



AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Report for: | Strategic Planning and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee |
| Date of meeting: | 9 June 2015 |
| PART: | 1 |
| If Part II, reason: | |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Title of report: | Quarter 4 and End of Year 2014/15 Performance Report – Planning, Development and Regeneration |
| Contact: | <p>Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration</p> <p>James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration</p> |
| Purpose of report: | To report on service performance for the end of year and fourth quarter of 2014/15, and to provide an update on the Operational Risk Register. |
| Recommendations | That the report be noted. |
| Corporate objectives: | The report focuses on the service plan for the area and key performance indicators. All corporate objectives are therefore relevant. |
| Implications: | <p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>None arising directly from this report.</p> |
| 'Value For Money Implications' | <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>None arising directly from this report.</p> |
| Risk Implications | Risk Assessment completed as part of the service plan. |
| Equalities Implications | None arising from this report. |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Health And Safety Implications | None arising from this report. |
| Consultees: | Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration. Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director for Housing and Regeneration Steve Clark, Interim Group Manager for Development Management and Planning Chris Taylor, Group Manager for Strategic Planning and Regeneration |
| Background papers: | Planning and Regeneration Service Plan 2013-2015 Performance information held on the CorVu system. |

Introduction

1. The report provides the end of year position for 2014/15. Unlike quarterly performance reports to the Committee, this provides a summary of progress on key projects that come under its remit. Overall, very good progress has been made this year on the regeneration projects. Increased workload and staff turnover have affected performance levels in the regulatory services, particularly Development Management.

Key Achievements and Milestones during 2014/15

2. *Dacorum Development Programme – Hemel Evolution: the programme for the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre*

- a. Hemel Evolution is the Council's brand for all development matters within the town centre and is now being used repeatedly to promote the extensive works and projects that are being, or are planned to be, carried out. The programme is underpinned by the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan – this was adopted by Council in January 2013, and this was preceded by the interim planning statement to cover the Gade Zone (Queensway to Market Square. Both documents, in particular the Masterplan, provide a firm basis for the ongoing development and regeneration of the town centre. They have featured heavily in the plans and current procurement exercise for the new Form development and complementary development. Members are reminded that the Masterplan identifies seven character zones within the town centre, most of which are referred to below.
- b. North Gade Zone – further to the demise of the Morrison's proposals on the College and Civic centre sites, West Herts College will now be bringing forward proposals for a new college facility in the northern part of the College site. Funding from the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is assisting with this. The College is yet to take a decision on the regeneration of the rest of the site. The Civic Centre site will become vacant in early 2017 when the new Forum development will be completed.

- c. The Forum – The development agreement with RG Carter/Endurance Estates was signed in 2015. Planning permission was granted earlier this year for this £17m development to provide a new community hub including library, space for the voluntary sector, the registry service, Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team, DBC customer service centre and back office accommodation, with new Council Chamber and meeting rooms. The site has been hoarded off with publicity about the Forum and the wider Hemel Evolution programme. The Library, now temporarily relocated to the Civic Centre, will be demolished soon, with construction works starting in June 2015.
- d. Gade Zone Complementary Residential Development. In April proposals to for residential development around the Forum (on the sites of the Police Station, former Magistrates' Court and Marlowes Health Centre were approved by Development Control Committee. The planning consent for this development of 208 dwellings will be issued soon once a s106 agreement has been concluded. Once in place, it is expected that Endurance Estates will market the site to housebuilders and detailed plans will be submitted this autumn to the Council for approval.
- e. Market Square and Bus Station – As part of the development agreement with the Council's appointed partners, these two sites are to be amalgamated to deliver a new commercial leisure development. The Council's development partners are working on proposals to secure an investor to deliver a multi-screen cinema supported by family restaurants. Later this year all bus services will relocate to the new Town Centre Bus Interchange (see below) as Arriva's lease on the current bus station is brought to an end. DBC is the owner of both sites with the exception of some small parts of the Market Square which are held by the Homes and Communities Agency. These are in the process of being acquired.
- f. New Bus Interchange – contractors T Loughman have been appointed and work has commenced in earnest on this £2.5m development to deliver comprehensive bus and coach services in the heart of the town centre – based on Bridge Street and Northern Marlowes – on 1 June. The project is due to substantially complete by the end of 2015.
- g. Marlowes Shopping Zone (the pedestrianised area) – Urban realm improvements began in The Marlowes in autumn 2014 and recommenced in January 2015 after the Christmas embargo. Works will be substantially complete by late summer. Bank Court, a linked project, commenced in May 2014 and will deliver a high quality public piazza fronting onto the Water Gardens.
- h. Jellicoe Water Gardens restoration – The Council was successful in its Stage 2 bid for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the works. Initial tree clearance took place in January 2015. The contract for the main works was awarded in May 2015, with work due to start in the summer for a 12 month period.
- i. Heath Park - this improvement project is currently underway to provide new pathways and improved landscaping, just to the south of the Plough Roundabout.

