

# Dacorum Life residents' magazine – Summer 2024

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## Hello

Welcome to Dacorum Life magazine, with news and updates from Dacorum Borough Council. For regular news updates, sign up to our Dacorum Life email. It's quick and easy to sign up here [www.dacorum.gov.uk/dacorum-life](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/dacorum-life)

You can follow us on social media. Find more details on our website [www.dacorum.gov.uk/social-media](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/social-media)

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You can apply, pay, report and contact us on our website for a range of services. [www.dacorum.gov.uk](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk)

Alternative formats are available: audio and large print.

## Welcome

Starting year two of the new Liberal Democrat administration, I am excited by the opportunity to step up from Deputy to Leader of the Council, as we gear-up with our new Corporate Plan. More on what that means for you – and me – in the autumn.

I first want to say a big thank you to Ron Tindall for his year as Leader of Dacorum Borough Council. After many years' service as Leader of the Opposition Group it was a fitting honour as we established the new administration.

Ron has taken on Portfolio Holder responsibility for People and Transformation, a service area which is responsible for transforming and improving council services.

Ron's portfolio also includes our events programme, putting on fantastic free events for our residents throughout the year such as the Armed Forces Day, Summer of Fun programme and our Dacorum 50th anniversary celebrations coming up in September. You will find an overview from each of the Portfolio Holder's in this magazine with updates on the great work each service has been doing.

On our website you'll see there are many different things that you can ask the Council to do, report or comment on. This way you can make small things happen quicker and self-serve for many of our services.

Over the next few years, we will face increased financial pressures. We must make savings of £3.8 million over the next four years, which will require us to make some difficult decisions. We must ensure we can provide council services which are fit for the future and improve and protect the wellbeing of our residents.

Nearly half of the planned activities and spending we expect to carry out for residents and the wider community needs to be funded from fees and charges (not Council Tax), for certain services which the Government says are optional (outside of our statutory duties and services).

Only 25 per cent of our income comes from the Council Tax. We collect Council Tax on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire and the Parish and Town Councils. Every £1 of your Council Tax is shared in the following way:

- 77.8p Hertfordshire County Council
- 10.6p Dacorum Borough Council
- 11.6p The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Together we can do big things, but we need our residents, volunteers and businesses, to be empowered to play a part in creating a borough that puts its collective wellbeing at its heart. I invite you to contribute ideas in helping us continue to provide familiar and useful services and to help make our borough a place we can all be proud of.

You can share your thoughts and ideas at [www.letstalk.dacorum.gov.uk](http://www.letstalk.dacorum.gov.uk)

## 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

Cllr Adrian England Leader of the Council

## **News**

### **New Mayor of Dacorum**

Councillor Brenda Link was appointed Mayor of Dacorum 2024/25 in May.

The Mayor is the first citizen of the borough and is elected to the post by fellow councillors at the annual meeting of the Council in May each year. The role of Mayor is a non-political position and during the mayoral year, a Mayor puts aside Council duties to concentrate on the role as the town's first citizen.

Cllr Link has been a Dacorum Borough Councillor for nearly 19 years, representing Highfield three committees: Housing, Appeals and the Licensing, Health and Safety Committee, where she was Vice Chair. She also serves on the Highfield Community Centre Committee.

She has brought up four children, and later on grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In the past she has volunteered at a children's club called Highflyers and at a youth club based at St Paul's church. She is a founder and committee member of the Gadebridge Gals WI group, as well as a founder member of AVID (Arts Venue Dacorum).

## **Solar Together**

Around 60 per cent of Dacorum residents have the option of generating renewable energy at home.

So far 257 residents have already installed 2,711 solar panels through Solar Together Hertfordshire, a group-buying scheme, which brings Hertfordshire households together to get solar panels at a competitive price.

You can register your interest for the next round of the scheme at [www.dacorum.gov.uk/solar-together](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/solar-together)

## **Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre goes renewable**

We have been awarded £630,000 from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund to install solar panels at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre. This will see significant energy savings on a high energy using building.

The funding will enable the installation of 720 solar panels which will generate an estimated 360kWh of energy which will help the carbon footprint of the facility.

Steve Cox, Everyone Active Area Contract Manager, said: "As a result of the energy crisis, we have seen our energy bills more than double. The implementation of the solar panels at the leisure centre marks a significant step towards reducing our carbon footprint and lowering our energy costs. Everyone Active is proud to work alongside the Council to help achieve our company's net-zero ambitions."

We have also installed new LED floodlights at Jarman Park Athletics track to provide better lighting for residents using the track, as well as reducing emissions.

