



# A Change for the Future

## Dacorum Borough Council's move to The Forum, January 2017

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In January 2017 Dacorum Borough Council moved into The Forum, a space shared with a county library and register office and voluntary sector partners. The move has been about far more than bricks and mortar; it has been part of, and sometimes a driver for, our transition to a more flexible and efficient organisation.

This paper provides information on the Council's journey, both culturally and physically as we move to our new building.

# Introduction

Built in the 1960's, our previous home, Hemel Hempstead Civic Centre, was a product of its time. The office was a rabbit warren of separate offices and cut-off space and the cost to bring it up to modern standards would have been enormous.

With this in mind it was decided to bring together the town's regeneration programme with business transformation and create a building that reflects the organisation that we aspire to be. The new building would also be a community hub, bringing together public and voluntary services to work more effectively together.

Through freeing up our old site, strategic purchases of adjacent land, and partnerships we have also created space to combine the project with the delivery of new housing and a new college site.

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## Contacts

### **Charles Berry Ottaway**

**Innovation and Improvement Team  
Leader**

[Charles.BerryOttaway@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:Charles.BerryOttaway@dacorum.gov.uk)

DD: 01442 228 850

### **Andrew Marsh**

**Innovation and Improvement Officer**

[Andrew.Marsh@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Marsh@dacorum.gov.uk)

DD: 01442 228 519

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

# 1. Staff engagement

Fundamental to the change has been the level of engagement and involvement that our staff have had and we introduced a variety of approaches:

- **Regular updates from our communications team**, and staff briefing sessions led by senior management, at which staff had the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns.
- **A 'video tour' of the building as it started to take shape**, and tours of the building for all staff as it neared completion.
- **A network of 'change coordinators'** taken from across different services, who were responsible for ensuring communication between the project board and staff, championing the project and decisions from furniture to breakout area guidelines.
- **Staff prototyping of our Customer Services Unit layout** using Lego, then scaling up to full scale in a community centre, giving the chance to make iterative improvements, and leading to a space that better meets staff and customer needs.

This was led and supported by a Forum Cultural Board, which coordinated actions across three key areas;

- Developing and promoting the culture that we want in the Forum
- Supporting the transition and change to the Forum
- Overseeing the physical move to the Forum

# 2. Normalising the transition

One of the key ways to ensure that staff transition into the Forum was to give them the opportunity to experience what it would be like before they move in.

That's why we took the decision to change the layout and 'usage' of the Civic Centre to mirror the Forum. This included progressively reducing desk space and storage, introducing stationary stations and adopting 'Forum processes'.

# 3. Paper-lite

As part of the change we have adopted a paper-lite approach, which fits in with our broader strategy (known as Digital Dacorum) to be a digital by default Council.

In the move to the Forum we have scanned and removed 40 tonnes of paper and digitised 100,000 microfiche copies. We have also brought in a new print and post solution, reducing printing by 20% and automatically pulling together documents for the same customer to save on postage costs.

## 4. Technology

Our move to a modern building has given us the opportunity to embrace new technology and new ways of working. This includes:

- **Interactive meeting rooms**, all equipped with on-screen booking, large screens for presentations and video conferencing technology.
- **'Innovation rooms' with full-wall magnetic whiteboards**, improving our capacity to share ideas and think creatively, as well as tying in to our existing process redesign kit and programme.
- **Self-service kiosks and payment machines** in the Customer Services Unit, coupled with a different model of working which emphasises staff assisting with using kiosks over working at desks.
- **Greater energy efficiency** through the use of new technologies, including solar panels and the reuse of rainwater, saving an estimated £300,000 each year.

## 5. Flexible working and culture

Our new building and technology have been coupled with a new, more flexible, approach to work:

- **Open plan office space with hot-desking**, which has already paid off with improved staff communication and engagement between departments and with other partners.
- **Breakout areas** with sofas, tables and information screens for informal meetings and lunch, encouraging more face to face communication and staff taking a proper break at lunch.
- **Corporately provided tea, coffee, mugs, and dishwasher facilities.**
- **More remote working**, with reduced desk space and more staff flexibility, including the upcoming roll out of Direct Access, which will allow staff to access our systems as if they were in the office.





## 6. What's next?

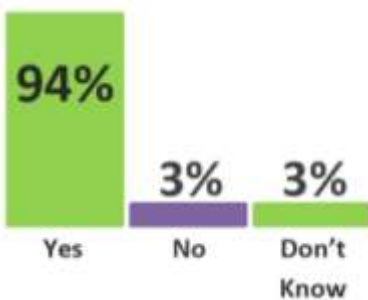
We are still working on projects that are tied in to our new building and our new way of working, these include:

- **Introductions to our partners** who are sharing The Forum with us, providing a chance for staff from both sides to meet each other, and for Council staff to see what happens in the rest of the building.
- **Staff welfare initiatives**, including more flexible working hours allowed by the new building, fitness incentives, and the ability to buy and sell leave.
- **Introduction of staff bicycles for use at lunchtime, and a pool of electric cars** which will be for staff use during the day, but available to residents during evenings and weekends.

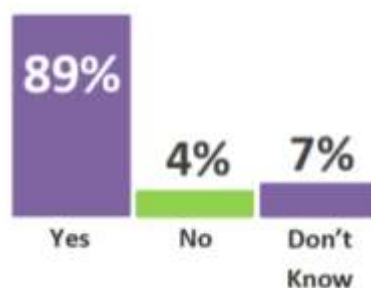
## 7. Impact

The overall impact has been really positive. Within 60 minutes' staff had moved from the old building and were docked and working in the new building (without any issues). Furthermore, a recent survey of 215 staff gave overwhelmingly positive feedback:

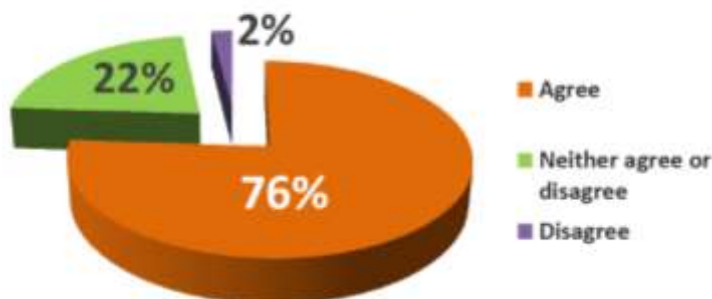
Do you think the move to the Forum was well managed?



Do you think the move to the Forum has created a better working environment?



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Forum is a great place to work".



## Stats in brief

Scanned and removed **40 tonnes** of paper.

Digitised **100,000 microfiche** copies.

Reduced printing by **over 20%**.

Greater energy efficiency through the use of new technologies, including solar panels and the reuse of rainwater, saving an estimated **£300,000 each year**.

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