



HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Scrutiny making a positive difference: Member led and independent, Overview & Scrutiny Committee promote service improvements, influence policy development & hold Executive to account for the benefit of the Community of Dacorum.

WEDNESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2014 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
Mrs Bassadone	Mahmood (Vice-Chairman)
Conway	Marshall (Chairman)
Flint	McLean
Hearn	R Sutton

Co-Opted Members: M Cook, J Howard, A Horn

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

For further information, please contact Trudi Coston on Tel: 01442 228224, or Email: Trudi.Coston@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 agree the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2014, which can be viewed at:

<http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/council-democracy/meetings-minutes-and-agendas/events/2014/07/16/housing-and-community-overview-and-scrutiny-committee/housing-and-community>

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 and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10 September 2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Budget Monitoring Quarter 1 2014/15
Contact:	Cllr Nicholas Tiley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources James Deane, Assistant Director (Finance & Resources) Richard Baker, Group Manager (Finance and Resources)
Purpose of report:	To provide details of the projected outturn for 2014/15 as at Quarter 1 for the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · General Fund · Housing Revenue Account · Capital Programme
Recommendations	It is recommended that Committee note the forecast outturn position
Corporate objectives:	Dacorum Deliver
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.
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<p>Monitoring Officer</p> <p>No further comments to add.</p> <p>Deputy S.151 Officer</p> <p>This is a Section 151 Officer report.</p>
Consultees:	Budget Managers.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>GF – General Fund</p> <p>HRA – Housing Revenue Account</p>

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's forecast outturn for 2014/15 as at 30th June 2014. The report covers the following budgets:

- General Fund
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- Capital Programme

2. General Fund Revenue Account

2.1 The General Fund revenue account records the income and expenditure associated with all Council functions except management of the Council's own housing stock, which is accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) (see Section 4).

2.2 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.

2.3 The majority of non-controllable costs result from year-end accounting adjustments, e.g. depreciation charges. These are required to show the true value of resources used to provide the Council's services, but do not result in a cash charge to taxpayers. As costs will not be known until year-end, the forecast outturn for all areas is shown as on budget.

2.4 The adjusted budget is the original budget approved by Cabinet in February 2014 plus the following approved amendments:

Amendments	£000	Approved
2014/15 Original budget	19,416	
Replacement Street Name Plates	40	Council February 2014
Dacorum Sports Trust	100	Cabinet April 2014
Apprentices	68	Audit Committee June 2014
EDRMS	90	Audit Committee June 2014
Category Management	75	Cabinet June 2014
2014/15 Adjusted Budget	19,789	

2.5 The table below provides an overview by Scrutiny area of the current forecast outturn for controllable budgets within the General Fund.

	Adjusted Budget £000	Projected Outturn £000	Variance	
			£000	%
Finance & Resources	12,605	11,815	(790)	-6.3%
Housing & Communities	1,751	1,869	118	2.2%
Strategic Planning & Environment	5,433	5,621	188	3.5%
Total	19,789	19,305	(484)	-2.4%

2.6 The following section provides a subjective analysis of the projected outturn and major budget variances shown for the Housing and Community area.

3 Housing and Community

Housing & Community	Controllable Budget £000	Projected Outturn £000	Forecast Variance	
			£000	%
Employees	3,171	3,221	50	1.6%
Premises	435	452	17	3.9%
Transport	43	39	(5)	-10.5%
Supplies & Services	2,217	2,225	8	0.4%
Third Parties	25	25	0	0.0%
Income	(4,141)	(4,093)	47	-1.1%
	1,751	1,869	118	6.7%

3.1 Employees - £50k over budget (1.6%)

The main pressure is £22k within Regulatory Services linked to a shortfall against the budgeted vacancy provision.

3.2 Income - £47k under budget (1.1%)

Clinical commercial waste collections have ceased during the first quarter of this year (resulting in a £60k loss of income for the year). This was part of a wider initiative to focus operations on higher revenue generating streams over the longer term within Environmental Health – namely Pest Control which has implemented a charging policy. Growth in this service is expected to yield significantly increased income over the coming years.

4. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

4.1 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.

4.2 The projected HRA balance at the end of 2014/15 is £3.38m. The forecast operating surplus is £603k – a change of £364k compared to the surplus of £239k originally budgeted. Significant variances are as follows:

4.3 Contribution towards expenditure - £160K surplus (34.8%)

£160K surplus due to Green Deal energy income being received that wasn't budgeted.

4.4 Repairs and Maintenance – £1.1M over budget (9.7%).

There is a forecast pressure of £1.1m on the Responsive Repairs and Maintenance budget. This is due primarily to the following:

- Cessation of planned repairs by Keepmoat has caused an expected overspend of £490k on responsive repairs.

- Overhead costs built into the base budget differ to the tendered rates, causing a projected pressure of £200k.
- An increase in the number of voids, and increased costs per repair for voids suggests a projected overspend of £300k.
- An increase in the number of drain blockages has led to an overspend on the drainage budget causing a projected pressure of £180K.

The position will be contained by transferring resource from the HRA capital planned repairs budget via a reduced revenue contribution to capital (£1M).

4.5 Supervision and Management – 355k under budget (3.3%)

The expected underspend relates to:

- Pension backfunding paid in 2013/14 – £210K.
- Electricity for flats management - £100K savings from the implementation of energy efficiency projects.
- Supporting People – Saving in agency staff budget of approximately £33K due to service being close to full capacity.
- Housing Cleaning Service – Saving in employees budget of approximately £42K due delayed recruitment to four new posts.
- Housing Landlord Management - £44K saving due to Corporate Graduate post remaining vacant and over budgeted GM post.

Off-set by pressures from:

- Uninsured losses relating to insurance claims from tenants - £50k
- ICT Orchard maintenance costs - £20k

5. Capital Programme

5.1 Appendix C shows the projected capital outturn in detail by scheme.

The table below summarises the overall capital outturn position by Scrutiny area.

The 'Rephasing' column refers to those projects where expenditure is still expected to be incurred, but it will now be in 2015/16 rather than 2014/15, or conversely, where expenditure planned initially for 2015/16 will now be in 2014/15.

The 'Variance' column refers to those projects which are now complete, but have come in under or over budget and those projects which are no longer required.

	Adjusted Budget £000	Projected Outturn £000	Rephasing £000	Variance	
				£000	%
Housing & Community	5,331	5,433	55	47	0.9%
G F Total	5,331	5,433	55	47	0.9%
HRA Total	36,050	31,380	(2,758)	(1,912)	-5.3%
Grand Total	41,381	36,813	(2,703)	(1,865)	-4.5%

5.2 General Fund Major Variances

As at quarter 1 there are no material variances on the Housing and Community General Fund capital programme.

5.3 Housing Revenue Account Major Variances

There is a projected underspend on the HRA capital program of £1.912m.

- £1m underspend on Planned Fixed Expenditure as discussed above (point 4.4). Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council a reduction in the Capital Programme and capital financing requirement.
- £900k underspend relating to Strategic Acquisitions: The budget allocation for the transfer of the Point between the General Fund and HRA is no longer required as provision for this transaction will be made in the financing of the capital programme.

There is projected slippage of £2.758m into 2015/16 due to delays on the New Build scheme at London Road. Construction works have been delayed due to difficulties relocating the substation during the initial phase of the scheme. Works are due to commence in September.

Appendix A – Revenue Budget Monitoring Report (1 Page)

Appendix B – Housing Revenue Account Projected Outturn 2014/15 (1 Page)

Appendix C – Capital Programme Monitoring Report (2 Pages)



AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10/9/2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Quarter One Performance Report – Regulatory Services
Contact:	Cllr Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services Author/Responsible Officers: Chris Troy, Group Manager, Regulatory Services Dave Austin, Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Delivery)
Purpose of report:	To provide Members with the performance report for quarter 1 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:
Value For Money Implications'	None.

	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 papers:	Quarterly Performance Report – quarter 1 (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)
- Public Health
- 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
- Sustainability

2. Regulatory Services Q1 Performance Indicators

2.1 There has been slight slippage in the following areas Q1:

REG02 (Amber) - Percentage of A-C rated food premises inspected

REG05 (Amber) – Percentage of noise cases closed within 90 days

REG06 (Amber) – Percentage of final DFG payments made within six months

The quarter 1 performance report (Appendix 1) identified that there has been slippage with respect to the indicators above. This is due in part due to a couple of complex legal cases/investigations and general issues with cover during this period. An Environmental Health Officer working in the Food & Health & Safety Section is now working in Corporate Health & Safety which left a vacancy in this area. A number of the noise cases were not able to be closed within the 60 days PI as these are to do with Bovingdon Airfield which is a long standing investigation. There were a couple of delays with DFG approval due to extended negotiations with external agencies.

3. Environmental Protection

3.1 Numerous complaints have been received about Bovingdon Airfield and the change of use of the site with intensified motor sport activity. This is part of an active and ongoing investigation working in co ordination with the planning department regarding the change of use of the site. An appeal is going to be heard by the Planning Inspectorate in September 2014, in the meantime we are investigating the noise issues and taking action to prevent further nuisance from this site.

3.2 Other enforcement notices served in this period included an abatement notice for noise nuisance , a notice for a premises that was filthy and verminous and a notice requiring drainage to be fixed.

4. Environmental Enforcement

4.1 There are currently four cases which have been referred to legal for prosecution.

5. Food Safety

5.1 Voluntary Closure of one food premises took place for a failure to provide a food safety management system, inadequate training, food out of temp control, lack of hot water, cross contaminations issues, lack of disinfectant or other cleaning chemicals, poor cleaning.

Unfit food was seized and detained by officers from another premises in Hemel town centre.

Eight Premises were served with Food Hygiene improvement notices in this period.

5.2 IPEN- Prohibition of business processing human placenta for Human Consumption. At the last meeting there was mention of a successful court case which upheld DBC's decision to issue prohibition notices. DBC for some time has been asking the Food Standards Agency to declare this as a novel food, which in effect will initiate a ban on

products not just in the UK but in Europe. The FSA has now agreed that this should be considered to be a Novel food. We are awaiting a final decision from the FSA in the meantime the business concerned has moved out of Dacorum. There is a national alert which has been sent out to other EH departments in relation to other businesses which formed part of the IPEN network.

6. Pest control

6.1 Cabinet agreed the new proposals for the pest control service including charges for pests and expansion of the current service. We are now charging for rats and provide a whole range of services for other pests including mice, fleas, wasps and cockroaches.

7. Corporate Health and Safety

7.1 Corporate H&S now sits within the Food & Health & Safety Team, which is part of Regulatory Services. A report went to CMT at the end of June and an action plan agreed. Key actions are:

- Set up a new Health & Safety Committee
- Review the organisation & arrangements for delivering H&S
- Develop more detailed corporate H&S plans
- Implement an electronic accident data base
- Electronic DSE assessments

Also there were a number of operational issues requiring immediate action and we gave advice to departments on how to effectively manage the risks..

8. Private Sector Housing

8.1 At the last meeting it was highlighted that a landlord was prosecuted for failing to license a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) along with failing to rectify a number of housing defects. It was highlighted at the last meeting that there were still issues hazards at the property witnessed by officers which has resulted in the service of an Interim Management Order (IMO). DBC continues to manage the property in terms of the tenancies and it is also maintaining the property and remedying any defects so it is fit for habitation. DBC have also carried out works in default to rectify a number of hazards.

9. Primary Authority

9.1 In addition to Tesco's, Empire and Hilton we are about to sign contracts with 'One stop' . At a recent meeting with the Government's Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) it was highlighted that the Dacorum/Tesco's PA agreement is a leading example of how the PA arrangements should work and we are giving a presentation with Tesco's at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Annual Conference in October.

10. Health & Safety

- 10.1 Three premises were served with H&S Improvement notice and one was served with a prohibition notice for a dangerous bandsaw. One particular premises had multiple H&S issues including poor asbestos management, Electrical & Gas safety hazards.

11. Sustainability

- 11.1 An update was given to CMT in June on progress with the corporate workplan. The Environmental Management System is now fully embedded in the majority of Council buildings and the progress towards maintaining ISO 14001:2004 compliance is on track. It has been agreed that DBC will install more water meters which will enable issues such as leaks to be identified.
- 11.2. A 'cycle to work scheme' was implemented in May and so far 11 applications have been approved.

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE

APPENDIX 1

Regulatory Services

June 2014

Measure	Owner & Updater	Jun 2013 Result	Trend	Mar 2014 Result	Trend	Jun 2014 Result	Sign Off	Comments	Flag
REG02 - Percentage of high risk (A-C) food inspections/interventions achieved within the quarter	Chris Troy Nicholas Egerton	No Data Target: 0		No Data Target: 0		85.71% (36/42) Target: 95.00		Owner The Food & H&S section carried a vacancy during this period and also one officers had increased workload due to a high profile court case. Also includes 4 closed premises	
REG03 - Percentage of service requests for the whole of Regulatory Services responded to within 3 working days	Chris Troy Nicholas Egerton	99.47% (933/938) Target: 98.00		98.87% (786/795) Target: 98.00		99.33% (744/749) Target: 98.00		Owner PI Met	
REG05 - Percentage of Noise cases closed within 60 days	Chris Troy Nicholas Egerton	88.68% (94/106) Target: 90.00		84.93% (62/73) Target: 90.00		85.51% (59/69) Target: 90.00		Owner A number of noise complaints are related to a long running investigation which is still ongoing	
REG06 - Disabled Facilities Grants - percentage of final payments made within 6 months following approval	Chris Troy Nicholas Egerton	86.67% (13/15) Target: 80.00		85.71% (12/14) Target: 80.00		75.00% (9/12) Target: 80.00		Owner There have been extended negotiations on some of the DFG which has delayed completion	



AGENDA ITEM: 8

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10th September 2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Quarter 1 Performance Report, Service Plan update & Risk Register 2014/15 – Housing
Contact:	Councillor Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Author/Responsible Officer – Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director - Housing
Purpose of report:	1. To Update the Committee on the Performance of the Housing Service for the Quarter 1 2014/15 2. To inform the Committee of the status of the current Housing Service Risk Register and Housing Service Plan
Recommendations	1. That the Committee note the Performance Report & Risk Register, and Service Plan Update
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications: 'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Financial</u> All areas of the service are subject to Monthly Budget Monitoring Meetings with Financial Accountant. Budget Reporting is quarterly to the Committee and 6 monthly to Tenants & Leaseholders Committee. <u>Value for Money</u> The Housing Service & its costs are reviewed annually through

	a national benchmarking organisation (Housemark)
Risk Implications	Appendix – Housing Operational Risk Register
Equalities Implications	Equality Impact Assessments are carried out when policies or procedures are amended as appropriate
Health And Safety Implications	Health & Safety is an identified key risk for the Housing Service.
Consultees:	Andy Vincent – Group Manager Tenants & Leaseholders Fiona Williamson – Group Manager Property & Place Julia Hedger – Group Manager Strategic Housing
Background papers:	n/a
Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i>	Each year, in consultation with staff and members of the Tenants & Leaseholder Committee a set of performance indicators, and key Service Plan Objectives are identified and agreed.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	TLC – Tenants & Leaseholder Committee HRA – Housing Revenue Account STAR – Survey of Tenants & Residents

1.0 Introduction

This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the 1st quarter 2014/15 against performance indicators and an update regarding the Housing Service Plan 2014-2016

The report also details the Housing 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.

2.0 Housing Performance Report – 2014/15

Appendix 1 shows performance against the ‘Service Critical’ performance indicators for 2014/15 for the period of April - June

3.0 Total Asset Management Performance Indicators

Since the start of the new Total Asset Management contract work has taken place with the Council's Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee to agree a suite of new Performance Indicators. These are currently being finalised and will be reported from Quarter 2 of this year.

4.0 Housing Service Plan

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Service Plan 2014/16

It was agreed with the Council's Tenants & Leaseholder Committee that the Housing Service plan should be aligned with the STAR survey which is carried out every two years. The most recent survey took place in early 2014. The Service Plan therefore will run from 2014 – 2016.

Currently the Council are in the process of agreeing a corporate template for all service plans in order that they can in some way be aligned with corporate priorities and encourage joint working. The new template is currently being agreed and should be in place by Quarter 3.

A meeting was held with the TLC and Councils Portfolio Holder for Housing to review the results of the STAR survey and agree actions to come out of it.

