



**Our Plans and  
Performance 2001/02**

**IMPROVING DACORUM: WHERE WE ARE NOW**

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Our Main Purpose

We aim to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives or works in the Borough, and to make it a place where people, communities and businesses can flourish.

### We focus our actions on:

**Environmental Initiatives** from refuse collection and clean streets to transport. Looking after the environment also includes creating affordable housing, ensuring community safety, protecting our Green Belt and the quality of our air.

Looking after the **Economic Vitality** of the Borough. We will be looking at skills training and attracting and retaining a wide range of employment opportunities for local people throughout the Borough.

Supporting our **Local Communities**. We will make sure that everyone has fair access to our services, that we do all we can to tackle disadvantage and that we pay special attention to the needs of young and older people.

We do attempt to do all of these things in the most prudent and cost effective way we can, aiming to deliver high quality services which give real value for money for our residents. We do this by consulting people about what we do and how we do it. We have introduced a rolling five year review of each of our services to ensure we are doing our best to give our people, businesses and communities what they want. Our reviews will check what we can do to make services even more efficient.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Our Standards

Dacorum Borough Council provides a wide range of services to residents, businesses and visitors. Some of these services are delivered by the Council's employees, others by businesses carrying out work under contract to the Council.

Each service has its own priorities and standards. But in addition the Council has set some standards which apply to all departments and services.

At Dacorum Borough Council we aim to:

- Provide you with the services you need where possible;
- Be fair and even-handed to everyone;
- Tell you when and where our services, including emergency services, are available;
- Always be helpful and courteous and wear a badge which will tell you who we are;
- Respond quickly and efficiently to your enquiries;
- Value the feedback you give us including complaints;
- Continuously improve our services;
- Encourage and support businesses and other organisations to improve their services to you.

The Council also has Customer First standards which are designed to make it easier for you to get in touch with us. For example we aim to answer all telephone calls within 12 seconds. We aim to answer correspondence needing response within 5 working days, even if we cannot provide a full reply in that time. We have logged our complaints procedure to make it easier for you to tell us if you are dissatisfied with your service. We try to use Plain English in letters and other written items.

## Our Methods

We will achieve our aims by:

### Involving our community

We will seek to involve all the communities in Dacorum in planning, designing and monitoring services we provide, respecting the differences and diversity that exist, and enabling everyone who wishes to contribute to local matters to do so.

### Setting targets

We will set ourselves ambitious targets for achieving what our communities tell us they want. We will do this by setting clear objectives, monitoring performance and using the results to review our policies and our working arrangements. We will also improve our performance against national targets set by the Government.

### Working in partnership

The Council will safeguard and promote the interests of the residents of the Borough through joint working with all relevant partners, for example other local authorities, central Government and statutory agencies, non-elected bodies, industry and the voluntary sector.

### Working together

We will work together towards even more efficiency, effectiveness and quality in all services. We will treat customers well, uphold the Council's values and let the public know what we are doing.

### Valuing and developing employees

We will support our employees in delivering services by helping them reach their full potential through training and development and by providing a good working environment.

### Generating funds

We will seek external sources of funding through partnership working where possible to maximise the resources available for the Borough's residents.

### Supporting National Initiatives

National Government and agencies control some of what we do. We work within this framework to provide local services.

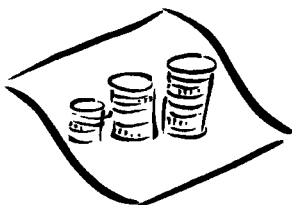
### Best Value

We will continuously try to improve the quality of all the services we provide. We will ensure that resources are used wisely by continuously reviewing what is provided and how it is provided. We will do this by following the Government's Best Value process.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## OUR KEY AIMS

In 2000/01, we looked again at our policies and strategies. We decided to concentrate on just the key areas which are the most important things we have to work for:

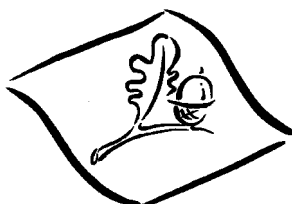


for prosperity

### **Economic Prosperity:**

*For prosperity*

We need a healthy local economy, a wide range of job opportunities and people with the skills to make the jobs work.



for the future

### **Sustainable Development:**

*For the future*

We need to share a cleaner, healthier environment, with better public transport and access to open spaces.

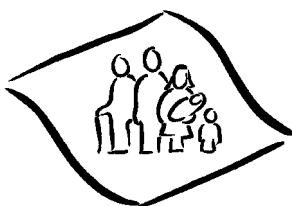


for living

### **Quality of Life:**

*For living*

We need opportunities to enjoy ourselves, to lead a full, healthy and safe life.



for everyone

### **Social Inclusion:**

*For everyone*

We need a community which works, lives and plays together, fulfilling potential, respecting and supporting each other.

# Making it Happen

### **Community Leadership:**

*Making it happen*

We cannot do all of this on our own. We need to deliver our own services effectively and work with others towards a better Borough.

See page 35 for more details.



# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

The restructure of seven departments into three directorates resulted in a need to review the number of second tier Heads of Service posts. This review was carried out towards the end of the year 2000 and resulted in 15 Heads of Service posts being identified. These are:

	Service	Manager
Directorate of Community Services	Housing	Colin Farrar
	Cultural Services	Sue Kingdom
	Community Development	Mike Clasby
Directorate of Development Services	Planning	Graham Winwright
	Regeneration	David Wass
	Environmental Health	Peter Ablett
	Environmental Services	Brian Scott
	Property and Asset Management	Alan Gater
Directorate of Resources	Finance	Vacant
	Personnel	Ron Down (acting)
	ICT	Anton Heyworth-Dunn
	Legal and Constitutional	Steven Baker
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate	Communication	Mike Browne
	Environmental Action	Jonathan Foster
	Policy	Hilary Mitchell

# AN INTRODUCTION TO BEST VALUE AND THE DACORUM PERFORMANCE PLAN

## Best Value

*"the central purpose of Best Value is to make a real and positive difference to the services which local people receive from their authority;"*  
DETR Circular 10/99.

