

Dacorum Life Summer 2023

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Dacorum Life is going digital

Our biannual residents’ magazine is moving online. Previously delivered to every household, printed copies will still be available to pick up from Council customer access points and community locations throughout the borough. This will substantially reduce our carbon footprint by decreasing printing and distribution, supporting our climate and ecological aims and objectives.

To ensure you don’t miss out on Council news and services, and vital information such as your bin collection days, please sign up to receive our weekly e-newsletter, Dacorum Life (digital).

Sign-up now by registering your email address at www.dacorum.gov.uk/dacorum-life

Welcome

I’d like to thank all of the residents of Dacorum who voted for 28 Liberal Democrat Councillors on Thursday 4 May, creating the majority which has enabled me to become the Leader of the Council.

In this edition of Dacorum Life, the new Portfolio Holders introduce themselves and outline the key priorities for the Council. These are Cllr Sheron Wilkie, Portfolio Holder for Place, Cllr Carole Weston, Portfolio Holder for People and Transformation, Cllr Robin Bromham, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations, Cllr Sally Symington, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Services, Cllr Adrian England, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Cllr Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services.

At first it seems a daunting task to steer the good ship Dacorum through the rocky times ahead, with the continuing effects of the Russian attack on Ukraine and a cost of living crisis that is not abating; but as the days and weeks have gone by, I have come to recognise the knowledge, skill and effort that the staff have shown over adversity in recent years. I am sure they will continue to rise to the challenge as we look forward with a new administration in The Forum.

I step into the role of Leader with over 40 years of political experience, first in Bermondsey, then Hertford, before moving to Hemel Hempstead in 2002. Until I retired, I combined local politics with careers in local government, the Department of the Environment, the Transport and General Workers Union (now Unite), and work in the commercial world in retail sales and Sainsbury’s. After moving to Hemel Hempstead, I found great satisfaction in being a Trustee of the Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline, and also a member of the Management Committee at the Dacorum Educational Support Centre. The move into the voluntary world taught me the value of the Dacorum Voluntary Sector which is full of amazing people.

The experience I have gained over those many years will stand me in good stead as we look forward to the challenges of the future. One of those challenges is to identify a future for our towns and villages as we adjust to the post-pandemic world, more home working, shopping online, and climate change. That last adjustment could be the biggest we have to make as we move to 2030 and beyond, but there will be other challenges on the way.

Of crucial importance is the need for a vision, for Hemel Hempstead, for Berkhamsted, and for Tring, and also a vision for our villages. I should like you to join me in searching for those visions, for each

of the treasured local parts in Dacorum. I want to know how you feel about where you live; what you like, what you dislike and how you would like to transform the place in which you live.

Over the coming months and years, there will be lots of opportunities for you to give your views. You can be assured that all local contributions will be considered by our councillors who take pride in representing where both you and they live.

Cllr Ron Tindall, Leader of the Council.

Our priorities 2020-2025

- Ensuring economic growth and prosperity
- Building strong and vibrant communities
- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
- Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
- Climate and ecological emergency
- Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

News

A new Mayor for Dacorum

Cllr William Allen was appointed the new Mayor of Dacorum at the annual Mayor Making ceremony in May. Cllr Brenda Link was appointed Deputy Mayor for 2023-24.

In view of the cost of living crisis, the Mayor will be working with our officers and those from Community Action Dacorum to establish a long-term Resilience Fund that will benefit multiple causes in the charity sector with the aim that a wide variety of charities can benefit from the fundraising, especially those supporting residents in greatest need.

In their first busy month in office, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have spoken at civic events, including our Armed Forces Day and 75th Anniversary of Windrush. They have also supported community, business and youth events including Kings Langley Carnival, Dacorum Business Ambassadors and the Beavers Fun Day at 1st Apsley Scouts (pictured).

To find out more about requesting the Mayor's attendance at a community event, please visit www.dacorum.gov.uk

Solar Together

After a successful first round last year, the solar bulk-buy scheme, Solar Together Hertfordshire, is set to take place again this autumn.

We are working in partnership with Hemel Garden Communities, and independent energy experts iChoosr, to give residents the chance to group-buy solar panels to make them more cost-effective. There is also the option to install battery storage and electric vehicle charging points. The venture enables homeowners to contract directly with pre-vetted installers.

More than 13,000 residents registered to the scheme last year with over 2,000 solar panels having now been installed through the scheme.

You can register your interest on our website www.dacorum.gov.uk/solar-together

Responsible bonfires for a healthy environment

Bonfires can sometimes pose a nuisance to both neighbours and the environment. To ensure a clean and healthy community, it is important to be aware of the laws governing the burning of specific waste types.