Timescales and responsible officers are being finalised and will be confirmed in time for the new corporate template going 'live'.

Please see below the list of actions identified by the TLC, results from the STAR survey and following consultation within the service

<i>1. Introduce arrangements for identifying and supporting our most vulnerable tenants.</i>
<i>2. Improve Digital access</i>
<i>3. Launch a back to work initiative</i>
<i>4. Develop a theme for the programme</i>
<i>5. Review our Local Offers</i>
<i>6. Put in place arrangements for reporting environmental issues and monitoring the environmental condition of our estates</i>
<i>7. Review our 'Get Involved' Strategy – and develop new objectives for tenant involvement from 2016-2020</i>

<i>8. Review our Financial Inclusion Strategy and develop a strategy from 2016-2019</i>
<i>9. Completion of the new Homeless Hostel, Farm Place and the Nokes - end of March 2015</i>
<i>10. Continue with Council New Build Programme as set out in the HRA Business Plan – March 2016</i>
<i>11. Extend current Housing advice and education services available within the Community</i>
<i>12. Prepare for peer review in line with Gold Standard and agree timescales for review to take place.</i>
<i>13. Set up a single non-priority project group, obtain commitment from partner agencies.</i>
<i>14. Develop a Young Persons Housing Strategy</i>
<i>15. Develop Help to Rent offer</i>
<i>16.</i>
<i>17. Woolmer Drive – New Temporary Accommodation</i>
<i>18. Through HMEC ensure that both Osborne & Sunrealm work with the Council and tenants to ensure that there is choice and consultation surrounding renewals of doors, kitchens, bathrooms and that boilers are suitable for the needs of the tenants</i>
<i>19. Complete the review of service provided to Leaseholders</i>
<i>20. Continue to promote awareness of the standard of cleaning that tenants can expect, monitor standards via satisfaction surveys and invest in improvements to the service, including staff training where necessary.</i>
<i>21. Grounds Maintenance should be a regular agenda item for Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee (HMEC) with a view to monitoring standards and investigating options for improving levels of satisfaction.</i>
<i>22. HMEC and TLC should continue their involvement with monitoring the new TAM contract and work co-operatively with officers to devise both the new definition of 'right first time' and satisfaction surveys to promote confidence that service standards are being met.</i>
<i>23. Develop a Fencing Policy</i>
<i>24. That we continue to publish STAR updates in News and Views and carry out further consultations in accordance with the Housing Consultation Strategy whenever</i>

changes are planned, whether to the service as a whole or at a local level.

25. That all possible steps should be taken to reverse the trend of increasing numbers of residents finding it difficult to reach the correct person when contacting the Council.

5.0 Housing Risk Register

Appendix 2 details the Housing Service Operational Risk Register following the review carried out by the Assistant Director & Group Managers.

Some of the risks shown are to be replaced during the end of 2nd quarter review and replaced by more relevant items.

Appendix 1 – Quarterly Performance Report (8 Pages)

Appendix 2 – Quarter 1 Operational Risk Register Report (6 Pages)



AGENDA ITEM: 9

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10th September 2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Resident Services Quarter 1 Performance 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	
Consultees:	Service Team Leaders, Community Safety Co-ordinator
Background papers:	Service Reports, Police reports (JAG), CorVu

Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Quarter 1, 2014 – 2015

1 Introduction

1.1 This is the first quarter performance report for the Residents Services Group which forms part of the wider Neighbourhood Delivery service area and covers the period 1st April to 30th June 2014.

1.2 The services within this group are: -

2 Neighbourhood Action, Anti-Social Behaviour, Community Safety, The Old Town Hall, Children's Services, Community Cohesion, CCTV and Youth Democracy. In addition to the services above there are additional projects relating to verge hardening, play parks and the Tour of Britain

2.1 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.

3 Quarter 1 Performance Report – CorVu

3.1 See Appendix A

4 Resident Services – 1st Quarter Achievements.

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

5 Community Safety Partnership

5.1 1st Quarter Report 2014-15

1/4/14 to 30/6/14 compared with same period in previous year showing percentage increase/decrease followed by rise/fall in number of crimes, followed by total number of crimes in period.

	All Dacorum	Position in County (10 Districts)per 1000 population 2014	Position in County (10 Districts)per 1000 population (2013)
All Crime	+15% (+233,1784)	5 th	6 th
Burglary Dwelling	-7.7% (-7, 83)	4 th	9 th
Vehicle Crime	+25.4% (+39, 192)	10 th	3 rd
Violent Crime	+39.2% (+82, 281)	5 th	7 th
Criminal Damage	-10.4% (-34,292)	7 th	8 th
Anti-Social Behaviour	-13.2% (-117,767)	5 th	5 th

5.2 As a result of recording procedures affecting some of the categories of crimes recorded by the police, it is now not possible to compare the affected categories with data from previous years as the datasets are quite different. This change has produced a marked increase in the recording of certain crimes which therefore has an impact on the All Crime category which is showing an increase of 15% when compared to the same period last year.

5.3 As stated, comparing the two periods is not statistically valid because of the fact that it is like trying to make a comparative analysis between apples and pears.

5.4 Therefore the other categories, (Burglary, Vehicle Crime, Criminal Damage and Anti-Social Behaviour) can legitimately be compared to previous years' data. On that basis the increase in vehicle crime is a genuine increase and has been caused by two factors:-

- A spate of thefts of petrol from vehicle petrol tanks across parts of Hemel Hempstead
- Damage and interference caused to vehicles parked on footpaths in various parts of the borough.

5.5 Both of these issues have been brought to the CSP and in the case of the first issue one offender was dealt with for multiple offences. Investigations into fuel theft are ongoing.

5.6 What **can** be compared is the position of Dacorum in relation to the other districts. What can be seen from the final column of the table is that with the exception of vehicle crime,

in the priority categories, Dacorum has improved or maintained performance in all categories compared to the 1st quarter of last year.

5.7 Until we have a baseline established after the first year of collection of the new datasets, the County position, Burglary, Vehicle Crime, Criminal Damage and ASB are the only datasets that we will be able to use in comparison with previous years' data.

5.8 A breakdown for the figures for all crime at Ward level is attached at appendix B. Please note that all figures for this quarter include the first 6 days of July 2014.

6 Anti-Social Behaviour

6.1 Reports of anti-social behaviour in Dacorum continue to reduce overall with a 13.4% reduction in the first quarter on 2014/15. There was however an increase of 22 reports to police for June 2014 compared to June 2013. Figures for anti-social behaviour are not included in the all crime total for Dacorum. Dacorum are placed 5th within Hertfordshire per 1000 population for incidents of ASB.

6.2 The Office for National Statistics have released national crime figures up to 2013/14, including ASB incidents. These show that Hertfordshire has had the greatest overall reduction in ASB in England and Wales over the period 2010/2014 at 66%; even adjusted for population the reduction is still the largest in England & Wales at 61%. This compares to reductions for England of Wales of 40% (36% per 1,000 pop)

6.3 In 2010/2011 Hertfordshire were ranked 20th best for ASB per 1,000 pop; we are now 2nd (behind Thames Valley).

6.4 Our MSG (Most Similar Group) is:

MSG – Reductions in ASB per year	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Since 2010/11	per 1,000
Bedfordshire	4%	0%	-12%	-8%	-16%	-30%	-52%	-48%
Essex	-13%	-4%	-11%	-13%	-9%	-4%	-32%	-26%
Hertfordshire	-8%	-8%	-16%	-18%	-29%	-30%	-66%	-61%
Hampshire	-7%	-12%	-3%	-21%	-12%	-23%	-48%	-48%
Kent	-13%	7%	-4%	-14%	-15%	-11%	-38%	-37%
Thames Valley	4%	-6%	-19%	-24%	-30%	-12%	-62%	-55%

Avon and Somerset	-2%	-8%	-10%	-4%	-18%	-2%	-30%	-25%
England and Wales	-5%	-4%	-9%	-15%	-17%	-7%	-40%	-36%

6.5 Progress continues on the implementation of the new legislation, Anti-Social Behaviour Police and Crime Act 2014. One of the key areas for members to note is the 'Community Trigger' as members can use this on behalf of their constituents.

6.6 The Community Trigger gives victims of anti-social behaviour the power to ensure that action is taken to deal with persistent anti-social behaviour through a specific process.

6.7 The process will give victims and communities the right to request a review of their case and bring agencies together to take a joined up, problem solving approach to find a solution. There is a level of anti-social behaviour needed to activate the trigger – Three reports from an individual about separate incidents in 6 months or 3 individuals have separately reported similar in 6 months.

6.8 Consideration must also take account of: The persistence of the anti-social behaviour; the harm or potential harm caused by the anti-social behaviour and the adequacy of the response to the anti-social behaviour.

6.9 The trigger can be used by a victim or another person acting on behalf of the victim such as a carer, family member, Member of Parliament or Ward Councillor.

6.10 A briefing paper for the Community Trigger will go to members at the start of October prior to its activation date of 20th October and an update of all the new powers will be presented to this committee in October.

7 Quarter 2 – 2014/15 priorities for ASB: -

7.1 Preparation for the introduction of new legislation – Crime, Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014.

8 Neighbourhood Action

8.1 Some of the public meetings for the Neighbourhood Action areas took place during this quarter and the Neighbourhood Action consultation commenced and was to run until 31st July. Initial feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with parking and highways issues the main concern. A full report of the findings of this survey will be reported in quarter 2.

- 8.2 A follow up on the targeted work in Woodhall Farm continued under the 'Love your Neighbourhood banner' with a Food Festival at Woodhall Farm Community Centre. Co-ordinated by the Neighbourhood Action team this was a truly partnership event which continues with a range of competitions for growing vegetables and sunflowers continuing over the summer – an overview is provided at appendix C.
- 8.3 The Neighbourhood Action Team Leader's work with British Cycling came to fruition and resulted in the 6th stage of the Tour of Britain travelling through Dacorum to finish in Gadebridge Park on 12th September 2014.
- 8.4 Community Payback works continued with general works such as litter picking, delivery of leaflets, works to Adventure Playgrounds (when closed to the public), community projects and clearing allotments so that they can be let.
- 8.5 Phase 2 of the Verge Hardening Project commenced and the first 4 areas for this financial year were completed and the areas for the remainder of this year have been identified and prioritised – regular reports are sent to all members.
- 8.6 There is reduced capacity in the Neighbourhood Action Team due to long term absence and as of one member of staff and a Lead Officer being successful in obtaining a team leader post within the Council.

9 Quarter 2 2014-15 priorities: -

- 9.1 Deliver the finish of Tour of Britain event in Gadebridge Park – 12th September 2014.
- 9.2 Continue with next stage of verge hardening project
- 9.3 Neighbourhood Action public meetings and consultation
- 9.4 Progress play area refurbishments
- 9.5 Follow up on Love Your Neighbourhood Food Festival

10 Children and Young Peoples Services

10.1 Adventure Playgrounds

- 10.2 The numbers of children aged 6 – 12 Years inclusive attending the adventure playgrounds in the last quarter were: - 25,219, which surpassed the target by 2,935 attendances. Easter was particularly busy with after school attendances also at an all time high.
- 10.3 In addition to the core adventure playground attendance the numbers of young people aged 11 – 16 attending the youth clubs at all 4 adventure playgrounds continues to increase with 1391 attendances and numbers steadily increasing.
- 10.4 Youth Connexions Sessions were stopped at Adeyfield due to damage of equipment and a restart date with a strong agreement is in the process of agreement at this time. Grovehill sessions are continuing and Chaulden sessions have restarted at the end of June.

10.5 Youth Democracy

- 10.6 With exams the priority of a lot of the DYF members, attendance at monthly meetings and involvement during this time has been fairly quiet, which unfortunately saw the meeting for April cancelled. However in May members of the group met with the Manager of the Old Town Hall who attended to speak about an exciting arts award project in conjunction with the Arts Council.
- 10.7 Discussions regarding affordability of access to Arts and Entertainment were discussed at the May meeting with the Old Town Hall and the possibility of more affordable tickets for young people being made available at the Old Town Hall. This is one of the priorities identified by young people in their presentation to members in November 2013.
- 10.8 In June, the group discussed becoming involved with some work with charities. Several ideas and possible organisations to get involved with were discussed and the forum are in the process of making arrangements with these organisations.
- 10.9 In June members of the youth form were involved with a 'Conversation Café' in partnership with the NHS trust who wanted to hear what young people think about health services in the area. The feedback from the young people was very positive and they felt they were encouraged to speak their mind and fully express their views.

11 Quarter 2 Priorities 2014 – 15:-

- 11.1 Increase membership of Youth Forum - continue
- 11.2 Access to the Arts/ Entertainment
- 11.3 Improvements/repairs to equipment at Adventure Playgrounds
- 11.4 Increase attendance at Adventure Playgrounds

12 Community Cohesion

- 12.1 Youth Action Entertainers continue to work in partnership with Housing on a range of events and volunteers have performed at sheltered housing schemes and carried entertained at community groups and also partnered with Beechwook Park School who's students entertained residents in Sursham Court, Markyate.
- 12.2 Neighbourhood Action continue to support the local Interfaith Group and have been working with them to increase membership numbers in the following ways:-
- Articles in, Dacorum Digest, The Review, Gazette Newspaper and staff electronic noticeboard.
 - Leaflets and posters created to increase interest in DIN and promote 'Interfaith 14' event
 - Display board created to take to meetings/events
 - Research to locate religious groups in Dacorum – 100 new contact details now held
 - Emails sent explaining about Dacorum Interfaith Network
 - Contact details of previous members, speakers and guests collated –increase from 38 to 68 who are happy to be kept in touch with interfaith issues.
- 12.3 Plans are underway for and Interfaith 14 event on 23rd November 2014 and there have been three meetings with a range of speakers with increasing attendance at each

meeting on the following subjects: - April – 3 speakers ‘compassion’. May 2 speakers Baha’i faith and June – 3 speakers future of faith in Dacorum.

13 Priorities 2014 – 15:-

- 13.1 Increase membership of groups
- 13.2 Increase the capacity and the performances of Youth Action Entertainers

14 CCTV

- 14.1 The final transfer of all control room services was completed at the end of May and the new systems are all up and running.
- 14.2 Following requests from the Public Houses in the Pub Watch scheme, the CCTV /control room has secured radios from Shopsafe Ltd and re introduced the radio support scheme and extended this to shops within the Marlowes and the shopping centres. Police have radios and are in direct contact with pubs and shops across the area.
- 14.3 There has been 708 incidents captured in the first quarter and 80 requests for footage
- 14.4 Police are tasking the control room and early results are very promising with a burglar caught in the act and police guided in for the arrest.

15 Quarter 4, 2013-14 priorities: -

- 15.1 Ongoing planning and implementation of code of practice
- 15.2 Development of CCTV/Community Control services

16 Old Town Hall

- 16.1 The works to re-open the Cellar with disabled access and to deliver an extended programme continue and will be completed in the next quarter with the opening planned for 13th September 2014.
- 16.2 The Old Town Hall will also be hosting the Tour Of Britain press venue on 12th September 2013.
- 16.3 As was anticipated, the attendance levels over the last quarter have been below target (51.3% against a target of 57%) due to the significant works and the reduced service available. The Old Town Hall is unable to provide a refreshment service.
- 16.4 In addition to this the private hires are significantly reduced with 9 over the whole quarter.
- 16.5 A full report on the Old Town Hall will come to committee in November 2014.

17 Quarter 2 Priorities: - 2014 -2015

- 17.1 Deliver reduced programme whilst Cellar access works are in progress.
- 17.2 Folk Festival, 19th July
- 17.3 Award contract for the catering in the café and bar
- 17.4 Host the media for the Tour of Britain 12 September 2014
- 17.5 Grand Reopening September 2014
- 17.6 To offer an extended programme utilising the Cellar

Appendix A – Quarterly Performance Report (2 Pages)

Appendix B - Figures for all crime in Dacorum at Ward level (1 Page)

Appendix C – Woodhall Farm Food Festival Event Report (8 Pages)



AGENDA ITEM: 10

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10 September 2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Neighbourhood Action
Contact:	Councillor Neil Harden, Portfolio Holder for Resident and Regulatory Services Authors/Responsible Officers Julie Still/Joe Guiton
Purpose of report:	1. To inform members of a proposed pilot programme, based on evidence, to test and evaluate approach to the delivery of changes to the Neighbourhood Action Service
Recommendations	1. Members note the proposal and identify any concerns or comments
Corporate objectives:	Community Capacity Clean and Safe Environment
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> Pilot within existing budgets.
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u> Full evaluation of pilot project to be completed – targeted approach based on evidence.

