

Housing

Service Plan

September 2015 Update

Period of the Plan	September 2014 – March 2016
Service:	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants & Leaseholders • Property & Place • Strategic Housing
Assistant Director:	Elliott Brooks

Dacorum Borough Council Corporate Priorities – 2010 – 2014

- Regeneration
- Affordable Housing
- Safe & Clear Environment
- Dacorum Delivers
- Building Community Capacity

Service priorities

The landlord service, managing and maintaining the Council's rented and leasehold housing stock, is an integral part of the broader housing service which incorporates the strategic function – developing and delivering the strategies for the future including ensuring a healthy supply of new homes (including affordable) to meet the needs of the Borough – and housing options which deals with housing need, homelessness and allocations of rented homes. Although having elements of separation in operation – not least because the HRA is ring fenced to landlord expenditure only – the delivery of the housing service should be seen as a single entity with clear and shared vision and objectives.

The broader strategic vision takes account of the housing needs – current and predicted – of the whole of the borough, whatever tenure or socio-economic background. Key priorities are:

- Ensuring a healthy level of new house building is achieved, ideally accelerating this delivery ahead of the trajectory in the Core Strategy.
- New build to ensure a good balance of tenure and housing opportunities: market housing of varying sizes and types; affordable housing for rent or shared ownership, a re-invigorated private rented sector; and services and stock to meet the needs of particular groups (such as the elderly and people with physical or mental disabilities)
- Playing a direct role in the building and stimulus for new build affordable homes for rent in conjunction with Housing Association, developers and investors
- Ensuring that the evidence base – of housing need and land availability – is in place and kept up to date
- That the Council has the key strategies, policies and plans in place to deliver requirements

Due to the significant changes in the Housing Service over the past few years it was acknowledged that there needed to be a clear direction and vision for staff, tenants and leaseholders and the Council to buy into so that

common goals were expressed in order to achieve success and take the service forward.

We want Dacorum to be a place people are proud to call home. We will involve our tenants & leaseholders in decisions, provide good quality, affordable homes, help maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness – and be honest about improvements we still need to achieve.

The Housing Service undertake a survey of all the Council's Tenants & Leaseholders every two years – 'STAR'. The results of the most recent survey, January 2014 have, along with further consultation resulted in the targets and priorities identified.

