



Annual Report 2009

A report of the work undertaken within Dacorum Local
Strategic Partnership in 2009

Working together to make Dacorum a happy, healthy, prosperous
and safe place to live, work and visit



Welcome from Councillor Andrew Williams

Chair – Dacorum Partnership

I'm pleased to be able to present this report to you on the work of the Dacorum Partnership for 2009. The Annual Report is the one opportunity I have to take time to reflect on the work being done and consider what difference the Partnership is making.

The point of working in a partnership is that we can achieve things together that would not be possible alone. Our strength is in our shared vision and co-ordinated work. Through working together we can get best use out of finite resources, share concerns and deliver real benefits - the communities of Dacorum deserve nothing less.

In 2008 we had an independent inspection of the Partnership and in 2009 we've set about undertaking our improvement plan. The result is that the Partnership is in a better shape to meet the challenges we face in 2010 and better prepared to address Government initiatives like 'Total Place', CAA and Local Area Agreements.

The benefits of working in Partnership are not always immediately apparent. Some get involved because its an opportunity to raise the profile and importance of their work; some find that their 'voice is louder' and their influence greater when they work in partnership; some find greater opportunity for joint bidding; better access to funding streams; better networking, sharing best practice and enhancing services for clients. Whatever the reason organisations get involved the result is better for Dacorum.

In this report I've concentrated on giving you a few examples of where we've made a difference this year. I hope that you find the report interesting and it inspires you to do more with us in 2010.

I am indebted for the work undertaken by all the community groups, partner agencies, staff and individuals that play a part in Dacorum Partnership. I thank you all for your energy, enthusiasm and commitment to making Dacorum a better place and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future

What is it?

The Dacorum Partnership brings together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. The Partnership helps services to support each other and work together more effectively. The government refers to partnerships of this nature as Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

Dacorum is a district of Hertfordshire. There are two tiers of councils that deliver public services to our area: Hertfordshire County Council and Dacorum Borough Council. We also have two LSPs: the Dacorum Partnership and Hertfordshire Forward.

What do we do?

The Dacorum Partnership has a long-term vision to improve the quality of life and services in the local area. This long-term vision is outlined in a strategy called Towards 2021: the Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy.

How is the Partnership measured?

Hertfordshire has a series of targets aimed at improving performance, over a 3-year period, which it reports to the government. These targets focus on the things that matter most to local people and the document that lists the targets is called a Local Area Agreement (LAA). Hertfordshire Forward co-ordinates these targets and the Dacorum Partnership relays these targets into its local strategy.

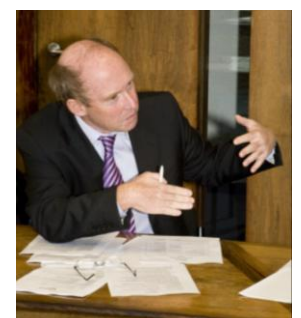
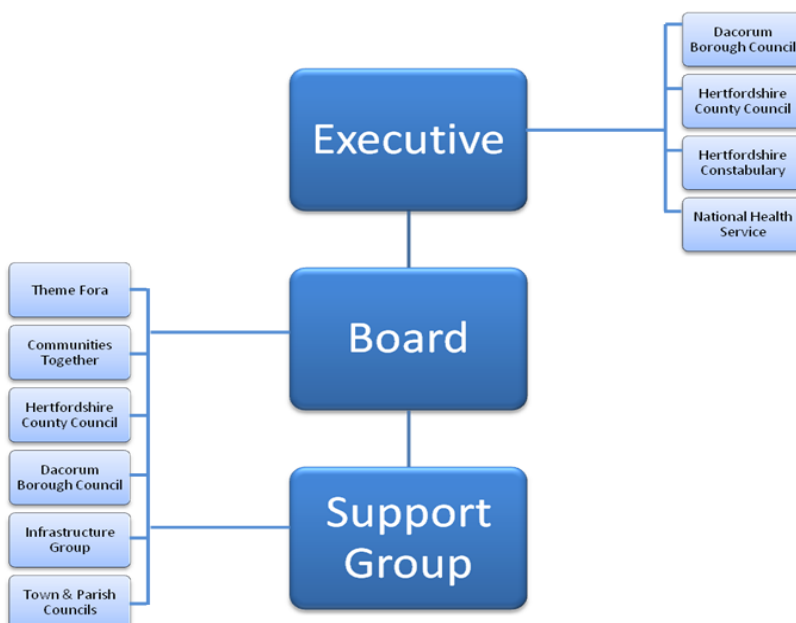
How do we fit in with Hertfordshire Forward?

