



HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 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 13 March 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 and Community Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	19th June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Resident Services quarter 4 report
Contact:	Cllr Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Resident and Regulatory Services Author/Responsible Officer, Julie Still, Group Manager – Resident Services
Purpose of report:	(1) Monitoring and information
Recommendations	1) That members note the report and identify any areas where they require additional information or reports of specific projects.
Corporate objectives:	Safe and Clean Environment Building Community Capacity Dacorum Delivers
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> Within existing budgets
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u>
Risk Implications	As per Neighbourhood Delivery Service Plan
Equalities Implications	
Health And Safety Implications	Individual risk assessment undertaken as well as risk register
Consultees:	Service Team Leaders, Community Safety Co-ordinator

Background papers:	Service Reports, Police reports, CorVu
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Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Quarter 4, 2012 – 2013

1. Introduction

1.1 This is the last quarter performance report for the Residents Services Group which forms part of the wider Neighbourhood Delivery service area and covers the period 1st January to 31st March 2013 and end of year figures where appropriate.

1.2 The services within this group are: -

Neighbourhood Action, Anti-Social Behaviour, Community Safety, The Old Town Hall, Children's Services, Community Cohesion, CCTV, Town Centre Management and Youth Democracy, Town Centre events and management.

1.3 If there are any additional areas or reports for specific areas that members would like to see, please can they inform the Group Manager, Resident Services.

1.4 Further information on Resident Services can be found at www.dacorum.gov.uk/residents

2 Quarter 4 Performance Report – CorVu

2.1 See Appendix A

3 Operational Risk Report

3.1 See Appendix B

4 Community Safety

4.1 **Dacorum Crime Summary – 1/4/12 to 31/3/13** compared with same period in previous year showing percentage increase/decrease

	Hemel Hempstead	Berkhamsted	Tring	Dacorum
All Crime	-12.6%	-5%	-17.2%	-12.4%
Burglary Dwelling	-10.5%	+83.3%	-4.1%	-3.4%
Vehicle Crime	-23.7%	-7.9%	+1.8%	-19.2%
Violent Crime	-6%	-11.1%	No change	-6.2%
Criminal Damage	-19.2%	+24.3%	-11.8%	-15%
Anti Social Behaviour	-29.2%	-25.9%	-25.9%	-28.6%

- 4.2 Please note that Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents are NOT Crimes and therefore do not form part of the All Crime Figures.
- 4.3 A full breakdown of figures for Berkhamsted, Tring, Hemel Hempstead and Dacorum as a whole is attached at appendices C,D,E and F.

4.4 Performance on Partnerships Strategic Priorities 2012/13

4.5 All Crime

The Borough wide figure for reduction of all crime is 12.5% - this is an improvement on last year's reduction figure of 11% - and means that there were 951 fewer victims of crime than last year;

4.6 Residential Burglary

This shows a reduction of 3.4% compared to last year across the borough but within that there is an increase shown in Berkhamsted of 83%, a rise of 25 crimes compared to the previous year which is significant. The breakdown by ward highlights where particular issues occurred and all were targeted with the appropriate responses.

4.7 Vehicle Crime

A good reduction across the borough of 19.2%. The only part of the borough showing an increase is in Tring showing an increase of 1.8% or 2 more crimes than last year.

4.8 Violent Crime

A satisfactory end of year result showing a reduction of over 6%, 83 fewer crimes than last year. A significant contribution to this result is the reduction in Hemel Hempstead Central Ward of 23%, partly attributable to the changes in Public Order Policing which have been introduced. It is too early yet to gauge the impact of the introduction of Street Pastors in the Town Centre, but their effect will be monitored.

4.9 Criminal Damage

This category shows a good reduction of 15% across the Borough. However there is , like Burglary, an increase in Berkhamsted across all wards except Castle. We have discussed this with Police and some of this can be attributed to individual incidents where many cars in particular streets have been targeted, but this issue will remain a high priority for the Community Safety Partnership to tackle.

4.10 Anti Social Behaviour

A strong performance across the borough reflected in a 28% reduction.

5 Resident Services - Achievements.

- 5.1 The following achievements are a sample of the projects/work undertaken by this group of services during the last quarter of 2012/2013.

5.2 Anti-Social Behaviour

- 5.3 As reported in the Community Safety report, anti-social behaviour reduced by 28% during 2012/13 – a reduction of 1806 reports to Police.

- 5.4 Cases that are dealt with by the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Team continue to be of complex and serious nature and involve a range of agencies to deal with these issues.

- 5.5 There were 16 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) signed by young people and their parents to address specific concerns. 8 of the ABC's were in Tring as were used to address particular individuals causing general nuisance in the area. In addition to the ABC's warning letters and Anti Social Behaviour Order warnings were issued. The reports of anti social behaviour in the area have ceased and Police and the ASB Team continue to monitor.
- 5.6 There was a breach of an Anti Social Behaviour Injunction which was dealt with by the County Court as contempt and this resulted in an 8 week suspended prison sentence.
- 5.7 In house training has been delivered by the ASB Officer to 90 DBC officers. This officer has also been identified as a local champion in this area by CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) who attended the West Hertfordshire MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) to assess its performance.
- 5.8 Funding is secured until end of March 2015 for the Family Intervention Officer under the Housing Challenge project. This post is based at Dacorum Borough Council and works closely with the Thriving Families project at Herts County Council. The officer continues to work intensively with families who have a range of complex issues and needs. A case study is attached at appendix G. Families are identified for this project by meeting the following criteria: -
- The family is receipt of a means tested benefit related to worklessness.
 - A child in the family has a poor record of attendance at school
 - There is evidence of involvement of a family member in crime, disorder or causing anti social behaviour.

6 ASB Priorities for 2013/14 -

- 6.1 Review policies and procedures in partnership with other DBC services in light of the proposed introduction of the new Anti Social Behaviour legislation.
- 6.2 Work with Hertfordshire County Council's Thriving Families Project to deliver the Family Intervention project across the borough to the identified cohort.
- 6.3 To work with other agencies and our communities to deliver a restorative approach to dealing with low level anti social behaviour.

7 Neighbourhood Action

- 7.1 Neighbourhood Action steering groups have continued to meet and there were 300 people involved during this quarter with 1314 attendances at meetings during the year.
- 7.2 A wide range of events have been organised by the Neighbourhood Action during the last 12 months from Jubilee Celebrations, Christmas light events at shopping centres to film events bringing older and younger residents together and spring bulb planting.
- 7.3 The Street Champions completed a 6 month pilot and is now ready to be offered to other groups in the other Neighbourhood Action areas.

7.4 The verge hardening project is progressing and consultation has taken place at the following locations and projects are agreed to provide additional parking at: -

7.4.1 Marlins Turn, Gadebridge – 8 bays;

7.4.2 Ritcroft Street, Leverstock Green – 22 bays;

7.4.3 Cowper Road, Markyate – existing bays to be formalised;

7.4.4 Fennycroft Road, Gadebridge – 8 bays;

7.4.5 Burns Drive, Woodhall Farm – 5 bays;

7.4.6 Ritcroft Close, Leverstock Green – 12 bays;

7.4.7 Butts End, Gadebridge – 10 bays;

7.4.8 Brickmakers Lane, Leverstock Green – verge to be hardened;

7.4.9 Plantation Walk, Gadebridge 2 locations Rayburn Road end - 6 bays and Middleknights Hill end – 10 bays;

7.4.10 Royden Court Woodhall Farm – 5 bays;

7.4.11 The Thistles, Gadebridge – 6 bays

7.4.12 Hilldown Road, Gadebridge – 6 bays.

7.5 Work on the first of 12 areas will commence in June and it is anticipated that the funding will meet the needs of more of the prioritised areas. This is currently being investigated.

7.6 There were 9 play parks were upgraded in the last quarter of 2012/13 and launched at Easter with events taking place at all parks during the Easter school holidays.

7.7 The Friends of Gadebridge Park group was established and formalised and has agreed a formal launch date for July 2013.

8 2013/14 priorities: -

8.1 Complete the Verge Hardening Project

8.2 Public meetings to be held in all Neighbourhood Action areas – priorities refreshed and information exchanged.

8.3 Street Champions project to be extended to other areas.

9 Children, Young People and Youth Democracy

9.1 The total number of attendances at the Adventure Playgrounds for the last quarter of 2012/13 was 11,811 which brought the annual attendance to 71,017. The number of individual children registered at the playgrounds is 5,176.

9.2 The 4 Youth Clubs continue to thrive with numbers continuing to increase. Attendance figures are regularly 70 young people per session at Adeyfield and both Chaulden and Grovehill numbers are also increasing. Bennetts End does not currently run a Youth

Session but one will start in July 2013. Quarter 4 attendance was 999 attendances which brought the annual attendance to 4,482.

- 9.3 A project to increase the offering to young people and the use of the playgrounds was introduced in January 2013 in partnership with Youth Connexions who are mirroring the successful Dacorum Borough Council youth project at the playgrounds.
- 9.4 All four adventure playgrounds were given funding by the Billy Dove Memorial Fund which secured disco equipment, a skate ramps and launched a homework club by providing laptops. The Billy Dove Memorial Fund has pledged continued support for the playgrounds.
- 9.5 A full review of the Adventure Playgrounds has been completed and consultation took place with all staff regarding a new structure that will deliver an increased service at the playgrounds and make budget savings. The new structure will be implemented from 1st July 2013.
- 9.6 Dacorum Youth forum meetings have continued with one additional subgroup meeting each month. The group have finished the design for their recruitment campaign and these have been distributed around the schools. 6 additional young people have registered. The group have also been supporting the Your PLACE: Highfield project. Helping to co-ordinate and run an Easter colouring competition and Easter egg hunt for the launch day.
- 9.7 'Kick it Out' – follow up football coaching sessions took place every Tuesday evening between 22nd January 2013 and 19th March. 45 people took part in the sessions which were delivered by Apex 360. People who attended 6 out of the 8 sessions were rewarded with a discounted trip to an Arsenal match. An AQA accreditation in basic football skills and health eating sessions was incorporated in one session by Youth Connexions. All attendees are now being offered a sports leadership qualification.
- 9.8 'Animated About Voting' was a project lead by the Active Communities Officer and involved: 69 young people from 6 different Dacorum schools; a local film director, David Wachs; Jim Doyle, Group Manager Democratic Services; Cllr Neil Harden and was also supported by Mike Penning MP. This project was a celebration of the young talent in Dacorum and full details of the project can be seen at appendix H. The winning film can be seen at www.youtube.com/DacorumBC
- 9.9 Our local professional from LRG media will work with the top two film makers to produce the final film which will be used in future election campaigns to encourage young people to vote.

10 2013/14 priorities: -

- 10.1 To launch 8 of the upgraded play areas over the Easter School holidays.
- 10.2 Implement the review and new structure at the Adventure Playgrounds
- 10.3 To review the new structure and service changes after 6 months
- 10.4 To review the impact/success/ of youth project with Youth Connexions
- 10.5 To continue to develop the youth democracy agenda and offering to children and young people within Dacorum

11 CCTV and Town Centre

- 11.1 The control room managed 391 separate incidents during the final quarter of this year and a total of 1850 incidents during the year. There were 73 arrests directly involving the CCTV control room and over the year a total of 342 arrests. There were 95 calls regarding lost, found or stray dogs and 432 in total for the year.
- 11.2 The new Community Control Centre project is underway and new policies and procedures and working practice are being drafted for the improved service which is due to launch in the summer.
- 11.3 The last 12 months has seen a range of events in the town centre from the Jubilee Carnival procession, Olympic Torch Relay to the Bandstand Marathon and Christmas light switch on. Closer working has developed with the Planning and Regeneration Team and the new market management company.

12 2013/14 priorities

- 12.1 Complete the transfer of CCTV control to the new Community Control Centre at Cupid Green
- 12.2 Raise the profile of the CCTV service and the services offered to businesses.
- 12.3 Deliver a programme of events in the Marlowes and the Old High Street
- 12.4 Work with the Town Centre Partnership to improve footfall in the Marlowes.
- 12.5 Contribute to the working groups for planned improvements to Old High Street and regeneration works to Hemel Hempstead Town Centre and the Watergardens.

13 Old Town Hall

- 13.1 A separate report will be presented to the committee regarding the Old Town Hall.

14 Service Concerns

- 14.1 There are no service concerns

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix D

Appendix E

Appendix F

Case study 2

Family N comprised of a mother and her 5 children, with their ages ranging from 16yrs to 5yrs.

They had lived at the same address for a number of years and their relationship with their neighbours had deteriorated to such a stage that it was completely beyond repair.

There was an allegation and counter allegation made by both family N and their next door neighbour on an almost daily basis.

Further to this, the children's father was estranged and had had no contact with his family for over a year, the mother suffered from mental health issues, the 2 eldest children were school refusers and the family were facing eviction due to rent arrears in the region of £2,500. Mother was also reliant on benefits. As a consequence of the children not attending school, Ms N had received a court summons and faced the very real threat of a custodial sentence. Due to the father being estranged and having no contact with his children, Ms N had to make provision to have her children taken into temporary care as there was no extended family that could take care of them.

The house was very dirty (I had bugs crawling across me on my first home visit) and was full of clutter. The furniture was also shabby, the beds were broken and there were no carpets downstairs in the house.

The first piece of work was to establish exactly how and why the rent account was so far in arrears and to address this. It transpired that during one of Ms N's bouts of depression, she had failed to respond to the local authority's request for additional information and as such her housing benefit had been suspended. Ms N had a desire to move away from the family next door however she was unable to do so due to her rent arrears.

Together, we composed an appeal letter and submitted it to the local authority. This appeal was successful and as such, Ms N had her housing benefit account credited with approximately £3,000.

While this housing benefit appeal was being considered, I attended court with Ms N regarding her children's non-attendance at school and presented a case to the judge as to why she should not be imprisoned. Fortunately, this presentation was successful and rather than a custodial sentence, she was given a 6 month conditional discharge.

There was also a warrant out for Ms N's arrest for non payment of fines for an unrelated matter. I spoke with the court and provided them with medical evidence I obtained from her GP detailing her mental health issues and managed to get the warrant lifted and the fine cancelled.

I contacted a local charity and managed to source funding for both new carpets for the house and also new beds and bedding for the children.

In relation to the non attendance of the 2 eldest children, I spent time discussing with them the real reasons behind their non attendance. With the eldest girl, it transpired that she too was suffering from mild depression which had been brought on by the lack of contact with her father and also the pressure of sitting her GCSE's.

Working in partnership with the school, we organised some counselling sessions for her as well as organising some additional support to ensure she was able to achieve her projected exam results.

With the boy, his non attendance was for a number of underlying reasons. He felt isolated at the school he was at as many of his friends had attended a different secondary school. The school he was attending was quite a distance from his home and the family had originally chosen that particular school as at the time the father was present and was able to drive the child to school, however when the father moved out of the family home the boy was forced to take a number of buses. He had also begun to demonstrate signs of anger, again around the lack of interest from his father. This had led to a number of exclusions for him and he felt that he had earned himself a reputation that he would be unable to get rid of.

It was decided that a fresh start at a school closer to home would be beneficial to him so, with the schools inclusion officer, we approached his local school and were successful in placing him there.

Both children's attendance improved dramatically and the girl has now moved from to school to a full time college place.

Lastly, as the rent arrears had been cleared up, the family was able to move to a new home, enabling them to have a fresh start without the ongoing conflict with the neighbour.

The work with this family lasted approximately 14 months and at the end of the intervention, they had moved to a new home, the rent account was in credit, all children were in full time education and Ms N had returned to work.

AGENDA ITEM: 7**SUMMARY**

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	19 June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Quarter Four Performance Report – Regulatory Services
Contact:	Cllr Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services Author/Responsible Officers: Nicholas Egerton, (Team Leader Environmental Protection & Housing) Steven Baker, Assistant Director (Legal, Democratic & Regulatory)
Purpose of report:	To provide Members with the performance report for quarter 4 in relation to Regulatory Services.
Recommendations:	That Members note the report.
Corporate objectives:	Resources and Value For Money; Optimise Resources and Implement Best Practice.
Implications:	Financial: None.
'Value For Money Implications'	Value for Money: Monitoring Performance supports the Council in achieving Value for Money for its citizens.
Risk Implications	Risk Assessment completed for each service area as part of service planning and reviewed quarterly.
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessment completed for each service area as part of service planning and reviewed quarterly.
Health And Safety Implications	None.
Consultees:	

Background	Quarterly Performance Report – quarter 4 (attached).
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

1. Background

1.1 For the purpose of this report, 'Regulatory Services' includes the following services:

- Environmental Health (Food Safety, Health and Safety, Statutory Nuisances, Contaminated Land, Drainage, Private Water Supplies, Infectious Diseases, Air Quality Management)
- Private Sector Housing (HMOs, Illegal Eviction, Private Sector Landlord Issues, Improvement Grants, Disabled Facilities Grants, etc)
- Home Energy Conservation
- Pest Control
- Stray Dogs / Dog Warden Services
- Clinical Waste
- Cesspool Emptying
- Environmental Enforcement and High Hedges
- Emergency and Business Continuity Planning
- Street Trading

2. Regulatory Services Performance Indicators

2.1 There are no significant performance issues to bring to Members' attention arising in Quarter 4. There has been slippage in two areas,

REG01 (Red) - Percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours.

