



## AGENDA ITEM:

### SUMMARY

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Strategic Planning and Environment Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> March 2015</b>
<b>PART:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Dacorum Look No Further Work and Enjoy Campaign update.</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	<p>Cllr Andrew Williams- Portfolio Holder for Planning &amp; Regeneration</p> <p>Author/Responsible Officers;</p> <p>Rebecca Oblein – Team Leader, Economic Wellbeing Team, Strategic Planning &amp; Regeneration</p> <p>Sue Lea – Tourism Officer, Strategic Planning and Regeneration</p>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To demonstrate the value added from the additional investment into Economic Wellbeing and the Look No Further campaign.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That this report be noted and the work already carried out during 2013/14 acknowledged.</li> <li>2. That the committee endorses the direction of the planned work for 2014/15 and into the future.</li> </ol>
<b>Corporate objectives:</b>	The project supports the Corporate Vision and in particular the priority of Building Community Capacity and Regeneration. It has also allowed focus on raising the reputation of Dacorum as a great place to Live, Work and Enjoy.
<b>Implications:</b>	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The work within this report is contained within the additional budget allocated by Cabinet in December 2011 as a result of the economic downturn for piloting initiatives to raise Dacorum's reputation as a great place to Work, Live and Enjoy</p> <p>£300k was allocated over 2 years to support the economy and</p>

	<p>£200k was given to promote the reputation of Dacorum.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>The funding detailed above was given to pilot initiatives to help attract inward investment, and support our current business community through tough financial times. In addition the money was to raise the profile and reputation of Dacorum, and to maximise the tourism economy in the Borough.</p>
Risk Implications	Risk Assessment included within the Project Initiation Document for this area of work and monitored through the Corvu system.
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessment carried out as part of DLNF PID
Health And Safety Implications	None in this report
Consultees:	<p>James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration</p> <p>Chris Taylor – Group Manager, Strategic Planning and Regeneration</p>
Background papers:	Overview and Scrutiny Report June 2014 (annex 1).
<p>Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i></p>	<p><b>1. “Dacorum Look No Further” – Work, Live and Enjoy.</b></p> <p>1.1. In December 2011 a Cabinet decision was taken to allocate additional budget for piloting initiatives to raise Dacorum’s reputation as a place to Live, Work and Enjoy.</p> <p>1.2. In October 2012 a report was presented at Cabinet to inform and update members of those activities already undertaken and those planned under this Dacorum-Look No Further initiative (DNLF), see appendix 1. This report laid out our focus areas around Inward investment and Marketing (Work strand), and raising the profile of Dacorum (Enjoy strand). Alongside this a new Economic Development Strategy 2013-16 was adopted by Cabinet.</p> <p>1.3. Since October 2012 both areas have been amalgamated under the banner of DLNF and this report aims to demonstrate the added value gained to date through this additional funding.</p>

<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	<p><i>ED = Economic Development</i></p> <p><i>FDI = Foreign Direct Investment</i></p> <p><i>JSA = Job Seeker's Allowance</i></p> <p><i>LEP = Local Enterprise Partnership</i></p> <p><i>MBC = Maylands Business Centre</i></p> <p><i>DLNF = Dacorum; Look No Further</i></p> <p><i>PPC = Pay per click</i></p> <p><i>PR = Public Relations</i></p> <p><i>HCCI = Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce</i></p>

**1. Tourism - Dacorum; Look No Further – Enjoy Strand £200k committed over a 2 year period.**

1.1. Initially in January 2013 a Tourism Officer was recruited for a 2 year post to help to raise awareness of the brand Dacorum and all it has to offer, and to look at ways to maximise the impact of the tourism economy on the area. Due to the successes achieved over the last 2 years in promoting tourism, this post has now been extended up to March 2017. During the next phase of this work the Tourism Officer will be seeking contributions from Dacorum tourism businesses to assist in funding this position further into the future.

1.2. The Tourism Partnership has continued to grow its network of tourism businesses and now has approximately 70 businesses. This network works together with DBC to ensure that we are promoting the best we have to offer at relevant Tourism events, help to populate our DLNF website with accurate information for our visitors, link together to encourage visitors to stay longer in the borough and provide us with intelligence about what is going on in the Tourism economy. From this group a main tourism steering board has been formed who works very closely with the Tourism Officer to direct the work we are undertaking to ensure it maximises effect on the economy.

1.3. The layout of the “Enjoy” section of the Dacorum Look no Further (DLNF) website has been changed to be more inviting and easier to navigate, to attract more visitors to the website and keep them there longer. A new structure has been built allowing visitors to quickly access relevant information e.g. children’s favourites’ page and a wedding venues page. This is continually being built upon to keep the website vibrant and up to date.

