



HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 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	Killen
Bassadone	Mahmood (Vice-Chairman)
Conway	Marshall (Chairman)
Douris	McLean
Flint	Organ

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

Substitute Members: Councillors G Chapman, Clark, Harris and Wixted.

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

PART I

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1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 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

AGENDA ITEM:6

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	17 July 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Housing Service Plan 2013/14
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Author/Responsible Officer – Elliott Brooks
Purpose of report:	1. To provide timescales and Lead Officers for the actions included in the 2013/14 Housing Service Plan
Recommendations	1. To note the timescales and Lead Officers for the Housing Service Plan 2013/14
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> N/A.
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u> N/A
Risk Implications	Housing Risk Register is updated quarterly and presented to the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Equalities Implications	N/A
Health And Safety Implications	N/A
Consultees:	Tenants & Leaseholders Committee Portfolio Holder for Housing Corporate Director – Housing & Regeneration All Housing Staff
Background papers:	N/A

Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	N/A
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1. At the June 19th Meeting of the Housing & Communities Overview & Appendix 3 of the Housing Service Performance Report detailed the Service Plan 2013/14. At the time of the meeting timescales had not been assigned to individual pieces of work.

It was agreed that the Service Plan be re-submitted to the July meeting for committee members for information. The Service Plan progress will be reported quarterly to the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Service Plan & Performance Indicators

Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service has gone through some significant changes over the past few years and that has resulted in the strategic approach needing to alter dramatically.

2012/13 saw the first year of Self Financing. This meant that for the first time the Council could approach its Housing Service in a strategic way. A 30 year Business Plan was agreed with tenants and signed off by the Cabinet.

Beneficial rates secured to service and repay the Self Financing debt meant that from the 1st year, the Council had significantly more resources to invest in its housing stock.

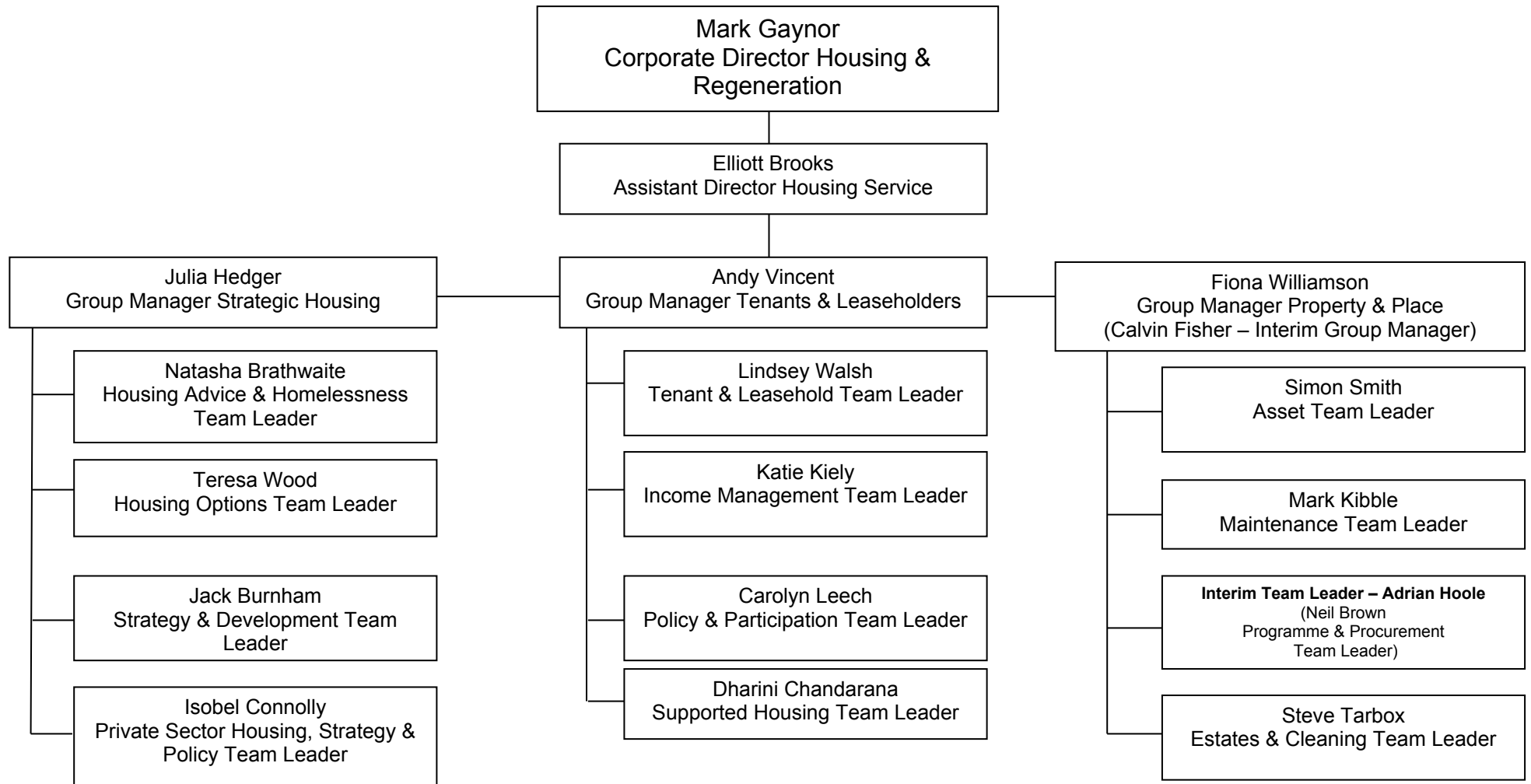
The Business Plan sets out the approach to maintaining its stock, improving estates, investing in remodelling & energy efficiency measures as well as a new build programme to build the Council's first new homes for over 25 years.

Other significant changes have been a review of the Tenant & Leaseholder involvement structure, a shift in focus around income maximisation and tenancy sustainment due to the anticipated impact of Welfare Reform, as well as the review of the Tenancy Agreement and the preparation to introduce Flexible Tenancies from April 2013.

2014 will also see the start of a new Total Asset Management contract to maintain the housing stock, with an approach agreed to offer one contract combining both responsive repairs and planned works. Separate contracts will be awarded for Gas Servicing & other specialist works.

In December 2012 there was a re-organisation of the Housing Service to bring it together, with Housing Landlord and Strategic Housing brought under the same Assistant Director. The Strategic Housing Service has also been subject to significant challenges which will continue into 2013/14. As well as starting the Council's New Build Programme Phase 1 of 71 new homes and a homeless hostel, the Council's Housing Allocations Policy has been reviewed as well as the launch of a new Housing Strategy and the Council's Strategic Tenancy Policy.

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Service



2013/14 Housing Service Plan

The Service Plan captures the key improvements or pieces of work we will deliver this year. It identifies how we will do this and who will be responsible. The Service Plan progress will be reported to our Tenants & Leaseholders Committee and the Council's Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee Quarterly.

	<i>What will be different once this work is done</i>	<i>Project Lead & Target Completion</i>
<i>Asset Management Strategy</i>	<i>We will develop a long term plan which will detail how we expect to invest in Dacorum Borough Council owned homes, sheltered schemes, footpaths and drying areas over the next 10 years.</i>	<i>Asset Team Leader September 2013</i>
<i>Cross Tenure Energy Strategy</i>	<i>We will utilise grants where available to help improve the energy efficiency of privately rented, privately owned and Dacorum Borough Council owned homes. We will also ensure that when we undertake work to improve Dacorum Borough Council owned homes that we seek to improve their energy efficiency.</i>	<i>Asset Team Leader December 2013</i>
<i>Digital access</i>	<i>We will improve the number of people who have access to the internet; by:-</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Installing internet enabled computer terminals in each of our sheltered schemes</i> • <i>Working with Community Centres to install additional internet enabled computer terminals</i> • <i>Develop a training course to enable tenants to develop their IT skills</i> 	<i>Income Team Leader March 2014</i>
<i>Homelessness - prevention and developing a new Homelessness Strategy</i>	<i>We want to help prevent households from becoming homeless. Our Housing Advice Team already provides services to help households from becoming homeless. During 2013/14 we will:-</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop working with the local prison to ensure that when inmates finish their term that they have access to suitable accommodation.</i> • <i>Employ Welfare and Budget Advisors to help residents with the impact of the on-going economic difficulties and the introduction of changes to welfare benefits.</i> • <i>Adopt a Homelessness Strategy that will set long-term strategic objectives with a clear action plan for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ <i>Preventing homelessness,</i> ➢ <i>Improving temporary housing options,</i> 	<i>Homelessness and Housing Advice Team Leader December 2013</i>

	<p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Focusing on suitable and well-managed resettlement into more secure accommodation.</i> 	
<i>Developing the Private Rent Sector</i>	<p>We want to develop and run a Local Lettings Agency to improve and expand the current Deposit Guarantee Scheme. The aims of this work will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase the number of local landlords working with the Council;</i> • <i>Provide more housing options to low income and vulnerable households;</i> • <i>Develop a modern, professional service with a good local reputation; and</i> • <i>Generate income to cover costs (remaining competitive over private agencies).</i> 	<p>Strategy & Private Sector Housing Team Leader</p> <p>December 2013</p>
<i>Developing the Housing Options service</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop a new Enhanced Housing Options module on the Moving with Dacorum website which identifies the options available to a household when seeking alternative accommodation.</i> • <i>We will also provide more details on the website including developing a user guide and information leaflets on topics such as About Housing in Dacorum.</i> 	<p>Housing Options Team Leader</p> <p>December 2013</p>
<p>We will utilise the feedback we receive to improve the quality of the services we provide.</p> <p><i>(affects tenants, leaseholders and housing applicants)</i></p>	<p>We receive feedback in the form of satisfaction survey responses, complaints, comments at involvement events and complements.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Delivering an improvement plan developed as a result of undertaking the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) and publish progress within News and Views and our Annual Report.</i> • <i>Publish information on the themes that people are complaining about</i> • <i>Ensure that our 'Local Offers' continue to reflect our tenants priorities</i> • <i>Review how affective our satisfaction surveys are in capturing the views of our tenants</i> <p>We will use this information to review our policies and procedures and enhance the information that we provide to service users.</p>	<p>Policy and Participation Team Leader</p> <p>March 2014</p>
<i>Leasehold service review</i>	<p>Review the service that leaseholders receive; by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Comparing the service that leaseholders in Dacorum receive with other leaseholders</i> 	<p>Leasehold Team Leader</p>

	<p><i>across the county</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Asking leaseholders' their view of the quality and costs associated with their existing service</i> • <i>Ensuring that all processes associated with providing services to leaseholders are as efficient as possible</i> 	<p><i>December 2013</i></p>
<p><i>Older Persons Strategy</i></p> <p><i>(affects tenants, leaseholders, housing applicants and residents across the borough)</i></p>	<p><i>We will look at the housing, support, care and health services available to older people across the borough.</i></p> <p><i>This work will seek to understand how well these services are working together and what is needed to be done to improve the co-ordination of these services over the next 10 years.</i></p> <p><i>We will also identify whether there is sufficient provision of services for older people within the borough; whether new services are required or some are existing services are surplus to requirements.</i></p> <p><i>A new Older Persons Strategy will be developed and adopted by the Council.</i></p>	<p><i>Strategy & Private Sector Housing Team Leader</i></p> <p><i>March 2014</i></p>
<p><i>Repairs & Maintenance Procurement project delivery</i></p> <p><i>(affects tenants and leaseholders)</i></p>	<p><i>This work is designed to enable us to prepare for the end of our current maintenance contracts – and to ensure that a new contract(s) is in place from the spring of 2014.</i></p>	<p><i>Property and Place Group Manager</i></p> <p><i>July 2014</i></p>
<p><i>Vulnerable people</i></p> <p><i>(affects tenants)</i></p>	<p><i>We will look at how we deliver services to 'vulnerable people' – for example we may do certain repair work quicker if a tenant is known to be vulnerable or be able to provide support services to ensure they are able to sustain their tenancy.</i></p>	<p><i>Tenant and Leasehold Group Manager</i></p> <p><i>October 2013</i></p>
<p><i>Develop phase 2 and 3 of the Council New Build Programme</i></p>	<p><i>We will develop phase 2 & 3 of the Council New Build programme including purchasing land, developing standard of the new homes and confirming the required budgets for the whole programme.</i></p>	<p><i>Housing Development Manager</i></p> <p><i>March 2014</i></p>

