

Housing

Service Plan

September 2014

Period of the Plan	2014 - 16
Service:	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants & Leaseholders • Property & Place • Strategic Housing
Assistant Director:	Elliott Brooks

Dacorum Borough Council Corporate Priorities – 2010 – 2014

- Regeneration
- Affordable Housing
- Safe & Clear Environment
- Dacorum Delivers
- Building Community Capacity

Service priorities

The landlord service, managing and maintaining the Council's rented and leasehold housing stock, is an integral part of the broader housing service which incorporates the strategic function – developing and delivering the strategies for the future including ensuring a healthy supply of new homes (including affordable) to meet the needs of the Borough – and housing options which deals with housing need, homelessness and allocations of rented homes. Although having elements of separation in operation – not least because the HRA is ring fenced to landlord expenditure only – the delivery of the housing service should be seen as a single entity with clear and shared vision and objectives.

The broader strategic vision takes account of the housing needs – current and predicted – of the whole of the borough, whatever tenure or socio-economic background. Key priorities are:

- Ensuring a healthy level of new house building is achieved, ideally accelerating this delivery ahead of the trajectory in the Core Strategy.
- New build to ensure a good balance of tenure and housing opportunities: market housing of varying sizes and types; affordable housing for rent or shared ownership, a re-invigorated private rented sector; and services and stock to meet the needs of particular groups (such as the elderly and people with physical or mental disabilities)
- Playing a direct role in the building and stimulus for new build affordable homes for rent in conjunction with Housing Association, developers and investors
- Ensuring that the evidence base – of housing need and land availability – is in place and kept up to date
- That the Council has the key strategies, policies and plans in place to deliver requirements

Due to the significant changes in the Housing Service over the past few years it was acknowledged that there needed to be a clear direction and vision for staff, tenants and leaseholders and the Council to buy into so that

common goals were expressed in order to achieve success and take the service forward.

We want Dacorum to be a place people are proud to call home. We will involve our tenants & leaseholders in decisions, provide good quality, affordable homes, help maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness – and be honest about improvements we still need to achieve.

The Housing Service undertake a survey of all the Council's Tenants & Leaseholders every two years – 'STAR'. The results of the most recent survey, January 2014 have, along with further consultation resulted in the targets and priorities identified.