Risk Implications	To be completed as part of project
Equalities Implications	To be completed at the start of the project
Health And Safety Implications	All elements of the project will be risk assessed
Consultees:	Neighbourhood Action Team, Joe Guiton NA Team Leader, David Austin, Assistant Director, Cllr Neil Harden Portfolio holder
Background papers:	Neighbourhood Action Report – January 2014
Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i>	In January 2014, this committee asked for a report on the proposals to review this service to provide a more targeted approach to community involvement.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	HRA – Housing Revenue Account SLA – Service Level Agreement NAG's – Neighbourhood Action Groups NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training LOSA – Lower Super Output Area

Background

1. Current Service

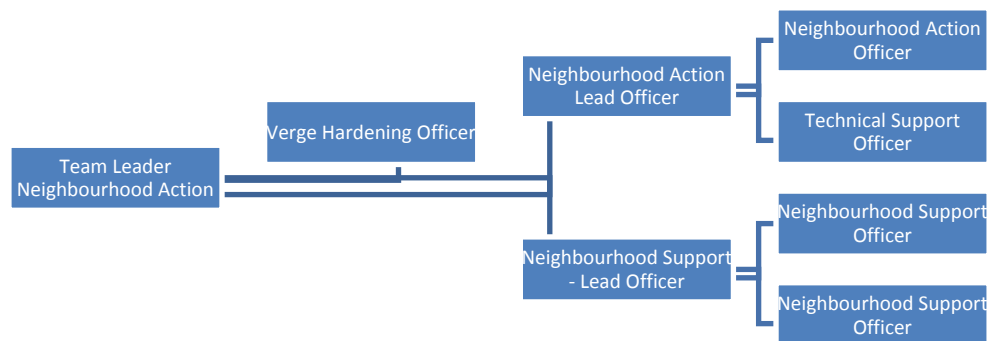
1.1 At this time there are 10 wards and 4 'sections' of wards involved in Neighbourhood Action Groups with differing levels of support from the Neighbourhood Action Team and differing levels of resident involvement. The wards covered are Grovehill / Woodhall Farm, Highfield, Adeyfield East / Adeyfield West, Chaulden / Warners End, Gadebridge, Bennetts End, Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, Watling and the sections of wards include Piccotts End, Box Lane, Felden and Bourne End.

1.2 All of the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG's) are chaired by at least one of their Ward Councillors and in addition to this have regular support at Neighbourhood Action Steering Group meetings from County Councillors.

1.3 In addition to the Neighbourhood Action areas this team deals with Community Cohesion, Youth Democracy and a range of large projects including Play Area improvements, Verge Hardening and the Tour of Britain as well as one off events.

1.4 The Neighbourhood Action Team consists of: - Team Leader –Neighbourhood Action; 2 Neighbourhood Action Officers(one of these posts is a Lead Officer); one Technical Support Officer and a Verge Hardening Officer (a fixed term post).

1.5 In addition to the core Neighbourhood Action Team there is a small team of 3 Neighbourhood Support Officers (including one Lead Officer post) which are funded, except for 20% of one post, by the HRA and work to an SLA which is agreed with Housing. In the past this team have been involved in the clear landings implementation but these roles will be changing significantly as the Cleaning Service are taking over the management of the clear landings procedures.



2. Budget

2.1 The budget for 2014/2015 is £237,410 which does not include the cost of the salary for the project officer for Verge Hardening, or the costs of the capital works on verge hardening and play area improvements.

2.2 In addition to the above the budget for the HRA funded Neighbourhood Support Officers is £97,800.

2.3 Total budget is £335,210

3. The last 12 months

3.1 The recent Neighbourhood Action Annual Public meetings have seen a reduction in the attendance of residents at the meetings and the regular steering groups have also seen a reduction in attendance – see Appendix A.

3.2 This appears to be connected with increased satisfaction with their local areas as is reflected in the latest Neighbourhood Action Survey which ended 31st July 2014. See appendix B.

3.3 There is a high level of satisfaction in all of the areas with key issues of concern for residents relating to the condition of roads, parking and some environmental issues which reflect the priorities of the Neighbourhood Action Groups.

3.4 The local groups have not got the momentum or the attendance that they had previously but the 'Love Your Neighbourhood' approach that was used in Woodhall Farm has been extremely successful in engaging residents and been an ongoing project with the most recent event taking place on 27th August 2014. This followed the Food Festival at Easter with a number of organisations coming together to meet specific targeted needs of the community.

4. Pilot Project

4.1 It is proposed that a new approach to delivering Neighbourhood Action is piloted in the next 6 months and evaluated to assess its value for money and the impact on Neighbourhoods.

4.2 The proposal is for an evidence based pilot project, based on the Love your Neighbourhood model, that would be delivered and co-ordinated by The Neighbourhood Action Team by the end of the financial year – a provisional date is planned for February 2015 at half term.

4.3 We have a range of measures of where the Neighbourhood Action Groups and communities are at now with the recent public meeting attendance figures, the consultation results and the strong evidence gathered as part of the Evidence Based Decision making project. This information will allow us to tailor make projects that directly target Neighbourhoods and smaller lower super output areas specific needs.

4.4 Based on this we have selected Highfield as the pilot area as we know that we have strong evidence that requires support from not only Dacorum Borough Council, but a range of agencies, to address the specific needs of the community.

4.5 We will be working with the Policies and Partnerships Team and their partners on the delivery of the Get Set Go Dacorum in Highfield in regard to the health issues and benefits of exercise but in addition to this it is proposed that we target other areas of need such as community safety, environmental concerns, child poverty, NEETS (not in Education Employment or Training) domestic abuse, young and older peoples needs and other relevant specific deprivation indicators associated with the Ward.

4.6 The Neighbourhood Action Team will be co-ordinating a week of highly visible action in the Ward over the period of one week to include participation from a range of services and partners relevant in addressing Highfield's. The week would end with a community event where the action taken would be fed back to the community.

4.7 A full evaluation of all agencies involved would follow and allow us to measure against the evidence base and potentially calculate the financial benefits to services.

4.8 If the project is successful, this approach would allow all areas of need within the borough to receive a tailored service which is dependent on need and not be restricted to a ward level.

4.9 For example: -

- There is a small area, a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA), in Tring which has a level of child poverty of 22.2% which is above the national average of 20.6% and the Hertfordshire average of 13.5% – the population of a LSOA is approximately 1500. This level is three times that of the surrounding LSOA's in the same ward and knowing this will allow us to target the area with the relevant agencies and services. If we look at ward level the average is 11.9%.

4.10 A very specific, multi agency, income maximisation project in this small area targeted at the 1500 people who live there could maximise the impact and make a real difference. This method can be applied to target any identified need in any area.

5. Neighbourhood Support Officers – Environment and Street Champions

5.1 The change in the role of the Neighbourhood Support Officers provides the opportunity for a team to concentrate on the environmental issues that are one of the areas most identified by residents as of concern.

5.2 The proposal for this area is that these officers will be responsible for the existing Street Champions and for involving more residents in this scheme. They will arrange regular meetings and 'neighbourhood inspections' where the environment will be graded and issues addressed. There will be a formal Service Level Agreement with the Housing Service relating to Housing areas but the audits will be inclusive of all areas including other landlords.

5.3 As part of these audits, the Neighbourhood Support Officers will work with the Police Community Support Officers, the Fire Service and registered Housing Providers.

5.4 The inspections will be a regular occurrence and members will be invited to take part in the audits and the Street Champions meetings would replace the NAG steering group meetings.

5.5 The Neighbourhood Support Officers will continue to manage the Community Payback Scheme which delivers 3 days per week of varied work delivered by offenders subject to community orders.

6. Feedback

6.1 It is important that residents receive information about the issues they have raised and been involved in – this worked well in the Love Your Neighbourhood events in Woodhall Farm. See Appendix C

6.2 It is proposed that a full report of the project is given at next year's public meeting and all participating agencies and services are involved.

7. Cohesion and Youth Democracy

7.1 The work with the Youth Forum, Youth Action Entertainers, interfaith and Communities Together groups will continue.

8. Results

8.1 If the pilot is successful it is proposed that this model is used to address the specific needs of areas and that a priority list is brought to members for consideration.

8.2 In addition to ongoing environmental audits via the Street Champions and Neighbourhood Support, it is proposed that there would be 2, projects involving a week long event per year and up to 3 smaller targeted events according to need and in consultation with members.

2014 Public Meetings review

The Neighbourhood Action Public Meetings were held in the following Neighbourhood Action areas;

Adeyfield
 Bennetts End
 Bourne End, Felden and Box Lane
 Gadebridge, Warners End and Chaulden
 Grovehill, Woodhall Farm and Piccotts End
 Highfield
 Town Centre

The table below shows a comparison to last year's attendance

NA Area	Adeyfield	Bennetts End	Bourne End, Felden & Box Lane	Gadebridge, Warners End & Chaulden	Grovehill, Woodhall Farm & Piccotts End	Highfield	Town Centre	Total
Attendance of Residents								
2013	42	15	42	47	29	25	26	226
2014	24	12	17	42	26	19	14	154
Staff, stall holders, Fire, Police and Councillors attending								
2013	21	14	12	20	22	13	22	124
2014	16	18	11	13	13	14	17	102
Total number of people at public meetings								
2013	63	29	54	67	51	38	48	350
2014	40	30	28	55	39	33	31	256

The update from both Councillors and police went down well and some questions were asked and answered there and then.

There was a great interest from residents in the different stalls that attended and the break half way through seemed to work really well as residents had the chance to speak to stall holders, Councillors and staff.

At the end of each public meeting there was a Question & Answer session.

The questions most asked were based around;

- Parking
- Roads and pavement repairs
- Why are Arriva cutting some bus routes
- Grass cutting
- Overgrown trees

In general both residents and Councillors seemed to enjoy the evening.

Appendix B – Neighbourhood Action Consultation Report (44 Pages)



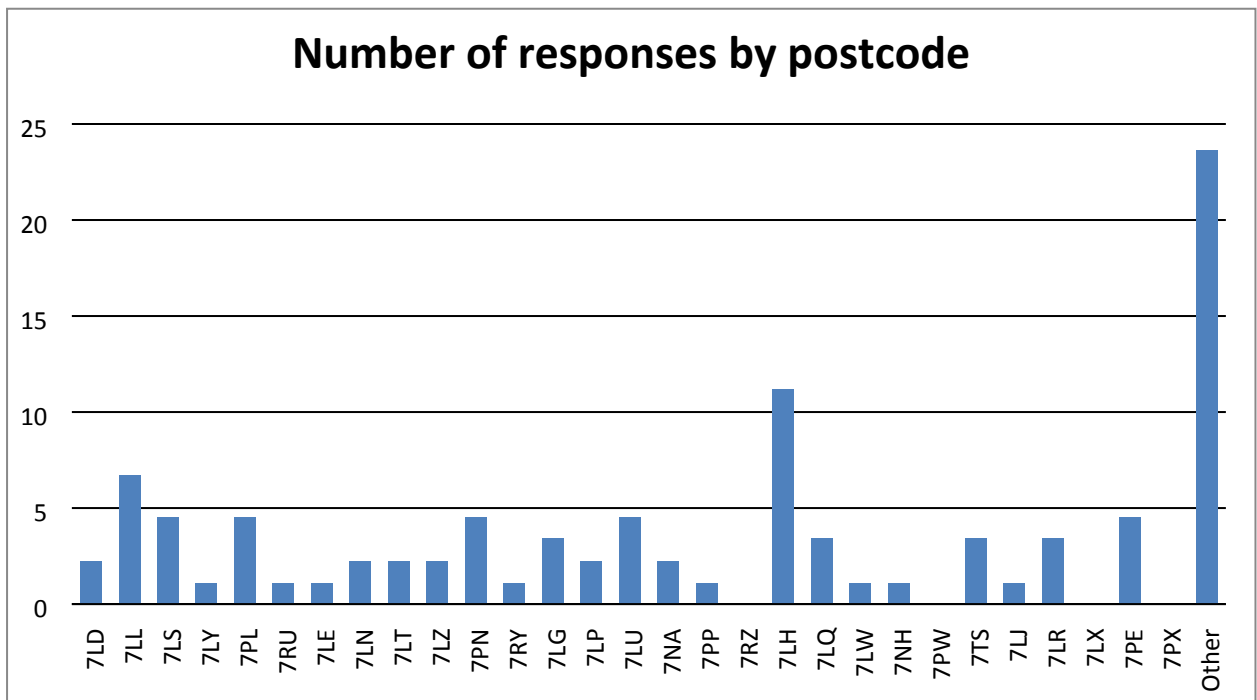
Love Your Neighbourhood
Woodhall Farm 2013
Results and summary
of our resident survey



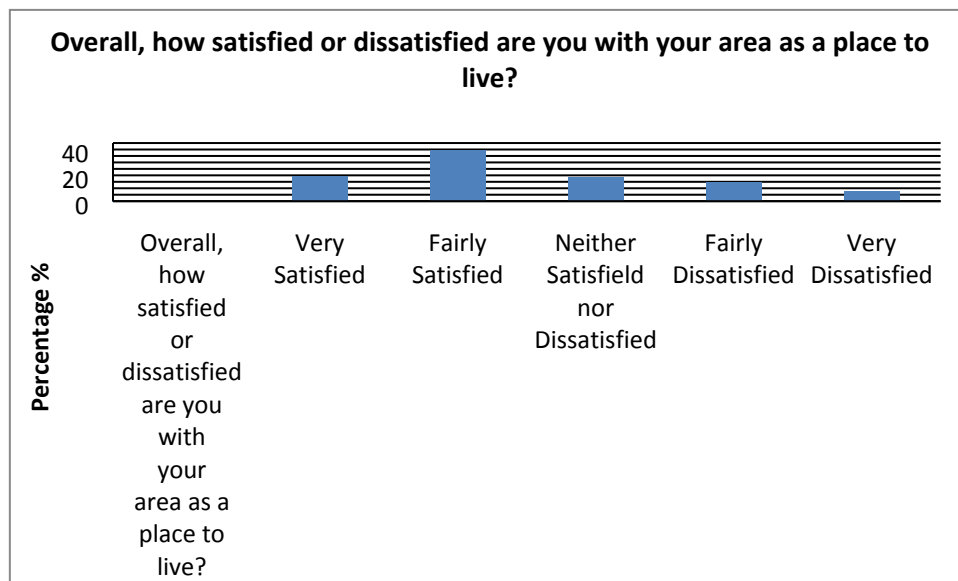
89 surveys were completed between 25 June 2013 and 25 July 2013. 32 completed on line and 57 paper versions.

The results from this consultation will be used to inform different departments within the Council and external agencies of the views of residents in Woodhall Farm East.

Q1.