Housing Performance Indicators 2013/14

As well as improving the service we offer to our tenants and leaseholders and making changes to what we do, we have to ensure that the service we offer is monitored and achieving high standards. For this reason we have agreed a list of Performance Indicators with our Tenants & Leaseholders which will enable us, and those who receive the service to keep an eye on the core functions we deliver. Performance Indicators are reported to our Tenants & Leaseholder Committee and the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

Property & Place

Ref	Indicator	Target	Tolerance
PP01	Percentage of dwellings with a valid Gas Safety Certificate	100%	0.5%
PP07	Value of Capital Type Installations, replacements or major repairs YTD	98% of programme at year end	10% at year end
PP08	Percentage of tenants satisfied with Gas Servicing	97.00%	5%
PP10	Percentage of urgent repairs completed within government time limits	98.00%	5%
PP11	Average time taken to complete a non-urgent repair	15.00days	10%
PP13	Percentage of responsive repairs completed right first time	98.5%	5%
PP14	Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made	97.00%	5%
PP15	Percentage of tenants satisfied with the level of repair	97.00%	5%
	Average Time to re-let a Sheltered Home	50 days	5%
	Average Time to re-let a General Need Property	25 days	5%
	ADAPTED (TBC)	TBC	
PP19	Percentage of tenants satisfied with planned replacement works	97.00%	5%
New	Percentage of responsive repairs completed within target	97.00%	5%

Tenants & Leaseholders

Ref	Indicator	Target	Tolerance
TL01	Current rent arrears as a percentage of the annual debit	3.8%	5%
TL02	Rent collected as a percentage of the rent owed	98.5%	5%
TL04	Percentage of income lost due council homes being empty	1%	10%
TL13a	Percentage of Community Alarm calls answered within 1 minute	97.50%	5%
TL16	Acknowledgement of a report of ASB within 24 hours	95%	5%
TL19	The number of Mutual Exchanges	info	

	undertaken in the financial year		
New	The number of Council tenants who have moved to a smaller home	Info	
New	Satisfaction with the handling of ASB cases (Medium Level)	80%	10%
New	The number of tenants actively involved with the Housing Service	500	10%

Strategic Housing

Ref	Indicator	Target	Tolerance
	Number of new homeless applications received YTD	info	N/A
	Number of homeless applicants accepted	info	N/A
	Average time taken to investigate a homeless application	33 days	10%
	Percentage of Homelessness reviews upheld by Member's panel	90%	5%
	Number of households in B & B for longer than 6 weeks	0	10%
	Number of applicants on active housing register	Info (start Quarter 3 2013/14)	N/A
	Percentage of allocations made to transfer seeking tenants	info	N/A
	Percentage of allocations made to home seekers	info	N/A
	Percentage of Allocations made to Homeless applicants	Info	N/A
	Percentage of total allocations made as a direct let	Info	N/A
	Number of new affordable homes completed	150	10%

DRAFT AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	17 July 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Empty Homes Strategy
Contact:	Councillor Neil Harden - Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services Nicholas Egerton - Team Leader Environmental Protection & Housing Steven Baker - Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic & Regulatory)
Purpose of report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide an opportunity for Members to provide comments on the Draft Environmental Health – Empty Homes Strategy and recommend it for approval (Appendix A).• To consider the approach this authority proposes to take to reduce the number of private sector empty homes within the borough.
Recommendations:	To consider and comment on the Regulatory Service, Environmental Health - Empty Homes Strategy as detailed in Appendix A of this report and recommend its approval by Cabinet together with amendments suggested by Members.
Corporate objectives:	To produce a robust and sustainable Empty Homes Strategy in line with current best practice and one that provides value for money and most economical use of resources. Affordable Housing

	<p>Action will be targeted at those properties in the worse condition and also in areas of highest housing need. There is a possibility of linking the work under this strategy with a private sector leasing scheme which would enable additional affordable housing.</p> <p>Safe and Clean Environment.</p> <p>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. This strategy, together with the Environmental Health - Housing Assistance Policy, 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. Reducing the number of Empty Properties 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 (under the Environmental Health - Housing Assistance Policy) and Private Sector Leasing Schemes will help improve the standard of housing within the borough and remove unused buildings attracting investment into the borough.</p>
<p>Implications:</p> <p>'Value For Money</p>	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>All officer costs would be met within existing budgets. This however will limit the amount of action this authority is able to take.</p> <p>If an Empty Dwelling Management Order is put in place the local authority becomes responsible for the management of the property, including outstanding debts etc. However this power is discretionary and therefore it is not proposed that this action is taken where there may be significant cost implications for this authority.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p>

Implications:	It is anticipated that a reduction in empty homes in the borough will lead to an increase in the amount of money received by this authority in the way of New Homes Bonus. This strategy should therefore have a positive financial benefit and offer value for money
Risk Implications:	The most significant risk is identified above in the financial implications.
Equalities Implications	This Strategy is aiming to resolve issues relating to Empty Properties and is therefore believed unlikely to discriminate on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability or age. An equalities impact assessment had been carried out (Appendix B)
Health and Safety Implications	There are no additional health and safety implications associated with this report.
Consultees:	Councillor Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration) Sally Marshall, Corporate Director (Finance and Governance) James Doe, Assistant Director (Planning, Development and Regeneration)
Background Papers:	HM Government – Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England (November 2011)
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report	

1. Background

- 1.1 Long term empty homes in the private sector are a wasted resource and can present challenges to the local community and cause problems for their owners. Generally empty properties have a negative impact on the neighbourhood.
- 1.2 Not only is an empty property detrimental to an area but can also be detrimental for the owners of the properties. Empty homes cost their owners money in maintenance, insurance, council tax (which will be increased to 150% for long term empty properties) and loss of rental income. In some cases this can badly affect vulnerable owners, who may be aware they need to renovate a property but are unable to afford the cost of renovation, yet are paying simply to leave the property empty.
- 1.3 In Dacorum it is difficult for key workers, young people leaving home and single persons to access suitable housing. The opportunities for new

affordable housing developments are limited. Bringing more long-term empty homes back into use is a sustainable way to meet housing demand and helps to reduce the need to build new houses.

- 1.4 The national and regional trend over the last three years have been a reduction in the number of empty properties. This trend however is not apparent within Dacorum which is experiencing a growth in the number of empty properties over the same period.

2.0 What Actions Can We Take:

- 2.1 The Government, through the Department for Communities and Local Government, are encouraging local authorities to tackle the problem of empty homes in their districts. This policy therefore is clearly aligned with current government priorities & key objectives.
- 2.2 We would hope to encourage the owners of empty homes to bring them back into use voluntarily. Our approach is focused initially on engaging with the owners offering support, advice and, where appropriate, offering loans, or the opportunity to make use of leasing schemes. However, where an owner is unwilling to bring the home back into use, and it is either causing a specific problem within its neighbourhood, or would meet a particular housing need, we will consider the use of the enforcement powers available to us.



Environmental Health – Empty Homes Strategy

Regulatory Services

Version Control	Version 1
Status of Strategy	Draft
Sponsor	Steve Baker, Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic and Regulatory) (Monitoring Officer)
Author/Reviewer	Nicholas Egerton, Team Leader for Environmental Protection and Housing
Approved	
Review Date	

Dacorum Borough Council

Regulatory Services Empty Homes Strategy.

Contents

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scope of This Strategy - What are Empty Homes
- 1.2 The Problems Associated With Empty Homes
- 1.3 The Benefits of Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use

2. Strategic Context for Empty Property Work

2.1 National Context

- 2.2 Regional Context
- 2.3 Local Context
- 2.4 Why Homes Are Left Empty
- 2.5 The Housing Market and Need in Dacorum

3.0 Strategic Aims and Objectives

4.0 Our Approach to tackling Empty Homes

4.1 Step 1 – Identification

- 4.2 Step 2 - Investigation**
- 4.3 Step 3 - Initial Prioritisation**
- 4.4. Step 4 – Encouragement**
- 4.5 Step 5 – Enforcement**

5.0 Delivering the Strategy

- 5.1 Resourcing and Partnerships**
- 5.2 Use of Empty Homes Information

Appendix 1 - Council Tax Exemptions relating to Empty Properties

Appendix 2 - Powers Available to Improve Empty Properties

Appendix 3 - Supporting Documents and Consultation

1. Introduction

- 1.01 This strategy explains Dacorum Council's approach to bringing empty homes back into use and is an important element of the Council's overarching Housing Strategy. It contains details of the range of powers available to us to achieve this work and how we will use these powers.
- 1.1 **The Scope of This Strategy - What are Empty Homes**

The focus of this strategy is not on those empty properties where there is a clear intention that the home will become occupied within a reasonably short time, but on those which remain empty for longer than 6 months and where the owner has either no plans to bring the property back into use, or where there will be a long delay before they are reoccupied.
- 1.1.1 Within an effective housing market there will be some properties that are unoccupied for a short period, either during the transfer of ownership or between lettings. In most cases these properties will be empty for less than 6 months. There will also be the need for property to be unoccupied through periods of renovation, due to the owner being temporarily in care or probate issues. Again these can generally be reoccupied within 6 months although a few properties may require being empty for longer periods.
- 1.2 **The Problems Associated With Empty Homes**

Long term empty homes are a wasted resource; they can present challenges to the local community and cause problems for their owners. Generally empty properties have a negative impact on the neighbourhood. Specifically empty properties can:

- attract crime and anti-social behaviour
- provide shelter for criminal activity.
- have a detrimental effect on the overall amenity of an area

1.2.1 If not adequately maintained empty homes can also:

- become unsightly
- cause damage to neighbouring properties
- lead to accidents if children use them as play places.

1.2.2 Not only is an empty property detrimental to an area but can also be detrimental for the owners of the properties. Empty homes cost their owners money in maintenance, insurance, council tax and loss of rental income. In some cases this can badly affect vulnerable owners, who may be aware they need to renovate a property but are unable to afford the cost of renovation, yet are paying simply to leave the property empty.

1.3 **The Benefits of Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use**

Returning an empty home into use has benefits for the whole community. Including:

- reducing the reality and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
- improving the look and feel of the area
- increasing available housing in established locations
- reducing the need for new development
- providing either capital or income for the owner

1.3.1 In Dacorum it is difficult for key workers, young people leaving home and single persons to access suitable housing. The opportunities for new affordable housing developments are limited. Bringing more long-term empty homes back into use is a sustainable way to meet housing demand and helps to reduce the need to build new houses.

2. **Strategic Context for Empty Property Work**

2.1 **National Context**

2.1.1 The Government, through the Department for Communities and Local Government, are encouraging local authorities to tackle the problem of empty homes in their districts.

2.1.2 The Governments Housing Strategy – Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England (November 2011) includes a chapter entitled 'Our strategy for Empty Homes'. The Coalition government has stated that:

'We are committed to bring empty homes back into use, as a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing and reducing the negative impact that neglected empty homes have on communities.

That is why we are:

- ✦ awarding the New Homes Bonus to empty homes brought back into use
- ✦ providing information and practical advice to local authorities and communities to help them address empty homes
- ✦ investing £100 million funding to bring problematic empty homes back into use and announcing £50 million further funding to tackle some of the worst concentrations of empty homes
- ✦ consulting on options to levy an 'empty homes premium' on the Council Tax payable.
- ✦ proposing changes to Empty Dwelling Management Orders to target their use on the very worst long term empty homes causing a nuisance to the community'.

2.1.3 There is clearly a national driver to ensure that empty properties are bought back into use.

2.2 Regional Context

The annual Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA) publishes housing data reported by local authorities. The table below gives the number of homes which have been reported as empty for more than 6 months in private sector housing (non RSL) for England, the East of England and Dacorum Borough Council.

Year	England	East of England	Dacorum Borough Council
2009	307684	29262	332
2010	289612	27832	384
2011	285808	25906	566

Table 1 showing private sector empty properties nationally, regionally and locally.

