

CABINET AGENDA



TUESDAY 23 JUNE 2020 AT 6.30 PM
MICROSOFT TEAMS - MICROSOFT TEAMS

* This meeting of Cabinet will be held remotely via the Microsoft Teams application.
Should any members of the public wish to join this meeting, please contact the Assistant Director (Corporate & Contracted Services) at member.support@dacorum.gov.uk by 5pm on Friday 19th June.

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.

Membership

Councillor Williams (Leader)
Councillor Griffiths (Deputy Leader)
Councillor Elliot

Councillor G Sutton
Councillor Anderson
Councillor Banks

For further information, please contact Corporate and Democratic Support or 01442 228209

AGENDA

1. MINUTES (Pages 3 - 11)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2020

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 and ask questions in accordance with the rules as to Public Participation.

5. REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet

6. CABINET FORWARD PLAN (Page 12)

7. HOMELESS STRATEGY (Pages 13 - 67)

8. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY 2020 (Pages 68 - 92)

9. COVID-19 IMPACT REPORT (Pages 93 - 116)

10. CLIMATE CHANGE

Report to follow after the SPAE OSC meeting being held on 16th June 2020.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To consider passing a resolution in the following terms:

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Part 1 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during the items in Part 2 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 those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council and third party companies/organisations.

Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, paragraph 3.

MINUTES

CABINET

19 MAY 2020

Councillors: Williams (Leader)
Griffiths (Deputy
Leader)
Elliot
G Sutton
Anderson
Banks

Officers:	Claire Covington	Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer
	James Deane	Corporate Director - Finance and Operations
	James Doe	Assistant Director - Planning, Development and Regeneration
	Mark Gaynor	Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration
	Nigel Howcutt	Assistant Director - Finance and Resources
	Linda Roberts	Assistant Director - Performance, People and Innovation
	Alex Robinson	Strategic Planning Manager
	Olivia Halper	Urban Design Officer
	Katie Mogan	Corporate and Democratic Support Lead Officer
	Mark Brookes	Assistant Director - Corporate and Contracted Services
	Sally Marshall	Chief Executive

Also in Attendance:

Councillor John Birnie
Councillor Stephen Cloughton
Councillor Terry Douris
Councillor Adrian England
Councillor Ron Tindall

The meeting began at 6.30 pm

CA/40/20 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020 were agreed by Members present.

CA/41/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CA/42/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CA/43/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation

CA/44/20 REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet

CA/45/20 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was noted.

CA/46/20 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT 2019/20

Decision

That the report be noted and:

1. The movement on earmarked reserves as set out in section 9 of the report be approved
2. The capital slippage into financial year 2020/21 as set out in Appendix C of the report be reviewed and approved

Resolved _____ to _____ recommend:

3. **The approval of a supplementary capital budget of £300k in 2020/21 to complete works to the Berkhamsted multi-storey car park**

Corporate objectives

Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.

Deputy Section 151 Officer

This is a Deputy S.151 Officer report

Monitoring Officer

No comments to add to the report

Advice

Councillor Elliot introduced the report to members. The report summarises the financial performance in 2019-20 and details other minor accounting changes. The final audited accounts will be presented to the Audit Committee for scrutiny and approval in September prior to final publication. The General Fund shows an overall

balanced budget with small variances in different services areas as outlined in the report. The Housing Revenue Account has an in year surplus of £884k and the Capital Programme is broadly on track and there is a projected rephrasing of £0.4 million into the 2020/21 General Fund. Due to the current crisis with Covid-19, next year may show a very different set of accounts with many challenges up ahead.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 11, paragraph 4.2 and asked for further details about the £115k of additional insurance costs relating to uninsured losses.

N Howcutt explained that the council undertakes its own insurance provision for minor claims and for significant claims, the council has external insurance. For the small claims, this is covered from reserves which is far more cost effective than having external insurance for all eventualities because of the large premiums.

Councillor Birnie asked if the £115k was multiple small claims or one claim.

N Howcutt confirmed that this total was made up of all insurance claims under £10k.

Councillor Birnie then referred to page 31, paragraph 5.1 relating to the vacancy pressure within the Clean, Safe and Green team. He asked if it would be better to increase the budget for staff vacancies in this team.

J Deane said the vacancy factor comes from balancing budgeting experience with what experience has shown in the past. The council budgets on a post by post basis and experience shows that at the end of the financial year, the council comes in at 5% under budget. This process gives an easy way to show what is a realistic saving over the year when taking all vacancies across the council into account.

