



HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2013 AT 7.30 PM

BULBOURNE ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

The Councillors listed below are requested to attend the above meeting, on the day and at the time and place stated, to consider the business set out in this agenda.

Adeleke	N Hollinghurst
Adshead	Mahmood (Vice-Chairman)
Bassadone	Marshall (Chairman)
Conway	McLean
Flint	Organ
Hearn	R Sutton

Co-Opted Members: S Parker & M Cook (Substitute)

Substitute Members: Councillors G Chapman, Clark, Rance, Wixted and Vacancy

For further information, please contact Trudi Coston on Tel: 01442 228226, or Email: Trudi.Coston@dacorum.gov.uk. Information about the Council can be found on our website: www.dacorum.gov.uk.

PART I

Item No.		Page No.
1.	Minutes	2
2.	Apologies for Absence	2
3.	Declarations of Interest	2
4.	Public Participation	2
5.	Consideration of Any Matter Referred to the Committee in Relation to Call-in	2
6.	Youth Connexions Presentation	2
7.	STAR Satisfaction Survey Progress Update	3
8.	Community Alarm Call Response Performance	14
9.	Housing Allocations Policy	23
10.	Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018	64
11.	Environmental Health - Housing Assistance Policy	111
12.	Exclusion of the Public	166
	Appendix A - Work Programme 2013/14	167

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 16 January 2013, 23 January 2013 and 5 February 2013.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered-

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent

and, if the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest, or a personal interest which is also prejudicial

- (ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter (and must withdraw to the public seating area) unless they have been granted a dispensation.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Members' Register of Interests, or is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal and prejudicial interests are defined in Part 2 of the Code of Conduct For Members

[If a member is in any doubt as to whether they have an interest which should be declared they should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer before the start of the meeting]

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

An opportunity for members of the public to make statements or ask questions in accordance with the rules as to public participation

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN

None

6. YOUTH CONNEXIONS PRESENTATION

Mohamed Fawzi from Youth Connexions will be attending the meeting to provide a presentation to the Committee.



AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	13 March 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	STAR Satisfaction Survey Progress Update
Contact:	Councillor Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Responsible Officer: Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing
Purpose of report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To update the committee on how our STAR survey results compare to other housing service providers in our benchmarking group 2. To update the committee on our progress in delivering the STAR improvement plan
Recommendations	That the committee note the information contained within the report
Corporate objectives:	<p>Improving customer satisfaction supports the Council's corporate objectives and help contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our community capacity • Resources and Value for Money • Enhancing our profile and reputation
Implications:	<u>Financial</u>
'Value For Money Implications'	<p>Any financial implications arising from the delivery of the Improvement Plan have already been identified within the budget.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>Delivering service improvements helps ensure the maximum value for money for our tenants and leaseholders</p>

Risk Implications	Failure to act upon customer feedback and performance issues could impact upon the reputation of Dacorum Borough Council.
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessment reviewed/carried out as part of STAR project.
Health And Safety Implications	None identified.
Consultees:	Tenants and Leaseholders
Background papers:	<p>STAR Survey 2012 – News and Views articles</p> <p>Winter 2011</p> <p>http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/NV%20Winter%202011.pdf</p> <p>Summer 2012</p> <p>http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/News%20and%20Views%20Summer%202012%20lr.pdf</p> <p>STAR Presentation to committee June 2012</p> <p>http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/Housing%20-%202012-06-20%20-%20Presentation%20of%20STAR%20Results.pdf</p> <p>STAR progress report to committee Sept 2012</p> <p>http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/Housing%20-%202012-09-12%20-%20STAR%20Progress%20&%20Responsive%20Repairs%20Satisfaction%20Questionnaires.pdf</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>STAR – Survey of Tenants and Residents</p> <p>STATUS - Standardised Tenant Satisfaction Survey</p>

1. Background

The STAR survey is a comprehensive satisfaction survey covering all aspects of the Housing Service. The purpose of the survey is to help identify areas of lower satisfaction so that improvements can be put in place to address them.






The STAR survey was issued to all our general need tenants, supported housing tenants and leaseholders in spring 2012. By surveying each group separately we could ensure that the individual needs of each could be identified so that targeted improvements could be put in place.



Prior to STAR, the last robust housing survey of our tenants and leaseholders was carried out in 2008 through the STATUS survey.

To ensure value for money the survey was administered in-house, following guidance from HouseMark. Several 'core' questions suggested by HouseMark were included in the survey to enable us to benchmark our results against other members, as demonstrated in the key findings below.

2. How does our performance compare?


The table below summarises how we have performed in the 'core' areas of the STAR Survey. The survey compares our performance with the 2008 STATUS Survey and other housing providers (through HouseMark Local Authority Benchmarking Club).


STAR Question	STAR result (2012) % satisfied	STATUS result (2008) % satisfied	HouseMark result – how do we compare	Comments
Overall satisfaction with the service provided by the Council as your Housing Landlord	88% overall - general need and supported housing tenants 71% - Leaseholders	79% 54%		Good performance compared to other housing providers with DBC ranking 9 out of 43 providers. Satisfaction has increased since 2008 STATUS Survey.
Overall satisfaction with quality of your home	80% overall - general need and supported tenants 82% - Leaseholders	75% 73%	 / 	Relatively weak performance compared to other housing providers (borderline lower/middle lower quartile performance) with DBC ranking mid table in 20 th place out of 43. Satisfaction has increased since 2008 STATUS Survey.
Satisfaction with your neighbourhood as place to live	88% overall - general need and supported housing tenants 79% - Leaseholders	80% 58%		Strong performance compared to other housing providers with DBC ranking 8 out of 43. Satisfaction has increased since 2008 STATUS Survey.
Satisfaction that your rent/service charge provides value for money	81% overall - general need and supported tenants 55% Leaseholders	70% N/A		Average performance compared to other housing providers with DBC placed 13 th out of 43 providers. Satisfaction has increased since 2008

				STATUS Survey.
Satisfaction with the way the Council as your landlord/owner of your freehold deals with repairs and maintenance	79% overall - general need and supported housing tenants 54% Leaseholders	69% 40%		Average performance compared to other housing providers ranking DBC 14 out of 43. Satisfaction has increased since 2008 STATUS Survey.
Satisfaction that the Council as your landlord/owner of your freehold listens to your views and acts upon them	63% overall - general need and supported housing tenants 41% Leaseholders	51% 32%		Satisfaction has increased since 2008 STATUS Survey ranking DBC 13 out of 43 providers.

Notes

Results for general need and supported housing tenants have been combined for HouseMark reporting purposes.

 Upper/Middle upper quartile

 Middle lower quartile

 Lower quartile

HouseMark data 2011/12. Number in sample 43

STATUS Survey was only sent to a sample of tenants and leaseholders so direct comparison is not possible.

It is evident that rates of satisfaction have increased across the board since the 2008 STATUS Survey. Our performance against other housing providers in the sample is generally positive, with several areas achieving upper/middle upper quartile. We will be benchmarking our 2014 STAR Survey results against HouseMark and the 2012 survey and will report our progress to the committee.

3. STAR improvement Plan

The STAR improvement plan was developed to help address areas for improvement highlighted by the results of the survey. Some issues have arisen across all survey groups, such as the need for more parking provision, while others relate to particular client groups. The improvement plan, together with an update on the progress we have made to date in meeting each objective can be found below.

We have and will continue to provide regular updates on how we are delivering the improvement plan in Housing News and Views.