All local authorities are involved in a Best Value revolution, and Dacorum Borough Council is no exception. Best Value means a complete assessment of all that Councils do, how they spend the public's money, how they provide public access to services, what targets they set for improvement and how they tell the public what they have achieved. By delivering Best Value through well-run services, the Council will be in the best position to develop the social, economic and environmental well-being of its area.

All local authorities have to undertake a programme of service reviews over a five year cycle. The Council's service reviews have to consider 4 C's:

- **Challenge:** should the service be provided, if so how and by whom?
- **Comparison:** how do we compare with other service deliverers, including other Councils?
- **Consultation:** what do our service users and others think about the service?
- **Competition:** has the service embraced fair and open competition in its service delivery?

Following the review of each service, the Council will draw up an improvement plan of how it will improve the service to equal the quality and cost of the top performing Councils providing the service. This is known as the improvement plan.

## Dacorum Performance Plan

Dacorum Borough Council, in common with all principal local authorities, and some other public sector bodies, publishes a yearly Best Value Performance Plan to run from 1 April to 31 March. The Plan allows the Council to let the community know what we are trying to achieve, how we are performing, and how much progress we have made towards giving Best Value.

This Plan, although substantial, gives only a summary of much of the Council's work and other plans for 2001/02. If you would like to know more about any of the issues which you read about here, you are welcome to contact the manager whose name appears at the foot of each section.

We published a Best Value Performance Plan for the first time in 2000/01. We consulted widely on its form and contents, and comments received have influenced this Plan. We hope that you will let us know what you think about this version.

If you have any queries about Best Value or this Best Value Performance Plan, please contact **Hilary Mitchell on 01442 228344 or email [policy@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:policy@dacorum.gov.uk)**, from where you can also order further copies.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

### Achievements in 2000/01

Dacorum Borough Council is a large organisation providing services for its residents and for people who work in and visit the Borough. Some of the things we do are 'one-offs', many are day-to-day services on which people rely. The information in the following pages tells you in summary how we have been doing against some targets. We are pleased with our performance in some areas and disappointed with others. Where our performance is less good than we would wish we are undertaking new initiatives or plans to make them better.

In Appendix 1 of this document you will see Dacorum Borough Council's performance compared with other Councils and with our own performance in previous years. We are seeking improvements across all our services - both those which are not doing so well, and those where we are already excelling.

2000/01 was a year of many changes for Dacorum Borough Council, some of which are described elsewhere in the Plan. We also achieved a lot in 2000/01 that we are proud of, including:

- Customer Service: revamped complaints system, including appointment of a complaints officer, two new complaints forms - one intended for use by young people, and giving people access to the complaints system through the Council's website: [www.dacorum.gov.uk](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk);
- Efficiency and Effectiveness: the Call Centre added enquiries about Environmental Health and employee recruitment to its work.
- Anti-Poverty: in October the Government Minister with responsibility for tackling poverty visited Dacorum to see the range of projects being carried out under the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy;
- Best Value: Dacorum Borough Council was the first Council to have two Best Value inspections carried out - Housing Cleaning and Caretaking - and was awarded 2 stars meaning good services.
- Efficiency and Effectiveness: the External Auditor's Management Letter concluded that: 'In summary ... the overall impression we have gained from our work in the last twelve months is that Dacorum Borough Council remains a financially prudent authority intent upon delivering value for money services to the local community.'
- Finance: Councillors and officers successfully lobbied the Government to allow a long transition period for the withdrawal of subsidy from the Housing Revenue Account which means that cuts to services will not have to be made so quickly;
- Environment: the Council set up a microchipping scheme for dogs, which along with a monitoring scheme, contributes to promoting responsible dog ownership. Both schemes are available at low cost to Dacorum Card holders;

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- Environment: Dacorum Borough Council trained 15 local companies in environmental management, a number of which have been awarded with ISO 14001;
- Community Involvement: work was begun on creating a new 'Vision for Dacorum' involving initial consultations with over 200 people. This will be pursued in 2001/02 to seek commitments from other organisations in Dacorum, to make the vision a reality;
- Community Involvement: we engaged the Tring community on an important local decision affecting the future of Dundale Wood;
- Environment: we adopted the Dacorum Biodiversity Action Plan, which is a 50 year strategy in partnership with Dacorum Environmental Forum to strengthen nature conservation in the Borough;
- Lifelong Learning: Dacorum Borough Council presided over the successful completion of four of its European funded projects (in partnership with the voluntary sector): Academy of Service Excellence, Dacorum Care Project, Dacorum Inclusion Project and the Furniture Recycling project, which is continuing with funding from elsewhere;
- Lifelong Learning: Learndirect has attracted 500 customers in less than 6 months using the internet for training from The Bridge Business and Training Centre;
- Community Safety: with the completion of new installation in Tring all town centres now have 24 hour CCTV surveillance; we also partnered the County in an Anti-Bullying Day and developed diversionary activities for young people by painting murals in subways in Grovehill;
- Housing: in October 2000 the Council's first Tenant Participation Compact was agreed. It sets out how tenants and leaseholders are encouraged to be involved in making decisions about the housing services they receive;
- Involving the Community: we developed local agreements with the voluntary and community sector. Supported and housed the Millennium Young Volunteers Project and worked closely with Druglink;
- Environment: a two day Millennifun event was held in Gadebridge Park offering families and schools free entertainment with environmental themes;
- Millennium: local projects funded by Dacorum's Millennium grants included the re-opened Roman Villa excavation, Millennium books and gardens, gates, flood-lighting and a picnic area;
- Equal Opportunities: Dacorum Borough Council's work with black and ethnic minority groups progressed significantly in 2000/01 with an audit of services for people in different ethnic groups, the start of a minority language project and particularly the success of the multi-cultural festival in Dacorum Pavilion, where Dacorum and other agencies, including Social Services and CVS, celebrated Dacorum Together with the minority groups in the Borough;
- Quality: Building Control was awarded a National Charter Mark in February 2000. The Personnel Services and Chief Executive's Departments were accredited under Investors In People.
- Equality of Access: a Shopmobility pilot scheme was launched in October 2000 in Berkhamsted;
- Economic Development: the Academy of Service Excellence has supported 190 companies in skills training and Dacorum Business Network has counselled 350 businesses or business start-ups, offering a business mentoring scheme which has been heavily oversubscribed.
- Environment: kerbside recycling was extended to the whole Borough where possible, and a scheme for flats will be introduced in 2001;
- Business: we achieved international recognition for our environmental work with the business community with an EU-funded project to develop business networks in Asia based on the Dacorum Green Business Club.