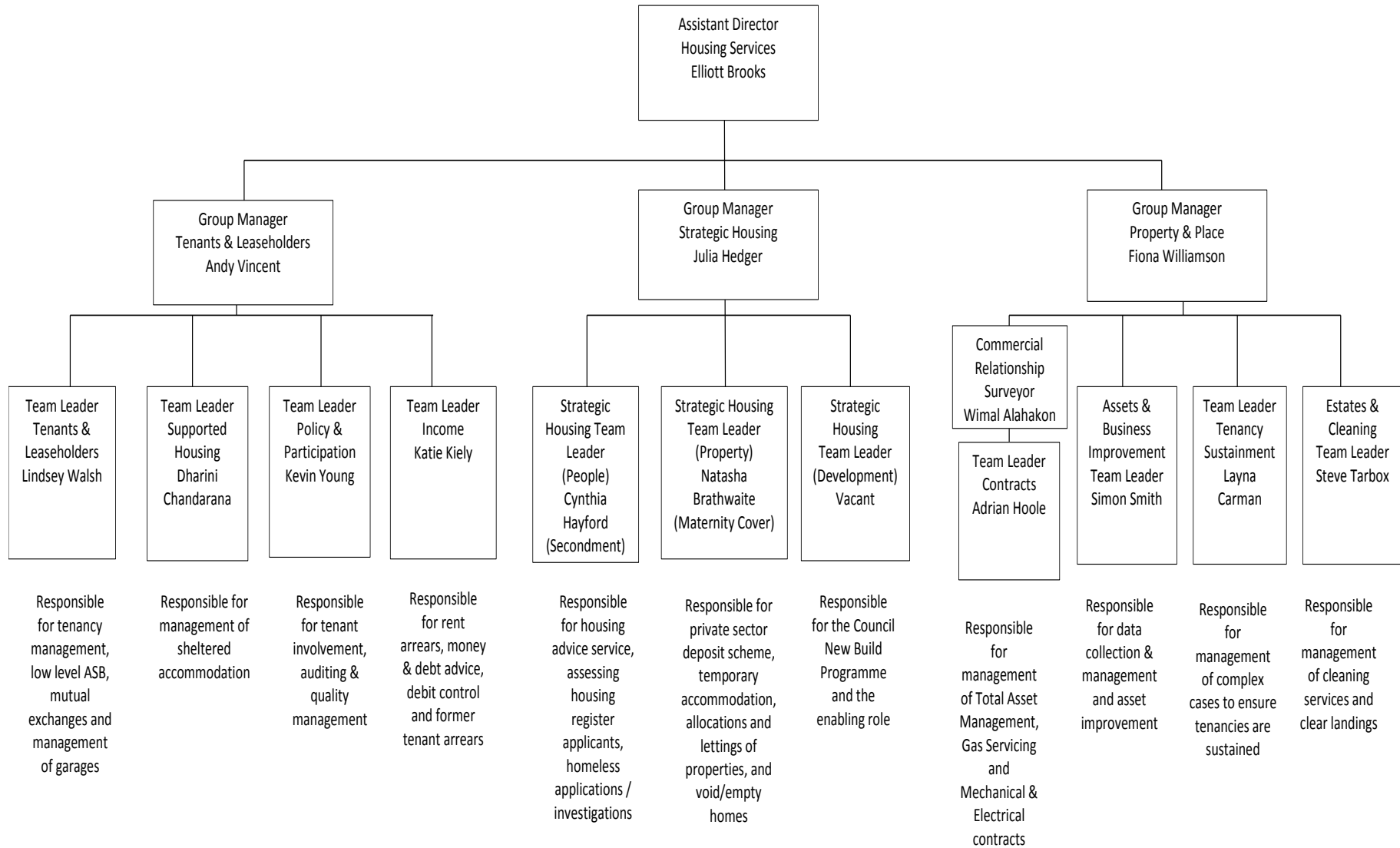
Relevant Policies and Strategies

Dacorum Borough council Housing Strategy

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 'People, Property, Place'

Dacorum Borough Council Development Strategy – 'Building Homes for the Future'

Housing Service Structure



Emerging issues

This section identifies issues and/or risks which have shaped the current service plan or which could effects its delivery

Issue	Service plan impact
<p>Staff Recruitment & Retention – the ability to attract high quality candidates is becoming more of a challenge for the service due to competition primarily from Housing Associations. The same issue applies to retention of staff who have benefited from development, training and the opportunity to use these skills within the service to do the amount of initiatives taking place</p>	<p>The initiatives and service improvements desired by all stakeholders are challenging and require good quality highly motivated teams to deliver them</p>
<p>Performance of the HRA Business Plan – Since the introduction of Self Financing the Housing Service has benefited from having more resources than previously. This has meant that tenants have received more improvements within their homes, in the communal areas of their estates and in terms of our ability to engage and consult with them</p>	<p>Without robust management of the HRA operational budgets and the Business Plan the ability to deliver improvements to homes or the service is restricted</p>
<p>Tenancy Sustainment - A growing number of our tenants require more intensive support than can be offered in the traditional way the Council has structured its Landlord function. A specialist team has been introduced partly using existing resources to work with those tenants who require more in depth work to sustain a successful tenancy</p>	<p>The introduction of a Tenancy Sustainment Team should enable some complex issues to be dealt with more efficiently by the correct officers so that progress with key initiatives continues</p>
<p>Flexible & Remote Working – The Council promotes the approach of encouraging new ways of working whilst ensuring the needs of the service and its customers are not compromised. Whilst the benefits to individuals in terms of a work / life balance are obvious it requires a new culture and approach to line management which can cause teething problems</p>	<p>IT and equipment have to be suitable and fit for purpose to allow effective flexible working</p>

in terms of consistency of implementation.

and it has to then be used appropriately so projects and initiatives can be managed without daily contact with individuals face to face.