STAR Improvement Plan – Progress update February 2013

Improvement area	Objective	Action	By when?	Lead Officer	Update February 2013
General need tenants					
<p>Extent to which tenants feel their views are being taken into account</p> <p>STAR result: 60% satisfied</p>	<p>Ensure feedback from STAR and other consultation is acted upon. Publicise opportunities for tenants to get involved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Include regular STAR update in News and Views ➤ Promote opportunities for involvement through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants Conference • News and Views (N&V) • Community events • Hold recruitment drive to attract more involved tenants and leaseholders 	<p>Quarterly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual • Quarterly • Ongoing • Feb/March 2013 	<p>CL/SD</p>	<p>Updates featured on overall results, cleaning service improvements and improved parking provision.</p> <p>Tenants' Conference Sept 2012. Opportunities for involvement promoted quarterly in N&V and through events, eg Housing Information Fairs. Recruitment drive launched through News and Views, Radio, local press and social media.</p>
<p>Extent to which tenants feel parking is a problem in their neighbourhood</p> <p>STAR result: 40% feel is major problem</p>	<p>Improve quality of parking for our tenants and residents</p>	<p>Support corporate parking project to look at improvement, prevention and traffic order controls</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>SS</p>	<p>Four priority sites have been identified, with a number of additional sites coming forward. Consultation with residents is currently underway. Housing has provided £100K towards the scheme and will provide further funding as the project progresses.</p>

<p>Extent to which tenants feel rubbish or litter is a problem in their neighbourhood</p> <p>STAR result: 19% feel is major problem</p>	<p>Reduce rubbish and litter within neighbourhoods and improve reporting mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduce litter picks as part of the local area walkabouts ➤ Work with street champions to ensure litter picking in area 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>JG</p>	<p>Walkabouts made available on request.</p> <p>Availability of walkabouts publicised in autumn and winter 2012 editions of News and Views</p>
<p>Tenants satisfaction with maintenance of planted areas</p> <p>STAR result: 60% satisfied</p>	<p>Improve maintenance of planted areas to increase satisfaction levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Service Level Agreement to be developed with Clean Safe and Green (CSG) ➤ Recruit tenants in blocks of flats/supported housing schemes to monitor the standard of work 	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>SS CL</p>	<p>Work on the development of an SLA with CSG is currently underway.</p> <p>Tenant representatives will be recruited to help monitor service quality once SLA in place.</p>
<p>Tenants living in flats: satisfaction with cleaning of internal communal areas</p> <p>STAR result: 64% satisfied</p>	<p>Improve monitoring arrangements for cleaning service. Communicate level of service tenants should expect to receive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Install signs in all blocks detailing cleaning schedule. ➤ Issue service standards booklet to all residents ➤ Service quality to be monitored through Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee (HMEC) and local residents. 	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>ST</p>	<p>New signage installed to help monitor cleaning Dec/Jan 2013</p> <p>Service standards booklet issued to all flats March 2013.</p>
<p>Tenants living in flats: satisfaction with cleaning of external communal areas</p> <p>STAR result: 51% satisfied</p>					<p>HMEC to monitor progress</p>

Leaseholders					
<p>Leaseholders contacting DBC in the last 12 months with a query other than service charges: was getting hold or right person easy or difficult</p> <p>STAR result: Easy 53% (32% answered difficult)</p>	<p>Ensure we provide an accessible, efficient service to our leaseholders</p>	<p>Publicise ways in which leaseholders can get in touch through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News and Views • Leaseholder Handbook 	<p>2013/14</p>	<p>SB</p>	<p>Letter sent to all leaseholders encouraging them to get involved in the service and help make improvements. Follow up articles to feature in spring and summer 2013 News and Views. Work on new Leaseholder Handbook to commence shortly in consultation with leaseholders.</p>
<p>Extent to which leaseholders feel parking is a problem in their neighbourhood</p> <p>STAR result: 30% feel is major problem</p>	<p>Improve quality of parking for our tenants and residents</p>	<p>Support corporate parking project to look at improvement, prevention and traffic order controls</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>SS</p>	<p>Four priority sites have been identified, with a number of additional sites coming forward. Consultation with residents is currently underway. Housing has provided £100K towards the scheme and will provide further funding as the project progresses.</p>
<p>Extent to which leaseholders feel rubbish or litter is a problem in their neighbourhood</p> <p>STAR result: 23% feel is major problem</p>	<p>Reduce rubbish and litter within neighbourhoods and improve reporting mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduce litter picks as part of the local area walkabouts. ➤ Work with street champions to ensure litter picking in area 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>JG</p>	<p>Walkabouts made available on request. Availability of walkabouts publicised in autumn and winter 2012 editions of News and Views</p>

<p>Satisfaction with area bordering leaseholder's home: maintenance of planted areas</p> <p>STAR result: 51% satisfied</p>	<p>Improve maintenance of planted areas to increase satisfaction levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Service Level Agreement to be developed with Clean Safe and Green (CSG) ➤ Recruit tenants in blocks of flats/supported housing schemes to monitor the standard of work 	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>SS</p>	<p>Work on the development of a Service Level Agreement with Clean, Safe and Green is currently underway.</p> <p>Tenants to monitor once SLA in place</p>
<p>Thinking about your property, block or scheme: cleaning and upkeep of internal communal areas</p> <p>STAR result: 57% satisfied</p>	<p>Improve monitoring arrangements for cleaning service. Communicate level of service tenants/leaseholders should expect to receive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Install signs in all blocks detailing cleaning schedule. ➤ Issue service standards booklet to all residents ➤ Service quality to be monitored through HMEC and local residents. 	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>ST</p>	<p>New signage installed to help monitor cleaning Dec/Jan 2013. Service standards booklet issued to all flats March 2013.</p> <p>HMEC to monitor progress</p>
<p>Thinking about your property, block or scheme: cleaning and upkeep of external communal areas</p> <p>STAR result: 40% satisfied</p>					
<p>Thinking about your property, block or</p>	<p>Increase leaseholder satisfaction with</p>	<p>Consult with leaseholders on repairs and maintenance as</p>	<p>2013/14</p>	<p>CF</p>	<p>We will be consulting with leaseholders to identify</p>

scheme: external building repairs and maintenance STAR result: 42% satisfied	repairs and maintenance service	part of Leaseholder Service Review.			issues with the repairs and maintenance service and make improvements where necessary.
Leaseholders satisfaction with way DBC as owner of freehold deals with repairs and maintenance STAR result: 54% satisfied	Increase leaseholder satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	Consult with leaseholders on repairs and maintenance as part of Leaseholder Service Review.			
Thinking of last repair: time taken before work started STAR result: 49% satisfied	Increase leaseholder satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	Consult with leaseholders on repairs and maintenance as part of Leaseholder Service Review.			
Thinking of last repair: overall quality of work STAR result: 41% satisfied	Increase leaseholder satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	Consult with leaseholders on repairs and maintenance as part of Leaseholder Service Review.			
Thinking of last repair:	Increase leaseholder	Consult with leaseholders on	2013/14	CF	

repair being done right first time STAR result: 53% satisfied	satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	repairs and maintenance as part of Leaseholder Service Review.			leaseholders to identify issues with the repairs and maintenance service and make improvements where necessary.
Thinking of last repair: keeping dirt and mess to a minimum STAR result: 62% satisfied					
Thinking of last repair: service you received on this occasion STAR result: 62% satisfied					
Leaseholders satisfaction with service charge providing value for money STAR result: 55% satisfied	Increase leaseholder satisfaction that service charge represents value for money	Consult with leaseholders regarding service charges and how they are calculated	2013/14	SB	We will be consulting with leaseholders on their service charges as part of wider consultation. Further information of service charge will be included in new Leaseholder Handbook.
Supported Housing tenants					

<p>Extent to which Supported Housing tenants feel parking is a problem in their neighbourhood</p> <p>STAR result: 31% feel is a major problem</p>	<p>Improve quality of parking for our tenants and residents</p>	<p>Housing are part of a corporate project and are contributing 100K to the budget to look at improvement, prevention and traffic order controls</p>	<p>2013/14</p>	<p>SS</p>	<p>Four priority sites have been identified, with a number of additional sites coming forward. Consultation with residents is currently underway. Housing has provided £100K towards the scheme and will provide further funding as the project progresses.</p>
<p>Satisfaction with area bordering tenants home: maintenance of planted areas</p> <p>STAR result: 60% satisfied</p>	<p>Improve maintenance of planted areas to increase satisfaction levels.</p>	<p>Service Level Agreement to be developed with Clean Safe and Green (CSG)</p> <p>Recruit tenants in blocks of flats/supported housing schemes to monitor the standard of work</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>SS</p>	<p>Work on the development of a Service Level Agreement with Clean, Safe and Green is currently underway. Tenants to monitor once SLA in place</p>
<p>Percentage of Supported Housing tenants with internet access at home</p> <p>STAR result: 76% have no internet access</p>	<p>Improve accessibility of internet access for Supported Housing tenants</p>	<p>Install internet enabled computers in every Supported Housing Scheme and provide training to tenants as required.</p>	<p>2013/14</p>	<p>DC</p>	<p>Computers will be installed in all Supported Housing Schemes during 2013/14. A project run in partnership with Longdean School to provide computer skills training to residents of Gilbert Burnet House has proved very successful. We hope to expand the training to further schemes working with additional local schools.</p>
<p>Key to Responsible Officers: CL – Carolyn Leech, SD – Suzy Donaldson, SS – Simon Smith, JG – Jules Goodridge, ST- Steve Tarbox, SB – Sue Birrell, CF- Calvin Fisher, DC – Dharini Chandarana</p>					



AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	13 March 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Community Alarm Call Response Performance
Contact:	Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Landlord Responsible Officer – Andy Vincent, Group Manager, Tenants and Leaseholders Author – Nicola Charman – Development Officer, Supported Housing Service
Purpose of report:	To advise Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee members regarding the past three months performance of SeniorLink Eldercare, community alarm provider for the Supported Housing Service.
Recommendations	The future reporting of the community alarm contract performance is presented in the Housing Landlord Quarterly reports to Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Corporate objectives:	This report supports the following Council objective: Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> None
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u> Effective Contract Monitoring is essential in delivering Value for Money within the HRA
Risk Implications	Risk reference HLMO in the Housing Landlord Risk register refers to effective financial and operational control of

	contractors.
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessment - None required for the purpose of this report.
Health And Safety Implications	Effective management of the Community Alarm service contributes to the health and safety of residents of sheltered housing.
Consultees:	Dharini Chandarana: Supported Housing – Team Leader
Background papers:	http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/Housing%20-%2012-03-21%20-%20Community%20Alarm%20Report.pdf http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/Social%20-%2011-09-14%20-%20ITEM%207%20-%20Community%20Alarm%20Report.pdf http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/Social%20-%2011-07-20%20-%20Item%207%20-%20Community%20Alarm%20Response.pdf

1.0 Background

1.1 Dacorum Borough Council's community alarm monitoring service provider is SeniorLink Eldercare. They are members of the Telecare Services Association (TSA), which is the representative body for the telecare industry within the UK. The TSA aims to promote and support the telecare and telehealth industry and has over 350 members, primarily from Local Authorities, registered Social Landlords and private sector suppliers. The organisation sets quality standards for service delivery in its code of practice to enable commissioners to identify quality providers.

1.2 There are two critical performance indicators in the code of practice that refer to call handling which Dacorum Borough Council use to monitor the performance of the provider:

- Achievement of 97.5% of alarm calls being answered within one minute
- Achievement of 99% of alarm calls being answered within three minutes

1.3 The community alarm contract stipulates the provider will be monitored on the above targets. In addition to this, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked for two additional targets to be added:

- % of calls answered within 90 seconds
- Undertake a customer satisfaction survey on a quarterly basis

2.0 Performance

2.1 The tables below illustrates Eldercare's performance since the last report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2012.

The third and fourth tables show the results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey carried out between July and September 2012 and between October and December

2012. The survey is sent out to all tenants and customers who used their alarms to summon help from medical or paramedic services, family or next of kin and who remain in their property.

The last table shows the number of calls which took longer than 180 seconds to answer and the reason for the delay.

2.2 The first table illustrates that response target for one and three minutes were consistently met. The response target for 90 seconds has improved again since the last report and the Performance Targets have been met or exceeded throughout the 11 month period of March to end of December without exception.

Tenant satisfaction has remained high throughout this period with 115 customers returning the survey out of the 208 which were sent out for the July to September survey and 116 returns out of 207 for the last quarter.

2.3 For Committee Members information 26 of our 31 Category 2 Sheltered Housing Schemes have one telephone line, UAC, designated for community alarm calls. Leys Road, Rice Close and Phyllis Courtnage House all have 2 dedicated lines, Pond Close has 3 lines and Evelyn Sharp House, which is the Flexi care Scheme, has 5.

With regard to the potential to increase the number of lines, Cirrus Communications have undertaken a dilapidation survey of all our schemes. The report shows that all the dispersed schemes will need to have new wiring. The new system will be digital enabled once the phone providers are able to accommodate digital lines. We have asked Cirrus to cost the various options available to us and they will present this at the next monitoring meeting at the end of March 2013.

Internal schemes, such as William Crook House, may not need to have new wiring because of dilapidation but will need the wiring to be upgraded to allow for digital capacity.

Week Commencing	14/10	21/10	28/10	04/11	11/11	18/11	25/11	02/12	09/12	16/12	23/12	30/12
% of calls answered within 1 minute (Target – 97.5%)	98.04	97.93	99.26	97.60	99.57	99.26	99.07	98.98	98.30	98.41	98.55	99.00
Number of calls answered within 1 minute	1194	1264	1583	1262	1330	1283	1145	1540	1626	1168	1130	1341
% of calls answered within 90 seconds	99.19	99.01	99.60	98.97	99.99	99.79	99.46	99.32	99.01	99.47	99.33	99.70
% of calls answered within 3 minutes (Target 99%)	99.85	99.96	99.93	100	100	100	99.94	99.59	99.85	99.92	100	100
Number of calls answered within 3 minutes	1216	1290	1594	1293	1233	1293	1155	1550	1651	1186	1147	1355

Week Commencing	06/01	13/01	20/01	27/01	03/02	10/02	17/02
% of calls answered within 1 minute (Target – 97.5%)	99.35	99.13	97.55	98.4	99.25	98.57	98.91
Number of calls answered within 1 minute	1365	1361	1266	1144	1158	1145	1128
% of calls answered within 90 seconds	99.86	99.68	99.43	99.55	99.92	99.63	99.64
% of calls answered within 3 minutes (Target 99%)	100	99.89	99.86	99.87	100	100	99.9
Number of calls answered within 3 minutes	1374	1372	1296	1161	1167	1162	1139

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results: July - September 2012

	Contact with Control Centre					Total	Speed of response					Total	Staff Helpful & Supportive					Total
	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither/Nor	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied		Very Good	Fairly Good	Neither/Nor	Fairly Poor	Very Poor		Very Good	Fairly Good	Neither/Nor	Fairly Poor	Very Poor	
Results from combined customer/tenant	88	20	4	1	2	115	82	25	3	2	3	115	95	14	3	1	2	115
% of customers	76%	17.5%	3.5%	1%	2%		71%	22%	2.5%	2%	2.5%		82.5%	12%	2.5%	1%	2%	

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results: October– December 2012

	Contact with Control Centre					Total	Speed of response					Total	Staff Helpful & Supportive					Total
	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither/Nor	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied		Very Good	Fairly Good	Neither/Nor	Fairly Poor	Very Poor		Very Good	Fairly Good	Neither/Nor	Fairly Poor	Very Poor	
Results from combined customer/tenant	94	17	4	0	1	116	90	21	3	1	1	116	101	11	2	1	1	116
% of customers	81%	14.5%	3.5%	0	1%		77.5%	18%	2.5%	1%	1%		87%	9%	2%	1%	1%	

**Calls which took longer than
180 seconds to answer**

Week Beginning	Scheme or Dispersed Call	Amount of calls unanswered in 180 seconds	Reason for delay in answering call
14 October 2012	Scheme	4	All 4 calls came from one scheme and were held in a queue to be answered
21 October 2012	Scheme	2	Both calls from one scheme and were held in a queue to be answered
28 October 2012	Dispersed	1	Volume of calls, answered in 193 seconds
4 November 2012		0	
11 November 2012		0	
18 November 2012		0	
25 November 2012	Scheme	2	Both calls from one scheme and were held in a queue to be answered
2 December 2012	Scheme	2	Both calls from one scheme and were held in a queue to be answered
9 December 2012	Scheme	13	All calls from one scheme, which was down and waiting for fault repair
16 December 2012	Scheme	2	Both calls from one scheme and were held in a queue to be answered
23 December 2012		0	
30 December 2012		0	
6 January 2013		0	
13 January 2013	Scheme	3	Calls from one scheme, held in queue to be answered including one from SHO coming on duty.
20 January 2013	Scheme	3	Calls from one scheme, held in queue to be

			answered.
27 January 2013	Scheme	4	Calls from two schemes, held in queue to be answered including one from SHO coming onsite.
3 February 2013		0	
10 February 2013		0	
17 February 2013	Scheme	1	Call took 192 seconds to answer.



