



Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Quarter 2 2024/2025 Performance Report – People Transformation Digital and ICT Communications and Engagement
Date:	5 November 2024
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Caroline Smith-Wright (Portfolio Holder for People and Transformation)
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	N/A
Background papers:	Nil
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	KPI – Key Performance Indicators

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Corporate Priorities	<p>Community engagement: Engage with residents and partners to have a real say on our services and the borough</p> <p>Service improvement and delivery:</p> <p>Running the Council efficiently and putting residents at the heart of everything we do</p> <p>Vibrant communities: Foster arts, culture and leisure opportunities</p> <p>Sustainable future: Take action on the Climate and Ecological Emergency</p> <p>Clean, safe and green: Provide a clean, safe and green-focussed environment</p> <p>Homes to be proud of: Enable well-maintained and affordable homes, where people want to live</p> <p>Proud and thriving borough: Realise our potential as a great place to live and work with a thriving business community</p>
Wards affected	All wards
Purpose of the report:	To provide the Q2 performance information for monitoring and information
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That Members note the report and identify any areas where they require additional information
Period for post policy/project review:	N/A

Introduction

1. This paper will provide an update on service performance over Q2 2024/2025 for People, Performance, Digital and ICT and Communications, and highlight key achievements over this same period.
2. As previously seen by this committee, our Key Performance Indicators were reviewed and updated and subsequently agreed by Cabinet in June 2024. The corporate performance team have worked across the Council to embed this new framework and have collected the relevant data so that Q2 performance data below reports against these updated KPIs.

Digital and ICT

3. The primary performance indicator (ICT01 - Percentage of priority 1 & 2 incidents resolved in less than 2 days) was green this quarter at 97% against a target of 90%. This performance has remained the same for the last two quarters and is a positive indication that our underlying infrastructure is robust.
4. The Digital Team has rolled out a new mobile app that can be downloaded to users' personal mobile devices. Bring your own Smartphone (BYOS) represents a significant shift in workforce technology supporting remote and hybrid work arrangements by enabling our workforce to work flexibly in a way that better meets customer need. This new app enables our entire workforce (including Councillors) to access work emails, take calls and manage their diary securely without having to log onto their laptop.
5. Next step will be to reduce the number of devices on our estate. People who work predominantly on Wi-Fi will no longer need access to a DBC mobile device. Users who work in the community will continue to have access to a mobile device (phone or tablet) which we plan to review and upgrade over the next 12 months.
6. The work on the digital platform is continuing to move forward. For example, the abandoned vehicles reporting modules is in the build phase and will shortly move to test phase. This module will be integrated with the DVLA database resulting in automated MOT and tax checks before submission. Once reported abandoned vehicles will be posted on a virtual map enabling users to sign up for update alerts online. We anticipate will result in a significant reduction in duplicate cases reported once live as well as a reduction in case administration.
7. The roll out of new kit is almost concluded. New Wi-Fi has been rolled out to all sites except for Cupid Green Depot and the Old Town Hall, both of which are underway. There is a similar position with the roll out of new docking stations across our estate.
8. 141 new laptops have been rolled out to date. This represents 18% of the rollout which is targeted to conclude by the end of March 25. The team are in the process of recruiting an additional resource to speed up laptop builds.

Communications

9. In Q2 (2024/25) we delivered against our external communications programme supporting corporate projects and events across DBC services and partner organisations. This includes delivery of the 50 Fest anniversary event in September, 382 social media campaigns on our corporate channels (Facebook, X formerly Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn), and more than 185,000 email campaigns (e-newsletters) sent via our digital publications portfolio.
10. In Q2 we delivered on our internal communications programme, including delivery of the Annual Staff Recognition Awards. In Q2, we issued 32 internal communication campaigns across internal channels, such as our intranet, covering general staff news, corporate information (projects and initiatives) and staff events.
11. We have delivered our programme of digital publications, including 12 issues of our weekly Dacorum Life digital newsletter (13,816 subscribers), three issues of our monthly Housing Matters newsletter (5,587 subscribers) and three issues of our monthly Business Matters newsletter (2,241 subscribers).
12. Q2 Social media statistics:
 - o Dacorum BC **Facebook**:
 - o Connections – 13,507
 - o Link clicks – 7,227
 - o Posts – 191

