



**IMPROVING DACORUM:
HOW WE ARE GOING TO GET THERE**

Our Plans and
Performance 2001/02

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Dacorum Performance Targets 2001/02

During 2001/02 we plan to do the following:

Community Leadership: We will send our draft constitution to the Secretary of State by 30 June 2001, and start the new political structure as a pilot for 1 September 2001.

Health Improvement/Community Safety: map services in Dacorum which support people suffering, and concerned about, drug and alcohol abuse, and publicise them on a web-site by June 2001;

Regeneration: During 2001/02 we plan to complete Berkhamsted Urban Design Study and publish a newsletter by 31 August 2001 to show the achievements;

Regeneration: complete Hemel Hempstead Old Town Marketing and Promotions project and establish a successor organisation of local groups and individuals to continue the work by 31 March 2002;

Regeneration: research options for town centre management across Dacorum by 30 September 2001 and re-launch Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Management;

Lifelong Learning: expand training activities at The Bridge Business & Training Centre and promote training to meet a target of 2000 clients in the year;

Local Plan: During 2001/02 we plan to complete the Dacorum Borough Local Plan Inquiry and consider the Inspector's recommendations to the Council and prepare a community engagement strategy for the next review of the local plan by the end of 2001.

Efficiency and Effectiveness: As part of our work on single status employment we will have evaluated every different type of job by 31 August 2001 to place everyone on a single pay-scale.

Community Leadership: Work towards completing a community strategy for Dacorum. The target date for this is May 2002.

Quality of Life: Complete a Cultural Strategy for Dacorum by 31 March 2002 covering:

Arts and Entertainment Strategy
Sports and Sport Development Strategy
Recreation Strategy

Community Leadership: Review the policy framework for the distribution of grant aid to voluntary organisations during 2001 and aim to have a new framework in place by 1 April 2002.

Community Leadership: Look at models for 'area working' to see how the needs of people in local areas are responded to.

Housing: Find ways of increasing the involvement of Council tenants in the planning of the housing service.

Quality: Complete an employee satisfaction survey by 31 May 2001, analyse the findings and incorporate them into our plans for future years.

Environment: complete an accreditation audit for ISO 14001 for the Council's Depot at Cupid Green by 31 March 2002;

Environment: co-host a major community environmental event in Gadebridge Park in July 2001 to raise awareness and encourage school children to become actively involved.

Building Control: We aim to start cross-boundary plan checking of Building Regulation applications within Hertfordshire, with a view to forming partnerships with local architects by 31 December 2001;

Transportation: We aim to complete the first stage of a car parking strategy for Dacorum with an assessment of the parking problems in Dacorum by 31 December 2001.

Environment: By 31 March 2002 we will launch four pilot recycling schemes to increase our recycling rate in Warners End, Berkhamsted, Tring and Kings Langley.

Environment: We will adopt a Strategy for dealing with contaminated land before July 2001.

Social Inclusion: Review access to services for disadvantaged people in rural areas and develop ways of improving it. We aim to have a policy in place by 2002.

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The Corporate Work Programme

The Council has set out challenging objectives for itself over the next twelve months in order to build for the future. As a large organisation with wide-ranging services and functions there are objectives which will affect the whole Council and others which are specific to services.

The Council has to perform a range of roles to meet requirements and expectations from:

- the community with individual service needs and collectively as representative groups
- the voluntary and business sectors
- national government
- other public sector organisations like police, health, education
- other local government bodies - Herts County Council and nearby authorities

In order to realistically deliver these objectives we have set out a corporate programme of work which specifies

- what are we going to do
- when we are aiming to do it
- who will take the lead on the action
- what will be the key benefits (the outcomes)

There are five main themes in the Corporate Work Programme:

- Community Well-Being
- Democratic Renewal
- Best Value
- Ethical and Financial Framework
- Modern Management

The Corporate Work Programme is key to ensuring we can set realistic and achievable targets which are adequately resourced. We then have an opportunity to deliver our overall aims. This approach will also provide a way of monitoring the objectives, recognising successes and taking corrective action whenever necessary. However despite the changes we plan, we must continue to provide good services.

There are a wide range of people working for or with the Council. Equally the community relies and depends on the Council to a lesser or greater extent. The Corporate Work Programme will help to communicate to all of these interested parties that we have a clear focus and direction which will aspire to meet the majority of their expectations. This will provide confidence and trust that the Council can deliver what it sets out to do.

