

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Dacorum Performance Plan 2001/2. This document is a statement of where we are, how we are improving and what we want the services we provide for residents to be like.

All of the work we do at Dacorum Borough Council stems from the five key aims featured on page 9. The targets we set our services are all about helping to do things **for prosperity, for the future, for living and for everyone**. We believe these are essential ingredients of the quality of life in Dacorum and we will do all we can to ensure we are **making it happen**.

This is the second Dacorum Performance Plan. We have learned lessons from the creation of the first plan and as a result we have changed our approach to the way we review our services and the way we make our plans and set our targets. Like authorities up and down the country, we are evolving our programme of service reviews so that they deliver the best possible range of service improvements and/or cost savings. You can find out more about the programme on page 68.

The reviews which were finished last year have resulted in a number of service improvements and/or reductions in our costs. Some of these reviews have been checked by external organisations such as the Audit Commission. The results of our reviews are on page 27.

I hope you will find this document useful and informative. It is the plan to which all of the services at Dacorum Borough Council will work over the coming year and it includes the targets on which we will measure our success and will expect to be measured against by our residents.

This year, as part of our fifth aim, **Making it Happen**, we will be working towards creating a Community Plan. We will want to involve as many individuals and organisations as possible in that plan. Only by sharing aims with all of the people and organisations in Dacorum can we work towards a better Borough.

You can find out how the performance plan and the community plan are progressing in future issues of Dacorum Digest which is delivered to homes in the Borough and available on our website www.dacorum.gov.uk.

*Councillor Andrew Williams
Leader of Dacorum Borough Council*

Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

ABOUT DACORUM

Geography

Dacorum Borough Council serves Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring and the villages of Aldbury, Bourne End, Bovingdon, Chipperfield, Flamstead, Flaunden, Great Gaddesden, Gaddesden Row, Gubblecote, Little Gaddesden, Long Marston, Kings Langley, Markyate, Nash Mills, Nettleden, Northchurch, Potten End, Pudds Cross, Puttenham, Wigginton, Wilstone and outlying areas.

The Borough covers an area of 210.20 square kilometres. 75 square kilometres of our Borough are designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is equivalent to 36% of the Borough. There are 23 Conservation Areas in Dacorum.

Three tiers of local government operate in Dacorum: Hertfordshire County Council, Dacorum Borough Council and sixteen Town or Parish Councils. Approximately 41% of the Borough's population lives in a parished area, which includes Berkhamsted, Tring, Kings Langley, Bovingdon, Markyate, the Gaddesdens, Flamstead, Chipperfield, Aldbury and other villages.

Communication Routes

The M1 and M25 have junctions for Hemel Hempstead, giving access to all major motorways linking London and the rest of the UK. The A41 runs east - west through the Borough, linking the largest settlements. Railway Stations in Dacorum link with Birmingham and Euston Station, London, along the west coast mainline which runs the length of the Borough. Dacorum is also convenient for Luton, Stansted, Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

Employment

Our recorded unemployment rate is less than half the national average but above the average for Hertfordshire. In December 2000, 1,000 people, or 1.4% of our residents, were claiming unemployment benefits, compared with 3.4% nationally. Three quarters of our claimants are male.

Dacorum People

The population of the Borough is in excess of 137,281 (Office for National Statistics, mid-year estimates 1999). Of these more than 32,000 (23% approx) are 0 - 17 years old and about 20,500 (15% approx) are 65 years old or older.

Of the 56,921 homes in the Borough, 11,436 are owned by the Council and rented to tenants.

Dacorum Borough Council serves a population with widely varying income levels. For example:

- 14.5% of households in Dacorum are in receipt of a benefit administered by us (Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit), the highest number of households compared with other Hertfordshire Districts.
- Dacorum ranks 192 out of 354 local authorities in England for deprivation, with the largest number of households on benefits in Hertfordshire.
- Six of Dacorum's wards are in the top quarter of all wards in England for child poverty. Several wards in Dacorum are among the most affluent in England.
- We have a slightly higher than average number of lone parent households (4.5%) compared to the rest of Hertfordshire (4.2%).

Dacorum has a very high level of car ownership compared to the rest of the country: 35% of households owned two or more cars according to the 1991 Census. However 21% had no access to a car.

Crime levels in Dacorum during 1999/00 were well below the national average recorded crime rate. Dacorum had only 63.45 crimes per 1000 population compared to the national average of 90.45.

It has been calculated that 12.9% of our Borough's population has literacy skills well below average and 29.9% have moderate or severe difficulty with figures. These figures are slightly below the national average.

The proportion of our residents who belong to ethnic minorities is 2.73% (1991 census): this is half the national average.

There is substantial variation on many of these factors across the Borough, reflecting the diversity of areas and people served by the Council.