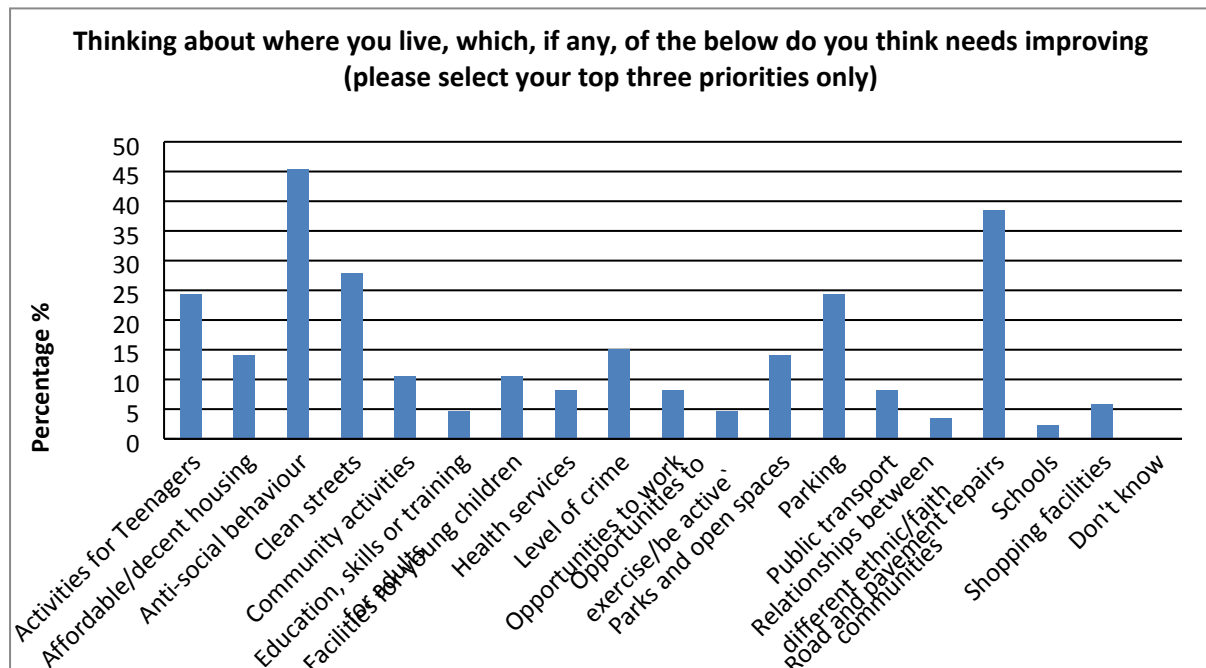
Q2.



The majority 59% are very (20%), or fairly (39%) satisfied with the area. 18% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 23% are fairly (15%) or very (8%) dissatisfied.

Q.3

Thinking about where you live which, if any, of the below do you think needs improving?



Q.4

Please tell us why you consider your top 3 priorities from Q.3 need improving. Please write the name of each priority in the box with your explanation.

Priority 1 – Anti-social behaviour

- Loud music/noisy/shouting
- Neighbours
- Taking and dealing drugs
- Graffiti
- Vandalism
- Youths hanging around at day and night
- Car break ins and burglary

Priority 2 – Roads and Pavements

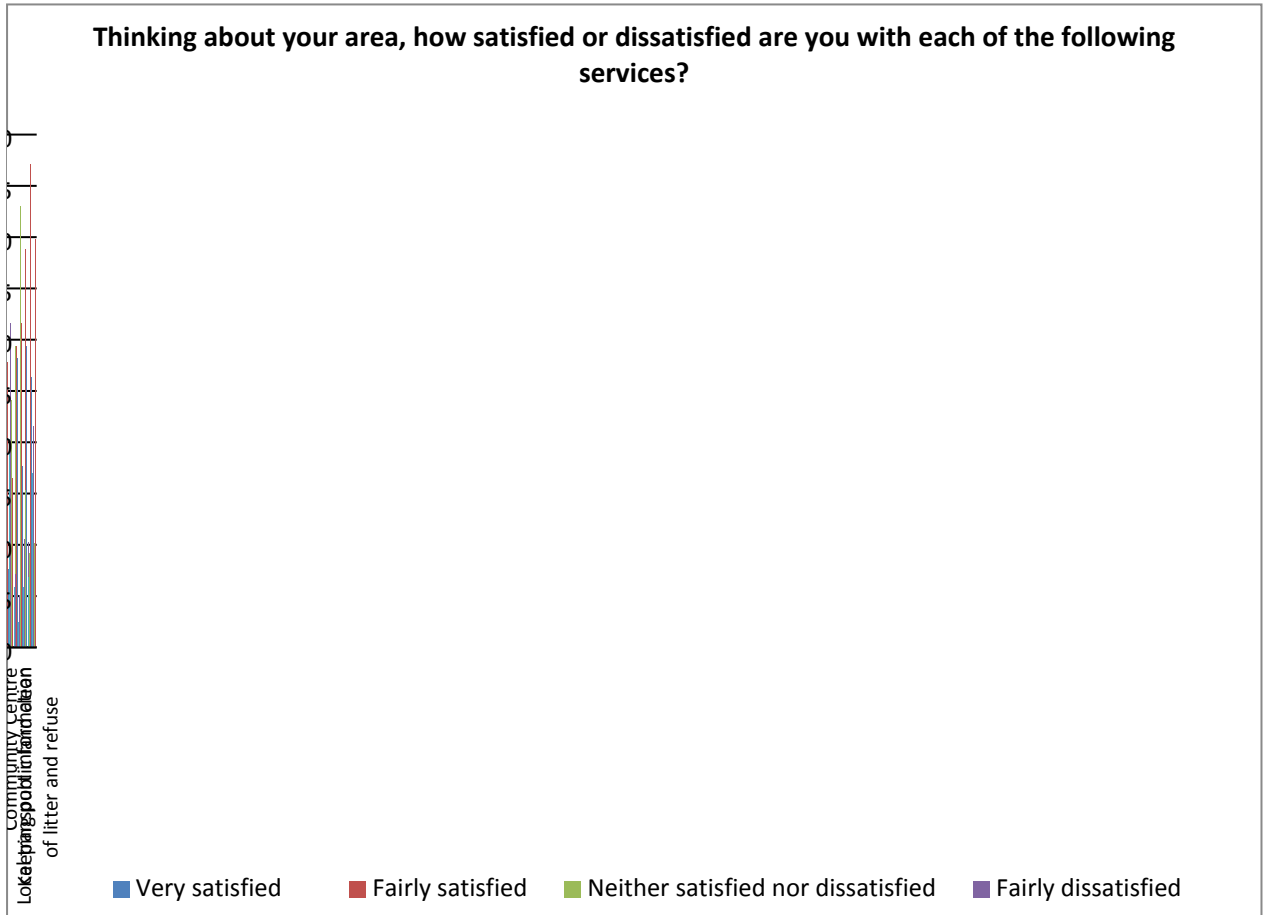
- Pavements uneven
- Take bumps out of Shenley Road and replace with speed cameras
- Holes in road

Priority 3 – Clean Streets

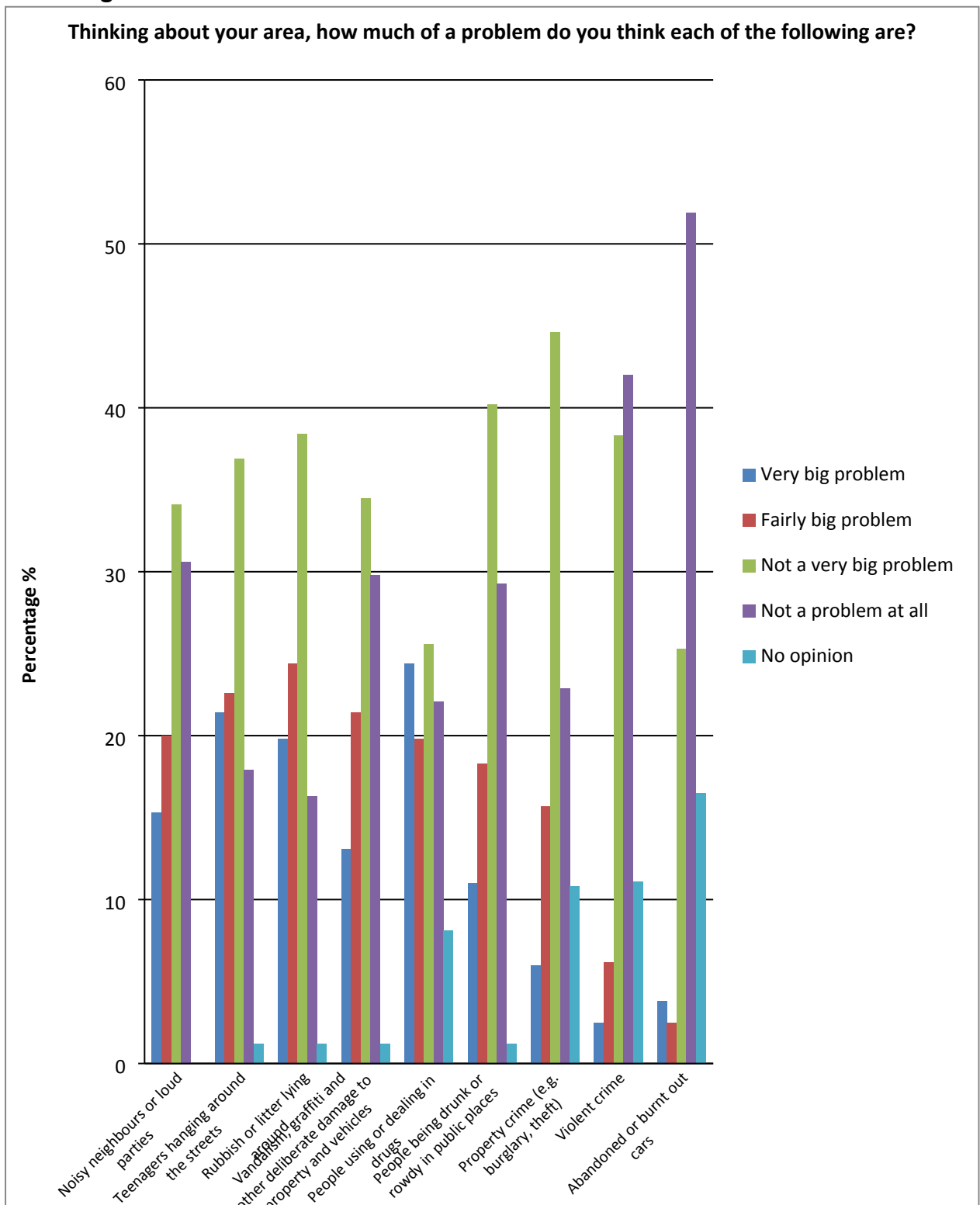
- More bins needed
- Dog fouling
- Rubbish everywhere
- Communal bins need re-gating
- Gutter full of grass and rubbish
- Dog poo everywhere

Q.5

Thinking about your area, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following services?



Q.6 Thinking about your area, how much of a problem do you think each of the following are?



Q.7

Please tell us what you like about your area:

Some of the responses;

- **Family run shop**
- **Close to countryside**
- **Quiet**
- **Love the park**
- **Convenient for the M1**
- **Shopping centre**
- **Schools, doctors nearby**
- **Good transport links**
- **Friendly**
- **Good neighbours**

Q.8

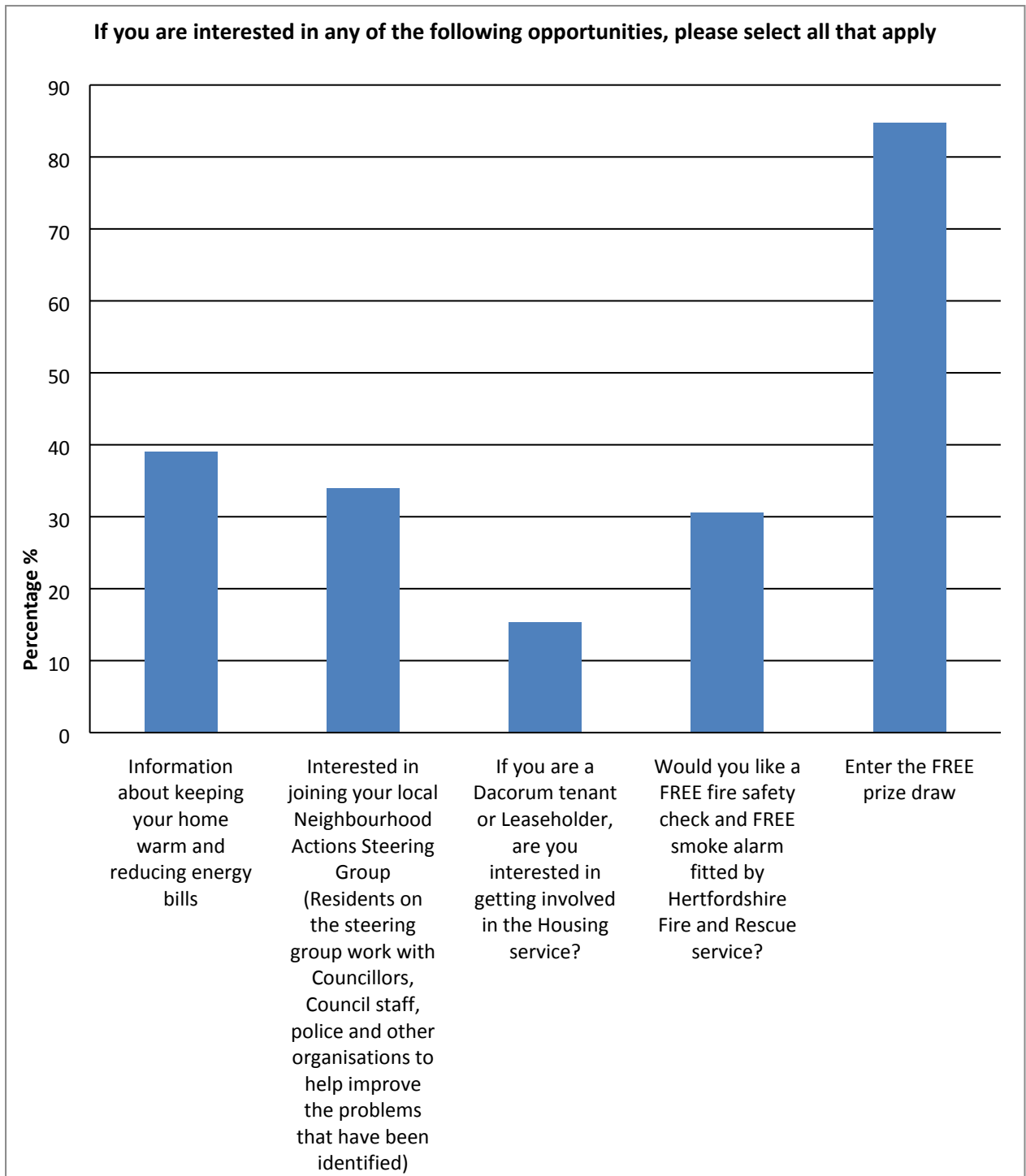
**Is there anything else you would like to tell us about living in your area?
(Please note this question is intended to help us understand the needs of residents in the area. We will not be able to respond to you individually)**

Some of the responses;

- **A pub would be nice or community centre club**
- **More information on how the community centre is used**
- **Don't like the area at all**
- **No café**
- **Park needs more things for younger children**
- **No recycling facilities**
- **More parking needed**
- **Street light back on at night**
- **More activities for youth**
- **Disused concrete area between Cleves and Aragon could be used for washing lines**
- **Generally a nice place to live**
- **More dog poo bins**

Q.9

If you are interested in any of the following opportunities, please select all that apply



Summary

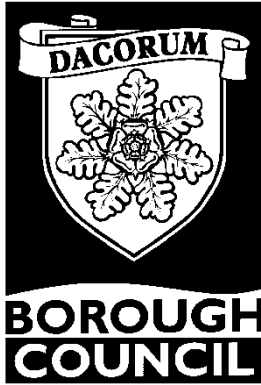
Thank you for completing the consultation, it really does help us understand what you do and do not like about the area in which you live.

Please see table below to see how we have started to address your concerns;

You said	We did..
There is lots of anti-social behaviour in the area	A meeting was held between Kim Ashworth our anti-social behaviour officer, local police, councillors, school head teacher and housing association representative on 2 December. We also delivered letters to 857 properties in December and early January inviting residents to attend any one of two, one hour long "Drop In" sessions which were held on 10 th January at Brockwood School at 9am and 3pm. Various issues were raised and these have now been dealt with. Police stats show that ASB is down by 34.5% in the Woodhall Ward in comparison to the same time last year.
Streets are full of litter	Arranged a community litter pick for March through the Neighbourhood Action Group
The waste area between Cleves Road and Aragon Close – can we have this made into a drying area?	Our Housing Asset team will look at this request as part of their Estate Improvement project.
You said...	Did you know...
You need more dog poo bins	..you can now dispose of dog poo in your household bin and normal public bins?
Lots of graffiti around the estate	.. you can report graffiti on 01442 228000 and ask for Clean, Safe and Green? For occurrences that are our responsibility, we endeavour to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear racist/offensive graffiti within one working day (this is dependent on whether the Police require it for evidence). • Clear all non-racist/offensive graffiti within seven working days.
You need more recycling bins	..if you think your area will benefit from recycling bins please email cleansafegreen@dacorum.gov.uk or telephone 01442 228000 and ask for Waste Services

This is not just a one off! We fully intend to work with the Neighbourhood Action Group throughout the year to work with residents to improve the area and make it a nicer place to live.

