



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.