The burning of certain materials releases harmful pollutants, negatively impacting air quality. It is crucial to never burn treated wood, tyres or anything containing plastic, foam or paint.

If you suspect someone is causing a smoke nuisance by burning waste, whether it is an individual, construction company or business, we encourage you to visit our website where you will find information about the laws, guidelines and steps to report any smoke-related issues.

For more information, please visit www.dacorum.gov.uk/bonfires

Communities come together to celebrate

We've had a packed programme of events so far this year and have loved seeing our communities coming together to enjoy free family fun.

In May, we celebrated the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III with a two-day event in Gadebridge Park.

Despite the wet weather, many people braved the rain to watch live coverage of the Coronation on our big screen and to enjoy the free activities on offer, including face painting, balloon modelling and a petting zoo. The sun came out the next day for free films and the showing of the concert at Windsor Castle.

In June, we marked Windrush 75 with free events in partnership with the iCane Foundation. On

National Windrush Day on Thursday 22 June we held a flag raising ceremony in the Walled Garden, in Gadebridge Park. Attendees enjoyed readings, music and prayers. There was also a Windrush stall and performances from the Hemel Community Drummers at our Armed Forces Day.

Our annual Armed Forces Day event was held on Saturday 24 June and is an opportunity to show our support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces Community, from currently serving troops, to service families, veterans and cadets.

For our full events programme, including our Summer of Fun, visit www.dacorum.gov.uk/our-events

Ensuring economic growth and prosperity

I am very proud to be appointed as your Portfolio Holder for Place. Dacorum is your borough, your place. My portfolio covers many areas from the Draft Local Plan to the Hemel Town Centre Vision, sport, commerce and Adventure Playgrounds.

We have an expert team of directors, officers and councillors, and with them, my job – our job - is to rise to the challenges facing us. To deliver a place people in Dacorum are proud to call home, to work in, and to enjoy our social time. We will need your help.

The team and I are working on the crucial Draft Local Plan with our promise to revisit the big questions, most importantly bringing forward a new consultation process for our residents across Dacorum so that we adopt a new plan, led by our residents and their housing needs.

We are also pleased to have been awarded £1.763m by the Government as part of its Levelling Up programme to support its places and communities over a three-year period to 2025, supporting the

three themes of place, business and people. We consulted with our voluntary sector partners and local businesses to put forward a compelling Investment Plan. Highlights include:

- An allocation to Community Action Dacorum to run a programme of grants to voluntary and community organisations.
- Support to Herts Local Enterprise Partnership's programme of funding for training and local businesses.
- Key work on our agenda to develop our places including strategies to take Maylands Business Park into the future, and also to develop our arts, culture and creative sector across the borough.

In addition, we have been working on the Hemel Town Centre Vision. Hemel – Where Life is Greener – was the message that officers took to the UK's foremost exposition for development and investment, the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum in Leeds in May 2023. Attending as part of the Hertfordshire team, we showcased the great advantages Hemel has for new business development with its great accessibility connections, set among its great parks and open spaces.

I attended a public meeting at the Old Town Hall in June which showed the work being done with residents, local businesses, Hemel Old Town Traders Association and the Market team to revitalise and drive footfall and business into the Old Town, while making it a lovely place to work and live.

We have exciting hopes and plans for Place so do watch this space!

Cllr Sheron Wilkie, Portfolio Holder for Place

Improvements taking place to encourage active travel

A series of projects to encourage active travel are taking place across Hemel Hempstead, after special funding was secured through the Hemel Garden Communities Programme. The town was awarded Garden Town status in 2019, as part of the planned growth to the north and east of Hemel, that will bring up to 11,000 new homes by 2050 and 10,000 new jobs. The focus will be on a more sustainable way of life, with better connections for walking, cycling and public transport.

A number of improvements are being carried out following a grant from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, including:

- Resurfacing of the Nickey Line walking and cycling route, between Queensway and Redbourn Road, to make it smoother, more durable and useable all year round
- Upgrading of a key section of the Grand Union Canal towpath between Nash Mills Lane and Kings Langley, to improve accessibility and make it more enjoyable for users
- New lighting on the Buncefield Quietway to improve safety for walking and cycling

The work is due to be completed over the course of the summer, with more exciting projects to follow as part of the Hemel Garden Communities Programme.

Make your business idea a reality with a £1,000 grant

Budding entrepreneurs have the chance to get a head start in business by pitching for up to a £1,000 grant from Dacorum's Den.

Based on the popular TV series Dragons' Den, the grant-giving initiative helps local small businesses develop and grow.

