

# What is the Council trying to achieve?

## Index

	Page No.
• AMBITIONS	
- The Council's Key Aims	10
- A Better Borough – The Community Plan	10
- Local Strategic Partnership	11
• PRIORITISATION	
- National Shared Priorities	11
- Community Priorities	12
- Financial Priorities	12
- Key Council Priorities 2003 - 2007	12
• FOCUS	19

In this section we set out what the Council is trying to achieve and how these ambitions have been prioritised based on consultation, to ensure that we are focused on what we need to do.

## **AMBITIONS**

The Council aims to deliver services with the community's needs at the core. We plan to achieve performance at or above the upper quartile level, and to be known as an authority that believes in innovation, partnership working, and measured risk taking within the context of continuous improvement.

Dacorum Borough Council is the key organisation in ensuring that the communities and businesses within Dacorum are afforded the best opportunities and an improved quality of life. This position is reflected in the main purpose statement for the Council (see Page 7).

All the aims and priorities that we have set ourselves or that we choose to adopt, fit and support within this framework the statement of our purpose. To ensure that the Council can deliver this purpose, we have established priorities based on the views and experiences of communities, external agencies and partners as well those of the employees and Members of the Council.

### **The Council's Key Aims**

Following the first round of community consultation in Dacorum in 2000 to inform the Community Plan, the Council reviewed its own corporate priorities. There were a number of unrelated policies and strategies in existence. In order to clarify and focus attention on the things that the community considered important, the Council grouped and shaped its priorities to develop the Council's Key Aims. They are:

For Prosperity	(Economic Development)	We need a healthy local economy, a wide range of job opportunities and people with skills.
For the Future	(Sustainability)	We need to share a cleaner, healthier environment, with better public transport and access to open spaces.
For Living	(Quality of Life)	We need opportunities to enjoy ourselves to lead a full, healthy and safe life.
For Everyone	(Social Inclusion)	We need a community where everyone can fulfil their potential, respect and support each other.
Making it Happen	(Community Leadership)	We cannot do all of this on our own. We are striving to deliver our own services more efficiently and effectively and to work with others towards a Better Borough.

### **“A Better Borough” – The Community Plan**

The Council, in its role as community leader, undertook comprehensive consultations in 2000 and 2001 to inform the creation of the Community Plan. The Plan brings together the views of the community, partner agencies and Council to enhance the effectiveness of all the agencies in the Borough to make a valued difference. The vision for the Community Plan is,

*“ ... about identifying the things we need to tackle in order to improve life for everyone in Dacorum, to build upon what is good and create the Borough we want for our children to inherit. It is also about people today, developing our communities and improving our way of life.”*

The Community Plan key priorities are:

- Reducing Crime, Feeling Safe;
- A Cleaner and Healthier Environment;
- Improving Health and Social Care;
- Accessible Local Employment;
- Lifelong Learning;
- Transportation;
- Meeting Housing Need;
- Culture, Arts and Leisure; and
- Community Involvement.

### **“A Better Borough” – Local Strategic Partnership**

The Local Strategic Partnership has responsibility for ensuring that the objectives of the Community Plan are delivered and has identified key areas for development for the forthcoming year:

1. To establish a clearer vision for Dacorum – achieved through a range of consultation seminars.
2. To develop the existing partnerships and establish new partnerships to deliver the 9 key priorities.(as in the Community Plan)
3. To receive and consider performance management reports from the partnerships / lead agencies in 2 above.
4. To identify a small number of key projects which will only be delivered through the LSP leading and working together.

If you would like to know more about the Community Plan and Local Strategic Partnership please contact [Christine Fisher, Strategic Director of Community Services on 01442 228500 or email christine.fisher@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:christine.fisher@dacorum.gov.uk)

## **PRIORITISATION**

### **National Shared Priorities**

In November 2001 the LGA first proposed that, as a method to improve the way central and local government work together, a number of shared priorities for public services should be developed. Following consultation a final set of shared public service delivery priorities were agreed in July 2002. These priorities cover areas where it was agreed that it is essential that government, councils and others work together to improve the quality of life for all and where it was considered most important to drive up standards.

The shared public service delivery priorities cover the following areas:

- Raising standards across our schools
- Improving the quality of life of older people and of children, young people and families at risk
- Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities
- Creating safer and stronger communities
- Transforming our local environment
- Meeting local transport needs more effectively
- Promoting the economic vitality of localities

As these priorities cover the issues that local people are concerned about, the Council is already doing a considerable amount of work which supports these aims and it will continue to do so as the issues are to be given priority nationally for the next three years.