If you would like to know more about the Corporate Work Programme please contact **Christine Fisher** on 01442 228233, email christine.fisher@dacorum.gov.uk

Our Plans and Performance 2001/02

Planning and Managing Performance

All Dacorum Borough Council's Services produced Service Plans for the first time in 2000/01. These plans will form the basis for our performance management system, which should be introduced by autumn 2001. We will be monitoring our progress against our performance indicators and targets, so we can ensure that we achieve what we set out to. This will help us to improve services for Dacorum's residents, and secure greater efficiency and effectiveness. If you would like to know more please contact **Hilary Mitchell** on 01442 228344, email hilary.mitchell@dacorum.gov.uk.

How We Will Consult Over The Coming Year

Cultural Strategy

During the year, the Community Plan will be developed, but there are other plans that will be worked on too, including a 'cultural strategy' covering arts and entertainment, sport and sports development, leisure and recreation; countryside management. This work will involve looking at existing provision and identifying gaps. There may be certain groups of people who are unable to access services, or some locations where services are not provided. These will be explored and local people and organisations approached for their views.

Look out for coverage in Dacorum Digest or contact **Sue Kinghorn, Head of Cultural Services** on 01442 228796, e-mail sue.kinghorn@dacorum.gov.uk

A vision for the future

We are planning to consult more widely as we develop the Community Strategy for the Borough. We aim to have the Community Strategy in place by April 2002. The Strategy will only work if it is shared by the Community and all of the organisations which deliver services to support the quality of life. This includes the Police, the Health Authority, the County Council and the Voluntary Sector.

We will be consulting on the draft of the vision with our partner organisations and then, later this year we will be asking what residents think and how they would like the Borough to be in 10 years time.

Services

We will be asking our Citizens' Panel about the way we deliver services, finding out what residents think about us expanding the use of call centres and providing services on-line. We will also be asking panel members their views on using contractors to provide some of our services. This is one possible outcome of our Best Value Review programme, so we are asking the panel what they think.

We will also continue to consult on a wide range of services on a regular basis and specifically on the lead in to our Best Value Reviews. We will use our complaint forms, the Citizens' Panel, the Tenants' Advisory Panel, telephone surveys, mailed-out questionnaires and focus groups.

Democratic Renewal

Although we have already consulted substantially on the choice of model for Dacorum (see How We Consulted You Last Year), we will be giving further opportunity to comment on the more detailed decision-making model for Dacorum once it is developed.

Area representation is one of the things which is being considered with the new structures. This may mean a standard approach to area forums across the Borough in the longer term, but in the short term the Council will be supporting Councillors' surgeries more effectively. This will enable residents to have access to their Councillor on a regular basis and give Councillors even closer links to the communities they represent.

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

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Five Year Programme of Best Value Reviews

One aspect of Best Value for local authorities is a review of all functions within a five year cycle, ending in 2005. The Government has not specified the order in which services are to be reviewed, but it has laid down the criteria by which the services for review are selected. These include user satisfaction, importance to the public, size of budget, performance against indicators, potential market and strategic importance. Although we have to ensure that all the Council's services are reviewed over five years, the Government's guidance anticipated that the programme might have to change for various reasons.

Dacorum Borough Council included a programme of Best Value reviews in its first Best Value Performance Plan published in March 2000. In drawing up the programme it considered all factors, and the programme included a mix of single service, crosscutting and strategic reviews. It soon became clear, however, that the programme contained too many reviews, and that the resources to manage them were not available. Also it became clear that opportunities for innovative delivery would not arise through such a piecemeal approach.

The Council therefore considered a revised programme which contained fewer, larger reviews. At the end of 2000 there were several Best Value conferences at national and regional levels, which provided the latest views of progress in Best Value. The Government, the Auditors and Inspectors and our colleagues in other local authorities all supported the view that there needed to be fewer Best Value reviews on a larger scale. This would allow the opportunity to achieve the greatest service improvements.

At Dacorum Borough Council we also undertook checks on the Best Value reviews in progress against a list of questions from the Audit Commission document 'Seeing is Believing' which details what the Best Value Inspectors would look for during inspection. This allowed an evaluation to be made as to whether the reviews would be completed to the required depth by the end of the year, and be ready for inspection in 2001/2002.

Dacorum Borough Council has now had two Best Value inspections: Housing Cleaning and Caretaking and of the Anti-Poverty Strategy. A major review of Support Services has also been included in the programme since last year.