Now in its 10th year, the scheme has seen more than £90,000 awarded to over 70 local businesses, creating additional jobs within the borough.

Dacorum's Den is aimed at individuals and businesses who have:

- less than 10 employees and under £500,000 turnover
- have a great business idea
- are keen to expand their business in Dacorum

Sponsored by local businesses, applications are now open until Friday 1 September 2023. Shortlisted applicants will put their ideas before a panel of judges, led by The Rt Hon Sir Mike Penning MP.

Find out more at www.dacorum.gov.uk/dacorumsden

Support for your business

Our Economic Development team offers free business support and advice to help businesses in the borough thrive.

The team can give personalised advice based on local knowledge and connections, referrals to specialist advice on setting up your business, from practical to legal and financial information and introductions to local partnerships and networks.

To find out more please visit www.dacorum.gov.uk/business email business@dacorum.gov.uk or call 01442 531002. Sign up to our Business Update for the latest information on business issues, news and support by email.

www.dacorum.gov.uk/business-update

Building strong and vibrant communities

Our residents at the heart of everything we do

I'm delighted to have taken over the Portfolio for People and Transformation, which covers many of the critical enabling services within our Council: Human Resources, Transformation, Technology and Communications. These services are very important in ensuring we provide efficient and effective frontline services.

Putting the resident at the heart of everything we do is an absolute priority for me, and my Cabinet colleagues and I will ensure that the team are fully focused on this. As such, we will continue to move at pace implementing our customer strategy and transformation programme, to provide residents with a positive and effective customer experience. In parallel, we will be working to make our services and how you engage with them fit for the modern day. We recognise that many of our residents would much rather engage with us digitally so we will be increasing our ability to do just that. Of course, if you would rather speak to us over the phone or pop in to talk things through then this will continue to be available.

Ensuring our technology and processes are fit for purpose will make sure the resources we have are focused on serving you. We are also focusing heavily on ensuring our workforce are best-placed to deliver for you – this means being innovative and radical as we look to recruit in a very difficult market but also providing staff with the right tools so they can work effectively.

Communications also falls within my area which includes the delivery of our events programme. It was wonderful to see so many of you supporting our events earlier this year, including the free Coronation two-day event in Gadebridge Park and our annual Armed Forces Day. We are once again

running our our hugely popular Hemel Old Town Halloween Party on Sunday 29 October. Keep an eye on our social media for more information nearer the time.

It is also gratifying to see the increasing interest the film and TV industry has in our beautiful borough. Not only does this put us on the map but it brings in vital money to the Council and boosts our local economy.

Cllr Carole Weston, Portfolio Holder for People and Transformation.

A warm welcome to Dacorum Film Office

We're going from strength to strength, offering the creative industries a one-stop shop to facilitate filming on council-owned locations, property, and public highways. We recognise the benefits that film tourism can bring to the local economy, and the positive impacts filming brings to our businesses, residents and students.

Being just 30 minutes from London and so close to many major film studios, it's an exciting journey for us to assist production companies in finding their perfect filming locations.

We're unique with our rolling hills, beautiful buildings, and rich heritage. Our locations across the borough have been used in hits such as the BBC's 'Pie in the Sky', 'Mr Stink', 'The Cleaner', Netflix's 'After Life', and Sky's 'This is Christmas'.

Ashridge Estate is a very popular filming destination with scenes filmed for 'Bridgerton', 'Harry Potter', and 'Maleficent' to name just a few! We've also had national treasure Rowan Atkinson in 'Man vs Bee' filmed in Bovingdon, and the latest 'FastX' filmed at Bovingdon Studios.

Dacorum locations in demand

This summer we already have some exciting filming booked and we'd love you to be a part of it. We've created a locations database to share with production companies and to give our local residents the opportunity to earn a fee and see your properties or businesses feature in a major production.

If you have a residential property, business or piece of land you would be happy to be used as a filming location, you can register it at: www.dacorum.gov.uk/register-a-filming-location

For any filming-related questions or enquiries please contact us at filming@dacorum.gov.uk

Health Hub Dacorum

Taking your first step to change a habit or ask for help isn't always easy. Maybe you'd like to quit smoking, get money advice or simply try a new activity to get out and about more. We can help you every step of the way.

Healthy Hub Dacorum is your free one-stop shop for health and wellbeing information, advice and support.

Whether you choose to reach out to us from the comfort of your home or pop along to your local hub, a member of our friendly team can help. Together we'll explore the choices available to help you:

- Cut down on your drinking
- Become more active
- Get money advice
- Lose weight

- Quit smoking
- Feel happier

Enquire through the Healthy Hubs Hertfordshire website: www.healthyhubs.org.uk/home.aspx or directly email us at: HealthyHub@dacorum.gov.uk

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment

Keeping Dacorum clean and green

I am honoured to have been appointed as the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations.