### **The Community's Priorities**

Dacorum residents have been asked about their priorities for Council services through a range of surveys and consultations over a number of years including the biennial "Viewpoint" residents' survey, Best Value reviews, customer satisfaction surveys, Citizens Panel, Citizens Jury, budget consultation and so on. Their responses have indicated consistently that they value good basic service delivery (for example refuse collection, sports services, environmental protection) plus additional investment to help groups with specific needs to improve the quality of life (for example affordable housing, meals on wheels, adventure playgrounds, providing people with skills to meet employment opportunities, bus fare concessions and youth facilities, some of which are the responsibility of other agencies and tackled through partnership work.)

Although in Dacorum there are no large scale regeneration issues there are localised plans for environmental improvement and redevelopment, and the public in Dacorum are very concerned about environmental issues such as land use, pollution and street care.

### **Financial Priorities**

In addition to ensuring that resources are focussed on its priorities, the Council continues to face a big challenge over the next eight years which will see available net revenue funds (excluding Housing Revenue Account) fall by some £8 million (40%). This has arisen principally because legislative changes have meant that subsidy from the Housing Revenue Account, currently used to finance other services or to maintain levels of balances, is reducing in stages from £4.2 m per annum (as at 2001/02) to nil by 2011/12.

In addition to this, large reductions in interest from investments, reducing levels of balances and the need to increase expenditure on Waste Management to meet national targets have all added to the problems ahead. At the same time the Council's Housing Revenue Account is facing a deficit of £600,000 in 2003/4, which partly emanates from unfavourable changes in new Subsidy arrangements and other factors which are beyond the Council's control.

The final major challenge to existing resources is the legislative changes in the treatment of new capital receipts, particularly from Right to Buy sales. Over the period 2004/5, 2005/6 and 2006/7 the amount the Council will be able to retain for housing purposes is approximately 75%, 50% and 25% respectively, the remainder being paid over to the Government for redistribution to other councils for their housing purposes. Thereafter the Council will only retain 25%. In 2004/5 capital receipts are estimated at about £10million, of which the Council will retain £7.5 million.

### **Council Priorities 2003 - 2007**

Taking all of these factors together the Council elected in May 2003 worked on clarifying priorities for 2003/07. The Council's Cabinet Members reviewed previous areas of priority and performance levels across all the Council's services and identified the following areas as priorities for the next four years.

## **RECYCLING**

### **Objective**

To transform Council's current refuse service into an intensive recycling service in order to achieve new Government Statutory recycling targets.

### **Where We Are Now**

- Adopted Hertfordshire Waste Strategy - Hertfordshire County Council and all Districts working together.
- Successful pilots last year. Led to Cabinet decision to adopt new three-streamed wheeled bin method. Roll out programme across whole Borough over next two years starting end of June in Kings Langley/Bovingdon/Chipperfield.
- Significant increase in costs partly offset by £1M funding from Central Government.

### **Long Term Goal / Outcome / Timescale**

- Current recycling rate 13.6%. New method aiming for 24% by 2005/6 and 40% by 2012.

## **RIVERSIDE SCHEME**

### **Objective**

To secure a major retail/leisure development for Hemel Hempstead. Over 20,000 square metres of new floor space with Debenhams as the "anchor" store, 19 shop units, restaurants/cafés, 109 bedroom hotel, and between 50 to 100 residential units.

### **Where We Are Now**

- Dacorum Borough Council originally purchased site in September 1999. Developed proposals in conjunction with Nicholson Estates - our development partner.
- Dacorum Borough Council will retain freehold, and receive annual rent based on 8% of income received.

### **Timescale**

- Starting on site June 2003, due for completion Christmas 2005.

### **Long Term Goal / Outcome**

- Aim is to revitalise Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, improve quality/choice.

## **ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT FACILITY**

### **Objective**

To develop a venue which will provide a high quality arts & entertainment programme for the community of Dacorum and beyond.

## **Where Are We Now**

Specific issues to address:-

- New venue - during 2003/04 update the feasibility study for the future venue to consider changes in the local market and "competitors".
- Future management arrangements - options appraisal on management arrangements and projected costing completed by 2004.
- Finalising design and build options to be considered - either part of the Civic Zone or stand-alone.

## **Long Term Goals / Outcomes**

- To provide a prestigious venue which will be the focal point of a quality arts & entertainment programme for all of Dacorum and beyond.

## **Timescales**

- Commence preparation during 2003/04, and finalise completion dates for the venue on decision regarding Civic Zone

## **CIVIC ZONE**

### **Objective**

To create an integrated public sector 'One Stop Shop' to transform customer access through new technology to a range of local and national services and information. Will also include new Arts and Entertainment venue, Library, College/Learning Centre, Health Zone and administrative offices. Involves partnership working with Hertfordshire County Council, West Herts. College, Primary Care Trust, Police, Job Centre and others. Involves redevelopment of northern end of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre. Aim is to achieve scheme via private sector development partner, and fund through significant new housing development on part of site.

