



AGENDA ITEM: 9
SUMMARY

Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	27th March 2012
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Housing Policy Review
Contact:	Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director Housing Landlord Carolyn Leech Team Leader Policy and Participation
Purpose of report:	To confirm to Cabinet that key housing policies have been reviewed and scrutinised as recommended by Cabinet in July 2010.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Cabinet note the review of Housing Policies and agree that the approval and implementation, and any subsequent amendments, to the list of policies set out in the report be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Housing in conjunction with the Assistant Director Housing Landlord. 2. That future housing policies, and amendments to any existing policies, which are either operational or which are governed by regulation or legislation may be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Housing following a recommendation from the Assistant Director, Housing Landlord.
Corporate objectives:	<p>The Housing Policy Review supports the Council Priority for 2010-14:</p> <p><i>Dacorum Delivers</i> (internal operations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiencies • Value for money • Performance excellence • Reputation and profile delivery

<p>Implications:</p>	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>No financial implications.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>No value for money implications.</p>
<p>Risk Implications</p>	<p>Failure to develop a suite of robust housing policies may render the Council subject to a judicial review or poor inspection rating.</p> <p>The review has ensured that all policies are compliant with current legislation and regulations.</p>
<p>Equalities Implications</p>	<p>Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for all policies included in the review and will be published on the DBC website, along with the policies once they have been implemented.</p>
<p>Health And Safety Implications</p>	<p>Health and Safety implications have been considered as part of the review process for the individual policies.</p>
<p>Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments</p>	<p>Monitoring Officer:</p> <p>The Council's housing function is the responsibility of the Cabinet. Under the Constitution (Responsibility For Functions) operational decisions are taken by the Portfolio Holder for Housing or officers under delegated powers. Decisions on housing policy are still retained by Cabinet. The Cabinet has the power to delegate to the Portfolio Holder for Housing authority to approve the types of housing policies referred to in this report. Such delegation would seem sensible as it would avoid the need for the full content of these policies to be brought to Cabinet for consideration and approval.</p> <p>Decisions on key strategic housing policy would still remain the responsibility of Cabinet.</p> <p>Deputy S.151 Officer</p> <p>The policies set out in the report provide detailed guidance on approaches to specific functions or issues. There are no financial implications from the report itself but decisions taken in compliance with these policies may have financial implications which will be subject to budgetary control processes. Where financial implications are significant these will require reports to Portfolio Holder and/or Cabinet as required under Financial Regulations and as stated in paragraph 3.2.</p>

Consultees:	<p>These differ according to the policies, but will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBC Legal Services • Tenant and Leaseholder Committee • Maintenance Focus Group • Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Background papers:	<p>Housing Improvement Plan for 2010/11 approved at Cabinet in March 2010</p> <p>Cabinet Report 27th July 2010</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting on the 27th July 2010 Cabinet agreed the review of all Housing Policies in line with the Constitution. The review of all housing policies was to ensure that the Housing Landlord Service had a robust set of policies in place to ensure that the service was fit for purpose. This has been supported by the recent restructure which has seen areas of responsibility change and as a result we have been able to ensure through the policy review that each service area does have the necessary policies in place to support the business.
- 1.2 As a result of the review a suite of housing policies has been developed with a few of the existing policies having had small changes made to them as a result of changes in legislation or regulation which can be approved under the delegated powers by the Portfolio Holder for Housing.
- 1.3 All policies have been subject to a stringent review process which has enabled the department to work with the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Tenants and Leaseholder Committee.
- 1.4 As part of the Policy review process a working group was created that included members of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, members of the Tenants and Leaseholder Committee and staff from the appropriate service area, as well as colleagues from across the Council as required where specialist knowledge may have been required. It should be noted that this has been a very successful process and one that the Housing Landlord Service is looking to use as and when policies are due for review or new policies are required as a result of legislative or regulatory changes.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 As a result of the Housing Landlord Policy Review the following policies have been developed, they are all housing specific and do not influence policy across the Council but do ensure that the Housing Landlord Service is fit for purpose and can carry out its day to day business as effectively as possible.

<u>Policy</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Brief summary of the policy scope</u>
Housing Decant Policy	Lindsey Walsh	The policy sets out the process of decanting tenants in the event of works to their property that for health and safety reasons makes it impossible for the tenants to remain in residence.
Disposal of Tenants Good Policy	Lindsey Walsh	Sets out legal requirements when removing storing and disposing of tenants goods that have been left in empty properties, garages or communal area's
Domestic Abuse Policy	Lindsey Walsh	The policy describes the activities and responsibilities that are involved in dealing with reports or suspected cases of Domestic Abuse and Violence.
Estate Management Policy	Lindsey Walsh	Ensures that residents have access to services which allow them quiet enjoyment of their home, and ensures effective management in consultation with residents
Expenses Policy	Carolyn Leech	This policy concentrates on the reimbursement of tenants and leaseholders expenses for involvement activities
Gas Servicing Policy	Fiona Williamson	The policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Council and its contractors for the achievement of gas safety and adherence to statutory responsibilities
Housing Allocations Policy – Flexi Care	Julia Hedger	The policy covers the letting of Flexi Care housing for older people and should be read in conjunction with the Councils Housing Allocations Policy
Housing Disposals Policy	Fiona Williamson	This policy defines the criteria used to identify properties that may be suitable for disposal and the appropriate routes for this
Policy for dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour affecting tenants and leaseholders	Lindsey Walsh	The policy fulfils the legal requirements around anti-social behaviour affecting tenants and leaseholders
Housing Rents and Other charges Policy	Katie Kiely	This policy supports the governments policy around rent and rent setting, it also details the framework used at Dacorum Borough Council for setting rents and charges that are applicable
Rechargeable Works Policy	Fiona Williamson	This policy sets out tenant's responsibilities to their home and what constitutes a recharge. The policy

		aims to ensure the efficient maintenance of the housing stock
Rent Arrears and Write off Policy	Katie Kiely	The policy sets out the principles for rent collection and the circumstances when a write off may be considered
Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements Policy	Fiona Williamson	Sets out the aims of Dacorum Borough Council to deliver repairs, maintenance and improvements for tenants that fulfil the requirements of legislation and the Council's Constitution
Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults	Dharini Chandarana	The policy defines Dacorum Borough Council's response and responsibilities if abuse of a vulnerable adult is identified by an employee as well as the signs and types of abuse that may be encountered
Tenant Compensation Policy	Fiona Williamson	This policy sets out the approach to be taken to assess the circumstances and amounts that maybe payable when compensation is an entitlement.
Void Management Policy	Fiona Williamson and Andy Vincent	This policy covers the process of void management and relates to all aspects of this process

3. POLICY APPROVAL GOING FORWARD

- 3.1 The coming year will see the need for the Housing Landlord Service to develop further policies as a result of changing legislation and housing regulation. In order to expedite the delivery of housing policies it is requested that future policies and amendments to any existing policies which are either operational or which are governed by regulation or legislation may be approved through a Portfolio Holder Executive Decision Sheet following a recommendation from the Assistant Director, Housing Landlord.
- 3.2 Any policies new or amended that have an impact financially or politically or impact on health and safety will still be presented to Cabinet for approval.