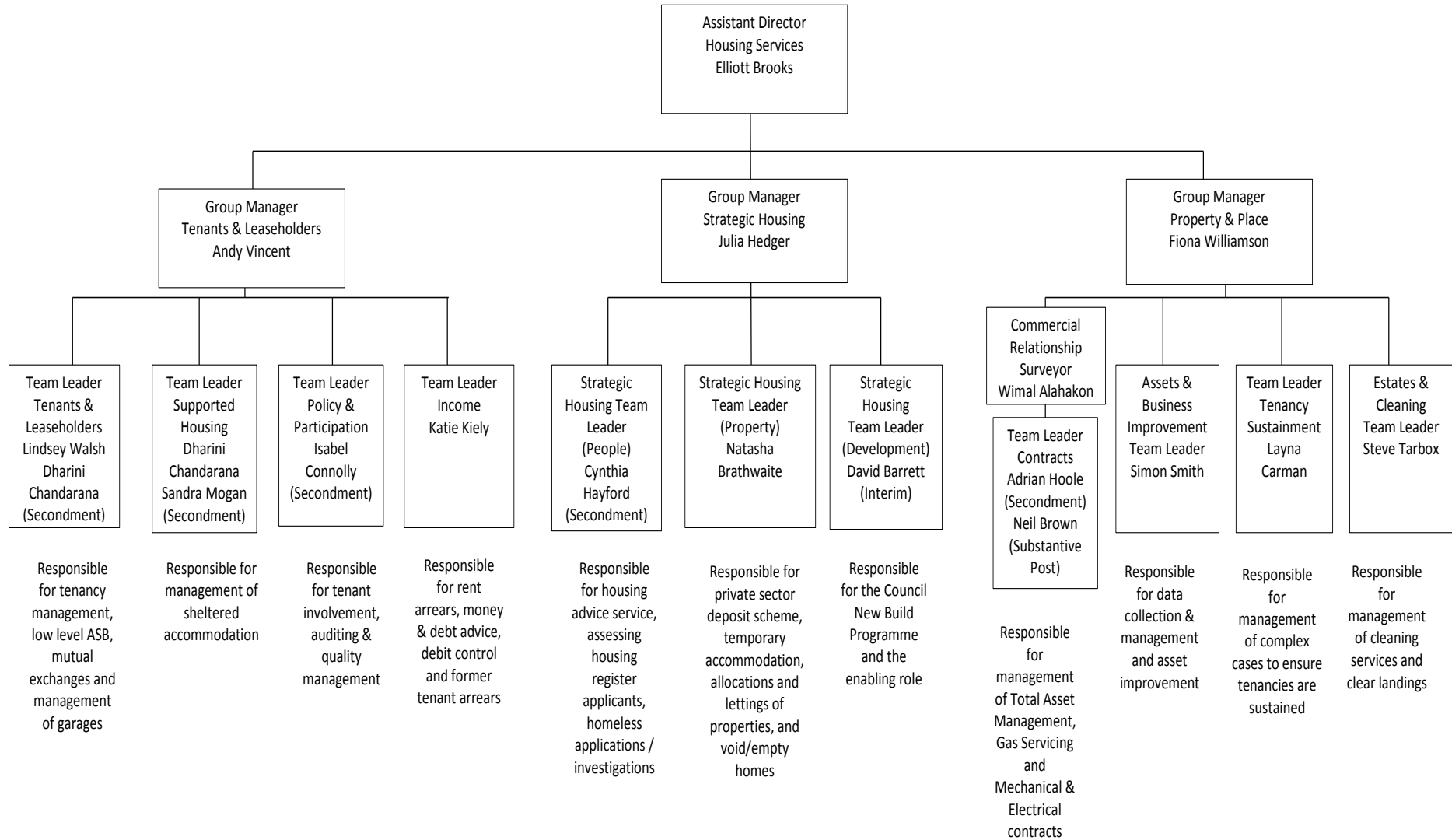
Relevant Policies and Strategies

Dacorum Borough council Housing Strategy

Dacorum Borough Council Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 'People, Property, Place'

Dacorum Borough Council Development Strategy – 'Building Homes for the Future'

Housing Service Structure



Emerging issues

This section identifies issues and/or risks which have shaped the current service plan or which could effects its delivery

Issue	Service plan impact
<p>Staff Recruitment & Retention – the ability to attract high quality candidates is becoming more of a challenge for the service due to competition primarily from Housing Associations. The same issue applies to retention of staff who have benefited from development, training and the opportunity to use these skills within the service to do the amount of initiatives taking place</p>	<p>The initiatives and service improvements desired by all stakeholders are challenging and require good quality highly motivated teams to deliver them</p>
<p>Performance of the HRA Business Plan – Since the introduction of Self Financing the Housing Service has benefited from having more resources than previously. This has meant that tenants have received more improvements within their homes, in the communal areas of their estates and in terms of our ability to engage and consult with them.</p> <p>Increasing costs of services (particularly New Build) and the new rent policy announced by the government recently will have an impact which will need to be monitored and reflected in the Council’s HRA Business Plan. Officers are currently reviewing the Council’s HRA Business Plan to fully reflect the impact of proposed changes in government policy.</p>	<p>Without robust management of the HRA operational budgets and the Business Plan the ability to deliver improvements to homes or the service is restricted</p>
<p>Tenancy Sustainment - A growing number of our tenants require more intensive support than can be offered in the traditional way the Council has structured its Landlord function. A specialist team has been introduced partly using existing resources to work with those tenants who require more in depth work to sustain a successful tenancy</p>	<p>The introduction of a Tenancy Sustainment Team should enable some complex issues to be dealt with more efficiently by the correct officers so that progress with key initiatives continues</p>

Flexible & Remote Working – The Council promotes the approach of encouraging new ways of working whilst ensuring the needs of the service and its customers are not compromised. Whilst the benefits to individuals in terms of a work / life balance are obvious it requires a new culture and approach to line management which can cause teething problems in terms of consistency of implementation.

IT and equipment have to be suitable and fit for purpose to allow effective flexible working and it has to then be used appropriately so projects and initiatives can be managed without daily contact with individuals face to face.