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## **Sustainable Development: Making Dacorum a Good Place To Live and Work**

All the Council's services and activities are expected to conform with the principles of sustainability.

Sustainable development means meeting the needs of today in terms of things like health, jobs, housing, recreation and education, without compromising the ability of our children and future generations to meet their needs. At present we are using up the world's resources faster than they can be replenished and creating waste and pollution faster than it can be cleaned up. This means that for each new generation we are passing on the world in a progressively worse state. For sustainable development to work successfully this situation has to stop and a balance must be achieved in which environmental, social and economic matters are considered together.

Sustainable development has been a key focus for a number of international initiatives in recent years. In 1992 over 150 countries signed a sustainable development action programme called Agenda 21 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. At a local level the Council worked with a range of partner organisations to consult on and produce a Local Agenda 21 Strategy for the Borough in 1996. The strategy has resulted in a number of environmental improvement projects and partnership initiatives. Examples of the work undertaken include developing an action programme to promote nature conservation, working with businesses to help them improve their environmental performance, the development of school wildlife gardens and introducing recycling and composting programmes.

Alongside this direct action the Council continues to test its services and actions against the principles of sustainability. The emerging Dacorum Local Plan is an example of where key policies and proposals are aimed at protecting the environment and delivering more sustainable forms of development and activities. Local policies and the Local Transport Plan also seek to influence car use, passenger transport, walking and cycling so as to reduce congestion, pollution and to promote more sustainable patterns of movement. Other key environmental projects include work towards a waste strategy to reduce waste and increase recycling, improve air quality and deal with land contamination strategies.

Work towards sustainable development is now a statutory requirement for local authorities. Under the Local Government Act 2000 all councils are required to produce a 'Community Strategy' to promote the social, environmental and economic well-being of their area and work towards sustainable development in the UK. The Council will continue to improve promotion of sustainability across all services and through actions with its partners. The Council will also seek to build upon success of Local Agenda 21 and arrange community involvement in environmental projects.

On the following page, you will see the impact of some aspects of our work to improve our quality of life.

If you would like to know more contact  
**Jon Foster on 01442 228239, e-mail  
[jon.foster@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:jon.foster@dacorum.gov.uk)**

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Is Dacorum a Good Place to Live and Work?

You will find a large number of performance indicators in the Best Value Performance Plan, relating to the Council's key aims and services. This small selection gives a flavour of how

Dacorum Borough Council is doing against some measures we use to check performance.

For the full details of Dacorum Borough Council's performance against the statutory Performance Indicators, please see Appendix 1 on page XX of the Best Value Performance Plan.

Performance Indicator	Type of Indicator	1999/00 Performance	2000/1 Performance	2001/2 Target	Service
<b>For Prosperity</b>					
Number of Learndirect clients accessing internet based training project	Local	Learndirect scheme not run until 2000/01	600	1400 including 100 business clients	Regeneration
The number of businesses and business start-ups offered advice	Local	252	251	350	Regeneration
<b>For the Future</b>					
Hectares of green spaces per 1,000 population	Local (Quality of Life)	Information not calculated this year	4.56	4.56	Planning
% of household waste collected per head	BVPI 82	Information not calculated this year	9.26%	9.5%	Engineering and Environment
Kilograms of household waste collected per head	BVPI 84	Information not calculated this year	371.30	382.00	Engineering and Environment
Percentage of highways that are of a high/acceptable level of cleanliness	Local	42%/56%	43%/53%	44%/56%	Engineering and Environment
<b>For Living</b>					
Number of new houses built – Private sector	Local (Quality of Life)	151	289	289	Planning
Total crimes per 1,000 population	BVPI 125	63.45	60.87	59.5	Policy
The number of swims and visits per 1,000 population	Local	8,890	8,845	Increase by 2%	Cultural Services
<b>For Everyone</b>					
Number of Dacorum Card holders	Local	10,000	11,300	Increase by 2%	Community Development
Number of additional homes provided – Social sector	Local (Quality of Life)	77	89	100	Housing
Percentage of urgent local authority housing repairs completed within Government time limits	BVPI 72	90.4%	90%	93%	Housing
<b>Making It Happen*</b>					
Proportion of Council Tax collected	BVPI 9	97.9%	98%	98.1%	Finance

\*The Council will be working on its efficiency and effectiveness in 2001/02 by:

- Streamlining the purchasing systems to increase efficiencies;
- Developing the Call Centre;
- Investing in Information and Communication Technology, and aiming to meet the E-Government target of 25% of services capable of electronic delivery being so delivered by 2002.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Did We Meet Our Targets?

In the Dacorum Performance Plan 2000/01 we said we would:

Answer telephone calls within 12 seconds	We answered calls in 9.87 seconds on average
Enable 15 Dacorum companies to undertake training in environmental management with DBC/Middlesex University on a fully commercial basis	We trained 15 companies and supported some of them financially
Enable 100 affordable housing units to be provided in Dacorum	89 units were provided
Charge less than the average of Hertfordshire District Councils for Council housing rent	Hertfordshire Districts charge on average £50.76; Dacorum charged £48.61
Complete the third stage of a three stage process in preparation for monitoring the quality of air in Dacorum	We achieved this and we now know that we will meet the air quality standards to be applied in 2005
Respond to all requests for environmental health service within 3 days	We achieved our target on 99.5% of occasions, slightly better than last year
Collect Council Tax at a cost per dwelling of £13.74	It actually cost £14.05
Carry out 98.5% of local land charge searches in 10 days	We achieved 100%
Extend the recycling scheme rECOLlect to the whole Borough, including flats during 2000/01	It now covers the whole Borough with few exceptions because of access difficulties. A scheme for flats is due to start in 2001