Table 1 shows that the national and regional trend over the last three years have been a reduction in the number of empty properties. This trend however is not apparent within Dacorum which is experiencing a growth in the number of empty properties over the same period.

2.3 Local Context

Within Dacorum our empty homes work contributes to many of the Council's Corporate Priorities including:

Affordable Housing
Safe and Clean Environment
Building Community Capacity
Regeneration

The Empty Homes Strategy sits within the suite of strategies (See Appendix 3) and under the umbrella of the overall Dacorum Housing Strategy 2013-18.

2.4 Why homes are left empty

In 2005 the Government Office for the East of England commissioned a Research study by MORI Social Research Institute in order to understand the reasons why privately owned properties in the East of England have been empty for some time (<http://emptyhomes.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CTAppNoTable.pdf>). The survey was based on a sample of local authorities selected as representative in the region. In total 3,294 empty properties were used for the survey.

2.4.1 Of those that responded who were still the owners of the empty home, a wide range of reasons were given when asked why the property is currently empty. The most common reasons being:

- It is being repaired/renovated
- I am trying to sell/let it
- It needs repairs/renovation
- I am planning to repair/renovate it soon
- I don't want the trouble of tenants living there

2.4.2 The reasons provided by MORI are believed to be consistent with the causes of empty properties in Dacorum and without action many of these properties will remain empty and deteriorating.

2.5 The Housing Market and Housing Need In Dacorum

There is a clear affordability problem in Dacorum for low-income households. The Dacorum Housing Market & Need Assessment 2012 study highlighted the overwhelming requirement for affordable housing in Dacorum, for all sizes and types of home. One of the key findings of the 2012 study (in contrast to the 2003 study) was the increased requirement for older persons housing.

3. Strategic Aim and Objectives

3.1 The key aim for our empty homes work is:

To maximise the number of empty homes brought back into use.

3.2 This will be achieved by working towards the following objectives.

- **Ensure the availability and effective use of information on empty homes within our district**

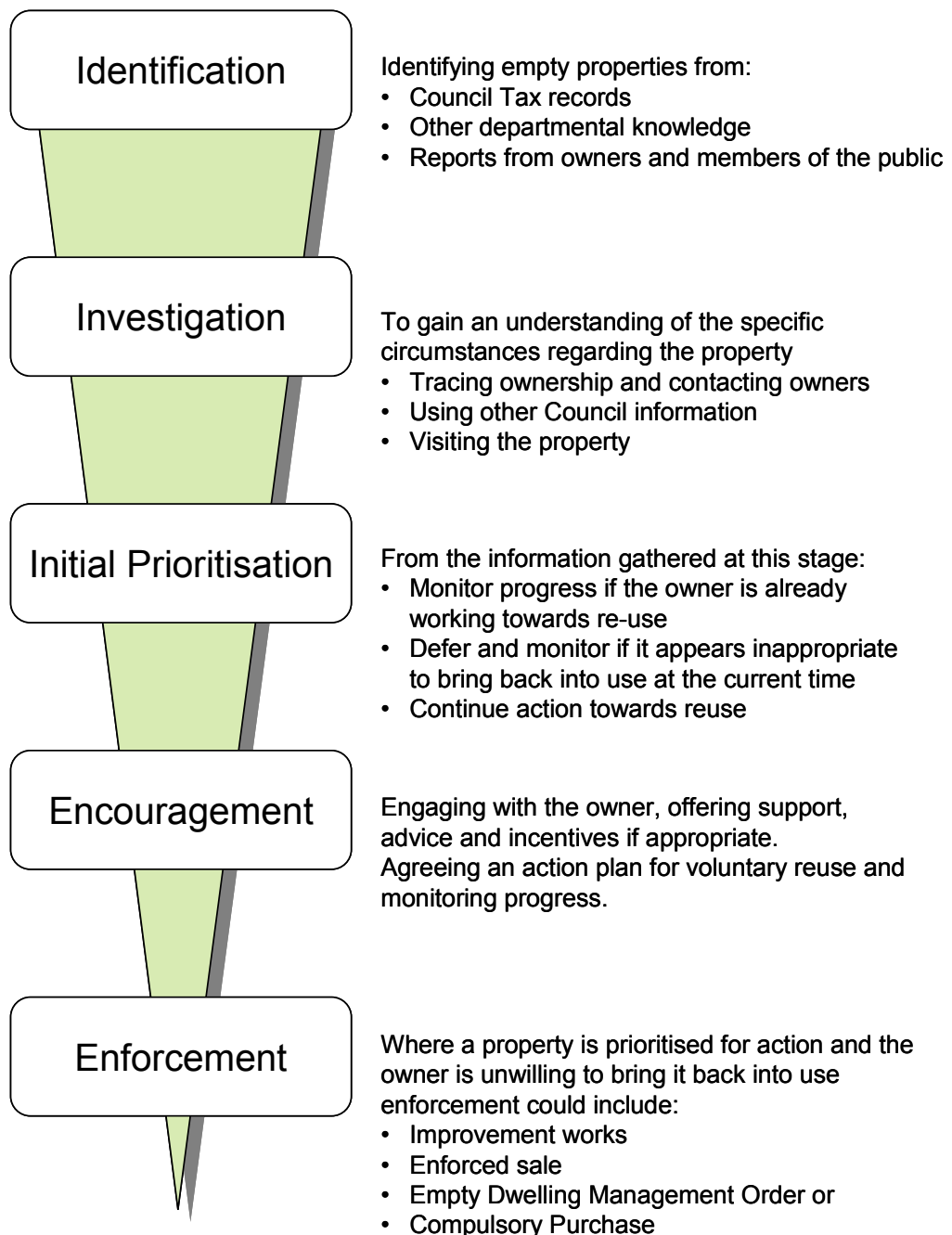
This will be achieved through the maintenance of a database of all empty homes using information from Council Tax and other areas of the Council, supported by information from owners, elected members, street champions and other individuals and external partners.

- **Raise the awareness of empty homes in Dacorum**
Effectively publicising the problems of empty homes in our area and the services we can offer. Encouraging owners to seek our help to bring their property back into use. Inviting members of the public to report empty homes and specific problems they are causing. And develop an online reporting mechanism.
- **Encourage reuse through information and incentives**
Encourage the owners of empty homes to see the benefits of returning their property to use. Offer advice, support and flexibility in the incentives offered to help bring the property into use.
- **Prioritise action to ensure the best outcomes**
Prioritise empty homes that are causing problems in the local neighbourhoods and those that, if bought back into use, would best help alleviate particular housing need.
- **Take enforcement action where appropriate**
Where a property is prioritised for action and the owner has been provided with advice and still refuses to bring the property into use, undertake the most appropriate enforcement action for that situation.
- **Consider alternative approaches and opportunities as they become available.**
For example through Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Council can receive payments in lieu of affordable housing on some developments within the borough. Where appropriate, the Council will look into using such payments to purchase empty homes from the open market and convert them into socially rented accommodation.

4. Our Approach to tackling Empty Homes

4.01 We would hope to encourage the owners of empty homes to bring them back into use voluntarily. Our approach is focused initially on engaging with the owners offering support, advice and, where appropriate, offering grants, or the opportunity to make use of leasing schemes. However, where an owner is unwilling to bring the home back into use and, it is either causing a specific problem within the neighbourhood, or would meet a particular housing need, we will consider the use of the enforcement powers available to us.

4.02 The diagram below outlines the stages in our approach each of which are then described in more detail.



4.1 **Step 1 – Identification**

Certain classes of empty property can currently claim Council Tax exemption or discount. All these will be considered empty for the purposes of this strategy though the action taken will vary according to the individual circumstances. Members have made use of the additional flexibilities of Council Tax discounts to support this strategy: by reducing the period certain empty properties have no council tax charge to three months; increasing the charge after this period from 90% to 100% Council Tax; and introducing a levy to enable a 150% charge for long-term empty properties (over 2 years empty) which will apply from April 2015. (further details regarding Council Tax exemptions and/or levies can be seen in Appendix 1)

4.1.1 The owners of some empty homes will choose not to apply for initial discounts, these properties will therefore only become known to us through local officer knowledge or through complaints/notification from members of the public. Regardless of whether Council Tax discounts or exemptions are claimed, all identified empty properties will be covered by this strategy. Information gathered about empty properties will be shared with other departments such as the Council Tax team.

4.1.2 Officers, Councillors and members of the public will be encouraged to report empty properties and owners will be encouraged to contact us for support and advice for properties that are, or may become, empty. All properties reported to us in these ways will be investigated.

4.2 **Step 2 - Investigation**

All properties identified will be investigated; initial checks will be made to see if there are any planning applications for the property or if any complaints have been made about the property. At this stage we will also consider contacting the owner(s) and seek to identify:

- why the property is empty,
- what plans the owner has for the property, and
- what if anything is preventing the owner from bringing the property back into use.

4.2.1 Depending on the response (or lack of response) from the owner, the nature of any complaint received, and on resource constraints an initial visit will be made to investigate the condition of the property.

4.3 **Step 3 - Initial Prioritisation**

As a result of our initial investigation, an assessment of the property is made and the property will be put into one of three broad categories based on the process to be followed:

- **Monitor Progress**

Where there is the likelihood that the owner will bring the property into use within a short timescale. (This may include properties that are being marketed for sale or rent and those where the owner is currently renovating or has plans to do so).

- **Defer And Monitor As Required**

For properties where it may be inappropriate to pursue re-use at

this time. These may include: properties considered as annexes located within or close to a main dwelling, properties being held for an unwell or elderly relative, or some which are beyond economic repair.

- **Continue Action**

All other properties will come into this category and the next step of the process will be followed.

4.4 **Step 4 – Encouragement**

Our aim is that owners will bring back properties voluntarily, trying to show the owner(s) that it is in the best interest of themselves and of their community that the property is reoccupied. Where we have not received a response from the owner, we will continue our efforts to engage them.

4.4.1 Once in dialogue with the owner the range of support and advice we can offer (either directly or through other agencies) includes:

- General advice on their options for returning their property to use (including a range of Council initiatives outlined below).
- Assistance with identifying the best course of action for their situation.
- Guidance on accessing other Council services.
- Help identifying the works that may be required to bring the property back to a habitable standard.
- Introductions to individuals or developers that have registered an interest in purchasing an empty property.
- A Private Sector Leasing Scheme, targeted at empty property owners, allowing them to lease the property for an agreed period, during which time the owner may receive a fixed monthly income from the property. A social landlord would expect to undertake the property management during this period. The specific rental that may be available will depend on the type and condition of the property. This type of scheme is designed to allow for some agreed renovation works to be carried out by the social landlord (if required) on behalf of the owner.
- The property would be expected as a minimum to meet the Decent Homes Standard prior to rental and the property would be returned to the owner in a suitable condition for rental.

4.4.2 Owners of empty homes may be able to access loans of between £5,000 and £15,000 from the National Empty Homes Loans Fund, operated by the charity Empty Homes. The fund will be available to eligible owners of empty properties in England. If these loans are not available, loans may be available to potential owner/occupiers or landlords of empty properties through our Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy.

Where an owner is encouraged to bring their property back into use we will continue to support the owner as appropriate and will monitor progress.