The quarter 2 performance identified that the collection of abandoned vehicles was inadequately recorded. As a result additional steps were put in place. The results for quarters 3 and 4 were much improved and reflect the actual performance achieved, with only one vehicle recorded outside of the target period. This vehicle was removed within 48 hours.

REG02 (amber) – Percentage of high risk (category A and B) food premises inspected that were due in the quarter.

There was one outstanding B premises which was not inspected because we were unable to gain access. These premises have now been inspected.

3. Food Safety

3.1 Officers were required to formally close another food premises in Quarter 3. This was due to a serious mouse infestation, causing a significant health risk. Officers have worked with the Food Business Operator to deal with the risk and the business has since been allowed to re-open. Following this action in Quarter 4 the Food and Health and Safety Team successfully prosecuted this food business. The Food Business

Operator pleaded guilty to three counts of failing to meet the requirements of the food hygiene regulations during May and June 2012. He was ordered to pay a fine of £5,000 for the hygiene offences plus £2,790 in costs and a £15 victim surcharge

3.2 Following the success of the Tesco Primary Authority partnership, two other large businesses, namely, Empire Cinemas and Marks and Spencer, have approached the Council with an interest in forming partnerships. Negotiations have taken place and we have so far succeeded in entering a further partnership with Empire Cinemas. As a result we have appointed a Specialist Environmental Health Officer in the Food and Health and Safety Team (James Allaker), and he will be working on both the Tesco Primary Authority Partnership and our new Empire Cinemas Primary Authority Partnership.

4. Home Energy Conservation

4.1 It was reported previously that officers had been working with colleagues at Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council, to produce a Hertfordshire bid for £0.5 million. The bid was largely successful, with £395,000 awarded to Hertfordshire from the Department of Health's Warmer Homes Healthy People fund. The campaign helped over 1000 people across Hertfordshire stay warm this winter.

4.2 In Dacorum, between November 2012 and April 2013, 159 home energy visits were made by the contractors Groundwork who were appointed by the County Council. This led to a number of referrals for both home improvements and financial assistance.

5 Housing Assistance Policy

5.1 The Housing Assistance Policy was drafted and approved by Cabinet in Quarter 4. The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy replaced the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. This policy moves away from grant based assistance (except for disabled facilities grants) towards a loan based approach. This approach should ensure better value for money and help ensure that the assistance policy is more sustainable.

Appendix A

AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	19th June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	2012/13 4th Quarter Performance Report, Service Plan Update & Operational Risk Register – Housing
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Author/Responsible Officer: Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing
Purpose of report:	1) To provide Members with the Quarter 4 / End of Year performance information (2012/13), update on progress of the Service Plan & Operational Risk Register for the Housing Landlord Service Area.
Recommendation	2) That Members note the Quarter 4 / End of Year Performance Report, Service Plan update and Operational Risk Register.
Corporate objectives:	Effective Performance Monitoring will have a positive impact on all corporate objectives directly or indirectly.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> None.
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u> Monitoring Performance supports the Council in achieving Value for Money in all areas of service delivery.
Risk Implications	The Housing Landlord Operational Service Risk Register was reviewed during the 4th Quarter of 2012/13 and will be reviewed quarterly throughout 2013/14.
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessment completed for each Service Area and reviewed annually or as and when there is Policy change
Health And Safety Implications	None

Consultees:	Calvin Fisher – Interim Group Manager, Property & Place Andy Vincent – Group Manager, Tenancy & Leasehold
Background papers:	None

1. Introduction

This report details the performance of the Housing Landlord Service during the 4th quarter and the end of year position of 2012/13 against performance indicators, as well as updating the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding progress of the Housing Service Plan which was agreed with the Tenant & Leaseholder Committee in March 2012 following consultation.

The report also details the Housing Landlord Operational Risk Register. These risks have been identified as key in terms of tracking and ensuring all is done to mitigate as far as is reasonably possible.

2. Housing Landlord Performance Report - Quarter 4 / End of Year 2012/13

Appendix 1 shows performance against the 'Service Critical' performance indicators for the Quarter 4 period of January – March 2013 and the end of year position.

2.1. Performance Highlights

2.1.1 Average Cost of a void (empty home) - £2498.37

The new 'lettable standard' was agreed with tenant representatives towards the end of 2011/12 which resulted in the amount of work carried out prior to a new tenancy starting increasing. This has proved successful in fewer refusals of properties and the Property & Place team have managed to keep the average spend under the new target of £2,500

2.1.2 Percentage of tenants satisfied with Planned Works – 97.57%

Due to the increase in resources available following the move to Self Financing, the capital programme was greatly increased in 2012/13 from previous years. This has been a challenge to manage in terms of tenant liaison and the Council have worked closely with the main contractor, Keepmoat/Appollo to ensure this did not result in more complaints or less attention to detail.

The table below demonstrates the increase in work taking place in tenants' homes across the borough:

Improvement Works	2011/2012	2012/2013
Kitchen Renewal	196	456
Bathroom Renewal	192	426
Re-Wire	250	605
Front Doors	532	1935

2.1.3 Rent Collected as a percentage of rent owed (excluding arrears brought forward)
100.02%

To achieve a performance level in excess of 100% in the current financial climate is excellent. Arrears performance on the whole is improving rapidly and many initiatives which started in the early part of the year are now showing their value.

An example of this is that following a recent 'evening ring around' whereby tenants in arrears are called in the evening by an Income Officer, each one of those tenants made a payment within the next week. The Christmas 'Pay your Rent' campaign also proved to be a success.

2.1.4 Complaint Handling (P & P 218/222 T & L 40/40)

Whilst the volume of complaints received may appear high, for a local authority with a housing stock of over 10,000 the numbers are relatively low. The turnaround of complaints in terms of hitting the target time of 20 days has been excellent in 2012/13 but more importantly is a culture of learning from complaints and changing our procedures or policies as a result.

3. Housing Service Plan

Appendix 2 details progress against the 2012/13 Service Plan.

Appendix 3 shows the 2013/14 Housing Service Plan and performance indicators which will be reported throughout the year. The Service Plan and performance indicators have agreed by the Tenants & Leaseholder Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Corporate Director of Housing & Regeneration

4. 2012/13 Housing Landlord Operational Risk Register

Appendix 4 details the key risks identified to monitor and report against. They are reviewed quarterly by the Housing Senior Management Team (HSMT) whereby work undertaken to mitigate will be reflected in the assessments.

Appendix 1 – Yearly Performance Report – Housing Landlord

Appendix 1 – Yearly Performance Report – Housing Landlord

Appendix 1 – Yearly Performance Report – Housing Landlord

Appendix 2 – Housing Landlord Service Plan Objectives

Appendix 2 – Housing Landlord Service Plan Objectives

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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.

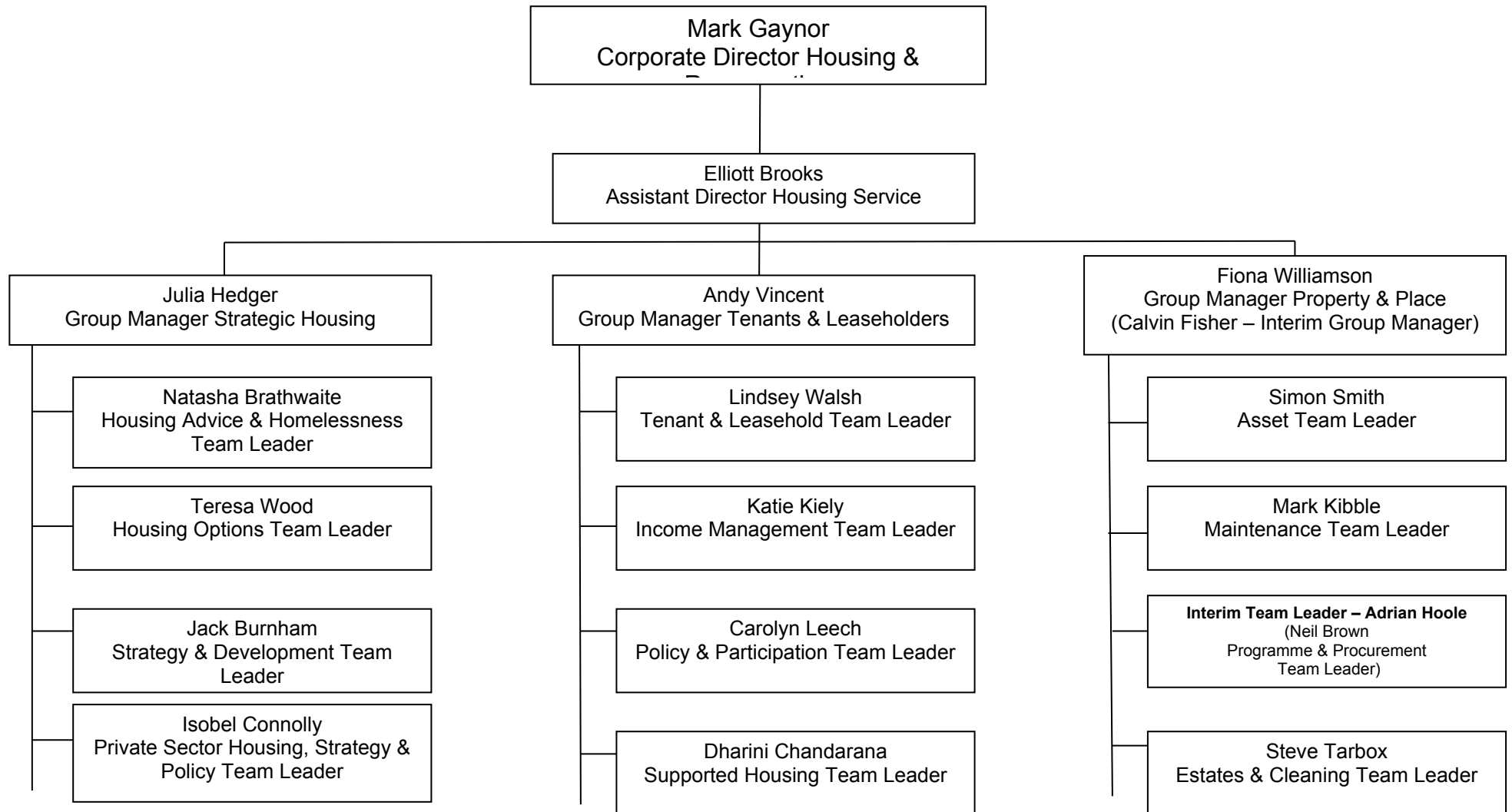
The Business Plan sets out the approach to maintaining its stock, improving estates, investing in remodelling & energy efficiency measures as well as a new build programme to build the Council's first new homes for over 25 years.

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</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</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.</i> <i>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</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</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, and</i> 	<i>Homelessness and Housing Advice Team Leader</i>

	<p>➤ <i>Focusing on suitable and well-managed resettlement into more secure accommodation.</i></p>	
<i>Developing the Private Rent Sector</i>	<p><i>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:</i></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> 	<i>Strategy & Private Sector Housing Team Leader</i>
<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> 	<i>Housing Options Team Leader</i>
<p><i>We will utilise the feedback we receive to improve the quality of the services we provide.</i></p> <p><i>(affects tenants, leaseholders and housing applicants)</i></p>	<p><i>We receive feedback in the form of satisfaction survey responses, complaints, comments at involvement events and complements.</i></p> <p><i>We will:</i></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><i>We will use this information to review our policies and procedures and enhance the information that we provide to service users.</i></p>	<i>Policy and Participation Team Leader</i>
<i>Leasehold service review</i>	<p><i>Review the service that leaseholders receive; by:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Comparing the service that leaseholders in Dacorum receive with other leaseholders across the county</i> • <i>Asking leaseholders’ their view of the quality and costs associated with their existing service</i> 	<i>Leasehold Team Leader</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that all processes associated with providing services to leaseholders are as efficient as possible 	
<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>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>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>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>

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 undertaken in the financial year	info	
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%

Appendix 4 – Housing Landlord Risk Register

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AGENDA ITEM: 9**SUMMARY**

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	19 June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Provisional Outturn 2012/13
Contact:	Cllr Nick Tiley – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources James Deane – Assistant Director (Finance & Resources)
Purpose of report:	To provide details of the provisional revenue and capital outturn position for the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny area for 2012/13.
Recommendations	That the Committee note the provisional outturn position.
Corporate objectives:	This report supports all of the Council's Corporate Objectives.
Implications:	Financial and Value for Money implications are included within the body of the report.
Risk Implications	Risk implications are included within the body of the report.
Equalities Implications	There are no equality implications.
Health And Safety Implications	There are no health and safety implications.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	GF – General Fund H&C – Housing and Community HRA – Housing Revenue Account HCA – Homes and Communities Agency

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline for the Housing and Community (H&C) Overview and Scrutiny Committee Provisional Outturn for 2012/13, prior to the closure of the accounts. Outturn is reported for the following:

- General Fund Revenue Account
- Housing Revenue Account
- Capital Programme

2. General Fund Revenue Account

2.1 The General Fund (GF) revenue account records the income and expenditure associated with all Council functions except management of the Council's housing stock which is accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA – see section 3).

2.2 To provide Committee with some council-wide context, a summary of the GF provisional outturn position, analysed by OSC, is shown in Appendix A.

2.3 Appendix A separates expenditure into controllable and non-controllable categories in order to focus scrutiny on those controllable areas that officers are able to influence.

2.4 The majority of non-controllable costs result from year-end accounting adjustments, e.g. depreciation charges, which are required to show the true value of resources used to provide the Council's services, but which do not result in a cash charge to taxpayers. As these costs will not be known until work on the annual accounts is complete, the forecast outturn for all areas is shown as on budget. Appendix A separates expenditure into controllable and non-controllable.

2.5 The provisional outturn for H&C is set out in the table below:

Housing & Community	Controllable Budget £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Forecast Variance	
			£000	%
Employees	3,195	3,192	(3)	-0.1%
Premises	400	438	38	9.5%
Transport	49	48	(1)	-2.0%
Supplies & Services	2,324	1,976	(348)	-15.0%
Third Parties	25	25	0	0.0%
Transfer Payments	5	5	0	0.0%
Income	(3,835)	(3,949)	(114)	-3.0%
	2,163	1,735	(428)	-19.8%

Material variances are explained below:

2.6 Supplies and Services - £348k under budget (15%)

The major area of underspend relates to £250k slippage on garage maintenance. The works are planned for completion early in 2013/14.

2.7 Income - £114k over achieved (3.0%)

Provisional outturn reflects an over achievement of income in the following areas:

- £40k relating to rental income now recovered through housing benefits, in relation to tenants at Leys Road hostel (homelessness accommodation).
- £49k due to a higher than budgeted level of licence fee income. This budget will be closely monitored in 2013/14.

3. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

3.1 The HRA is a ring-fenced account relating to the Council's Landlord functions. A guiding principle of the HRA is that revenue raised from rents and service charges must be sufficient to fund expenditure incurred. The forecast outturn position for the HRA is shown at Appendix B.

3.2 The provisional HRA balance at the end of 2012/13 is £3.299m after a proposed transfer to reserves of £12m, subject to final outturn.

3.3 The provisional operating surplus is £11.285m - £52k (0.47%) more than the revised surplus of £11.233m. Significant variances are as follows:

3.4 Dwelling Rents - £164k over achieved (0.3%)

This is the combined impact of more effective voids management, new tenants moving straight to target rent, and an improved collection rate.

3.5 Repairs & Maintenance - £211k over budget (2.2%)

There has been an increase in demand-led expenditure for responsive and void repairs of £558k which has been partly offset by an underspend in the planned maintenance budget of £447k. The balance between expenditure on planned and responsive repairs and this will be monitored carefully in 2013/14.

3.6 Leaseholder / Non Dwelling Expenses - £47k over budget (19%)

The primary cause of this overspend was uninsured losses.

3.7 Supporting People – Transition – £56k under budget (48.7%)

Transitional spend has continued to reduce but this was not reflected in the revised budget. The budget for 2013/14 has been reduced to £50k.