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Besides targets that we set ourselves, the Government set targets in 2000 for some of the performance indicators that appear in Appendix 1. These were known as the top quartile targets, as they were based on the top performing quarter

of councils for these services. Dacorum Borough Council, in common with other Councils, has until 2004/05 to reach the level of performance of the top quarter of local authorities in the following areas:

Top Quartile Targets	Government Target	DBC Performance in 2000/01 (estimated)
Proportion of Council Tax collected	98.2%	98%
Percentage of business rates which should have been received that were	98.7%	98%
Number of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent employee	6.8	9.04 days
Early retirements as a percentage of the total workforce (excluding ill health retirements)	0.45%	1%
Ill-health retirements as a percentage of the total workforce	0.35%	0.6%
Average relet times for local authority dwellings	25 days	42 days

We are working hard on the services where Performance Indicators show Dacorum Borough Council to be performing poorly. Further information is given later in this Plan.

For complete information about how Dacorum Borough Council performed against targets it set for itself, please see Appendix 1 on page 77.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Partnership Working

Dacorum Borough Council works alongside a number of organisations which also provide services within Dacorum. These include Hertfordshire County Council, the Health Authority, Dacorum Primary Care Group, Town and Parish Councils, voluntary agencies such as Age Concern, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Relate, business representatives like the Chambers of Commerce, community groups, clubs and societies and Central Government agencies, like the Benefits Agency and the Environment Agency.

Increasingly, local authorities are involved in partnerships with organisations which have similar aims serving the residents of the Council's area. An example of this type of partnership working is the Dacorum Community Safety Partnership, where the Police, the Borough Council and the County Council are required to work together to reduce crime and disorder in Dacorum.

Very often Dacorum Borough Council will choose to work with one or more of these organisations to improve service quality and gain the benefit of skills, contacts and resources that other agencies have. In most cases these are voluntary partnerships and they serve the interests of Dacorum residents better than the Borough Council could do on its own. An example of this is the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Management Executive, which involves representatives of business interests in the town centre, the Police and the Borough Council. The Dacorum Environmental Forum and the Green Business Club have encouraged business and community members to be involved in working on environmental priorities.

Dacorum Borough Council often works in neighbourhoods, and its partnerships can involve residents, community groups and agencies serving a small area. An example of this is the Highfield Families Project, supported by Single Regeneration Budget funding.

There are an increasing number of partnership groups in Dacorum, and it is likely that there will be more in the future. This way of working collaboratively will help to underpin service improvement and innovation, to reduce duplication and ensure that public funding is used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

A list of partners with which Dacorum Borough Council works can be found at Appendix 5.

# WHAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE TOLD US

## Improvement and Development Agency Review

In December 1999 Dacorum Borough Council was one of the first local authorities to have a corporate review carried out under the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Local Government Improvement Programme. The Review Team comprised local government practitioners including Councillors and Managers from other Councils. The review was carefully structured by the IDeA and the same process has now been used at over 100 other Councils. During the review the Review Team looked at a wide range of evidence to assess the Council against a Benchmark of an "Ideal Local Authority". In particular the Review Team examined Leadership, Community Involvement and Performance Management.

The Review Team found some strengths:

- Sound financial management;
- Generally good engagement with the community;
- Enthusiastic employees committed to service users;
- Good work implementing equal opportunities and anti-poverty policies;
- Preparedness for change;
- Some innovation and excellence, particularly in cross-cutting activities;

The Review Team recommended that the Council should:

- Set priorities and plan for change in the financial situation and to meet the modernisation agenda;
- Develop the culture of the Council to work on Best Value;
- Decide on new political structures;
- Work with community groups;
- Use Information and Communication Technology better; and
- Plan and measure performance and development.

## Action Plan 2000

In the year since the IDeA Review Team visit, the Council made progress in all the areas where recommendation for improvements were made. In response to the IDeA's recommendations, Action Plan 2000 was drawn up by Paul Walker, the Chief Executive, to help manage the workload. Responsibility for each element and deadlines were assigned to Council managers, who worked on the following aspects during 2000:

- Community Leadership: developing a vision for Dacorum;
- Community Planning: preliminary work to develop a 10 year Community Strategy for Dacorum;
- Performance Planning: service plans were drawn up for all Council services in a consistent format, feeding into this annual Best Value Performance Plan and into a five year corporate plan, including financial and resource plans;
- External Communications Programme: how the Council is to consult, inform and publicise in the future;
- Democratic Representation: we provided information to all residents about the possible options for changes to the political structures and consulted widely. The Council opted for the Leader and Cabinet model, which will be in place by May 2002;
- Performance Management: we developed new performance measures and targets, and revamped the Council's employee appraisal scheme.
- Internal Communications: a new briefing system was introduced and employees were surveyed;
- Resources Plan: new medium term financial and capital strategies were developed, and work was begun on an Asset Management Plan and Information and Communications Strategy;
- Best Value: the need to achieve Best Value and continual improvement has been highlighted in every service, and the Council is making good progress with implementing the regime;
- Other issues: a job evaluation scheme to assess all Council jobs has been developed and should be in operation during 2001.

In working hard and making progress in all these areas the Council has moved closer to the IDeA's benchmark of the "Ideal Local Authority."

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## External Auditor's Management Letter 2000

Each year Dacorum Borough Council, in common with every other local authority, is audited by an independent External Auditor, appointed by the Audit Commission. Dacorum's External Auditor is Deloitte & Touche. Over the years the External Auditor has examined the Council's financial arrangements. More recently the External Auditor has also examined management arrangements. A key priority for the Council and the External Auditor in 2000 was the Council's progress on Best Value.