- j. Durrants Lakes – although outside of the town centre, the project provides a number of public access and amenity improvements to this open space facility in Apsley. Details of the scheme and lease issues with users of the lakes are currently being addressed.

3. *Dacorum Development Programme – Maylands*

- a. Maylands Gateway – The Gateway extends along the A414 Breakspear way from the Maylands Avenue roundabout as far as Green Lane. It is the largest undeveloped resource of land for new employment development. It is in four main ownerships. The first, is owned by Kier properties where the Travelodge hotel has been constructed. There is currently an outstanding planning application for a foodstore for LIDL UK. The second is owned by Aviva on the former Lucas Aerospace site. Here, there is a current planning application for an out of centre retail park with foodstore and some offices. The third is the largest site on the Gateway, owned by the Homes and Communities Agency. At just over 32 acres, this is due to be marketed imminently. The fourth is the 16 acres owned by the Borough Council at Green Lane. Officers are in discussion with investors showing an interest in the site.
- b. Spencers Park – Officers are processing the reserved matters (detailed) planning application from Barratts, the developers of phase 1 of the site for 357 new homes. Progress has been made on outstanding drainage issues with Thames Water. It is understood that there is now agreement between it and the developers on the infrastructure needed to ensure adequate capacity for foul water disposal. Once resolved, the final planning approval can be issued.
- c. Heart of Maylands – There have been significant developments over the past year. The Borough Council, through its Housing Revenue Account, has acquired the former Schroff Building (known as Wood House). This site is on the north-west quadrant of the Heart, just to the north of Wood Lane End and the small parade of shops. Demolition of the building is now practically complete. A housing led scheme, probably with small shop units, will be brought forward. On the opposite side of Maylands Avenue and to the south of Wood Lane End in the south-east quadrant, Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association has recently submitted plans for a mixed use but residential-led regeneration of older commercial premises, featuring c120 new homes, shops and a new facility for Adeyfield Free Church. Work on the Hightown scheme is expected to start in October.
- d. Maylands Business Centre – fully let with a waiting list and ahead of schedule on its business plan. It also offers a virtual office service to non-resident businesses and has expanded the range of business support services that are provided through it. This year gone a further 3 office units were added through conversion of the mezzanine floor of one of the light industrial units. Plans to expand the centre are progressing with new industrial units being added on adjacent land this year.

- e. Maylands Urban Realm Improvement Project – this project aims to improve the quality of the public realm at Maylands through improvements to the footways, cycle paths and landscaping. The first phase will commence later in the year and will run from the Maylands Avenue roundabout with Breakspear Way up to the Heart of Maylands. The project is funded from a variety of sources including DBC capital, Hertfordshire County Council, the Department for Transport Local Sustainable Transport Fund and s106 receipts.

4. Dacorum Development Programme – rest of Dacorum

- a. Other than in Hemel town centre and at Maylands, the service continues to manage development pressures and enquiries and report these through the Corporate Regeneration Group.
- b. Interest and activity in the discount retailing sector remains strong. Aldi has now completed two stores in Hemel Hempstead, firstly at Redbourn Road and then at London Road, Two Waters.. LIDL have consent for a store and new apartments at London Road Berkhamsted, and is seeking permission for a foodstore at the Kier site, Maylands Avenue.
- c. Further information of development activity can be found in *Delivering Success: Annual Monitoring Report and Progress on the Dacorum Development Programme* at <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-planning/amr-december-2014-final.docx?sfvrsn=0> .