## **Hemel Hempstead's tennis courts get a fresh serve**

Great news for tennis fans. Hemel Hempstead's tennis courts at Reith Fields (Adeyfield) and Coronation Fields (Bennetts End) have officially reopened after a fantastic £109,000 renovation.

This project, funded by the UK Government, LTA Tennis Foundation, and us, is part

of the LTA's Parks Tennis Project – the biggest ever investment in park tennis facilities across Britain.

The courts have received a makeover, including a complete resurfacing and a brand new gate access system linked to online booking for your convenience.

This national initiative breathes new life into park tennis courts, offering fantastic opportunities for people of all ages to get active. We have partnered with Apex 360, who manage the Active Dacorum Hub with its four public courts, to ensure these courts are well-maintained.

The fun doesn't stop there. Free weekly tennis sessions, with equipment provided, are being offered, giving everyone a chance to pick up a racket and play. Additionally, a local Tennis League is planned, fostering friendly competition within the community.

Ready to hit the courts? Bookings for all courts and sessions can be made easily via the LTA website: [www.lta.org.uk/book](http://www.lta.org.uk/book). The new online booking system and gate access technology ensure you can secure your court time in advance. Currently, there's no charge to play, but booking is essential.

## **Splash into summer**

Our Gadebridge Park Splash Park has been freshly refurbished for the summer.

We can't wait to see you for a season of summer fun! The opening hours are 10am - 6pm every day until early September. There's no need to book.

Follow [@GadebridgeSplashPark](#) on Facebook for the latest updates.

## **Ensuring economic growth and prosperity**

### **Preserving new spaces and places into the future**

The Hemel Garden Communities programme will see Hemel Hempstead grow and transform over the next few decades, with up to 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new

jobs. It's an exciting time for the town, bringing new facilities and leisure opportunities too. There'll also be a focus on ways to travel more sustainably, including improved networks for cycling and walking and better public transport.

With the growth of Hemel Hempstead, it's important to think about how things will be maintained for the years to come.

With this in mind, Hemel Garden Communities carried out a 'Stewardship Survey' on social media in the spring, asking how people would like new community facilities to be managed into the future.

Almost 90 per cent of those who replied said they'd like to see the community having more involvement and commented that parks, playgrounds and community halls are some of the places that mean the most to them. Hemel Garden Communities will be using the feedback to help plan the approach to stewardship for the new growth area.

For more information on the survey results go to:

[www.hemelgardencommunities.co.uk/stewardshipsurvey](http://www.hemelgardencommunities.co.uk/stewardshipsurvey)

We'd like to thank all those who took part in an initial consultation on ways to improve cycling and walking routes in Dacorum.

Your comments will help us to identify walking and cycling routes of most importance to the community over the next 10 years. Funding will be sought from central Government and other sources to make improvements to these routes. Potential future enhancements include new or improved crossings, footway improvements, junction upgrades and traffic-calming measures.

The consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was open for four weeks, closing on 26 February.

The LCWIP, which is being compiled by Herts County Council in partnership with ourselves, aims to make walking and cycling more attractive and create viable options other than using a car, for shorter journeys or as part of longer trips.

We are now reviewing your feedback while drawing up the final draft LCWIP. You will have the opportunity to comment on this later this year when a further public

consultation is held.

Cllr Sheron Wilkie, Portfolio Holder for Place

## **Dacorum's Den – a winner's story**

Dacorum's Den is our business grant scheme which gives budding entrepreneurs the chance to apply for up to £1,000 to grow and develop a business idea.

Gilded Bee was one of the successful applicants to be awarded £1,000 which it used to build its first website. We spoke to founder Emily Stone about her experience.

### **Would you recommend Dacorum's Den?**

Yes, I would highly recommend taking part to any small business or start up. It can support you with crucial business planning, fine tune and build confidence in your proposition and gain some financial support.

### **How does it work?**

To apply you have to write a business plan and complete an application. This process itself is incredibly helpful as many businesses do not spend enough time on these vital steps. The Council's Business Support team will help guide you through this process. If your application is successful you then present to the panel of judges, following a similar format to the TV show Dragons' Den. Again we found this exercise so useful as it gave us a deadline to work towards to ensure we had a concise and compelling proposition.

### **How did the win support your business?**

We were lucky to win £1,000. We used the money to build a professional website, which enabled us to sign up several large businesses in our first year of trading.

### **What's next for Gilded Bee?**

We've needed to adapt our proposition to the market but we've always stayed true to our core, which is to make the people most important to your business feel valued



through thoughtful gifts.

We support other small businesses including previous Dacorum's Den winner, Puddingstone Distillery's Gin. We are just about to launch an online store that will open our market up to consumers as well as businesses so it's an exciting time. We are grateful for the support we've received.