Objective	What will be different once this work is done	Project Lead & Target Completion	Other Services Involved consulted	Update November 14
Introduce arrangements for identifying and supporting our most vulnerable tenants.	<p>Ensure that vulnerable tenants are identified and that support arrangements are put in place to enable them to manage their tenancy effectively.</p> <p>Vulnerable Persons Strategy</p>	<p>Group Manager Tenants and Leaseholders</p> <p>September 2014</p>	Resident Services	<p>A Vulnerable Persons Strategy for the Housing Service is now in place. This has been discussed with the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee, Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Housing Management Committee.</p> <p>A detailed procedure document is also being prepared to support the implementation of the strategy.</p>
Improve Digital access	<p>Identify geographic areas with high levels of digital exclusion.</p> <p>Provide training sessions on internet access and security – run prize draws with free IT equipment</p> <p>Create a virtual tenant resource centre to be linked to the customer service portal login allowing access to online training – Housemark – CIH – TPAS etc</p>	<p>Income Team Leader</p> <p>March 2015</p>	Part of a wider Borough Wide Project	<p>Training for tenants has been provided within sheltered schemes and at the Tenant and Leaseholder Day.</p> <p>Training for tenants will be delivered at part of the Highfield event in February.</p>
<p>Launch a back to work initiative</p> <p>Develop a theme for the programme</p>	<p>Theme ‘conference on the road’, the tenant and leaseholder day and other involvement events around getting back to work.</p> <p>Link to Digital Access</p> <p>Work with our Repairs and Maintenance Partner regarding the recruitment of tenants to</p>	<p>Policy and Participation Team Leader</p> <p>March 2015</p>	Regeneration	Work is yet to commence on this objective

	<i>apprenticeship posts</i>			
Review our Local Offers	<i>Review the Local Offers we have agreed with tenants (tenants key priorities) to ensure they reflect the priorities of the community</i>	<i>Policy and Participation Team Leader</i> <i>October 2014</i> <i>October 2015</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Local Offers were reviewed with tenants at the Tenant and Leaseholder Day and reflect the priorities established following the STAR survey conducted in January 2014.</i>
Put in place arrangements for reporting environmental issues and monitoring the environmental condition of our estates	<i>This work will enable the condition of the environment to be monitored.</i> <i>Themes affecting the environmental condition to be identified and areas of the borough with the lowest environmental standards prioritised.</i>	<i>Tenant and Leasehold Team Leader</i> <i>March 2015</i>	<i>Clean Safe & Green</i>	<i>Work is yet to commence on this initiative</i>
Review our 'Get Involved' Strategy – and develop new objectives for tenant involvement from 2016-2020	<i>The purpose of this strategy is to continue to expand the involvement of tenants with the service – ensuring that tenant's priorities set the direction for the service as a whole (including housing management, repairs and improvements, management of the housing register and allocations and new build)</i>	<i>Policy and Participation Team Leader</i> <i>Commences in March 2015 completed by December 2015</i>	<i>Resident Services</i>	<i>Work is yet to commence on this initiative – but this will be the priority of the new Policy and Participation Team Leader (Kevin Young) who starts with Dacorum Borough Council on 20 October 2014.</i>
Review our Financial Inclusion Strategy and develop a strategy from 2016-2019	<i>The purpose of this strategy is to assist tenants to get access to financial services which can often be restricted from people with the lowest levels of income.</i>	<i>Income Team Leader</i> <i>Commences March 2015</i>	<i>Revenues & Benefits</i>	<i>A review of the existing strategy has commenced. Proposals will be put the Housing Management Committee in November 2014 – for a full report to be given to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee in December 2014.</i>