AGENDA ITEM: 9

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	13 March 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REPORT
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Julia Hedger – Strategic Housing Group Manager Isabel Connolly – Team Leader for Strategy, Policy and Private Sector Housing
Purpose of report:	To bring to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft Housing Allocations Policy (Appendix 1) with minor amendments for feedback • The consultation feedback and the Council’s response giving due consideration (Appendix 2).
Recommendations	For members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give their comments on the amended draft policy document that will now go to Cabinet to approve for adoption by Full Council.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	The minor amendments do not introduce any new implications in terms of finance or value for money. The implications identified in the report for Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2013 still hold. <u>Legal</u> The minor amendments are being reviewed by the Council’s legal service with the full draft policy.

Risk Implications	The minor amendments do not introduce any new risk implications in terms of legal challenge, communications, or system failure. The risk implications identified in the report for Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2013 still hold.
Equalities Implications	An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2013. No reasons to expect discrimination have been identified that the Council does not have processes in place to mitigate.
Health And Safety Implications	The minor amendments do not introduce any new Health and Safety implications.
Consultees:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing Cllr Janice Marshall – Chair of H&C OSC Cllr Mahmood – Vice chair of H&C OSC Dacorum Borough Council Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tenants and Leaseholders’ Committee Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing Andy Vincent – Group Manager for Tenants and Leaseholders Natasha Brathwaite – Housing Advice and Homelessness Team Leader Teresa Wood – Housing Options Team Leader Jack Burnham – Housing Strategy and Development Team Leader
Background papers:	The current Housing Allocations Policy (Oct 2011) Draft Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018 (March 2013) Strategic Tenancy Policy (January 2013) Housing Principles (March 2012) Localism Act 2011
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	H&C OSC – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee TLC – Tenants and Leaseholder Committee

1. Background

- 1.1 The current Housing Allocations Policy was approved by Cabinet in October 2011 and adopted on 1 December 2011.
- 1.2 The Localism Act 2011 gave Councils new freedoms to manage their housing registers and to promote mobility for existing social tenants. In the Code of Guidance 2012 (Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities 2012) the Government encourages Councils to review their existing allocations policies and to introduce changes based on the new flexibilities brought in by the Localism Act 2011 and endorsed in the guidance.
- 1.3 A small working party of Councillors and Officers met on four occasions in 2012 to rigorously consider all implications, benefits and potential risks. Once the main policy proposals had been formed these were then outlined in a report to the Council's Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny (H&C OSC) Panel on 5 December 2012.
- 1.4 A full draft Housing Allocations Policy was presented to H&C OSC on 22 January 2013 and to Cabinet on 23 January 2013. This document was approved for public consultation, which then ran until 12 mid-day on 8 March 2013.
- 1.5 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;
 - An brief article in Dacorum Digest signposting people to the consultation;
 - A forum with housing association partners; and
 - Discussion at the Council's quarterly Homelessness Forum.
- 1.6 During the consultation period the Gazette ran an article on the proposed changes to the policy and the Group Manager for Strategic Housing was interviewed on the BBC Three Counties Radio.

2. Consultation feedback

- 2.1 The consultation feedback and the Council's response giving due consideration is provided in Appendix 3.
- 2.2 The overall tone of the feedback is positive. Where suggestions or comments have been made regarding specific sections of the policy these have been considered.
- 2.3 Any additional feedback made after this report has been submitted before the end of the consultation on 8 March 2013 will be circulated to H&C OSC prior to the meeting.

3. Table of minor amendments to policy

Bold Italic indicates additions to policy, strikethrough indicates removal from policy.

2.3 The use of direct offers

A direct offer is defined by the Council as those offers made outside of the CBL scheme, but which are still covered by this policy. In each case where the right to make a direct offer is used it is specified in the table in appendix 1.

Where applicants are not bidding or refuse offers beyond a specified number of cycles the Council considers that it is reasonable to make direct offers where an offer is considered suitable to meet an applicant's needs.

For applicants in high-risk priority groups it may not be appropriate for applicants to bid, and a sensitive letting ~~will~~ **may** be sought through the making of a direct offer.

Direct offers will also be used as part of the Council's preventative approach to homelessness. ~~For A~~ applicants given a Homelessness Status at the point of receiving the full statutory homelessness duty ~~may then receive~~ **there will be a presumption to give** one direct offer of suitable accommodation (please see 'People who are homeless' section 6.2).

2.9 Councillors, council employees and their close relatives

Councillors, **and** council employees, and their close relatives, can apply to join the housing register. Any such association with the Council must, however, be clearly stated and disclosed on the application form.

If any such applicant applies for housing or makes a successful bid, the Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration) will be informed and must approve the allocation, prior to the formal offer being made.

4.5 Financial means

As with home-owners, it is felt by the Council that applicants with the financial means to meet their own housing need should not qualify to the Active Register.

The Council has reflected the above by introducing qualification criteria for applicants with financial means. Applicants will need to demonstrate that their income and savings fall below a threshold that is considered sufficient to meet housing need. **The Council will include in its calculations the income and savings of the head or heads of the household, whether there is a joint tenancy or a single tenant is living with a partner or spouse.**

The Council has set its threshold cut-off points for income and savings to be in line with ~~current benefits cut off points as~~ **cut off points** set by central Government. Therefore applicants will only be placed on the Active Register where they can demonstrate that neither they nor their partner or spouse have:

- In excess of £16,000 savings (**in line with the housing benefit cut off point**);
or

- In excess of £60,000 income (*in line with the Homes and Communities Agency cut off point for shared ownership*).

In the case that the Government changes its thresholds the Council will adopt new cut-off points accordingly.

Applicants whose financial means fall above the threshold cut-off points will be placed on the Deferred Register. These applications will have an opportunity for review at a 12 month renewal date.

Any lump sum payment made to a current or former member of the armed forces as compensation received for injury or disability sustained in active service will not be included in an assessment of financial means.

5.2 The bidding process

Each property advert states the number of available bedrooms. Applicants will **only** be able to bid for those properties where they meet the following criteria:

- The household has a need for all the bedrooms available; and
- The household would not become overcrowded (*except for households needing four or more bedrooms who may bid for three bedroom properties due to the shortage of large family homes available and in recognition that a three bedroom property may go some way to help a large family address their housing need*).

To encourage single tenants and couples who are only eligible for one bedroom to downsize from three, four and five bedroom properties, in the case that a household is under-occupying by two bedrooms, they will be able to bid for properties with one bedroom above their need (please also see 'Under-occupation' section 6.3.3).

6.2 People who are homeless

'Homelessness' is a term defined in the Housing Act 1996, Part 7.

Part 7 distinguishes between people who are homeless with a statutory duty to be re-housed by a local housing authority, and those who are homeless without any statutory duty. The statutory duty will occur in cases when the applicant is assessed to be eligible and unintentionally homeless, and the household contains:

- dependent children; or
- a pregnant woman; or
- an adult who is assessed as vulnerable.

The Housing Act 1996, Part 6 requires councils to give additional priority to those who are homeless for any reason and in any circumstances, including rough sleepers. To meet the Part 6 definition of 'homeless' an applicant need not have made an application for homelessness assistance to any local housing authority.

The Council will give:

- A low points award to applicants who are homeless without the statutory homelessness duty (please see table in appendix 1); and
- A 'Homelessness Status' to applicants **at the point** that they receive the full statutory homelessness duty.