4.5 **Step 5 – Enforcement**

Where, after repeated attempts, we are unable to enter dialogue with an owner or where an owner refuses to consider bringing back their property to use, we will consider taking enforcement action. Any enforcement action will

be undertaken in accordance with the Enforcement Concordat and the Council's relevant enforcement policies and in particular the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

4.5.1 Possible enforcement action includes:

- **Improvement works**

Where a property is in a poor state of disrepair or is affecting a neighbouring property or the surrounding area there are various powers that can be used to bring about improvements (see Appendix 2 for a table showing main powers that can be used). Where it is decided that the use of these powers is appropriate, notices will be served on the owners requesting that they carry out the required works. If the owners do not comply with the notices the Council may carry out works in default and subsequently request repayment of our costs from the owner. Simply carrying out improvement works may not in itself bring about the reoccupation of the property but should alleviate some of the problems it is causing. The fact that an owner has been put to additional expense may be the trigger to encourage them to bring it back into use themselves. If the owner fails to pay for the works that we undertake in default this may allow us to pursue the next option below.
- **Enforced Sale**

Where works in default have been undertaken at a property, or there is an existing debt, the debt will be secured against the premises by making a local land charge or by registering it as a caution on the land registry certificate. If the owner fails to repay the debt this power enables the local authority to recover its debt through the enforced sale of the property.
- **Compulsory Purchase Orders**

Local authorities have the power to acquire land and property compulsorily where the owner is not willing to sell by agreement. This applies to underused or ineffectively used property/land for housing purposes if there is housing need in the area. Compulsory purchase can be approved where acquisition will allow improvements or redevelopment to take place, providing that the improvement/redevelopment contributes to the promotion of economic, social or environmental well-being. Compulsory purchase is a potentially costly and time-consuming process and will be used as a last resort where attempts at encouragement have failed and where other enforcement actions are not seen to be viable.
- **Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's)**

Empty Dwelling Management Orders are a discretionary power introduced in the Housing Act 2004 that came into force in April 2006. They allow local authorities to take management control of certain empty properties for initially up to 1 year (under an interim EDMO) and then for 7 years (under a final EDMO). Under an interim EDMO the authority can only grant tenancies with the permission of the owner but under a final EDMO the owner's

consent is not required. Once we have determined that an EDMO is the most appropriate course of action for a particular property and the Residential Property Tribunal have authorised an interim EDMO, the Council's Housing Department will manage the property. If we then make a final EDMO, the Housing Department will be granted the tenancy on the property, and will manage it and sub-letting to tenants. This authority will not consider taking this course of action unless the property has been empty for over 2 years and is causing a nuisance to local residents.

- 4.5.2 When considering enforcement options each case will be assessed on its merits and the most appropriate course of action decided. In some cases it will be decided that even though the owner is unwilling to consider bringing their property back into use voluntarily, there is insufficient reason to pursue enforcement action due to the type and location of the dwelling and to the property being well maintained. If enforcement action is deemed inappropriate at that time the property will be recategorised to “defer and monitor” as at Step 3 – Initial Prioritisation. If whilst preparing for enforcement action the owner decides to take voluntary action to bring the property back into use this will be the preferred route providing we have not incurred significant costs. If we delay enforcement action to allow the owner to take voluntary action the situation will be closely monitored.

5. Delivering the Strategy

5.1 Resourcing and Partnerships

Regulatory Services will lead on the delivery of the Empty Homes Strategy. However this section has limited resources so the effective delivery will require coordinated support from officers in many other services within the Council. The main supporting services/teams including:

- Council Tax
- Development Management
- Building Control
- Strategic Housing
- Tenants & Leaseholders
- Legal

- 5.1.1 Councillors will be encouraged to support the Empty Homes Strategy by reporting empty properties within their wards and discussing the problems associated with them.

- 5.1.2 In addition a network of external contacts will be developed and maintained including:

- Community Police
- Local Estate and Letting Agents
- Local Housing Associations

- 5.1.3 Sub-regional and cross regional working through the Herts, Beds and Bucks Empty Homes Forum will be supported in order to achieve efficiencies through shared development work and best practice. Through

these groups we will also seek additional funding for specific empty homes projects.

5.2 Use of Empty Homes Information

The empty homes database will contain sensitive, personal data. It must be used with care to serve the needs of the Council in returning empty properties to use, with concern for the privacy of empty homes owners and the security of their properties. There can be benefit in sharing this information with other responsible partners to support the investigation and return to use of empty homes. Information will only be shared with others beyond the main supporting services following discussion with and approval from the Information Security Team Leader and Legal Services. It is expected that only those properties categorised for further action or enforcement (i.e. the property owner has been contacted and is currently not willing to bring the property into use) will be included in any shared lists of empty homes.

Appendix 1 - Council Tax Charges for Empty Homes

Empty properties:

If the property is unfurnished and undergoing major repairs or structural work:

From 1 April 2013 you will pay no Council Tax for up to three months while the work is being carried out. You will then pay full council tax.

If the work started before 1 January 2013, you will pay full Council Tax from 1 April 2013.

If the property is unfurnished:

From 1 April 2013 you will pay no Council Tax for up to three months. You will then pay full council tax.

If the property became empty before 1 January 2013, you will pay full Council Tax from 1 April 2013.

If the property is furnished:

From 1 April 2013 you will pay full Council Tax.

If the property has been empty and unfurnished for more than two years:

From 1 April 2013 you will pay full Council Tax.

From 1 April 2015 you will pay 150% of full Council Tax.

You will not have to pay Council Tax for your property if it is empty:

- ⤴ and it is owned by a charity, and it was last used for the purposes of the charity for the last six months,.
- ⤴ because the occupier is in prison (except for non-payment of council tax), detained under the Mental Health Acts, in hospital, receiving care in a hospital or home, or receiving personal care elsewhere because of old age, disability or illness.
- ⤴ because the occupier has moved in order to provide personal care to another person.
- ⤴ since the death of the owner or tenant, and for which the only liable person would be their personal representative (and for up to six months after probate or letters of administration have been granted).
- ⤴ because its occupation is forbidden by law.
- ⤴ and it is a caravan pitch or boat mooring.
- ⤴ because it is waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion.
- ⤴ and it was last occupied by the freeholder or tenant who is a student.
- ⤴ and it has been repossessed, or is the responsibility of a trustee in bankruptcy.
- ⤴ and it is an annex that is unable to be let under planning regulations (for example a granny annex).
- ⤴ and it is accommodation for UK armed forces.

This is an extract from the full list of Council Tax Exemptions and only covers those exemptions that apply to empty properties. The full list can be viewed on our website.

Appendix 2 - Powers Available to Improve Empty Properties.

• <i>Problem</i>	• <i>Legislation (Service, where not Environmental Health)</i>	• <i>Action required</i>
Dangerous or dilapidated buildings	Building Act 1984, section 77 and 78 <i>(Building Control)</i>	Requires the owner to make the property safe and/ or enables the Local Authority to take emergency action to make the property safe
Property in such a state as to be a nuisance (e.g. causing dampness in adjoining property) or prejudicial to health	Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 79	Requires the owner to take steps to abate the nuisance
	Building Act 1984, section 76	Enables the Local Authority to take emergency action to abate the nuisance
Unsecured property posing a risk of unauthorised entry or likely to suffer vandalism, arson or similar	Local Government (Misc.Prov) Act 1982, section 29 <i>(Building Control)</i>	Requires the owner to take steps to secure the property or allows the Local Authority to board it up in an emergency
	Building Act 1984, section 78 <i>(Building Control)</i>	Allows the Local Authority to fence off the property
Blocked or defective drains or private sewers	Building Act 1984, section 59	Requires the owner to address blocked or defective drains
	Public Health Act 1961, section 17	Requires the owner to address defective drains or private sewers
	Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, section 4	Requires the owner to take steps to clear the land of vermin and/or requires the owner to remove waste likely to attract vermin

Vermin either present or a risk of attracting vermin that may detrimentally affect peoples health	Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 79	Requires the owner to remove waste from the property
	Public Health Act 1936, section 83	
	Public Health Act 1961, section 34 <i>(Contract Services)</i>	
Unightly land or property affecting the amenity of the area	Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 215 <i>(Development Control)</i>	Requires the owner to address unsightly land or external appearance of the property
	Building Act 1984, section 79 <i>(Building Control)</i>	Requires the owner to address the property adversely affecting the amenity of the area through its disrepair

This list summarises the most likely powers to be used to improve empty dwellings. It is not comprehensive and the most appropriate power will be used for each specific situation.

Appendix 3 – Supporting Documents and Consultation

A wide variety of documents and other information sources have been used in the development of this strategy. The key documents/sources used are listed below:

- Empty Homes Agency web resources. www.emptyhomes.com
- A cure for Empty Homes – Document produced by David Ireland of the Empty Homes Agency for the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA)
- Housing Market & Needs Assessment 2012
- Dacorum Tenancy Policy
- Dacorum Homelessness Strategy
- Dacorum Affordable Housing SPD,
- Dacorum Core Strategy
- Dacorum Borough Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy
- Dacorum Borough Council Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy

The strategy has also been informed through consultation and discussion with various individuals and groups including:

- Officers in various Council service areas including Council Tax, Housing Department.

It will be made available on the Council website.

HAVE YOUR SAY

This policy is regularly reviewed and updated - please tell us your views on the policy and include any comments or questions you have for us via email:

environmental.health@dacorum.gov.uk OR

use the space below and return to the following address:

FAO, Environmental Health Department, Civic Centre, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP1 1HH.

Name: (Optional)

Address: (Optional)

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DBC Equality Impact Assessment Form

Directorate: Legal, Democratic and Regulatory

Service: Regulatory Services

Policy / function / activity being reviewed:

Date completed and by whom:

Review date:

Step 1 – Identifying the Purpose / Aims

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

Changing/ updated

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

This strategy explains Dacorum Council's approach to bringing empty homes back into use and is an important element of the Council's overarching Housing Strategy. It contains details of the range of powers available to us to achieve this work and how we will use these powers.

The aim of this strategy is not to deal with those empty properties where there is a clear intention that the home will become occupied within a reasonably short time, but on those which remain empty for longer than 2 years and where the owner has either no plans to bring the property back into use, or where there will be a long delay before they are reoccupied.

3. Outline any proposals being considered.

We would hope to encourage the owners of empty homes to bring them back into use voluntarily. Our approach is focused initially on engaging with the owners offering support, advice and, where appropriate, offering grants, or the opportunity to make use of leasing schemes. However, where an owner is unwilling to bring the home back into use and, it is either causing a specific problem within the neighbourhood, or would meet a particular housing need, we will consider the use of the enforcement powers available to us.

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

The strategy intends to assist owners of private sector houses that are being left empty and enable these to be bought back into use. The strategy also details potential enforcement action that can be taken against the owners of premises who are not willing to reoccupy their property, and are in such poor condition that they are detrimental to the local neighbourhood, therefore taking this action will benefit residents in affected neighbourhoods.

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

The Council will both help and influence private sector housing with the aim of improving living conditions for residents by improving and maintaining the quality of the residential stock. The resources will be targeted at those premises in the worst condition. Enabling these properties to be used could remove the risk of crime and anti-social behaviour as well as potentially increasing the amount of affordable housing.

In addition, key workers, young people leaving home and single people have particular difficulty accessing suitable, affordable housing in Dacorum. Bringing more long-term empty homes back into use would be a sustainable way of meeting housing demand and by alleviating pressure on the housing market could benefit these particular groups.

Currently, some vulnerable groups can be negatively affected if they own empty properties. Empty homes cost their owners money in maintenance, insurance, council tax and loss of rental income. In some cases, vulnerable owners may be aware they need to renovate a property but are unable to afford the cost of renovation, so end up paying simply to leave the property empty. The strategy should provide support to this group.

Finally, children can be at risk of accidents if they use poorly maintained empty homes as play places. Ensuring properties are maintained to an adequate standard should reduce the risk to this group.

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

Dacorum is experiencing a growth in the number of empty properties and this is currently estimate to be in the order of 550- 600 premises

7. Is there any evidence of negative differential impact on any of the Nine Protected Characteristics or any other cluster group? (Some equality categories may be more relevant than others)

Race or Ethnicity

There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

Sex (Gender)

There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

Gender Reassignment and Transgender
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Sexual Orientation
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Age
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy. .
Disability
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Religion or belief/ faith communities
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Marriage and Civil Partnerships
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.
Pregnancy and Maternity
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy
Socio Economic Duties (Socially excluded communities or groups)
There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy will be administered according to the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

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 authority currently does not monitor any information regarding empty properties. As this strategy evolves the impact where possible will be reviewed.

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?

The requirements are in accordance with the legal requirements and guidance. It is not anticipated that the strategy will be inaccessible to any of the equalities groups.

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?

Yes **Please give details below.**

There is no evidence of negative differential impact and the strategy is designed to have a positive effect on communities.

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?