Councillor Birnie asked if the external auditors were comfortable with this approach.

N Howcutt confirmed they were comfortable with this approach because it is part of the budget setting process and uses sound reasoning to justify. It is also reviewed every year.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/47/20 NEW NORMAL UPDATE

Decision

That the progress on the New Normal programme be noted alongside the proposals for resuming the programme and future projects.

Corporate objectives

Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.

Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications to this report

Deputy S.151 Officer

There are no financial implications to this report

Advice

L Roberts introduced the report to members which details the impact that the current Covid-19 crisis has had on the programme. Much of the project based work has had to be paused as there is a focus on continuing front line services. The report indicates some of the progress made with robotic process automation, key processing in housing and mobile working prior to Covid-19. The current situation means remote working has been tested in a way not thought of before but the goal is to make sure staff can work from any location, not just from home. There has also been progress within the People team, an improved recruitment site has been launched alongside a graduate and apprenticeship scheme. It is now important to make sure these projects continue without overloading staff with current workloads.

Councillor Williams said that mobile working has been rolled out a lot quicker than expected due to the current circumstances.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/48/20 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Decision

1. That the approach to the development and delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action plan as set out in the report be provisionally approved subject to consideration of the comments and feedback from the June Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, on the housing elements, the June Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. That a further report be made to Cabinet in June 2020 to formally consider the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
2. That the Climate Emergency Statement in Appendix 4 be approved

Resolved to recommend:

3. **The creation of a budget for the Climate Emergency of £75,000 in 2020/21 and authority be delegated for its expenditure be made to the Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration and the Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services in consultation with the Leader be approved**

4. That an annual review of the progress of the Strategy and Action Plan be made to Cabinet each year and an update be provided to Cabinet in September 2020 on initial progress
5. That a training and development programme for both staff and Members be delivered in 2020/21
6. That a 'Climate Emergency impact statement' be incorporated into Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny reports

Corporate objectives

The Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will help to support all 5 corporate objectives:

- *Safe and clean environment:* e.g. contains actions relating to the quality of existing environments and design and layout of new development that promote security and safe access;
- *Community Capacity:* e.g. provide a framework for local communities to be better informed and involved in climate emergency mitigation.;
- *New and Affordable housing:* through both direct delivery and setting improved sustainability requirements in new homes would help to reduce both the cost of energy and water and the carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions the homes would produce;
- *Dacorum delivers:* fulfilling the zero carbon pledge will make a huge contribution to local sustainability and assist in the national target to reach zero carbon as a nation by 2050;
- *Regeneration:* the strategy and action plan will provide improvements to air quality, biodiversity, opportunities for cycling and walking as well as major economic potential for 'green' businesses.

Monitoring officer

The Strategy and Action Plan will require continual review against the baseline data in order to measure the effectiveness of the agreed actions.

S151 Officer

The recommended £75k budget can be funded through draw down from the Climate Change and Sustainability Reserve.

Whilst the Council remains ambitious in the delivery of its Climate Change Action Plan, it should be acknowledged that there may be occasions when financial restrictions prevent the implementation of desirable service changes in the future.

Future recommendations to Members will need to be presented within the context of the Council's broader financial position in order to support evidence-based decision-making.

Advice

Councillor Williams introduced the report to members and notified the meeting that he had made some minor changes to Appendix 4 to reflect comments made by the Liberal Democrat group. The information contained in this report has only been made available in the last couple of weeks so it has not had the opportunity to go to the relevant scrutiny committees so part of the recommendation was to send it to scrutiny for comments. Councillor Williams said he did not think it would be appropriate to make climate change a standing item on every overview and scrutiny agenda but would suggest a regular reporting cycle to the committees. He asked for clarification from Councillor Tindall about some of the points he raised about contracts, policies and protocols.

Councillor Tindall said that climate change was a serious issue with this plan extending to 2030, so asked if some wording about climate change could be included in all the council's documentation, contracts, protocols and policies. Any effort that our partners can make to reduce their use of carbon and help achieve the target would be welcome. Climate change should be a golden thread running through all local government documents.

Councillor Williams replied that as contracts are renewed or put out to tender, the council would expect companies to include information around their climate credentials. Councillor Williams asked Councillor Tindall to clarify that he wasn't expecting the council to revisit existing contracts as this would be expensive and difficult.