At the point of receiving the full statutory homelessness duty there will be a presumption to give one direct offer of suitable accommodation The Homelessness Status may mean that an applicant is either:

Made one direct offer of accommodation that is considered by the Council to be suitable to meet that applicant's housing needs (please also see 'The use of direct offers' section 2.3).

- Permitted to bid for four bidding cycles through the CBL scheme with a high priority Homelessness Status equivalent to the highest points level (in these cases a direct offer may still be made at the end of the stated number of bidding cycles if an applicant has not received an offer).

The Council considers this approach to be consistent with its preventative approach to homelessness. Applicants will receive assistance to prevent homelessness and continue to bid through the CBL scheme with points allocated for other priority need criteria (please see 'Points' sections 6.3 – 6.7).

The Council also considers that this approach to homeless applicants will support the Council to ensure that homeless applicants do not unfairly dominate allocations made by the Council to the detriment of other groups whom the Council is required to also give priority to in accordance with the legislation in the Housing Act 1996, Part 6.

11. Exemptions to policy

Letting that are not treated as allocations under this scheme include:

- Mutual exchanges between tenants of the Council or housing associations, ***whether by Deed of Assignment or by commencement of new tenancies where a tenant with a Flexible Tenancy exchanges with a tenant with a Secure or Assured Tenancy*** (including those arranged via national schemes such as Homeswapper);
- Where a tenant dies (whether secure, assured or fixed term) and a succession takes place;
- Where a secure or assured tenancy is granted by order of a court under Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, or Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, or Children Act 1989;
- Where an introductory tenancy, assured shorthold starter, or probationary tenancy becomes an assured or secure tenancy; and
- Where a tenancy is demoted by court order, or, following the expiry of the demotion period, where a demoted tenancy reverts to secure tenancy status.

Appendix 1

Table for allocating points to applicants on the Active Register

For all priority categories an applicant may only be given points for meeting one level of criteria.

High risk groups	People from high-risk groups who meet hard-to-house or sensitive lettings criteria. Criteria include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care Leavers; Move-on from Supported Housing; Witness protection cases; and Individuals identified through multi-agency groups. This list is not exhaustive.	No points Direct offer or points at the discretion of the Housing Panel only
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4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The recommendation of this report is for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give their comments on the amended draft policy document that will now go to Cabinet to approve for adoption by Full Council.

APPENDIX 1 – HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Dacorum Borough Council

**Draft Housing Allocations Policy
March 2013**

Summary of consultation responses received through the Council's public consultation

The council should:

- Make the local connection criteria even stronger / Give even more consideration to being born in the Borough.
- Raise the £60,000 threshold as the cut-off point to judge whether a household has sufficient financial means to meet their own housing need.
- Lower the £60,000 threshold as the cut-off point to judge whether a household has sufficient financial means to meet their own housing need to £25,000.
- Make the transfer policy easier for people looking for a bigger property / Make overcrowding a higher priority / Give more priority to having a child.
- Do more to encourage people that are in properties that are too big for them to downsize.
- Help people on low incomes who are paying extortionate private rents.
- Prioritise waiting time on the housing register.
- Consider the proximity of properties to local facilities as a factor when prioritising properties for older people or vulnerable groups.
- Prioritise those that work and pay full rent and council tax.
- Provide a standardised process for potential fosterers and adopters, rather than considering applicants on a case-by-case basis.
- Allow existing sheltered scheme tenants to swap into voids without going through the formal transfer process.

Requests for clarification:

- Are bedroom sizes no longer taken into account?
- Will there not be any points for different genders sharing over 10 years old?
- Does the £60,000 threshold for savings relate to household or individual income?

Feels expressed:

- Frustration with living in overcrowded conditions when larger properties are being under-occupied.
- There may be inequalities in the annual re-registration and the bidding process for more vulnerable people having to use the telephone or internet.

Consideration of consultation responses

Local connection

The Council considers that the local connection criteria in the draft policy are suitable to ensure that housing is allocated to local residents:

- The three criteria for local connection (applicants must meet at least one of the three criteria) are now stronger than the criteria in the previous policy, which was recognised by giving applicants points.
- The local connection criteria are now set as qualification criteria to the 'Active Register'. Applicants who do not meet at least one of the criteria will be placed onto a 'Deferred Register' and will not be able to bid for properties.
- Local connection to villages is still recognised.

The Council is committed to recognising its legislative obligations in relation to assessing eligibility based on immigration status. The local connection criteria have been set to ensure that housing is allocated to local residents with a long-term connection to the Borough.

The local connection criteria in the new policy include a recognition of those applicants who have been resident in the Borough for 10 or more years at some point in their lifetime. This is to try and recognise those applicants born in the Borough or who have lived in the Borough for a major proportion of their life. The other two criteria applicants can meet to qualify to the Active Register require an applicant to have either, close family members who have been resident in the Borough for the last 10 years continuously, or to have been employed on a permanent basis in the Borough for at least 24 months for over 16 hours a week.

Priority for those in work

The Council is committed to housing those local residents in greatest housing need and does not differentiate between households based on receipt of any benefits. The Council is not considering providing greater priority to those in work as this is considered to be at odds with its commitment to meet housing need

Financial means threshold

The Council is committed to housing those local residents in greatest housing need. The number of lets each year to Council and Housing Association stock is very small given the scale of demand, and the Council considers that those households with an income of £60,000 or over can be supported to find other ways to access the local housing market.

The Council considers that the £60,000 threshold for household income is both reasonable and realistic in terms in expecting people to meet their own housing needs. This threshold is in line with the Homes and Communities Agency cut-off for providing assistance in the shared ownership market.

The threshold relates to the applicant and their partner, or to joint applicants. Therefore the joint income is what will be considered, which the Council considers to be a fair approach.

The £60,000 income threshold will be made clear in the draft policy to prevent any confusion.

Overcrowding

The Council is committed to recognising the impact on households of overcrowding and the draft policy includes an award of points for applicants who are currently overcrowded (15 points for each member of the household lacking a bedroom using

the Government's 'bedroom standard'). Transferring tenants can also try to find larger properties through the Council's mutual exchange scheme.

Having a child will give an applicant additional priority only when the additional child makes the applicant's current accommodation unsuitable to meet their housing need, which will most often occur because an additional child makes the household overcrowded.

Bedrooms

The 'bedroom standard' permits two children of different sexes to share a bedroom only until the eldest is 10 years old. At the point that two different sex children are sharing a bedroom and one of the children reaches their 10th birthday the applicant will receive additional points for overcrowding (the policy gives 15 points for each member of the household lacking a bedroom using the Government's 'bedroom standard').

Property adverts will continue to include bedroom sizes to assist households to make their own decision about whether a property is suitable for their household. The draft policy permits households to bid on properties with the number of bedrooms they need based on the Government's 'bedroom standard' which does not include bedroom sizes.

Under-occupation

The Council is committed to freeing up more three and four bedroom family homes by encouraging residents currently under-occupying to transfer to smaller properties – the draft policy has increased the points given to under-occupiers choosing to downsize to ensure they gain enough priority to be successful in bidding.

The Council has made a commitment in its Strategic Tenancy Policy (approved by Cabinet in January 2013) to adopt 'Flexible Tenancies', which are a new tenancy type introduced in the Localism Act 2011. The Council will start using Flexible Tenancies from April 2013 and this tenancy type will provide tenants with a five year fixed term. At the end of this fixed term the Council will carry out a review with a presumption to renew a tenancy, however if a property is being under-occupied at the point of review then the Council will require the household to bid for a smaller property.

Waiting time on the housing register

The Council is committed to using its Council stock and nominations to Housing Associations to prioritise need. The housing register is therefore a 'register' of people in housing need, rather than a waiting list. Council and Housing Association stock is very limited (just 400-500 lets a year) and there are over 6000 people on the housing register - this is a housing option for an increasingly smaller group of people. The Council has split its housing register into an Active Register and a Deferred Register - this is to manage the expectations of people who are bidding for properties when they are not realistically going to be housed through this housing option.

