



Council Briefing Note 25 September 2024

PLACE PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR SHERON WILKIE

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 the aspirations for the business park. The reports will be presented to Cabinet on 14th 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 23rd 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 26th 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 12th September to consider key workstreams and an upcoming workshop and site visit is planned for 24th 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).