Hertfordshire Forward has been in existence since October 2005. Its 'core group' brings together all the key agencies in Hertfordshire responsible for improving outcomes for local people. As well as monitoring delivery of the Local Area Agreement, Hertfordshire Forward also has a strategy.



The Dacorum Partnership:

- Brings together local agencies to develop a shared understanding of the areas needs and priorities
- Acts as the co-ordinating partnership, ensuring strong links with other partnerships, such as crime and disorder reduction partnerships
- Ensures that district level plans take account of county-wide priorities
- Ensures that district priorities are considered and, where possible, reflected in the Local Area Agreement targets.



ASPIRE TO PERFORM REVIEW

In September 2008 the East of England Regional Assembly assessed the effectiveness of Dacorum Partnership through the Aspire 2 Perform tool. This made the following recommendations:

- ◆ Board consider on focusing on 2-3 key strategic objectives
- ◆ Review membership of the Board to ensure it is fit for purpose
- ◆ Consider opportunities for strategic alignment of budgets
- ◆ Board consider how to involve the public more in its meetings
- ◆ The Partnership employ a dedicated support officer
- ◆ improve the websites to ensure better feedback
- ◆ Roles and responsibilities are clarified through establishment of “Job Descriptions”
- ◆ an integrated Performance Management System be developed
- ◆ That formally agreed guidelines for a partners role and their responsibilities be developed



During 2009 the Partnership Improvement plan addressed these recommendations and made progress. **We achieved the following:**

- ✓ Gap Analysis completed on the key strategic objectives: Rejuvenating Dacorum; Promoting Healthy and Caring Lifestyles; Developing Community Cohesion; Acting on Climate Change
- ✓ Membership review of Board and Support Group completed
- ✓ Partnership Development Officer post developed and appointed
- ✓ Communications strategy developed and websites improved
- ✓ Role Descriptions completed for all board and support group members
- ✓ Refreshed Terms of Reference covering guidelines and responsibilities adopted

During 2010 we will be continuing our improvement through:

- ✓ Developing an integrated Performance Management System across the Partnership
- ✓ Developing funding aligned to key objectives
- ✓ Developing commissioning arrangements with Third Sector organisations
- ✓ Refreshing the Sustainable Community Strategy – “Towards 2021” taking the action plan to 2014
- ✓ Improving accountability and scrutiny arrangements for the Partnership
- ✓ Organising another review of the Partnership’s effectiveness to continue to drive improvement



We will be reporting progress to board meetings during 2010 and in the Annual Report each year.

Some of our action in 2009....



Plan-It Eco brought expertise and a thought-provoking edge which was made even more dynamic and exciting with the presence of Juan Kunichikuy, an Amazonian Indian. Juan's inspirational talks reminded us all of the personal responsibility and global perspective to sustainability.

Tomorrow's World Today's Challenge was an exciting and innovative initiative exploring the real meaning of sustainability and how we can all make a difference.

Dacorum Partnership directed and shaped a week in January 2009 packed with events which embraced the true meaning of partnership and was supported by a huge number of community groups, forums, local businesses and other organisations.



With a mixture of community activities, school events, public talks, Councillor's briefings and training, Tomorrow's World, Today's Challenge achieved many of the objectives set in the Sustainable Community Strategy. It was a chance to cover the social, economic and environmental meaning of sustainability. It engaged partners involved within the Dacorum Partnership and embraced many diverse activities, reaching different audiences throughout the week.

Tomorrow's World Today's Challenge had many positive outcomes at many levels. It provided:

- greater awareness of sustainability;
- greater awareness of the Dacorum Partnership and what it aims to achieve through the Sustainable Community Strategy; and
- sign-posting to organisations and practical actions that residents can get involved in.

The events captured a diverse audience, catering to so many different needs and interests. Through positive partnership working many local people, including residents, businesses, teachers, children and visitors, were engaged.