1.4. The DLNF website is now averaging 2095 unique hits per month up from 550 per month reported in June 2014. This increase comes through continued

promotion of the website via all possible advertising channels, for example an ad shell (bus stop) campaign ran in January 2015 with its call to action to visit the website, and we continually promote the site via the Dacorum Digest. The use of PPC (see point 1.5 below) also helps maintain a steady flow of visits to the site. As this traffic grows advertising on the site becomes more viable for our businesses, and we are looking to trial advertising space with our tourism partners during the first quarter 2015/16.

- 1.5. Pay Per Click (PPC) marketing continues to be used on the DLNF website to help increase traffic to the website and to provide intelligence about search engine optimisation. This campaign allows us to target different audiences at different times to drive traffic to the site. For example, during school holidays families will be targeted for the activities section of the site, and wedding venues are being optimised in the run up to Valentine's Day. PPC has also highlighted an increase of click through rates, which indicates that the website content is more now relevant to the target audience. This information helps us to ensure that the site stays focussed.
- 1.6. Linked trips continue to be organised between our tourism partners facilitated by the Tourism Officer. The Apsley paper trail has now seen £12000 in additional income through linking with Scarenation, a Halloween events company, and the ski break offered by Shendish has seen 43 bookings resulting in revenue for them of over £10000. Recent links include Shendish and the centre for horseback riding and Pendley Manor and Butterfly World.
- 1.7. A taster day trip to Dacorum for group travel organisers ran on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2014. This has resulted in 8 coach companies coming into the Borough following the taster. Apsley paper trail has reported that through visits to the museum, they received an additional 163 visitors bringing in revenue of £3200. The Tourism Officer continues to pursue the group travel market and has recently attended the Alexandra Palace (Excursions 2015 show) and will be attending the Best of Britain and Ireland show in early March 2015 to promote Dacorum.
- 1.8. A hotel occupancy survey is now being carried out with 10 of our local hotels. The response rate has been 60% and these have shown an increase in bed occupancy from 2012 to 2013 from 64% occupancy to 69%. The 2014 results are not yet known.
- 1.9. A new seasonal tourism newsletter has been produced, and two issues have now been sent out, autumn and winter. These have been sent to a database of over 50,000 email addresses which were purchased. These email addresses relate to families with young children who live within an hour's drive of Hemel Hempstead. The newsletter features information on local events and tourism partner offers.
- 1.10. The industry standard measure for Tourism is known as the value and volume survey. This measured the economic impact of tourism in Dacorum at £218,000,000 in 2013. This is a reduction by 2% in value over 2012, however for the same period Hertfordshire as a whole dropped 5% in value.
- 1.11. In September 2014 Dacorum hosted the stage six finish of the Friends Life Tour of Britain. In order to maximise its impact on the tourism economy for the borough, a dedicated page on the "Enjoy" section of the DLNF website was created. The section contained information about places to stay, things

to do, places to eat and drink, information about cycling in the Chilterns, how to get to Dacorum, a list of local cycling shops and a section called “special offers” which tourism businesses and cycle shops offered discount to encourage visitors to stay longer which would ultimately increase spend in the area for the weekend. In total ten businesses offered discount to feature on the DLNF website, six of those were local hotels offering discounted stay.

## **2. Future work plans for Tourism**

- 2.1. The Tourism officer’s position has been extended for an additional 2 years and has an annual revenue budget of £20000 during that time.
- 2.2. A Tourism strategy is being formed to set out the vision, objectives and targets for the next two years including an engagement plan which will work towards building a sustainable tourism partnership providing the resources to fund the Tourism Officer beyond March 2017.
- 2.3. A Tourism consultant has been engaged to lead on this work, and a business workshop is set for 19<sup>th</sup> March to look at priorities as seen by our Tourism partnership. The draft strategy is expected by the end of April 2015. The specific objectives of this work are;
  - Identifying Dacorum’s tourism positioning now and where it should be in the future;
  - identifying the needs, wants and desires of the two market towns (Berkhamsted and Tring) as part of the strategy to bring the destination together;
  - Clarifying the key audience segments for the destination
  - Developing a detailed action plan to deliver the strategy and integral sub-plans for Tring and Berkhamsted.
  - Considering a workable model for shared delivery
  - Developing a viable and robust business model to financially support tourism delivery into the future.

