



## COUNCIL BRIEFING NOTE – 19 February 2025

### CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL PORTFOLIO – COUNCILLOR WILLAM ALLEN

#### Financial, Revenue and Benefits Services

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

- The 2025/26 draft budget proposal has been reviewed by the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny group and is due for Cabinet approval on the 11<sup>th</sup> February.
- The external auditors KPMG have concluded their audit of Dacorum's 2023/24 financial statements with the draft final Audit findings report and unqualified auditors opinion being reviewed by the audit committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> February.
- Cabinet have approved the annual 2025/26 Council Tax Base and Policy to support the 2025/26 Council Tax setting process for Dacorum and precept partners.

##### **Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:**

- The services have been focussed on the budget setting process, closure of the 2023/24 accounts and preparation for the 2025/26 Council Tax and Business Rates billing processes.
- The focus for the finance service over the coming months will be the ongoing delivery of a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy, (MTFS) and supporting the delivery of LGR March submission plan.

#### Legal and Democratic Services

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

##### **Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) – Electoral Review**

The Council has been undergoing a full Electoral Review which has been conducted by the LGBCE. This has been looking at the number of councillors and all ward boundaries. They published their draft recommendations in December 2024 for public consultation ending on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2025. They will publish their final recommendations in June 2025 ready for implementation at the local elections in May 2027, subject to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). They have confirmed that this review will still be completed within the original set timeframe, regardless of LGR implications.

The Electoral Review Committee met on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025 to agree the Council's response to the recommendations.

##### **Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:**

##### **HCC elections**

- The Hertfordshire County Council elections will take place on Thursday the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2025. The verification and count will be held on Friday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May at Hemel Hempstead sports centre. The Elections Team have begun making all necessary arrangements and are currently in the process of booking all polling stations and appointing all staff. The count venue is booked and all plans have been established. The key dates and arrangements have been agreed with the election printers and the project board meet with the Deputy Returning Officer regularly to ensure everything is on track. There will be continued close liaison with the Returning Officer at HCC and the rest of the Hertfordshire authorities to ensure a consistent approach.

##### **Tring Town Council – Bunstrux Ward by election**

- A by election will take place on Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2025 to fill a vacancy on Tring Town Council in the Bunstrux Ward. Again, the Elections team are making all necessary arrangements and all polling stations have been booked and all staff appointed. The verification and count will be held straight after the close of poll at 10pm at Tring Community Centre.

## Commercial Development

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

- EVCP Programme – The implementation of the EVCP programme continues to progress, with the final Connected Kerb locations due to be connected during Q4.
- Work continues across programmes and projects that support the Council’s Commercial Strategy and MTFS. This includes a multi-year Commercial Income Review programme to review services generating commercial income for the Council; with the aim of identifying opportunities to improve efficiency and net income. This work also fed into the review of fees and charges for the 25-26 budget, resulting in identification of increased opportunities for income generation.
- A review of the Garage Portfolio review is also reaching its conclusion. This review identified opportunities for growth and improvement of the garage portfolio, which will inform development of a new Garage Plan, as well as identifying opportunities for re-purposing of certain garage sites. The review forms part of a wider Strategic Asset Review programme, to support the Council in leveraging best value from its assets to support the Corporate Plan and the MTFS. This programme includes plans approved in October 2024 to seek an Investment Partner to work with the Council on delivering future housing growth and regeneration.

### Strategic or significant operational matters which the service would like Full Council to be aware of:

- Parking Enforcement Commissioning – The evaluation of the tender submissions for a new parking enforcement contract award process is now concluding, with proposals due to be presented to Cabinet in March 2025.
- Preparation continues for the Procurement Act 2023, with reports relating to changes to the Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders being presented to Finance & Resources OSC and Cabinet during January 2025. The Council has been undertaking all preparations necessary to respond to the requirements of the new Act, which goes live at the end of February 2025.

## Commercial and General Fund Property Services

- General fund occupancy remains strong circa 96% end of Quarter 3
- Income generated to date c£5.2m
- Current Debt level 9.98% and a lot of work going on to support those in debt to the council.
- Strong compliance performance across all key areas -



# General Fund Portfolio

## Performance

Area	Description	Target	Perfor- mance	Trend
<b>Fire</b>	Percentage of properties covered by valid FRA	100.00%	100.00%	↔
<b>Legionella</b>	Percentage of water installations covered by risk assessment	100.00%	100.00%	↔
<b>Asbestos</b>	Percentage of known asbestos locations re-inspected	100.00%	100.00%	↔
<b>Gas</b>	Percentage of properties with valid gas or combustion certificate	100.00%	100.00%	↔
<b>Electrical</b>	Percentage of properties with satisfactory EICR	100.00%	100.00%	↑
<b>Lifts</b>	Percentage of passenger lifts with current examination certificate	100.00%	100.00%	↔
<b>Heating</b>	Percentage of properties with current insurance inspection	100.00%	100.00%	↔

- Rossgate Phase 2 window works are well underway and due to complete by end February 25.

The procurement process for the Facilities Management contract is nearing completion, with the final evaluation progressing well. The preferred provider is expected to be identified in February 2025. Prior to formal award, formal approval will be provided by Commercial Board, SLT and Cabinet.