Affordability of the private sector

The Council is committed to housing those local residents in greatest housing need. The Council has an Advice and Homelessness Team who can discuss housing options with a local resident who feels that their current private sector tenancy is not sustainable. Where residents need assistance with completing the Housing Register

application form this can be provided. Points are given to applicants on the Housing Register based on a number of priority categories set in law by central government.

Fostering and adopting

Due to the very limited number of larger family homes, the Council considers that it is reasonable to treat each household thinking about fostering or adopting children on a case by case basis.

Accessibility of the Choice Based Lettings system

The Council is very committed to equality of access to its services and has carried out a full equality impact assessment of this policy. The Council already sends around 170 paper copies of the newsletter out to applicants every week. The Council's Housing Options team will support individuals as appropriate to ensure that they have a suitable phone handset or receive assistance to bid. The Council has been operating a Choice Based Letting system since 2003 with these bidding mechanisms and has successfully assisted many applicants to bid for appropriate properties.

Proximity of properties to local facilities

The location of the property is specified on the property advert (street name, not property number) so that applicants can make decisions about which properties to bid on based on the suitability of the property to meet their housing needs.

The Council does not consider that it would be appropriate to try to alter the priority to different groups based on proximity of a property to services. The Council cannot know all the individual needs with a group and there may be competing needs, such as proximity to family members.

Voids and transfers in sheltered schemes

The Council takes on board a comment made regarding void turnaround times and this feedback has been forwarded to the Council's landlord lettings and asset teams.

In relation to the question of offering tenants the choice of a transfer without going through the correct and legal transfer procedure the Council does not consider this to be possible while maintaining fair and transparent procedures.



AGENDA ITEM: 10

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	13 March 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	HOUSING STRATEGY 2013 – 2018 REPORT
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 update Members on the new draft Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018 (Appendix 1). The feedback and views of Members will be considered prior to a draft being presented to Cabinet on 26 March 2013 and prior to consultation commencing at the start of April 2013.
Recommendations	For Members to consider the content of the new draft strategy document and give their feedback.
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. Funds include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency • Grant funding from the Growing Places Fund • New Homes Bonus • Grant from Hertfordshire County Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Revenue Account • General Fund • Private investment • Developer contributions through s106 agreements as set out in the Affordable Housing SPD • Local Authority Enabling Grant • Housing Association cross-subsidy • Funds raised by Housing Associations from the development of and conversion to affordable rent. <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>This 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, to achieve defined target outcomes consistent with the Council's overall vision.</p>
Risk Implications	<p><u>Management and coordination of delivery</u></p> <p>This strategy has a broad remit - its strategic objectives refer to a number of other strategies and policies, and it guides the overall strategic direction for investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services. Some of the strategies and policies referred to have already been adopted by the Council, some are in development stages, and others are yet to be developed.</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>
Equalities Implications	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and provided with this report in Appendix 2.</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>
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</p>

	<p>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>
Background papers:	<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>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<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>

1. Background

- 1.1 The previous Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011, which has now expired, was adopted a number of years ago and prior to a number of wide-ranging changes to the housing sector. Since 2008 there have been changes to:
- The national public deficit and programme of austerity;
 - Multiple and wide ranging funding streams, legislation, guidance and initiatives from central Government;
 - The owner-occupied and private rented housing markets;
 - National and local demographic profiles; and
 - The internal structure and remit of the Council's housing services.

- 1.2 Since the 2008 – 2011 strategy was written the Council has adopted a new overarching strategic vision with a number of corporate objectives. In addition, since 2008:
- A new Core Strategy has been prepared for adoption in 2013, which will play a key role in the delivery of a new supply of housing over the next 20 years;
 - In 2012 the Council went through a self-financing process, taking control of its housing rental income; and
 - The Council will be developing its own new build properties in 2013 for the first time in over 20 years.
- 1.3 This Housing Strategy aims to provide 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.

2. The Strategic Objectives

- 2.1 This Housing 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 the changes at national and local level (stated above in 1.1):
- An overall shortage of homes, particularly affordable, and a prohibitive cost of owner occupation;
 - A need to improve the availability and range of housing, as an integral part of attracting and retaining employment in the Borough;
 - Growing numbers of households experiencing homelessness;
 - The impact of an ageing population and the contribution that good housing can make to the health agenda; and
 - Energy efficiency and quality of housing, particularly in the private sector.
- 2.2 The Strategic Objectives will support the Council in providing an overall strategic direction, which will guide investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services.
- 2.3 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.

2.4 Each Strategic Objective has a number of Target Outcomes with reviewing and reporting timescales. These Target Outcomes will support the Council to identify where actions and investments fit into its overall direction and vision, and to keep track of progress against this strategy.

3. Time scales for strategy adoption

3.1 The proposed time line for the Council's draft Housing Strategy is as follows:

- March 2013
 - Draft presented to H&C OSC for feedback and discussion (13/3/13)
 - Draft presented to Cabinet to approve for consultation (26/3/13)
- April and May 2013
 - Consultation
- Summer 2013
 - Final draft presented to H&C OSC and Cabinet for approval
 - Recommendation to full Council to adopt new strategy with immediate effect.

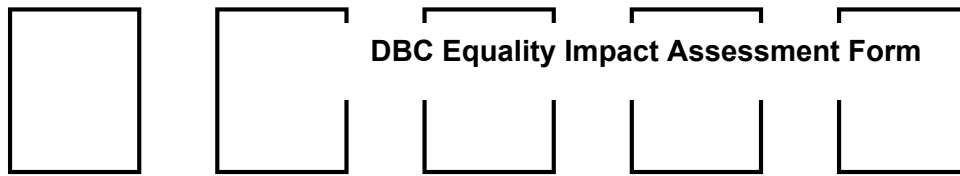
4. Consultation

4.1 A consultation period will commence in April 2013. All comments and feedback will then be considered before the strategy goes back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Cabinet in summer 2013. It is proposed that the strategy will then be taken to full Council for adoption.

5. Recommendation

5.1 The recommendation of this report is for Members to consider the content of the new draft strategy document and give their feedback, which can then be considered before a draft is presented to Cabinet on 26 March 2013 prior to consultation commencing at the start of April 2013.

APPENDIX 1 – DACORUM HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2018



Directorate: Housing and Regeneration

Service: Strategic Housing

Policy / function / activity being reviewed: Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018

Supporting Directorate Support Officer:

Date completed and by whom: February 2013, Isabel Connolly, Team Leader Strategy, Policy and Private Sector Housing

Review date: February 2014

Step 1 – Identifying the Purpose / Aims

1. What type of policy, service, activity or function is this?

- Adopting a new strategy for 2013 - 2018

2. What is the aim and purpose of the policy, activity, service or function?

- To provide 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.

3. Outline any proposals being considered.

- This Housing Strategy commits the Council to meeting six Strategic Objectives.

- 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.

4. Who is the policy, activity, service or function intended to help / benefit / serve?

- The objectives have been developed to help / benefit / serve:
 - People seeking a home within the Borough;
 - People in housing need, including the homeless and people threatened with homelessness;
 - Older people and other vulnerable people who require special accommodation and services to live independently;
 - People who own accommodation in the Borough, including owner-occupiers and private landlords; and
 - Developers, private investors and other providers of housing and housing related services within the Borough.

5. Does the policy, activity, service or function have any specific aims or objectives in relation to equality, social inclusion or community cohesion?

- In its implementation and on-going monitoring the Housing Strategy will explicitly consider the impact across a range of differing needs, with specific reference to people with disabilities, older people, vulnerable groups and other people needing housing with support or specific requirements.

Step 2 – Considering existing information and what this tells you

6. Summarise any data / research or performance management information about the policy, function or activity that is available.
This could include equalities monitoring information; surveys; complaints or grievances.

