

# Dacorum Borough Council Housing Landlord

## Consultation Framework 2013





## Housing Service Consultation Framework

Consultation is a very valuable part of tenant involvement as it gives tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to comment on issues that directly affect them.

It is essential that consultation is well planned, co-ordinated, robust and cost-effective, and that it is used to develop action plans to improve the quality of services we are delivering to our tenants and leaseholders.

Our definition of consultation is: **Ask, Listen, (Check\*) Act.**

### When do we consult?

When a change to a service or policy is needed that directly affects tenants and/or leaseholders we will ask your opinion on this. We will listen to your responses and we will then act upon them. If we are unable to act on your responses then we will give you a reason why we have taken the decisions that have been made. Matters that affect tenants and/or leaseholders locally will be consulted at that local level to ensure that the best outcome in local areas is achieved.

### We will also consult our tenants and leaseholders:

- when changes implemented need monitoring/tracking
- when there are unanswered questions from previous survey results that service officers cannot answer themselves
- when residents' opinion or feedback is required

**\*Where a consultation forms part of a project or piece of work that the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee (TLC) are involved in or are monitoring then we will refer all results of the consultation back to them before proceeding. This enables the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee to *check* that the best method of consultation has been used and that the consultation has been valuable. Failure to consult on changes to a service or policy that directly affects tenants and/or leaseholders will result in the TLC referring the matter to the Executive Panel for a full review and investigation on behalf of those tenants and/or leaseholders affected**

### Benefits of Consultation

#### To our tenants and leaseholders:

- Opportunity to influence decisions and actions that affect their lives
- Opportunity to express their views and concerns
- Opportunity to suggest service improvements
- Increased understanding and involvement with the Council

**To the Housing team:**

- Better decision making
- Better understanding of the needs of local people
- Early warning of potential problems
- Opportunity to make services more relevant and effective

**Consultation Procedure**

This consultation procedure defines the methods and standards of consultation to be adopted by Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service. Its purpose is to enable and encourage the effective involvement of tenants and leaseholders in matters that affect them and it ensures that tenants, leaseholders and their recognised group/s are made aware of when, why and how they are consulted and the outcome of any consultation. At all times consultations will abide by Dacorum Borough Council's '**Consultation Ethical Guidelines**'

This framework forms part of the Policy and Participation team's procedure document for Tenant Involvement.

**Consultation standard**

**Consultation procedures will vary according to:**

- The subject of the consultation, which may for example be an improvement or repair scheme, a regeneration initiative or a strategic issue.
- The people to be consulted, which might be all tenants and/or leaseholders, a whole block, estate or specific individuals and/or households.
- Particular circumstances; there might be specific local issues, environmental considerations, related legislation or guidance to take into account.

**The Housing Service will use a variety of methods to achieve our consultation standards including:**

- Informing tenants, leaseholders and their recognised associations of the consultations taking place in their area.
- Hold public meetings to discuss how the issue will be progressed – where appropriate.
- Set up a steering group if appropriate or requested by residents, which involves tenants, leaseholders and residents affected.
- Provide information to all those affected regarding any planned timetable, who to contact and how to complain during the process.
- Give regular and timely updates and advice to everyone affected and involved on lengthy projects.
- Provide opportunities for those affected to have their say on decisions and be involved in the process, where appropriate.
- Those that have been involved may be asked to evaluate the consultation at the end of the process.
- All consulted will be informed of how to access the outcome of any consultation. Results of consultations affecting all tenants or leaseholders will be published on our website.

- A variety of methods will be used to reach as many people as possible and ensure that those consulted are representative of those affected by the proposed change.
- Include the use of social media, such as Facebook, twitter and the website to increase the number of methods/ways in which people can have a say.
- Tenants cannot be formally involved in the decision-making process when appointing Housing staff. However there may be opportunities for an informal introduction for shortlisted candidates for all recruitment to the Tenant Involvement Team and Housing Service Team Leaders. The TLC will also be notified when a Group Manager is being recruited. All new Housing staff will be given the opportunity to attend as an observer at TLC and/or Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee (HMEC).