4. Provisional Capital Outturn

4.1 Appendix C reports the detail of the provisional capital outturn for those capital projects which fall within H&C.

General Fund

4.2 The provisional capital outturn for H&C General Fund is £2.633m against a budget of £2.597m – an overspend of £36k (1.4%).

4.3 Those projects showing an overspend in 2012/13 are multi-year projects which have sufficient capital budget allocated to 2013/14 to fund the shortfall. The 2012/13 overspend is effectively a timing issue where the project has progressed more quickly than was anticipated at the time the budget was set.

4.4 Expenditure on both Disabled Facilities Grants (line 193) and Home Improvement Grants (line 194) is demand-led, and the value of grant applications received was less than the budget available.

4.5 Expenditure on The Elms Hostel (line 199) was lower than budgeted because the scheme was originally planned to have a separate design phase to be delivered in 2012/13, but will now be tendered as a design and build scheme with all costs to fall within 2013/14.

HRA

4.6 The provisional capital outturn for the HRA is £18.184m compared to a budget of £20.685m – an underspend of £2.501m (8%).

4.7 The major variances are as follows:

- £1.744m slippage relating to New Build projects (lines 260 – 264).
 - £378k slippage at the Galley Hill site (line 262) was due to legal processes at the Homes and Community Agency taking longer than anticipated to remove a covenant on the site in order to permit residential development. The lifting of the covenant was a condition of the Council's purchase. It has now been lifted and the Council's purchase of will complete in 2013/14.
 - £1.3m of this is due to the transfer of land from the General Fund for the project at London Road, Apsley (line 263), which will complete in 2013/14.
- £729k slippage relating to two schemes within the Major Repairs Programme (lines 267 and 270).
 - During 2012/13, a decision was taken to let a two-year contract (rather than the usual one year) for the Roof Replacement programme in order to align it with the Total Asset Management contract. This led to a longer tendering process which is now complete and the works will be delivered during 2013/14.
 - A protracted planning process around the Longlands flat development caused delays in 2012/13. A feasibility study has now been produced for the development of the site and the project is expected to progress during 2013.

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

AGENDA ITEM: 10

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	19 June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Review of discretionary policies in Revenues and Benefits
Contact:	Cllr Nicholas Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources Author/Responsible Officer: Chris Baker, Group Manager Revenues, Benefits and Fraud
Purpose of report:	To seek approval of revised policies for discretionary housing payments, discretionary council tax reduction and discretionary rate relief.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree recommendations for new discretionary housing payments policy. 2. To agree recommendations for new discretionary council tax reduction policy. 3. To agree recommendations for new discretionary rate relief policy.
Corporate objectives:	<p>Dacorum Delivers – revision of the policies will ensure that discretionary awards made by Revenues and Benefits support local residents thus providing better value for money.</p> <p>Building Community Capacity – ensuring discretionary awards contribute to the objectives of the Council and thus benefit the local community.</p> <p>Regeneration – discretionary rate relief can be used to support local businesses and so aid regeneration in rural areas.</p>
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The April 2013 changes to welfare benefits and the localisation of business rates have impacted on the discretionary funding required to be made by the Council. This review enables the Council to review on-going entitlement, to ensure future applications meet the new criteria and therefore ensure all expenditure is beneficial to the community.</p>

	<p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>Revising the policies enables the Council to ensure that all awards contribute to the priorities of the Council and so therefore provide value for money to residents.</p>
Risk Implications	Risks reviewed and risk associated is addressed by actions highlighted in this report.
Equalities Implications	The aim of the policies is to ensure that all applicants are treated in a fair consistent and equal manner.
Health And Safety Implications	There are no health and safety implications arising from this report
Consultees:	None
Background papers:	None

1. Background

1.1 There are three areas of Revenues and Benefits within which the Council has discretion to make further awards of support:

- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) can be made in addition to housing benefit awards;
- Discretionary Council Tax Reductions (DCTR) can be used to reduce council tax bills in addition to discounts, exemptions and local council tax support; and,
- Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) can be used to reduce business rate bills in addition to statutory reliefs.

2. The impact of Welfare Reform

2.1 Changes arising from the government's welfare reform agenda, effective from 1 April 2013, have necessitated a review of the Council's discretionary policies for each of these areas:

- The Discretionary Housing Payments policy needs to be revised to take into account the recent changes to welfare benefits, and to ensure that effective use is made of the additional central government funding provided for this scheme;
- The Discretionary Council Tax Reduction policy needs to be revised to take into account the recent changes to welfare benefits and the local Council Tax Support Scheme; and,
- The Discretionary Rate Relief policy needs to be revised to take into account changes in funding due to Business Rates Retention.

2.2 The proposed policies incorporating these changes are attached as appendices to this report. They have been drafted to make it clear how awards will be made in line with the Council's objectives, and the factors which will be taken into account when decisions are made.

Dacorum Borough Council - Discretionary Housing Payments

Background and legislation

The discretionary housing payments scheme (DHP) allows the Council to give extra help to qualifying tenants in addition to the statutory housing benefit and universal credit schemes. The scheme was introduced as part of the Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000. Further rules can be found in the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.

Each year, the Council is given a grant from central government to contribute to the DHP budget. Under the terms of the regulations, the maximum that the Council can spend on DHP is 2½ times the government grant. Local authorities are expected to contribute to this from their General Fund.

This policy sets out how the Council will operate the DHP scheme, and the factors that will be considered when deciding whether to make an award.

What are discretionary housing payments?

DHPs provide further help with housing costs in addition to a person's entitlement to housing benefit or universal credit. This means that extra support can be given on the basis of individual circumstances which are not taken into account in the main benefit schemes. They can only be paid to someone who is entitled to either housing benefit or universal credit for the period in respect of which they receive the DHP.

Housing costs covered by the DHP scheme include:

- rental liability;
- rent in advance or deposits;
- other lump sum costs associated with a housing need such as removal costs.

DHP can't be given to help with:

- mortgage costs;
- council tax;
- service charges that you can't get housing benefit for (for example water rates);
- increases in rent to pay off rent arrears;
- some reductions in benefit (for example to recover overpayments, or as a result of fraud).

These are not exhaustive lists. The benefits service will be able to give more information about specific types of housing cost not mentioned here.

How will Dacorum Borough Council use discretionary housing payments?

We will use DHP to support the Council's key priorities, in particular **Affordable Housing** and **Building Community Capacity**.

We will do this by using DHP to:

- prevent evictions and homelessness;
- help tenants move to more financially sustainable accommodation;
- alleviate poverty;
- support people with disabilities to remain in homes which have been adapted for their use;
- support vulnerable tenants to remain in their homes;
- support tenants affected by welfare reform changes.

“Vulnerable” has the same meaning as defined in our Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2013/14. It means:

- the tenant, their partner, or a child who lives with them is disabled;
- the tenant has a child under five; or
- the tenant or their partner receives a war widow's or war disablement pension.

Claiming a discretionary housing payment

The regulations mean that a customer must make a claim in order to be considered for DHP. A claim form is available by contacting the benefits service.

There is a referral process from the homelessness service to the benefits service. This ensures that priority cases are identified and evictions are prevented where possible.

We will ask for reasonable evidence in support of the application, and may ask the customer to attend an interview to discuss their personal or financial circumstances.

Who will make the decision, and how long will it take?

Each decision will be made by two benefits lead officers. Details of the decision and reasoning will be recorded on the benefits document management system.

We aim to make a decision within two weeks of receiving all the information we need to make a decision.

What will be taken into account when the decision is made?

Each application will be considered on its own individual merits. The following will be considered:

- how the application fits within the Council's priorities detailed above.
- the amount of any shortfall between the customer's housing benefit or universal credit award and their eligible rent.
- any medical circumstances (including ill health and disabilities) that affect the customer or the customer's household.
- any action being taken by the customer to reduce their housing costs, or increase their income.
- if the customer has previously been awarded a DHP, whether they have met any conditions which were part of that award.
- the income and expenditure of the customer and the customer's household.
- any priority debts held by the customer or the customer's household. These include:
 - rent arrears;
 - gas, electricity and water arrears;
 - council tax arrears;
 - court fines;
 - arrears of child support maintenance;
 - income tax or VAT arrears;
 - TV Licence arrears.
- any other special circumstances raised on the application.

The information provided in support of the DHP application will also be used to check that the customer is receiving the correct amount of housing benefit or universal credit.

How much discretionary housing payment will be awarded, and how long will the award last?

The amount of a DHP will depend on the individual circumstances of the customer. It may be paid as a lump sum to contribute towards removal costs or a deposit for a new tenancy. If it is awarded to support ongoing rent costs, the DHP will usually be no more than the difference between the housing benefit award and the eligible rent charge. The amount of DHP will not always cover the whole of this shortfall. Initial awards of DHP will usually be for a period of 13 weeks. However, we recognise that it may sometimes be appropriate to make longer awards. Awards will not usually cross from one financial year to another because the central government funding is allocated to a specific financial year. The annual uprating of benefits may also lead to significant changes in the amount to be awarded.

Awards are conditional on customers taking such actions as deemed appropriate by the benefits service. These may include:

- seeking financial advice from a relevant agency (such as Citizens' Advice);
- seeking alternative accommodation;
- reducing their weekly expenditure; or
- attending a relevant training course.

If these conditions are not met, the award of DHP may be ended early, or a further award of DHP may not be given.

When will an award of discretionary housing payment start?

Any award will normally start from the Monday after the date we receive the claim form.

In exceptional circumstances we will consider starting from up to three months before the date we receive the claim form. For the award to be backdated, the customer must have received housing benefit or universal credit throughout the whole period covered by the claim.

How will discretionary housing payment be paid?

We will usually pay DHP in the same way as we are paying housing benefit for the customer. This means it may be paid to the customer or their landlord by bank credit, or credited to their rent account.

How will customers be notified about discretionary housing payment decisions?

We will send a letter giving details of our decision. The letter will contain the following information:

- whether or not a DHP will be paid;
- amount of DHP awarded;
- start and end dates of award, or whether a lump sum payment has been awarded;
- details of any conditions attached to the award;
- who the award will be paid to;
- how the award will be paid;
- when the award will be paid;
- if unsuccessful, reasons for refusing the award;
- details of the review process.

What will happen if a customer is not happy with the decision?

If a customer is unhappy with the Council's decision, they can request a review. This must be made in writing and be received within one month of the original decision date.

Disputed decisions will be reviewed by a multi-service panel made up of a minimum of two of the following officers, at least one of which will be from the benefits service:

- benefits processing team leader (benefits service);
- revenues and benefits support team leader (benefits service);
- housing advice and homelessness team leader (strategic housing service);
- team leader (income) (tenant and leaseholder service);
- group manager revenues, benefits and fraud (benefits service).

The panel will be able to change any aspect of the decision, including:

- start and end dates;
- amount of award;
- to whom the award will be paid;
- conditions attached to the award.

The panel will meet fortnightly as required. The decision of this panel is final.

Responsibilities of customers receiving discretionary housing payments

Customers have the responsibility to inform the benefits service of any change in their circumstances while they are receiving a DHP. This is in addition to their responsibility to advise the benefits service of changes which may affect their housing benefit award.

Customers must also meet any conditions which have been attached to the award. If a change of circumstance takes place and this means the customer has been paid too much DHP, this will be recovered by invoicing the customer.

What happens when an award of discretionary housing payment ends?

If a customer wants a further award of DHP they must complete a new claim form. This will be considered in the same way as their initial claim, but with more weight being given to how well they have met any conditions which formed part of their previous award.

Dacorum Borough Council - Discretionary Council Tax Reduction

Background and legislation

Discretionary council tax reductions (DCTR) allow the Council to give extra help to reduce the amount of council tax a person has to pay. This is in addition to the taxpayer's entitlement to council tax discounts or reductions under the local council tax support scheme. We are required to consider requests for DCTR under section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The cost of awarding DCTR is fully borne by Dacorum Borough Council from the General Fund.

This policy sets out how the Council will operate the DCTR scheme, and the factors that will be considered when deciding whether to make an award.

What is a discretionary council tax reduction?

DCTR is further help with council tax in addition to a taxpayer's entitlement to discounts or local council tax support. This means that extra support can be given on the basis of individual circumstances which are not taken into account in the main schemes. It can be paid to any council taxpayer.

How will Dacorum Borough Council use discretionary council tax reductions?

We will use DCTR to support the Council's key priorities, in particular **Affordable Housing** and **Building Community Capacity**.

We will do this by using DCTR to:

- prevent evictions and homelessness;
- help taxpayers actively seeking a move to more financially sustainable accommodation;
- alleviate poverty;
- support people with disabilities to remain in homes which have been adapted for their use;
- support vulnerable taxpayers to remain in their homes;
- support taxpayers affected by welfare reform changes.

"Vulnerable" has the same meaning as defined in our Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2013/14. It means:

- the taxpayer, their partner, or a child who lives with them is disabled;
- the taxpayer has a child under five; or
- the taxpayer or their partner receives a war widow's or war disablement pension.

Claiming a discretionary council tax reduction

All applications must be made in writing, and come from the council tax payer or someone authorised to act on their behalf. The application should explain all of the

circumstances on which the request is based. To help taxpayers give us the information that we need, a claim form is available by contacting the revenues service.

We will ask for reasonable evidence in support of the application, and may ask the customer to attend an interview to discuss their personal or financial circumstances.

Who will make the decision, and how long will it take?

The decision will be made by two lead officers from the revenues and benefits service. Details of the decision and reasoning will be recorded on the revenues document management system.

We aim to make a decision within two weeks of receiving all the information we need to make a decision.

What will be taken into account when the decision is made?

Each application will be considered on its own individual merits. The following will be considered:

- how the application fits within the Council's priorities detailed above.
- how much council tax is due to be paid by the taxpayer.
- whether the taxpayer has applied for, or is receiving, a discretionary housing payment.
- whether the taxpayer has applied for, or is receiving, local council tax support or other welfare benefits.
- any medical circumstances (including ill health and disabilities) that affect the taxpayer or their household.
- if the taxpayer has previously been awarded a DCTR, whether they have met any conditions which were part of that award.
- the income and expenditure of the taxpayer and the taxpayer's household.
- whether the taxpayer has access to any assets that could be used to pay the council tax.
- any action being taken by the taxpayer to reduce their expenditure, or increase their income.
- any priority debts held by the taxpayer or the taxpayer's household. These include:
 - rent arrears;
 - gas, electricity and water arrears;
 - council tax arrears;
 - court fines;
 - arrears of child support maintenance;
 - income tax or VAT arrears;
 - TV Licence arrears.
- any other special circumstances raised on the application.

How much discretionary council tax payment will be awarded, and how long will the award last?

The amount of a DCTR will depend on the individual circumstances of the taxpayer. The amount of DCTR awarded will usually still leave some council tax for the taxpayer to pay.

Awards of DCTR will last for different periods according to the individual circumstances of the taxpayer. An award cannot be made for longer than the current financial year.

Awards are conditional on customers taking such actions as deemed appropriate by the revenues and benefits service. These may include:

- seeking financial advice from a relevant agency (such as Citizens' Advice);
- seeking alternative accommodation;
- reducing their weekly expenditure; or
- attending a relevant training course.

If these conditions are not met, the award of DCTR may be ended early, or a further award of DCTR may not be given.

When will an award of discretionary council tax reduction start?

Any award will normally start from the date we receive the application.

In exceptional circumstances, we will consider starting from an earlier date in the same council tax year (1 April to 31 March).

How will discretionary council tax reduction be paid?

The reduction will be applied to the council tax account, and a new bill will be sent.

How will taxpayers be notified about discretionary council tax reduction decisions?

We will send a letter giving details of our decision. The letter will contain the following information:

- whether or not a DCTR has been awarded;
- amount of DCTR awarded;
- start and end dates of award;
- details of any conditions attached to the award;
- if unsuccessful, reasons for refusing the award;
- details of the review process.

What will happen if a taxpayer is not happy with the decision?

If the taxpayer is unhappy with the Council's decision, they can request a review. An officer not involved with the original decision will look at the application again.

After this, the taxpayer can appeal to the independent valuation tribunal if:

- we don't change the decision;
- we do change the decision but they are still unhappy; or
- we do not respond within two months of their request for review.

Responsibilities of customers receiving discretionary council tax reduction

Council taxpayers have the responsibility to inform the revenues service of any change in their circumstances while they are receiving a DCTR. This is in addition to their responsibility to advise the benefits service of changes which may affect their council tax support award if they are also getting this.

Taxpayers must also meet any conditions which have been attached to the award.

If a change of circumstance takes place and this means the taxpayer has been awarded too much DCTR, this will be recovered by adjusting their council tax account.

What happens when an award of discretionary council tax reduction ends?

If a taxpayer wants a further award of DCTR they must make a further application. This will be considered in the same way as their initial claim, but with more weight being given to how well they have met any conditions which formed part of their previous award.