As a result of taking into account local factors, the results of the assessment of progress in the Year 1 reviews and the wider national picture, it was felt necessary to revise the five year programme of Best Value reviews.

Year	Revised 5 year Programme
Year 1 2000/01	Building Control Community Alarm Services (from Year 0) Environmental Action Housing Management Recreation Sports Centres
Year 2 2001/02	Environmental Health Landscape Management Regeneration Support Services Voluntary and Community Sector Support
Year 3 2002/03	Building Services Housing Maintenance Planning Services for Older People Strategic Housing Role Waste Management
Year 4 2003/04	Asset Management Communication Corporate Management Heritage, Arts & Entertainment Services for Young People
Year 5 2004/05	Building Control Cultural Strategy Social Inclusion Sports Facilities Transportation

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Resources to be Devoted to the Review Programme

As we are now aiming to carry out fewer, larger reviews this should reduce the intensity of Best Value work for some managers, as there will be at most six service areas undergoing review in any one year.

However to support Best Value all service managers will be more actively involved in service planning and performance management. This will ensure that their services are ready for review when their part of the timetable is reached.

It is intended that in addition to the three full-time equivalent posts devoted to Best Value we can arrange secondments for the period of reviews. This will include involvement of people who are not Dacorum Borough Council employees, but who are service users or community representatives.

There is a corporate budget for the costs associated with Best Value.

Critical Issues that might affect the Timetable

The reduction in the number of reviews should ensure that the review programme is more manageable. In addition the increasing clarity over the Council's financial position is likely to stabilise plans that we make for the next two or three years.

However with so few Best Value specialists in post, the loss of one or more could significantly disrupt the programme until replacement.

If you would like to know more please contact Hilary Mitchell on 01442 228344, e-mail hilary.mitchell@dacorum.gov.uk

Best Value Reviews in Year 1 (2000/01)

Dacorum Borough Council decided in October 1999 that the following services should be subject to review in the first full year of the Best Value regime.

- Asset Management
- Economic Development
- Environmental Action
- Highways
- Housing Management
- Information and Communication Technology
- Sport and Recreation
- Landscape Management
- Voluntary and Community Support
- Waste Management

All the reviews started on or around 1 April 2000.

However it has been necessary to revise the review timetable in the light of circumstance unforeseen at the time that the original programme was drawn up. Delays to the progress of a number of the reviews have meant that they will not be finished until after 31 March 2001.

Reason for Delay	Services
Adjusted to County Council timetable	Economic Development, Highways, Waste Management
Management and policy framework revised	Asset Management, Landscape Management, Voluntary and Community Support
Now included in current review of support services	Information and Communication Technology

For a complete list of the revised 5 year programme of Dacorum Borough Council's Best Value reviews see page 68.

If you would like to know more please contact Hilary Mitchell on 01442 228344, e-mail hilary.mitchell@dacorum.gov.uk

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Choosing Service Options After Best Value Review

Some local authorities have already reviewed some of the functions they provide and have made decisions to engage external companies to provide services for given contract periods.

Any service is potentially suitable for the decision to 'externalise' following consideration of factors laid down in the Best Value regime. A variety of contract arrangements can be used to specify and monitor the service supplied by the external contractor and it is possible to contract with another public sector body for this.

The Government provides 7 main options as examples of Best Value for future service delivery.

- (i) Cessation of the service, in whole or in part;
- (ii) Creation of public-private partnership, e.g., through a strategic contract or a joint venture company.
- (iii) The transfer or externalisation of the service to another provider (with no in-house bid);
- (iv) The market-testing of all or part of the service (where the in-house provider bids in open competition against the private or voluntary sector);
- (v) The restructuring or re-positioning of the in-house service;
- (vi) The renegotiation of existing arrangements with current providers where this is permissible;
- (vii) The joint commissioning or delivery of the service;

In June 2000 Dacorum Borough Council stated its policy on procurement, particularly relating to Best Value:

Policy Statement

"Where it has been decided to provide a Service, that Service will be delivered at the agreed service level at the best price possible. Services, both statutory and non-statutory, will be subjected to rigorous challenge, which will involve consideration of how the Service is delivered and who delivers it. This will mean some Services being provided externally. This process of reviewing the need for a Service and the Service Manager challenging how and by whom it is to be provided will be repeated in order to ensure continuous improvement.