 - o Dacorum BC **X (formerly Twitter)**:

- o Connections – 8,945
- o Link clicks – 840
- o Posts – 138

- o Dacorum BC **LinkedIn**:
- o Connections – 6,030
- o Link clicks – 280
- o Posts – 53

People

13. The sickness outturn for quarter 2 (2619 days) which is higher than quarter 1 (2088 days). Detailed analysis shows the main contributors to sickness absence were musculoskeletal, Cold/Flu and mental health. HR work with management to assess cases to understand the reasons for the absence so that a tailored approach can be devised. For cases of work-related sickness, mechanisms are in place to identify the 'possible cause', so that managers can find solutions to alleviate these pressures whilst still setting expectations of work delivery. Alternatively, for cases including home life stressors, there are many support processes in place such as: occupational health; counselling; sign posting to external support; and our mental health first aider programme.
14. Another cause for the rise has been long term sickness, unfortunately the Council has experienced a peak in cases where staff qualify for ill health retirement. These cases tend to result in employees being absent for a long period of time. We have also experienced some delays in progressing these cases from the local government pension scheme process and awaiting NHS medical information to progress these cases quicker. These process issues are currently being addressed.
15. Work is underway in supporting the highest sickness absence teams across the Council to explore what bespoke interventions can be put in place to help reduce absenteeism. The first area identified was Waste Services, where there is now an action plan to address the areas of concern. Work is underway to ensure safe practices are in place and all risks are being identified, which should help with reducing musculoskeletal absences. The Council's Health and Safety team is leading in this review. Clean, Safe and Green also now have an action plan to support them in reducing their absence. Housing Operations is the next team that HR will be supporting.
16. The sickness scrutiny group continues to meet monthly to assess all sickness absence and looks to identify trends and areas of concern. Any such cases will be escalated to a more formal route as per the policy. This group also monitors return work interview compliance, as well as carrying out spot checks on whether managers are in regular contact with their staff whilst off sick from work. The sickness scrutiny group continues to assess all long-term sickness cases each month to ensure the Council is doing all it can to support staff back to work, by ensuring we have the latest medical information from our Occupational Health team, looking at what adjustments we can make to roles and where cases need to be escalated to a formal process in line with the policy. We work closely with managers to ensure regular contact is made with staff who are absent from work as this is a critical aspect to help staff back to the workplace.
17. HR also continue to send out staff wellness offers which includes courses, webinars, exercise classes and other support. These focus on a dedicated topic and link into national themes around wellness. We also offer free confidential helpline to staff where they can seek professional advice and counselling in certain cases. We also are continuing to run our staff engagement group which is focussing on health and wellbeing issues/solutions, with the next focus being offering 'lunch and learn' sessions on trying something new. A poll has been conducted to understand what wellness sessions will be of interest to staff.
18. HR has been undertaking further interventions which have been approved by the strategic leadership team to help reduce sickness absence. One initiative is focussing on email management, to help reduce email traffic. We are running a series of workshops and devising good practice guides to support with

the culture change required. We are currently drafting an email usage guide for all staff to support this cultural change. There is also currently a review on our currently leave approach, we want to ensure what is offered is competitive so that we can have a package that supports staff with life challenges and creates an effective work life balance. The areas identified for change are: supporting staff with dependents, caring responsibility, IVF, domestic abuse and disabilities.