### **The role of the Local Promise Champion**

Local Promise Champions are involved tenants who work with the Housing Service to ensure that we are complying with the Housing Regulations set out by the Homes and Community Agency; they are representatives from the TLC. Each Local Promise Champion monitors one of the standards. The Local Promise Champion will be informed of any consultation that is taking place within their area. This will enable them to monitor the process and ensure that effective consultation is being undertaken.

### **Consultation Register**

From October 2013 a register of consultation will be created and this will be shared on the website so that all tenants and leaseholders can view what consultations are ongoing at any time. Following testing and feedback, this will be formally introduced from 2014/15 and will form part of our local promises and service standards.

The consultation summary chart overleaf (page 4) shows at a glance the circumstances in which tenants, leaseholders and their groups should be consulted or informed of changes that affect them. Please note it is not an exhaustive list.

A variety of consultation methods may be used, and may include writing to them individually, or publishing an article in News and Views. Appendix 1 shows some levels of involvement.

In order to maximise the number of people that respond to consultation and give as many opportunities as possible for people to have a say we will also use social media which may include Facebook, twitter, and the website. Appendix 2 shows the procedure we will take on all consultations.

In all cases Dacorum Borough Council will abide by any relevant law or regulatory guidance.

### **Consultation Summary Chart**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Every DBC Tenant</b>	<b>Every DBC Leaseholder</b>	<b>All affected tenants and leaseholders</b>	<b>Residents' Associations</b>	<b>Tenant and Leaseholder Committee</b>
Changes to tenancy conditions					

	✓				✓
Changes to the provision of the Housing Service	✓	✓		✓	✓
Improvements to the provision of the Housing Service	✓	✓		✓	✓
Withdrawal of a Housing Service	✓	✓		✓	✓
Changes to general repairs procedures	✓			✓	✓
Changes to rent collection	✓			✓	✓
Changes to Lettings Policy	✓			✓	✓
Programmed Maintenance Works: ❖ Demolitions/decants ❖ Modernisation/ Refurbishment ❖ Environmental/Estate works			✓	✓	✓
Improvements to a local area			✓	✓	
Design modifications to individual properties or blocks			✓	✓	
Changes to Lease conditions		✓			✓
Changes to Tenants' Handbook	✓				✓
Changes to Leaseholders' Handbook		✓			✓
Changes to leaseholders' service charges		✓			✓
Any change to charges made to tenants			✓		✓
Introduction of other new Policy or Procedure			✓	✓	✓
Changes or reviews of existing policies			✓		✓
Developing methods for monitoring the quality of the service i.e. landscaping/cleaning etc.			✓	✓	✓
Introduction of local promises	✓	✓			✓
Developing a new Strategy i.e. Older Persons Strategy	✓				✓
Changes to the Housing Strategy	✓	✓			✓
Annual Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homelessness Strategy ❖ This may include residents of the borough in addition to tenants and leaseholders	✓	✓			✓

It may also be necessary to consult with a variety of partners or other agencies if they are affected by the issue being consulted on. This could include Councillors, internal Council departments, and external agencies such as Hertfordshire County Council, the local Constabulary, and other residents in the area. (This is not an exhaustive list).

#### **Data protection and how the information will be used.**

The Data Protection Act 1998 ensures that the information provided will only be used for research or to produce statistics.