Dacorum Borough Council - Discretionary Rate Relief

Background and legislation

Rate relief is part of the national non-domestic rates (business rates) scheme, and can reduce the amount of business rates payable by certain organisations.

Section 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (LGFA 1988) requires rate relief to be given in the following circumstances:

- charities and amateur community sports clubs can get relief of 80% (mandatory charitable rate relief);
- if they are the only one within a small rural community, village shops, post offices, pubs or petrol stations can get relief of 50%, as long as the rateable value of the property falls under certain thresholds. (mandatory rural rate relief).

Discretionary rate relief (DRR) enables Dacorum Borough Council to:

- increase the level of charitable rate relief to up to 100%;
- increase the level of rural rate relief to up to 100%;
- give relief to other rural retail businesses of up to 100%, as long as the rateable value of the property falls under a threshold.

This power is contained in section 47 of LGFA 1988.

The cost of discretionary rate relief forms part of the business rate retention scheme. This means that the Council contributes 40% of the value of DRR, with the remainder coming from Herts County Council (10%) and central government (50%).

What is discretionary rate relief?

DRR provides charities and other organisations with benefit to the local community with further financial assistance by reducing the amount of business rates they have to pay.

How will Dacorum Borough Council use discretionary rate relief?

We will use DRR to support the Council's key priorities, in particular **Building Community Capacity**.

We recognise that certain charities and other organisations support the Council's priorities and deliver outcomes that would otherwise be the responsibility of the Council.

Claiming a discretionary rate relief

All applications must be made in writing using the DRR application form by the ratepayer or someone authorised to act on their behalf. The application form is available by contacting the business rates team. The form must be sent in with appropriate supporting evidence. The evidence needed will vary according to the type of DRR requested, but the form will tell the ratepayer what they need to provide.

Who will make the decision, and how long will it take?

Most requests will be decided by the Group Manager Revenues, Benefits and Fraud or the Revenues Team Leader. We will aim to make these decisions within four weeks of receiving all the information needed.

Where the organisation has a turnover in excess of £100,000 or where the application is for discretionary rural rate relief but there is no entitlement to mandatory rural rate relief, the application will be considered by the appeals committee. In these cases it is likely to take about two months to make the decision, counting from the date we receive all the information needed.

What will be taken into account when the decision is made?

Each application will be considered on its own individual merits and the benefits that the organisation provides to the residents of Dacorum. The following will be considered:

- the organisation's links to the Council's priorities and to what extent its activities support these priorities;
- membership being open to all sections of the community and the extent to which the membership is made up of residents of Dacorum;
- the organisation meeting a local need in the community and providing a valuable service to the community; and
- whether the organisation provides access to facilities which indirectly relieve the Council of the need to do so.

In addition DRR will not be considered on any property with a rateable value in excess of £18,000 unless there are specific circumstances that require the occupation of a larger property.

How much discretionary rate relief will be awarded, and how long will the relief last?

The maximum period of any award is for one financial year. The amount of DRR will be considered in line with the following table, depending on the nature of the request.

Type of organisation	Other information	Annual turnover	Maximum relief
Youth organisations	Premises occupied by youth clubs and organisations such as the Scouts etc. In order to qualify for relief the organisation must be able to demonstrate that the premises is used solely or mainly by them or other non profit making organisations for the benefit of the community	-	Up to 100%
Village halls & community centres		-	Up to 100%
Schools	Voluntary aided, voluntary controlled or granted aided and academy schools	-	Nil
Nursery schools	Voluntary nurseries which are registered charities	-	Up to 100%
Sports & recreation	Premises run by sports clubs and recreational societies that are not set up or run for profit	No bar	Up to 50%
		With bar: up to £24,999	Up to 50%
		With bar: £25,000 – £49,999	Up to 25%
		With bar: over £50,000	Nil
Charities providing a public benefit	If the work is predominantly carried out by unpaid voluntary workers for the benefit of the elderly, sick or injured, disabled or other vulnerable groups (This excludes national or regional offices unless wholly for the benefit of Dacorum residents)	Up to £100,000	Up to 100%
		£100,001 – £499,999	Up to 50%
		Over £500,000	Nil
Charity shops (this means a shop selling goods donated to a charity)	Local charities primarily benefiting the local area (This excludes national charities unless wholly for the benefit of Dacorum residents)	-	Up to 100%
Dacorum Sports Trust		-	Up to 100%
Strategic partner organisations	Organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that are working with the Council; that operate in the voluntary and community sector; that receive a minimum of £10,000 of grant funding from the Council each year and have done so for at least three years; and that have a service partnership agreement (or equivalent) with the Council. 	-	Up to 100%

When will an award of discretionary rate relief start?

Any award will normally be from the date we receive the application.

In exceptional circumstances, we will consider starting from an earlier date in the same financial year (1 April to 31 March).

How will discretionary rate relief be paid?

We will apply the DRR to the business rates account, and issue a new business rates bill.

How will ratepayers be notified about discretionary rate relief decisions?

We will write to the ratepayer to tell them whether an award has been granted and the amount and period of that award.

What will happen if a ratepayer is not happy with the decision?

If the ratepayer is not happy with the decision, they can request a review of that decision by the appeals committee. This request must be made in writing and received within four weeks of the notification of the original decision.

Responsibilities of customers receiving discretionary rate relief

Ratepayers have the responsibility to inform the business rates team of any change in their circumstances while they are receiving a DRR.

If a change in circumstance takes place and this means the ratepayer has been awarded too much DRR, this will be recovered adjusting their business rates account.

What happens when an award of discretionary rate relief ends?

If a ratepayer wants a further award of DRR they must make a further application. This will be considered in the same way as their initial claim.

AGENDA ITEM: 11

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	Wednesday 19th June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Old Town Hall Update
Contact:	Cllr Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services David Austin, Assistant Director Neighbourhood Delivery Ext: Sara Railson, Arts Team Leader, Resident Services, Old Town Hall Ext 2093
Purpose of report:	1. Old Town Hall progress report
Recommendations	1. That members note the report
Corporate objectives:	Regeneration Dacorum Delivers
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> Within Agreed Budget
'Value For Money Implications'	This overall investment will improve the 'offer' of the Old Town Hall and contribute towards the wider regeneration of Hemel Hempstead Old Town.
Risk Implications	Risk Assessment has been carried out as part of the Project Initiation Document for the Old Town Hall. Risk implications for staffing and marketing review have already been carried out. March 2012 and January 2013
Equalities Implications	This is currently being completed and the proposed works will ensure accessibility is improved to the Old Town Hall. Equality Impact Assessment carried out at the commencement of the short term plan January 2011 and following its completion June 2012.
Health And Safety	These will be considered as part of tenders of any proposed

Implications	capital works
Consultees:	Old Town Hall customers, users DBC Senior Management
Background papers:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee paper 21 March 2012.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None

1.0 Background

The Old Town Hall is a 120 seat small scale professional receiving house. It provides a professional arts programme covering drama, dance, comedy, music, children's and family theatre. It is home to the Robert Adams Gallery bar, which hosts over a dozen separate visual art exhibitions per annum.

The professional theatre programme runs from September to June and is made up of approximately 100 productions. In addition the venue is host to over 200 private hires – incorporating events and meetings as well as celebratory occasions such as birthday parties and wedding / partnership receptions.

1.1 Budgetary Provision

Year	Arts Service Provision	Total Net Expenditure
2011/12	Old Town Hall	£428,200
2012/13	Old Town Hall	£428,200
2013/14	Old Town Hall	£400,000

Subsidy per head of the population for the Old Town Hall arts programme = £0.41.5p

1.2 Attendance Figures

The Old Town Hall has 120 seats available for each performance (except the Screaming Blue Murder Comedy Club hosted in the Robert Adams Gallery Bar, which has a capacity of 55 seats)

Year	Old Town Hall Attendance (% of capacity)
2011/12	52%
2012/13	54%
2013/14 (Apr – Aug)*	62%

*Figures include ticket sales for the LookOut / PopUp Festival this summer

1.3 Old Town Hall Customer Satisfaction

2012/13 figures

(Source: Old Town Hall Encore questionnaires – handed out to customers at theatre performances between April 2012 and March 2013, and compiled from customer responses

Satisfaction ratings are taken across the following areas:

- ❖ Quality of production
- ❖ Availability of information
- ❖ Ease of booking
- ❖ Helpfulness of staff
- ❖ Value for money
- ❖ Bar service
- ❖ Overall satisfaction

Customers are asked to score the Old Town Hall between 1 – 5: with 1 being not at all satisfied and 5 being very satisfied

Results for April 2010 to March 2011.

Criteria	Customer Satisfaction - satisfied / very satisfied customers (%)
Overall satisfaction 2012 / 2013	86%
Overall satisfaction 2013/14 (Apr-May - current)	94%

The Old Town Hall is owned, managed and funded by Dacorum Borough Council.

2 The Old Town Hall Refurbishment

2.1 The regeneration of the Old Town Hall (OTH), a facet of the Hemel Hempstead Old Town Renaissance is a critical project for Dacorum Borough Council.

2.2 The objectives of this project are to make internal alterations to the Old Town Hall - Redevelopment of Gallery Bar and Reopening of The Cellar - including installation of lift to allow for disabled access. There is currently £700,000 allocated in the Capital Programme for this project.

2.3 The proposed works were referred to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in February 2013 as the Old Town Hall is a Listed Building. We received a response with Listed Building Consent at the end of March 2013 with 13 conditions to adhere to. These conditions include for example the submission of photos for approval prior to works commencing.

2.4 Given the above, Officers propose to commence works to the Cellar Club in January 2014 with a relaunch in April 2014. In the meantime the Officers will :

- Proceed with external works (such as drainage / utilities) so they are completed prior to the works to the Old Town.
- Seek to complete the works to the Gallery Bar this summer (2013) if possible.

2.5 There have been several design team meetings over recent weeks to value engineer the project as far as possible. The expected costs of the project are £858,921. Clearly, this is over the budget allocation of £700,000. That said there is £55,000 contingency in the construction costs and also £13,000 project contingency. The reduced works to the kitchen area will also save a significant amount, in the region of £60,000. In addition a competitive tendering process is expected as this is a prestigious piece of work for suitable companies.

3 The Old Town Hall – Phase II Realignment

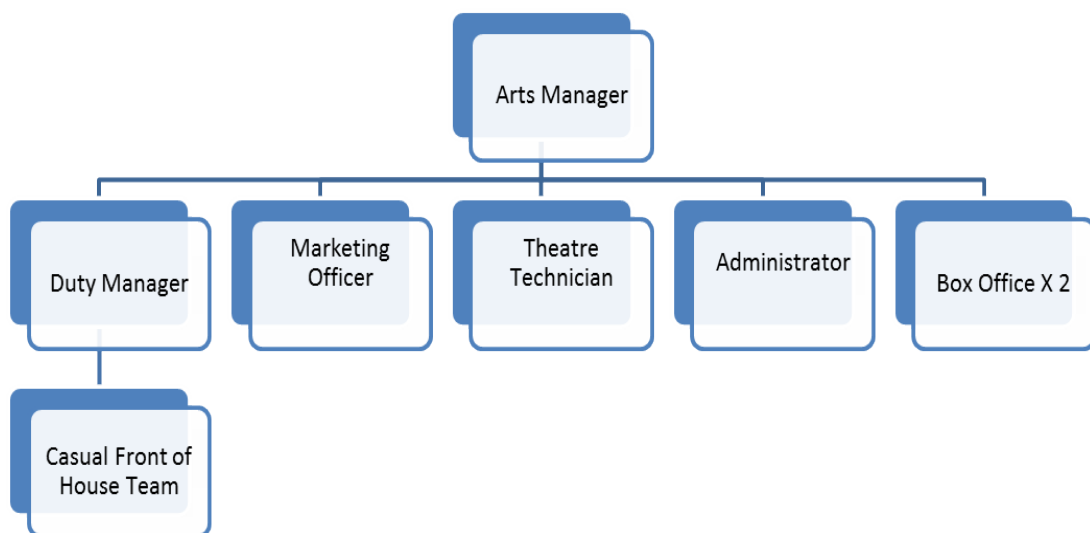
3.1 Given the impact that the proposed refurbishment would have on the OTH, and the weight of expectation to deliver a more robust and vibrant programme of activities It was decided that a re-think of the staffing structure at the Old Town Hall was a positive step.

The restructure was mainly concerned with two areas:

- Reshaping the administrative / sales functions of the Old Town Hall
- Developing a creative and financial resource officer at the Old Town Hall

It was felt that for the service to move forward it needed to reduce the administrative / box office team and rationalise their hours. We needed to spend less time on process driven activities and more time exploring and diversifying our income streams. We needed to encourage greater use of the building and all its facilities by all sections of the community and for it to be used day and night. And we needed to fully embrace the modern technology at our disposal and exploit it to the fullest extent.

Old Town Hall Staff Structure – Before Phase II Realignment

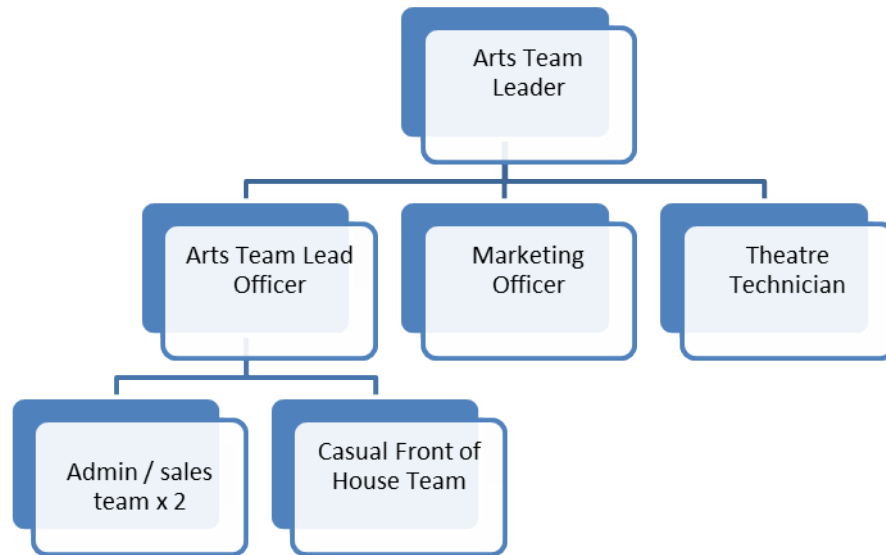


3.1.1 Whilst this structure ensured that administration and facility management was prioritised, it didn't leave capacity for the development of the creative vision for the Old Town Hall – simply put, too much emphasis on administration; no time or personnel resources left to expend on the creative development of the venue and the sourcing of external funding streams. This had over time, limited our ambition and ability to have a higher profile both a locally and regionally.

- 3.1.2 This model placed an over-reliance on paper based methods of working instead of making better use of modern technologies; of faster more efficient processes.
- 3.1.3 This structure had permanent staff working evening and week-end box office shifts, it was felt that the service would be better served with permanent staff working regular core hours and the evening and week end hours covered by casual staff.
- 3.1.4 This staffing model proved challenging in ensuring effective line management when most staff reported to one person - the Arts Manager.

A new structure was proposed and accepted:

Old Town Hall Staff Structure following Phase II Realignment



- 3.2 The new structure, effective as of 1st February 2013 , has at its heart a practical rationalisation of our main resource – OTH staff.
 - 3.2.1 The new structure enables us to put greater emphasis on the creative and financial aspects of the Old Town Hall, areas of increasing significance given the level of investment at the Old Town Hall and the ambitions for its future.
 - 3.2.2 The new Arts Team Lead Officer role is a complement to the Arts Team Leader, the post holder is charged with helping to develop the sponsorship and fundraising strategy for the Old Town Hall, as well as take on some of the programming responsibilities.
 - 3.2.4 One of the strengths of this new structure and an outcome of the change of working hours is the ability to gather the whole team together on a regular basis to meet and discuss operational issues alongside broader more long term plans. A simple, but hugely effective, change.

3.2.5 Through the new structure and the changes in personnel, we have been able to make better use of and seen a huge improvement in, the exploitation of new technology, specifically in our box office system and on-line profile. At our last Overview and Scrutiny update we weren't making the most of this opportunity. Now a little over a year later, the difference in this part of the customer experience is significant.

Our box office system is simple, intuitive and responsive. In the past it had taken days to set up a season worth of events for sale – now it takes a few hours. Previous box office training had been a complicated and convoluted affair, now it takes two hours to master simple sale and reservations transactions.

And for the customer, it couldn't be easier – we have worked closely with our colleagues within the web development team at DBC to produce stylish and informative web pages coupled with a customer friendly and secure on-line booking system. And it works:

- In 2011/12 – 23% of our total sales were made via the old online booking system
- In 2012/13 – 42% of our total sales were made via the new online booking system

This remarkable uplift in on-line sales has allowed us to re-allocate officer time away from the box office and toward supporting other areas of income generation – private hires and events etc.