## **Where We Are Now**

- Early stages. Only initial feasibility work done. Public consultation on vision underway. Partners not yet secured. Next stage detailed feasibility and partnership agreement by end of 2003.

## **Long Term Goals / Outcomes**

- Improved public access to integrated public services.
- E-Government.
- Dacorum Borough Council Community Leadership role enhanced.
- Regeneration of northern end of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre.

## **Timescale**

- Aiming for completion by end 2006/7.

## **TRANSFORMING CUSTOMER ACCESS**

### **Objective**

To strengthen customer focus by transforming customer access channels (e.g.: one stop shops, call centre, web access, remote access, etc) and availability of services and information through the use of modern service delivery methods and appropriate new technologies.

### **Where Are We Now**

- New Head of Customer Services just appointed.
- Phase 1 project plan agreed by Cabinet - by December 2003:
  - Bring all existing customer contact services under single management.
  - At least 2 additional services to be added.
  - Telephone payments to be centralised.
- New Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software installed.
- Customer feedback (complaints and compliments) centralised.

### **Long Term Goals / Outcomes**

- One-stop shops in at least Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring handling majority of customer enquiries.
- Central call centre to handle all initial telephone calls.
- Self service delivery via internet and intranet.
- Video links to allow remote access to services, (e.g.: members' surgeries online?).
- Customers at the heart of what we do - role of 'customer champion' adopted by all staff.

### **Timescales**

- Phase 1 by end of 2004.
- Further phases may take 2/3 years to complete.
- Significant progress needed to meet national 2005 E-Government targets.

## **HOUSING OPTIONS**

### **Objective**

To consider the future management option, for the Council's housing to meet both the Council's needs and the tenants in terms of provision, management and maintenance.

### **Where Are We Now**

Specific issues to address:-

- Government requirement for an option appraisal completed by July 2005 and signed off by Government Regional office.
- The Dacorum Stock Appraisal will be renewed and updated in 2003.
- Findings will be consulted on with tenants, leaseholders and stakeholders.
- During 2004/05 the Council will select preferred option in consultation with tenants, leaseholders and stakeholders.

- Implementation of option during 2005/07

### **Long Term Goals/Outcomes**

- To ensure the chosen future Management Option will deliver a good quality service which is viable and sustainable.

## **MANAGING DOWN THE BUDGET**

### **Objective**

To ensure that the Council has a clear budget strategy, is spending within its means, and targeting resources on its/the community's main priorities.

### **Where Are We Now**

Dacorum Borough Council has historically been a relatively wealthy council, but changes to national accounting rules mean that we now need to significantly reduce our spending, whilst maintaining or increasing service performance and quality.

Specific issues to address:-

- General Fund revenue budget - DBC currently spends approximately £7m per year more (66%) than Government says we should. We have been able to do this through use of balances, interest received from council house rates, and money transferred from the Housing Revenue Account. None of these are now possible, and so we have no alternative but to radically reduce our spending.
- Housing Revenue Account - currently running with a deficit of approx. £600,000. This has to be addressed instantly or it will grow, and ultimately (2 or 3 years hence), result in negative balances which is an illegal position. There is limited room for manoeuvre as balances are almost exhausted, and the Council only has direct control over a small proportion of the HRA budget (the bulk is now regulated by national Government). Consequently urgent action is needed in 2003/04 and 2004/05 to reduce spending.
- Capital Funding - currently healthy due to a large number of council house sales in recent years. However, much of the income is committed to capital schemes, and Government is planning to reduce the proportion of capital receipts we are allowed to keep. Therefore need to manage use of capital funds increasingly carefully, as only enough is likely to remain to fund housing projects.

### **Long Term Goals / Outcomes**

- Reduce spending through a wide variety of initiatives, focussing on improving efficiency rather than service reductions - achieving more with less.
- Increasing focus on main Council priorities, and less on lower priorities.
- Greater partnership working and collaboration with public private and voluntary sector organisations.
- Greater use of technology and automation to streamline business processes.

### **Timescales**

- Continuous process - annual service and financial processes within a medium/long term context.

## **IMPROVING THE STREETSCENE**

### **Objective**

To secure significant improvement in standards in environmental cleanliness and maintenance and increased public satisfaction.

### **Where We Are Now**

- Recent Council investment in services to address fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and dog fouling but public concern about standards of street cleanliness (particularly litter) and grass cutting.
- Work underway to improve litter picking and street cleansing along main routes, rural areas and in residential areas, and better co-ordination with grass cutting.
- Action plan and financial implications will be reported to Cabinet August 2003.
- Needs to be accompanied by more proactive approach to enforcement and promoting greater community responsibility.
- Also need to work positively with Hertfordshire County Council - now responsible for road maintenance, footpaths, street lighting, etc.