## **3. Economic Wellbeing - Dacorum Look No Further - Work Strand: £300k committed over a 2 year period.**

- 3.1. During the past two years the need to focus on the retention of our current business community, coupled with the need to secure potential inward investments has been a constant focus. There are a number of ways to seek investors but inevitably it is a unique combination of factors through which individual requests are converted into potential investments. In addition to the work reported in June 2015, Dacorum was instrumental in organising a Hertfordshire wide group made up of 7 Hertfordshire Local Authorities and the LEP to attend and staff a stand at UKs first MIPIM (an inward investment show). Over 4,000 plus participants attended, 575 investors and 35 cities were represented. The Hertfordshire stand captured the contact details of almost 100 professionals looking to close deals in the UK property market.
- 3.2. The Work pages on [dacorumlooknofurther.co.uk](http://dacorumlooknofurther.co.uk) have been revisited and refreshed and a suite of new pages added focussing on providing business support. These pages provide information on local support organisations, possible grants available and also a New Business Corner page giving hints and tips for start-ups. To increase the use of these a bus shelter campaign

has been run to raise awareness (see point 1.3) and we continue to promote through social media channels.

- 3.3. The PR campaign continues to run, with a mixture of advertising campaigns and editorial articles. In January, an ad shell (Bus Stop) campaign ran across the borough with one poster specifically focusing on business support we can offer to local businesses, and the other highlighting our local attractions. We are currently in the process of recording 3 radio advertisements to be played over the next year, on Dacorum Leisure Radio. These will be played hourly in Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted Sportspace and the XC. For examples of recent PR see annex 2.
- 3.4. The Economic Wellbeing team continue to work closely with both the planning and asset management teams to meet with potential developers, inward investors and expanding businesses to help to work towards positive outcomes from planning applications which support economic growth.
- 3.5. Outline planning permission has been granted on the Symbio Office site in Two Waters for a new mixed use development block which will provide 207 new flats and also 9000 sqft of office space. This same developer is looking to replicate this scheme in other areas of the borough therefore bring forward new office stock for our businesses. Recently, due to the new permitted development rules, Dacorum has lost a number of town centre Office blocks to conversions and so the market is starting to drive the need for speculative office development again. Developers are positive about Dacorum due to our economic development agenda and open for business planning approach.
- 3.6. The Maylands Gateway Development Brief has been completed and adopted by the Council, and the land in DBC's ownership has attracted a great deal of interest from investors and developers. We are in the process of completing a feasibility study to guide the design of new road access to DBC's landholding in the Gateway at Green Lane, to open up the site for development. Members will note that this study work is being part-funded by Hertfordshire LEP. Currently the corner plot, fronting Breakspear Way, is being reserved for high profile users, and there is a great deal of interest in the remaining plots.
- 3.7. The Heart of Maylands development area, at the junction of Wood Lane End and Maylands Avenue is moving forwards and an application for the first phase of development of the south-east quadrant was approved in December 2014. This will introduce a new vibrancy to the business park with a mix of uses including residential, retail and a range of other business supporting facilities. This area will also encompass an area of high quality public realm for the business park users. Additionally, DBC has acquired the north-west quadrant, known as Wood House (former Schroff Site), for housing development. The ground floor of the building will likely be used for further business incubation space with ongoing discussions between the SPAR and Strategic Housing teams.
- 3.8. The Maylands design guide and materials palette for the Maylands urban realm improvement scheme (MURI) on the Maylands Business Park have been completed and progress on the first phase of improvements for the Maylands have been underway with this work planned to start in

spring/summer 2015. The vision for this work is to make Maylands a more attractive place for current resident businesses and potential investors. The Council currently has approximately £1.5million (made up from DBC capital reserves, LSTF funding and S106 funds) to commence these works, and further funding will be sought for future phases through S106 contributions from developments within Maylands. The first phase of the improvements will focus on the southern half of Maylands Avenue, consisting of hard landscape improvements, tree planting, hedge and railing improvements, high quality street furniture and upgrading of signage.