The External Auditor's view was:

'In summary, ... the overall impression we have gained from our work in the last twelve months is that Dacorum Borough Council remains a financially prudent authority intent upon delivering value for money services to the local community.'  
(Letter from Deloitte & Touche 21, December 2000)

Subject of Audit	Issues for Members
Best Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a high priority, develop a performance management framework;</li> <li>Continue officer/member training and awareness initiatives to ensure that Best Value is seen as an initiative which is owned by the whole Organisation.</li> <li>Enhance use of PIs and targets as mechanisms for managing performance;</li> <li>Regularly review Best Value processes to ensure that they are being applied with the rigour envisaged in the statutory guidance.</li> <li>Improve corporate arrangements for checking the accuracy and completeness of PIs.</li> </ul>
New Political Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members are recommended to give consideration to some of the practical implications of the new political arrangements in order that they can take a fully informed decision on their choice of new political structures ahead of the DETR's June 2001 deadline.</li> </ul>
Financial Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members are requested to note the reasons for the delay on the certification of the 1999/2000 accounts.</li> </ul>
Adequacy of financial systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No issues for members.</li> </ul>
Performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the accuracy and completeness of the performance indicators being reported.</li> </ul>
Fraud and corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No issues for members.</li> </ul>
Legality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No issues for members.</li> </ul>
Economy, efficiency and effectiveness – Asset management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council should follow a corporate approach to property portfolio management including the creation of a formalised property strategy in conjunction with their Asset Management Plan.</li> <li>Future levels of funding available for expenditure on repairs and maintenance may be significantly reduced. The long-term condition and value of current property may be affected, and a strategy to deal with effects and remedies should be developed.</li> <li>The Authority should review the quality of property services provided. Areas in need of improvement should be catalogued and their performance monitored against predetermined standards including internal and external benchmarking.</li> <li>The Authority should ensure that staff are consulted regularly on issues such as their satisfaction with office accommodation and on the use of office space.</li> <li>The Authority should consider carrying out formal comparisons between the in-house property services and services offered by third parties.</li> </ul>
Economy, efficiency and effectiveness – Value Added Tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The detailed report sets out a number of 'technical' recommendations aimed at maximising VAT recovery, minimising VAT liabilities and limiting the risk of VAT being a cost to the Council.</li> </ul>
Economy, efficiency and effectiveness – Follow up on previous reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council should continue the implementation of the Income and Charging Strategy to achieve efficient and effective use of Council resources.</li> </ul>
Financial Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No issues for members.</li> </ul>

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## External Auditor's Report on Our First Best Value Performance Plan

Dacorum Borough Council published its first Best Value Performance Plan on 31 March 2000, as required, and, by law, this was reviewed by the Council's External Auditors, Deloitte & Touche. The Auditor prepared a report on the Plan by 30 June 2000. The report was received by the Council, and made available to the public on the Council's website and in hard copy. Necessary amendments were also made to the Best Value Performance Plan, and the Council's response was publicised alongside the Auditor's report.

The Auditor's detailed recommendations (together with an action plan to put improvements into effect) were considered at a meeting of Best Value Sub-Committee in November 2000.

The main recommendations of the Auditor were:

- To provide more information in the Summary Plan;
- To develop Council-wide objectives linked clearly to services and service reviews;
- Five year targets set against Best Value Performance Indicators;
- To progress with a design and implementation of a performance management system;

All of these issues have been addressed in this Plan, and in our planned work over the next twelve months.

In addition in 2001/02 we aim to:

- introduce a new service planning system in all areas;
- revise and reissue Best Value review guidance, taking account of all the recommendations raised in the External Auditor's report on the Best Value Performance Plan;
- offer a wider range of training on aspects of Best Value for Members and Officers;
- introduce a Performance Management System in all areas;
- communicate our progress in Best Value internally and externally through the various channels available to us;
- complete five Best Value Reviews listed in the revised 5 year programme of reviews (see page 68).

We believe that progress in implementing Best Value at Dacorum is rapid and measurable, and the External Auditor's comments have been helpful in targeting the areas which need attention. There is a process in place to monitor the advances in delivering Best Value. This involves both Councillors and employees in improving services for residents of Dacorum.

If you would like to know more please contact **Christine Fisher** on 01442 228333, e-mail [christine.fisher@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:christine.fisher@dacorum.gov.uk)

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Consulting the Public

### How we consulted this year and what we learned

Consultation is integral to the way we work at Dacorum. An IDeA report in 2000 stated that:

‘One of the Council’s strengths is the extent to which it consults and involves local people. The review team was impressed by the fact that everybody with whom they met or spoke to recognised the importance of consultation and were receptive to the views of local people.

‘The Council has adopted a variety of methods for consulting with local people (its citizen’s panel, focus groups, market research, etc.) and is beginning to develop a strategic approach to consultation. The Council has also made attempts to hear the views of hard to reach groups such as young people, ethnic minority groups and older people (e.g. the Council has recently appointed an ethnic minority outreach worker, has established a young people’s council and has conducted focus groups with hard to reach groups as part of its work on anti-poverty) and there was evidence of the Council evaluating the results of research albeit on a departmental rather than a corporate basis. The Council recognise that support is required to enable people to participate in consultation and devotes significant resources to community capacity building.

‘The Council’s successes in respect of consultation accounts for the fact that it has a reputation for being open and accessible.’

In 2000/2001 we asked what people thought in a wide range of ways. We asked residents and representatives of our business community for their views on

- Services
- Structures
- The future vision for the Borough

We also spoke to representatives of our business community about our budget and a vision for the future.

## Services

### How we asked

This year for the first time we were told by the government to conduct certain consultation exercises in particular ways. This is designed to allow the government to compare levels of satisfaction between local authorities. We surveyed benefit claimants, planning applicants and a general sample of residents to understand their levels of satisfaction and to allow us to compare our performance with other authorities.

We used our Citizens’ Panel, Dacorum 2000, to consult on services from refuse collection to sports centres and from recycling to community centres. All of this information is designed to contribute to current and future Best Value reviews.

We also undertook research with sports centre users and non-users as part of a review this year, and continued our ongoing Housing Customer Satisfaction Survey.

We consulted with all of our Council tenants and leaseholders during the development of the Tenants Participation Compact which sets out the issues we will consult with tenants on in the future. Work towards the Compact included focus groups, a conference, telephone conferencing and joint working groups of tenants, leaseholders, Officers and Councillors.

