



Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Quarter 3 2024/2025 Performance Report – People Transformation Digital, Data and Technology Communications
Date:	4 March 2025
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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<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<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: 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>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All wards</p>
<p>Purpose of the report:</p>	<p>To provide the Q3 performance information for monitoring and information</p>
<p>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</p>	<p>That Members note the report and identify any areas where they require additional information</p>
<p>Period for post policy/project review:</p>	<p>N/A</p>

1. Introduction

This paper will provide an update on service performance over Q3 2024/2025 for People, Performance, Digital, Data and Technology and Communications, and highlight key achievements over this same period.

2. Digital, Data and Technology

The primary performance indicator (ICT01 - Percentage of priority 1 & 2 incidents resolved in less than 2 days) was green again this quarter at 96% against a target of 90%. In December phone lines went down which accounts for the 96% performance. This indicator has remained over 95% for the last three quarters and is a positive indication that our underlying infrastructure is robust.

Dacorum is audited annually by the Cabinet Office to ensure that services we use over our network are secure and data is protected. The Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance certificate is issued annually to councils that pass this robust auditing process. Dacorum once again achieved the high standard of Cabinet Office Security requirements for our ICT network and infrastructure.

The Digital restructure went live on 2 December 2024 which represents a significant milestone for the service. The team has been renamed - Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT), in recognition that all digital resources required to support Dacorum into the future are now in one place and adequately resourced. High-level highlights are:

- A new Cybersecurity Engineer is being recruited to bolster our cybersecurity posture further.
- A new applications team has been designed to support the development of a longer-term technology roadmap as well as support services to bring in modern technologies over the next 3 years.
- Temporary digital resources brought into develop the digital platform last year have been converted to perm posts in recognition of the increased reliance on digital & automated processing across all services.
- A new Data Team has been created to help Dacorum realise its ambition to create a culture of data driven decision making across the organisation.
- A new out of hours services has been introduced to ensure that were possible all our priority systems are maintained out of hours. This service will also support our cybersecurity posture as resources will be available to monitor systems 24/7.

All vacant posts went out to internal advert in December and several appointments were made. This was a successful outcome as several existing members of the DDaT team moved into more senior roles. All vacancies have now gone out to external advert and in some cases interviews are underway. It is anticipated that the new service will be fully implemented by April 2025.

245 new laptops have been rolled out to date. A further 27 devices are awaiting collection. This represents 36% of the total rollout. This project will now conclude by September 2025 at the latest.

3. Communications

In Q3 (2024/25) we delivered against our external communications programme supporting on communication, marketing and engagement activities for corporate projects, campaigns, civic events and operational service delivery. This includes delivery of Remembrance Sunday and Parade on 10 November 2024. The parade included dignitaries Commodore Tim Hennessey RN DL, Deputy Lord-Lieutenant for Hertfordshire, the Mayor, local MP, Cabinet, Members, veterans and over 300 parade participants from community and voluntary groups. The event was attended by over 1,000 residents. We issued 21 news/press releases during this period [All news \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/news). Residents can stay up to date about all the news and information from the Council by signing up to our weekly newsletter

(Dacorum Life [Newsletter Sign Up - Dacorum Borough Council](#)) to get news and information direct to their inbox.

In Q3 we delivered on our internal communications programme, including delivery of staff events and engagement. In Q3, we delivered 67 internal communication campaigns across staff channels (e.g. intranet) including corporate updates and information (projects and initiatives), general news and staff events (Town Hall etc.).

We have delivered our programme of digital publications, including 12 issues of our weekly Dacorum Life e-newsletter (21,683 subscribers), three issues of our monthly Housing Matters newsletter (5,544 subscribers) and three issues of our monthly Business Matters newsletter (2,207 business subscribers).

Engagement with our residents and local communities is important to help shape our services and influence the work we do across the borough. Consultations over this period include our Draft Local Plan (Reg. 19), Budget 2025/26, Sports and Leisure Strategy and Adventure Playgrounds. We have a dedicated community engagement platform ([Let's Talk Dacorum](#)) where you can find all our consultations and engagement opportunities.

Q3 Social media statistics:

Channel	Connections	Clicks	Posts
Facebook	13,776 (↑ 269 from Q2)	6,216	201
X (formerly Twitter)	8,842 (↓ 103 from Q2)	769	136
LinkedIn	6,214 (↑ 184 from Q2)	517	77
Instagram	2,194 (↑ 89 from Q2)	14	73

4. People

The sickness outturn for quarter 3 (2752 days) is similar to quarter 2 (2619 days) and also similar to quarter 3 last year (2619.5 days). 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.