The overall saving to the Council through the service re-structure and other efficiency savings has been £28,000 per annum.

4 The Old Town Hall - Marketing Update

There have been some changes to our marketing operation since the last Overview and Scrutiny report, including but not limited to staff changes. Our new marketing officer took up position at the end of January 2013, as is to be expected, there is a change of emphasis and energy that sits with the change of personnel.

The last 6 months have seen a new focus in how we market our shows and of increasing importance how we market the DBC/Old Town Hall brand.

Integral to this new 'branding' has been an overhaul of how we interact with our customers, by phone, by email and in person; whether they are visiting the building or seeing a show.

4.1 Staff Charter

Having consulted with our staff, we have agreed a charter, which combines positive attitude with promotional opportunities, it is:

To provide the highest level of customer service, personal and professional, and to maximise customers awareness of all services available within the Old Town Hall by:

Answering the phone promptly, giving your name, identifying The Old Town Hall and asking if you can help.

Greeting everyone entering the building with a smile and asking if you can help with anything.

Informing everyone about either the show taking place or the exhibition in the gallery.

At every point of sale offer another product, eg. Suggest interval and post-show orders at bar, suggest another show at the box office, suggest a pre-show drink to customers collecting tickets, suggest a post-show drink and another show as customers leave the venue.

Ensuring all publicity material within and outside the building is up to date and well presented.

4.2 The Old Town Hall website has been an on going area of development for us. Not just ensuring up to date information on the Old Town Hall, but also how our customers interact with us (joining our database, buying tickets, giving online feedback, etc.) We work with our colleagues in web improvement services to continually develop our 'front face' to the public. To ensure that the online experience is a positive one and that they continue to return. But one look at other arts venue websites shows that we have to continually evolve and adapt to keep pace with new trends and social media fashions.

4.3 During our periods of closure (Summer 2013 and again in Winter / Spring 2014), we have decided on a short term marketing plan which we are hopeful will build and maintain momentum until we can fully re-open in the late Spring of next year.

For the short term our marketing plan is built around the following four drivers:

- **Accessibility**
Our promotional material will be written clearly and concisely.
We are committed to removing barriers to customer visits, more accessible opening times, plain signage, and a welcoming feel to the building
- **Creative communications**
Improve poster displays and expand areas of print distribution
An active and engaging on-line presence through increased use of social media – twitter, facebook etc., the creation of staff blogs
Targeted marketing campaigns to particular postcodes: We know from recent analysis that 65% of our audience are coming from HP1, HP2,HP3, HP4, HP23 (with some from HP5 – Chesham) But interestingly we are drawing increasing numbers from St Albans, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard.
- **Retaining audiences**
Improve the entire customer experience; whether through better on-line service or face to face encounter.
New Wonder Kids Club loyalty scheme complete with 'passport' rewards scheme.
Develop a friends / loyalty scheme for Old Town Hall customers
Improve our café/ bar facilities to offer a greater choice of food as well as drinks.
- **Increase Old Town Hall presence**
Promoting and supporting community arts – Dashfest, Mela events, Adventure Playgrounds - National Playdays
Offer support in kind (through box office resource/ equipment) to local events
These are perceived as 'quick wins' for us, as they all help to establish a new energy for the service as well as in raising our profile with customers and residents of the borough. As we will be closing twice within a 6 month period we need to maintain a strong profile.

5. The Old Town Hall – Future Plans

We are hopeful of a timely conclusion to the building works. In the meantime, we will be putting our finishing touches to our priorities for the next 12-18months:

- Sponsorship / external funding
- Programme – Cellar Club
- Community Use
- Popup events

5.1 **Sponsorship and external project funding**

The senior arts team are committed to attracting sources of external funding for specific programme streams as well as one off projects. We feel we now have the resources to actively pursue avenues of sponsorship and project funding.

Areas of work such as the Children's Theatre Programme, The Cellar Comedy Club, or Cellar Music Club are all examples of the Old Town Hall programme which have the potential to be sponsored or funded by external agencies.

5.2 **Programming for Theatre and Cellar Club**

Following the completion of refurbishment works in early 2014, The Old Town Hall will be a much busier venue with two performance spaces to programme and manage.

The Old Town Hall theatre has a long and distinguished history of drama, dance, music and comedy. We want to build further on this reputation with an eclectic mix of art forms that would rival any and all small theatre spaces in the south east region.

We are looking to programme an average of 10 theatre performances complimented by a further 8 Cellar Club performances each month January to May and September to December. During July and August, we are committed to our 'LookOut Popup Festival' with an additional 6 performances. In total a minimum of 186 events per annum. This does not account for private hires (photo society meetings, band rehearsals and private parties, theatre hires and other events) all of which bring the total of managed events to approximately 400 per annum.

The newly refurbished Cellar Club offers a huge opportunity in terms of programming:

- Comedy Club
- Music events including - jazz, folk, rock and blues, indy music nights.
- An ideal venue for local young musicians looking perform.
- Cabaret evenings
- Open Mic nights
- Poetry club

The above is not an exhaustive list but a taste of the type of entertainment the venue could host.

In addition, with its own entrance and separate bar, the Cellar Club will be ideally suited to private parties and celebrations; corporate events and meetings.

5.3 **Encourage greater community use**

As far as the Old Town Hall itself is concerned, we are, as we have always been actively seeking greater use of the building by members of our community. To this end we wish to repeat such successes as 'Around the world in a dozen dances' performed by Cultural Learning, part of Community Action Dacorum. We are currently discussing the possibility of Mela event to be held in and around the Old Town Hall this coming autumn.

Once our café is up and running we see the Gallery Bar as an ideal meeting space for a wide range of groups. We are looking to introduce day time films for carers of young children and senior citizens, as well as planning a series of holiday workshops for kids. And to stimulate local talent the re-introduction of 'open mic' nights in the cellar following refurbishment.

5.4 **Popup Festivals and events**

Early reaction to the Old Town Hall 'on the road' programme of events, now known as the Lookout Popup Festival has been overwhelmingly positive. There is scope for us in terms of our resources to continue to provide an external programme of work over the summer months, as this is a time when the Old Town Hall is traditionally closed for performances. In the meantime however, we want to push forward on a seasonal event in December – a Christmas grotto under the arches, as well as a programme of events out and about in the Marlowes as well as the Old High Street – this will be a complement to our event programme at the OTH..

During our closure period in January – March 2014, we will once again be looking at delivering a short programme of events in other venues across the borough.

- 6.0 These are exciting times for the Old Town in Hemel. There are ambitions to develop a '*Creative Hub*' in the Old Town High Street – an area subject to further improvement and enhancement within the next few months. The Old Town Hall sits at the centre of this new investment, it occupies the greatest physical footprint, and it is without one, if not the most imposing building on the street.
- The improvements to the building coupled with a fresh and vigorous approach to our cultural offer, will I am sure bring an increase in visitors / customers to the Old Town and will go some way to ensure that local people continue to enjoy their Old Town Hall for generations to come

AGENDA ITEM: 12

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	19th June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 - Update
Contact:	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Carolyn Leech, Team Leader Policy and Participation – Author</p> <p>Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing Service - Responsible Officer</p>
Purpose of report:	1. To update the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Get Involved Strategy 2012-15.
Recommendations	1. The committee to note the report and the progress made.
Corporate objectives:	<p>Effective and empowered tenant involvement supports the Council's corporate objectives and contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Community capacity • Economic development and regeneration • Resources and value for money • Affordable Housing <p>Enhancing our profile and reputation</p>
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 supports tenants and leaseholders getting involved through the monitoring of budgets to ensure that tenant priorities are tackled effectively.</p>
'Value For Money Implications'	<p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>Value for Money is a regulatory requirement for all social housing provider's and by ensuring that our tenants are empowered and involved in the services that they receive will ultimately ensure that we are giving good value for money.</p>
Risk Implications	Failure to deliver the Get Involved Strategy could risk the image and reputation of the Housing Service; mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that tenants actively monitor the strategy on a regular basis to ensure that the Strategy is met.

Equalities Implications	Tenant Involvement deals with the whole tenant and leaseholder community, including young people.
Health And Safety Implications	There are no health and safety implications.
Consultees:	<p>Chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee</p> <p>Chair of Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee</p> <p>Vice Chair of Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee</p> <p>Two co-optee members of the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Members of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee</p>
Background papers:	<p>Review of Tenant and Leaseholder Committee report of 21.03.13</p> <p>Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 (appendix 1)</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

1.0 Background

The Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 was created following the tenant involvement review and as a result of working with our involved tenants and leaseholders. The strategy is a three year plan to increase the number of tenants and leaseholders that are involved in working with the Housing Service and to give those that want to be involved a flexible choice of ways to get involved. An update on the strategy is taken to the Tenant Involvement Group on a regular basis and an update is also given to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee on a quarterly basis. The Chair of the Tenants and Leaseholder Committee also receives a monthly update on the Strategy.

In addition to the strategy and to support the delivery of involving more tenants and leaseholders in the housing service we have set a performance indicator for 2013/14 to have 500 tenants actively involved in the housing service by the end of March 2014. The year two objectives assigned to the strategy action plan (appendix 2) will help us work towards this target.

2.0 Year one of the Strategy – complete

The first year of the strategy is now complete and so far we have:

- Established a new involvement structure
- Undertaken a full and comprehensive review of all of our Committees Terms of Reference, and the Tenant Involvement Code of Conduct
- Developed a Tenant Scrutiny framework

- Begun work on a consultation framework
- Created a supported housing forum
- Set tenant involvement objectives for all housing staff as part of the appraisal process
- Hosted Tenant Involvement training workshops for staff
- Arranged for tenants to attend the ARCH conference as well as Housemark and CIH training sessions jointly with members of staff

The Tenant Involvement Team has also been restructured to ensure that adequate resources are in place to deliver the strategy and increase the number of tenants and leaseholders that we have actively involved with the Housing Service.

3.0 Year two of the Strategy

Year two of the strategy began in April 2013 and some of the key objectives for year two are:

- a. The “You are the Key” campaign, a recruitment campaign to get more tenants and leaseholders actively involved in the housing service and this has resulted in more tenants and leaseholders wanting to be formally involved with the committees. The recruitment process will be finalised by mid-June and in addition to new members joining our established committees will see us begin training for the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
- b. Tenant Scrutiny is a new and exciting phase for tenant involvement within the authority and will ensure that we are not only meeting our co-regulatory requirements following the withdrawal of the Audit Committee and as part of the Homes and Communities Regulation Framework, but that we are working to embed tenant involvement throughout the service. We created the framework for Tenant Scrutiny in year one of the Strategy and following the finalising of the recruitment process the appointment of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel will be one of our key priorities. We are currently looking at training packages to ensure that those involved have the relevant skills to undertake the roles that they are engaged in.
- c. Recruitment will remain one of our key objectives and priorities for 2013/14, and we will continue to use Housing News and Views to advertise tenant involvement opportunities as well as other medians such as the volunteer centre. Throughout 2013/14 we will look to involve more tenants and leaseholders in lower level activities in their own location by developing mechanisms for tenants and leaseholders to be actively involved in an armchair capacity. One of the ways we are going to involve tenants and leaseholders in an “armchair” capacity is by introducing a tenant led editorial panel, which will give tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to work with us on publications and other communications that go out to tenants and leaseholders.
- d. Extending the Orchard Housing Management System to include the Resident Involvement module, will enable us to create registers of involvement to include the number of hours that tenants and leaseholders have volunteered as well as a map of the activities that they have been involved in. Evidencing the number of volunteer hours helps us to benchmark our service and forms part of our annual return to Housemark. In addition to this the new customer portal will enable tenants and leaseholders to have contact with us easily and will aid the development of our armchair involvement methods, such as giving tenants and leaseholders the ability to report on the standard of cleaning and window cleaning in blocks of flats, plus the standard of landscaping in their local areas – all key priorities for our residents.

- e. We are also working on ways to involve tenants and leaseholders in helping us to prioritise the spending of the environmental improvements budget – this is a budget that is utilised for large scale projects such as developing drying areas, improving bin stores, tackling parking as part of our local offer etc. This also links closely to the STAR improvement plan, and enables us to tackle the local problems affecting tenants and leaseholders in their areas by enabling tenants and leaseholders to work with us and help to prioritise the way this budget is spent.

- f. To support this during the first quarter 2013/14 we will be working with the Asset team to support consultations in the following areas:
 - Wilstone
 - Riverside Gardens
 - Teddar Road
 - Howe Road
 - Longlands
 - Wood View
 - Surrey Place
 - Miswell Lane
 - Shugars Green

4.0 Events and spreading the “Get Involved” message

There are also a number of events that we are organising or are involved in this year which will help to promote tenant involvement and also enable us to engage with tenants and leaseholders locally. We are currently working with Residents Services to host the Coronation lunch in Queen Square, Adeyfield to celebrate the Queen’s Coronation, and will be attending the Tring Carnival in June. Both of these events will be used to help us to promote our tenants and leaseholder conference which will be held in September.

In addition to these events we are arranging a networking and joint discussion forum for tenants and leaseholders with Thrive, Watford Community Housing Trust, St Albans Council and Hightown Praetorian – this is an excellent opportunity for residents of neighbouring organisations to come together to solve problems and was developed following a suggestion from one of our tenants. We are also working on a project to improve the Memorial Garden at Gade Tower and will be supporting the next Corporate Ward Walk.

We have recently attended the recent Aids and Advice days in Bennetts End and Adeyfield where we were able to speak with tenants and also met with the Dacorum Communities for Learning team who we are hoping to do some more work with around Digital Inclusion. We also regularly attend the Neighbourhood Action Groups on behalf of the Housing Service, where we engage with tenants and leaseholders. We are also working with Residents Services on the Youth Action Entertainers Project which brings young people into the Sheltered Schemes to entertain the residents, and we are also supporting Residents Services work with the Youth Forum. This has enabled us to recruit a young person to be involved with us and act as a Young Persons’ Champion – we are hoping to recruit more young people over the coming year.

The results from the STAR survey highlighted to us the need to get more tenants on line or give them the ability to get on line, this is now even more important with Digital by Default and to help support this priority we are looking at ways to create a tenant resource centre. The resource centre will be based in a community hub, like a community centre or library and it will be equipped with PC’s and other resources that tenants may need access to but find it difficult to locate. The resource centre and the links we are building with Dacorum

Communities for Learning will mean that we can get more of our tenants connected to the internet and out of 'digital exclusion'.

5.0 Taking it a step further

We are working towards the National Tenant Organisations accreditation and the Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 supports this objective; achieving the NTO approved accreditation will mean that we have in place a system of accountability, self-regulation and scrutiny that actively involves our tenants. This will mean that we have not only successfully implemented the strategy but have developed tenant involvement so that tenants have an active voice that is heard and responded to.

In addition to the existing monitoring mechanisms in place at the end of year two we will again be undertaking a review of the strategy with the Tenant Involvement Review Group and will work with them to set the objectives for the final year of the strategy.

Dacorum Borough Council

Housing Landlord

Get Involved Strategy 2012-15



Get Involved Strategy 2012-2015 ~ Together We Can

Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Landlord Service Vision

Our vision is to improve the quality of housing service available to all tenants. By involving tenants to take a strategic role in the scrutiny and monitoring of services, we will be empowering tenants to make recommendations for improvements. Tenants will also actively challenge the service on the delivery of these improvements for all. The Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 supports achieving this vision.

Context

Tenant Involvement is a rapidly developing area; with the changes to legislation following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 it is even more important to involve tenants in the strategic management of housing services.

With the Localism Act 2011 comes the abolition of the Tenant Services Authority the regulator for the regulatory framework. As a result tenants will take on this role. It is therefore essential that our Involvement Structure ensures tenants are at the heart of our organisation. Not only to act as drivers for change, but to help set the Vision for the service. Empowered tenants will work with staff to help deliver the Strategic part of the business by way of governance and challenge.

TPAS quotes “Everyone knows that involving residents in service development, delivery and improvement is a sound proposition. It makes you more approachable. More accountable. More attuned to residents’ views – resulting in solid business decisions and increased efficiency.”

Whilst the new regulatory framework does not recognise leaseholders they are key stakeholders in the Housing Service and those residing in Dacorum Borough Council blocks are also encouraged to play an active part in this Strategy.

The Get Involved Strategy replaces the more traditional Tenant Compacts and will be a live document. It aims:

- To provide a range of flexible opportunities for tenants to get involved
- To enable tenants to truly scrutinise and monitor the service
- To ensure that tenants have a voice that is heard and responded to
- To provide a dedicated team to support and develop effective tenant involvement
- To remove barriers ensuring everyone can get involved in the Housing Service
- To be transparent, open and honest
- To measure and report the effectiveness of tenant involvement
- To maximise the impact of tenant involvement activities and ensure value for money

The Strategy incorporates an action plan that covers the three year period of 2012-15.