The next round of applications for Dacorum's Den will open soon. Sign up to our Business Update Newsletter to keep updated

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/business/business-services](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/business/business-services)

## **Heart of Maylands**

We've worked with Hightown Housing to create a housing development in the Maylands Industrial Estate.

Heart of Maylands (phase two) includes 158 newhomes – 92 for affordable rent (allocated to people on our housing register) and 66 shared ownership homes. The development also includes three commercial units, bringing homes and workplaces closer together.

We provided £3.3m in grant funding – paying for 33 of the homes. Homes England also provided grant funding.

The development follows our vision for the area as set out in our 2007 Maylands Master Plan and the 2010 Heart of Maylands Development Brief. The latest phase two was built on the site of a disused warehouse previously used by 66 Books. Construction started in late 2021 and finished at the end of March this year.

The Maylands area of Hemel Hempstead has been transformed over the last few years with new homes and businesses creating jobs and boosting the local economy.

# **Building strong and vibrant communities**

## **Working with our residents to improve services**

I'm delighted to provide an update on some of the highlights of the fantastic work taking place in my portfolio over the past few months.

In March 2024 we successfully completed a review of our telephone system to help improve the information we give when our residents call us. The improvements have made it quicker and easier for you to get to the information that you need. We now can text website links, meaning you can quickly access the services you need online, rather than waiting to speak to someone. We are pleased to see that this has proved popular since going live.

Over the next few months, we will be reviewing our website and working to improve the layout, so it is even quicker and easier for you to find information, report issues and request services.

We are always looking for customers to join our Customer Focus Group, as we cannot do this without you. If you are interested in supporting us with testing and giving feedback on where we can improve our services, please register your interest by emailing: [Georgia.jeycock@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:Georgia.jeycock@dacorum.gov.uk)

We continue to provide a packed programme of events for our residents. On a gloriously sunny May weekend, we hosted the Mayor's Garden Party in the tranquil surroundings of Sunnyside Rural Trust's Hemel Food Garden. The day was a great success, with many residents coming along to enjoy the varied entertainment and activities on offer, while helping to raise funds for local charities. Following our Armed Forces Day event in June, we have a bumper summer of low-cost events and activities to keep families amused during the summer.

I am particularly looking forward to our 50th anniversary of Dacorum event in September.

The event will include a parade and a variety of entertainment celebrating the diversity of our borough. I look forward to seeing many of you there to celebrate this

landmark anniversary.

Filming has continued to thrive in Dacorum, with a number of crews filming in our towns and villages over the last few months – from small TV productions to major blockbusters. Filming generates income for our local economy and showcases our borough and all it has to offer. We are looking forward to welcoming more exciting productions very soon.

Cllr Ron Tindall, Portfolio Holder for People and Transformation

## **Spotlight on Dacorum**

Dacorum continues to be a popular location for film and TV productions.

Recently we've had Hemel Hempstead locations in series 3 of the hit BBC comedy 'Mandy', and Guy Richie's Netflix series 'The Gentleman' filmed scenes at Ashridge House.

Apple TV's 'Masters of the Air' transformed Hemel's Old Town High Street into a bombed out street with bomb shelters, for the successful Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks series set during World War II.

The borough offers a truly unique mixture of filming locations from picturesque towns and villages, to beautiful parklands and rural locations.

Due to these assets Dacorum Film Office is taking a very proactive approach towards promoting the borough as the ideal filming location, just outside of the hustle and bustle of London with excellent transport links, and close by to many of the countries most iconic film studios.

Find out more [www.dacorum.gov.uk/filming](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/filming)

## **Visit our Healthy Hub**

The Healthy Hub Dacorum is a one-stop shop for Dacorum residents and their health

and wellbeing.

Taking that first step to change a habit or ask for help isn't always easy. You might not be entirely sure what support you want or need, but talking with us can help you figure that out.

The Healthy Hub Dacorum will listen, explore the options available and provide free, non-judgmental information and advice to support you with:

- losing weight
- reducing drug and/or alcohol intake
- quitting smoking
- getting fitter and healthier your mental wellbeing
- improving employability and digital skills
- getting money advice sexual health testing kits and much more.

Find out more at [www.healthyhubs.org.uk/home.aspx](http://www.healthyhubs.org.uk/home.aspx)

## **A clean, safe and enjoyable environment**

### **Our future neighbourhoods**

We are working on several new projects that will continue to strengthen operations and deliver quality services for our residents.

One of the new initiatives that is being piloted is called Future Neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood working can take a variety of forms which focus largely on internal and organisational coordination and collaboration to ensure effective and efficient service delivery at a neighbourhood level.