Objective	What will be different once this work is done	Project Lead & Target Completion	Other Services Involved consulted	Update
Introduce arrangements for identifying and supporting our most vulnerable tenants.	<p>Ensure that vulnerable tenants are identified and that support arrangements are put in place to enable them to manage their tenancy effectively.</p> <p>Vulnerable Persons Strategy</p>	<p>Group Manager Tenants and Leaseholders</p> <p>September 2014</p>	Resident Services	<p>A Housing Vulnerable Persons Strategy has been produced.</p> <p>Complete</p>
Improve Digital access	<p>Identify geographic areas with high levels of digital exclusion.</p> <p>Provide training sessions on internet access and security – run prize draws with free IT equipment</p> <p>Create a virtual tenant resource centre to be linked to the customer service portal login allowing access to online training – Housemark – CIH – TPAS etc</p>	<p>Income Team Leader</p> <p>March 2015</p>	Part of a wider Borough Wide Project	<p>The Group Manager for Tenants and Leaseholders is leading the Council's Digital Inclusion Project. This includes a programme of tenant training on IT is being undertaken and promoting wider access to the internet and the financial benefits this brings.</p> <p>Mapping of digital exclusion is also being undertaken.</p> <p>A virtual tenant resource centre will be provided – this is linked to develop of the customer service portal.</p> <p>The Team Leader for Tenancy Sustainment is representing Housing in the Corporate Digital Inclusion working group, to consider the areas which would be appropriate to include within the Customer Service Portal.</p>
<p>Launch a back to work initiative</p> <p>Develop a theme for the programme</p>	<p>Theme 'conference on the road', the tenant and leaseholder day and other involvement events around getting back to work.</p> <p>Link to Digital Access</p> <p>Work with our Repairs and Maintenance Partner regarding the recruitment of tenants to</p>	<p>Policy and Participation Team Leader</p> <p>March 2015</p>	Regeneration	<p>A series of activities are being undertaken to encourage tenants back to work. This includes activities at conference on the road and the love your neighbourhood events.</p>

	<i>apprenticeship posts</i>			
Review our Local Offers	<i>Review the Local Offers we have agreed with tenants (tenants key priorities) to ensure they reflect the priorities of the community</i>	<i>Policy and Participation Team Leader</i> <i>October 2014</i> <i>October 2015</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Our local offers were reviewed at the Tenant and Leaseholder day. A further review will be undertaken in 2015.</i> <i>Complete</i>
Put in place arrangements for reporting environmental issues and monitoring the environmental condition of our estates	<i>This work will enable the condition of the environment to be monitored.</i> <i>Themes affecting the environmental condition to be identified and areas of the borough with the lowest environmental standards prioritised.</i>	<i>Tenant and Leasehold Team Leader</i> <i>March 2015</i>	<i>Clean Safe & Green</i>	<i>Work is underway with the Cleaning Team and Neighbourhood Support Officers to enable the reporting of environmental issues and to capture a picture of the condition of our estates.</i> <i>Due to some IT issues this will take until the autumn to be finally completed.</i> <i>Complete</i>
Review our 'Get Involved' Strategy – and develop new objectives for tenant involvement from 2016-2020	<i>The purpose of this strategy is to continue to expand the involvement of tenants with the service – ensuring that tenant's priorities set the direction for the service as a whole (including housing management, repairs and improvements, management of the housing register and allocations and new build)</i>	<i>Policy and Participation Team Leader</i> <i>Commences in March 2015 completed by December 2015</i>	<i>Resident Services</i>	<i>A tenant consultation structure for the review has been discussed and developed with the Tenant Involvement Review Group.</i> <i>The consultation exercise has been undertaken – the strategy document is now being put together for December 2015</i>
Review our Financial Inclusion Strategy and develop a strategy from 2016-2019	<i>The purpose of this strategy is to assist tenants to get access to financial services which can often be restricted from people with the lowest levels of income.</i>	<i>Income Team Leader</i> <i>Commences March 2015 completed by</i>	<i>Revenues & Benefits</i>	<i>The review of the existing strategy does not commence until March 2015</i>