Progress against delivery of the plan will be reported to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee who will represent tenants and leaseholders across the borough in respect of the Strategy.

The Housing Service has an annual service plan that has been developed with tenants and the strategy links to the service plan as follows:

- Service Objective one – To involve tenants effectively to make sure tenants and leaseholders monitor, challenge, shape and help us to provide an excellent service
- Service objective two – To give the tenants and leaseholders the best value for their rent and service charges
- Service Objective eight – To make all areas of our service provide excellent customer service
- Service Objective ten – To produce a plan for communicating positive messages to tenants and leaseholders, councillors, residents and the housing industry
- Service Objective eleven – Develop a positive “can do” staff culture

Local Promises

Local Offers whilst being a regulatory requirement should also reflect the local priorities of tenants across the borough. We currently have four local promises based around tenants local priority areas; litter, parking, the standard of repairs and involving children and young people. The Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 will help to support the delivery of these promises by empowering tenants to get involved at a local level to tackle the priorities in their area.

STAR Survey

The recent Survey of Tenants and Residents has given us a good understanding of additional areas for improvement by the Housing Service and these are reflected in the Strategy. In particular more work will be done around creating local level involvement and leaseholder involvement to increase satisfaction with local services.

Objectives of the Tenant Involvement Strategy 2012-15

Our overall objective in addition to the service plan is to ensure that we have a diverse, inclusive and flexible involvement structure that puts tenants at the heart of the organisation, giving them an active voice and empowering them to make a difference.

In order to do this we will:

- Introduce a range of flexible ways to get involved with the housing service
- Increase the number of tenants that we have involved with the housing service, focussing on those groups that are currently under-represented
- Develop Tenant Scrutiny to give tenants an active voice in scrutinising and challenging areas of poor performance and making recommendations for improvements
- Strengthen links with the wider Council Scrutiny methods
- Involve tenants in the setting of Service Plan objectives to ensure that the service is focussed on their priorities

Measuring Success

It is essential that the Strategy is reviewed regularly to ensure that improvements remain on track and also to ensure that we account for any further changes in legislation or regulation.

In order to do this we will:

- Report the progress of the plan to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee on a six monthly basis
- Publish the successes of the plan via News and Views to the wider tenant body
- Establish a training package for involved tenants to enable empowerment
- Present an annual report to Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to demonstrate the achievements and success of the Strategy

In order to fully understand the impact of tenant involvement we also propose to:

- Develop and implement a value for money index
- Assess tenant satisfaction of activities
- Develop and publish an Impact Assessment of main tenant involvement activities

The National Tenant Organisations Accreditation

Within the 3 year plan, we aim to gain National Tenant Organisations (NTO) approved Accreditation (NTOapproved™). This accreditation has been developed to aid organisations in assessing themselves internally but it can also be externally accredited. The assessment is straightforward and is non prescriptive about how tenant panels are set up, allowing us, the Housing Landlord service to set up a panel that suits both the tenants and the landlords needs and aspirations.

The areas of focus for the accreditation are:

1. Co-regulation
2. Tenant leadership
3. Access to all and fairness
4. Functioning Structures and adequate support

The assessment is undertaken by the following methods:

1. Desk top review
2. Tenant Panel meeting
3. Staff Group meeting

The action plan attached to the strategy clearly outlines where and how we will be evidencing our journey to gaining this accreditation.

How will we know the Strategy has been a success?

One of the key measures of success for the strategy will be the NTO accreditation that we will work to achieve over the next three years. In addition to that the following will have been achieved:

End of year 1

At the end of year one, we will have put in place a new tenant involvement structure that will have increased the overall percentage of tenants involved in the service by a minimum 2.5%. This will be achieved by:

- Recruiting more tenants to be involved in committees/local area panels/focus groups etc.
- The Tenant and Leaseholder Committee will be re-established as a strategic group working with the Council to ensure that tenant priorities and expectations of the service are met and/or exceeded. Where this is not possible the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee will ensure that tenants are advised why.
- Tenant Involvement objectives will have been set as part of the staff appraisal process to increase the awareness of tenant involvement and help generate more involvement opportunities within the community.
- The Tenant Scrutiny Framework will have been launched and panel members will have been recruited. This will put us in a strong position to enable tenants to challenge and help shape the services they receive.
- Two joint training sessions will have been held; this will help to create a team working environment between tenants and staff.
- Work will have been completed with Communications to Plain English all publications; this will help to ensure that all messages are communicated clearly to all.

End of Year 2

At the End of year two, we will have strengthened tenant involvement further by introducing:

- An editorial panel will be in place made up of tenants and staff; this will ensure that errors are not made and that information is being communicated in the right way for the audience.
- A process of promoting tenant involvement at sign up of a new tenancy will have been devised; this will let tenants know immediately how they can get involved and make a difference in their housing service.
- A dedicated resource for the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee; this will free up staff time to work on bigger projects and will also ensure consistency and adequate regular support for the Committee as they continue to develop.
- A budget to create a local resource centre; this will enable more tenants to have access to the internet to help support them in their day to day lives. It is hoped that the resource centre could offer training to increase IT skills.
- Devolved budgets to local level via local area panels so that tenants can identify priorities in their local area and act on them. This will empower tenants to make a real difference in their local community.
- An annual report process so that the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee can submit a report to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; this will ensure links with the wider Council and will help to promote the work being done by tenants to improve services.

End of Year 3

At the end of year three, we will have increased the percentage of actively involved tenants by 5% following the introduction of:

- A flexible menu of involvement opportunities, offering something for everyone with varying levels of commitment.
- More electronic methods of involvement to make participating more readily available to all.
- Tenant Associations in high rise flats and sheltered accommodation to help tackle issues specific to those client groups.
- Neighbourhood Agreements via local area panels to ensure local issues such as parking, litter and anti-social behaviour are tackled at a local level with more specific remedies for the area in question.

At the end of the three years the Strategy will have enabled us to achieve a tenant focussed housing landlord service. Tenants will be involved in setting the Strategic direction of the service, and ensuring that priorities are delivered on. More tenants will be involved across the board, particularly at a local level. This will ensure that issues are tackled at a local level, to create a more tailored service for all.

Equality and Diversity

The introduction of more flexible tailored methods of involvement will create an opportunity for everyone to get involved in the Housing Service regardless of differing needs and capabilities.

We recognise the valuable contribution that all of our tenants and leaseholders can make and we will ensure that there is an option available to everyone to be involved, in way that suits them, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, disability, how much time they have or whether they can get to Civic Centre etc.

Our Get Involved Strategy 2012-15 aims to open up tenant involvement to all tenants and leaseholders and remove any barriers to involvement; ensuring that our Tenants are at the heart of the business setting the vision for the future.

As a commitment to ensuring a fair and accessible housing service for all we will sign up to the Chartered Institute of Housing Charter for Equality and Diversity. The Charter is a flexible framework underpinned by six core principles designed to ensure that we are more proactive to ensure that the right services and the right needs and aspirations of our tenants and leaseholders are achieved.

Action Plan to achieve our objectives

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Status	Hyperlink to evidence
	Year 1						
A, B, C & D	Establish new involvement structure – including committees, scrutiny, local panels, tenant associations and street champions in partnership with resident services	Service Plan 2012-13	CL	Quarter 2	A	Complete	Structure in word doc..doc
A & B	Establish aspirations of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee to improve the housing service	Service Plan 2012-13	JG	Quarter 2	I	Complete	TLC terms of reference 10.07.12 (final).doc
A, B, C & D	Develop Tenant Scrutiny and launch the framework and recruitment at the Tenants Annual Conference 2012	Localism Act 2011 Service Plan 2012-13	CL	Quarter 2	I	Ongoing	..\Scrutiny\Tenant Scrutiny Form 14 Nov Recruitment.docx
A,B,C & D	Create a consultation framework to ensure that effective consultation is undertaken with tenants and leaseholders on changes to policy and/or services and the results are	TLC Priority	JG	Quarter 3	A & I	Underway	

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Status	Hyperlink to evidence
	communicated effectively						
A, B, C & D	Undertake a consultation with tenants and leaseholders regarding the creation of local area panels	TPAS best practice	JG	Quarter 2	I	Consultation took place at the Tenant and Leaseholder conference with no for or against	
A,B,C & D	Create a supported housing forum to help ensure that the needs and priorities of supported housing tenants are being met	Service Plan 2012-13	OJ	Quarter 3	I	Underway	
A & D	Ensure that Tenant Involvement objectives are included in the staff appraisal process	Service Plan 2012-13	CL	Quarter 1	A & I	Complete	P:\Shared Information\Service Planning\201213\Updated 22.08.12 Service Planning Objectives 2012-13 all objectives V2 2003 2012 (2).doc Action 1.7 in plan

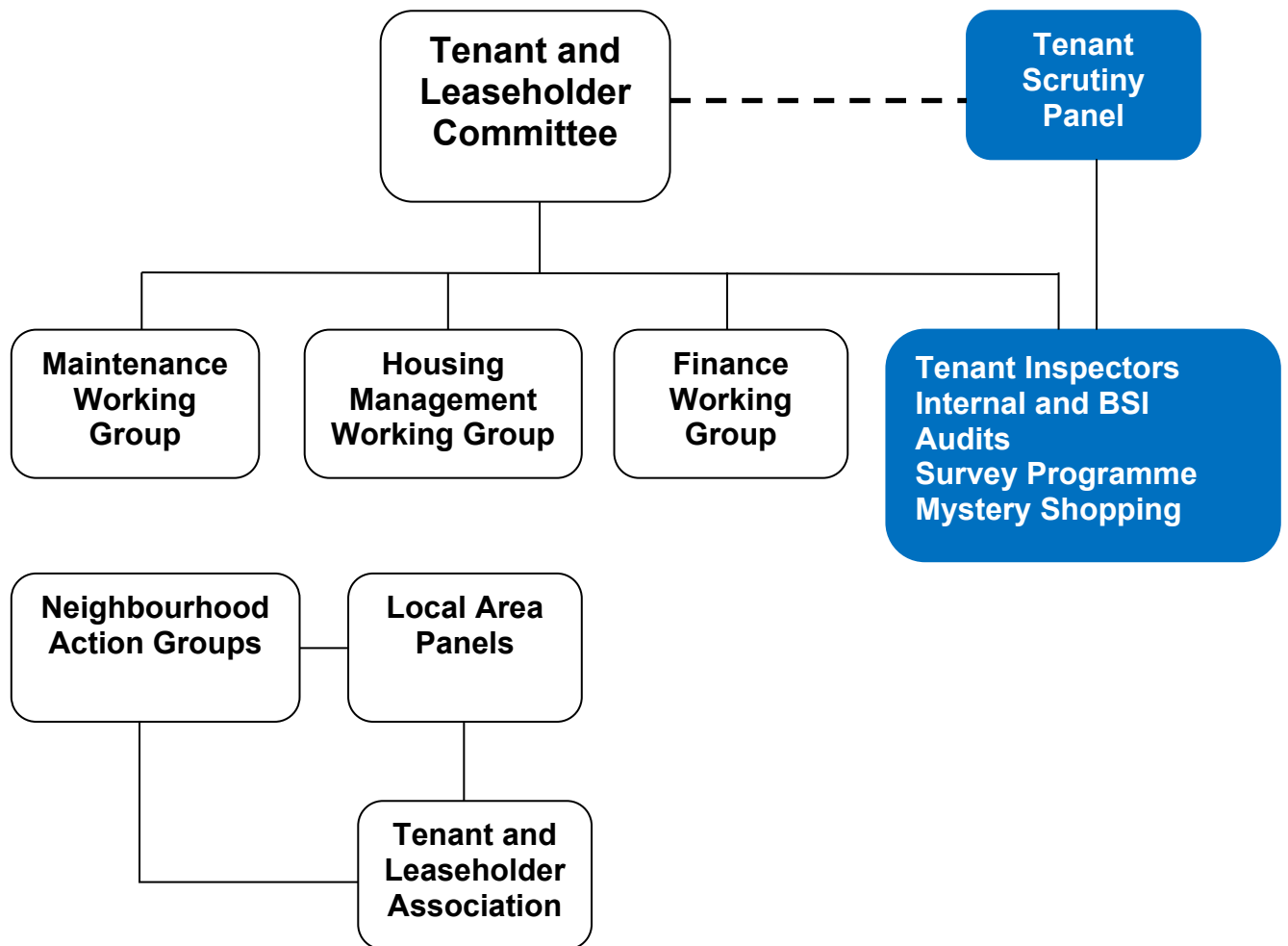
Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Status	Hyperlink to evidence
A, C & D	Where possible and practical arrange training jointly for staff and tenants	TLC priority	G	Quarter 4	A		
C	Set up a framework to continually look to recruit tenants to be involved in the service via News and Views, surveys, events, consultation and the local media	Service Plan 2012-13 TLC Priority	JG	Quarter 3	A	Recruitment advert in every edition of news and views. Local media will be used for recruitment to Scrutiny Panel.	P:\Tenancy and leasehold Group\Policy and Participation\News & Views\Final Versions\News and Views Winter 2012-13 LR.pdf
C	Develop a system to plain English all communications to tenants and leaseholders	Service Plan 2012-13 TLC priority	SD	Quarter 4	A		
A	Use the STAR survey results to identify and plan tenant led improvements across the borough	STAR Service Plan 2012-13 Local Offers	JG	Quarter 2	A & I	An action plan has been drafted and elements of improvements have been incorporated	P:\Tenancy and leasehold Group\Policy and Participation\Tenant's Annual

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Status	Hyperlink to evidence
						within the Annual Report 2011/12	report\Annual Report 2011-12\DC Annual Report WEB.pdf
A, B, C & D	Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment for the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement function and self assess against the CIH Equality and Diversity Charter	CIH E&D Charter	CL	Quarter 4	A & I		
A	Use Housemark benchmarking to establish Equality and Diversity Performance Indicators	CIH E&D Charter Housemark	JG	Quarter 4	A		
	Undertake a Gap analysis in preparation for the NTO accreditation	NTO best practice Regulation Tenant involvement and Empowerment Standard	JG	Quarter 4	A	Underway	

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Status	Hyperlink to evidence
	Undertake a review of the Strategy against the year one plan. Set deadlines for year two priorities.		CL	Quarter 4	A		
	Year 2 Achieve NTO accreditation						
C	Establish an editorial panel to include tenants and leaseholders for all publications including leaflets and posters						
D	Promote involvement opportunities at sign up of a new tenancy						
D	Recruit dedicated resource to support the TLC and other committees in minute taking and arranging meetings etc.						
D	Identify budget and space to create a “tenant resource centre”						
A	Delegate budgets through sub committees, local area panels						
A	Set up a process for the TLC to complete an annual report to be submitted to Housing Communities Overview and Scrutiny and						

Link to NTO	Objective	Reference	Who?	By when?	Administrative or Impact	Status	Hyperlink to evidence
	Cabinet						
D	Year 3. Constitute the TLC in a move towards a tenants federation and work with members services to include within the Councils constitution						
C	Establish tenant associations in high rise blocks and sheltered accommodation						
B	Increase the percentage of involved tenants by 5% between 2012-15						
B	Establish a menu of flexible involvement opportunities to enable everyone to have an input into the housing service						
C	Develop electronic methods of involvement via the website						
B & C	Introduce neighbourhood agreements via the local area panels to ensure that tenants priorities for improvements are being tackled in their local area						

