 29 Feb 2024, next stage will be site visits and auditing the primary and secondary routes, further consultation on final plans in early September 2024 . As at 12th February there have been 103 (11 from under 40 year olds) responses in relation to cycling and 86 (5 from under 40 year olds) in relation to walking
- DBC along with North Herts and Herts CC as other host authorities have objected throughout the Luton Development Consent Order (DCO) process in line with the agreed Council motion of February 2023. The Leader of Dacorum, alongside the Portfolio Holder for Place and members representing the wards most affected by the DCO have been kept informed on progress made over the past six months. While it is recognised that some progress has been made on a number of detailed and technical matters, fundamental concerns remain that go to the heart of the aforementioned motion.

Dacorum confirms its overarching position of objection of the Luton DCO and this position aligns with objections maintained by North Herts and Hertfordshire County Council.

DBC has set out in a Statement of Common Ground all the areas still cause for objection and where the matters of disagreement are these focus on Noise pollution; Air pollution and odour; Traffic and transportation; Climate Change and Green Controlled Growth. DBC has signed a Section 106 Legal Agreement along with North Herts and Herts CC which enables DBC to enforce matters in the S106 if permission is granted and these matters are breached. It is clear to the examining authority that DBC and other host authorities maintain a strong objection to the Luton DCO.

- Local Plan consultation ran between 30 October and 11 December, using the Engagement HQ platform and face to face sessions at community events. The response to the consultation will be presented to SPAE OSC on 6th March. Highlights include
 - 1,356 responses from residents, businesses, organisations and national bodies interested in planning for the future of Dacorum
 - (97%) of these via the new online consultation portal, Engagement HQ, and 41 (3%) by post
 - 37% support the local plan
 - Top 5 infrastructure priorities were Healthcare (290, 21.4%), Green space and play facilities (251, 18.5%), The road network (209, 15.4%), Public transport (172, 12.7%), Community facilities (163, 12%)
 - Task and finish group will have its first meeting on 4th March
- Officers presented a report to SPAE OSC on 10 Jan 2024 on Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, the Scrutiny Committee made one substantial recommendation, which is to engage with ward

members and Parish and Town Councils when drafting a management plan for future SANG sites. This amendment was presented to Cabinet on 13 Feb 2024. They also requested quarterly updates to SPAE OSC ion SANG matters which will be actioned.

- Planning enforcement – 5 enforcement notices served in the last quarter. As at 9 February 2024 there are 338 live planning enforcement cases. Visits have been carried out on time for all new cases opened in 2024.

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

- Bovingdon Neighbourhood Plan consultation closed 12 November 2023, DBC are supporting Bovingdon with next steps
- DBC responded to Secretary of State request on the Land East Tring appeal, following an update to the National Planning Policy Framework before Christmas. The SoS decision is now expected in Mid-March.
- Appeal received and PINs confirmed a Public Inquiry 9-12 April for Rectory Farm site (GB and lack of SANG refusal a delegated decision)
- New planning application received on National Grid site 23/03028/MFA
- Biodiversity Net Gain is now mandatory, this new law part of The Environment Act. Developers must deliver a minimum 10% net gain (Major applications – over 10 units or 1,000sqm from 12 Feb and small sites 2 April 2024)
- Planning application fee increase came into force on 6th December; Major applications increased by 35% and 25% for all other applications, annual indexation introduced from 1 April 2025, remove a free go.
- Government has announced the Housing Delivery Test results for 2022, DBC is in a buffer category where as many other Herts authorities are in a presumption category. A new version of NPPF was released before Christmas and consultations recently announced on building on brownfield land as well as further PD changes, we are expecting many more preparing for secondary legislation following the Levelling Up Regeneration Act. The AD Planning will host a session to all members on the recent government announcements.

Place and Enterprise

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Dacorum BC attains Skillmaker accreditation. Skillmakers are employers and people from industry who are dedicated to the development of skills in young people and adults.
- Dacorum's Den 2023 successfully completed. £13,500 was secured from 4 sponsors – Epson, Abodebed, Sopra Storia and Beeches Group. 10 local businesses were awarded grants of up to £2,000 each. This was the tenth anniversary and in total over £100,000 has been awarded to 80 local businesses
- Successful programme of Christmas lights and trees across the borough which was well received by the community and businesses
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Hemel Imaginarium. Officers are working with voluntary sector partners as well as the BID on proposals for meanwhile and activation plans for the Town Centre which will include 'pop up' summer activities. Once costed and finalised a list of activities will be shared with members and communicated residents through the usual channels.

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

- Health Campus – Officers are working with health colleagues to develop a Memorandum of Understanding and PID for the next stage of feasibility works
- Dacorum BC attains Skillmaker accreditation
- Laserquest will be opening in the Marlowes opposite Marlowes shopping centre on 16 February
- Officers hosted a visit from officers of the Cities and Local Growth Unit at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities where a presentation was given on the Town Centre Vision, HGC and

the Local Plan followed by a town centre walkabout. This was to demonstrate in person the council's ambitions. This was very well received by the DLUHC officers.

Communities and Leisure

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Household Support Funding – second payment of £50,000 received from HCC, passed to Dacorum Community Trust to provide emergency support to residents. This is the final payment with no further funding expected for 24/25
- Community Grants – a further £17,000 has been awarded to 6 organisations with more applications under consideration
- Reithfields and Coronations Fields Tennis Courts refurbishment complete and courts opened with new booking system at these courts and Cupid Green. Funded by the Lawn Tennis Association - £116,000 investment

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

- Head of Communities and Leisure, Chris Fennell. Started on 8th January 2024
- Following Cabinet approval to a grant based approach to VCS funding, funding agreements are being developed for implementation for first grant payments in April 2024
- Everyone Active (EA) Exercise Referral Programme – EA are in the process of rolling out an app onto the desktop of Herts GPs allowing GP's and other health professionals to refer patients into the leisure centres to access the social prescribing activity programmes available to residents with long term health conditions
- Funding for Health Inequalities and Healthy Hub officers extended by HCC for 24/25

Arts and Culture

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- Dance ReIgnite – funded by Arts Council England : delivered in partnership with BEEE Creative and Dacorum Community Dance – 265 people engaged at workshop at Old Town Hall a local dance artist and a visual artist are working with older adults in the community to co-create a performance to tour to 10 local community venues and settings later in the year
- Plough roundabouts subways art project - Proposal submitted and funding agreed (in addition to Hemel BID funding) to work with Hemel Hempstead School pupils to design and paint two subways
- Old Town Hall Theatre – new digital solutions implemented to provide improved pre ordering, ticket sales, venue management
- Old Town Hall Theatre - Customer satisfaction rating remains in mid 90%

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

- Head of arts and Culture, Diana Houghton, joins the council on 4th March 2024
- Creative Hertfordshire - Discussion on creative evaluation methods to better demonstrate the impact of arts on health and wellbeing.

Hemel Garden Communities

Significant service achievements since last Council meeting:

- A series of Hemel Garden Communities' Councillor Review Group engagement activities were held during December and January, with presentations on the evolving Framework Plan; the need for active and sustainable travel; and, the Transport Vision and Strategy.

- A successful Homes England funding bid (up to £190k, subject to expenditure during 2023/24) was confirmed in December to support the development of a series of workstreams addressing transport and the opportunities for active and sustainable travel; future stewardship opportunities; and design.
- Hemel Garden Communities continues to develop evidence to support the Local Plans processes, across both Dacorum and St Albans.

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

- N/A will be reported via wider DBC Local Plan processes.