19. The annual staff turnover percentage is still below 15% (actual 8%) which is considered a healthy staff turnover rate in the UK (Q1 9%). Work continues within the people strategy to ensure we are creating an engaging culture and ensuring staff have effective leaders guiding them within the workplace.
20. The people strategy continues to be delivered, some of the key highlights include:
 - Devising a mandatory Leadership development programme for all managers – this is due to be launched in the New Year. We are finalising delivery partners and costs.
 - The Strategic Leadership Team has approved three new staff schemes - Mentoring, Volunteering and Staff Recognition. Now in implementation phase.
 - The Strategic Leadership Team approved a new approach to Equality Impact Assessments which will improve the quality of these assessment and ensure they are undertaken at the beginning of a project.
 - Implemented a new vacancy tracker for the Strategic Leadership Team, so that we can ensure job vacancies are progressing. This has resulted in a significant reduction of job vacancies. From around 15% to now 8%.
 - We are soon to Launch new customer service training programme in line with customer charter for staff in high customer contact areas

Transformation

Customer Service

21. Further improvements have been made in call wait times, with average call wait times this quarter at just under five minutes (290 seconds), which is lower than the previous quarters wait times of six minutes (367 seconds) and less than half the call wait times during this quarter 12 months ago of just over 10 minutes (611 seconds in Q2 2023). Although call volumes are lower than Q1, the Customer Service Unit answered approximately 20,000 calls in this quarter, in addition to receiving approximately 4,500 email enquiries and 2,000 social media enquiries. The improvement in performance is largely due to several operational efficiency measures put in place to manage calls and reduce demand more effectively.
22. We will monitor performance levels against the target of 420 seconds over the next twelve months and if we continue to achieve this, the target will be reviewed and a new ambitious stretch target will be set to push call wait times even further.

Complaints

23. Performance of responding to stage 1 complaints within policy timescales have also seen some slight improvement since last quarter but is still below target. 73.5% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within policy timescales compared to 44% the same time last year. 60% of Stage 2 complaints (which are usually more complex to manage) were responded to within policy timescales compared to 39% in Q2 last year. We have also seen the number of escalations from stage 1 to stage 2 reduce slightly and is now below the 10% target, which indicates that Stage 1 complaints are being resolved more effectively.
24. The corporate complaints team are responsible for co-ordinating and allocating complaints to the relevant teams to respond to complaints whilst keeping oversight of performance at team level. We have introduced new governance processes whereby a monthly performance clinic is held with each Directorate where the Strategic Director is able to scrutinise performance at Directorate level and performance and subsequently a monthly update and discussion takes place at SLT to ensure oversight and accountability.

25. We are also in the process of introducing a new corporate complaint management system which will enable complaints to be investigated and responded to more efficiently, allowing us to further improve performance levels in the future.

Future Dacorum Transformation Programme

26. We continue to implement measures to improve customer experience, introduce better self service capabilities and enable process efficiencies through our Future Dacorum transformation programme. Significant progress has been made on our Year 1 road map relating to the transformation of services and our Digital Platform.
- We recently launched our 'Customer Promise' during Customer Service Week which sets out a series of commitments to help us improve customer service levels across Dacorum
 - We are improving our process for reporting abandoned vehicles, including automating some processes via our Digital Platform
 - We have created self-service options for Council Tax, and we are now expanding more self-service options in relation to Benefits and Business Rates
 - We are developing a new system to enable easy search and renting of our garages
 - Establishing a new corporate complaints system that will improve the user experience for customers whilst enabling a more efficient process to investigate and respond to complaints
 - We are also ensuring that work on self-service capabilities is linked to our IVR so that customers can have a consistent experience regardless of the entry point into the Council.

Corporate PMO

27. We continue to work on improving our corporate Programme Management Office (PMO) and overall approach to managing projects. All Projects across the PMO have now been identified and key information baselined and is now being reported against on a monthly basis. All directorates have programme boards in place to ensure critical oversight of all our key projects and new reporting templates and reporting process put in place to support this oversight and accountability. Further work is planned to ensure we are all working with a single project management methodology and developments of tools and templates to make it easier for staff to manage projects whilst ensuring consistency across the Council.