The initiative will support the development of a neighbourhood management model

that aims to:

- Improve collaborative working across Council departments and teams
- Develop a way of working at a neighbourhood level that supports better engagement with ward councillors, residents and businesses
- Enable creativity in identification and resolution of issues at a neighbourhood level
- Use resources more efficiently
- Provide tangible outcomes which enhance wellbeing and pride in those communities

Our Clean, Safe and Green team and Parks team continue to work in partnership with local groups and the third sector. We are working with Sunnyside Rural Trust on several projects including planting schemes, litter picking and undertaking a trial restoring original aluminium nameplates from around the borough.

Officers and Sunnyside Rural Trust are also working on our entry to Anglia in Bloom (a sub-group of Britain in Bloom). The Anglia in Bloom launch event was in March 2024 and the Dacorum entry will focus on the excellent work Sunnyside Rural Trust have been doing in delivering planting schemes on housing land. It will also give us an opportunity to showcase sites such as Gadebridge Park walled garden and the Water Gardens.

We are delighted that our annual compost giveaway event in May was as popular as ever. This is a perfect example of how we can support a circular economy. The fact that this compost came from residents' recycled garden waste means that the compost is peat-free. This is important as the production of peat is bad for the environment, destroying valuable eco-systems and releasing carbon into the atmosphere, which contributes to climate change.

As well as our garden waste subscription service, another great way to recycle your garden waste at home is by cutting it up and composting it. A compost bin can also

be used to recycle some of your food waste, including tea bags and fruit and vegetable peelings. For more information visit our home composting page on our website.

Cllr Robin Bromham, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations

## **Thank you to our volunteers!**

We'd like to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers across Dacorum who took part in our local Great British Spring Clean campaign during March and April this year, to help tidy up our local environment.

Over the two months, more than 1,000 volunteers took part in 28 different events across the borough and collected a grand total of 326 bags of rubbish and 204 bags of recycling.

Our Clean, Safe and Green teams do a brilliant job in litter picking daily around the borough, but we're always grateful to volunteers who can help the teams out - it's a big area to cover!

We support litter picking events throughout the year by providing equipment for groups to borrow. Find out more about community litter picks here:

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/communitylitterpicks](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/communitylitterpicks)

If you'd like to litter pick on a regular basis, you may also be interested in joining the Dacorum Street Champions team, now made up of over 1,500 volunteers. Sign up here [www.dacorum.gov.uk/street-champions](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/street-champions)

## **Schools take up compost challenge**

Last year we challenged schools across Dacorum to create artwork to teach people how composting is good for our gardens, and our planet. Above are some of our favourite entries!

It's easy to recycle your garden waste at home by composting it in your garden. A compost bin can also be used to recycle some of your food waste, including tea bags and fruit and vegetable peelings. Over time, this cheap and natural process will break down your waste and become a rich soil improver for your garden.

To get the best compost it is best to add an equal mixture of "greens" and "browns".

Greens are wet items such as tea bags, vegetable peelings, grass and fruit. Browns are dry items such as leaves, dead plants, cardboard and paper.

Find more information about home composting, and discounts on compost bins, here: [www.dacorum.gov.uk/compost](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/compost)

## **Dacorum events**

### **Mayor's Garden Party**

Thanks to everyone who supported our Mayor's Garden Party event in May at Hemel Food Garden. It was great to see so many residents and visitors enjoying the entertainment and activities on such a beautiful, sunny day.

Thank you to Sunnyside Rural Trust for being such fantastic hosts, and to the entertainers, charities, activity providers, stallholders and our event sponsor, Cardo.

View event images: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjBqhEi>

### **Summer of fun**

Looking for some fun activities to keep the family entertained over the summer? We have a variety of free and low-cost activities running in Hemel town centre during the school holidays, delivered in partnership with Hemel Hempstead BID (Business Improvement District). Many of the events have been funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

### **Olympics on the Big Screen**

Friday 26 July – Sunday 11 August 10am – 6pm Next to Rainbow Stage, Hemel

town centre. Experience the Olympics in Hemel town centre! The Olympic screen, situated by the Rainbow Stage, will be broadcasting live coverage of the games daily.

### **Magical Story Elves Presents**

Sunday 28 July 11am-3pm Hemel town centre

### **Climbing Wall**

Sunday 4 August 10am-4pm Hemel town centre

### **Summer Fun Day**

Friday 9 August 11am-3pm Hemel town centre

### **Caving**

Sunday 11 August 10am-4pm Hemel town centre

### **Magical Story Elves Presents**

Wednesday 14 August 11am-3pm Hemel town centre

### **Freestyle Bike Event**

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 August Market Square, Hemel Hempstead. Get ready for an adrenaline rush with our Freestyle Bike Event, a mobile pop-up bike stunt show that's sure to inspire and excite. Suitable for all ages and skill levels.