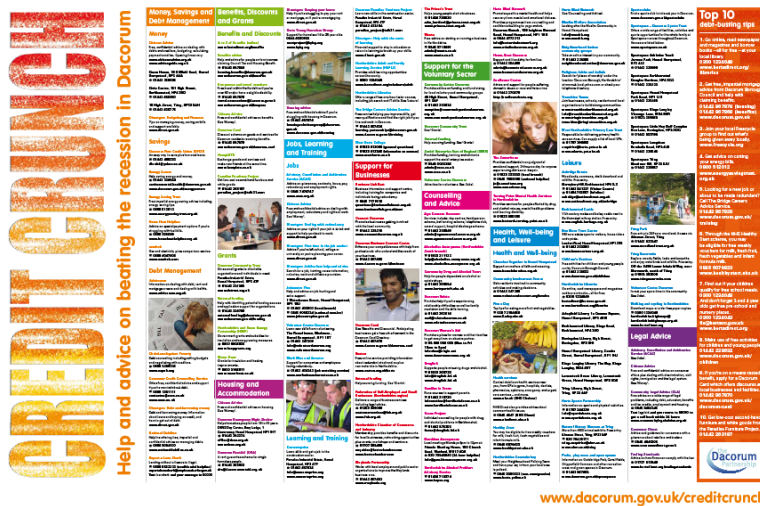


The Economic Recession group

The world-wide recession was a new challenge to Dacorum in 2009. When the new Sustainable Community Strategy was produced we could not predict the recession that affected our communities.

The Dacorum Partnership set up a 'credit crunch' task force which made progress in supporting Dacorum residents and businesses through the recession. It could not have been undertaken by only one agency. It needed the business sector to work with the lifelong learning group; the voluntary sector; the Council; the Credit Union; the Police and others, to make real differences to people's lives.

The group took a lead in getting the right information to people at the right time. A 'Credit Crunch' information poster was distributed to over 1000 community centres, homes, shops, businesses and other venues to ensure that local people knew who they could speak to and where they could go to get help.



The Partnership provided electronic information through websites and linked together those that needed help with those that could provide it. We also helped make sure there was impartial employment advice available to all through our local Citizens Advice Bureau. We made sure that local businesses were treated fairly by our partner organisations ensuring that there weren't long waits for invoices to be paid and ensuring planning needs were dealt with quickly and sensitively.

We're planning two other projects too - the refurbishment of Hemel Hempstead town centre to attract new business and increasing social housing availability.

The 'Credit Crunch' group will monitor the local economic situation closely and will take action to make sure that Dacorum continues to support its communities well in 2010.

Achievements in 2009

- Reduced CO2 emissions by 8.3 % across Dacorum
- Reduced by 4% the number of people who consider vandalism, graffiti and damage to be a big or fairly big problem.
- Increased the number of VAT registered business in the area showing growth and encouraged 50 new

The Economic Recession – Local Facts

1. According to Job Centre Plus the number of vacancies increased from 636 in July 2009 to 779 in October 2009.
2. The number of housing benefit and council tax applications reduced by 235 between September and October 2009.
3. There was a 17% reduction in landlord possession orders from the same period last year.



Dacorum Horizons is an exciting new community project funded as part of the national Learning Revolution. Situated at 160 Marlowes, (the old Post Office) - its open 10am - 4pm Tuesday - Saturday delivering a huge range of informal 'taster' learning sessions to any member of the public who is over 19 and wishes to participate.

Its aim is to encourage informal adult learning. This covers a huge range of activities: dance classes, floristry, calligraphy, a guide to buying at auctions, music, making jewellery, martial arts or DIY. It could also provide support to people through writing CVs, learning basic IT skills, managing finances, receiving careers advice and guidance, or business start up.

A large number of voluntary organisations including West Herts college, Community Action Dacorum and Volunteer Centre Dacorum have been involved with this partnership funded through a grant of £68k from the National Learning Revolution.

Dacorum Horizons has something to appeal to everyone and **IT'S ALL FREE.**



Our Meetings During 2009

The Local Strategic Partnership Board meet quarterly and have met on four occasions during 2009. The items they have discussed have included the following:

- Action on the 'Prevent' agenda (Preventing Violent Extremism)
- Reducing CO2 emissions (Climate Change action)
- Equality and Diversity
- Comprehensive Area Assessment (External audit of service performance)
- Acting on the 'Credit Crunch' (Economic Situation Group)
- Hemel 2020 and Local Development Framework
- Local Area Agreement and Performance Reward Grant
- Housing Futures
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
- Partnership Improvement Programme
- Budget Consultation
- Climate Change / 10:10 campaign
- Performance Management

Dates for 2010 Board meetings are: 10th March; 16th June; 15th September; 8th December.