		<i>December 2015</i>		
Completion of the new Homeless Hostel, Farm Place and the Nokes - end of March 2015	<i>New Council homes will be the first completed – Farm Place and The Nokes. The new Homeless Hostel will be a new facility within the Borough for single homeless and will include community facilities.</i>	<i>Group Manager Strategic Housing March 2015</i>	<i>New Build Project Group</i>	<i>The Elms and the Nokes (St Peters Court) achieved practical completion by the end of March 2015 with Farm Place completed in June 2015 (due to some issues with discharging planning conditions.) All new homes are occupied.</i>
Continue with Council New Build Programme as set out in the HRA Business Plan – March 2016	<i>Regular updates to TLC</i>	<i>Group Manager Strategic Housing Ongoing</i>	<i>New Build Project Group</i>	<i>HRA Business Plan has been updated regularly. Council new build programme is ongoing with new schemes identified in London Road Apsley, which started on site January 2015 and is progressing well. Completion is due by April 2016. Tring (Queens Court) is due to start on site 5th October. Other schemes in progress include Stationers Place, Woodhouse and Able House.</i>
Extend current Housing advice and education services available within the Community	<i>To increase the Homeless Prevention service by working with providers of hard to reach client groups; to include (Youth Offending Team) YOT, Probation, Dacorum Education Support Centre (DESC) & Teenage pregnancy</i>	<i>On-going with completion by March 2016</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Welfare and Support Officers Job Description have been amended to include education and training provision to clients. Housing Advice surgeries throughout the Borough are ongoing and are increasingly busy.</i>
Prepare for peer review in line with Gold Standard and agree timescales for review to take place.	<i>Achievement of Gold Standard status acknowledges the service improvements within the team and would be a national award to recognise the successful work of the service.</i>	<i>Natasha Brathwaite – Strategic Housing Team Leader (People) Peer Review Autumn/Winter 2014 Achieve Gold Standard Status</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Peer Review was completed in February 2015, with an action plan for improvements specifically around the service provided from CSU. Processes have been fully reviewed with a new referral procedure to the Housing Team in place from August 2015. The NPSS have also changed the way the Gold Standard can be achieved, therefore it will not be possible to achieve this status by Autumn 2015. A further peer review has been arranged for March 2016 with the aim to achieve Bronze status summer/autumn 2016 (this is dependent on NPSS being able to assess the criteria within these</i>

		by Autumn 2015		timescales).
Set up a single non-priority project group, obtain commitment from partner agencies.	<i>To eradicate street homeless to help the Council to achieve Gold Standard status.</i>	<i>Strategic Housing Team Leader (People)</i> <i>Summer 2015</i>	<i>Partnerships</i>	<i>Project Group met for the first time in December 2014 and has continued to meet quarterly to focus on reducing single non-priority homeless.</i>
Develop a Young Persons Housing Strategy	<i>To set out a long term plan for meeting the housing needs of young people living in the Borough</i>	<i>Strategic Housing Team Leader – (Property)</i> <i>Completion and approval of Strategy by December 2015</i>	<i>Resident Services</i>	<i>Work has begun scoping and drafting the document. On target to complete for December 2015.</i>
Develop Help to Rent offer	<i>Develop further ideas (eg possible Landlord incentive scheme) with the aim to recruit more landlords and increase partnership working with local lettings agencies.</i>	<i>Strategic Housing Team Leader (Property)</i> <i>Summer 2015</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>New Lead Officer has been recruited in January 2015 to focus on developing the Help to Rent offer. Temporary member of staff has also been made permanent to assist with this work. Team are working well with a focus on recruiting new landlords to the scheme.</i>
Woolmer Drive – New Temporary Accommodation	<i>Develop plans to bring property back into use as new temporary accommodation – significant structural and internal works to the property required.</i>	<i>Housing Development Team Leader</i> <i>Summer 2015 occupation</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Woolmer Drive was completed in June 2015 and is currently fully occupied. The property has a crash pad facility for 16 and 17 year olds to ensure the Council meets the Governments recommendation to place no 16 and 17 year olds in B&B accommodation.</i>
Through HMEC ensure that both Osborne & Sunrealm work with the Council and tenants to ensure that there is choice and consultation surrounding renewals	<i>Put in place protocol of consultation through HMEC</i>	<i>Group Manager Property & Place</i> <i>December 2014</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>There has been active consultation with HMEC both in the monthly meetings held at the Civic Centre and the interim meetings held in Osborne’s offices. To date this has established the options available for kitchens and bathroom refurbishment, colour choices for external wall insulation finishes and some improvement items such as Sure Stop Valves and soft close drawers. The tenant and leaseholder participation is currently being</i>