N/A

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

N/A

Step 5 – Consultation and Feedback

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

We will make the policy widely available on the website. We have included a 'Have your say' section to enable comments and feedback.

Step 6 – The decision

14. What needs to be done?

Step 7 – Monitoring, review and evaluation

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

We will consider the suitability of carrying out customer satisfaction surveys for both the owners of empty premises, and also those in affected neighbourhoods. The policy will be reviewed initially after 12 months and then annually to ensure it is fit for purpose. The take up of any financial assistance via our Housing Assistance Policy will be monitored for certain equality characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity) and reviewed at regular intervals to ensure there are no access issues.

Step 8 – The service plan

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

N/A

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

N/A

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 Group Manager. 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 Elissa Rospigliosi - Strategic Development & Transformation Officer, ext. 2541.

AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

Report for:

**Housing and Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting:	17 July 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Homelessness Strategy Report
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing Julia Hedger – Strategic Housing Group Manager Isabel Connolly – Strategy, Policy and Private Sector Housing Team Leader
Purpose of report:	To update Members on the new draft Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018 (Appendix 1). Feedback and views will be considered prior to a draft being presented to Cabinet, and the consultation period commencing at the end of July 2013.
Recommendations	For Members to consider the content of the new draft strategy document and give their feedback.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> The actions committed to in the draft Homelessness Strategy can be implemented in the first year within existing budgets. Some actions may identify future budgetary implications, and influence future financial planning through the Council's annual budget setting processes. Revenue streams into the department include rent and Housing Benefit collected for temporary accommodation properties. Welfare Reform by central government has raised a question mark over whether Housing Benefit can be considered a reliable income stream into the future. It is expected that the Council will need to apply flexibility in looking at the totality of resources rather than looking at each area of budget spend in isolation. Given the rise in homelessness acceptances, and the resulting increases in emergency and temporary accommodation costs, the Council recognises that there is a financial risk to 'doing-nothing' and that some actions are expected to identify opportunities to invest-to-save. <u>Value for money</u> Since the previous strategy was adopted in 2008, rising

	<p>homelessness has caused the Council's emergency and temporary accommodation costs to increase rapidly. Additional accommodation has been procured, and additional staff have been recruited, to ensure that the Council can continue to meet its legal requirements to provide housing assistance and accommodation to homeless households.</p> <p>This new draft strategy now provides the opportunity for the Council to plan its homelessness service for the next five years so that resources can be planned to achieve the Council's strategic prevention objectives. This is underpinned by an overarching value-for-money objective that recognises that a strategic, planned approach is necessary to counter the pull on resources from responding to crises.</p> <p><u>Legal</u></p> <p>This strategy meets the duty placed on housing authorities in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by 2002 Homelessness Act) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a review of homelessness in their areas; • Formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on this review; • Consult other local or public authorities, or voluntary organisations before adopting or modifying the strategy; and • Keep the strategy under review.
Risk Implications	<p><u>Further rapid increases in homelessness</u></p> <p>A further rapid increase in homelessness acceptances could stretch the Council's capacity to meet its legal requirements to provide housing assistance and accommodation to homeless households. This would increase the cost of the service, while also presenting a challenge to the Council in meeting the strategic prevention objectives in the strategy.</p> <p>This risk can be mediated by 'acting now' to develop a preventative service that can meet the strategic objectives the Council has set.</p> <p><u>Out-of-borough placements by London local authorities</u></p> <p>The private rented sector is recognised in the strategy as central to both increasing successful prevention work, and providing essential move-on accommodation to households in forms of accommodation with support. London local authorities are known to be seeking opportunities to make out-of-borough placements into the private rented sector. The Council will need to monitor and if necessary respond to any impact on local communities, and its own relationship with the private rented sector.</p> <p><u>Welfare Reform</u></p>

	The impact of Welfare Reform on Housing Benefit, and the overall government spending cuts for local authorities, could threaten future investment in the service, including opportunities to invest-to-save and meeting important strategic prevention targets.
Equalities Implications	An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and provided with this report in Appendix 2. No reasons to expect discrimination have been identified that the Council does not have processes in place to mitigate.
Health And Safety Implications	There are no direct Health and Safety implications from the strategy
Monitoring Officer S.151 Officer	Deputy Monitoring Officer:
Consultees:	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 – Development Manager
Background papers:	The Housing Allocations Policy April 2013 Draft Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018 Localism Act 2011 Section 193 (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012
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 last Homelessness Strategy covered the period 2008 - 2013. Since its adoption the national picture for homelessness has changed significantly. The financial year 2009/10 saw an increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities of 10%, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/04. This trend has since continued and has triggered a number of national and local responses.
- 1.2 The number of homeless applicants who have become homeless due to termination of an assured short-hold tenancy has been increasing, and this is now one of the main causes of homelessness. Nationally and locally over half of homeless acceptances are caused by either, termination of an assured short-hold tenancy, or eviction by family or friends (each making up between 20 and 30 percent of acceptances).
- 1.3 The level of housing need in the Borough is very high, and the increasing demand cannot be met by allocations through the housing register. In June 2013 the housing register had 5802 home-seekers, 1599 transfer applicants, and 77 homeless applicants. There were 599 allocations made in 2012/13, of which 172 were to sheltered housing accommodation, when the majority of homeless households require family homes. In April 2013 the Council approved a new Housing Allocations Policy, to be implemented in autumn 2013 once the necessary computer system changes are in place. This policy aims to assist the Council in managing its housing register by introducing a deferred register for those applicants who do not meet a number of criteria, including tests of local connection and housing need.
- 1.4 The average private rent in Dacorum has gone up from £886 per month in 2011 to £1,003 in the first quarter of 2013. A high proportion of evictions have been to lone parent households, often on low incomes and reliant at least partially on benefits for payment of rent. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates restrict the amount a household can claim for rent and this has discouraged many landlords from continuing tenancies. This presents a real challenge to the Council to work with the private rented sector and develop the skills to mediate with landlords to prevent unnecessary evictions.
- 1.5 However, the private rented sector is the main sector that the Council and its partners must look to in order to expand the housing options available to low income households. The private rented sector provides the Council with its main preventative option against homelessness, and this has been delivered as a Deposit Guarantee Scheme, allowing households to access private rented properties without needing a cash deposit. Central government has also provided local authorities with the power to discharge the full homelessness duty by offering a tenancy in the private rented sector, which should allow local authorities to make more flexible use of their local Council and Housing Association stock.

2. The Strategy

- 2.1 In April this year, the Housing Minister announced a new Gold Standard for local homelessness services, containing Ten Local Challenges. The Council has pledged to strive to meet these challenges.
- 2.2 The Council has reviewed its service to identify key areas for improvement and investment. These key areas have been discussed with the Councils partners, and from this work the Council has committed to four key strategic objectives:
 - To make every contact count in the primary prevention of homelessness

- To secure suitable and affordable accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- To provide support to prevent repeat homelessness and improve outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- To tackle the root causes of homelessness through much earlier intervention and prevention through education.

2.3 Each key strategic objective has a number of actions, which together make up the Homelessness Strategy action plan. This action plan shows the required team and financial resources, timescales and responsible officers for each action.

1.5 The proposed time line for the Council's new Homelessness Strategy is as follows:

- May 2013
 - Strategic direction and ideas for service delivery discussed with partners at the Council's multi-agency event 'Making it Happen'.
- June 2013
 - Strategy sessions carried out with teams within Strategic Housing to gather feedback and develop the strategic direction further
- July 2013
 - Presentation to TLC on 1 July on the background and key strategic objectives
 - Draft strategy presented to H&C OSC on 17 July and Cabinet on 23 July
 - Public consultation will begin on the new draft strategy
- August 2013
 - Consultation session with the TLC
 - Consultation session with the Council's Homeless Forum
- September 2013
 - Consultation at the tenants and leaseholders annual conference
- November 2013
 - An update on the consultation responses, and any strategy amendments, to be provided to H&C OSC
 - The amended draft strategy will be recommended for Cabinet approval with a summary of consultation responses.
- December 2013
 - Recommendation to full Council to adopt the new strategy with immediate effect.

3. **Consultation**

3.1 The proposed consultation period will commence in July 2013 and run for 12 weeks. All comments and feedback will then be considered before the strategy comes back to Cabinet in November for approval. It is proposed that the policy will then be taken to full Council for adoption in December 2013.

3.2 **The recommendation of this report is for Members to consider the content of the new draft strategy document and give their feedback.**

Directorate: Housing and Regeneration

Service: Strategic Housing

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

Supporting Directorate Support Officer:

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

Review date: July 2014

Step 1 – Identifying the Purpose / Aims

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

- Adopting a new strategy for 2013 - 2018

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

- To provide the strategic direction to guide investment in, and service delivery of, the Council's homelessness service. A number of other key policies and strategies will support the success of this strategy in the delivery of target outcomes.

19. Outline any proposals being considered.

- This Homelessness Strategy commits the Council to meeting four key strategic objectives.
 - To make every contact count in the primary prevention of homelessness
 - To secure suitable and affordable accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
 - To provide support to prevent repeat homelessness and improve outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
 - To tackle the root causes of homelessness through much earlier intervention and prevention through education

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

- The objectives have been developed to help / benefit / serve:
 - The homeless and people threatened with homelessness; and

- People in housing need seeking a home within the Borough.

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

- For objective 2, providing suitable properties will require judgement of location, local community needs, access to services and proximity to a households' social and support networks, including work and education.

Step 2 – Considering existing information and what this tells you

22. 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

Dacorum has a population of 144,800, which is 13% of the total population of Hertfordshire. In terms of headcount, Dacorum is the largest of the Hertfordshire districts.

There are 71,300 males (49%) and 73,500 females (51%) living in the borough.

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published July 2012

65.5% of the borough's population is of working age.

15.8% of the population is of retirement age

18.7% of the population are children

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published July 2012

Figure 1: Population breakdown by ethnicity

	Dacorum (%)	East of England (%)	England and Wales (%)
White: British	86.0	85.3	80.5
White: Irish	1.3	1.0	0.9
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.2	0.1	0.1
White: Other White	3.4	4.5	4.4
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.7	0.6	0.8
Mixed: White and Black African	0.3	0.3	0.3
Mixed: White and Asian	0.7	0.6	0.6
Mixed: Other Mixed	0.5	0.5	0.5
Asian/Asian British: Indian	1.6	1.5	2.5
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	1.4	1.1	2.0
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.2	0.6	0.8
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0.5	0.6	0.7
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	0.9	1.0	1.5
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	1.4	1.2	1.8

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0.5	0.6	1.1
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	0.2	0.2	0.5
Other ethnic group: Arab	0.1	0.2	0.4
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	0.2	0.3	0.6

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published December 2012

Figure 2: Population breakdown by religion

	Dacorum (%)	East of England (%)	England and Wales (%)
Christian	58.1	59.7	59.3
Buddhist	0.4	0.4	0.4
Hindu	1.3	0.9	1.5
Jewish	0.5	0.6	0.5
Muslim	2.2	2.5	4.8
Sikh	0.1	0.3	0.8
Other religion	0.4	0.4	0.4
No religion	29.5	27.9	25.1
Religion not stated	7.5	7.3	7.2

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published December 2012

There are 59,938 households in the borough

Figure 3: Household breakdown by tenure

	Dacorum (%)	Hertfordshire (%)	East of England (%)	England and Wales (%)
Owned: Owned outright	29.1	30.0	32.9	30.8
Owned: Owned with a mortgage or loan	35.7	36.8	34.7	32.7
Shared ownership (part owned and part rented)	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.8
Social rented: Rented from council (Local Authority)	17.4	9.2	7.8	9.4
Social rented: Other	4.4	9.0	7.9	8.2
Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency	10.9	12.1	13.3	15.3
Private rented: Other	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.4
Living rent free	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.4

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published December 2012

Figure 4: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by reason for homelessness

Reason for homelessness	Number of acceptances
Loss of rented accommodation	
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	59
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	7
Family or friends no longer able to accommodate	
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	35
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	11
Relationship breakdown	
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	11
Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	8
Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	4
Rent arrears	
Rent arrears on: Private sector dwellings	5
Rent arrears on: Local authority or other public sector dwellings	1
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	4
Other violence or harassment	
Violence: Other forms of violence	1
Harassment, threats or intimidation: Other forms of harassment	5
Other	
Left hospital	1
Left HM-Forces	1
Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad)	16