We are fortunate to have so many natural areas in our borough, which our residents benefit greatly from. Our green spaces help to keep the air cool, reduce pollution, look beautiful, support 'active travel' and improve our local biodiversity.

We're supporting Dacorum's biodiversity by creating more wildflower-rich meadows which not only encourage pollinators and mammals, but also help to mitigate flooding events by absorbing water. Our partnership with the Butterfly Conservation and the Friends of Halsey Field has also seen the installation of a butterfly bank in Spring Field, Warners End, which aims to encourage a local rare butterfly - the Dingy Skipper - and other species of butterflies, birds, bats and small mammals.

Litter-picking is an easy way for residents to show pride in their neighbourhoods. We're incredibly grateful to the 33 community groups who took part in the Great British Spring Clean, and the 1,200 volunteers now signed up to the Street Champions scheme.

With everyone doing their bit, Dacorum will continue to be a pleasant place to live.

In April, four people were prosecuted for fly-tipping. We also prosecuted 13 people for not paying Fixed Penalty Notices.

We are considering positive ways to further reduce anti-social behaviour such as littering and dog fouling.

Shockingly, almost a quarter of the contents of our grey-lidded bins is food waste that could have been avoided, such as by storing food correctly, ensuring our fridges are below five degrees, or freezing leftovers for another day. This waste is typically costing households over £700 per year. The new Hertfordshire #WorthSaving campaign provides residents with guidance about how to reduce this waste.

As of July, 60 per cent of the 55,000 households eligible for green-lidded bins have signed up to the new garden waste subscription service. Once collected from your greenlidded bin by our crews, your garden waste is transported to a composting facility in Enfield, Middlesex. The resulting compost is then used by the farming community as a soil improver, or shared with residents at our annual compost giveaway event.

Last year, we recycled over 52.7 per cent of our household waste in Dacorum. This means we recycle more than we send to landfill! By recycling more of the correct materials, we can work together to hit 60 per cent.

Cllr Robin Bromham, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations.

Clothes Swap Success

In June, we hosted two days of sustainable clothes swaps. These events are run to support circular fashion by encouraging residents to bring along their unwanted, good quality clothing to swap with

others'. In total, 115 local residents came to The Forum over the two days to refresh their wardrobes for free, bringing along 1,063 items of clothing in total, 89 per cent of which was swapped.

By passing on their unwanted clothing to others and swapping second-hand rather than buying brand new, 5.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent was saved from being emitted, had these clothes ended up in landfill. This is the same amount of emissions produced as flying 22,310 kilometres in a plane!

We run several clothes swap events throughout the year. If you would like to be added to our clothes swap mailing list to be the first to know about future events, please email recycle@dacorum.gov.uk stating your request.

Visit our Clothes and Textiles webpage for more information www.dacorum.gov.uk/clothes

Recycle Right

In the UK, recycling saves about 10-15 million tonnes of carbon emissions a year, the equivalent of taking 3.5 million cars off the road.

Putting the right materials in the right bin is important. The wrong items are called contamination. Most of us are getting it right. However, when too much contaminated material is collected, it potentially prevents the whole lorry load of material from being recycled.

Check the image above to make sure you're recycling the right materials in your blue-lidded bin, or visit: www.dacorum.gov.uk/bluebin

Campaign supports residents in saving up to £720 a year

We are supporting the #WorthSaving campaign, which aims to tackle the issue of edible food waste across Hertfordshire.

A waste composition analysis conducted in 2020 found that almost a quarter of the material in our grey bins is food thrown away unnecessarily - costing up to £720 a year per household.

We are encouraging Dacorum residents to follow the '4 Steps to Save' food waste and save money by developing better habits.

By signing up to receive hints and tips on making the most of your food via email for five weeks and taking part in two quick surveys, residents could win a cooking experience and meal out, paid for by WasteAware.