The 5 highest sickness areas, all have a local action plan to attempt to reduce sickness absence in these areas. Some of these actions include: reviewing H&S working practices to reduce musculoskeletal injuries, sickness training for managers and improved stress survey.

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.

HR also continue to send out staff wellness offers which includes courses, webinars and other support. These focus on a dedicated topic and also link into national themes around wellness. The Council continues to promote our mental health first aider programme (MHFA) and have increased the numbers of mental health first aiders. 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, recently this group has introduced a lunch knitting club and arranged for a qualified nurse to hold wellness sessions with staff so they could have free health checks.

The performance management process for sickness monitoring is also being developed so that from now on it will be included in senior manager's directorate performance clinics with Strategic Directors and the performance improvement team.

The annual staff turnover percentage is still below 15% (actual 10%) which is considered a healthy staff turnover rate in the UK. 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.

The people strategy continues to be delivered, some of the key highlights include:

- We have launched the mandatory Leadership development programme (Inspire) for all managers. The first cohort commences in February.
- Will be launching three staff schemes in Q4 - Mentoring, Volunteering and Staff Recognition.
- Launched a new approach to Equality Impact Assessments and working on a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for 2025.
- Launched a new Customer service training programme in line with customer charter for all staff who have high contract with customers.
- Started a Recruitment project – Improved branding, process improvements, selection methods in line with behaviours and new management competencies.
- Launched a new staff induction process which now includes pre joiner information, timetable of key meetings etc.

5. Transformation

Customer Services

We continue to deliver positively on call wait times for customers calling into the Customer Service Centre. Average wait times have further improved, with average wait times for Q3 at 232 seconds (under 4 minutes) against a target of 420 seconds, which is less than last quarters performance of 290 seconds. The Customer Service Unit answered approximately 18,500 calls in this quarter, in addition to receiving approximately 4,000 email enquiries, with 100% of emails responded to within target of 5 working days.

Call wait times are likely to increase in the next quarter as demand is likely to surge following the Annual Council Tax letters and rent statements are sent out. Work is ongoing to improve self service channels to help reduce demand into the Customer Service Centre. A Customer Service training officer has been permanently appointed, enabling consistent, planned, and continuous training for Customer Service Representatives. This ensures that the Customer Service Unit is prepared for peak times. The role will provide staff with necessary training support and focus on upskilling staff to maintain minimal wait times.

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.

Automated text surveys have been introduced for customers calling the CSU via mobile phones. This allows us to receive instant feedback from customers to improve our services. All feedback, positive or otherwise, is shared with the team and back offices to demonstrate the service being provided on their behalf.

Complaints

Performance of responding to stage 1 complaints within policy timescales have also seen significant improvement since last quarter and is within target. 92%% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within policy timescales compared to 52.65% the same time last year, and improvement against last quarter's performance of 74%. This is due to cross organisational efforts to drive improvement on complaints reposes and greater accountability and oversight by the Corporate Leadership team through the introductions of monthly Performance Clinics where performance is scrutinised.

74% of Stage 2 complaints (which are usually more complex to manage) were responded to within policy timescales compared to 69% in Q3 last year. We have also seen the number of escalations from stage 1 to stage 2 reduce slightly from last quarter to 6.6% and is well below the 10% target, which indicates that Stage 1 complaints are being resolved more effectively. In addition, the team responded to 52 MP enquiries, with over 90% responded to within target.

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.

Transformation

The team has led the Council's annual service planning process. This involved collaborating with colleagues across the Council to determine the activities that services will deliver in the coming year and how these activities align with our Corporate Plan priorities. Further work is planned to ensure all work across the organisation are appropriately prioritised and resourced based on this exercise.

Progress is being made on the Future Dacorum Transformation programme, with services collaborating to redesign processes and develop enhanced self-service capabilities. Currently, 15 projects are being delivered across various services within the organisation, including areas such as Council Tax and Business Rates, complaints, Environmental Services and Housing. The designs are now being handed over to the digital team, with the aim of launching improved service access for customers this summer.

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.

6. Financial and value for money implications:

Poor performance or increased risk would indicate areas of concern and potential lack of best value, and these services and processes are reviewed as part of the ongoing corporate financial monitoring framework and reflected in the budget monitoring reports presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet.

7. Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8. Risk implications:

The process of reviewing and reporting performance and operational risks is part of the wider risk management processes undertaken by the council, to ensure risk management and mitigation is undertaken where required and follows the strategic risk strategy outlined by the council.

9. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

No Community or equalities assessment has been undertaken specifically as part of this report. The services and the service delivery processes are assessed periodically to ensure these services reflect the Council's policies on service delivery.

10. Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

N/A

11. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

N/A

12. Conclusions

Performance and risk are outlined in the appendices and summarised in the report, and the Committee are asked to note the report.