"In order to help Councillors and managers to make the decisions on appropriate forms of service delivery further guidance is available, based on the Government's guidance DETR Circular 10/99."

It is expected that the Council's present guidance will be revised during 2001/02.

If you would like to know more please contact Paul Spencer on 01442 228585, e-mail paul.spencer@dacorum.gov.uk

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Improving Purchasing

During winter 2000 the Council carried out a comprehensive review of its purchasing activity. The review concluded that the Council could achieve significant efficiency improvements by enhancing our central purchasing function. This means establishing a new central team to

- negotiate cheaper contracts with private providers;
- review the need for the Council to store goods on site;
- investigate ways to purchase goods electronically; and
- provide professional purchasing advice to all managers who need to purchase goods and services.

The new Central Procurement Team will come in to place during 2001/02. It will then start work on the other findings of the review.

If you would like to know more please contact **Paul Spencer on 01442 228585, email paul.spencer@dacorum.gov.uk.**

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Ethical Framework

In compliance with The Local Government Act 2000 the Council will adopt a local code of conduct for members, based on a national model code to be issued by the Secretary of State, and set up a Standards Committee to oversee ethical issues and provide advice and guidance on the code of conduct and its implementation. A new independent, national body called the Standards Board, will be responsible for investigating alleged breaches of the Council's code of conduct.

Financial Framework

In September 2000 the Government issued a Green Paper entitled 'Modernising Local Government Finance' which set out the aims for a sound local government finance system. Although much of the financial framework will be determined by Government, we will put in place a fair, intelligible and transparent local framework within which we can encourage consultation with local stakeholders. It will look three to five years ahead, cover all sources of funding, all forms of expenditure, and link funding to service provision.

Revenue

In recent years the Council has been spending considerably more to provide services than it brings in as income. This is true for both council housing, financed through rents, and general fund services, financed in the main through Government grants and Council Tax. The medium term financial strategy to be developed by the Council will be designed to reduce reliance on reserves, with a view to moving towards balancing our books with as little impact upon service provision as possible.

Revenue Budget 2001/02

Revenue Budget 2001/02		
2000/01 Total £m.	Spending	2001/02 Total £m
9.4	Environmental Services	10.2
44.4	Housing (including Benefits)	44.1
13.9	Community & Leisure	14.7
2.0	Planning	2.0
2.2	Refuse Collection	2.3
1.8	Other Customer Services	0.9
73.7		74.2
2000/01 Total £m	Income	2001/02 Total £m
10.0	Fees and charges	11.1
32.2	Rents	31.7
10.2	Government Housing Benefits Grant	10.3
1.7	Interest	2.0
3.9	Transfer from Housing	3.5
1.6	Use of reserves	1.0
59.6	Sub Total	59.6
Employees:		
2000/01	1148	
2001/02	1142	

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Capital Finances

Dacorum Borough Council has a significant amount of assets in its property, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment and vehicles. These assets are the Council's second most costly resource after staff and therefore it is very important that the best use of these resources is made.

The Council has developed a number of procedures to manage its capital assets, one of which is the Capital Strategy. This Strategy sets out the criteria by which potential spending programmes and individual projects will be evaluated and prioritised; a statement of the available resources; the basis for targeting and obtaining capital investment from other resources and a structure to ensure the most effective use and application of resources.

The Council is currently in the process of developing a Community Strategy (see page 67 for further information) which will identify the Borough's vision/aims for the future. An Asset Management Plan is also being developed. The Council's Capital Programme will be geared at all times to addressing the aims within the Community Strategy and the Asset Management Plan, once completed, and the Council's key objectives.

To ensure that investment is guided by the Council's policies, aims and objectives, and to allow the Policy Committee to prioritise individual schemes, those requesting funding will need to show how they satisfy a number of criteria. These criteria include the contribution that schemes make to meeting the Council's aims, objectives and policies, the contribution they make to community safety, whether the scheme would generate other investment, revenue savings, or income, or reduce the possibility of claims against the Council. The Strategy however recognises that in some cases capital investment will need to be made for statutory reasons and that all these criteria may not be met.

The Council will also be looking to develop partnerships, particularly with organisations who can provide additional funding, and looking at whether the project meets Best Value. Projects should show any revenue cost which may arise and it should be considered whether the scheme could be funded/part-funded from any other source (internal or external).