Figure 5: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by Priority Need reason

Priority Need reason	Number of acceptances
Applicant whose household includes dependent children	128
Applicant who is, or whose household includes, a pregnant woman and there are no other dependent children	9
Applicant aged 16/17 years old	2
Applicant formerly in care, and aged 18 to 20 years old	1
Vulnerable due to old age	1
Vulnerable due physical disability	12
Vulnerable due to mental illness or handicap	10
Other	1
Vulnerable due to fleeing home because of domestic violence / threat of violence	5

Figure 6: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by household type

Household type	Number of acceptances
Couple with dependent children or member pregnant	58
Lone parent household with dependent children or member pregnant	80
One person households	24
All other household types	7

Figure 7: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by number of dependents

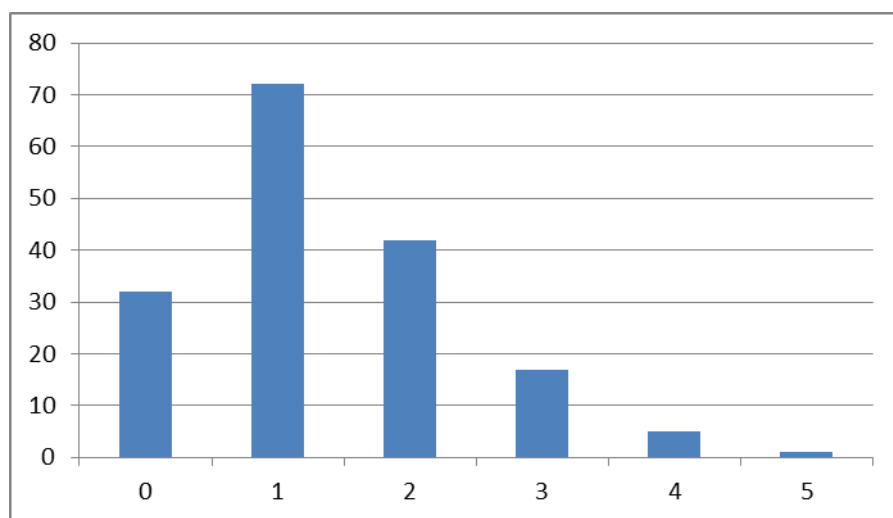
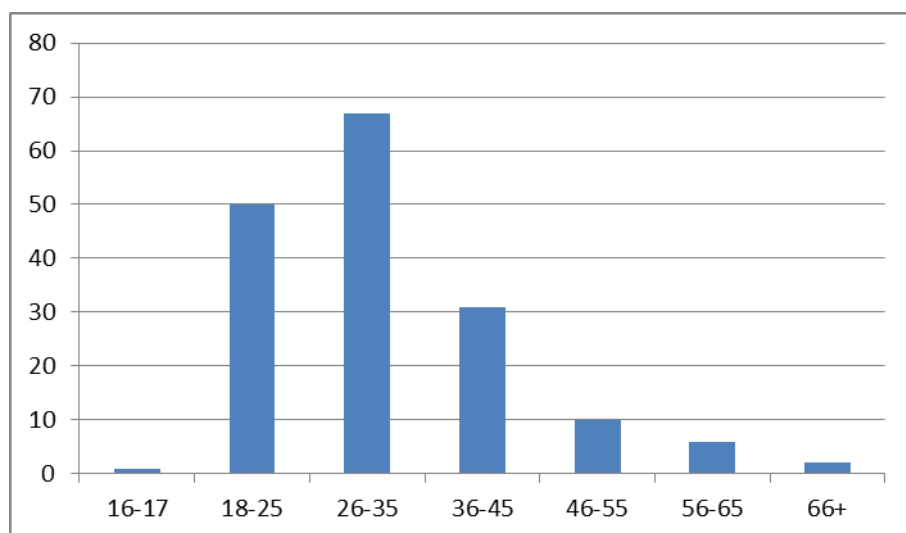


Figure 8: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by age



The Council's housing register has seen the number of active applications increase rapidly and steadily over the last five years. In June 2013 the housing register had 5802 home-seekers, 1599 transfer applicants, and 77 homeless applicants.

23. 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**

Gender

- **Women are disproportionately represented among the priority need groups that the Council has a statutory duty towards to provide settled housing. Women are over-represented among homelessness acceptances and more likely to depend on statutory provision.**
- Applicants at risk of domestic violence, likely to be women, are a group with specific needs. There is a focus on the prevention of domestic violence joint working through the MARAC, a multi-disciplinary group that meets monthly to discuss cases.
- **Men in general are under-represented amongst homelessness acceptances and less likely to benefit from statutory provision.**

Age

- Young people are at a risk of parental exclusion, the second most common reason for homelessness.
- Former care leavers are also at increased risk of homelessness.
- There is lack of awareness amongst young people about homelessness services the Council provides.
- **Older people are highly vulnerable to the effects of homelessness and therefore have priority need under the statutory framework.**
- **While few older people use homelessness services, a significant number of older people are likely to be living in unsuitable housing, and may be receiving inadequate support for their needs. The aging population in the Borough will impact on the suitability of present housing stock for future needs.**

Ethnicity/race

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities can face barriers to access, including cultural and language barriers, which can delay provision in decisions and services.
- Members of gypsy and travelling communities may be reluctant to approach the Council for help due to suspicion of official organisations. A lack of understanding of homelessness in gypsy and traveller communities means that this group may not be adequately planned for.

Religion

- The Council has limited evidence on the possible impact of religion or belief on people's ability to access services, or on the quality of services they receive. More information about the needs of faith groups may be needed.

Disability

- The Strategy exists within the statutory framework and promotes positive outcomes for people who are vulnerable due to disability.
- The Strategy acknowledges that early referral to appropriate services has the potential to prevent homelessness.

Sexual orientation

- The lesbian, gay, transsexual and transgender (LGBT) community may face specific barriers not currently considered, and it may be that more information about this client group is needed.

Step 3 – Assessing the Impact

24. 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?

- Women are disproportionately represented in homelessness acceptances under the statutory framework and are vulnerable to homelessness through domestic violence.
- Men are under-represented in homelessness acceptances under the statutory framework, and are less likely to benefit from statutory provision.
- BME communities have specific needs and may face barriers to accessing services, including cultural and language barriers.
- The needs of gypsy and traveller communities are not well understood, which may be linked to the relative reluctance of this community to engage with services, which may limit positive outcomes for this client group.
- Young people are over-represented in homelessness acceptances under the statutory framework.
- The aging population will affect the housing needs of elderly population of the Borough.

25. 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 priority need groups within the statutory framework to which the Council has a statutory duty to provide settled housing.

The **1996 Housing Act** refined and expanded the definition of a household in 'priority need' in England (and Wales) so as to include:

- a pregnant woman
- dependent children
- someone vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason
- someone homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster

This was expanded further still in England by the **2002 Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order** to include those:

- aged 16 and 17 years old
- aged under 21 years old who were in local authority care between the ages of 16 and 18
- aged 21 and over who are vulnerable as a result of leaving local authority care
- vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces
- vulnerable as a result of leaving prisoner
- fleeing domestic violence or the threat of domestic violence

The Council partners provide a range of specialised accommodation and services to non-priority need groups.

26. 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

27. 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?

NB: Please note that this section does not seek to replicate the actions that have already been outlined in the strategy action plan 2013-2018, but to add to it.

- Monitor the BME and gypsy and traveller communities to identify whether there is a need for specialist services.
- Monitor the needs of disabled people to ensure suitable provision of accommodation.
- Feed into the Older Persons Housing Strategy to ensure the changing needs of an aging population are met in the future.

- Consider ways to engage the LGBT community to identify whether they are facing any particular problems in relation to housing.
- Consider ways to engage different faith groups to identify if they are facing any particular problems in relation to housing.

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

- Regular, meaningful analysis of national and local demographic, household and homelessness data.
- Communication with local communities.
- Officer training on the needs of particular groups

Step 5 – Consultation and Feedback

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

Consultation on the Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018 is due to commence in July 2013 for a twelve week period, and will include:

- Public consultation including website portal
- Homeless Forum
- Landlord Forum
- Tenants and Leaseholders Conference

Step 6 – The decision

30. What needs to be done?

Complete the consultation process and consider all feedback.

Adoption of the strategy in November 2013.

Step 7 – Monitoring, review and evaluation

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

The strategy is to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Step 8 – The service plan

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

The strategy and a project to improve accessibility of services are both incorporated into the Housing Service's Service Development Plan

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

No. The strategy already contains an action plan that will drive the service to meet key strategic objectives. The additional actions identified by this assessment will be incorporated into the review process.

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: 9

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	17 July 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Deposit Guarantee Scheme Service Report
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing Julia Hedger – Strategic Housing Group Manager Isabel Connolly – Strategy, Policy and Private Sector Housing Team Leader
Purpose of report:	To update Members on the proposed service developments for, and re-branding of, the Council's Deposit Guarantee Scheme.
Recommendations	For Members to consider the service developments and re-branding, and give their feedback.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> The service developments proposed can be implemented within existing budgets. The re-branding exercise is planned as part of the Strategic Housing department's communications strategy for 2013/14 and is covered by existing budgets. Central government has provided local councils with a new power to discharge the full homelessness duty with an offer of suitable and affordable private rented sector accommodation. By making use of the new power through this scheme, the Council will be able to use a private rented sector offer as the final offer to discharge a homelessness duty. Financial savings should be gained from reductions in the need for high cost, short-term temporary accommodation. <u>Value for Money</u>

	<p>The service developments aim to increase tenancy sustainability rates and length of letting periods. This will achieve value for money because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New tenancies are the most intensive use of resources so reducing tenancy failure improves value for money • Failed tenancies can result in tenants being housed in expensive temporary accommodation. <p>By making use of the new power to discharge duty, the Council will reduce pressure on its affordable housing stock from homeless applicants and thereby allow more voids to go to applicants on the main housing register. Value for money will be improved through more flexible use of Council and Housing Association stock.</p> <p><u>Legal</u></p> <p>The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 sets out clear guidelines on suitability and affordability where a local authority chooses to discharge the full homelessness duty with a private rented sector offer.</p> <p>The proposed service developments aim to provide a robust framework with defined internal procedures to ensure that the service can meet the requirements of the Order.</p> <p>Note: The Order will not be relevant to those tenants who move into a property through the scheme as part of prevention work.</p>
Risk Implications	<p><u>Tenancy sustainability</u></p> <p>Tenants housed into the private rented sector will not have the same security of tenure that they would in a Council or Housing Association property.</p> <p>Management of this risk will be carried out by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the suitability of potential tenants and excluding certain very vulnerable groups including households fleeing violence; • Increasing the tenancy sustainment work carried out by officers within the private sector housing team; and • Making use of the resettlement service provided by the Advice and Homelessness Team to those applicants given a private rented sector offer to discharge the full homelessness duty. <p><u>Rogue landlords</u></p> <p>Management of this risk will be carried out by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a rigorous process to identify both suitable properties and landlords.