*If you would like to join or find out more information about the Neighbourhood Action Group please email neighbourhood.action@dacorum.gov.uk.



AGENDA ITEM: 11

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10 September 2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Vulnerable Persons Strategy Developing a strategic approach to identifying and supporting vulnerable households
Contact:	Cllr Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Andy Vincent – Group Manager, Tenants and Leaseholders Author/Responsible Officer
Purpose of report:	1. The purpose of this report is to introduce a draft of the Vulnerable Persons Strategy developed by the Housing Service.
Recommendations	That Committee Members support:- 1. The objectives contained within the strategy 2. The approach within the strategy designed to identify potentially vulnerable people utilising a series of triggers 3. The action plan within the strategy designed to continue to improve the quality of service delivered by Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service.
Corporate objectives:	Building Community Capacity

<p>Implications:</p> <p>'Value For Money Implications'</p>	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Establishment of a team to support vulnerable tenants will have cost implications for the Housing Service. Including on-costs annual costs are approximately £100,000</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>It is estimated that for each eviction averted £8,100 of costs to the landlord are saved (source Shelter).</p> <p>Providing support to vulnerable tenants can reduce other 'management costs' associated with rent collection, anti-social behaviour, repairs and maintenance and the annual gas servicing visit.</p>
<p>Risk Implications</p>	<p>A Risk Assessment will be completed following the consultation on the content of the strategy to enable comments from the consultation exercise to be built into the final documents</p>
<p>Equalities Implications</p>	<p>Equality Impact Assessment carried out July 2014</p>
<p>Health And Safety Implications</p>	<p>Lone working arrangements address Health and Safety implications</p>
<p>Consultees:</p>	<p>Cllr Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director of Housing</p> <p>Tenant and Leaseholder Committee</p> <p>Housing Management Sub-Committee</p> <p>Turning Point/Crime Reduction Initiative</p> <p>POWhER</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services and Children's Schools and Families Teams</p> <p>Citizens Advice Bureau – Dacorum</p>
<p>Background papers:</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy</p> <p>Older Persons Strategy</p> <p>The Future of Sheltered Housing Project</p>
<p>Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it</i></p>	<p>The development of a Vulnerable Persons Strategy is designed to strengthen the Housing Service's provision for vulnerable people.</p> <p>The approach is designed to be proactive by utilising existing data sources to target potentially vulnerable people ensuring</p>

<i>to be considered in the right context).</i>	that they get the support they need to sustain their tenancy and effectively engage within their community. This strategy is designed to work alongside other strategic documents designed to support the most tenants/applicants who use Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<u>Tenancy Sustainment</u> This is where (often with support) tenants are effectively maintaining their tenancy without breaching its terms. For example by falling into rent arrears or by committing anti-social behaviour.

1.0 Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to introduce a draft Vulnerable Persons Strategy developed by the Housing Service.

2.0 Background

The Vulnerable Persons Strategy has been developed in recognition that vulnerable people may require additional services or services delivered in a different way to ensure they are able to access them.

An example of this might be older people who have joined the Council's Housing Register. Some older people have been on the Housing Register for some considerable time, with high levels of housing need (high points levels) without bidding for properties through the Moving with Dacorum scheme.

This may imply that they need help to access the scheme and/or to bid for suitable alternative accommodation. It may also be the case that people in these circumstances are actively choosing not to bid and are waiting for specific accommodation to be advertised.

The Housing Service has developed a number of strategies recently that have strengthened the support that vulnerable people receive from specific services – examples of these include an Older Persons Strategy, a Financial Inclusion Strategy and a Homelessness Strategy.

The intention of the Vulnerable Persons Strategy is not to duplicate the content of these strategies but to ensure that vulnerable people receive services in the most appropriate way across the Housing Service. The strategy also seeks to highlight that a proactive approach will be developed to identify vulnerable people, ensuring that they receive the appropriate support or services delivered in a manner which is tailored to their needs. This may be as simple as ensuring that if tenants have identified that they require documentation in large print that this is provided to them consistently.

2.1 Developing the strategy

In developing the first draft of the Vulnerable Persons Strategy for the Housing Service we sought to work with the representatives from the following organisations:-

- Turning Point/POWhER
- Hertfordshire County Council – Adult Care and Children’s Services

Tenants were also involved at the launch meeting

A project group of members from across the Housing Service were involved in compiling the strategy and in establishing the approach utilised to identify potentially vulnerable people utilising a series of triggers.

The key objectives of the strategy were presented to the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee in March 2014. An outline of the consultation arrangements with the wider tenant population and other stakeholders was also discussed with the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee at the March meeting.

3.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that members of the Housing Senior Management Team support:-

- The objectives contained within the strategy
 - o Objective 1 - To provide a responsive service for people who are homeless or in housing need, which operates within the legislative framework, while protecting and reaching out to those who may be least able to protect themselves.
 - o Objective 2 - To provide a joined-up welfare and tenancy sustainment package, triggered by assessment either at the point of a homeless application or commencement of a new tenancy, to prevent vulnerable people losing a tenancy in the first year.
 - o Objective 3 - To build officer confidence in responding to existing tenants and leaseholders who may be vulnerable, to increase identification and reporting, and to provide a joined-up, enhanced housing service in response to identified needs.
 - o Objective 4 - To develop housing related support services for older people that promote independent living and encourage planning about future housing options.
- The approach within the strategy designed to identifying potentially vulnerable people utilising a series of triggers
- The action plan within the strategy designed to continue to improve the quality of service delivered by Dacorum Borough Council’s Housing Service

It is also recommended that overall responsibility for the progress against the strategy remains within the Tenant and Leaseholder Group who will provide bi-annual updates to the Housing Senior Management Team on the implementation of the strategy.

4.0 Implications

4.1 Long term consequences

More effective identification and proactive support to vulnerable people will ensure that where appropriate housing services are being delivered to them through an identified member of staff.

The consequence of this is that effective relationships are established with our most vulnerable people and that services are delivered through one member of staff; potentially minimising the level of staff resources being utilised to provide service to some of our most vulnerable tenants.

4.2 Service delivery

Proactively seeking to provide support to our most vulnerable service users will enable them to benefit from a service tailored to their needs. This should work to improve service delivery for these users and work to enhance the over-all service.

4.3 Diversity and community impact

Minimising tenancy failure will have a beneficial impact on the community. The cost of tenancy failure is in the region of £8,100 (source Shelter).

Profiling of those using support services is essential to identify if a profile of service users emerges. This requirement has been built into the Job Description of the Team Leader.

4.4 Financial

Recruiting additional staff will have financial implications – although these costs will be mitigated if this, as anticipated, reduces the number of tenancy failures.

4.5 Value For Money

Work to identify and support vulnerable tenants should have value for money benefits for the housing service as a whole.

4.6 Legal

No legal implications

4.7 Human resources and employee interests

If additional staff are recruited to support this proposal then this will have human resources implications.

4.8 Risk - maintenance of reputation

Developing a structured and proactive approach to identifying and supporting vulnerable people will enhance the reputation of the housing service and ensure that the resources of the service are better targeted on those people who need it.



Vulnerable Persons' Strategy for Housing 2014 - 17

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- National context
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- Service review introduction
- Deprivation Corporate Working Group: Recommendations for Action
- Service gap analysis by the Vulnerable Persons' Strategy working group

5 The objectives

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Key objective 1 | To provide a responsive service for people who are homeless or in housing need, which operates within the legislative framework, while protecting and reaching out to those who may be least able to protect themselves. |
| Key objective 2 | To provide a joined-up welfare and tenancy sustainment package, triggered by assessment either at the point of a homeless application or commencement of a new tenancy, to prevent vulnerable people losing a tenancy in the first year. |
| Key objective 3 | To build officer confidence in responding to existing tenants and leaseholders who may be vulnerable, to increase identification and reporting, and to provide a joined-up, enhanced housing service in response to identified needs. |
| Key objective 4 | To develop housing related support services for older people that promote independent living and encourage planning about future housing options. |

1. Introduction to the strategy

1.1 The Council's corporate vision from 2010 - 2014 has been:

Working in partnership, to create a borough which enables the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper through the five main priorities: affordable housing; safe and clean environment; regeneration; Dacorum Delivers; and building community capacity.

1.2 The Council believes that strong and sustainable communities are inclusive of those who are vulnerable. It recognises that vulnerability may relate to complex and interacting needs. In its approaches to vulnerable people the Council will seek to minimise stigma attached to vulnerability.

1.3 The Council will work with its partners in supporting residents to achieve independence, and recognises that a person's independence may be realised through the provision of assistance and support when, and how, it is needed.

1.4 Through its housing service the Council can support vulnerable people to learn skills to remain in their home and sustain a tenancy, to become more active members of their community, and to gain access to social care, health, doctors and community organisations, as well as education, training or employment.

1.5 The Council recognises the important business case for addressing the needs of vulnerable people. Many of the risks faced by those who are vulnerable get passed on to the Council through increases in serious housing need and homelessness, rent arrears, poorer maintenance of properties, and increased tenancy turnover. It is in the Council's interest to help its residents meet their housing needs, sustain their tenancies, and maintain their homes.

1.6 Dacorum Borough Council has an overall shared vision for its Housing Service:

We will provide good quality, affordable homes, help maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness – and be honest about improvements we still need to achieve.

1.7 The vision for this three-year Vulnerable Persons' Strategy for Housing reflects the above commitment to service improvement:

We will enhance the Council's housing service to improve the identification and assessment of, and responses to, the needs of vulnerable people.

1.8 This new Vulnerable Persons' Strategy forms part of the Housing Service framework, containing the strategies and policies that take forward housing provision and services within the borough.

- 1.9 To drive forward change and improvements that will support the Council's strategic objectives, this Vulnerable Persons' Strategy sets out four key objectives.

Our key objectives

The Council will:

- Provide a responsive service for people who are homeless or in housing need, which operates within the legislative framework, while protecting and reaching out to those who may be least able to protect themselves.
- Provide a joined-up welfare and tenancy sustainment package, triggered by assessment either at the point of a homeless application or commencement of a new tenancy, to prevent vulnerable people losing a tenancy in the first year.
- Improve the service delivered to existing tenants and leaseholders who may be vulnerable, by increasing identification and reporting, and by providing a joined-up, enhanced housing service in response to identified needs.
- Develop housing related support services for older people that promote independent living and encourage planning about future housing options.

2. Identifying vulnerable people

- 2.1 The Council has corporate definitions of certain terms, and for vulnerability it has stated:

There isn't a single definition of vulnerability, but it usually refers to people who cannot take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation. Different groups can become vulnerable in different circumstances.

- 2.2 There are both situational and personal aspects of vulnerability, which will interact differently for different individuals. Vulnerability can be thought of as occurring at the point when threats to an individual, from either the environment or from personal circumstances, become greater than the ability to cope with those threats. Understanding those threats, and how individuals can increase their resilience to threats, will help the Council to respond proactively to vulnerability across its housing service.
- 2.3 Currently the Council has a mix of formal and informal processes across its housing service for identifying and responding to vulnerability, including the corporate safeguarding procedures and domestic violence policy.
- 2.4 Beyond the Council's corporate procedures and policies, current identification of many cases of vulnerability relies on informal verbal or written reports of evident signs of vulnerability. This is likely to mean that problems are only being identified once situations are already at, or close to, a crisis. At the point of crisis, the needs of the individual will often outstrip resources available to respond effectively.

- 2.5 The Council does not currently have a rigorous approach to identifying signs that may indicate possible vulnerability, and which could be used to trigger further assessment of needs and help the Council to act pro-actively.
- 2.6 One of the key roles of this strategy will be to set out within its objectives the implementation of a number of triggers to identify possible vulnerability. The intention is to develop a framework of triggers using indicators that can be taken directly from the Council's existing systems, and then later made more sophisticated with system advances. If an individual or household hits an indicator it will not be assumed that there is vulnerability, but rather that further assessment should be carried out to identify whether there are any vulnerabilities and associated risks.

3. Background

3.1 National context

The Government's Housing Strategy, *Laying the foundations: a housing strategy for England* (November 2011) made a commitment to helping vulnerable people, specifically in relation to the provision of social housing:

Social housing should provide support for those who need it, when they need it, and should help vulnerable people to live independently. And opportunities for wealth must be open to all, with housing choices helping rather than hindering people's ability to build assets and find employment.

In times of economic hardship it is more important than ever that social housing helps the vulnerable in society.

This commitment is made at a time when reductions in central and local government spending have resulted in cuts to some services, including those which may have previously supported vulnerable people. This has increased the pressure on local housing authorities to be innovative and proactive in finding ways to enhance their services to better support those who are vulnerable.

Rising housing need, occurring nationally, has been reflected in local increases in people approaching the Council as homeless, applying to the Council's housing register, and requiring additional support from the Council as a landlord to make rent payments and maintain their tenancy. These trends have been detailed in the Council's recent Housing Strategy 2013-2018, Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018, Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2014-2020, Housing Revenue Account business plan, Financial Inclusion Strategy 2012-2015 and Annual Service Plans.

3.2 Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service

The Council's housing service is made up of three service areas:

- Strategic Housing
- Tenants and Leaseholders
- Property and Place

Through the provision of these services areas the Council takes on a number of roles in the lives of many local residents:

- Assessments of housing need, including homelessness
- Provider of temporary accommodation
- Provider of deposit guarantees for private rented accommodation

- Allocations into social housing
- Assessments of need for homeless people and tenants and provider of targeted welfare and support
- Provider of housing related support for older people
- Rent collection
- Tenancy management, including anti-social behaviour
- Estates management
- Property repairs and improvement

The Council's supported housing service has long provided a dedicated support service to older people. This service has received grant-funding from the Supporting People fund. Although this fund has reduced, and is set to reduce further, the Council recognises the key role that this level of support, related to a person's housing, can play in achieving successful tenancies and communities.

The Council has also long provided a welfare and support service to homeless households to help these households manage while in temporary accommodation, and then transition successfully into settled accommodation.

In 2013 the Council's tenant and leaseholder service recruited two Financial Inclusion Officers dedicated to supporting tenants who experience difficulties in maintaining their home due to financial difficulties. These additional resources have been identified within the Housing Service's Financial Inclusion Strategy and have proved very successful in minimising tenancy failure and addressing financial exclusion. It is recognised that addressing exclusion purely from a financial perspective does not always address tenant's needs and therefore a more holistic approach to exclusion/vulnerability is required.

3.3 Existing Strategies

Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Service has developed a series of strategies which seek to address the needs of some vulnerable groups or groups who may become vulnerable. These include:

- Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2014 - 2020
- Homeless Strategy
- Financial Inclusion Strategy

These strategies recognise the increasing demand for services designed to support vulnerable people and identify that existing services need to be both enhanced and reshaped in order to ensure outcomes for vulnerable people are effective.

4. **Service Review**

4.1 Service review introduction

The purpose of undertaking a service review has been to understand the current service, and how to achieve the change necessary in the delivery of Housing Services to ensure that vulnerable people can access our services effectively. The sources used in this review were:

- Deprivation Corporate Working Group: Recommendations for Action 2014.
- Service gap analysis report by the Vulnerable Persons' Strategy working group using:

- a 'kick start' strategy launch event,
- journey mapping across all operational housing services.

The four key objectives (see Section 4 “The Objectives”) set the direction in which this strategy needs to drive the service forward.

4.2 Deprivation Corporate Working Group: Recommendations for Action

A number of the recommendations for action from the deprivation corporate working group have implications for the housing service and cross-over with this strategy. This strategy has incorporated these recommendations into its strategic objectives, in order to provide the framework and long-term planning for their implementation by the housing service.

Recommendations for action from this work, and which have a bearing on the housing service, are stated below. The objectives in this strategy that these actions relate to are identified by each.