We also consulted with our tenants (for the first time) on how we set the housing budget.

We introduced two new leaflets. A simplified complaints leaflet and a version aimed specifically at young people. These leaflets and the creation of a Complaints Officer post are designed to improve ongoing input from residents about services.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## What we learned

The survey of Residents for the Government's satisfaction indicators told us that we're doing well in a wide range of areas compared to a MORI survey asking the same questions about local Councils nationally. We have included results from this survey throughout this document. The two main findings which we have to report to the government are:

### Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the authority runs things?

Dacorum		All Councils
11.8%	very satisfied	6%
61.7%	fairly satisfied	52%
5.8%	fairly dissatisfied	10%
1.4%	very dissatisfied	3%

Net satisfaction ratings are calculated by taking the total percentage of people who are very or fairly dissatisfied away from the total percentage who are very or fairly satisfied. Dacorum has a net satisfaction rating of 67% compared to 45% in the national survey.

Another response we have to tell the government is the satisfaction with our complaint handling. Those people who answered that they had contacted us with a complaint over the last 12 months were asked how satisfied they were with the outcome.

### How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the way in which your complaint was handled?

Dacorum		All Councils
22%	Very satisfied	14%
23%	Fairly satisfied	21%
21%	Fairly unsatisfied	27%
22%	Very unsatisfied	29%

This gives Dacorum a net satisfaction with the way complaints are handled of +2% compared to -21% in the national survey.

There is a monthly Housing Customer Satisfaction Survey questionnaire which is sent to a random sample of tenants. In 1999/2000, 1439 tenants were sent a survey form. 21.5% responded. 46% of those felt they had been adequately consulted. 67.5% of respondents who have contacted the Council felt their enquiry had been dealt with satisfactorily.

The results of other consultation with people who have submitted planning applications and people claiming benefit are currently being compiled.

## Decision-making structures

### How we asked

A major influence on the effectiveness of making Council decisions about services and priorities is the political decision-making process. This year we undertook a comprehensive public consultation exercise of our three options for the future. Over 1600 people expressed their views through the Council magazine, the citizens' panel and at roadshows across the Borough. There was also a three day Citizens' Jury which heard a range of local and national witnesses. The Jury made recommendations on the chosen model, area representation, the size of the cabinet, the scrutiny function and how to improve turn-out at local elections etc.

This year to help make the current decision-making structure clearer we described it in Dacorum Digest and re-published our leaflet about having your say or asking questions at Council meetings in a more easy-to-read format.

### What we learned

From our initial consultation on new political structures there was no conclusive decision. 351 Panel members wanted a Mayor with a cabinet (Option A), 324 wanted a Leader with Cabinet (Option B) and 224 wanted a mayor with Council Manager (Option C). Dacorum Digest readers voted 125 for Option A, 120 Option B and 99 Option C. The Citizens' Jury considered this along with a wide range of other evidence and came down in favour of the Leader with Cabinet model. They also made a range of other recommendations. You can see the full report at [www.dacorum.gov.uk/council/council-procedures/citizens-jury](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/council/council-procedures/citizens-jury) or an article about the consultation process at [www.dacorum.gov.uk/council/digest/2001\\_winter/news](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/council/digest/2001_winter/news).

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## A vision for the future

### How we asked

More than 150 individuals and organisations worked with people from Dacorum Borough Council on creating a draft vision for the Borough during the summer and autumn last year. This included schools, some members of the Citizens' Panel and community organisations.

These views and thoughts were brought together to begin our understanding of what all of the organisations providing public and voluntary services for Dacorum need to do to support and develop the quality of life in the Borough. The aim is to create a shared vision for the Borough as a whole, not just what Dacorum Borough Council needs to do.

By creating an overall vision for the Borough, we can then work with the County Council, the Health Authority, the Police, Town and Parish Councils and so on to deliver the vision by working in a more co-ordinated way. The Vision can help us shape the work that we do and help us build a Community Strategy which all of these organisations can work together with us to achieve.

### What we learned

This consultation identified a range of areas that we need to include and work with a wide range of partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve for everyone:

- The opportunity to be part of a fully inclusive society with a sense of community ownership and a fundamental right to have their say
- Affordable housing close to the family network
- Accessible local employment
- Effective and affordable transport to employment and leisure
- A cleaner and healthier environment

- Access to local green space
- Access to local goods, services and new and emerging technologies
- The opportunity to fulfil their potential through helping others
- Easy access to whatever they need to lead a full and independent life
- Confidence in their own safety and security and that of their families
- Responsibility for and pride in their local area
- Access to life long learning
- Access to local leisure opportunities

As part of the creation of a Community Strategy for Dacorum, we consulted about 200 people on a vision for the borough.

## A Business View

### How we asked

To help shape the vision, we invited representatives of the local business community to a meeting in February. We asked people who came to this meeting for their views on what the Borough should be like in ten years time and the steps we all need to take to achieve this. We also discussed the Council's Budget for 2001/2. We advertised this meeting in the local press.

### What we learned

The results of this meeting were still being collated as we went to press, but the small turnout means we need to focus more effort on involving our business community more closely with the Council in the future.

If you would like to know more about this, contact **Mike Browne** on 01442 228507, e-mail [mike.browne@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:mike.browne@dacorum.gov.uk).

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Dealing With Complaints

A new complaints handling procedure was set up during 2000/01 to ensure that customers' views of the services they received were heard by service managers and staff. We regard complaints and the information they give us as important for improving services, and making a contribution to Best Value.