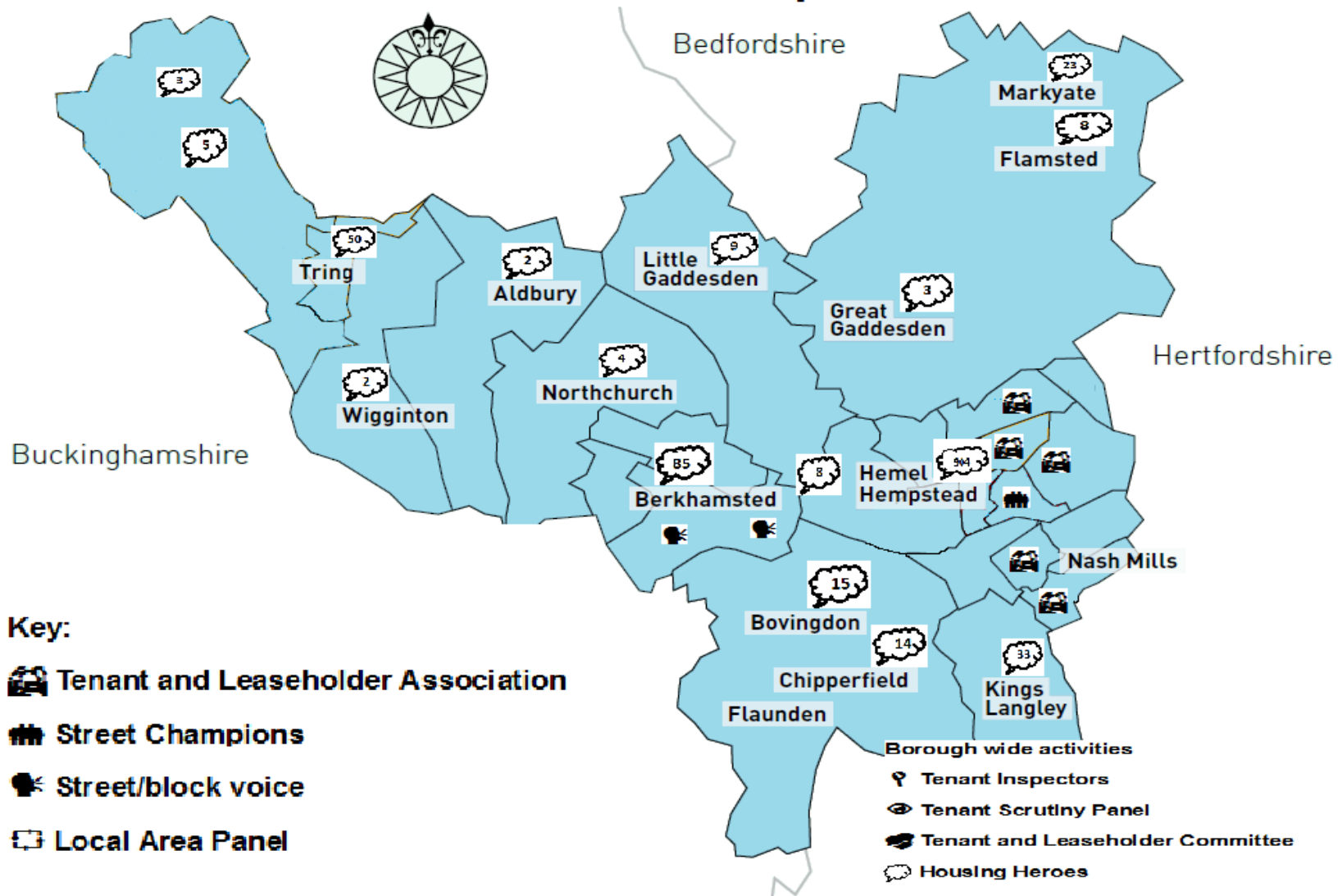
Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Structure



Councillors can attend any activity at request

- Road Shows
- Conference
- Engaged Tenants and Leaseholders
- Local Area Walkabouts
- Road Shows

Tenant Involvement Activity - 2012



AGENDA ITEM: 13
Summary

Report for:	Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	19 June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Council House Building Programme and Homeless Hostel Report
Contact:	Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Jack Burnham, Housing Development Manager Camelia Smith, Lead Officer – Housing Development
Purpose of report:	1. To update the Housing & Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Council New Build Programme phase one. 2. To update the committee on the progress of the Homeless Change Programme.
Recommendations	1. That the committee notes the progress of the phase one of the New Build Programme and with the Homeless Change Programme.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> The programme is currently on schedule to deliver new homes within the prescribed timeframe of March 2015 and to the original budget of £14m.
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u> The programme is currently on schedule to deliver new homes within the prescribed timeframe (March 2015) and to the original budget (£14m). The October 2012 Cabinet report set these objectives as value for money targets.
Risk Implications	Risk Assessments reviewed in June 2013.
Equalities Implications	An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out October 2012. There are no implications arising from the Assessment.

Health And Safety Implications	All development sites have been registered with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in line with the CDM 2007 (Construction Design and Management Regulations) as required by statute, by the Council's appointed CDM Coordinator.
Consultees:	Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director – Housing Julia Hedger, Group Manager – Strategic Housing Ben Hosier, Group Manager – Procurement Mark Brookes, Group Manager – Legal Services James Deane, Assistant Director – Finance Aaron Keyte, HRA Accountant
Background papers:	Cabinet Report – 23 October 2012 “ Update on Council Home New Build Programme – Phase 1 ”
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	HSE – Health and Safety Executive CDM – Construction Design and Management Regulations JCT – Joint Contracts Tribunal HCA – Homes and Communities Agency NAHP – National Affordable Housing Programme

1. Programme Overview

- 1.1 At the Cabinet meeting on October 23rd 2012 approval was given to begin a new Council programme to build new council homes for the first time in over 25 years. Phase one consists of 71 New Homes over three sites, with a mixture of one and two bedroom flats and some three bedroom houses. The Housing Revenue Account will fund the 71 new homes.
- 1.2 At this meeting, Cabinet also gave approval to develop a 33 bedroom homeless hostel for single people. This will be funded by the General Fund and the Homes and Communities Agency's Homeless Change Programme grant funding.

2. Grant funding changes

- 2.1 The Council was successful with the bid to build 45 new homes using £15k of HCA grant per property, linked with the requirement to convert 45 existing Council homes to the new affordable rent. (Total grant for the 45 new homes was £675,000.) As the phase one New Build programme developed, the HCA and the Council entered into a contract which confirmed the intent of delivering 45 new homes with “up to” 80% of market rents.

- 2.2 During the latter part of 2012 the HCA confirmed any new homes delivered using grant needed to have rent levels set at 80% of market rents (not 'up to'). To illustrate, rents on a three bed house at 80% of market rent would be approximately £800 per calendar month in Hemel Hempstead and £880 in Berkhamsted, with current Council rents at around £465 for a similar property.
- 2.3 When the Council bid for grant in early 2011 from the NAHP 11-15 programme certain assumptions were made, and the HCA had certain criteria which the Council had to commit to at that point in time. One key point included within the NAHP prospectus was the level of rents which the Council were expected to charge for any new properties which was set at "up to" 80% of market rents – this would then be known as a new tenure "Affordable Rent". There was also a requirement to convert a certain number of existing stock rents to the new affordable rent levels.
- 2.4 Following discussions with Cabinet members and tenant representatives it was clear that 80% of market rent in the Dacorum area was considered far from affordable, and therefore the Business Plan was looked at in detail to determine the impact of lower rents, and building the new homes without the HCA grant. Whilst there was an impact financially, this was considered favourable to the alternative of charging a rent deemed not to be affordable in the Borough. The HRA Business Plan was remodelled to assume that new homes will be delivered at 'target social rent' which is considered far more affordable for new tenants in the Dacorum area.
- 2.5 The Council is receiving £841,500 in grant funding from the HCA for the development of the hostel, which would be unaffected by the decision not to accept the £675k HCA grant for the development of the Phase one residential programme.

3. Site Updates

THE ELMS HOMELESS HOSTEL

Up to 41 rooms



- 3.1 Chambers Goodwin & Partners have been appointed as the Architects for the development. The Ground Investigation Report identified the low risk issue of slightly elevated lead levels on part of the site which can be mitigated by isolating the contamination under hard cover. The other site investigations have concluded, with no sufficient barriers to development identified.
- 3.2 The development team architects have undertaken several visits to exemplar hostels across London & the Eastern region as part of the information gathering process. Pre-application planning advice was sought on the 9th May 2013, and a public consultation event took place on the 28th May 2013 at the Maylands Business Centre. A full planning application will be submitted in June 2013, once feedback from the planning officer, building control and appointed engineers has been fed into the design.
- 3.3 The procurement process to appoint a main contractor commenced in May 2013, with the first pre-qualification questionnaire stage closing in June 2013. It is expected that the tender process will conclude in October 2013, and that works on site will begin in November 2013.

Key dates:

- **MAY 2013** – Planning pre-application advice application submitted
- **JUNE 2013** – Planning application submitted
- **OCTOBER 2013** – Tender process concluded
- **NOVEMBER 2013** – Start on Site
- **MARCH 2015** – Completion of the development

FARM PLACE, BERKHAMSTED

12 x 1 Bedroom Flats, 8 x 2 Bedroom Flats, 6 x 3 Bedroom Houses



- 3.4 The planning permission and intellectual rights were purchased from Aldwyck in January 2013. The Council has appointed an Employers Agent (Robinson Lowe Francis) to assist in transposing the technical work to date into a format, which has now been put to tender. The site has full planning permission and a new sign board has been erected to state that 26 new Council homes will be completed in 2015.
- 3.5 The tender process to select a main contractor has started, and an appointment is expected to be made in August 2013. The site will shortly be re-boarded with sufficient hoarding to last the duration of the redevelopment. Contractors will provide a price for this development to be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 standard, which would make the new homes amongst the highest environmentally efficient in the Borough.

Key dates:

- **AUGUST 2013** – Start on Site (Hoarding to commence in June 2013)
- **JANUARY 2015** – Completion of the development

GALLEY HILL, GADEBRIDGE

9 x 2 Bedroom Flats to 'Passivhaus' standard



- 3.6 Planning permission was obtained in January 2013 for the development of 9 Passivhaus flats at Galley Hill, Gadebridge. Architects and Engineers have been appointed to complete the further design work, and undertake detailed studies regarding the site, such as the ground condition (which is favourable for development).
- 3.7 The first stage of the procurement process (Pre-Qualification) has completed for the main contractor, with the second stage closing in August 2013. This development is being built to the Passivhaus standard, providing very high levels of thermal efficiency to keep gas heating bills to around £100 per annum per property. Further information on Passivhaus is available at www.passivhaus.org.uk

Key dates:

- **SEPTEMBER 2013** – Start on Site
- **JANUARY 2015** – Completion of the development

LONDON ROAD, APSLEY

13 x 1 Bedroom Flats, 23 x 2 Bedroom Flats



- 3.8 The whole site has been acquired by the Council, and has been secured with hoarding and gates. The land is currently owned by the General Fund and the site will be appropriated as a whole to the Housing Revenue Account's ownership.
- 3.9 Several site investigations have been concluded and an ecology report has confirmed that there are no habitat/ecology concerns with regard to developing homes on this site. A planning application was submitted to the Local Planning Authority in May 2013 (4/ and will take approximately 13 weeks to determine.
- 3.10 The tender for a main contractor will begin in June 2013. The first stage of the tender (the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire) will take around 6-8 weeks to complete, and the total procurement process (including selection, interview and authorisation to appoint) will take 3-5 months.
- 3.11 The substation relocation will be undertaken outside of the main contract, to ensure the scheme is completed by March 2015. Works on relocating the substation will start in the summer.

Key Dates:

- **APRIL 2013** – Planning application
- **DECEMBER 2013** – Start on site
- **MARCH 2015** – Practical Completion

AGENDA ITEM: 14

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	19th June 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Dacorum Borough Council Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Author/Responsible Officer: Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing
Purpose of report:	1) To provide Members of the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the HRA Business Plan and associated recommendations which were agreed at the Council's Cabinet meeting in April 2013
Recommendation	1)That Members note the HRA Business Plan, associated recommendations and Phase 1 New Build Update
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> See Appendix 1 – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Update Report
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u> See Appendix 1
Risk Implications	See Appendix 1
Equalities Implications	n/a
Health And Safety Implications	None
Consultees:	See Appendix 1
Background papers:	Appendix 1 - Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Update Report

1. Introduction

Throughout 2012/13 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan has been continually reviewed and refined following discussions between officers in Finance & Housing.

Meetings have been held involving a Sub-Group of the Tenants & Leaseholders Committee and the Council's Cabinet at appropriate times to discuss decisions required and review progress of the financial performance.

The final annual review of the Business Plan was completed in early April 2013. The review resulted in recommendations regarding New Build Phases 2 & 3 and rent levels of new homes as well as the setting up of a strategic acquisition fund and amendments to the Housing Capital Programme.

Due to the fact that there was not a Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting during April, it was agreed in consultation with the Chair of the committee to send a copy of the report to Cabinet 30th April 2013 for information and to request that the item be brought to the June meeting for discussion.

Members of the Tenants & Leaseholders Committee Sub-Group were also sent a copy of the Business Plan & Cabinet report in advance of the Cabinet meeting.

2. Appendix 1

Cabinet Report 30th April – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review - Report

3. Appendix 2 - Please see separate document attached to the agenda

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	30th April 2013
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Update
Contact:	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Author – Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director (Housing Landlord)</p> <p>Contributors:</p> <p>Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director (Housing & Regeneration) James Deane – Assistant Director (Finance & Resources) Aaron Keyte – Housing Revenue Account Accountant Fiona Williamson – Group Manager (Property & Place) Julia Hedger – Group Manager (Strategic Housing) Jack Burnham – Housing Development Manager</p>
Purpose of report:	<p>To Update Cabinet on the 1st Yr Review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.</p> <p>To Update Cabinet on the Progress of the Council House New Build Programme.</p> <p>To agree the revised HRA 13/14.</p>
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan; 2. To agree Phase 2 of the Council House New Build Programme and to agree in principle Phase 3 for financial planning purposes, as set out in section 3 of the report; 3. To agree that the Council charge a rent level of 'target social rent' for all new build Council owned properties; 4. To recommend to Council the following supplementary estimates to the HRA capital programme, to be funded through revenue surpluses in the business plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Estate Improvements, £750k per annum from 2013/14 -

	<p>2016/17;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structural Balcony Repairs, £1m per annum 2013/2014 & 2014/2015; ○ Strategic Acquisition Fund, £5m, to be financed from HRA reserves to be created as part of the 2012/13 year-end process subject to outturn and Council approval; ○ £675k increase to the budget for Phase 1 of the Council House New Build Programme to cover the amount of HCA grant funding forgone by the decision to charge social rent rather than the Affordable Rent level stipulated by the HCA as a condition of grant; <p>5. To recommend to Council the approval of an appropriation of land at London Road, Apsley from the General Fund to the HRA together with an adjustment of £1.8m between the General Fund and HRA Capital Financing Requirements.</p>
Corporate objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affordable Housing ● Dacorum Delivers ● Regeneration
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Included in the body of the report.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>Close monitoring on a monthly and quarterly basis of the HRA Business Plan jointly by Finance and Housing officers and an annual review ensures that value for money is derived from the HRA's available resources.</p>
'Value For Money Implications'	
Risk Implications	The Housing Risk Register is reviewed quarterly and considered by the Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessment reviewed/carried out*
Health And Safety Implications	none
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<p>Deputy Monitoring Officer:</p> <p>The HRA business plan sets out the Council's 30 year financial model of income, expenditure and debt which is required as a result of the self-financing system introduced by the Localism Act 2011. This year 1 review is an essential part of the required monitoring and updating of the plan.</p> <p>S.151 Officer</p> <p>The HRA business plan is sufficiently resourced to finance the above recommendations, whilst retaining the target balance of at least 5% of annual turnover.</p>

	<p>The financing of the Strategic Acquisition Fund within the capital programme is planned to be financed by a transfer from the HRA reserve as approved within the revised estimate. Creation of this reserve is subject to Member approval and the availability of sufficient revenue surpluses generated in 2012/13, which will be determined and recommended to Members as part of the current year-end process. The revised budget, approved by Members in February 2013, forecasts that there will be sufficient surplus to create a reserve of £12m.</p> <p>The HRA has sufficient borrowing headroom to enable the increase of £1.8m to its Capital Financing Requirement in order to appropriate the land at London Road from the General Fund.</p>
Consultees:	<p>Dacorum Borough Council Tenants & Leaseholders Committee</p> <p>Dacorum Borough Council Housing Maintenance & Environment Committee</p>
Background papers:	<p>27th March 2012 Cabinet - The Self Financing Loan Portfolio</p> <p>23rd October 2012 Cabinet – Council New Build Programme</p> <p>12th February 2013 Cabinet – The 2013/14 Budget Papers</p> <p>26TH March 2013 Cabinet – Draft Housing Strategy</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>HRA – Housing Revenue Account</p> <p>HRA BP – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan</p> <p>NAHP – National Affordable Homes Programme</p> <p>HCA – Homes & Communities Agency</p> <p>DCLG – Department of Communities & Local Government</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In April 2012 the Council agreed its 30 year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. It was a requirement following the introduction of Self Financing (replacing the HRA Housing Subsidy System) for Local Authorities with housing stock to have such a plan.
- 1.2 The 2012/2013 HRA Business Plan and its key assumptions were agreed over several months following consultation with members of the Council's Cabinet, Housing & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee, a sub-group of the Tenants & Leaseholders Committee and taking external advice from the Chartered Institute of Housing & Sector.

- 1.3 This report details the first year review of the HRA Business Plan and recommendations coming from that review as well as providing an update on progress of the Council's New Build Programme Phase 1 which was agreed in October 2012.

2. DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

- 2.1 The resources available following the move to Self Financing in April 2012 created the opportunity for the Council to be strategic in its approach to its housing stock for the first time. It was possible, and essential, to not only consider the existing housing stock, but also wider issues such as community development, improving the environment and the potential to build new Council homes to address the increasing demand for affordable housing.
- 2.2 The Business Plan not only concentrates on the financial related strategy and objectives, but also the service priorities of the Council's Landlord function to its tenants and leaseholders. The longer term perspective is crucial to ensure that the service and its primary assets, the housing stock, are fit for purpose for the whole period and beyond.

3. PERFORMANCE 2012/2013 & YEAR 1 REVIEW – DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL HRA BUSINESS PLAN

3.1 HRA Business Plan Performance 2012/2013

- 3.1.1 In terms of income generation and ability to improve our tenants' & leaseholders' homes (as well as maintaining the Council's assets) the HRA Business Plan performed well in its first year 2012/13.
- 3.1.2 The forecast HRA balance at the end of 2012/13 is £3.2m. This was approved by Council as part of a revised budget in February 2013, subject to year-end adjustments. This is broadly in line with the £3.1m original budget approved in February 2012.
- 3.1.3 It should be noted that the revised budget includes a £12m transfer to reserves that was not part of the original budget. This £12m represents additional funding that has become available to the HRA over the course of the last year, which will be transferred to reserves to finance future investment as part of closure of accounts for 2012/13.
- 3.1.4 The additional £12m arose from the favourable outcome of a number of issues which were finalised as part of the year-end process and the transition to Self Financing, both of which occurred after the original budget had been approved. The key contributors were:
- £4.3m arising from reduced annual interest payments on the Self Financing loan of £354m. Interest rates were not available in advance of the borrowing profile being finalised.

The average borrowing rate was 3.3%, less than the prudent assumption of 4.5% in the original budget;

- £3.9m reduction in the Revenue Contribution to Capital arising from auditors' confirmation, following work undertaken by officers, that an historical £8.1m of capital funds would be available to the HRA for capital expenditure under the Self Financing regime;
- £3.2m reduction in the depreciation charge reflecting year-end adjustments to the book value of the Council's housing stock;
- £816k higher opening balance on the HRA after all the final accounts adjustments had been completed.

3.1.5 It is proposed that this reserve is increased when in-year revenue surpluses allow, and is used to finance the Council's new build programmes. In particular, it is important that the Council has funds clearly identified in advance that will enable it to make strategic land acquisitions when suitable development land becomes available. More detail on the Council's new build aspirations is included in paragraph 3.2.4 of this report, and in the HRA Business Plan at Appendix 1.

3.1.6 An additional favourable consequence of the transition to Self Financing is that by strategically planning the financing of the debt, more resources were immediately available to the Council to invest in its housing stock. During 2012/2013 the Property & Place Team have worked with our contractors to ensure that maximum efficiency was gained from these resources resulting in a huge increase in the volume of improvement works carried out compared to 2011/2012.

Improvement Works	2011/2012	2012/2013
Kitchen Renewal	196	456
Bathroom Renewal	192	426
Re-Wire	250	605
Front Doors	532	1935

3.2 HRA Business Plan Year 1 Review

3.2.1 Rather than a single end of year review of the Business Plan there have been a series of meetings held throughout the year with members of the Council's Cabinet, Corporate Directors of Finance & Governance and Housing & Regeneration as well as senior officers from both Housing & Finance.

3.2.2 Officers have also met with members of the Tenants & Leaseholder Committee to discuss all issues highlighted in the meetings with the Council's Cabinet members.

3.2.3 During the ongoing process of review there have been a numbers of issues that have come to light that have had an impact on the Business Plan and will continue to going forward. Some of these issues are for noting, whilst others require amendments to the Business Plan, the 2013/2014 HRA, or both.

3.2.4 Rent Levels – Dacorum Borough Council New Build Council Homes

- (i) When the Council bid for grant in early 2011 from the NAHP 11-15 programme certain assumptions were made, and the HCA had certain criteria which the Council had to commit to at that point in time. One key point included within the NAHP prospectus was the level of rents which the Council were expected to charge for any new properties which was set at “up to” 80% of market rents – this would then be known as a new tenure “Affordable Rent”. There was also a requirement to convert a certain number of existing stock rents to the new affordable rent levels.
- (ii) The Council was successful with the bid to build 45 new homes using £15k of HCA grant per property, linked with the requirement to convert 45 existing Council homes to the new affordable rent. (Total grant for the 45 new homes was £675,000.) As the phase 1 New Build programme developed the HCA and the Council entered into a contract which confirmed the intent of delivering 45 new homes with “up to” 80% of market rents. However, during the latter part of 2012 the HCA confirmed any new homes delivered using grant needed to have rent levels set at 80% of market rents (not ‘up to’). To illustrate, rents on a three bed house at 80% of market rent would be approximately £800 per calendar month in Hemel Hempstead and £880 in Berkhamsted, with current Council rents at around £465 for a similar property.
- (iii) Following discussions with Cabinet members and tenant representatives it was clear that 80% of market rent in the Dacorum area was considered far from affordable, and therefore the Business Plan was looked at in detail to determine the impact of lower rents, and building the new homes without the HCA grant. Whilst there was an impact financially, this was considered favourable to the alternative of charging a rent deemed not to be affordable in the Borough. The HRA Business Plan in Appendix 1 therefore assumes that new homes will be delivered at ‘target social rent’ which is considered far more affordable for new tenants in the Dacorum area.

3.2.5 Amendments to HRA Capital Programme

- (i) During the final quarter of 2012/13 two significant issues came to light which have an impact on the

short and medium term Housing Capital Programme.

Accelerated Estate Improvements

- (ii) Much work has taken place to improve the housing stock in Dacorum over previous years and as highlighted in the earlier summary (Section 3.1) this has had significant benefit to our tenants and their homes. There has however continued to be a concentration towards internal works to homes rather than the communal areas or general appearance of the areas in which the Council's tenants and leaseholders live.
- (iii) Many of these areas are looking tired due to lack of maintenance and investment needs have not been fully responded to. To address this it is proposed that for a 4 year period 2013/14 – 2016/17, an additional £750k per year is allocated. A programme would be agreed using asset information and tenant & leaseholder priorities.

Balcony / Walkway Repairs

- (iv) Following the collapse of a balcony access walkway to a block of flats in Blackpool, it was decided to carry out some checks on access walkways of similar design in the Council's housing stock. The walkways were scanned to establish exactly what reinforcement was present in the walkways and where it was positioned. This latter point was important because the main cause of the balcony collapse in Blackpool was because the reinforcement had been placed in the wrong part of the slab and was therefore giving inadequate support.
- (v) Unfortunately, a range of the balcony access walkways have been constructed with the same incorrect placement of the reinforcement. Housing staff brought this to the attention of the Council's Building Control department who advised the need to provide temporary support to these balconies while future options are considered. All balconies identified as risk have been reinforced with props. To put into context the situation in Dacorum does not compare with the situation in Blackpool, with the bulk of these walkways being at first storey level only as access to bedsits above garages, though there are some on flat blocks. The action taken means that there is no immediate risk to tenants and residents.

- (vi) Remedial works will start in 2013/14. Whilst only an estimate of the financial implication could be made, it is proposed to add an additional £1million to the Housing Capital Programme for both 2013/14 & 2014/15 for these works.

3.2.6 Welfare Reform & HRA Bad Debt Provision

- (i) A number of changes to the benefits system were implemented in April 2013 and others are planned for later in the year as a result of the Government's Welfare Reform programme. Some of these could have a significant impact on the Housing Service in terms of income and therefore the performance of the HRA Business Plan
- (ii) The change which is expected to have the biggest impact on the HRA is the introduction of the Social Sector Size criteria (commonly referred to as 'the bedroom tax') which affects approximately 900 tenants in Dacorum. Many of these same tenants will also be affected by the replacement of the national council tax benefit scheme by a local council tax support scheme. Those affected by this measure will lose an average of £138 a year due to the impact of losing benefit on a 'surplus' bedroom.
- (iii) Personal Independence Payment will replace Disability Living Allowance for eligible working age people aged 16 to 64. There are further reforms on the horizon with the introduction of a Benefits cap (£350/wk for single people and £500/wk for families) to be introduced before October when we will see the introduction, on a phased basis, of Universal Credit and with it the payment of benefit for housing costs direct to the tenant.
- (iv) The Housing Service has plans in place to mitigate these various threats as follows:
- All tenants known or believed to be affected by the bedroom benefits changes were contacted in advance by means of a telephone call or personal visit. The Housing Officer discussed the various options (move, budgeting help, lodger, DHP etc) with the tenants and ensured that they understood the implications of the changes.
 - The Council has reviewed its Allocations Policy and introduced new measures to assist tenants who wish to move to a smaller home.

- Housing took part in the 'Task Force' – a helpline/drop-in to offer advice and information on the changes. Due to the intensive work already undertaken with tenants (see above) the number of housing related queries has been very small.
 - We are working with Hertsavers Credit Union to offer various accounts to our tenants, including 'jamjar' or budgeting accounts to assist with managing payments.
 - Two Officers will be working full time on financial inclusion initiatives including training for tenants and the provision of support
 - We are already working with other organisations such as Turning Point and Druglink to offer additional support to tenants who have had changes in their benefit,
 - We are liaising with the Court User Group to obtain the views of Judges on any necessary changes to policy and procedure
- (v) It is expected, even with all the initiatives detailed above taking place that there will be a negative impact on a number tenant's ability to pay their rent. Whilst the level of financial impact is unknown, a significant amendment to the 'Bad Debt' provision has been made in the Business Plan, rising from 0.4% to 2% in 2014/2015.

3.2.7 DBC Council Homes New Build Phases 2 & 3

- (i) Due to the ongoing availability of resources it has been the intention of the Council that the building of new homes should be a long term strategy rather than a 'one off'.
- (ii) The original HRA Business Plan agreed in 2012 made provision for 15 new homes per year until year 10 and then 30 per year thereafter.
- (iii) During the review process it has become evident that the HRA resources enable this to be accelerated. Various scenarios were modelled for within the Business Plan with regard given to other priorities, capacity and the availability of suitable land.
- (iv) The following proposals were arrived at for Phases 2 & 3 of the Council's New Build Programme:

Phase 2

100 new homes

Cost Approximately £15million

Development Phase 2013/14 – 2015/16

Delivery 2016/17 – 2017/18

Phase 3

100 new homes

Development Phase 2018/19 – 2019/20

Delivery 2020/21 – 2021/22

(For Business Planning purposes the new build assumptions then revert to 30 per year for the remainder of the Business Plan until further review.)

- (v) It should be noted that the phased approach to delivery allows the Council to respond relatively quickly to changed circumstances and, should it be required, the ‘tap’ could be turned off if financial pressures occur elsewhere in the business plan.

3.2.8 Right to Buy Receipts

- (i) Changes to government legislation on Right to Buy mean that, from 2012/13 onwards, all receipts must be retained within the HRA, whereas previously the receipts were also available to fund regeneration programmes within the General Fund. Exclusive access to these funds has the effect of increasing the resources available to the HRA, around £500k in 2012/13.
- (ii) In addition, the Council has received extra income from the ‘one-for-one’ replacement scheme introduced by government as part of the Reinvigorating Right to Buy campaign, which increased the maximum discount available to applicants. In a departure from the previous RTB scheme which required the Council to surrender roughly 75% of all RTB receipts to DCLG, ‘one-for-one’ replacement enables the Council to retain 100% of the RTB receipts in excess of the amount that had been forecast to DCLG before the higher level of discount had been introduced.
- (iii) As DCLG intended, higher discounts have resulted in more units being sold by the Council over 2012/13, which has generated an additional £1.5m of available funding in the business plan. The Council is contractually obliged to use this receipt as a contribution to its new build programmes.

4. DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL NEW BUILD COUNCIL HOMES UPDATE – PHASE 1

4.1 Cabinet October 2012

4.1.1 At the Council's Cabinet meeting on October 23rd 2012 approval was given to proceed with the Council's programme to build its first new Council homes for over 25 years. Phase 1 consists of 71 New Homes over 3 sites, with a mixture of 1 & 2 bedroom properties and some 3 bedroom houses. The 71 new homes are funded fully from the Housing Revenue Account.

4.1.2 Approval was also given for the development of a 33 bedroom homeless hostel for single people which is being funded by the General Fund therefore not detailed within the HRA Business Plan. The Council is receiving a grant of approximately £841,500 from the HCA for the development of the hostel, which would be unaffected by the decision not to accept the £675k HCA grant for the development of the Phase 1 residential programme.

4.2 Site Updates

4.2.1 THE ELMS HOMELESS HOSTEL, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD (General Fund)

(i) Chambers Goodwin & Partners have been appointed as the Architects for the development. Most of the site investigations have concluded, with no sufficient barriers to development identified. The Ground Investigation Report identified the low risk issue of slightly elevated lead levels on part of the site; however this can be mitigated by isolating the contamination under hard cover.

(ii) A planning application is currently being prepared and the development team & architects have undertaken several visits to exemplar hostels across London & the Eastern region as part of the information gathering process. A full planning application will be submitted in May 2013, following consultation with the public.

(iii) Key dates:

- MAY 2013 – Planning application submitted
- NOVEMBER 2013 – Start on Site
- MARCH 2015 – Completion of the development

4.2.2 FARM PLACE, BERKHAMSTED

(i) The planning permission and intellectual rights were purchased from Aldwyck in January 2013. The Council

has appointed an Employers Agent to assist in transposing the technical work to date into a format which the Council can use. The site has full planning permission and a new sign board has been erected to state that 26 new Council homes will be completed in 2015.

- (ii) The tender process to find a main contractor has started, and is expected to conclude in July 2013. The site will shortly be re-boarded with sufficient hoarding to last the duration of the redevelopment. This development will be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 standard, and will be amongst the highest environmentally efficient developments in the Borough.

- (iii) Key dates:
 - AUGUST 2013 – Start on Site
 - JANUARY 2015 – Completion of the development

4.2.3 GALLEY HILL, GADEBRIDGE

- (i) Planning permission was successfully obtained for the development of 9 Passivhaus flats at Galley Hill, Gadebridge in January 2013. Architects and Engineers have been appointed to complete the further design work, and undertake detailed studies regarding the site, such as the ground condition (which is favourable for development).

- (ii) The first stage of the procurement process (Pre-Qualification) has completed for the main contractor, with the second stage closing in July 2013. This development is being built to the Passivhaus standard, providing very high levels of thermal efficiency to keep gas heating bills to around £100 per annum per property. Further information on Passivhaus is available at www.passivhaus.org.uk

- (iii) Key dates:
 - SEPTEMBER 2013 – Start on Site
 - JANUARY 2015 – Completion of the development

4.2.4 LONDON ROAD, APSLEY

- (i) The whole site has been acquired by the Council, and has been secured with hoarding and gates.

- (ii) The land is currently owned by the General Fund and approval to appropriate the site as a whole to the Housing Revenue Account's ownership for the price of £1.8million is needed. This would be funded from the HRA reserve described in paragraph 3.1.
- (iii) Several site investigations have been concluded and an ecology report has confirmed that there are no habitat/ecology concerns with regard to developing homes on this site. The Council has been working with RG+P Architects towards the submission of a planning application in April 2013. The planning application will take around 3-4 months to conclude (including the s106).
- (iv) The tender for a main contractor will begin after the planning application has been submitted. The first stage of the tender (the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire) will take around 6-8 weeks to complete, and the total procurement process (including selection, interview and authorisation to appoint) will take 3-5 months.
- (v) Key dates:
 - APRIL 2013 – Planning application
 - DECEMBER 2013 – Start on site
 - MARCH 2015 – Practical Completion

5. DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

Appendix 1 HRA Business Plan 2013/2014

APPENDIX 2 – PLEASE SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT ATTACHED TO THE AGENDA

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

:

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
17 July 2013	5 July 2013	Domestic Abuse Policy		J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services	
11 September 2013	30 August 2013	Quarter 1 Performance Report (& Q1 Operational Risk Reports)	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services S Baker, Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic & Regulatory J Deane, Assistant Director, Finance and Resources	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance.
13 November 2013	1 November 2013	Quarter 2 Performance Report (& Q2 Operational Risk Reports)	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services S Baker, Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic & Regulatory J Deane, Assistant Director, Finance and Resources	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance.

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type:	Contact details:	Background information
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	
19 March 2014	7 March 2014				

PM – Performance management

PD – Policy Development

Sc – Scrutiny

Items to be scheduled:

- Update report on Supported Housing
- Neighbourhood Action Group report

Update report on Tenant Involvement Strategy
Equalities Strategy