		<i>completed by December 2015</i>		
Completion of the new Homeless Hostel, Farm Place and the Nokes - end of March 2015	<i>New Council homes will be the first completed – Farm Place and The Nokes. The new Homeless Hostel will be a new facility within the Borough for single homeless and will include community facilities.</i>	<i>Group Manager Strategic Housing March 2015</i>	<i>New Build Project Group</i>	<i>The Elms Hostel is on target to be completed by March 2015. The management tender process has been completed with the recommendation to appoint the service provider being taken to Cabinet in November. Farm Place and The Nokes also on target to complete by the end of March 2015.</i>
Continue with Council New Build Programme as set out in the HRA Business Plan – March 2016	<i>Regular updates to TLC</i>	<i>Group Manager Strategic Housing Ongoing</i>	<i>New Build Project Group</i>	<i>Work is on-going. Updates to TLC have been provided regularly – business plan has been to OSC and Cabinet.</i>
Extend current Housing advice and education services available within the Community	<i>To increase the Homeless Prevention service by working with providers of hard to reach client groups; to include (Youth Offending Team) YOT, Probation, Dacorum Education Support Centre (DESC) & Teenage pregnancy</i>	<i>On-going with completion by March 2016</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>This work is on-going. A new working group has been established to extend work in the area for this client group. Surgeries are provided in all Children’s centres now. Work underway with midwifery team, YOT and DESC.</i>
Prepare for peer review in line with Gold Standard and agree timescales for review to take place.	<i>Achievement of Gold Standard status acknowledges the service improvements within the team and would be a national award to recognise the successful work of the service.</i>	<i>Natasha Brathwaite – Strategic Housing Team Leader (People) Peer Review Autumn/Winter 2014 Achieve Gold Standard Status</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Peer review process has been agreed between DBC, Welwyn and Hatfield and St Albans LAs. Peer review at DBC will be February 2015 – still aiming to achieve Gold Standard by Autumn/Winter of 2015.</i>

		<i>by Autumn 2015</i>		
Set up a single non-priority project group, obtain commitment from partner agencies.	<i>To eradicate street homeless to help the Council to achieve Gold Standard status.</i>	<i>Natasha Brathwaite – Strategic Housing Team Leader (People)</i> <i>Summer 2015</i>	<i>Partnerships</i>	<i>Project meets in November for the first time. Partner agencies will work with new hostel provider of The Elms also.</i>
Develop a Young Persons Housing Strategy	<i>To set out a long term plan for meeting the housing needs of young people living in the Borough</i>	<i>Isabel Connolly – Strategic Housing Team Leader – (Property)</i> <i>Completion and approval of Strategy by December 2015</i>	<i>Resident Services</i>	<i>Scoping of project has begun. On target to achieve completed document by Dec 15.</i>
Develop Help to Rent offer	<i>Develop further ideas (eg possible Landlord incentive scheme) with the aim to recruit more landlords and increase partnership working with local lettings agencies.</i>	<i>Isabel Connolly – Strategic Housing Team Leader (Property)</i> <i>Summer 2015</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Work is on-going in this area. A new LO is to be recruited to develop this area of work using CLG funding and other staffing budget savings. The local paper will also be running a campaign to recruit new landlords in November –January. The results of this will be reviewed to monitor its success.</i>
Woolmer Drive – New Temporary Accommodation	<i>Develop plans to bring property back into use as new temporary accommodation – significant structural and internal works to the property required.</i>	<i>Housing Development Team Leader</i> <i>Summer 2015 occupation</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Quotes are currently being sought for the building work. Osborne’s will be undertaking the electrical and heating work under the TAM contract over the new few weeks. Building work will commence after Xmas. On target for occupation in summer 2015.</i>
Through HMEC ensure that both Osborne & Sunrealm work with the Council and tenants to	<i>Put in place protocol of consultation through HMEC</i>	<i>Group Manager Property & Place</i> <i>December 2014</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Sun Realm and Osborne have attended HMEC meetings to provide regular updates on the selection of materials and programming of works. Members of HMEC have also been involved in the selection of</i>