The changes to the complaints procedure include:

- A designated member of staff to co-ordinate the response to complainants. You can contact the Complaints Officer on 01442 228250;
- A new definition of what we consider to be a complaint:  
'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the Council, its staff or its agents, affecting an individual customer or group of customers'
- New complaints forms for the public – one for young people, one for anyone to use;
- Monitoring complaints by gender, ethnic origin and disability.
- Enabling complaints to be made via e-mail to [complaints@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@dacorum.gov.uk)

The new system started on 1 September 2000. Between 1 September and 31 December 2000, 75 complaints were received by Dacorum Borough Council. The services and issues that people made complaints about were very varied, and the service managers resolved them individually. The categories of complaints were:

Service had not been provided:	23 complaints
Unacceptable delay or previously reported fault	27 complaints
Employee attitude	9 complaints
Unfair treatment	6 complaints
Council had done something wrong	3 complaints
Complaint about Council policy	2 complaints
No reply to phone call or letter	2 complaints
Others	3 complaints

Our Customer Satisfaction Survey in September showed that of those that had made a complaint, 45% were satisfied or very satisfied with the way the complaint was handled. This compares to a national figure of 35%.

All these complaints were replied to by telephone or letter. On average it took 23.3 calendar days to resolve the complaints.

Of the 75 complaints received, 3 remain unresolved.

If you would like to know more please contact the Complaints Officer on 01442 228250, or email: [complaints@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@dacorum.gov.uk).

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT ABOUT OURSELVES

### Best Value Reviews In Year 0 (1999/2000)

Best Value became a legal requirement for many public bodies on 1 April 2000, and local authorities were not required to undertake Best Value reviews before then. However in common with many other Councils, Dacorum Borough Council decided that there would be advantages in learning from undertaking reviews of some services before the regime started.

Therefore the following services were reviewed in 1999/2000:

- Anti-Poverty Strategy;
- Public Relations;
- Building Control;
- Sports Centres;
- Environmental Health (part)
- Housing Cleaning and Caretaking;
- Land Charges;
- Community Alarm Services

Two of these reviews: Housing Cleaning and Caretaking and the Anti-Poverty Strategy, have already been inspected by the Best Value Inspectorate. Three others, Building Control, Sports Centres and Community Alarm Services, are scheduled for inspection during 2001/02. Environmental Health, Public Relations and Land Charges are to be reviewed again as part of wider reviews in the revised 5 year programme (see page 68).

The decision to undertake a major review of support services led to some of the reviews which had started in 1999/2000 to be paused. These include: Committee Services, some financial services and Fleet Management. Recycling is now included in the review of Waste Management.

### Improvements from pilot Best Value Reviews

Carrying out a Best Value service review takes time, involves a number of different activities to address all the 4 Cs (challenge, compare, consult and compete) and needs the work of a team of people with different skills. The findings of each review and the recommendations for improvement are therefore based on substantial pieces of work, including the results of consultation with services users and employees, consideration of other ways of providing the service and comparison of cost

and quality with other service providers. All the improvements listed are endorsed by Council Committees, and are now in progress.

The reviews of services completed in the first year of Best Value (1999/2000) resulted in the following proposals for improvements. Best Value review reports are usually documents in the public domain and can be consulted.

### Anti-poverty strategy

#### Improvement plan recommendations

##### Social Inclusion

1. That the Council maintain a strategy to tackle poverty but that it should both inform and be part of a broader strategy to tackle disadvantage and exclusion, including:
  - Improving health
  - Services for young people
  - Equal opportunities
  - Community safety
  - Involving the community
  - Services for older people
2. That we attempt to engage a broader range of agencies and interests in shaping it.
3. That tackling poverty/social exclusion should underpin an overall Community Strategy for Dacorum.
4. To consult Dacorum Borough Council service users regarding the further development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

##### Information for Residents

5. Based on Focus Group research that was carried out with low income households, it is clear that poverty and lack of opportunities often arise not because of a lack of services, but because people either do not know about them or find them difficult to access.

An important part of the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy is therefore that information about services reaches the greatest possible number of residents, taking into account people's differing circumstances and ways of finding out about things. A one-stop shop and multi-agency approach, training front-line employees and sharing information are therefore key actions.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Income and Charging

6. The Council's Income and Charging Strategy should develop a coherent approach to discounts on fees and charges based on the Dacorum Card. The practice of discounting costs to assist the least well-off via the Dacorum Card needs to be made standard practice across the authority and as much as possible with other local service providers.

## Performance Management

7. The production of an Annual Anti-Poverty report linking objectives, outcomes and a review of performance to meet the demand for information, revealed in the stakeholders' surveys.
8. There is a need for the Strategy to have objectives that are SMART (Specific – Measurable – Agreed – Realistic – Timebound) with clear performance targets and that these objectives should also inform the work and monitoring of specific anti-poverty measures arising from the Strategy.

## Strategic Information

9. That we meet the growing demand for knowledge about our community, using a corporate information system able to turn data into intelligence, such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), to allow greater sharing and use of data across departmental and agency boundaries.

If you would like to know more contact  
**Paul Manning** on 01442 228635,  
e-mail [paul.manning@dacorum.uk.gov](mailto:paul.manning@dacorum.uk.gov)

## Public Relations

### Improvement Plan Recommendations

#### Communications

1. To examine the benefits of pulling together the existing marketing units within services to achieve efficiencies and deliver the corporate message;
2. A full review of communications resources and expenditure across the authority should be undertaken, including market testing.

## Budget saving

3. To make a planned saving of at least 10% of the budget, saving at least £4680 from seeking more competitive designers and printers and a minor reduction in run-on costs.

## Partner contact

4. Monthly formal contact will be established with Herts Constabulary's local PR representative.

## Target revision

5. To develop qualitative evaluation of media coverage. Qualitative targets will then be set for the unit alongside existing quantitative targets.