Challenges for Dacorum Partnership in 2010

Preamble...

To provide good strategic direction for the area, Dacorum Partnership needs to continually keep up to date with demographic changes, legislative developments, community needs and performance improvements. The Partnership has already identified a work programme for 2010 that includes responding to some of these issues. Detailed below are some aspects of that work programme.

National Indicators

In recent results Dacorum was in the bottom quarter of all districts in the following areas:

- % of people who have been involved in decisions that affect the local area
- % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (lowest in Hertfordshire)
- % of people who agree that the police and other local public services seek people's views about anti-social behaviour and crime in their local area.
- The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home
- Female Mortality from all cancers at ages under 75

Building new homes for our communities. An announcement is expected soon about the number of new homes that have to be built in Dacorum over the next 10 – 20 years. Our Partnership will develop and influence the infrastructure that comes with that growth through our new infrastructure group.

Disadvantaged communities – There are four wards in Dacorum that are in the 50% most deprived in the Country and one in the 30% most deprived. These inequalities need to be addressed.

On Health...

- × 30% of people in the most deprived wards smoke against a Dacorum low of 14% and a Dacorum average of 22%
- × Obesity affects 23% of people in the most deprived ward against a Dacorum low of 13%
- × Life Expectancy in 2003 was 8 years lower in the most deprived ward than the least deprived and 3 years lower than the Dacorum average

On occupation...

- Over half the people in the most deprived communities are in elementary / service / administrative jobs against a figure of half of that in the least deprived wards – these 'service sector' jobs are most at risk in recessionary times
- 47% of people in the least deprived wards are in professional and managerial jobs against only 19% in the most deprived

On qualifications

- 37% of people in the most deprived wards had no qualifications against only 11% in the least deprived ward
- 37% of people in the most deprived ward got 5 A-C grade GCSEs and more than double that number (76%) got 5 A – C grade GCSEs in the least deprived. The Dacorum average is 63%

How can we get involved in the work of Dacorum Partnership?

People can get involved with the Dacorum Partnership by joining one of the forums. We also welcome the public and those who aren't formal members of the partnership at our Board and Support group meetings as observers. Observers are welcome to make comments to the Chair at the end of the meeting.

You can also send your comments to dacorum.partnership@dacorum.gov.uk or call 01442 228000.

- Local Strategic Partnerships - **How Things Have Changed since 2000**

There is a historic legacy of views on how Local Strategic Partnerships should work, dating back to their introduction in 2000. This includes their relationship with the local authority. The development of LSPs has been active and dynamic and because of that it makes sense that some of the original thinking has now changed. Some of those changes in attitude are detailed below:

- “Councils should facilitate the establishment of an LSP in their area but then take a backseat and try not to influence its activities”

This thinking comes from original guidance for LSPs in 2000. It is now accepted that Councils should take a much stronger role in leading and steering local partnership work as the statutory body responsible for the Sustainable Community strategy.

- “LSPs are collaborative partnerships where each member is an equal partner”

This also appeared in the 2000 guidance. Whilst most agree that views of any LSP member should be equally respected, the statutory position now is that partners have different responsibilities. Public sector partners are under a duty to co-operate. Only local authorities can use the legal ‘power of wellbeing’, hence LSP partners are not all equal in terms of powers and the responsibilities placed upon them.

- “LSPs should be apolitical”

Local partnerships, trying to work on a consensus basis, are not the best place for party political argument. But no-one can pretend that choosing priorities and targets for an area, which need local democratic support, is not an ‘apolitical’ process. The latest guidance from Government in 2006 makes clear the proper role of democratically elected local councils in leading and steering LSP activity

Local Strategic Partnerships will continue to evolve and guidance will evolve with them to make sure that they maintain effectiveness in changing circumstances.

Notes

Dacorum Partnership is made up of the following organisations, groups and people and acknowledges and appreciates their help and support



Communities Together – Dacorum Housing Forum – Dacorum Business networks – Town and Parish Councils – Dacorum Healthy Communities and Older People’s Forum – Dacorum Arts Partnership - DHT