<i>ensure that there is choice and consultation surrounding renewals of doors, kitchens, bathrooms and that boilers are suitable for the needs of the tenants</i>				<i>kitchen ranges and flooring colours for the programmed works.</i>
<i>Complete the review of service provided to Leaseholders</i>		<i>Group Manager Tenants & Leaseholders</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>A review of the Leaseholder Service has been concluded. Initially a report will be given to the Housing Senior Management Team in October 2014, before an update is given to committees.</i>
		<i>December 2014</i>		
<i>That the council should continue to promote awareness of the standard of cleaning that tenants can expect, monitor standards via satisfaction surveys and invest in improvements to the service, including staff training where necessary.</i>		<i>Team Leader Cleaning Services & Tenant Involvement Team</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>A leaflet has been circulated to flat residents identifying the standard they should expect from the cleaning service.</i> <i>A survey has also recently been undertaken to establish tenants' views of the service. Feedback from this has been very positive.</i> <i>An event was recently held at Northend to address concerns.</i>
		<i>Ongoing</i>		
<i>That Grounds Maintenance should be a regular agenda item for Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee (HMEC) with a view to monitoring standards and investigating options for improving levels of satisfaction.</i>		<i>Team Leader Housing Asset Management</i>	<i>Clean Safe & Green</i>	<i>Quarterly updates to HMEC have been scheduled and the first meeting was attended in October. HMEC members were provided by the SL.</i> <i>Some of the HMEC representatives attend the monthly operational meeting to discuss the service and areas for improvement.</i>
		<i>Ongoing</i>		

<i>That HMEC and TLC should continue their involvement with monitoring the new TAM contract and work co-operatively with officers to devise both the new definition of 'right first time' and satisfaction surveys to promote confidence that service standards are being met.</i>		<i>Group Manager Property & Place Ongoing</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>The TLSP have reviewed the methods of collecting satisfaction data. These are being developed to ensure there is transparency and to enable the tenants to have confidence in the data. The definition of first time fix is still being reviewed so a workable and understood definition is produced.</i>
<i>Develop a Fencing Policy</i>		<i>Team Leader Housing Asset Management March 2015</i>		<i>This has been superseded by the escalation to the HSMT for guidance on a preferred approach. The existing fencing responsibilities as detailed in the tenants handbook will continue to be in force and exceptions will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Empty Homes team to review this element of lettable standard</i>
<i>That all possible steps should be taken to reverse the trend of increasing numbers of residents finding it difficult to reach the correct person when contacting the Council and the Housing Service in particular.</i>		<i>Assistant Director - Housing</i>	<i>Corporate Customer First project sponsored by Chief Exec</i>	<i>Housing are playing an active role in the corporate project which is committed to enhancing the customer experience when contacting the Council by any method. This will be more challenging due to flexible working going forward and it is essential that IT and Phone systems are invested in and used to their capacity</i>
<i>That using an Estate Management approach the Tenant Involvement</i>		<i>Group Manager Tenants & Leaseholders</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Initial consultation with Team Leaders in the Housing Service has taken place – A report is due to HSMT (Housing Senior Management Team) to propose a way forward in November 14</i>

<p><i>Team in partnership with other housing colleagues should continue to organise and promote local area walkabouts to highlight any local problems and work co-operatively with Clean Safe & Green and Resident Services to tackle any local rubbish or littering issues.</i></p>		<p><i>April 15</i></p>		
<p><i>To work in partnership with colleagues across the Council to develop a garage strategy</i></p>	<p><i>Consider all options for the Council's garage stock following evaluation</i></p>	<p><i>Group Manager Tenants & Leaseholders</i></p>	<p><i>Estates / Finance</i></p>	<p><i>A garage strategy is being developed. An initial report was given to the Council's Cabinet in September.</i></p> <p><i>Consultation with members will take place in November – consultation with residents will follow.</i></p>