



AGENDA ITEM: 14
SUMMARY

Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	22nd October 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	HOUSING STRATEGY 2013 – 2018
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing Julia Hedger – Group Manager for Strategic Housing Isabel Connolly – Team Leader for Strategy, Policy and Private Sector Housing
Purpose of report:	To bring to Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018 (Appendix 1). • The consultation feedback and the Council's response giving due consideration.
Recommendations	That Cabinet approve the new draft Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing, Safe and Clean Environment, Regeneration
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> This strategy sets medium and long term objectives that will require planned and coordinated investment of a number of existing Council budgets, funding from central government, and other private external investment. Financial planning is not affected by any minor amendments made in response to the consultation. Amendments have included additional reference to the Asset Management

	<p>Strategy being developed for early 2014, and the role of this document with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan in setting the long term plans for investment in the Council's existing stock.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>There are no value-for-money implications from the consultation or amendments to the strategy. The strategy supports the Council in providing value for money by setting strategic medium and long term objectives, which will guide the coordination of investment and service delivery across its housing services.</p>
Risk Implications	<p><u>Management and coordination of delivery</u></p> <p>Due to the number of other strategies and policies shaping actions and investment required to ensure the success of this strategy, there needs to be commitment, effective monitoring, and joined up planning from across the Council, and in particular the Housing and Regeneration directorate and across all the Council's housing and planning teams, with support and overview from Councillors.</p> <p>The consultation responses drew attention to a desire from partners to see long-term planning to achieve quality investment in the Council's existing stock. Amendments have included additional reference to the Asset Management Strategy being developed for early 2014, which will set out the detail of investment priorities and objectives in line with the HRA Business Plan.</p>
Equalities Implications	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and was provided with the report for the draft strategy in March 2013.</p> <p>No reasons to expect discrimination have been identified that the Council does not have processes in place to mitigate.</p>
Health And Safety Implications	<p>This strategy recognises Health and Safety standards for housing in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System: Guidance for Landlords and Property-Related Professionals.</p>
Monitoring Officer/ S.151 Officer comments	<p>Monitoring Officer</p> <p>No comments to add to this report.</p> <p>Deputy S151 Officer</p> <p>No comments to add to this report.</p>
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Neil Harden – Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services</p> <p>Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration</p>

	<p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Steve Baker – Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic and Regulatory) (Monitoring Officer)</p> <p>Andy Vincent – Group Manager for Tenants and Leaseholders</p> <p>Fiona Williamson – Group Manager for Property and Place</p> <p>Nick Egerton – Environmental Protection and Housing Team Leader</p> <p>Natasha Brathwaite – Housing Advice and Homelessness Team Leader</p> <p>Teresa Wood – Housing Options Team Leader</p> <p>Jack Burnham – Housing Strategy and Development Team Leader</p> <p>Corporate Management Team</p> <p>Departmental Management Team</p>
<p>Background papers:</p>	<p>Draft Housing Strategy and Cabinet paper – March 2013</p> <p>Draft Core Strategy – 2013</p> <p>Affordable Housing SPD – 2013</p> <p>Housing Market & Needs Assessment 2012,</p> <p>Economic Development Strategy 2009 - 12</p> <p>Draft Housing Allocations Policy – January 2013</p> <p>Strategic Tenancy Policy – January 2013</p> <p>Draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy – February 2013</p> <p>Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013</p> <p>Housing Principles – March 2012</p> <p>HRA Business Plan 2012</p> <p>Localism Act 2011</p>
<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	<p>H&C OSC – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>TLC – Tenants and Leaseholder Committee</p> <p>DMT – Departmental Management Team</p> <p>CMT – Corporate Management Team</p> <p>HRA – Housing Revenue Account</p>

1. **BACKGROUND**

1.1 The draft Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018 was presented to H&C OSC and Cabinet in March 2013 and was followed by a consultation period which has now closed. This report presents a consultation summary and the final strategy document to Cabinet.

1.2 The Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018 replaces the expired Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011. It provides the overall strategic direction to guide investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services. A number of other key policies and strategies will support the success of this strategy in the delivery of target outcomes.

1.3 The strategy commits the Council to meeting six strategic objectives. These objectives have been developed to tackle a number of local challenges facing Dacorum, which have arisen from changes at national and local level. The strategic objectives are:

- To plan and deliver a good supply and mix of housing;
- To improve the quality of housing in Dacorum;
- To meet housing needs;
- To maximise the delivery of affordable housing;
- To improve prevention of homelessness and the available range of temporary housing options; and
- To foster the private sector as a housing option.

2. **Consultation**

2.1 The consultation included:

- Consultation through the Council's online consultation portal;
- Hardcopies of the consultation sent out on request;
- A press release to the Gazette signposting people to the consultation;
- A brief article in Dacorum Digest signposting people to the consultation; and
- A multi-forum housing event with partners held at the civic centre.

2.2 The main response to the consultation came from Hightown Pretorian and Churches Housing Association (HPCHA). Other additional comments have been submitted informally. Overall responses have been very positive and conveyed that the document has been useful in stating clearly the Council's plans and objectives.

2.3 The consultation response from HPCHA is summarised below:

- 1) Compliment to the strategy for setting out the housing aims and objectives for the next five years.

- 2) Recognition that the stated housing targets in the document are realistic in the present economic and political environment.
- 3) Concern that the strategy does not sufficiently address investment in the Council's existing housing stock.
- 4) Query regarding the aspiration to build homes that are planned at the design stage to be homes-for-life due to the implications for households affected by the spare room subsidy.
- 5) Query regarding the aspiration to work with housing associations to maintain 'healthy competition'.

2.4 The Council is grateful to HPCA for taking the time to respond to the consultation and has considered this feedback with other informal feedback in producing the final strategy document for approval by its Cabinet.

2.5 In response to the consultation:

- 1) The Council welcomes a compliment of its strategy and vision for housing over the next five years.
- 2) The Council also welcomes the recognition of economic and political pressures being faced that prevent even more ambitious targets for new housing supply.
- 3) The Council has amended the strategy to make clearer reference to its Asset Management Strategy being developed for early 2014. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan has already gone a long way to recognising the need to invest in the existing stock and to use the resources available to the Council through the self-financing in 2012.
- 4) The Council is committed to developing new homes that are planned at the design stage as homes-for-life. The Council recognises the importance of wheelchair accessibility, and bathrooms and kitchens that can be adapted for wheelchair users at low cost. The Core Strategy and Supplementary Planning Document (Affordable Housing) both set targets for lifetime homes. Modern households may be multi-generation or single-generation, and there is an increasingly older population living in all housing tenures. Many tenants of council-owned properties are working households not affected by the spare room subsidy. There will be long-term efficiencies and savings in making today's housing ready for future needs.
- 5) The Council is keen to maintain a healthy balance in the competition for section 106 sites locally. The Homes and Communities Agency does not recommend that councils operate preferred partner agreements, and local authorities are not able to dictate the partners developers choose to work with. The Council would not desire a situation where one housing association could control the market. The Council's Development Team maintains regular contact with all housing associations with property in the Borough or actively seeking to develop in the Borough.

3. Recommendation

3.1 The recommendation of this report is that Cabinet approve adoption of the Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018.