Data / Information

In 2012 the Council commissioned a desk-top Housing Market and Needs Assessment of the Borough, which highlighted key affordability and supply side issues with the housing market in Dacorum, and a summary of the key findings is both provided below and included as Appendix 2 of the Housing Strategy 2013 – 2018:

Housing Market Change

- Over the three year period Q3 2008 to Q4 2011, the average property price in Dacorum increased by 36%.
- All property types had increased in price, with larger property types seeing the greatest increases. Detached properties were found to have increased in price by 43.8%, followed by terraced properties (30.2%) and semi-detached properties (25.8%).
- Sales levels in the Dacorum area increased by 13.4% from 2003 to 2006, reaching a peak in 2006, in contrast to the County which peaked in 2004.
- The average property price in Dacorum is £312,681, higher than the County average, regional and national averages.
- Nationally, loans to first-time buyers were up by 4% from November 2010 to November 2011. The typical first time buyer in September 2011 needed a deposit of 20% and borrowed 3.23 times their income.
- If funding could be secured at 90% mortgage an average deposit of around £11,595 to £12,000 would be required to buy one and two bedroom flats, and £17,900 to £20,000 for two and three bedroom terraced houses in the 2012 Dacorum market.
- The need for up to a 20% deposit is the key affordability problem for those wishing to buy - 93% of concealed households forming within parental homes will not be able to afford a deposit for a 1 bed flat without significant parental assistance.
- Entry rental costs in the private rented sector vary by location within the Borough.
- 58% of new households forming cannot afford to rent in the private market.

Income Change

- 2011 data shows a median income of £30,858 for Dacorum, a 53.7% increase on the 2003 figure of £20,079.

Population Projections

- Demographic projections for Dacorum predict an increase in the population of Dacorum of 19,500 people (+13.9%) over the forecast period to 2033. There is an increase in all age groups.
- The most significant growth is in the over 65 age group with an increase of 14,400 people (+65.8%), compared to an increase of only 4.3% for the whole population aged under 65.
- Within the older age group, numbers of people aged 85+ are projected to grow by 4,500 (+150.0%). Given the resource demands and specialist accommodation needs often associated with very elderly people, these are significant figures.

Property Types Needed

- Meeting the backlog of affordable housing need over 5 years would require 653 units a year.
- There is substantial housing need for all types of unit sizes that will not be met by the immediate identified supply.
- The provision of smaller units for older people, particularly Extra Care, will be important for initiatives to free up under-occupied three bedroom social rented stock.
- Making best use of the existing stock is now even more important as a means of addressing needs for larger family size properties.

The objectives of the Housing Strategy have been developed to tackle a number of local challenges facing Dacorum, which have arisen from the changes at national and local level:

- An overall shortage of homes, particularly affordable, and a prohibitive cost of owner occupation;
- A need to improve the availability and range of housing, as an integral part of attracting and retaining employment in the Borough;

- Growing numbers of households experiencing homelessness;
- The impact of an ageing population and the contribution that good housing can make to the health agenda; and
- Energy efficiency and quality of housing, particularly in the private sector.

7. Is there any evidence of negative differential impact on any of the following?
(Some equality categories may be more relevant than others)

Age; Disability; Race or ethnicity; Religion or belief / faith communities; Gender and transgender; Sexual orientation

- In its implementation and on-going monitoring the Housing Strategy will explicitly consider the impact across the range of differing needs, with specific reference to people with disabilities, older people, vulnerable groups and other people with a need for housing with support or specific requirements.
- This strategy has a broad remit - its strategic objectives refer to a number of other strategies and policies, and it guides the overall strategic direction for investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services. Some of the strategies and policies referred to have already been adopted by the Council and have Equality Impact Assessments, some are in development stages, and others are yet to be developed.
- Due to the number of other strategies and policies shaping actions and investment required to ensure the success of this strategy, this Equality Impact Assessment will not duplicate the detail in assessments that have already been carried out, or remove the need for individual Equality Impact Assessments for the strategies and policies that Council has committed to developing in this strategy.

Step 3 – Assessing the Impact

8. Is there any evidence of higher or lower take-up of the service, facility or opportunity by any group /community and if so, is there an explanation for this?

- This strategy does not set out the detail of services, facilities, or opportunities, but rather guides the overall strategic direction for investment and service delivery across all the Council's housing services. This overall direction is based on a vision to promote access to housing for all equality groups, and commits the Council to specific pieces of work to improve access for some specific groups (e.g. commitment to an Older Persons' Housing Strategy)
- The Council is committed to providing staff training in Equality and Diversity for all back office and front line staff within the Housing Service and those other teams who are involved in delivering this strategy. By maintaining a commitment to training the Council intends to prevent any unforeseen negative consequences for any of the equality categories.

9. Could any of the associated rules, requirements or regulations of the function, activity or policy affect the accessibility of the service/ activity to any groups or communities?

- There are no directly associated rules, requirements or regulations. Where rules, requirements or regulations are associated with underlying policies or strategies these will be dealt with in the specific equality impact assessments.

10. If the impact or effects are adverse for any community or group, can they be defended i.e. in order to provide equality for another community under legislation or policy?

- Please see answer to question 9.

Step 4 – Dealing with adverse or unlawful impact

11. What can be done to improve the policy, service, function or any proposals in order to reduce or remove any adverse impact or effects identified?

- Staff across the Council's Planning and Regeneration teams, incorporating the Housing Service, will have training in all the equality categories. Where front line staff are dealing with specific customer groups this may also include: mental health and substance misuse; domestic abuse; religious, ethnic and cultural minority groups.

12. What would be needed to be able to do this? Are the resources available?

- Resources to assess and analyse the impact of the strategy across the range of differing needs, with specific reference to people with disabilities, older people, vulnerable groups and other housing with support or specific requirements.
- Commitment to training.

Step 5 – Consultation and Feedback

13. Outline your proposals to consult with those affected on proposed changes.

- Consultation on the Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018 is due to commence in March 2013 for a six week period.

Step 6 – The decision

14. What needs to be done?

- Complete the consultation process and consider all feedback.
- Adoption of the strategy in summer 2013.

Step 7 – Monitoring, review and evaluation

15. What monitoring and review mechanisms are in place or will be developed?

- Assessments and analysis of the impact of the strategy on an annual basis.
- Equality Impact Assessments to be completed for related policies and strategies.
- Training to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Step 8 – The service plan

16. What needs to be included in the Service Development Plan?

- Implementation and monitoring of the Housing Strategy.
- Staff training

17. Does an Action Plan need to be put together to ensure everything is actioned?

No

Step 9 – Publishing the Results

The EqIA will be published on the Council's website; therefore as the author of the document it is your responsibility to ensure that it is written in an understandable way, free from Council jargon.

In order for the EqIA form to be published it must be reviewed and signed off by the relevant Head of Service. It is the service manager's responsibility to ensure that this is done.

Once the form this has been completed an electronic copy should be sent to Anne Stunell / Emma Harvey – Human Resources, ext. 2089 / 2258



AGENDA ITEM: 11

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	13 March 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Environmental Health - Housing Assistance Policy
Contact:	Councillor Neil Harden - Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services Rita McGinlay - Group Manager Regulatory Services Nicholas Egerton - Team Leader Environmental Protection & Housing
Purpose of report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide an opportunity for Members to provide comments on the Draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy before it is submitted to Cabinet. 2. To consider whether the Council should recharge for costs incurred and whether these should be added to the loan for successful applications. 3. To consider whether the Council should recover costs paid to external agencies/companies for applications that are unsuccessful.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider and comment as appropriate on the draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy as set out in Appendix 1 of this report. 2. To consider and comment on the proposal in Appendices 2 and 3 that the Council should recover the costs incurred by adding these costs to the loan for successful applications. 3. To consider and comment on the recommendation that the Council should recover the costs incurred from