To find out more and enter the prize draw, visit www.wasteaware.org.uk/worthsaving

Your Councillors

It is the Cabinet's responsibility to take day-to-day decisions to meet the Council's priorities. Each of the members of the Cabinet is responsible for a specific area of our work, called a portfolio:

- Councillor Ron Tindall - Leader of the Council
- Councillor Adrian England - Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Climate Change
- Councillor Robin Bromham - Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations
- Councillor Simy Dhyani - Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services
- Councillor Sally Symington - Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Services
- Councillor Carole Weston - Portfolio Holder for People and Transformation
- Councillor Sheron Wilkie - Portfolio Holder for Place Cabinet Members

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01442 394910

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HP2 7ND

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Adeyfield West

Adrian England

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Adeyfield

Hemel Hempstead

HP2 4BN

07809 679744

Ron Tindall

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Hemel Hempstead

HP2 5XT

07818 580088

Aldbury and Wigginton

Paul Reynolds

The Forum

Marlowes

Hemel Hempstead

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Apsley and Corner Hall

Toni Cox

The Forum

Marlowes

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Marlowes

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Carrie Link

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Marlowes

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07810 797247

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Terry Douris

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Bennetts End

John Birnie

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Marlowes

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Berkhamsted West

Robert Stewart

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Sally Symington

The Forum

Marlowes

Hemel Hempstead

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Bovingdon, Flaunden and Chipperfield

Gbola Adeleke

The Forum

Marlowes

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Stewart Riddick

The Forum

Marlowes

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Catherine Ann McArevey

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07456 918101

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Leverstock Green

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07702 202966

Nash Mills

Jan Maddern

The Forum

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The Forum

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**Tring West and Rural
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The Forum

Marlowes

Hemel Hempstead

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Brian Patterson

The Forum

Marlowes

Hemel Hempstead

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Watling

Edward Barradell

The Forum

Marlowes

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Markyate

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07712 050363

Woodhall Farm

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Woodhall Farm

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07812 837396

Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery

Providing first-class services to residents

I am very much looking forward to taking on my role as Portfolio Holder and working alongside the team who take pride in delivering excellent public services.

With rising interest rates and pressure on grant funding from central government, we as a Council are working hard to ensure Dacorum is leading the way in providing the best services to residents and looking after the most vulnerable in our communities.

We are reviewing all of our assets including housing, garages, car parks and commercial properties and assessing their condition, maintenance needs and value for residents.

This work will inform investment decisions and longer-term priorities for service provision and revenue generation. It will support our aim to deliver housing growth and regeneration throughout Dacorum, and to make best use of Council assets to support service delivery for the benefit of Dacorum's communities.

The property services team completed the assignment of the Riverside Lease in June and have programmed works to commence in the late summer at Bennetts End shops to replace windows, undertake render repairs and structural improvements. We've also introduced a new reporting methodology to give the Council better oversight of compliance across the commercial property portfolio.

We are reviewing car parking charges across the borough to ensure we are achieving best value in delivery of services, achieve a more consistent approach to pricing and in line with addressing the climate emergency.

We, as a Council, successfully oversaw the local elections on Thursday 4 May with the election of 51 borough councillors, and councillors for our 16 town and parish councils, across 84 polling stations and 258 polling station staff.

At the end of each financial year, we're required to produce an annual statement of accounts. The draft 2022/23 Accounts were published at the end of May and the external auditors are currently reviewing these with an expectation of producing approved accounts by the end of September.

Cllr Sally Symington, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Services

Let's Talk Dacorum

We have recently launched a new digital engagement platform for our public consultations, including the new Local Plan, called Let's Talk Dacorum.

Signing up takes a few minutes and, once registered you will be able to participate in all our consultations in one place.

We will continue to offer alternative methods of engagement for people without digital access.

You can find out more about Let's Talk Dacorum and how to register on our consultation page: www.dacorum.gov.uk/consultation

Council transformation programme puts customers at the heart of our services.

During the last 18 months, we have reviewed the ways we engage with our customers to look at areas where we could improve levels of customer satisfaction.

We have engaged customers through a number of focus groups and one-to-one sessions to understand their experiences of using our services. The review has helped to inform our new Customer Strategy.

The aims of our new strategy are to:

- Put the customer at the centre of our services.
- Provide a positive and effective customer experience.
- Empower our staff so they can deliver consistent and quality Council services.
- Establish a corporate approach to customer research, customer feedback and continuous improvement.
- Encourage and support customers to use online and automated channels as much as possible.
- Embed customer focus in all roles, teams, and services, and manage ourselves aligned to this.
- Provide us with customer insight and increase intelligence-led decision-making.
- Reduce the cost of interactions and remove inefficiencies.

Dacorum Borough Council Committee Meetings

Full Council

All 51 Council Members attend full Council meetings, held around eight times a year. They debate and agree decisions on behalf of local residents.

Cabinet Meetings

The Council's Cabinet has six senior Councillors who make key decisions. The Cabinet's decisions can be 'called in' to be looked at in more detail by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or may need to be approved by Full Council.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

These meet regularly to discuss service performance and improvements and to check the decisions made by the Cabinet. They are made up of Council Members from across the political parties and encourage views from local people, community groups and our partner organisations.