To take advantage of the re-launch of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to shape it as a coordinating mechanism for services which need to be involved around the child and the needs of the wider family.	Key objectives 1, 2 and 3
To take advantage of the Customer Service Unit's <i>Single View of the Customer</i> project.	Key objectives 1 and 3
To take forward Strategic Housing's Joint Front Door initiative by looking for opportunities to link with other services such as HCC's LINK Family Services.	Key objective 1
To include signposts to learning and skills support when advice and services are delivered to families.	Key objectives 1, 2 and 3
To improve engagement with housing associations in Dacorum as significant numbers of people in some areas where poverty is high live in housing association rather than council homes.	Key objective 2
To take advantage of volunteer support programmes for families, such as HomeFirst, and other information services.	Key objectives 2 and 3
Engage with JobCentre Plus through the Universal Credit implementation agenda.	Key objectives 2 and 3
Use the Health and wellbeing Corporate Working Group to identify relevant areas based on evidence and on priorities identified through partnership work with health and social care agencies.	Key objectives 2, 3 and 4
Use existing engagement routes and community expertise, including linking with Community Action Dacorum's current training which is aimed at helping particular Black and Minority Ethnic groups access services, and communicating with the Pakistani community via Muskaan, Global Pindd and Hemel Mosque.	Key objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4
Use existing evidence on disability groups (gained through Equality and Diversity led focus groups) and engage with	Key objectives 1 and 3

Hertfordshire County Council Carers' support networks and Young Carers network, to identify needs of carers.	
Review the Council's own employment practices to see if we can do more to support disabled people into employment, e.g. flexible work opportunities, increasing awareness of the Access to Work scheme across the Council, disability awareness training for staff, and advertising vacancies via disability groups to invite applications from them.	Key objective 2 and 3

4.3 Service gap analysis by the Vulnerable Persons' Strategy working group

This service gap analysis used a 'kick start' strategy launch event, journey mapping by each of the housing operational teams to identify both opportunities for enhancing the service to meet the needs of vulnerable people and any 'holes in the net'.

This strategy will provide the framework to make long-term plans in-line with strategic objectives that respond to the potential opportunities and risks.

Risks:

- Reductions in services provided by partners (for example, social services and mental health organisations) due to constraining resources and budgets, leaving gaps in services.
- Housing Allocations Policy change which means that every new tenant receiving an introductory tenancy either has had a housing need or has been homeless.
- Lack of procedural clarity for officers when responding to certain situations relating to vulnerable people (including situations where previously officers may have relied on a partner agency and now this service has been reduced).
- Unclear understanding of remit of role in relation to 'vulnerable' people.
- Lack of procedural clarity when more than one officer is involved in a situation with a vulnerable person.
- Unclear about how 'complex needs' should be met.
- Concerns about officer capacity if large numbers of people meet a 'vulnerable person' definition.

What's already working:

- Officers felt that the six week tenancy visit works because: it has to happen; there is a checklist; it is monitored; there is a clear purpose.
- Officers stated high levels of confidence in the anti-social behaviour policy due to its detail and clear processes and requirements of officers, including signposting and safeguarding.
- Effective use of an IT system to monitor support plans for older people.
- A vulnerability checklist already used by Housing Advice and Options Officers in deciding whether a person is vulnerable according to the homelessness legislation.
- Access to tenancy sustainment training for prospective tenants.
- Repairs and maintenance officers report properties where they cannot carry out repairs due to the state of the property, which picks up potential vulnerability issues.
- Maintenance provider 'Concern' cards.

- The ‘Love Your Neighbourhood’ model and project-specific partnerships that have been developed with housing associations, which has been a successful engagement approach with hard-to-reach households.
- Homeless directory of services to support both officers and residents to identify the range of homeless and housing advice services available across the borough.
- Partnership with Environmental Health (for example, dog chipping and pet policy) to identify potentially vulnerable people in contact with these services.

Opportunities:

- Development of new procedures for situations involving vulnerable people.
- Clear internal and external referral routes.
- A process of visiting all properties where vulnerability indicators have been identified.
- The new maintenance contract and future work with the contractor to enable vulnerability concerns to be identified and reported.
- Partnership with Environmental Health who visit private sector properties to assess disrepair, to identify potentially vulnerable people in housing need in the private rented sector.
- Implementation of adapted properties through choice based lettings to make best use of existing adaptations and properties identified as adaptable, which will increase the number of people whose housing needs can be met who have a disability and associated vulnerabilities.
- Review of the Domestic Abuse Policy implemented in 2013 to make sure that this policy has been successful in protecting vulnerable people fleeing violence.

5. The objectives

KEY OBJECTIVE 1

To provide a responsive service for people who are homeless or in housing need, which operates within the legislative framework, while protecting and reaching out to those who may be least able to protect themselves.

To meet Key Objective 1 this strategy commits to:

1) Being proactive in identifying and understanding the housing needs of vulnerable people

The Council’s housing advice and options service comes into contact with people who may be experiencing housing need for a great variety of reasons, and with a variety of different needs. Homelessness is known to have a complex interaction with vulnerability, and there no straightforward cause-and-effect pathway.

Although homelessness can happen to any individual or household, regardless of status or wealth, cases presenting to the Council are often from lower income households, and long-term deprivation is known to be another interacting factor with both homelessness and vulnerability.

The Council’s officers interview and contact many individuals and households over a day, and the signs of vulnerability can be subtle and not immediately obvious. The

Council needs to make sure that officers have sufficient time to spend on cases, as well as the necessary training, to identify vulnerabilities that may be present.

Evictions from the private rented sector have been increasing, and delays or gaps in benefit claims can be a trigger for eviction. With universal credit due to be implemented over the next few years councils are having to think about how they act to prepare residents to sustain tenancies once claims are all processed online and payments become monthly.

To achieve Key Objective 1, the Council will:

- Target housing advice surgeries to areas of known deprivation;
- Provide officers with training in identification and reporting;
- Review the adaptations service provided to those who have a physical disability or limited mobility;
- Include and recognise housing as playing a key role in the corporate digital inclusion project; and
- Engage with JobCentre Plus through the Universal Credit implementation agenda.

2) Reviewing the accessibility of the housing advice service and temporary accommodation, acting on any identified vulnerable groups who may be 'under the radar'

The Council has seen recent increases in the numbers of individuals accessing its housing advice, homelessness, and temporary accommodation services. However, little is understood currently about the make-up of groups accessing these services, and whether there are any barriers that may prevent some groups seeking support from the Council.

To achieve Key Objective 1, the Council will:

- Analyse the customer profile of the housing register against the local population;
- Review the profile and make-up of households in temporary accommodation, and those households who seek a homeless application but choose not to stay in Council-provided temporary accommodation.

This objective also has a specific link to one of the recommended actions from the corporate deprivation working group:

- Use existing engagement routes and community expertise, including linking with Community Action Dacorum's current training which is aimed at helping particular Black and Minority Ethnic groups access services, and communicating with the Pakistani community via Muskaan, Global Pindd and Hemel Mosque.

3) Improving the accessibility of the choice based lettings system for vulnerable adults

The Council operates an online choice based lettings system, which is used for the majority of allocations to home-seekers and transferring tenants. This system requires an applicant to have an active online housing register application, and then

to view property-adverts. An applicant has to register their interest in suitable properties by placing up to three 'bids' for properties each week.

An up-to-date equality impact assessment was carried out prior to the introduction of a new Housing Allocations Policy in November 2013.

This equality impact assessment identified that:

The service has not been formally assessed for non-take-up, however it is considered likely that individuals with lower levels of English and from ethnic and cultural minority groups may well be underrepresented on the housing register.

To achieve Key Objective 1, the Council will:

- Carry out a full review of the accessibility of the online choice based lettings format and various methods for bidding on properties (text message, phone call, online etc.);
- Follow up applications on the housing register that have high points totals, but where the applicant has not been placing bids; and
- Develop Housing Advice Officers' knowledge and understanding of available signposting routes to get support for people to assist them in accessing the system.

This objective also has a specific link to one of the recommended actions from the corporate deprivation working group:

- Use existing evidence on disability groups (gained through Equality and Diversity led focus groups) and engage with Hertfordshire County Council Carers' support networks and Young Carers network, to identify needs of carers.

4) Being innovative in improving the Council's first responses to people in housing need who may be vulnerable

With increasing numbers of individuals and households presenting to the Council in housing need, the Council's officers have come under pressure to manage their caseloads while responding to crisis events that may occur. This situation can sometimes lead to gaps in the quality of the Council's first response to people, including those who may be in desperate need.

At a time of increasing workloads it is often easy to invest less time in the development and implementation of service improvements and new ways of working. The Council recognises that the pace of change in legislation and government guidance as well as significant increases in demand, mean that it is essential to always maintain a focus on improving how services are delivered and structured.

To achieve Key Objective 1, the Council will:

- Review the effectiveness of the Domestic Abuse Policy implemented in 2013; and
- Assess its frontline services to review whether officers take a sensitive and victim-orientated approach when responding to people approaching the Council fleeing any form of violence or harassment, or as victims of crime; and

- Maintain an up-to-date directory of local homelessness and support services.

This objective also has specific links to two of the recommended actions from the corporate deprivation working group:

- To take forward Strategic Housing's Joint Front Door initiative by looking for opportunities to link with other services such as HCC's LINK Family Services; and
- Take advantage of the Customer Service Unit's *Single View of the Customer* project.

Action plan

Key objective	Action	Team Resources	Financial Resources	Timeframes	Officer responsible
KO1	Review surgery running at the Children's Centre in Adeyfield and plan future programme of housing advice surgeries in areas of known deprivation.	Strategic Housing People team			Natasha Brathwaite
KO1	Adaptations service review	Strategic Housing People and Property teams, with Property and Place			Isabel Connolly
KO1	Customer profiling and follow-up to equality impact assessment of housing register	Strategic Housing Property team			Isabel Connolly
KO1	Promote Community Action Dacorum's current training aimed at helping particular Black and Minority Ethnic groups access services	Communications, tenant participation team			Carolyn Leech
KO1	Map existing engagement routes and community expertise relating to Black and Minority Ethnic groups	Tenant participation team			Carolyn Leech
KO1	Implement monthly follow up of applications on the housing register that have high points totals but are not placing bids	Strategic Housing People team			Natasha Brathwaite

KO1	Use team meetings to raise awareness of the needs of carers and appoint and in-house champion to engage with Hertfordshire County Council Carers' support networks	Strategic Housing People team			Natasha Brathwaite
KO1	Officer training on signposting and referring	Strategic Housing People team			Natasha Brathwaite
KO1	Take part in review of domestic abuse policy	All teams across the housing service			Natasha Brathwaite

KEY OBJECTIVE 2

To provide a joined-up welfare and tenancy sustainment package, triggered by assessment either at the point of a homeless application or commencement of a new tenancy, to prevent vulnerable people losing a tenancy in the first year.

To meet Key Objective 2 this strategy commits to:

1) Developing an assessment process across the service that feeds into person-focused support for those who are vulnerable

Balancing the needs of the most vulnerable groups with improving outcomes for the wider resident population is a challenge.

Many people may struggle to maintain a tenancy in the first year after signing-up to their new home. This can be for many different reasons, and different households will require very different levels of support to make sure the first year of a tenancy is successful.

Some households may have come through the homelessness route and have one or more vulnerabilities, which could include factors that contributed to the homeless situation, and which may have then been worsened by the experience of being homeless. Some people may have come from a settled home, but lead chaotic lives, with complex patterns of vulnerability. Others may simply be unprepared and therefore not pay attention to important aspects of maintaining a tenancy. Others may have physical vulnerabilities caused by disability or limited mobility.

The key for the Council will be to implement an assessment process at the point of a homeless application, and at the point of a new tenancy commencing, which can be

used to identify the appropriate level of support necessary, based a person-focused approach.

To achieve Key Objective 2, the Council will:

- Provide officers with training on carrying out initial assessment visits;
- Set out clear handover processes between officers and teams, particularly when homeless applicants receive a new tenancy;
- Review and rationalise officer and team involvement in different case types, to make sure that officer time is being used effectively; and
- Offer one point of contact for the most vulnerable.

2) Monitoring the quality and effectiveness of support provided or procured by the Council

Welfare and support services are often provided in residents' own homes and for much of the time support workers are left to manage their caseloads, appointments and paperwork themselves, outside of the main office environment. In some cases this can make it hard to track the consistency, quality and type of support being delivered.

To achieve Key Objective 2, the Council will:

- Fully implement an online system to hold the support plans for homeless applicants and other households identified as vulnerable at the start of an introductory tenancy, with an emphasis on effective data entry by officers and reporting mechanisms for managers;
- Set up job shadowing between officers as part of a peer-review approach to reviewing the consistency of delivery;
- Determine performance indicators for support planning that will drive improvements in service delivery;
- Develop consistent standards for support workers and complex case workers; and
- Developing written guidelines and codes of practice for support workers and complex case workers.

3) Preventing duplication of effort both internally and externally, and taking advantage of work, projects and initiatives already taking place

It has been recognised by the Council that awareness of all the different services and projects it carries out is not always shared across all its teams, and that this can lead to some duplication of effort, planning and delivery. In addition to this, local charities and voluntary groups may already be set up to provide support to certain groups, and it is in the Council's interest to maximise referrals to these services, so that it can appropriately target its own resources.

Officers working within housing may not be aware of projects, campaigns and initiatives relating to vulnerability, which are being carried by its customer service unit, housing benefit and council tax teams, and so on.

To achieve Key Objective 2, the Council will:

- Develop a comprehensive register of all its in-house expertise in welfare and support, as well as current support services and projects.

This objective also has specific links to two of the recommended actions from the corporate deprivation working group:

- To take advantage of volunteer support programmes for families, such as HomeFirst, and other information services.
- To improve engagement with housing associations in Dacorum as significant numbers of people in some areas where poverty is high live in housing association rather than council homes.

4) Being responsible in the use of the private sector in housing people who may be vulnerable

In November 2013 the Council brought in new powers to discharge its homelessness duty into the private rented sector. Previously, private rented allocations were only offered to cases being supported at the prevention stage, prior to homelessness. This has taken away the guarantee of a council or housing association property for a household with a homeless application that has received a positive decision. This change in policy was made in order to recognise that not all households experiencing homelessness necessary need a social home. However, this could mean that more vulnerable households are being placed into the private rented sector without the security of tenure they would have received in the social sector.

To achieve Key Objective 2, the Council will:

- Monitor officers' use of suitability checklists that should prevent unsuitable households being offered private sector accommodation;
- Provide welfare services, alongside tenancy support, for homeless applicants moving into the private rented sector; and
- Develop the relationship between the housing service and Environmental Health to assist with both the rapid identification of, and response to, poor conditions in the private rented sector.

Action plan

Key objective	Action	Team Resources	Financial Resources	Timeframes	Officer responsible
KO2	Officer training on carrying out initial assessment visits at the point that applicants/tenants come into the service	Strategic Housing Property team and the Complex Cases team			Isabel Connolly and Complex Case team leader
KO2	Embed handover of support between teams into service procedures	Strategic Housing Property team, Income Team, and the Complex Cases			Isabel Connolly

		team			
KO2	Carry out full implementation of the online system that holds support plans for homeless and other vulnerable people	Strategic Housing Property team and the Complex Cases team			Isabel Connolly and Complex Case team leader
KO2	Determine, implement and review performance indicators for support planning	Strategic Housing Property team and the Complex Cases team			Isabel Connolly and Complex Case team leader
KO2	Review the caseload allocation and management in the homeless welfare and support service	Strategic Housing Property team			Isabel Connolly
KO2	Develop the Housing Policy and Strategy Officer role to take forward strategic relationships the third sector and housing associations	Strategic Housing Property team			Isabel Connolly
KO2	Monitor use of checklists by officers to prevent unsuitable households being offered private sector accommodation	Strategic Housing People and Property teams			Natasha Brathwaite

KEY OBJECTIVE 3

Improve the service delivered to existing tenants and leaseholders who may be vulnerable, by increasing identification and reporting, and by providing a joined-up, enhanced housing service in response to identified needs.

To meet Key Objective 3 this strategy commits to:

1) Early identification of possible vulnerability through use of ‘triggers’

As discussed in Section 2 ‘Identifying vulnerability’, a key role of this strategy is to drive the formation of triggers within the Council’s systems, which will provide officers with reports identifying those households who may have one or more vulnerabilities.

