

Policy Framework: Guiding Principles

To deliver strong, effective and visible community leadership

The primary and overarching role of the Council is to provide local leadership for the area.

The Council will act in the interests of communities to:

- a) deliver, or facilitate delivery of, valued services and
- b) to bring influence to bear on other bodies (private, public and voluntary) who have an impact on the well-being of the area.

Acting within the principle of localism and devolution, this principle implies that the Council will make decisions based on a reasonable assumption that it has the necessary powers, and will therefore only seek permission where that permission is clearly required.

The Council strives to offer best value for all that it does.

To put the citizen at the heart of everything it does

Ultimately the Council's purpose is to provide services for its citizens, and for visitors.

All plans and strategies start from that perspective.

To maximise the use of DBC assets for well-being

The Council will seek maximum value in all of its land and property transactions. In pursuit of 'best consideration' it will also take account of the wider community interest in pursuit of social and economic well-being, and act accordingly where there is a compelling case to negotiate undervalue (Local Government Act 1972 and Circular 06/03).

This principle underpins the community leadership role and is in the context of the Council being able to fulfil delivery on its top priorities.

To target resources in two key priority areas

DBC has identified two primary strategic goals:

- Housing led regeneration, with affordable housing,
- To promote economic well-being.

The Council will ensure that these priorities are core to the external role of the Council as leaders and stewards of the area. This will result in the area of Dacorum being considered by the business community and developers alike as a place to do business.

They will also be a core focus of strategic process and strategic planning within DBC. This will include corporate planning, community planning, revenue budget and capital programme.

These priorities will command the collective support of DBC leadership, continuing with cross cutting Executive member and Director level positions.

To develop consistent evidence based decision making

Evidence will be developed and consistently utilised as appropriate for all policy making, and resource allocation.

This will enhance the Council's ability to make choices, and to ensure that resources are effectively targeted. The Council will also establish stronger evidence on minority groups.

This principle will be enhanced by, and heavily reliant upon, collaboration with partners.

To agree and monitor a critical set of 'key indicators' for top priorities

A small number of key indicators (15-20) expressed as outcomes will be integral to the Corporate Plan and will provide the Council and citizens with a focus on delivery. This will also enable a snapshot of progress at any time.

To ensure that all initiatives have strong links to top priorities

Any proposal for a new initiative or project will be tested against the Council's agreed top priorities. This is to ensure that the Council's capacity and capability is properly focused.

To evaluate all initiatives in order to inform future policy decisions

A rigorous examination of the outcomes of initiatives and one-off projects will help the Council to determine future policy and operational decisions, and be part of changing the way we work.

To promote early intervention as a way of working – whether alone or with others

The Council will take a positive approach to preventative work, aimed at reducing longer term costs, breaking cycles of dependency, and improving outcomes for citizens.

Much of this work will be in partnership.

To have simple and well understood accountability and governance for all policy

Readily identifying all key policies of the Council requires clarity on responsibility and accountability at member level and at officer level.

It is not necessary to compile a single compendium of all policies. However it will be possible, and necessary, to easily locate where specific policies reside.

To be open minded on models and methods of service delivery

The Council will continue with its pragmatic and opportunistic approach to a mixed economy of provision.

It is likely that over the coming years the Council will need to be more challenging on what services it provides and how it provides those services, based on citizen focus and value for money.

Community action and social enterprise are part of this picture.

Sustaining delivery

The Council has well established internal arrangements for running the business effectively and efficiently, to sustain the delivery of services.

Corporate groups

To ensure that the priorities/aims and delivery programmes are synchronised, four Corporate Groups are in place, reporting to the Corporate Management Team:

- Regeneration and affordable housing
- Localism and community capacity
- Sustainable, clean and safe environment
- Organisational transformation

All operational activities are co-ordinated through these groups, and two other corporate groups

- Capital Strategy Steering Group
- Corporate Management Team

High performance environment – performance excellence

Dacorum Borough Council has engaged in a radical re-think about the way it delivers its services to support staff to achieve the significant changes that are required to deliver the Council's Vision, reduce costs, improve how it uses its resources and improve citizen and customer satisfaction.

The continuous improvement programme leads cultural change within the organisation, helping to redefine attitudes and behaviours expected of the Council's employees, in a citizen focused organisation. These required attitudes and behaviours have been developed and are the integral criteria of the High Performance Environment. The Performance Excellence Process is linked to, and designed to help achieve, the Council's Corporate Priorities.