### **Long Term Goals / Outcomes / Timescales**

- Increased public satisfaction with Environmental Services over next two years.
- Integrated and comprehensive street care service.

Closer working with Town and Parish Council's and community.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

### **Objective**

“To tackle crime and disorder to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the Borough, to make it a place where people, communities and businesses can flourish” *Dacorum Community Safety Strategy 2002-2005*

### **Where Are We Now**

Dacorum Borough is one of the safest in the country, having lower than average crime rates in almost every category. However we are not complacent and have a good record of proactive crime reduction work. The Borough Council works in a Community Safety partnership with the Police, County Council and other partners to deliver the detailed objectives of the Strategy. There are 6 strategic objectives supported by detailed action plans:

- Reduce burglary
- Reduce motor crime
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Reduce violent crime
- Reduce the fear of crime
- Reduce drug and alcohol related crime

The Council is also working to reduce crime and the fear of crime through:

- An extensive CCTV network that is due to cover additional areas during 2003/4
- An Anti-Social Behaviour Team, based in Housing, which is tackling some of the most demanding examples of anti-social behaviour on the estates
- Projects to discover the extent and reduce the harm of illegal drugs

## Outcomes

We aim to reduce burglaries in all categories and lessen the concern that householders and others feel about them. Taken together with the aim to reduce vehicle crime this should make a difference to the level of drug crime. Although violent crime is comparatively uncommon in Dacorum residents are concerned about it and reducing the levels will help to reduce the fear of crime.

## Timescales

Each objective in the Dacorum Community Safety Strategy has a target for improvement on a year-on-year basis. So for example we aim to reduce burglary by 8% per year, violent crime by 5% per year and car crime by 2% per year over the three years of the Strategy.

The table below shows how the Council's identified priorities satisfy a range of demands – both local and national.

<b>DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES 2003-7</b>					
<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>KEY AIM</b>	<b>COMMUNITY PLAN OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>NATIONAL PRIORITY</b>	<b>LOCAL POLITICAL VISION</b>	<b>PUBLIC CONCERN</b>
<i>Recycling</i>	<i>For the Future</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Riverside Development</i>	<i>Making it Happen</i>			✓	✓
<i>Arts and Entertainment Facility</i>	<i>For Living</i>	✓		✓	✓
<i>Civic Zone</i>	<i>Making It Happen</i>		✓	✓	
<i>Transforming Customer Access</i>	<i>Making It Happen</i>		✓	✓	✓
<i>Housing Options</i>	<i>For Living</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Managing down the Budget</i>	<i>Making It Happen</i>		✓	✓	✓
<i>Improving the Streetscene</i>	<i>For the Future</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Community Safety</i>	<i>Making it Happen</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓

Detailed action plans for the priorities and other key areas of work for the next twelve months can be found in the final section of this document, "In light of what the Council has achieved, what does it plan to do next?".

If you would like to know more please contact Hilary Mitchell, Head of Corporate Policy on 01442 228344, or email [hilary.mitchell@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:hilary.mitchell@dacorum.gov.uk)

## **FOCUS**

### **How we maintain Focus**

The Council's Key Aims have been very clearly and regularly communicated internally and externally, and as a result all services are now able to demonstrate how they deliver on them. This Best Value Performance Plan sets out how we aim to deliver on the Key Aims through objectives for the forthcoming year and how they will be achieved (see page 69.). The Performance Management framework, which is reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, via monthly reports to directors and Portfolio Holders, allows progress on delivery and objectives to be monitored.

Through our approach to Service and Financial Planning and Best Value, Dacorum Borough Council has adopted a culture of continuous improvement to services for the public and of 'Making It Happen'. Within the framework of the corporate aims, the Council undertakes an annual Service and Financial Planning review process to assess what has been achieved in the year, what is still outstanding and what additional issues are of priority. The Service and Financial Planning process ensures that the services provided are appropriate. It is also an opportunity to assess the changing local government environment and its impact on the service and to provide an enhanced community focus.

While the Portfolio-holders are accountable for the decisions of the Council, the Strategic Directors implement decisions of the Cabinet, as well as investigate and propose direction for the Council. There is a high degree of delegation to officers, which is exercised following appropriate depth of consultation internally and externally. Corporate Management Team and Cabinet meet every month to discuss the work of the Council, and the frequent contact between Portfolio-holders, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service ensures that the Cabinet's priorities are translated into action.

The Council's Management Development Programme has allowed a cascading of the Council's vision through the top tiers of management, as well as providing opportunities to learn and practise skills needed to deliver it. This programme will continue to roll out over 2003, using officers who have been through the programme as mentors for the new trainees. Increased ownership of the vision has resulted from continued expansion of the corporate training programme delivered by officers, as well as external facilitators.