Initial work as part of this strategy's development has indicated that this will necessarily be a complex process, requiring contributions from across the housing service of data sets that get collected on a regular basis. Data will need to be handled sensitively so that data protection rights are not breached through the act of 'flagging' someone within a system without informing them.

To achieve Key Objective 3, the Council will:

- Explore the possibilities provided by the Council's IT systems, and work to achieve cross-service census of key 'triggers' that will lead to a more detailed officer assessment of vulnerability (for example, '50 repairs calls within three months').
- Take a 'phase one' and 'phase two' approach. Phase two will need to involve planning ahead and informing future system developments, in order that reports become more sophisticated and able to provide more targeted information.

2) Building officer confidence to recognise situations that should result in action

Frontline officers come up against vulnerability as they deal with tenants and their families on a day-to-day basis. As well as the proactive identification of potential vulnerability through triggers, the Council also needs to make sure that its officers are as confident as they can be in identifying vulnerability and knowing how to respond.

In addition to the Council's officers, a number of the housing service's operations are carried out by contractors, particularly within the repairs and maintenance service. Contracted staff going into tenants' homes on behalf of the Council act as representatives of the Council, and it is important that these staff are equally as confident in identifying and reporting vulnerability.

Officers may witness signs of vulnerability, or experience concerns over a situation or condition of a person's home, and it is important that officers both report these signs or concerns, and know how to highlight cases requiring urgent action.

To achieve Key Objective 3, the Council will:

- Implement an 'in the field' assessment form for assessing vulnerability and determining that action is needed in any situation where an officer may feel that a person is vulnerable;
- Extend awareness and understanding of the 'Concern' cards given to contractors to report concerns; and
- Provide officers with training through both a core training schedule, and some specifically tailored courses for officers who come up against certain situations or clients more frequently.

3) Developing new procedures for situations involving vulnerable people where officers are expected to take action

Building officer confidence in reporting vulnerability needs to go hand-in-hand with increasing officer confidence that action can, and will, be taken if concerns are raised. If officers feel that nothing is likely to be done, or that they do not have the resources necessary to act, then they may be less likely to make a report.

In addition, poorly defined procedures around situations relating to vulnerability can result in officers spending extra time working out what to do in each case. Without any guidelines or information about possible services to access or available budgets, this work can be very time intensive, which exacerbates the already time intensive nature of working with vulnerable people.

To achieve Key Objective 3, the Council will:

- Identify commonly occurring situations and work with officers to develop detailed, clear and understood procedures;
- Set repairs and maintenance priorities for certain groups of vulnerable people;
- Work through targeted 'task and finish' groups for specific issues, particularly where a cross-service response is required within a procedure;
- Develop information sharing protocols with other agencies; and
- Provide training for officers on delivering difficult messages to vulnerable people.

4) Promoting an environment in which people feel able to raise concerns, complaints or grievances, and respond promptly to issues raised

It is absolutely essential that all officers and contractors feel that they are able to raise any nature of concern, complaint or grievance, about anything they have witnessed, and have their report taken seriously.

Officers witnessing events involving vulnerable people may need support to cope with the emotional stress, and the Council needs to promote a strong ethos of protecting and supporting its staff in situations that can be very distressing.

In addition, residents must feel that they are safe in making a confidential report to the Council, and that they will not receive any negative treatment after making a report.

To achieve Key Objective 3, the Council will:

- Provide practical support and guidance for staff via the Council's intranet;
- Provide a framework for front-line staff that will assist them to recognise and report any suspected abuse towards either children or vulnerable adults;
- Publicise the names of senior managers who can receive reports confidentially from officers or customers who may feel uncomfortable speaking directly to officers already involved in a case; and
- Periodically promote awareness and sources of support via the tenants and leaseholders newsletter

5) Developing the customer profiling information held by the Council to better understand the needs of its tenants and leaseholders

The more the Council understands its resident base, the more it can plan its services and meet the needs of its tenants and leaseholders. Customer profiling can help the Council to paint a picture of its residents and could identify certain groups with high or low needs, leading to improved targeting of services.

Customer profiling can only ever be as good as the data within the Council's systems. For this reason it is essential that the Council sets and maintains a commitment to keeping up-to-date and accurate data on its tenants and leaseholders.

To achieve Key Objective 3, the Council will:

- Maintain comprehensive profiling data on tenants and leaseholders;
- Analyse profiling data in order to make recommendations for how to tailor services to the individual needs of vulnerable people and identify trends across the resident base as a whole;
- Maintain links with statutory agencies and keep up-to-date with current guidelines on customer profiling; and
- Make links to the corporate deprivation project and evidence-based decision-making.

6) Genuinely seeking to engage vulnerable tenants and leaseholders both in decisions affecting them directly and more widely concerning the services they receive

Vulnerable tenant and leaseholder groups are often some of the least likely to be actively involved in consultation and participation activities. This may be because it is harder to attract vulnerable individuals to typical tenant involvement activities (for example, focus groups, tenant forums etc.), and written information may be harder for some vulnerable tenants to access.

Vulnerable individuals may need support to get involved, and may need to have activities specially tailored to meet their needs. The Council recognises the extra care and attention that needs to go into making sure there are opportunities available for vulnerable people to engage in consultation.

To achieve Key Objective 3, the Council will:

- Publish client group specific information in service literature and within housing schemes, e.g. Young Parents Service Guide, sheltered housing schemes notice boards, etc.;
- Ensure there are representatives on tenant groups and panels who have experienced, or are experiencing, vulnerability;
- Ensure tenants and leaseholders feel supported and protected by the service's procedures, by reviewing existing procedures alongside the development of new procedures;
- Incorporate into the internal audit process carried out with BSi, an assessment of how effective procedures are for reaching / supporting vulnerable people; and
- Get feedback on communication methods used by the Council and link into the corporate digital inclusion project.

Action plan

Key objective	Action	Team Resources	Financial Resources	Timeframes	Officer responsible
KO3	Identify key customer data 'triggers' and explore the potential within IT systems to produce these triggers	Property and Place and Tenants and Leaseholders			Simon Smith
KO3	Introduce an 'in the field' assessment form for assessing vulnerability and determining action	Tenants and Leaseholders			Andy Vincent
KO3	Agree cross-service core training schedule for housing staff	Tenants and Leaseholders			Andy Vincent
KO3	Set out and promote clear, robust reporting lines	Tenants and Leaseholders			Andy Vincent
KO3	Identify a number of 'task and finish' groups to develop procedures for specific issues	All housing services			Andy Vincent
KO3	Add to the internal auditing process, by introducing a requirement to assess how procedures meet the needs of vulnerable groups	Policy and Participation team			Carolyn Leech
KO3	Use BSi monitoring and auditing for any new procedures	Policy and Participation team			Carolyn Leech
KO3	Use procurement to gain commitment from contractors	Property and Place			Fiona Williamson
KO3	Review tenant and leaseholder engagement practices	Policy and Participation team			Carolyn Leech

KEY OBJECTIVE 4

To develop housing related support services for older people that promote independent living and encourage planning about future housing options.

To meet Key Objective 3 this strategy commits to:

1) Developing a community-based housing related support service to older people outside of the Council's sheltered schemes

The Council's older population is increasing, with more over-60s now living in general needs stock across the borough, as well as the Council's 31 sheltered schemes.

There is national recognition that low level preventative support services can help people stay independent in their homes for longer, and reduce the need for emergency hospital admissions. Support services can pick up potential problems and vulnerabilities prior to crisis and help to get the necessary health or social care services in place to manage the situation.

The Council is committed to moving away from an accommodation-based model of support services focused on sheltered schemes, and is moving towards a more flexible support model that can respond to the needs of older people who may be vulnerable, across the community.

To achieve Key Objective 4, the Council will:

- Review its support services in order to successfully plan the provision of flexible, floating support services;
- Maximise the use of an online system for creating support plans to provide effective support to older people in their own homes; and
- Carry out an equality impact assessment of older persons' services to make sure that the service is being accessed by all groups who need it among the older population living in council homes.

2) Making best use of sheltered schemes as central 'hubs' for support for older people

While the Council is moving towards making its support services more flexible in order to meet the needs of those who do not live within its sheltered schemes, the schemes still provide the Council with valuable community assets, as well as being homes for many older people in the borough.

The Council needs to maximise use of the communal areas and facilities offered by its schemes, and work with partners to extend the use of these facilities to provide a range of services. In addition, the Council needs to further promote the activities and services being offered, to the local communities that surround each scheme.

To achieve Key Objective 4, the Council will:

- Use schemes to hold awareness events to promote older persons' housing options;
- Develop an action plan to advertise activities and services taking place at sheltered schemes to the surrounding local communities; and
- Work with existing residents of sheltered schemes to make sure that residents are welcoming and supportive to members of the community using services based on site.

3) Ensuring that existing residents of sheltered schemes are provided with general information on living alongside tenants with higher care needs.

The average age of occupants of sheltered schemes, has changed since many of these schemes were constructed in the 1970s and 80s. Original resident populations had a majority of tenants in their 60s, who were often active and participated in the running of the scheme. These tenant populations have since got older, and new tenants moving into schemes are also often older, as people are now more likely to choose not to move into a scheme until they are less able to manage their family home.

Age ranges in sheltered schemes are therefore now much greater and in some cases this can result in frictions where very different expectations are formed about the extent to which tenants should be prepared to participate in the running of the scheme and contribute to its social environment.

To achieve Key Objective 4, the Council will:

- Improve residents' general understanding of the range of the needs and wishes within a scheme; and
- Use supporting planning to identify residents who wish to assist neighbours with higher support needs and make sure that scheme managers feel able to support their efforts.

4) Developing the relationship with Hertfordshire County Council adult services, police and fire services, and exploring opportunities for joint commissioning with the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board

New opportunities are arising for multi-agency working through the formation of new strategic boards that have been set up by central and local governments, in order to try and coordinate service delivery and rationalise some elements of commissioning services.

The Council needs to be an active partner in local discussions that will shape future service delivery, in order to make sure that its priorities in terms of meeting the needs of its vulnerable residents can be met.

To achieve Key Objective 4, the Council will:

- Maximise use of local partnerships to provide joined-up services and to raise awareness of issues affecting older people.

Action plan

Key objective	Action	Team Resources	Financial Resources	Timeframes	Officer responsible
KO4	Review of support services to move away from accommodation-based model	Supported Housing Team			Dharini Chandarana
KO4	Carry out an equality impact assessment of older persons' services	Supported Housing Team			Dharini Chandarana
KO4	Use schemes to hold awareness events to promote older persons' housing options	Supported Housing Team			Dharini Chandarana
KO4	Advertise events and services taking place at sheltered schemes to local communities	Supported Housing Team			Dharini Chandarana
KO4	Develop training for residents to be delivered by scheme managers on living alongside vulnerable people	Supported Housing Team			Dharini Chandarana



AGENDA ITEM: 12

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	10th September 2014
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review & Development Programme Update
Contact:	Author – Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director – Housing Portfolio Holder – Cllr Margaret Griffiths
Purpose of report:	To update the Committee on the annual review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan in advance of it being considered by the Council's Cabinet
Recommendations	That the committee note the report & updated 2014/15 Business Plan with appendices
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications: 'Value For Money Implications'	Close monitoring of the HRA Business Plan jointly by Finance & Housing Officers and an annual review ensures that value for money is derived from the HRA's available resources
Risk Implications	The monitoring of the HRA Business Plan is an identified Service Risk of the Housing Service and reported quarterly
Equalities Implications	n/a

Health And Safety Implications	n/a
Consultees:	James Deane – Assistant Director, Finance & Resources Aaron Keyte – Financial Accountant Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director, Housing & Regeneration Fiona Williamson – Group Manager Property & Place Julia Hedger – Group Manager Strategic Housing Richard Baker – Group Manager Financial Services Tenants & Leaseholders Committee
Background papers:	n/a
Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i>	The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (HRA BP) is a thirty year plan which encompasses both the financial and service related objectives over that period. The longer term perspective is crucial to ensure that the service and its primary assets, - the housing stock, can be 'fit for purpose' for the whole period (and beyond). A formal review of the Business Plan takes place on an annual basis
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	HRA – Housing Revenue Account BP – Business Plan TLC – Tenants & Leaseholders Committee HMEC – Housing Maintenance & Environment Committee

1. **Background**

In April 2012 the Council agreed its first 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.

This report details the second year review of the HRA Business Plan and explains some of the issues which have needed to be re-visited, as well as providing an update on progress of the Council's New Build Programme

2. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

The resources available following the move to Self Financing gave the Council the opportunity 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.

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 of the 2013/14 Business Plan

As would be expected within such a complex budget as the Housing Revenue Account there were various areas of overspend and underspend throughout 2013/14. These were regularly reported to the Council's Corporate Management Team and its Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis. The Council's TLC was also given budget updates at the mid-year point and end of year.

The primary area of overspend on the HRA was on planned maintenance - £1.4million.

This was the result of an increased number of replacement Kitchens and Bathrooms in void properties; as well as re-profiling of the Keepmoat contract in anticipation of the new Total Asset Management contract.

This was mostly off-set however, by an accounting adjustment for capital financing, and an under spend on Strategic Acquisitions.

Following reinvigoration of RTB policy in 2012/13, RTB sales continue to remain high. Dacorum completed 86 RTB sales in 2013/14, resulting in retained receipts of £8.6m.

In terms of tangible outcomes that benefit our tenants directly the table below demonstrates how the Council has been able to improve the homes in which tenants live since the introduction of the Business Plan.

Improvement Works	2011/2012	2012/2013 (first year of 'self financing)	2013/14
Kitchen Renewal	196	456	721
Bathroom Renewal	192	426	529
Re-Wire	250	605	784
New Doors (front/rear)	532	1935	3480

The Council has also been able to commence its programme to build new homes in the borough for the first time in over 20 years. The New Build Programme update is in Section 4 of this report

4. Considerations for 2nd Year Review of HRA Business Plan

4.1 Government Guidance: Rent Policy

Government have issued guidance on rent setting from 2015-16. The guidance advises two fundamental changes

- Changing the annual uplift on rents from 'RPI + 0.5%', to 'CPI + 1%';
- Ending rent convergence, i.e. the ability to increase rent by an additional factor for those tenants who are below target rent.

Whilst both advised changes substantially reduce rental income to the Business Plan, removal of convergence will leave Dacorum worse affected than most LA landlords, because it is further away from achieving convergence with Target Rent.

Over the past few months extensive work has taken place between Council officers in both the finance and housing teams to determine the impact of the changes and future rent policy on the Council's HRA Business Plan. Briefings have been given to members of the Council's Cabinet, its Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and also the Council's Tenants & Leaseholder Committee. The most recent briefing note following the Government issuing the guidance can be found in Appendix 1.

The Council's Cabinet propose to retain existing rent policy for those below Target Rent, but to implement CPI-linked rental increases for those who have already achieved Target Rent. This option optimises income, whilst at the same time works towards achieving parity of rents.

Members of the Council's TLC have expressed their view on this proposal formally and this can be found in Appendix 2.

The formal decision regarding rent policy for 2015/16 would be taken during the approval of the 2015/16 Budget papers.

4.2 Right to Buy

The Business Plan assumes sustained high levels of RTB sales in the short-term only, with 75 units projected for 2014/15; dropping to 40 units in 2015/16 and 20 units thereafter.

Under the '1 for 1' agreement, the Council is able to retain a higher proportion of its RTB receipts. Receipts are retained on the condition they contribute towards replacement new homes on a '1 for 1' basis.

4.3 New Build Programme

At the Cabinet meeting on October 23rd 2012 approval was given to commence the Council's own New Build Programme, to build council homes for the first time in over 25 years.

The Dacorum Borough Council Strategy for New Council Homes 2013-2020 '**Building for the Future**' published December 2013 sets out the Council's ambitious plans for the New Build Programme. The Strategy commits the Council to deliver 400 homes by 2020. The first tranche of sites of the New Build Programme are currently in construction and includes; Farm Place, The Nokes (*formerly St Peter's Church*) and London Road.

Other sites recently acquired by the Council for the purpose of development include Tring Depot, Able House, Stationers Place and Wood House. All these sites are currently in the HRA Business Plan for the purpose of affordability but as they progress will require various approvals from the Council's Cabinet.

4.3.1 Current Scheme Updates

Farm Place – Berkhamsted

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



Planning permission was granted in April 2013. The construction works has commenced and the development is due to be completed by March 2015. The new homes will 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.