### **Magical Story Elves Presents**

Sunday 25 August 11am-3pm Hemel town centre

### **Hemel's Animal Adventure**

Friday 30 August 11am-3pm Hemel town centre

### **Shepherd Brass Band**

Saturday 31 August 1pm-3pm Hemel town centre

We'll also be running pop-up events in Berkhamsted and Tring, with a range of activities including face- painting and story-telling.



Please follow our social media channels or visit [www.dacorum.gov.uk/events](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/events) for the latest updates and details of all our upcoming events.

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dacorum**

### **50 Fest**

This year is the 50th anniversary of the creation of Dacorum.

Dacorum Council was created in April 1974 following a review of local government in England and Wales. Five smaller council areas, those of the borough of Hemel Hempstead, the urban districts of Berkhamsted and Tring, and the rural districts of Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted were merged.

Join us on Sunday 29 September, from 11am to 5pm, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Dacorum. We'll be marking the historic occasion with a host of exciting activities for all ages across Hemel Hempstead town centre. The highlight of the event will be our spectacular parade, supported by Handmade Productions. Watch as puppets, performers, and community groups bring colour and energy to the streets.

There will be a variety of local market stalls to explore, offering delicious treats and unique crafts. From gourmet food to handmade goods, there's something for everyone to enjoy. There will also be a range of entertainment on offer, including live performances and interactive activities to keep the whole family amused.

We're delighted that Hemel Hempstead BID will also be hosting their fantastic Hullabaloo offering even more food, music and entertainment.

Find out more: Dacorum at 50 Fest [www.dacorum.gov.uk/50-Fest](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/50-Fest)

## **Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery**

### **Committed to front-line services**

Now we are well into the 2024/25 financial year, we turn our attention to the 2025/26 budget and continuing to deliver essential services to you.

As a Liberal Democrat administration, we want to know what our residents think, what their concerns are and what is important to them for Dacorum. In January 2024 we undertook the first borough-wide budget consultation that asked all residents and organisations of Dacorum what their budget priorities are. Thank you to all who took part. Your feedback will give us direction in our discussions for the 2025/26 budget.

Along with other county and borough councils up and down the country, we have seen years of cuts to our core funding and, in more recent years, an increase in costs that far out-strips that core funding. To make up the shortfall in core funding from Central Government more and more councils like ours are expected to increase their income and find additional savings.

Many of you will have seen the formal consultation for increases in parking tariffs across the Borough and I have received correspondence from many residents questioning the need for increases. 'Fees and Charges' make-up a large proportion of our income and all increases will contribute to reducing the deficit in funding.

Compared to many Local Authorities, Dacorum is financially stable and delivering the essential services our residents need, but to achieve that some difficult decisions have to be made. We have to find £3.8m in additional income and savings over the coming four years to balance our budgets. We recognise the financial climate is still challenging for households and businesses across our borough and, like many families, we are looking inwards to ensure we are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible. We are committed to investing in Dacorum's future and will plan and manage our finances wisely to ensure we continue to provide essential and discretionary services to our residents.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Elections Team who have done Dacorum proud by overseeing not just one, but two big elections in 2024; the General Election and the Police and Crime Commissioner election in May. The team also facilitated the Bovingdon Neighbourhood Plan referendum for an electorate of 3,613.

Please look out for information soon about paper-free billing for Council Tax. The Climate Emergency is a priority for us and we are always looking to improve our sustainability. By introducing paper-free billing we aim to reduce our carbon footprint.

## **Parking – proposals to change tariffs and charging**

Statutory public consultation relating to new parking tariff proposals began on 10 July 2024. This follows a previous consultation carried out in 2023.

The tariff increases form part of an ongoing review of fees and charges, as part of our need to recover costs and effectively manage the Council's budget.

Parking fees across the borough were last increased in 2019. Over this period, inflation increased by 28 per cent. The proposed changes will bring our tariffs in line with the cost of inflation. Further reviews will be carried out on a more regular basis to ensure tariffs keep pace with the costs of delivering services.

The proposals include changes to off-street parking (car parks), town centre on-street parking and controlled parking zones.

Our proposed parking charges are still lower than public sector averages, and local private sector parking charges. The set of proposals has been carefully considered to ensure they are fair and proportionate. They will allow us to continue to offer competitive pricing locally for parking and visits to our town and neighbourhood centres.