Reputation

The Council aspires to:

- be well known and have a respected profile and identity - locally, regionally and nationally
- promote Dacorum as a place to be proud of, in which to live, work and enjoy
- communicate with, consult, and inform citizens about the things that affect them
- engage high quality staff, and providers, who put the needs of the community first

Reputation of place is fundamental to success on the Council's ambitions. The Council has established a campaign 'Dacorum – Look No Further' which markets Dacorum as a place for business, retail and leisure. This campaign for inward investment is in conjunction with the local strategic partnership.

Partnerships

In pursuit of its service delivery and wider community leadership role the Council continues to develop external relationships with organisations and individuals. Without that approach the Council would be unable to fulfil its ambitions for 'place'. It does mean that the Council must focus effort where it can achieve the highest impact on outcomes, consistent with the Council's priorities.

Working with other partners and partnerships

The Council's ability to deliver its vision for place is based on effective leadership, and effective partnerships. All partnerships are there to take collective actions that make a difference to the quality of life of residents.

The Council has a proud record of working with the voluntary and community sector. This area of work is under review to develop a strategic partnership arrangement, for mutual benefit. The remodelling of services, alternative means of delivery, and continuing the move from grant giving towards service commissioning are all part of that picture.

Our efforts to sustain services, retain cohesive communities and build community capacity are critically linked to this relationship.

With the election of new Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012, the leadership and accountability for Police services has changed. The Council will be represented at member level on the countywide Panel holding the Commissioner to account and looking after the interests of Dacorum residents.

Our long-standing and successful partnership on crime and disorder reduction will continue.

In addition to our local economic partnerships the Council works with the countywide Local Enterprise Partnership, to promote the Hertfordshire position, and to secure the best possible outcomes for Dacorum.

Health and well-being is addressed through a Dacorum partnership. The Council is working with the County Community Intelligence team on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Dacorum. This will help the Council to make the case for health services and resource allocation to areas most in need, and where health inequalities are most evident. Arrangements with the new county Health and Well-being Board are being determined. Significant levels of NHS 'commissioning' funding will flow through that route in future.

Beyond these bodies, the Council is involved in a number of partnership arrangements formal and informal, where these add value to the Council's aims for the community.

Equalities, deprivation and vulnerability

The Equality Act places a general duty on all public bodies. This came into force on 5 April 2011. Public bodies must have due regard across all their functions to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations between the different groups defined under the protected characteristics.

In pursuit of these obligations the Council has identified four specific actions:

1. Develop a more robust, sophisticated and usable set of equalities data on service users to get a better insight into their needs.
2. Develop a programme of service improvement aimed at enabling all people in Dacorum to have access to services, and opportunities to be involved in civic life. This programme will commence with a pilot project working with deaf people.
3. Encourage the reporting and recording of hate crime, and hate related incidents, so that the Council, with partners, can respond in a way that supports residents, reduces incidence, and underpins community cohesion.
4. Develop the Council's consultation database so that it becomes more representative of the whole community.

While Dacorum is generally a prosperous place we do have a number of wards that are disadvantaged within the context of the wider region. Our focus on economic well-being, regeneration and affordable housing is critical to the opportunities, aspirations and quality of life enjoyed by all residents.

As levels of funding decline over the coming years, it is imperative that our most deprived and vulnerable communities do not slip further behind. This requires an approach that is strong on use of evidence, encourages self-help, neighbourhood action, engagement and capacity building. For those families most at risk a partnership approach is essential and the Council will work with all local agencies to promote early and sustained support. This joined up working will improve the outcomes and reduce overall longer term costs to the public purse.

Financial management and the Council's financial position

The Council manages its expenditure through a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which takes a forward looking three year view about the Council's income and expenditure. This allows for a strategic view to be taken about priorities, pressures and, at the current time, the need to make efficiencies and savings. This is updated and rolled forward every year as part of the annual budget setting process and is revised, as necessary, according to developments in the Council's environment.

Underpinning the MTFS is a value for money approach and the need to seek the most efficient and effective ways of working. Service Plans will feed into the MTFS and budgeting process but will also reflect the requirements in terms of savings and changes agreed.

Financial management is governed by our financial regulations and is exercised by cost centre managers with the support of staff from Financial Services.

Performance management

All have a part to play in the Council's success and converting our priorities into desired outcomes requires everyone to understand how their role contributes to achieving those outcomes. Individual performance management is managed through the Council's High Performance Environment programme, which means that all staff have an individual Performance Excellence Plan that clearly sets out objectives and personal development targets annually.

The Council records all of its performance management, risk and project management data on a corporate performance system. This is centrally managed, with data input at service level and approved by the leadership team. Performance and improvement is monitored monthly and quarterly at structured meetings between staff and members.