	<p>external agencies/companies for applications that are unsuccessful.</p> <p>(It is recommended that internal costs are not recoverable except for any fees for Planning Permission and Building Regulations (if required)).</p>
<p>Corporate objectives:</p>	<p>To produce a robust and sustainable Housing Assistance Policy in line with current best practice and one that provides value for money and most economical use of resources.</p> <p>Affordable Housing</p> <p>Loans will be targeted at those most in need. All the loans require upon completion that the properties are adequately insulated and free from any significant identified hazard(s) as required by the Housing Act 2004. This will have the potential to improve health through improved standards of living. The work on energy efficiency not only helps improve living standards but also helps to reduce fuel poverty which particularly affects low income households.</p> <p>Safe and Clean Environment</p> <p>Improvements made to improve the energy efficiency in homes will help deliver a high quality, low carbon environment, helping to make homes warmer and healthier. Empty properties left vacant for a long period of time are wasteful as well as being a potential problem for residents in nearby properties, either from possible vandalism, the property falling in to disrepair, gardens becoming overgrown or used for dumping rubbish, etc. Assistance will help remove these properties and therefore improve and maintain a clean and safe environment.</p> <p>Building Community Capacity</p> <p>To work with local communities, partnerships and other agencies to improve the standard of private sector housing within the borough. Housing assistance should lead to improvements in all wards and particularly wards in the lowest quartile of the indices of deprivation.</p> <p>To support the local economy by providing employment opportunities from improvement measures carried out within the Borough.</p> <p>Regeneration</p> <p>Financial assistance for Empty Properties and Landlords alongside Health Homes Loans should improve the standard of housing within the borough and remove unused buildings attracting investment into the borough.</p>

Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There are limited financial implications relating to this report. If the cost of applications where the person has not taken the loan are recovered as detailed in Appendix 2 & 3 then the financial risks to this authority are reduced.</p> <p>All capital expenditure for loans will be from the existing capital grant budgets. All officers costs associated with processing the application would be similar to those currently incurred for processing grant applications</p>
'Value For Money Implications'	<p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy will replace the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. This policy will be a move away from grant based assistance (except for disabled facilities grants) towards a loan based approach. This approach should ensure better value for money and help ensure that the assistance policy is more sustainable.</p>
Risk Implications	See Appendix 2 & 3
Equalities Implications	The aim of this policy includes improvements to all private sector housing, and specifically offers assistance for those with disabilities
Health And Safety Implications	There are no additional health and safety implications associated with this report.
Consultees:	<p>Councillor Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services</p> <p>Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration)</p> <p>Sally Marshall, Corporate Director (Finance and Governance)</p> <p>James Doe, Assistant Director (Planning, Development and Regeneration)</p> <p>Steven Baker - Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic & Regulatory)</p>
Background papers:	Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2003.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

Background

1. The Council currently has a Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy which was approved by Cabinet on the 4th March 2004. This policy aims to replace the existing policy and considers changes to the legislation and guidance.
2. It has long been accepted that poor quality housing has an impact on the health of occupants and on the quality of life in the area. Responsibility for maintaining privately owned homes rests first and foremost with their owners but some targeted assistance may be available from local authorities and agencies, such as home improvement agencies, for the elderly and less well off, to pay or contribute to carrying out essential maintenance/improvement work.
3. Up until July 2003 local authorities had a range of powers at their disposal to give grants or loans, or provide labour and materials to help homeowners, private sector landlords and tenants to repair or renovate their homes. The main grant giving powers for home improvement were contained in the *Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996*. This Act also governs mandatory disabled facilities grants which remain unaffected (i.e. they are still mandatory).
4. Part I of the 1996 Act provided for authorities to issue discretionary grants (subject to a test of resources) for specific purposes. Home repair assistance (also under Part I of the 1996 Act) allowed authorities to provide assistance for smaller repairs and improvements without having to follow the more detailed procedures required for other grants. These grants were targeted at the elderly, disabled and those in receipt of income-related benefits.

Problems with the old system and existing Policy

5. In March 2001 the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) published a consultation paper, *Private sector housing renewal: reform of the Housing Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Housing Act 1985*, chapter 5 of this paper set out perceived problems with the private sector renewal system.

(Note: Housing matters are now the responsibility of Communities and Local Government (CLG))

Grants

6. The very detailed controls that governed local authorities' powers to give grants under the 1996 Act were viewed as inconsistent with the discretionary regime and the legislation governing loans, which contained far fewer restrictions. The controls, the aim of which was to ensure the effective targeting of public resources, were identified as a factor that actually inhibited authorities' ability to address local needs.
7. The paper also suggested that the widespread use of grants as part of area based renewal work might actually discourage homeowners with resources from carrying out the work themselves.

Loans

8. The restrictions on the use of home improvement loans were far fewer, but nonetheless, it was thought that they prevented authorities from being able to use them effectively. As the rate and terms of interest under which loans were given were linked to those for commercial loans, authorities could not offer preferential loans for home repair, except in very limited circumstances.
9. The regime had prevented authorities from helping to develop “equity release” schemes, in which capital in the home, rather than income, is used to repay a loan. Equity release loans avoid the need for the borrower to make repayments from income and can provide access to capital without reducing people’s living standards.

The ‘new’ approach to private sector renewal

10. In April 2000 the Government published *Quality and Choice: a decent home for all* in which it proposed a new approach to private sector renewal. In place of detailed regulation the then Government set out proposals to use a combination of guidance, local public service agreements and Best Value to set key principles and targets, monitor activity and reward good performance.
11. On 13 December 2001 the Government laid before Parliament a proposal for a draft Regulatory Reform Order under the *Regulatory Reform Act 2001*. This Order proposed a number of changes to the detailed provisions that prescribed how authorities could offer assistance to home-owners and others for the renovation of their properties (see below). The Order was subject to detailed simultaneous scrutiny by the Deregulation and Regulatory Reform Committee in the Commons and the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee in the Lords.

The Regulatory Reform Order 2002

12. *The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002*, which was made under the *Regulatory Reform Act 2001* came into force in July 2002. Authorities’ powers to provide renovation grants and home repair assistance were revoked and replaced with a system under which authorities are enabled to provide a wide variety of assistance to home owners.

Grants and loans

13. Authorities now have a general power to give financial assistance for home repair, improvement and adaptation. This power is not restricted aside from the fact that authorities must have regard to guidance which sets out overarching principles such as the need to be fair and to:
 - give priority to the most vulnerable households;
 - ensure that applicants for loans are properly advised; and
 - take realistic account of people’s ability to contribute, including to equity release loans.

14. Authorities are required to give assistance under these powers in accordance with a published policy. To ensure that the assistance given is targeted effectively, authorities have the power to carry out means testing and to charge for any labour or materials they provide, should they wish to do so. They have the power to set the conditions under which any financial assistance should be repaid and the period over which those conditions should apply. Where they chose to give a loan or to attach conditions to a grant or loan, authorities have the power to waive any requirement to repay it or to reduce the amount they require to be repaid.

APPENDIX 1 – PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To consider passing a resolution in the following terms:

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Part 1 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during the item in Part II of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to:

APPENDIX A

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme 2013/14

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
19 June 2013	7 June 2013	Quarter 4 Performance Report (& Q4 Operational Risk Reports)	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services S Baker, Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic & Regulatory J Deane, Assistant Director, Finance and Resources	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance.
		'Get Involved' Strategy		E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing C Leech, Team Leader, Policy and Participation	
		Old Town Hall Update		D Austin, Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Delivery J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services	
		Council House Building Programme and Homeless Hostel		J Hedger, Group Manager, Strategic Housing	
17 July 2013	5 July 2013				

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
11 September 2013	30 August 2013	Quarter 1 Performance Report (& Q1 Operational Risk Reports)	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services S Baker, Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic & Regulatory J Deane, Assistant Director, Finance and Resources	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance.
13 November 2013	1 November 2013	Quarter 2 Performance Report (& Q2 Operational Risk Reports)	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services S Baker, Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic & Regulatory J Deane, Assistant Director, Finance and Resources	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance.
12 December 2013		Budget 2014-2015	Sc	S Marshall, Corporate Director, Finance & Governance	

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
<i>Joint OSC Meeting</i>		<i>No further items to be added</i>			
29 January 2014	17 January 2014	Quarter 3 Performance Report (& Q3 Operational Risk Reports)	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services S Baker, Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic & Regulatory	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance
5 February 2014 <i>Joint OSC meeting</i>		Budget 2014-2015 <i>No further items to be added</i>	Sc	S Marshall, Corporate Director Finance & Governance	
19 March 2014	7 March 2014				

PM – Performance management

PD – Policy Development

Sc – Scrutiny

Items to be scheduled:

- Update report on Supported Housing
- Update report on Tenant Involvement Strategy
- Neighbourhood Action Group report
- Equalities Strategy