The building on site continues well with no major issues.

Key dates:

- **FEBRUARY 2014**– Start on Site
- **MARCH 2015** – Completion of the development
- **April 2015** – occupation of the development.

The Nokes, Galley Hill - Hemel Hempstead

9 x 2 Bedroom Flats to 'Passivhaus' standard



Planning permission was obtained in January 2013 for the development of 9 Passivhaus flats at Galley Hill, Gadebridge. Works have commenced on site and development is due to be completed in March 2015.

This development is aiming to be 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:

- **March 2014** – Start on Site
- **March 2015** – Completion of the development
- **April 2015** – Occupation of the development

LONDON ROAD - APSLEY

13 x 1 Bedroom Flats, 23 x 2 Bedroom Flats



The planning application was submitted in May 2013 and the scheme was granted planning permission in August 2013, subject to the completion of the s106 agreement. Hertfordshire County Council is required to sign off the agreement. The completion of the agreement was unfortunately delayed and only completed in February 2014, which then followed the granting of planning permission in March 2014.

There is a substation at the front of the site which needs to be relocated to the rear of the site to enable the build out of the scheme. The land in which the substation sits is in the ownership of Eastern Power Networks (EPN) currently. Hill Partnerships, the Council's appointed contractor are in discussions with UKPN (its subsidiary) to agree the technical details for the substation works.

The requirement for the scheme to have planning permission has been a critical factor in enabling the land transfer to proceed and the decommissioning of the existing substation. The land transfer agreement was completed in July 2014 with UKPN, the building of the enclosure for the new substation will commence shortly. Once this has been finalised the full building works will commence in November.

Demolition of the existing buildings to ground floor level has been completed. Further demolition works will resume once the existing substation has been decommissioned.

Key Dates:

- **July 2014** – substation transfer agreement completed
- **November 2014** – estimated start on site
- **December 2015** – estimated practical completion
- **January 2016** – estimated occupation

TRING DEPOT

4 x 2 bedroom Flats and 1x 3 bedroom House

The Council's current main depot in Tring is located on Queen Street, within the Tring triangle conservation area.



The Group Manager for Commercial Assets and Property Development has obtained an alternative site from Hertfordshire County Council leaving the existing site on Queens Street available for residential development.

The initial feasibility study indicated 7 units could be accommodated on the site. The scheme proposal has been developed with the Development Planning team and local residents who have been consulted. (A public consultation event was held on the 17th December 2013.) Following the consultation event the scheme was amended to provide 5 new homes.

The planning application has now been submitted and is currently being considered.

Key Dates:

- **May 2014**- Planning application submitted
- **August 2014** – Planning permission (subject to s106 agreement)
- **January 2015**- Select contractor
- **March 2015** – Start on site

ABLE HOUSE, FIGTREE HILL

10 x 1 bedroom Flats and 4 x 2 bedroom Flats currently proposed

The Council acquired the site in 2013, with outline planning consent for 11 flats and commercial units on the ground floor. The Council has appointed Oxford Architects to design an affordable housing scheme; the preliminary design proposal indicates 15 homes can be accommodated on the site; comprising a mix of one and two bed flats.

A further report will be brought to Cabinet in due course recommending approvals required to progress the development.

Key Dates:

- **November 2014**- Submit planning application
- **Spring 2015**- Select contractor
- **Summer 2015** – Start on site

APSLEY PAPER TRAIL/ STATIONERS PLACE

11x 1 Bedroom Flats and 22 x 2 Bedroom Flats currently proposed

The Council acquired the site from the Apsley Paper Trail Trust land approximately 2.2km south of Hemel Hempstead town centre. The site is bounded by the Grand Union Canal on the north eastern boundary, a Homebase retail centre to the west, to the east a public house and residential properties, to the south are residential properties.



The site is currently a tarmacked car-parking area which has been hoarded recently. The Council has appointed RG +P architects to design a scheme for the site. The preliminary design proposal indicates 33 homes can be accommodated on the site.

A further report will be brought to Cabinet in due course recommending approvals required for the development to progress.

Key Dates:

- **Autumn 2014** - submit planning application
- **Early 2015** - select contractor
- **April** – estimated start on site

WOOD HOUSE - Maylands

The Council acquired the site which is located in the Heart of Maylands from Total Oil Pension Fund in the latter part of 2013. The former warehouse on the site has been demolished and the site has been secured with hoarding. The Council has commenced several site investigations to determine the site characteristics. Site feasibility study indicates circa 70 units can be accommodated on the site including commercial/retail space on the ground floor.

The Development Team are preparing to appoint the architect to progress the scheme to the planning application stage. The Council anticipate a start on site late 2015.

4.4 Walkways & Balconies Project

At the point of the 2013/14 review of the Council's HRA Business Plan resources were allocated to carry out essential works to a number of communal and private balconies and walkways across the Council's Housing stock. This work has progressed in terms of all 'at risk' balconies and walkways have been propped and the contract to carry out a permanent solution has been let.

Following a request from the Council's Cabinet the Development Team have also been working with the Property and Place team to undertake a feasibility study to examine the redevelopment potential of four of these sites which comprise bedsit properties that have been found to have structural defects to their walkways.

This work overlaps with the emerging comprehensive review of garage sites in the Borough which the Council's Estates team has commissioned EC Harris to undertake.

The two projects are therefore merging and a report to Cabinet on the E.C Harris will be provided in due course by the Estates team.

4.5 Total Asset Management (TAM) Contract

Following a comprehensive procurement project the Council awarded its new housing management contract, worth up to £235 million, to Osborne Property Services.

The Council, with the help of tenants carried out a thorough two-year search to find the best contractor to carry out all day-to-day repairs, maintenance and planned improvement work (known as a 'total asset management' contract) to its 10,500 council homes throughout the Borough.

From 1 July, Osborne Property Services have been providing the day-to-day repairs and the planned improvement work to the Council's 10,500 homes throughout the Borough, and will use patterns of repairs information to target investment at the areas most in need.

Financial assumptions relating to annual spend in certain criteria of works have been factored into the Business Plan review

The Council's Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee (HMEC) – the tenant panel which looks at repairs – were fully involved in the procurement process.

The contract will run for an initial five years, although this can be extended on an annual rolling basis up to ten years, based on performance.

5.0 2014/15 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

The reviewed and updated Business Plan can be found in Appendix 3. The document will be subject to regular review involving officers from the Council's finance and housing teams as well as appropriate updates to the TLC, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees as needed.

Key points within the reviewed plan:

- Rental Income is assumed from an agreed collection rate from the rent policy proposal outlined in Section 4.1
- Development programme within the plan contains all schemes detailed in Section 4.3.1 and 1025 homes in total over the life of the Business Plan
- Cash flow Projections in appendices d & e of the Business Plan reflect projected positions but are subject to regular and annual review.

Rents for Social Housing from 2015/16 – TLC Briefing Note August 2014

Background

1. In May 2014 Government issued new guidance setting out its policy on rents for social housing for April 2015 onwards. As expected, it contains no material differences from the proposals that were included within the preceding consultation document released in autumn 2013.
2. The Housing & Community OSC scrutinised the consultation document in December 2013, and their comments were incorporated into the DBC response. Minutes of the discussion can be found at the following link: <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/council-democracy/housing-13-12-12-minutes.pdf?sfvrsn=0>
3. The Council's TLC (Tenants & Leaseholder Committee) also held a one off meeting to consider the government consultation and potential impact on DBC's HRA Business Plan.
4. Appendix A shows a table summarising the financial impact of the options discussed in this paper for the Council's future rent policy.

How do the new guidelines affect DBC?

5. The most significant implication for DBC arises from the change to annual rent increases scheduled to take effect from 1 April 2015. The two key points for DBC, together with the financial impact on the 30-year business plan, are:
 - A change from 'RPI + 0.5%' to 'CPI + 1%' for the index linking of all rent increases. Historically CPI has been 0.7% lower than RPI and this change is projected to cost DBC £120m; and,
 - An end to convergence increases of up to £2 per week for those tenants currently below Target Rent – this is projected to cost DBC £260m.
6. In summary, switching from current rent policy to the new guidelines will cost the HRA £380m over the 30 years of the plan.

How is DBC affected relative to other social landlords?

7. The change from RPI to CPI as a means of calculating rent increases will negatively affect all Local Authority landlords.
8. DBC will be worse affected than most other LA landlords by Government's decision to end the convergence policy because it is further away from achieving convergence with Target Rent. While Government states that the majority of LAs have already achieved convergence, DBC is projected to have only 40% of its stock at Target Rent by the end of 2014/15, rising only to 70% by 2019/20.

9. Officers highlighted DBC's unusual situation in the response to the Government consultation. Whilst not referring directly to DBC, the new guidance states that rent increases for sitting tenants should always be limited to CPI + 1% and that landlords should pursue outstanding convergence by re-letting at Target Rent when properties become void. If the Council were to adopt this approach in tandem with the new guidelines, the loss to the business plan would be mitigated by £80m over 30 years, resulting in a net loss of £300m.

Is compliance with the new guidance compulsory?

10. Government has expressed an expectation that LAs will comply with the guidance but has not stated that it is compulsory.

What are the consequences for Local Authorities that choose not to comply?

11. In the view of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Government currently has no means of enforcing compliance.
12. Currently LAs face financial penalties only in those cases where they increase average weekly rent above a limit set by Government. In such cases the LA will only receive Housing Benefit on rents up to the limit and will have to fund the cost of additional Housing Benefit itself. This is known as the Rent Rebate Subsidy Limitation.
13. The current rent limit set by Government for DBC properties is £109.40 per week, and the actual average rent is £102. From 2015 onwards the rent limit will increase annually by CPI + 1%, which means that DBC is likely to be able to continue with its current rent policy in the short-term without being affected by Rent Rebate Subsidy Limitation.
14. Government retains the ability to implement policy in the future that will enable them to enforce compliance or even retrospectively to claw-back any gains made by those LAs that did not comply. However, the view of CIH, based on their work across the sector, is that this is low risk.

What are the arguments for DBC retaining its current rent policy?

15. Government has issued new rent policy *guidance* – DBC is under no statutory obligation to follow the guidance.
16. The new guidance does not indicate that Government believes that Target Rent is too high, or that the convergence policy was in any way wrong. Rather it is a one-size-fits-all attempt to limit future rent increases for landlords whom it assumes are *already* charging Target Rent. If DBC continued with its current policy it could argue that it was still operating within the spirit of Government guidance on the basis that it was continuing to try and reach the rent levels that Government states that it should be charging for its property.
17. Both the H&C OSC and the TLC have expressed a preference for the Council to continue with its current convergence policy as a means of bringing parity between tenants' rents. If the Council was to abandon its rent-setting discretion and adopt a policy based purely on Government guidance, it could be argued that it was reducing its

accountability to tenants. This would be in direct contravention of a fundamental tenet of Government's Self Financing policy, which seeks to *increase* landlord accountability.

18. For the purpose of calculating the Self Financing Settlement, Government made an assumption that, nationally, Local Authorities would achieve convergence in 2015/16. This means that Government's assessment of DBC's capacity to repay its SF debt was predicated on the basis that it would continue with its policy of convergence until at least 2015/16. This is sound justification, if required, for maintaining convergence for at least one more year, whilst sounding-out Government response to non-compliance.

What are the arguments for adopting the new guidance?

19. Historic low borrowing rates at the inception of Self Financing meant that DBC and other LA landlords in a similar position enjoyed a financial benefit far in excess of what Government anticipated. Although the Council's business plan does not show excessive accumulating balances, there is an argument that we should do as little as possible to attract Government scrutiny of annual surpluses. To do so would be to risk Government implementation of a mechanism to recover some of DBC's surplus operating income for redistribution to those areas of the country where Self Financing has worked less well. However, officers have discussed this with CIH and believe that there is a low risk that this would happen.
20. It should be noted that if the RPI element of the current rent policy is retained, even those tenants *already at Target Rent* would face annual rental increases in excess of the CPI linked basis recommended in the new guidance. This could be addressed through a split rent-setting mechanism whereby those below Target Rent face increases calculated using RPI whereas those already at Target Rent face increases calculated using CPI.

Conclusion

21. The option that best optimises income whilst at the same time working towards achieving parity of rents is to retain the existing rent policy for those below Target Rent but to implement CPI-linked rental increases for those who have already achieved Target Rent.

TLC meeting 14th August 2014

After a debate of the change in rent policy as per guidance from the Government i.e. changing from annual *increases of* RPI + 0.5% for those at target rent and *plus* £2 for those who are not, to a standard CPI + 1% for all, and the council's proposal to maintain the RPI + 0.5% plus £2.00 where the rent is below target, while changing to CPI + 1% where the rent is at target, we noted the following:

We all felt personally, that we all would like the slightly smaller rent increases year on year that would result from the Government guidance, but collectively we also wanted to safeguard the ongoing improvements being made to all properties, and the future plans building more homes, in the business plan.

We discussed those tenants who are working and the impact it would have on them, it seemed that this group would be at a disadvantage than those who were claiming Housing Benefit.

When the council took on the debt of £365 million from the government the TLC were wary of any future government policy regarding any changes that would alter the course of the business plan and felt that all the hard work the council staff have put into the working out of figures etc. and tenant expectations it is now being jeopardised by the government and we the committee expressed concern about the local impact should adoption of the changes become compulsory.

We would like to the council to note that there needs to be a plan B because if the government makes this rent policy compulsory it would drastically change the course of the business plan.

Conclusion

The TLC are of the same conclusion as the council item 21 (of the recent briefing paper to TLC 14th August) as follows:

The option that best optimises income whilst at the same time working towards achieving parity of rents is to retain the existing rent policy for those below Target Rent but to implement CPI-linked rental increases for those who have already achieved Target Rent.

Appendix 3 – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2014/15 (27 Pages)

13. EXCLUSION OF 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 items 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 these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to:

APPENDIX A

Scrutiny making a positive difference: Member led and independent, Overview & Scrutiny Committee promote service improvements, influence policy development & hold Executive to account for the benefit of the Community of Dacorum.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme 2014/15

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type :	Contact details:	Background information	Outcome of Discussion
15 October 2014	3 October 2014	Sportspace Performance Report Crime, Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour legislation report Result of the invite to tender for the Homeless Hostel (Part 2)	PM	D Cove (PH – N Harden) J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services. (PH - N Harden) I Connolly, Housing Strategy & Private Sector Team Leader (PH – M Griffiths)		
12 November 2014	31 October 2014	Quarter 2 Performance Report (& Q2 Operational Risk Reports) Q2 Financial Data Report Old Town Hall report	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services C Troy, Group Manager Regulatory (PH – M Griffiths, N Tiley, N Harden) R Baker, Group Manager, Finance (PH – N Tiley) J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services.		

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type :	Contact details:	Background information	Outcome of Discussion
		Empty Homes Community Infrastructure Levy		(PH - N Harden) E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing (PH M Griffiths) James Doe, Assistant Director Planning, Development & Regeneration		
10 December 2014	28 November 2014	Joint Budget OSC <i>Ideally no further items to be added</i>	SC	M Hone, Corporate Director Finance & Operation		
28 January 2015	16 January 2015	Review of the operations of the Housing Allocations Policy. Housing Asset Management Strategy – 1 st Draft	PD	Elliott Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing (PH – M Griffiths) E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing (PH M Griffiths)		
4 February 2015 (Joint Budget OSC)	22 January 2015	Budget 2015-16 <i>Ideally no further items to be added</i>	Sc	M Hone, Corporate Director Finance & Operation	<i>To consider the draft budget proposals 2015/16</i>	

Meeting Date:	Report Deadline	Items:	Type :	Contact details:	Background information	Outcome of Discussion
18 March 2015	6 March 2015	Quarter 3 Performance Report (& Q3 Operational Risk Reports) Quarter 3 Financial Data Report	PM	E Brooks, Assistant Director, Housing J Still, Group Manager, Resident Services C Troy, Group Manager Regulatory <i>(PH – M Griffiths, N Tiley, N Harden)</i> R Baker, Group Manager, Finance		

PM – Performance management

PD – Policy Development

SC – Scrutiny

Items to be scheduled:

- Star Survey update report/results
- Complaints annual report – June 2015
- Housing Appeals Update – Jan/Feb 2015