Electronic copies of the proposed orders, statements of reasons and drawings showing more detailed particulars of the proposals are available at [www.letstalk.dacorum.gov.uk/](http://www.letstalk.dacorum.gov.uk/)

Documents may also be inspected at our offices during normal office hours, at the following locations:

- The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1DN, or
- Berkhamsted Civic Centre, 161 High Street, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 3HD or

- Victoria Hall, Akeman Street, Tring, HP23 6AA.

General enquiries relating to the proposals should be referred to the Traffic Management Team at ADL Traffic and Highways Ltd: 01454 332100.

Once the consultation ends on Wednesday 31 July we will consider all the responses received and prepare a consultation report which will be available on our website.

## **Let's Talk Dacorum**

Be part of our public consultations by signing up to our digital engagement platform Let's Talk Dacorum.

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.letstalk.dacorum.gov.uk/](http://www.letstalk.dacorum.gov.uk/)

## **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](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/councilmeetings)

## **Climate and ecological emergency**

### **Tackling global problems locally**

The Climate and Ecological Emergency is one of our Corporate Priorities and we are committed to acting locally to help tackle the global problem.

We are working towards two very ambitious targets - net zero as an organisation by 2030, and net zero as a borough by 2050.

Over the past seven months we have installed 16 electric vehicle charging points in five Council-owned car parks to meet the growing demand for public charging. We also trialled two electric vehicles for our fleet of waste and street cleansing vehicles, planted seven wildflower meadows to support our local pollinators, installed bat boxes and bee houses across our parkland, and continue to run at least two clothes swaps each year to reduce the resources needed to make brand new clothes and the emissions produced in the disposal of textiles.

We've completed a project to install energy saving improvements to 75 of our council homes in Kings Langley and Berkhamsted. The works which will save tenants money on their fuel bills include external wall insulation, loft insulation, energy efficient lighting, draught proofing and solar panels. The retrofit programme will help us meet our net zero targets.

By working together with Dacorum residents, we are more powerful in making a tangible difference to our local and global environment; the motivation behind the Dacorum Climate Action Network (Dacorum CAN).

Dacorum residents and businesses can save money by making smart, climate-aware decisions to make savings:

- By planning our meals, sticking to a shopping list, storing
- food correctly and eating what we have, we can cut food waste emissions and save around £60 per month, (according to WRAP) adding up to £720 a year. Follow
- the 'WorthSaving' campaign's '4 Steps to Save' for top tips, plus a chance to win a meal out: [www.wasteaware.org.uk/worthsaving](http://www.wasteaware.org.uk/worthsaving)
- Loft insulation could save £315 a year (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors).
- Repair instead of buying new. Visit the Open Door Repair Café in Berkhamsted or the Tring Repair Café for free repairs (donations always welcome).

- Use the NextDoor app to share with neighbours; trade time for tools, cupboard space for supper, favour for favour.

Added together, these ideas could make you over £7,000 in savings by 2030.

Sign up to Dacorum CAN to find out more: [www.dacorum.gov.uk/dacorumcan](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/dacorumcan)

Cllr William Allen, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change

## **New electric charge points**

Transport makes up the largest proportion of emissions within the borough at 34 per cent. We recognise the importance of giving our residents confidence to switch to electric vehicles. So far, we have installed 16 electric charge points across five of our car parks and have 59 more being installed across the borough, ready for use by the summer.

In partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, we want to install more charge points closer to residents' homes. If you are finding it difficult to access a chargepoint, please email [EVstrategy@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:EVstrategy@hertfordshire.gov.uk) with your details, including your postcode. The County Council team will include your location in the mapping data, which will be used to identify potential future charge point locations. To find the electric vehicle charge point in operation closest to you, visit [www.zap-map.com](http://www.zap-map.com)

## **Our borough's wildlife is buzzing**

Spring saw our local wildlife getting busy. Our masonry bee houses are buzzing with activity after we released all of the cocoons following their winter hibernation. We've already seen wild honeybees foraging for food from flowering plants such as selfheal, dead nettles, dandelions, wild garlic, red campions, and cow slips. We have introduced new rewilding initiatives in the borough too. With the help of Friends of Bunkers Park and local business Henkel, we have planted over 1,000 whips in Bunkers Park to create a new hedgerow. We have also introduced bat boxes in the Water Gardens.

All of the plant species listed above can be found in our rewilded wildflower

meadows which you can find using our wildflower map. You can also find opportunities to get involved in the environmental volunteering map on our website. If you spot any interesting insects in your garden or in any of our parks, send in a picture to [biodiversity.wildlife@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:biodiversity.wildlife@dacorum.gov.uk) and tell us all about it.