	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>A deposit guarantee is a guarantee underwritten by the Council and given to a private landlord in place of a cash deposit. This guarantee covers loss and damage, not rent. There is a budget in place to cover claims against these guarantees.</p> <p>Management of this risk will be carried out by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the tenancy sustainment work with tenants, including looking after a home. <p>This support will be provided through a compulsory pre-tenancy training course, and as part of officers' on-going interactions with tenants.</p> <p><u>Legal</u></p> <p>Where the Council uses a private rented sector offer to discharge the full homelessness duty, the homeless applicant will have the right to request a review of suitability. This review will be carried out by a senior reviewing officer (Group Manager) within the department. The tenancy contracts used by landlords in the scheme will need to be checked so that there is flexibility to break the contract in the case that such a review is successful.</p> <p>All new tenancies will be signed off by a Team Leader and the private rented sector officers will work closely with housing options officers and the homelessness team to successfully match tenants and properties to achieve high tenancy sustainment rates.</p>
Equalities Implications	No reasons to expect discrimination have been identified that the Council does not have processes in place to mitigate.
Health And Safety Implications	Any properties identified as suitable will have to meet Health and Safety criteria as stated in the Suitability Order.
Monitoring Officer S.151 Officer	Deputy Monitoring Officer:
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Dacorum Borough Council Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Tenants and Leaseholders' Committee</p> <p>Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration</p>

	<p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Andy Vincent – Group Manager for Tenants and Leaseholders</p> <p>Natasha Brathwaite – Housing Advice and Homelessness Team Leader</p> <p>Teresa Wood – Housing Options Team Leader</p> <p>Jack Burnham – Development Manager</p>
Background papers:	<p>Draft Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018</p> <p>Housing Allocations Policy April 2013</p> <p>Draft Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018</p> <p>Localism Act 2011</p> <p>Section 193 (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996)</p> <p>The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012</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>

1. Background

1.1 The current Deposit Guarantee Scheme

The Deposit Guarantee Scheme (DGS) is used as a preventative measure against homelessness and helps families who are unable to raise the deposit needed to access the private rented sector. DGS was previously known as the Dacorum Initiative Guarantee Scheme (DIGS), initially set up in 2000.

A deposit guarantee is a guarantee underwritten by the Council and given to a private landlord in place of a cash deposit. For many families, this can make private rented accommodation more affordable. The scheme only provides a deposit guarantee. DGS cannot help with rent in advance, a cash deposit, a guarantor or agency fees.

As the Council has applicants identified through its homeless prevention work with households, one of the main attractions to landlords of the scheme is that it provides a tenant-find service that allows a quick time-to-let.

1.2 The current DGS application process

If a homelessness officer believes an individual may be eligible for the DGS scheme, they will ask the individual to complete a DGS application form as part of their homelessness prevention work.

If a suitable property becomes available, the applicant will be contacted by a private sector housing officer to arrange a property viewing, and then if agreed with the landlord and tenant, a sign-up.

1.3 The current DGS service

At the moment the service has standardised contracts and paperwork and officers provide on-going third party support to landlords and tenants during the course of tenancies.

Several areas for the development have been identified to ensure that the service provides the robust framework to guarantee a service standard that will enable the Council to recruit additional landlords, and to discharge the full homelessness duty using private rented sector offers. These areas include:

- Updating the paperwork and filing systems, improving the use of on-line systems;
- Increasing the checks on landlords and properties, working in partnership with Environmental Health;
- Increasing the expertise of officers to match tenants and properties to achieve long letting periods;
- Increasing the focus on tenancy sustainment and tenancy support to both landlords and tenants;
- Increasing the information available to tenants and landlords online and in information packs; and
- Improving the cross-team processes and links between officers in the private rented sector team and both, housing options officers and homelessness officers.

2. Help to Rent

2.1 The proposed Help to Rent service

The private sector housing team will provide the following:

- A tenant matching service including a pre-tenancy interview
- Compulsory pre-tenancy training and financial inclusion support
- Start-up packs for landlord and tenant
- Sign up with tenant and landlord
- Settling-in phone call within the first fortnight
- Settling-in visit after four to six weeks
- Catch up phone call once a quarter with both landlord and tenant to troubleshoot
- Mediation (phone calls and visits) where communication between tenant and landlord has broken down in relation to:
 - Rent / housing benefit
 - Repairs / environmental health
 - Evictions / notices
 - Claims
- Website service providing:
 - Application forms
 - Information and resources
 - Landlord and tenant forums

Note: the Council will not carry out any repairs

The service will invest in a customer relationship management system for tenancy files and case notes.

A transfer register will be introduced based on an assessment of need and date of registration.

There will be a full review of internal procedures

Team training will focus on:

- Tenancy management and contract law
- Welfare and support
- Mediation

2.2 Intended outcomes

- 1) A scheme that is attractive to landlords because of:
 - A tenant find service and quick time-to-let;
 - Offer of a tenancy management package not available on the private market;
 - Good, informative website; and
 - Enquiries get fast response from officers trained in mediation.
- 2) Increased take up of the scheme by new landlords because:
 - Tenancy support and management will improve landlord trust with the service and make them more likely to recommend the service to another landlord (word of mouth is very important in this market).

- 3) Tenancy sustainability and value for money achieved by:
 - Focusing resources on tenant and property matching; and
 - Increasing the focus on welfare, support, and third party mediation to support long lettings periods.
- 4) Reduced risk achieved by implementing:
 - Robust processes to protect the Council from potential challenges against its decision making; and
 - An improved service that provides an opportunity to raise the scheme's reputation in the local community.
- 5) An opportunity to improve the Council's knowledge of the local private sector housing market that is available to lower income households.
- 6) Meet strategic objectives and direction in:
 - The Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018
 - The Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018

2.3 Timescales

The proposed time line for the Council's new Help to Rent scheme is as follows:

- July 2013
 - Report on service development proposals to the Corporate Management Team, Homes and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and Cabinet.
- August 2013
 - Consultation with landlords
 - Communication plan implemented.
- September 2013
 - Launch new service to tenants and landlords with robust internal procedure and monitoring system in place for discharging the full homelessness duty into the private rented sector.

3. **The recommendation of this report is that Members consider the service developments and re-branding of the service as 'Help to Rent', and give their feedback.**

AGENDA ITEM: 10

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	17 July 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Draft Domestic Abuse Policy
Contact:	Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Resident and Regulatory Services Author/Responsible Officer Julie Still – Group Manager Resident Services
Purpose of report:	To inform members of the proposed corporate Domestic Abuse Policy and seek their views
Recommendations	1) The Domestic Abuse Policy is noted 2) Members views given and considered and taken into account prior to Cabinet report.
Corporate objectives:	Safe and Clean Environment, Community Capacity Dacorum Delivers
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> None
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u> N/A.
Risk Implications	Reputation – an uncoordinated approach to Domestic Abuse could have detrimental impact on DBC reputation
Equalities Implications	Assessment in progress
Health And Safety Implications	Provides coordinated support to officers who may be victims of domestic abuse.
Consultees:	Hertfordshire County Council, Housing Service, Strategic Housing, Human Resources, MARAC – Multi Agency Risk

	Assessment Conferences, CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse)
Background papers:	Dacorum Community Plan, DACORUM 2015 – A Better Borough, Hertfordshire County Council Domestic Abuse Policy, Hertfordshire CC, Herts Police Data – 2012/2013

Background

1. Definition

1.1 Domestic abuse has a wide definition which includes: -

- Physical Violence
- Physiological, sexual, financial and emotional abuse involving partners, ex-partners, other relatives or household members

1.2 The Council is proposing to adopt the following definition of domestic abuse: -

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, (physiological, physical, sexual financial or emotional) between any persons who have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

1.2 This definition incorporates Government and ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) guidance and recognises that domestic abuse and occur between family members and is not just restricted to current or former partners. It also takes into account elder abuse, forced marriages, male victims and same-sex relationships.

1.3 It is recognised that domestic abuse is not restricted to a specific age group, race religion or socio-economic standing, but cuts across all sections of society and its effects can be debilitating on the individual concerned and society as a whole (taken from draft policy)

2 Facts

2.1 In Dacorum between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2013 there were 421 reports to the police of Domestic Violence Related Crimes.

2.2 This is an increase of 19.3% on the previous year and is a figure that would be expected to continue to rise with increased awareness and improved support for victims of domestic abuse. On average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police (Source: Living Without Abuse, 2013) so there is considerable under reporting.

2.3 The local MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) estimates that they receive 25% of the referrals that they should for serious and repeat victims of domestic abuse due to the significant under reporting.

2.4 Domestic abuse is the most quoted reason for becoming homeless (Shelter 2002).

3 Dacorum Borough Council Services

3.1 There are a number of front line services within the Council that will deal with the victims on a regular basis as an obvious part of their role. In addition to this, there are other services within the Council that will also deal with victims which are not so obvious and officers given the appropriate awareness training can offer support at an early stage.

The draft policy for Domestic Abuse (appendix A) aims to coordinate the Councils response to: -

- Intervene early in cases of domestic abuse;
- Protect those affected by domestic abuse; and
- Support victims of domestic abuse.

3.2 Staff can also be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse and the draft policy recognises this and gives guidance.

3.3 The Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 require a review to take place after any domestic homicide.

3.4 The Chair of the RAOG (Responsible Authorities Officers Group) of the Community Safety Partnership is responsible for conducting a review and the document must be sent to the Home Office. In Dacorum's case the Chief Executive is the Chair of the RAOG.

3.5 There was a domestic homicide in Dacorum in 2012 which is currently subject to a review. The review will result in an action plan to address any areas that could be improved. The whole review will be sent to the Home Office for approval.

4 Actions supporting the policy

4.1 A lead officer for Domestic Abuse sits within the Resident Services Anti-Social Behaviour Team. This office is highly trained and had been recognised by CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) as a champion in this field.

4.2 Designated Officers will be appointed in each service area. This approach is already in place for Safeguarding and officers will now be trained to include domestic abuse. These officers will provide a point of contact for their services for information, services related issues and any concerns. They will also act as a support network.

4.3 This information will be publicised as with first aiders so that all staff will know not only for domestic abuse but also for Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

4.4 A regular meeting is organised for the designated officers to discuss any barriers they may encounter and to take forward any improvements or actions that may be identified following on from reviews or as service improvements.

4.5 Over 80 front line staff have now been trained in domestic abuse awareness and 2 further courses for up to 40 more have been scheduled.

Appendix A



Domestic Abuse Policy

Corporate

Version Control	Version 1.1
Status of Policy	Draft
Sponsor	Julia Hedger, Group Manager for Strategic Housing
Author/Reviewer	Isabel Connolly, Team Leader for Private Sector Housing, Strategy and Policy
Approved	
Review Date	

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- 8. Equality**
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1. Introduction

1.1 Dacorum Borough Council has a corporate commitment to treat all known and suspected cases of domestic abuse seriously. The Council recognises that where it occurs domestic abuse is both harmful and damaging to the individuals involved and the wider community. As a key local partner to many service providers the Council recognises that it has an integral role to play in supporting work to reduce the incidence of domestic abuse and provide support to victims, as both an employer and a direct provider of services.

1.2 The Council has a long-standing commitment to tackling domestic abuse and making its communities safer. This commitment is clearly set out in Dacorum's Community Plan *DACORUM 2015 – A Better Borough*, which sets out the Council's strategic vision for:

“Creating a cohesive community where people feel safe by tackling crime and disorder and improving quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the Borough.”

1.3 Through its inter-agency partnerships, the Council will contribute to wide and far reaching strategies to tackle domestic abuse.

1.4 The Council believes that:

- Domestic abuse is unacceptable and should not be tolerated;
- Those who abuse should be held accountable for their behaviour;
- Domestic abuse affects not only children and families but also the whole community; and
- The safety and empowerment of those experiencing domestic abuse should always be the priority in any response.

1.5 The Council is committed to:

- **Early intervention** and signposting;
- **Protecting** those affected by domestic abuse; and
- **Supporting** those who need it.

1.6 In achieving the above the Council will:

- Adopt a strong partnership approach with agencies working within this field;
- Support both local and national agencies and the police to co-ordinate responses at strategic and operational levels;
- Make available to both service users and employees relevant information from appropriate agencies;
- Ensure a sensitive, consistent, confidential and prompt response in service delivery;
- Ensure Council Officers receive support and training to enable them to take appropriate action, including referral and signposting;
- Ensure all employees understand the important role they can play in addressing the effects of domestic abuse and develop a consistent approach across the Council;
- Provide a range of services to assist people to live in safety and security;

- Ensure that services are accessible to all and that any barriers to access, such as language and disability, are addressed;
- Offer support and understanding in the workplace to those experiencing domestic abuse, prioritising confidentiality and workplace safety;
- Support the police and other local partners to challenge perpetrators and make use of legal remedies where appropriate; and
- Be clear to employees and Members that any conviction of a domestic abuse-related crime could bring the Council into disrepute, and that such a conviction would trigger disciplinary or other conduct procedures.