Strategic Planning and Environment

Housing and Community

Finance and Resources

Other committee meetings

Health in Dacorum

Development Management Committee - This committee makes decisions on planning applications.

Licensing (Health and Safety and Enforcement)

Dacorum Community Safety Partnership

Standards Committee

Audit Committee

Meeting agendas are published a week before the meeting date. You can find the most up-to-date details, agendas, minutes and meeting dates on our website at www.dacorum.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Climate and ecological emergency

Preserving our climate for a generation

Since declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019 we now have six budget years to 2030, to make a difference.

I am excited to be Dacorum's first Portfolio Holder for Climate Change which will help to bring a renewed climate-focus for Dacorum. By prioritising self preservation, we can choose to be part of a "Climate Generation" instead of a "Climate Emergency".

We can start generating a better future now. The 2022 Skidmore Net Zero Review for Government said there are around 2,000 to 4,000 good jobs – in Dacorum - in tackling this challenge.

Here in Dacorum, we are committed to doing all we can, alongside others.

The initial programme includes:

- A big step – many, many steps – on active travel, cycling and the key to easing parking.
- Waste education - we will be striving to reduce the amount of food waste found in our grey bins by supporting Hertfordshire Waste Partnership's #WorthSaving campaign. This includes working closely with schools and community groups.
- "Solar Together" phase two, rolling out more solar panels and battery storage to residents. Over 2,000 solar panels have already been installed through the scheme. To express an interest, go to www.dacorum.gov.uk/solar-together
- 104 vehicle charge points (a mix of fast and rapid) will be installed across our car parks this year. We've secured more than £400,000 of Government funding to install more electric vehicle charging points in our public car parks.
- Focus on funding streams available to draw in greater investment for decarbonisation work. We will be providing the Dacorum Climate Action Network Grants this year (formerly Green Community Grants). More info at www.dacorum.gov.uk/grants

Since starting my Portfolio, I have attended the Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) meeting and taken on the position of Chair of the HCCSP, which puts Dacorum at the centre of this important work, in Hertfordshire.

"Climate Generation" is about bringing new energy to Dacorum. New renewable power generation, but also a can-do attitude.

CLLr Adrian England - Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Deputy Leader

Wildflower meadows

The UK has lost a staggering 97 per cent of its wildflower meadows in less than 100 years.

Wildflowers provide essential homes and food sources for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and other insects, which in turn are crucial for supporting larger wildlife populations that depend on them, such as birds and mammals.

We have been actively creating more wildflower-rich and biodiverse grasslands across the borough. These areas are managed differently, to encourage them to flourish. There is a unique cutting

schedule to encourage wildflowers to flourish, there is wildflower seed planting and we also lay wildflower turf.

These types of habitats are much better suited to dealing with extremes of wet and heat, and are able to absorb large quantities of water – making them useful in helping to play a role in mitigating future flooding events.

We have created an interactive wildflower map to show in which areas we are carrying out this work.

This can be found at: www.dacorum.gov.uk/biodiversity

Water Butt giveaway

In March 2023, over 1,200 residents registered to be in with a chance of winning one of 20 water butts.

The competition's goal was to increase awareness of how water butts can help save water, money, reduce emissions and allow residents and their gardens to be more resilient to the climate crisis.

Dacorum residents can purchase subsidised water butts and access a buy one get one half price offer on home composters. Find out more at: www.getcomposting.com

Environmental Volunteering Map

One of the key aims of the Dacorum Climate Action Network is to encourage people to 'think global and act local'. As such, we have created an Environmental Volunteering Map to help connect people to local organisations and groups that have volunteering opportunities.

There are a range of different activities to suit different skillsets and interests. All volunteering opportunities are related to activities that either reduce emissions or help to improve biodiversity.

To find out more about environmental volunteering in Dacorum and to sign up to the Dacorum Climate Action Network to receive our regular newsletter, please visit:

www.dacorum.gov.uk/dacorumcan

Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

Our commitment to new housing

I'm proud to be Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services and to be working with a dedicated team committed to developing and delivering an ambitious Housing Strategy.

Our strategy, which will launch next year, includes plans to invest £369million in Council homes over the next 10 years. This includes a £263million investment in existing homes and £106million in new Council homes, including £28million for Climate action.

We have a number of new housing projects that we are currently working on including the development of five former garage sites in the borough. We have just completed Beechfield, in Kings Langley, and there are four other sites in Hemel Hempstead due to be completed next year.

