



## AGENDA ITEM: 11

### SUMMARY

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Housing &amp; Community Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>10 September 2014</b>
<b>PART:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Vulnerable Persons Strategy Developing a strategic approach to identifying and supporting vulnerable households</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Cllr Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing  Andy Vincent – Group Manager, Tenants and Leaseholders  Author/Responsible Officer
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	1. The purpose of this report is to introduce a draft of the Vulnerable Persons Strategy developed by the Housing Service.
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Committee Members support:-  1. The objectives contained within the strategy 2. The approach within the strategy designed to identify potentially vulnerable people utilising a series of triggers 3. The action plan within the strategy designed to continue to improve the quality of service delivered by Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service.
<b>Corporate objectives:</b>	Building Community Capacity
<b>Implications:</b>	<u>Financial</u>  Establishment of a team to support vulnerable tenants will have cost implications for the Housing Service. Including on-costs annual costs are approximately £100,000
<b>'Value For Money Implications'</b>	<u>Value for Money</u>

	<p>It is estimated that for each eviction averted £8,100 of costs to the landlord are saved (source Shelter).</p> <p>Providing support to vulnerable tenants can reduce other 'management costs' associated with rent collection, anti-social behaviour, repairs and maintenance and the annual gas servicing visit.</p>
Risk Implications	A Risk Assessment will be completed following the consultation on the content of the strategy to enable comments from the consultation exercise to be built into the final documents
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessment carried out July 2014
Health And Safety Implications	Lone working arrangements address Health and Safety implications
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director of Housing</p> <p>Tenant and Leaseholder Committee</p> <p>Housing Management Sub-Committee</p> <p>Turning Point/Crime Reduction Initiative</p> <p>POWhER</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services and Children's Schools and Families Teams</p> <p>Citizens Advice Bureau – Dacorum</p>
Background papers:	<p>Homelessness Strategy</p> <p>Older Persons Strategy</p> <p>The Future of Sheltered Housing Project</p>
Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i>	<p>The development of a Vulnerable Persons Strategy is designed to strengthen the Housing Service's provision for vulnerable people.</p> <p>The approach is designed to be proactive by utilising existing data sources to target potentially vulnerable people ensuring that they get the support they need to sustain their tenancy and effectively engage within their community.</p> <p>This strategy is designed to work alongside other strategic documents designed to support the most tenants/applicants</p>

	who use Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p><u>Tenancy Sustainment</u></p> <p>This is where (often with support) tenants are effectively maintaining their tenancy without breaching its terms. For example by falling into rent arrears or by committing anti-social behaviour.</p>

## 1.0 Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to introduce a draft Vulnerable Persons Strategy developed by the Housing Service.

## 2.0 Background

The Vulnerable Persons Strategy has been developed in recognition that vulnerable people may require additional services or services delivered in a different way to ensure they are able to access them.

An example of this might be older people who have joined the Council's Housing Register. Some older people have been on the Housing Register for some considerable time, with high levels of housing need (high points levels) without bidding for properties through the Moving with Dacorum scheme.

This may imply that they need help to access the scheme and/or to bid for suitable alternative accommodation. It may also be the case that people in these circumstances are actively choosing not to bid and are waiting for specific accommodation to be advertised.

The Housing Service has developed a number of strategies recently that have strengthened the support that vulnerable people receive from specific services – examples of these include an Older Persons Strategy, a Financial Inclusion Strategy and a Homelessness Strategy.

The intention of the Vulnerable Persons Strategy is not to duplicate the content of these strategies but to ensure that vulnerable people receive services in the most appropriate way across the Housing Service. The strategy also seeks to highlight that a proactive approach will be developed to identify vulnerable people, ensuring that they receive the appropriate support or services delivered in a manner which is tailored to their needs. This may be as simple as ensuring that if tenants have identified that they require documentation in large print that this is provided to them consistently.

### 2.1 Developing the strategy

In developing the first draft of the Vulnerable Persons Strategy for the Housing Service we sought to work with the representatives from the following organisations:-

- Turning Point/POWhER
- Hertfordshire County Council – Adult Care and Children's Services

Tenants were also involved at the launch meeting

A project group of members from across the Housing Service were involved in compiling the strategy and in establishing the approach utilised to identify potentially vulnerable people utilising a series of triggers.

The key objectives of the strategy were presented to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee in March 2014. An outline of the consultation arrangements with the wider tenant population and other stakeholders was also discussed with the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee at the March meeting.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that members of the Housing Senior Management Team support:-

- The objectives contained within the strategy
  - o Objective 1 - To provide a responsive service for people who are homeless or in housing need, which operates within the legislative framework, while protecting and reaching out to those who may be least able to protect themselves.
  - o Objective 2 - To provide a joined-up welfare and tenancy sustainment package, triggered by assessment either at the point of a homeless application or commencement of a new tenancy, to prevent vulnerable people losing a tenancy in the first year.
  - o Objective 3 - To build officer confidence in responding to existing tenants and leaseholders who may be vulnerable, to increase identification and reporting, and to provide a joined-up, enhanced housing service in response to identified needs.
  - o Objective 4 - To develop housing related support services for older people that promote independent living and encourage planning about future housing options.
- The approach within the strategy designed to identifying potentially vulnerable people utilising a series of triggers
- The action plan within the strategy designed to continue to improve the quality of service delivered by Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service

It is also recommended that overall responsibility for the progress against the strategy remains within the Tenant and Leaseholder Group who will provide bi-annual updates to the Housing Senior Management Team on the implementation of the strategy.

### **4.0 Implications**

#### **4.1 Long term consequences**

More effective identification and proactive support to vulnerable people will ensure that where appropriate housing services are being delivered to them through an identified member of staff.

The consequence of this is that effective relationships are established with our most vulnerable people and that services are delivered through one member of staff; potentially minimising the level of staff resources being utilised to provide service to some of our most vulnerable tenants.

#### **4.2 Service delivery**

Proactively seeking to provide support to our most vulnerable service users will enable them to benefit from a service tailored to their needs. This should work to improve service delivery for these users and work to enhance the over-all service.

#### 4.3 Diversity and community impact

Minimising tenancy failure will have a beneficial impact on the community. The cost of tenancy failure is in the region of £8,100 (source Shelter).

Profiling of those using support services is essential to identify if a profile of service users emerges. This requirement has been built into the Job Description of the Team Leader.

#### 4.4 Financial

Recruiting additional staff will have financial implications – although these costs will be mitigated if this, as anticipated, reduces the number of tenancy failures.

#### 4.5 Value For Money

Work to identify and support vulnerable tenants should have value for money benefits for the housing service as a whole.

#### 4.6 Legal

No legal implications

#### 4.7 Human resources and employee interests

If additional staff are recruited to support this proposal then this will have human resources implications.

#### 4.8 Risk - maintenance of reputation

Developing a structured and proactive approach to identifying and supporting vulnerable people will enhance the reputation of the housing service and ensure that the resources of the service are better targeted on those people who need it.