5. Policy

- a. The Local Planning Framework Core Strategy was adopted by Council in September 2013. This is currently the subject of a legal challenge by Grand Union Investments which was heard in the High Court in March 2014 which was unsuccessful. The Council is now committed to an early review of the Core Strategy to form a new single Local Plan for the Borough. Work on bringing forward the land allocated through the Core Strategy progress is continuing to ensure that the Borough has a deliverable and ready supply of housing land.
- b. Dacorum was made the subject of good practice guidance by the Planning Advisory Service for the work it is carrying out with developers to help bring sites forward for delivery. The guidance can be seen online at <http://www.pas.gov.uk/documents/332612/1099327/Working+with+developers+in+plan+making/5d70da39-4072-4ff5-bb5a-0ca79f6c7b3d>
- c. Community Infrastructure Levy – will be formally implemented by the Council on 1 July 2015 following a successful public examination in autumn 2014. CIL is a new local tax on some forms of development – mainly new housing and larger scale retail – to provide local funds for the delivery of new infrastructure.
- d. Grovehill Neighbourhood Plan – a DCLG front-running project, the neighbourhood forum to lead production of the plan has now been

formed and the Council approved the plan area in 2014. Work with the forum continues.

- e. Conservation Area Reviews and Appraisals – these have been prepared for Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead, with Tring and Markyate in draft. A new Conservation Strategy for the Borough has been prepared and issued for public consultation, the results of which will be considered by Cabinet in July.

Performance Indicators

6. Building Control. This year has been a challenge for the service in terms of staff turnover and a large rise in workload – both products of the improving economic situation. Income came in over budget by nearly £40,000 at almost £561,000 (FIN15). Despite workload pressures, all applications received were determined within the two month target timescale (BC01).
7. Development Management. As with Building Control, this has been a challenging year for the service with the same issues of staff turnover and increased workload. On this, there has been a 40% rise in planning and related applications since 2014 with just over 2400 received in 2014/15 (DMP02). Unsurprisingly, income exceeded the targeted level significantly by nearly £160,000 at a total received of just over £822,000 (FIN16).
8. Speed of processing applications has suffered somewhat – whereas there has been a 40% increase in applications, the staffing complement has remained the same, though in anticipation of increased workload a further professional officer post was added to the establishment through the budget setting process for 2015/16. A high level of staff turnover has inevitably meant that performance levels have been affected. Members will note however that following much recruitment activity in the early months of 2015, the Development Management service is now fully staffed with professional officers.
9. As a result, the 'other' category of planning applications is showing as amber at 75% of applications determined within 8 weeks (DMP06). This is the majority of applications received by the Council. Performance is down 4% from last year. The 'minor' category (DMP05) is showing red at 56% determined in 8 weeks, which is 9% below target and 10% below last year. The outcome for the 'major' category (DMP04) is awaited.
10. More positively, the approval rate for planning applications was at its highest, with only 7.5% of applications refused, well ahead of the 12% target (DMP07). Also, only 17% of applications refused by the Council were then subject to an appeal to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, also doing very well against the 35% target (DMP03).
11. Planning Enforcement. Performance has remained high. The Council's approved Local Enforcement Plan sets out priorities for investigations into three categories. All Priority 1 cases were visited within 1 working day (PE01). Priority 2 and 3 cases came in at just under 100% for the target visiting times of 10 and 15 working days respectively (PE02 and PE03).
12. Land Charges. This is a competitive service, and workload and business remains very high, with just over 2500 search applications received in

2014/15 (LC03). Performance was just under target, with the average time taken to process a search taking 11 days against the target of 10 days (LC04). This is however a very marked improvement on the outcome of 19 days for 2013/14. Income exceeded the budget target by some £13,000 (FIN17).

13. Strategic Planning and Regeneration. There was positive progress on business development with a net growth of 175 businesses registered for VAT. 26 new apprenticeships were created in the Borough.

Operational Risk Register

14. The risk register is at appendix 2. This has been reviewed recently and was recently updated to reflect progress with the town centre regeneration projects. Questions on the register are invited at the meeting.