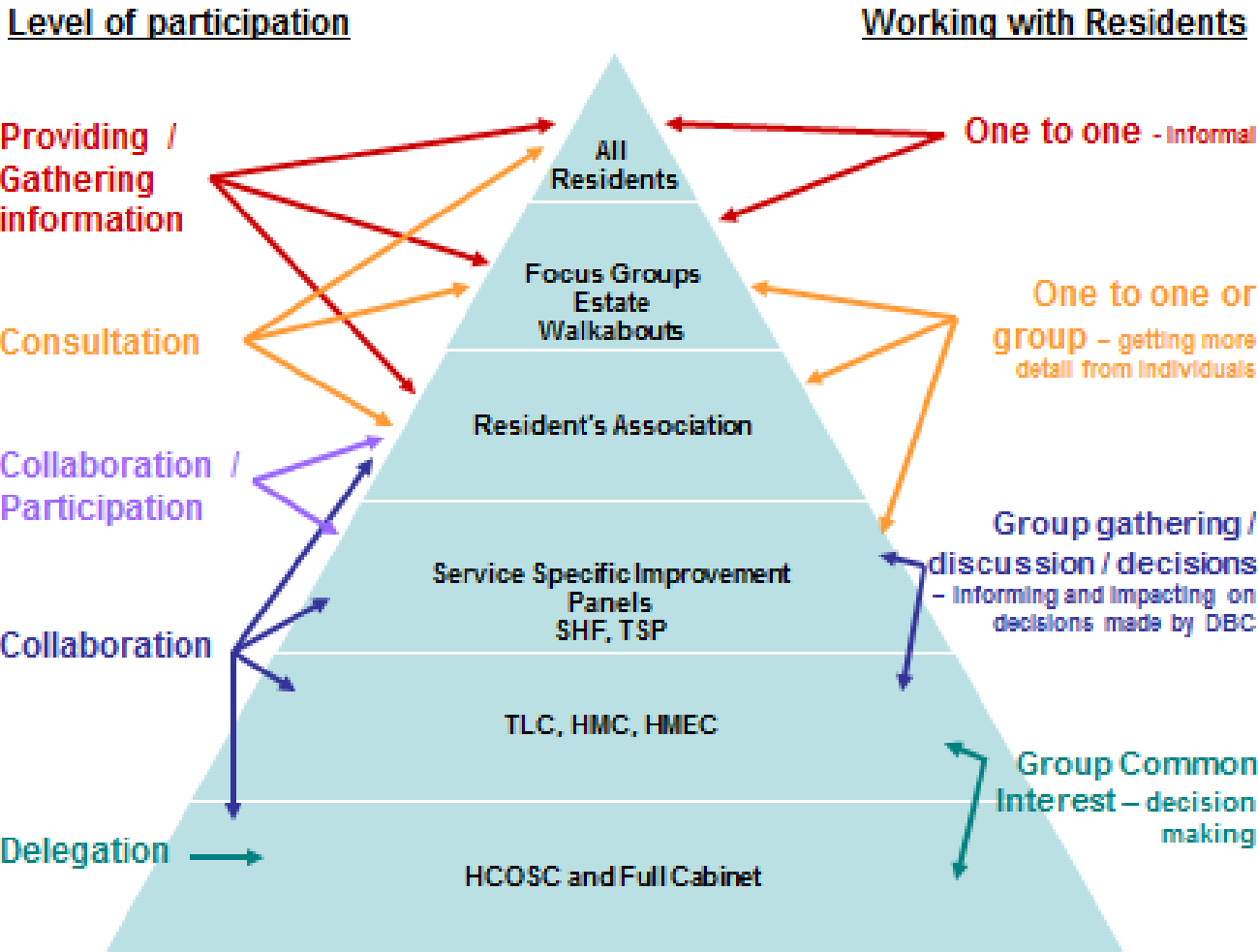
The data is confidential and only the aggregated data which cannot be attributed to any individual will be published.

## **Equal Opportunities**

We will include Equal Opportunities questions to help us ensure that we are hearing from and considering all sections of the community. These questions are optional.

## **Contact Details**

For further information on consultations, please contact Tenant Involvement on 01442 228000 or email [tenantinvolvement@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@dacorum.gov.uk)



Levels of involvement

**Consultation Procedure**