<i>of doors, kitchens, bathrooms and that boilers are suitable for the needs of the tenants</i>				<i>reviewed to ensure that the various participatory bodies represent a wider number of views of those individuals who have recently experienced repairs or planned works. Osborne and Sun Realm will continue to attend meetings as appropriate to the various work strands that are being reviewed.</i>
<i>Complete the review of service provided to Leaseholders</i>		<i>Group Manager Tenants & Leaseholders December 2014</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>The review of the leaseholder service has been completed. The actions from the review are currently being addressed – these will be considered by the Leaseholder Forum Complete</i>
<i>That the council should 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>Team Leader Cleaning Services & Tenant Involvement Team Ongoing</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>The cleaning service has appointed a lead officer to improve the improve supervision and monitoring of the service. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cleaning Standard booklet issued to all residents and also available online</i> • <i>Satisfactions survey currently via the STAR but considering other additional methods of survey</i> • <i>Easy-log system has been changed so inspections can be carried out by managers, supervisors and “operatives with a van” soon to also be available to Neighbourhood Support Officers and Housing staff with the use of tablets</i> • <i>Equipment and chemicals constantly reviewed and replaced where necessary</i> • <i>Training in house, and from suppliers of equipment and chemicals to reinforce health and safety and appropriate use of the products.</i> • <i>Staff acting as eyes and ears reporting maintenance issues when encountered</i> • <i>Run a team which patrols to ensure all internal communal areas are clear in line with the Clear Landings policy.</i> • <i>The new window cleaning contract will provide the rota for the sites so that these can be proactively monitored by the Supported Housing Officers.</i> </i>
<i>That Grounds Maintenance should be a regular agenda item</i>		<i>Team Leader Housing Asset Management</i>	<i>Clean Safe & Green</i>	<i>HMEC have had a member sitting on the monthly joint Housing/Clean Safe and Green (CSG) meetings to enable better understanding of the frequency and scope of work which is</i>

<p>for Housing Maintenance and Environment Committee (HMEC) with a view to monitoring standards and investigating options for improving levels of satisfaction.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>		<p>undertaken by the teams.</p> <p>This is currently being reviewed as CSG want their role clarified in terms of what items are discussed in front of the HMEC member as there is some overlap into staffing and HR issues which are not considered appropriate..</p> <p>HMEC has a quarterly update as a standing agenda item from Simon's Coultas and Simon Smith.</p>
<p>That 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.</p>		<p>Group Manager Property & Place</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The HMEC are actively involved in monitoring the performance of the new Tam contract and performance reports are discussed at the monthly meetings, where areas of performance are scrutinised in detail.</p> <p>The definitions for emergency repairs and first time fix have been agreed and these will be established in the Corvu reports from the beginning of the next financial year with new data quality sheets produced to reflect the changes.</p> <p>HMEC members are to review the contract terms and conditions and the final bid solutions that formed Osborne's tender, to assess if all of the service elements are being delivered.</p> <p>The empty homes are for review by the tenant and leaseholder scrutiny panel which will provide a further opportunity for the service to be monitored.</p>
<p>Develop a Fencing Policy</p>		<p>Team Leader Housing Asset Management</p> <p>March 2015</p>		<p>A draft fencing policy has been produced but there are concerns about the ongoing revenue costs if fencing between gardens is to be provided to all properties. It has been agreed that fencing enquiries will be dealt with on a case by case basis and the GM's from Property and Place and Tenants and Leaseholders will review.</p>
<p>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</p>		<p>Assistant Director – Housing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Corporate Customer First project sponsored by Chief Exec</p> <p>Digital Dacrum</p>	<p>The Housing Service are involved in the two corporate projects in place to address issues relating to the customer experience and access to services. The service has designated lead officers to ensure that housing's needs and those of our tenants and leaseholders are considered.</p>

<i>contacting the Council and the Housing Service in particular.</i>			<i>Corporate Project</i>	
<i>That using an Estate Management approach the Tenant Involvement Team in partnership with other housing colleagues should continue to organise and promote local area walkabouts to highlight any local problems and work co-operatively with Clean Safe & Green and Resident Services to tackle any local rubbish or littering issues.</i>		<i>Group Manager Tenants & Leaseholders April 15</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>An approach to Neighbourhood Management was launched in April – this will involve regular inspections and neighbourhood action plans.</i>
<i>To work in partnership with colleagues across the Council to develop a garage strategy</i>	<i>Consider all options for the Council's garage stock following evaluation</i>	<i>Group Manager Tenants & Leaseholders</i>	<i>Estates / Finance</i>	<i>A garage strategy was presented to the Council's Cabinet – this identifies sites which have a development opportunity</i>