## **Improving air quality for pupils**

We have recently installed a green screen at Nash Mills Primary in Hemel Hempstead. A green screen is a natural barrier of evergreen plants which reduces air and noise pollution and improves privacy. The school's location on busy Belswains Lane was the reason it was chosen as a pilot site.

Prior to installation we installed an air quality monitor. This means we have several weeks' data to understand how effective the green screen is at reducing air pollution in the school playground. This will help us decide if we want to extend the project.

To find out more about what we offer local schools, sign up to our SEED (Supporting Environmental Education in Dacorum) newsletter which provides teachers with the latest local environmental news, campaigns, classroom ideas and links to free resources. We also deliver assemblies on various themes to primary schools across the borough. Visit our Schools Recycling web page for more information: [www.dacorum.gov.uk/schoolrecycling](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/schoolrecycling)

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

### **Committed to keeping standards high in Housing**

We have published our Housing Strategy for 2024 to 2029 which outlines our commitments to you, our tenants, and to our housing stock.

The strategy sets out our five commitments and how we and our partners will do our utmost to make sure that everyone in Dacorum can access warm, safe, secure housing to meet their needs, where people from all backgrounds feel at home.



We aspire to making accommodation in Dacorum high quality, energy-efficient and affordable, particularly for younger people who may have limited options. I am also passionate about providing high quality and sought-after housing for older people. We will continue to create sustainable communities, where everyone feels safe and supported, including those who have come into our borough as asylum seekers or refugees.

We are proud that we are due to complete our 400th new home in Randalls Ride, a former garage site which creates a place that meets the needs of local people, is visually attractive, improves the character and quality of the area, and is safe.

You can be part of our drive to provide safe neighbourhoods for our tenants by getting involved. Our neighbourhood engagement events are essential in finding out what issues are affecting you. We held a successful estate day in Grovehill and I met many residents at Eastwick Row. We are committed to driving up cleaning standards in our communal areas and I was pleased to hear the positive comments from our residents about the recent deep clean on the site.

Our repairs partner, Cardo was at the event carrying out small repairs and providing skips for residents. Cardo acquired Osborne in March and steps have already been taken to deliver improvements. We will all work together to deliver service improvement. We aim to reduce the average time to complete non-urgent repairs and learn from complaints to improve services.

In April, the government launched a new regulatory regime for social housing. Our housing service had its first inspection in May, when the regulator's inspectors spent two days with us, focussing on our service to tenants.

The Regulator of Social Housing will report back to us with their findings. To find out more about housing services in Dacorum, sign up to our 'Housing Matters' email [www.dacorum.gov.uk/housing-matters](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/housing-matters)

Cllr Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property Services and Deputy Leader

## **30 new homes at Randalls Ride**

Our Randalls Ride development replaces six outdated bungalows and four flats above garages with 30 one-and-two bedroom apartments spread across two blocks. The project is nearing completion, so we're anticipating that the homes will be ready to let this summer.

The green energy solutions for this scheme include a communal air-source heat pump on the roof of the larger block, which will deliver heating and hot water efficiently to each apartment. This not only helps meet our drive towards zero carbon, but reduces energy bills and minimises the likelihood of fuel poverty. Each flat will achieve energy rating EPC level B as a minimum.

Over the past year, we have enhanced our specification to include floor coverings to all internal areas, with carpets in bedrooms and Karndean flooring installed throughout the wheelchair units.

This project benefitted from Homes England funding and is another step towards improving the supply of affordable housing in Hemel Hempstead.

For more information about our ambitious new build programme, visit [www.dacorum.gov.uk/newhomes](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/newhomes)

## **Paradise Fields**

Work on our Paradise Fields development is progressing well providing much-needed homes for social rent, whilst enhancing the area for existing residents.

This development, which will known as 'Mountbatten View', will provide 58 apartments including six fully wheelchair accessible units, close to Hemel Hempstead town centre. The layout respects the existing environment and includes carefully designed landscaping that will encourage existing wild habitats to continue to thrive and flourish.

## **News for tenants and leaseholders**

### **Changes to our Mutual Exchange policy**

We have launched an updated Mutual Exchange policy to reflect our ongoing commitment to improving our services and ensuring our policies meet the needs of our tenants.

The key amendments are:

#### **Eligibility for the number of bedrooms:**

We have revised the criteria for the number of bedrooms a household can exchange into. This change aims to better align with current housing needs and Housing Allocations Policy, ensuring that homes are appropriately sized for the exchanging families. The updated policy outlines specific eligibility criteria based on household size, promoting fair and equitable access to housing.