If you would like to know more please contact **Paul Spencer** on **01442 228585**, e-mail paul.spencer@dacorum.gov.uk

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Capital Budget for 2000/01

Capital Investment in Service Provision for the Community

Detail	Priorities	
	High	Medium
	£'000	£'000
ICT		
Key Councilwide Projects	450	
One-off Investments in Specific Projects	150	
Integrated Revenues & Benefits Software	250	
Community Services		
HHSC – Café/Duty Room Air Conditioning	30	
HHSC – Extend Life Fitness		120
BSC – Refurbish Changing Rooms	250	
BSC – Refurbish Café/Bar Area		50
Skateboarding Provision	60	
Memorial Gardens Pond Tring – Rebuilt (a further £40,00 is held in a Reserve)		20
Dacorum Pavilion – New Sound System		40
Chaulden Adventure Playground – Extend Artroom	25	
Grovehill/Woodhall Farm APG – Convert Loft	10	
Loans & Grants		250
Development		
Car Parking Strategy – Feasibility Study, Design & Consultation	150	
Apsley Paper Trail – Environmental Work, Refurbishment & Pump Priming		50
Piccotts End Cottages/Museum (Net of Lottery Contribution)		500
Access for Disability – Ongoing Programme	200	
CORPORATE		
CCTV – Expansion	100	
Vehicle Replacement Programme	500	
Asset Management – Annual Programme		1,000
Totals	2,175	2,030
Total Capital Budget (High & Medium Priorities) – General Fund	4,205	

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Performance Management: Our Approach To Efficiency

On page 7 of this Performance Plan, in the section entitled 'We Will Focus our Action On' we state:

'We will do all these things in the most prudent and cost efficient way we can, aiming to deliver high quality services which give real value for money for our residents.'

The Council is facing a need to reduce its general fund budget by about £4.5 million over the next five years, and this is an incentive to seek efficiencies and finding new ways of doing things.

Using the Best Value planning and review regime gives us an opportunity to review all the Council's functions and activities, and we are asked by Government to achieve 2% efficiency from doing that, by improving the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local services.

Among the ways we are seeking to improve efficiencies in 2001/02, we are:

- Reviewing all our support services (approx 37% of all our services) with a view to seeking opportunities for improved services through reduced duplication, making better use of IT and finding out about innovation in other organisations;
- Reviewing our Standing Orders to allow for developments in the decisions we take about how services will be provided in future;
- Investigating the feasibility of developing the Council's Call Centre;
- Seeking to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our services by setting targets and managing our performance more systematically;
- Reviewing all our functions over a five-year period and implementing the findings of those we have renewed already.

Information and Communications Technology and Electronic Government (ICT/E-Government)

Information Technology is transforming the way we work, the way we do business, the way we communicate with each other, and the way we spend our time. As the level of understanding spreads, and the cost of equipment starts to level off, the opportunity is increasing for 24-hour access to services, seven days a week.

Over recent years, leading private sector companies have revolutionised the way they work by investing heavily in new technology, and by focusing their services on the needs of the customer. The Government has recognised that both central and local government have not kept pace with these changes, and is now setting demanding targets to make sure that we are using technology to deliver services when, where and how the customer wants them.

Dacorum Borough Council has already made a good start, for example with full use of e-mail within offices, a call centre to handle all housing repairs enquiries and a website giving detailed information about our services. However, we are now planning to explore even more opportunities, as we believe ICT can:

- Increase public access to services, eg 'one-stop' shops open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or through terminals in public places such as libraries, shopping centres, etc
- Increase public awareness of services, eg through information available on-line
- Increase the Council's responsiveness, eg through on-line comments and complaints, or the chance to test public opinion about key policies and developments
- Reduce costs by streamlining procedures and cutting down on duplication and mistakes.

Over the next few years the Council is therefore planning a major investment in ICT, including a number of key projects affecting the Council as a whole. The targets set out below represent our commitment to maximise the benefits of technology for improving the way we deliver services to local people.

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ICT/E-Government targets 2001/02

The Government's targets for eGovernment are:

25% of services capable of delivery electronically by 2002 and 100% of service capable of delivery electronically by 2005.

90% of low value procurement should be delivered electronically by March 2001, which we are looking to achieve during 2001.

Local authorities will also have to set their own targets for making progress in allowing easier access to information they hold and exchanging it with other public sector bodies.

If you would like to know more please contact **Paul Spencer** on 01442 228585, e-mail paul.spencer@dacorum.gov.uk