1.7 Dacorum Borough Council recognises that it operates within a legislative framework, including:

- Domestic Violence Act 1998
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The Family Law Act 1996
- Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 1985 and 1996
- The Homelessness Act 2002
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

2. Definition

2.1 The Council has adopted the following definition of domestic abuse:

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between any persons who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender and sexuality”

2.2 The definition incorporates both Government and ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) guidance and recognises that domestic abuse can occur between family members, and is not just restricted to current or former partners. It also takes into account elder abuse, forced marriages, male victims and same-sex relationships.

2.3 It is recognised that domestic abuse is not restricted to a specific age group, race, religion or socio-economic standing, but cuts across all sections of society and its effects can be debilitating on both the individual concerned and society as a whole.

3. The facts

3.1 Domestic abuse will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetime (Source: Living Without Abuse, 2013).

3.2 Domestic abuse leads to, on average, two women being murdered each week and 30 men per year (Source: Living Without Abuse, 2013).

- 3.3 Domestic abuse accounts for 16% of all violent crime, however it is still the violent crime least likely to be reported to the police (Source: Crime in England and Wales 04/05 report).
- 3.4 Domestic abuse has more repeat victims than any other crime and on average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police (Source: Living Without Abuse, 2013).
- 3.5 Domestic abuse is the single most quoted reason for becoming homeless (Shelter, 2002).
- 3.6 In 2010 the Forced Marriage Unit responded to 1735 reports of possible Forced Marriages (Source: Living Without Abuse, 2013).
- 3.7 Nearly one in ten older people experience elder abuse, with the majority of cases occurring within the home (Age UK, 2013).
- 3.8 Around 75% of domestic abuse victims are targeted at work, including harassing phone calls, arriving at the office unannounced, and physical assaults (Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence, 2013).

4. Partnership

- 4.1 The Council adopts a strong partnership approach to domestic abuse, working with the following local agencies:

- Community Safety Partnership
- The Police
- 'True Love' preventative programme to target teen abuse
- Sunflower Project
- MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences)
- Domestic Violence Forum
- Domestic Violence support providers
- Local refuge
- Herts Young Homeless
- Perpetrator support
- Homicide reviews
- Children's Services
- Social Services
- Clinical Commissioning Groups
- Public Health.

This list is not exhaustive.

- 4.2 The Council is committed to playing an active role and ensuring that it is represented at multi-agency forums and meetings led by its partners.
- 4.3 The Council will work towards a proactive multi-agency approach with all relevant statutory and voluntary agencies working together to facilitate effective case management.
- 4.4 The Council will ensure that a multi-agency approach is taken by making use of referrals and signposting to local agencies, charities and other service providers

within the partnership. The Council will however only involve other agencies where it has received consent from the person to do so, unless required to do so by law.

- 4.5 Where children are affected particular care will be taken to ensure that their interests are taken into account and that where appropriate the police and support agencies are involved, provided that parental rights and wishes are followed, unless the Council is required by law to share information.

5. Lead Officer responsibility

- 5.1 The Council has a Lead Officer in its Anti-Social Behaviour team recognised by CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse), a national charity supporting multi-agency responses.

- 5.2 This Lead Officer provides:

- An overview of service provision;
- Advice and training; and
- Up-to-date knowledge of good practice and legislation.

- 5.3 Relevant service areas have the responsibility for their own case management and will have staff trained in this regard.

- 5.4 The Lead Officer will work with Domestic Abuse Champions for each departmental service area and bi-annual meetings will be used to share learning from recent cases, MARAC, and homicide reviews. This is in line with the Council's structure for safeguarding.

- 5.4 The Lead Officer will also be able to provide support to Human Resources where an employee may be experiencing domestic abuse, particularly where the employee may be at threat within the work place.

6. Service Delivery

6.1 Service standards

- 6.1.1 If someone is experiencing domestic abuse they can expect the following:

- To have their situation dealt with sympathetically and in a non-judgemental manner;
- To be interviewed immediately or within 24 hours if more appropriate and to be fully involved in all decisions;
- To be offered the choice of an interview with a same-sex investigator;
- To have arrangements made to have an interpreter available if English is not their first language;
- To be provided with details of other agencies that may be able to offer support and counselling;
- To have a referral made with their consent to a specialist service provider;
- To experience high levels of confidentiality. Any information given to staff will remain confidential and will only be given to other agencies with the consent of the person unless there is a statutory duty to do so (e.g. under section 47 of the Children's Act 1989);

- To not have staff contact the person responsible for the abuse unless express permission is given to staff to do so. The sole exception is where there is a clear reason to believe that there is an attempt to defraud the Council. Any decision to contact the person responsible will be approved by a Senior Officer;
- To be provided with emergency temporary accommodation as a result of experiencing domestic abuse;
- To have eligibility for permanent accommodation determined in accordance with the relevant homelessness legislation;
- To have arrangements made to ensure that the service is accessible and that appropriate advice and support is provided where there are barriers to communication or mobility, a learning disability, or if the abuser is relied on for care;
- To have safeguards put in place to maintain their safety, especially in relation to the Council making contact with them by phone, letters or visits; and
- To talk to staff who are culturally aware and who have received relevant training.

6.2 The Service

6.2.1 A person or household experiencing domestic abuse will have their case dealt with by the team appropriate given their housing situation:

- In the case that a person or household is homeless they will be dealt with in the first instance by the Advice and Homelessness team;
- In the case that a person or household is a current tenant or leaseholder of the Council's Landlord service they will be dealt with in the first instance by the Housing Landlord team; and
- In the case that a person or household is a private tenant or homeowner they will be dealt with in the first instance by the Anti-Social Behaviour team.

6.2.2 The Council will provide suitable accommodation where the Council accepts that it is unreasonable for a person or household to return to their home in line with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. Each case will be assessed on its own merits and will be viewed against statutory legislation.

6.2.3 Where action is to be taken against the perpetrator, the Council will signpost or refer residents affected by domestic abuse to agencies able to support them in making use of legal remedies available, including non-molestation orders, occupation orders, and property transfer orders.

6.2.4 The Council will facilitate and provide information on a range of housing options and services that provide support and counselling to residents affected by domestic abuse.

6.2.5 The Council will look to further develop partnerships with support providers to co-ordinate services to residents affected by domestic abuse.

6.2.6 Where a Council or Housing Association tenant or a member of their household is experiencing domestic abuse the Council will work with and support other partnership agencies to secure out-of-area arrangements for accommodation in all cases where there would be a continuing risk to the household by remaining in the Borough.

- 6.2.7 Where appropriate Council tenants will be considered in terms of their suitability for additional security measures to be made to their property, which would allow them to remain more safely in their own homes.
- 6.2.8 In the case that Council tenants have a joint tenancy, and one or both tenants are seeking to end the tenancy, the Council will take a victim-centred approach considering the best course of action to support the needs of the victim and support the future of their household. The Council may choose to grant a further tenancy, however victims will not be rehoused within the Borough where this could place them at risk from further abuse.
- 6.2.9 In the case that Council tenants have a joint tenancy and the victim has fled with no intention to return, enforcement action will be taken against the remaining tenant using the statutory Ground 2A for possession (Housing Act 1996). The Council will where appropriate also support the victim to access secure accommodation.
- 6.2.10 In the case that Council tenants have a joint tenancy and the tenants pursue legal remedies through the courts the Council is obliged to abide by any court orders and will support tenants accordingly.

6.3 Case management

- 6.3.1 All cases involving domestic abuse will be kept open with regular reviews, until the person considers that their situation has been resolved satisfactorily in accordance with this policy.
- 6.3.2 Where a person is dissatisfied with the investigation or a decision, they may pursue an appeal through the Council's complaints procedure.

6.4 Record keeping, monitoring and review

- 6.4.1 The Council's teams will keep confidential records in locked storage for the cases they are dealing with. In this way the Council will prevent any unnecessary travel of paperwork that could either identify the parties involved or in any way breach data protection laws.
- 6.4.2 The Council will make use of a central monitoring system to record the number of known cases of domestic abuse, which will be done anonymously so that this record does not identify any of the parties involved.

7. **Dacorum Borough Council as an employer**

7.1 Managing the impact

- 7.1.1 The Council is committed to the welfare of staff and where risks are identified precautions will be made to ensure protection for staff from situations that could make them potentially vulnerable.
- 7.1.2 The impact of domestic abuse experienced in the home has both direct and indirect impacts in the workplace, which include:
- Decreased productivity;
 - Absenteeism;
 - Errors; and

- Increased employee turnover.

7.1.3 The Council will provide all staff, in particular managers and HR staff with awareness of the main issues involved in domestic abuse, to recognise potential victims and perpetrators, and to provide a supportive structure in which to deal effectively with cases.

7.1.4 Those with line management responsibility should take a proactive stance in increasing awareness.

7.1.5 All employees and their family members may access independent free advice and support through the Council's Employee Assistance Programme.

7.2 Training

7.2.1 All new staff will need to sign a statement to say that they have read and understood the Domestic Abuse Policy.

7.2.2 All staff will undertake training in safeguarding and domestic abuse awareness as part of the Council's mandatory training programme. This is to be managed through the Council's online HR Employee Information System and line managers are expected to make sure employees attend where required.

7.2.3 Where appropriate the Council will consider policy and mandatory training requirements when procuring contracts for services that could bring contracted staff into contact with the public.

7.2.4 For front line teams coming into contact with cases of domestic abuse on a more regular basis specialist training will be appropriate. Line managers are expected to make sure employees attend where required in line with County guidelines.

7.3 Service standards

7.3.1 Employees who have identified that they are experiencing domestic abuse will be treated without judgement, both personally and professionally, and provided with a sympathetic, supportive response.

7.3.2 Where risks in the work environment are identified managers and HR will support employees to put in place safety precautions to prevent exposure through work to situations that could make any employee vulnerable.

7.3.3 The Council will support employees in making positive changes and in providing a safe and positive working environment.

7.3.4 In considering formal action relating to issues of performance or attendance managers should take the impact of domestic abuse into account as far as is reasonable.

7.3.5 Discussions between a manager and an employee who is experiencing domestic abuse will be treated in confidence. In some circumstances this confidence may need to be broken in order to protect children or vulnerable adults.

7.3.6 Managers will ensure that reasonable additional measures are taken to protect personal information regarding those who are known to be experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse.

7.4 Perpetrators

- 7.4.1 An employee who is cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence could be subject to disciplinary procedures. The Council reserves the right to use disciplinary procedures should an employee's activities outside of work have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed, or be considered to bring the Council into disrepute.

7.5 Employee case management

- 7.5.1 Where an employee is dissatisfied with any actions or decisions made in relation to their situation, they may pursue this informally with their line manager or HR, or formally by making use of review procedures outlined in the relevant HR policy/procedure, or if appropriate through the Council's grievance procedure.

8. Equality

- 8.1 Dacorum Borough Council is committed to equality in its Domestic Abuse Policy.
- 8.2 No employee or person in receipt of services provided by the Council will be unlawfully disadvantaged on the grounds of age, race or ethnicity, disability, gender or marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or belief under the operation of this policy.

9. Review

- 9.1 The policy will be reviewed three yearly or in response to changes in relevant legislation or guidance.

15. 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

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)		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	
		Housing Revenue Account Business Plan		E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing	
		Review of discretionary policies for Revenues and Benefits		C Baker, Group Manager- Revenue, Benefits and Fraud	

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
17 July 2013	5 July 2013	Domestic Abuse Policy Milestones for the Housing Service Plan		J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services	
		Empty Property Strategy		Nicholas Egerton	
		Homeless Strategy		Julia Hedger	
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.
Sheltered Housing Telephone Lines Review					
16 October 2013		Impact on the Business Plan of reducing the rate of rent increases			

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
13 November 2013	1 November 2013	Quarter 2 Performance Report (& Q2 Operational Risk Reports) Star Satisfaction Survey & Get Involved Strategy Update	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 Carolyn Leech	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance.
12 December 2013 <i>Joint OSC Meeting</i>		Budget 2014-2015 <i>No further items to be added</i>	Sc	S Marshall, Corporate Director, Finance & Governance	
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	

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
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