- 3.9. The Maylands Business Centre continues to thrive and has now expanded its office accommodation through the conversion of one of the light industrial units. This has created an additional 3 offices, all of which are fully occupied, and there remains a waiting list of 6 for offices and 18 for light industrial units.
- 3.10. Business support, advice and guidance are now embedded in the MBC service provision. We offer personal business support, we have access to COBRA, a suite of information providing business intelligence, fact sheets and regular updates on current business legislation, and we are currently investigating the feasibility of buying into Wenta's my incubator service, which offers online business support, available via live chat with expert business advisors. Additionally the small business forum, which allows micro businesses to network, share experience and self mentor, runs at the MBC monthly. In total for 2014/15 to date 168 businesses have been supported on a one to one basis at the centre.
- 3.11. The third business showcase "A taste of Dacorum" was held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 14. The showcase had a particular focus on local food suppliers, in addition to the commercial business stands. 37 commercial businesses held stands at this event and 17 businesses exhibited in "A taste of Dacorum". 250 visitors enjoyed the day and 92 new business contacts were made.
- 3.12. The partnership with Herts Chamber of Commerce continues. A new Business Development Manager for Dacorum started in September 2014. Membership of the chamber has increased by 11% since September and 8 events have been hosted here to date, and at least one Dacorum event planned per month moving forwards. This gives Dacorum's businesses additional opportunity to network and expand their business contacts locally.
- 3.13. Dacorum's Den 2015 has been planned and the judging day set for 12<sup>th</sup> June. For the 2015 Den we have £10000 for grants, half of which has been sponsored by a private company – Symbio House. Our business advisor at the MBC continues to work with all previous winners; a brief update of their progress is shown in annex 3.
- 3.14. Work has been underway to raise Dacorum's profile with the Hertfordshire LEP promoting the proactive economic development and regeneration work we do and future plans. Hemel Hempstead features as an area for investment in the LEP's Growth Plan. We will continue to work with the LEP and strive to take a leading role in accommodating employment growth for the county through the M1 growth Corridor. The M1 Growth Corridor group

is planned to be formed in early 2015 which will lead to opportunities to secure funding for employment enabling projects within the borough.

- 3.15. The MBC continues to offer affordable, bite sized courses which address areas of concern raised by the business community through continual 2 way contact. These now self fund and are an established service provided as part of our care and retention package. Current courses running include customer service, time management, using social media to enhance marketing, Excel formulae, health and Safety management for the SME, developing management skills and appraisal skills. We have had 132 delegates to date attend our workshops.
- 3.16. Promotion of apprenticeships and other routes into employment is ongoing in the borough via our Economic Development Officer with a variety of events being held throughout the year. Unemployment figures are on the decrease with the JSA claimant rate currently standing at 1.3% (as compared to a national figure of 1.9%). In 2013 a small grant scheme, funded by DBC, was set up to support Dacorum businesses with taking on an apprentice. The scheme can support up to 40 placements. 10 grants have been paid to Dacorum Businesses; a further 8 are currently ring-fenced whilst we work with the employers to find the right apprentices and training framework.

#### **4. Future work for Economic Wellbeing (EW)**

- 4.1. The Economic Wellbeing team are currently working on the formation of a new Hemel Hempstead Ambassadors programme to continue the place shaping message that Hemel Hempstead and thus Dacorum as a whole are the place for inward investment. This programme will enable us to continue to spread the message about all we have to offer, and our reputation as being open for business. This scheme will also start to raise a new income stream to be re-invested into the continual promotion of the area. This will be managed by a high level place board, made up of business and council representation and delivered by a place manager.
- 4.2. Work has commenced on a project to expand the MBC light industrial stock. It is thought that this could accommodate a further 4 to 5 units, and it is envisaged that this development will take 18-24 months to complete. This will allow additional businesses to be supported and will also raise revenue to be reinvested into the EW service, currently estimated at £35k per annum.
- 4.3. The EW Officers are comfortable that additional funding is not required in order to maintain our level of work around care and retention for our business community support, advice and guidance for business start-ups. We now charge for events that we hold to cover costs and we are looking at other ways to raise revenue which we can re-invest into economic development. An example of this is charging for our on-line business directory based on the DLNF website. This has currently brought in £1000+ which can be used for other ED activity.
- 4.4. The team are currently assisting Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in establishing an ED service on a consultancy basis. This work is being seen as a test case for services we could potentially sell to other boroughs in the future. This piece of work has brought approx. £18k of income.



4.5. The EW team will continue to investigate ways in which to raise additional funding for this service, be it through the MBC offering, selling consultancy to other boroughs or increasing the charges for the events we host.

### **Summary**

The Dacorum Look No Further funding ceases at the end of March 2015. Much has been achieved using this which has helped to create growth and opportunities in the Borough which are sustainable into the future thanks to this pump priming initiative.

From our use of this additional funding the reputation of Dacorum has been greatly increased through our promotional channels and we now need to build upon this to continue to raise Dacorum's profile.

This initiative now needs to be embraced as a corporate focus. A Dacorum Look No Further Communications Officer has been recruited, to work across the council to promote the use of the Dacorum Look No Further branding. This position is initially on a part-time 2 year basis, a proportion of which has been funded through the Dacorum Look No Further project. This post sits within the communications team to allow the work to continue post DLNF funding.

All of the council should now be looking at how their department, function, team and external partners can continue to spread the word that when you are looking for a great place to invest, work, live and visit - **Dacorum: Look No Further.**