## Service improvements

6. Response to the media survey undertaken last year has already seen some service improvements. These include:
  - More one-to-one briefings with reporters on complex issues such as Budget and Local Plan
  - Closer monitoring and improvement of responses to one publication which fed back less positively than others in the media survey
  - The introduction of Newsflash media monitoring software, enabling
  - more rigorous and automated monitoring of performance against standard media response targets
  - effective benchmarking with County and Police Media Relations which already use this system, and with other Boroughs which are in the process of adopting the system
  - The joint commissioning of PR planning training in partnership with the Police, County and other Districts. The first of these events was held in June 2000

If you would like to know more contact  
**Mike Browne** on 01442 228507,  
e-mail [mike.browne@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:mike.browne@dacorum.gov.uk)

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Building Control

### Initial improvements identified:

#### Public information

1. 2 talks each year to local surveyors and agents
2. 3 Access newsletters each year produced and distributed to local groups
3. 2 newsletters each year on Building Control circulated to agents and builders
4. Produce pockets guide on access for pubs, restaurants and hotels

#### Quality

5. Implement good enforcement concordat for Building Control
6. Obtain Charter Mark

#### Strategic

7. Work towards Shopmobility within Berkhamsted
8. Develop scheme to provide discounted rail tokens for disabled people

#### Service Delivery Options

9. Investigate feasibility of partnerships with building industry
10. Investigate cross-boundary working to maximise income
11. Seek to develop additional partners under partnership scheme to maximise income

If you would like to know more please contact **John Gavin on 01442 228578**,  
e-mail [john.gavin@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:john.gavin@dacorum.gov.uk)

## Sports Centres

The Sports Facilities review is due for completion by the end of April.

The review has led to the production of an improvement plan for the service, which is already being implemented. Some of the areas introduced to date include the introduction of the Microcache Leisure Management System, the development of a Sports Strategy and the introduction of Customer Care skills training. In addition a re-structuring of sports facilities staffing has been undertaken and will be in place from 1 April 2001.

It is anticipated that a review of how the facilities are delivered to the community will be complete by April 2001. It is from this review that members can decide on how the service is delivered to best serve the requirements of Best Value and meet the demands of the community.

If you would like to know more contact **Sue Kinghorn on 01442 228776**,  
e-mail [sue.kinghorn@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:sue.kinghorn@dacorum.gov.uk)

## Environmental Health (food safety)

### Improvement Plan Recommendations

#### Service Delivery: Inspection of Food Businesses

1. Increase the percentage of inspections actually carried out, when compared with those on the inspection programme for the year.
  - In the high-risk categories from 90.6% (1998/99) to 100% in 2003/4.
  - In the low risk categories from 96.1% (1998/99) to 99.5% in 2003/4.

#### Responses to Requests for Services

2. Continue to respond to 100% of service requests within 3 working days.

#### Food Hygiene Training

3. Provide training for at least 150 people each year.
4. Provide at least 1 non-English language training course each year.

#### Service request and inspection feedback

5. Undertake additional surveys and use call-centre to improve accuracy and quality of information gathered.

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Consult focus groups

6. Establish focus groups of customers and businesses and consult on specific issues.

## Cost of contractors

7. Further research into the costs and viability of employing contractors to undertake services.

If you would like to know more please contact Peter Ablett on 01442 228470, e-mail [peter.ablett@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:peter.ablett@dacorum.gov.uk)

## Housing Cleaning and Caretaking

### Improvement Plan Recommendations

#### Cleaning

1. Revise cleaning specification to obtain efficiencies and more outcome-based measures; consult on changes
2. Introduce service schedules in all communal locations
3. Provide more admin support for service
4. Revise procurement processes
5. Introduce incentive scheme and more flexible working
6. Survey customers on service improvements

#### Caretaking

1. Introduce replacement to caretaking service
2. Transfer cleaning element to cleaning service

If you would like to know more please contact Graham Miles on 01442 228448, e-mail [graham.miles@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:graham.miles@dacorum.gov.uk)

## Land Charges

### Improvement Plan Recommendations

1. Data check of entire Land Charges Register
2. Develop Service Level Agreements amongst all associated departments and organisations
3. Production of an information leaflet for customers and prospective customers
4. Utilisation of Council's Website to promote services and fees
5. Develop use of GIS for Land Charge Searches

6. Increase current fees in light of the price comparisons and Council's financial climate
7. Undertake further development relating to the 'Sellers' Pack' and the National Land Information Service and their likely impact on future delivery of the Land Charges service
8. Improve and enhance the entire consultation process to ensure better service planning and customer input

If you would like to know more please contact Shona Russell on 01442 228674, e-mail [shona.russell@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:shona.russell@dacorum.gov.uk)

## Community Alarm Services

1. Review charging policy applicable to:
  - Corporate customers
  - Lifeline customers
  - Provision of additional services
2. Adopt procedures and management practices aimed at improving communication with:
  - Resident and mobile wardens
  - Corporate customers
  - Operators
3. Develop a marketing strategy to promote the Lifeline service for implementation when additional call handling capacity becomes available
4. Determine priorities in the medium to long-term scope of the service in respect of the customer base and apply an appropriate charging policy
5. Improve call response during peak times and achieve an overall improvement in performance by contracting out the whole monitoring service, subject to competitive tendering

If you would like to know more contact Lou Wilson on 01442 228610, e-mail [lou.wilson@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:lou.wilson@dacorum.gov.uk)

# Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

## Best Value Review – Housing, Building, Cleaning & Caretaking

### Inspector's Report

#### A 2-star service

This Review was one of the first examined by the Best Value Inspection Service as part of its early inspection programme.

The Review focused on two related service activities; housing building cleaning and housing caretaking.

The housing cleaning service is provided by a direct service organisation (DSO) of the Council. The service covers the communal parts of blocks of flats and sheltered housing schemes for the elderly (over 3000 flats in total).

The housing caretaking service currently comprises 4 caretakers covering a number of blocks of flats and communal areas in Hemel Hempstead.

These services were chosen to be reviewed first because there is a well developed local market for building cleaning which has not been tested for some time and the need for caretaking has remained unchallenged for many years.

The Inspectorate concluded that the building cleaning and caretaking service at Dacorum is a good (2 star) service and that the service is likely to improve as a result of the Best Value Review.

They also made a number of recommendations that the Council is currently addressing, as follows:

- That the cleaning service be subjected to further competition
- That clear criteria be produced for deciding on the future type and location of the Estate Warden scheme (which is proposed as a replacement for the caretaking service)
- That the future role of the caretaking service is considered as part of the housing management review to produce an integrated approach to neighbourhood management
- That performance monitoring and management is reviewed to achieve greater consistency in service standards

If you would like to know more please contact **Graham Miles on 01442 228448,**  
e-mail [graham.miles@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:graham.miles@dacorum.gov.uk)