#### **Clearer Process for Appealing Decisions:**

We have implemented a more transparent and structured process for appealing mutual exchange decisions. This includes clear guidelines on how to submit an appeal, the documentation required, and the timelines for receiving a response. Our goal is to ensure that all applicants understand their rights and the steps they can take if they wish to challenge a decision.

Our Tenancy Management team is available to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have regarding the new policy. Please feel free to contact us at [Tenancy@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:Tenancy@dacorum.gov.uk) or call us on 01442 228000.

### **Repairs and Maintenance – now Cardo Group**

At the end of last year, social housing maintenance specialists, Cardo, made a friendly buyout of our repairs and maintenance contractors, Osborne Property Services Ltd. All vehicles, ID badges, uniforms and communications now feature the Cardo logo.

If you need to report a routine repair, go to [www.dacorum.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/repairs) Alternatively you can call 0800 018 6050 (option 2)

## **New domestic heating and ventilation contractors**

Aaron Services were awarded the heating and ventilation contract for our domestic properties in April 2024.

Aaron Services have a great deal of experience carrying out similar work for other councils, so we look forward to working with them over the next seven years. As well as providing efficient and reliable services that keep our residents safe, comfortable, and warm, they will be developing new heating and ventilation technologies to support our drive towards environmental sustainability and our commitment to meet net zero by 2050.

To report a heating, hot water or ventilation repair, go to [www.dacorum.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/repairs)  
Alternatively you can call 0800 018 6050 (option 1)

## **Garden day a blooming success**

The sun shone as our community at Crawley Drive Supported Housing came together to create a budding garden area.

We held a garden day in May where residents along with representatives from Cardo, Clean, Safe and Green and Sunnyside Rural Trust created garden boxes and planted flowers, shrubs and vegetables.

Andy Adkin a Cardo representative, who personally makes bird houses, kindly donated one for the bird area.

Hanging baskets from Sunnyside and seating will complete the garden giving residents a green space to enjoy.

## **Need a smaller home?**

Perhaps you're living in a home that's too large, or has a garden you struggle to

maintain. Maybe you'd like to be spending less on rent, Council Tax and energy costs? Why not look into downsizing? Or if you're living with major disabled adaptations that are no longer needed, you may prefer to move away.

We're keen to make best use of our housing stock. Our Help to Move Policy sets out our approach to helping our tenants move to a home more suitable for their needs.

We pay between £500 and £2,000 depending on the type of move you're making. This could pay your removal costs and help clear any arrears.

Find out more by contacting our Housing Needs Team  
[housingneeds.mailbox@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:housingneeds.mailbox@dacorum.gov.uk)

### **Could you be one of our 'Mystery Customers'?**

We hope you will join our new Mystery Customer project. You could even win a prize! We want your feedback on our services so we know what we are doing right and what we can do better.

It's simple. Every time you use our services, you can let us know how we did and how we could improve, and we will enter you into our quarterly Mystery Customer monthly prize draw.

Find out more and register on our website [www.dacorum.gov.uk/get-involved](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/get-involved)

### **Dacorum Online Training**

Our tenants and leaseholders can access free courses through our Dacorum Online Training (DOT) portal.

The courses focus on wellbeing, life skills and tenancy management advice and are available to all existing tenants, those in temporary accommodation and housing applicants.

Find out more [www.dacorum.gov.uk/get-involved](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/get-involved)

## **Engaging with our residents**

We hold events throughout the year to make sure we are engaging with you and finding out what matters to you.

Thank you to all who attended our first Housing Open Day in November. We had an amazing turn out - around 400 people came along to find out information about mutual exchange, shared ownership, report repairs and give feedback on our services.

We held engagement events in Grovehill and Eastwick Row, at the beginning of the year, where residents could report repairs issues, speak to police officers and give us feedback on what they would like to see in their local areas.

The feedback gathered at all events is vital and helps co-create neighbourhood improvement plans.

## **RAAC removal from Council-owned blocks**

Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is a lightweight form of concrete, which was used in building construction from the 1950s until the mid-1990s. It became a safety concern when a school's roof collapsed over a weekend. Since then, many schools and other public buildings have been found to contain RAAC.

We identified RAAC at three sites and removal works were completed promptly and efficiently in March 2024. We then reinstated the roofs. We would like to thank the residents for their cooperation during these essential works.

Pictured: RAAC removal works underway at Hilltop Road, Berkhamsted.

## **Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour**

We listened to resident feedback to develop an improved approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour in Dacorum. Our new policy was approved by the Council's Cabinet in April 2024.

You can find out more about our policy and report issues of anti-social behaviour at [www.dacorum.gov.uk/ASB](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/ASB)