Another key priority in our Housing Strategy is to improve our existing homes for our tenants. We carry out an average 24,000 repairs and improvements to our homes each year. We're working towards our net carbon zero target by retro-fitting energy saving measures to our existing housing stock and aim to have 90 per cent of council homes with a B energy rating by 2030.

To further improve the lives of our tenants, our Housing Operations Service is currently engaging with voluntary sector partners to explore opportunities to enhance amenity and green areas in some of our wards. Proposals are currently in development and we look forward to engaging with our tenants, to share ideas and proposed improvements for these areas.

As well as our commitment to our tenants, our Private Sector Housing team is working to drive up standards in the private-rented sector through proactive engagement with landlords and tenants. In instances where this has not been successful, enforcement action has been taken against the landlord or property owner, for failure to maintain a property in line with legal requirements.

Our Safe Communities service is working collaboratively with a range of partners locally, across the county and regionally, to tackle key priorities including rising cost of living, affordability, homelessness, migration and community safety – ensuring that we identify and implement co-ordinated plans to support residents by improving access to wrap-around support, implement new preventative activity and initiatives to resolve difficulties that are being experienced.

I have loved meeting our residents and have visited our supported housing schemes to address and improve our cleaning and maintenance standard. I am also delighted to have supported over 25 caseworks for people needing help with housing, with the help of our fantastic housing team.

Our commitment to new housing I'm proud to be Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services and to be working with a dedicated team committed to developing and delivering an ambitious Housing Strategy.

Cllr Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services

Former garage sites redeveloped

We're currently redeveloping five former garage sites in Dacorum. The first to be completed is in Beechfield, Kings Langley, and includes four timber framed homes with parking and electric vehicle charging points. The houses are heated by energy efficient air source heat pumps which help save on carbon emissions.

In total, there will be 19 houses and six apartments with completion expected in spring 2024.

The other four sites are in Hemel Hempstead; in Dione Road, Housewood End, Sempill Road and Sleddale.

We are also building at Randalls Ride in Highfield, regenerating an existing housing and garage site. Planning permission has been granted with completion expected next year.

New homes in Tring village

Work has begun on a new scheme in Wilstone village in Tring, which will provide six two-bedroom and three-bedroom houses, including a fully compliant wheelchair house. The homes are on underused council-owned land and are designed to complement the surrounding properties. They will be energy-efficient and feature photovoltaic panels, electric air source heat pump heating/hot water and increased insulation. Each home will have an electric charger point and a private parking bay.

Paradise Depot

We have exciting plans to redevelop the Paradise Depot site, located on the Paradise Industrial Estate in Hemel Hempstead.

It is proposed the site, which has a food bank, depot and offices run by local homeless charity DENS, will be redeveloped to include 56 apartments with a mix of one and two-bed homes and a new centre for DENS. The DENS building will feature a ground-floor food bank and first-floor community café and office space for their staff.

Both buildings will be heated by an energy-efficient air source heat pump system and will have a number of electric vehicle charging points in the communal parking areas.

Planning permission was granted in March this year and construction works are due to commence in spring 2024.

We have also acquired a large piece of land at Paradise Fields, St Albans Road, from Homes England. The development will include new apartments, communal parking and landscaped gardens.

Our new Housing Strategy

We have listened to our partners and residents, and developed a strategy that sets out our plans for affordable housing in Dacorum.

We are committed to ensuring that everyone in Dacorum can access warm, safe, secure housing to meet their needs, in an attractive, welcoming community where people from all backgrounds feel at home. Our next five-year Housing Strategy will set out our vision for providing the homes that local families need, at a price they can afford.

Priorities include:

- Building more genuinely affordable homes for local people
- Tackling homelessness and supporting the most vulnerable in our community
- Improving existing Council homes and building new Council homes
- Improving our Housing Services
- Supporting the Climate Change agenda

We're planning to launch the strategy next year, so please keep an eye on our social media and website for more details.

For further information, email talk-to-us@dacorum.gov.uk.

No more paper rent statements

To achieve better value for money and help the environment, we're no longer producing paper statements. We are asking tenants to use other ways of checking their rent balance. You can:

- Sign up to My Dacorum at www.dacorum.gov.uk/MyDacorum
- Send a text from the mobile phone registered on your tenancy records. Just text BAL to 07860 024350
- Call your Housing Income Officer or phone 01442 228000 and ask for 'Housing Rent'

For more information go to www.dacorum.gov.uk/rent

Looking after your safety

We're producing a Resident Engagement Strategy for each of our high-rise blocks, as required by the Building Safety Act 2022.

Once finalised, every resident of these blocks aged 16 years and over will be given a copy. This will make sure that everyone living in the block knows what we are doing to keep them safe, as well as the information they need to reduce risks for themselves and their neighbours.

We work closely with the Fire and Rescue Service to confirm safety advice and pass this on to residents. We ask residents to follow all safety advice, which includes keeping communal areas clear, not using naked flames on balconies (for example, barbecues) and keeping fire doors closed. Please never store gas bottles or fuel cans in any storage area or on your balcony.

Residents are reminded of the risks when considering to charge e-scooters in the home. E-scooters should never be left unattended or charged while you are asleep; you should always make sure that you unplug your charger once it has completed charging to prevent the risk of overheating. Always ensure that you use the correct charger for your e-scooter batteries and buy replacements from a reputable seller. Where lithium-ion batteries (the type used in e-scooters) are damaged or not charged correctly, this can cause fire as a result of overheating.

Please make sure our records are up to date by giving us details of everyone living in your home (this includes temporary guests staying for 30 days or more).

For more information about our approach to fire safety in our high-rise blocks, visit www.dacorum.gov.uk/fire-safety

Free training for tenants

Dacorum Online Training (DOT) is a free site for our tenants, leaseholders and housing applicants.

All new tenants need to complete our pre-tenancy course, but everyone can choose from a range of courses which can improve health and wellbeing, help with employment prospects or help manage personal finance.

Since launching DOT, the number of users has been steadily growing, so why not take a look and enjoy the benefits?

You find out more and register free at www.dacorum.gov.uk/DOT

Shared areas granted a makeover

Have you heard about our Tenant Improvement Grants (TIG)?

If your Council-owned home has communal areas, you and your neighbours can apply for a grant to enhance it.

Residents of sheltered schemes at Saturn Way, Christopher Court and Compass Point have all recently benefitted from TIG grants to improve their communal gardens. They asked for items including sheds, patios, pathways and garden furniture. Our partners, Osborne, lent a hand by assembling the sheds as part of their social value project.

Any shared-housing area can benefit. If you're a tenant or leaseholder, you can apply now using our simple online form.

Visit www.dacorum.gov.uk/TIG for more details.

New Regulatory Surveys

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are a new, compulsory requirement for social landlords to gather and submit data around satisfaction and performance to the Regulator of Social Housing.

We've appointed a contractor, MEL Research, to carry out these surveys on our behalf. They will telephone a representative sample of tenants and leaseholders every three months. These calls will be made from a 0121 Birmingham number, so if you receive a call, we ask you to spend a few minutes to answer the questions and give your opinion of our services. There are 12 standard questions, plus an opportunity to tell us anything else about our services that you wish to share with us. We will use the results to compare our performance against other landlords and work to improve services.

For more information, please visit www.dacorum.gov.uk/TSM

Raising awareness of Domestic Abuse

We're committed to keeping our residents safe, by raising awareness of Domestic Abuse and ensuring positive steps are taken to support survivors. We've recently published our new Domestic Abuse policies for residents, tenants, leaseholders and Members which can be found on our website. If you have been impacted by Domestic Abuse and need support, please call the Domestic Abuse helpline on 0808 2000 247. If you are a tenant you can contact your Tenancy Management Officer. If in need of urgent Housing help, you can speak to a member of our Homeless Prevention team for advice and assistance homelessnessprevention@dacorum.gov.uk

Get involved

This November, we're planning an interesting and interactive event, open to all our tenants and leaseholders.

We want to find out what you think we're doing well, where we could improve, and what our priorities should be for the future.

If you would like us to send you an invitation nearer the time, please email your name and address to talk-to-us@dacorum.gov.uk using the subject line 'Count me in!'

The event will also be publicised on social media and at www.dacorum.gov.uk/get-involved

Supporting our tenants

We are beginning a regular cycle of neighbourhood inspections. These will make sure that the areas our tenants and leaseholders live in are clean, tidy and generally well-maintained. We will pay particular attention to landscaping, car-park areas, trees, hedges and bin stores, as well as any other communal facilities and lighting. We'll look out for vandalism or fly-tipping, but will also respond quickly to reports from residents and contact the correct Council team to get the problem resolved.

These inspections will be carried out by our Tenancy Management Officers (TMOs), who aim to give support to our tenants right from the time they sign their Tenancy Agreement. Tenants will already be familiar with their TMO as they're guided through their tenancy. Whether it's sensitive issues, including significant life events such as relationship breakdown, bereavement or involvement with social care, or just our periodic tenancy reviews, the TMO is a friendly and helpful point of contact. As ambassadors for the Council in the local community, they are also now taking a leading role in working with residents to improve our neighbourhoods.