Councillor Tindall clarified that he would expect to see this in contracts moving forward.

Councillor Williams said that all policies have a review date built into them.

Councillor Griffiths asked Councillor Tindall to clarify that he was not expecting the council to change all its contracts for tenants.

Councillor Tindall said no that was not what he was expecting. He would like to see a phrase incorporated into these documents as and when they are reviewed so that everyone reading the documents will understand that the council is taking climate change seriously. Only 40 local authorities have created a climate change action plan so DBC are ahead of the pack.

M Gaynor said that all reports going to Cabinet in the future will require a climate change emergency impact and then new policies or procedures that come through should consider the climate emergency. Some procedures are very technical and wouldn't lend themselves to this. It will also be part of service planning moving forward so it is a golden thread of sorts. The commitment is there that it is a whole council and community issue.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 13 of the report about electric cars and was concerned that the focus seemed to be solely on electric with no consideration for hydrogen power.

M Gaynor said that an all-electric solution on its own wouldn't be enough. It is a fairly comprehensive report but it cannot cover everything. There is also a lot of work being done on methane. This is a start and the action plan is in development and it has got a lot of ideas to run with in the short and medium term but it is critical for the pledge the council have made that there will need to be technological improvements to allow this to happen. At the moment, it not sufficiently developed to make use of them but will when they become more efficient and available.

Councillor Birnie agreed that there problems at the moment with all of these solutions but would be cautious of going all out for electricity because of the financial implications.

Councillor Williams said that there is a difference in how the public can access electricity power and hydrogen power. People can have electric charging points at home and hydrogen would need to be bought at a service station – they cannot have hydrogen storage in every house. The way the public engage with them is different.

Councillor Tindall said it would be essential to involve the community and try and take people along with the plans so they are more receptive to the change.

Councillor Williams said he has taken the comment on board and said it is difficult as you can only go as far as the population will let you. Some measures will need national and perhaps international legislation. He said he did not believe that people would give up their cars easily for other forms of transport so the council must look to the science to give them a cleaner option.

M Gaynor said the action plan refers to community engagement by using the council as a means by which the public can access the correct information.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/49/20 STRATEGIC SITES DESIGN GUIDANCE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Decision

1. That the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document be approved for public consultation;
2. That authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure and Assistant Director, Planning, Development & Regeneration to agree the timing of the public consultation on the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

Corporate objectives

The DSDG design standards for new development will support the following objectives:

- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment: e.g. design principles that include promoting walkable neighbourhoods, accessible green infrastructure and prioritising pedestrians.
- Building strong and vibrant communities: e.g. including design principles providing a mix of uses and range of housing types and tenures integrated within neighbourhoods.
- Ensuring economic growth and prosperity: e.g. including design principles that promote contemporary, sustainably designed employment areas.
- Providing good quality affordable homes: e.g. including design principles to promote a range of tenures and housing typologies that meet all socio-economic needs and conform to best practice space, quality and sustainability standards.

Deputy Monitoring Officer:

There is a requirement for public participation prior to the adoption of a SPD by a local planning authority as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Deputy S.151 Officer

There are no financial implications of this report.

Advice

Councillor G Sutton introduced the report to members and said this was an exciting document which sets out the council's vision for the future. It sets out the strategy for ensuring future developments provide a vibrant, happy and healthy environment. This ties in with the previous report on climate change because it gives the opportunity to create buildings and properties that fit within the environmental aims the council wants to achieve.

J Doe added that the report had been to the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and their views have been embedded into the report. The document focusses on strategic sites as there is some large growth coming to Dacorum to give developers the appropriate tools to create developments in line with standards and style the council would like to see in Dacorum, dependant on the location. A more specific design guide will be coming forward soon for smaller sites. This project has been done in conjunction with St Albans District Council and the Hertfordshire LEP because it will be used by St Albans for development in their district and also covers large areas of employment land being considered on the Crown Estate land in East Hemel Hempstead. The recommendation asks Cabinet to approve the document to go out to public consultation. The consultation requires

documents to be available to view at The Forum and other sites for public inspection so the consultation will need to be arranged for when these sites reopen.

Recommendations agreed.

The Meeting ended at 7.15 pm

CABINET FORWARD PLAN

	DATE	MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION	Decision Making Process	Reports to Monitoring Officer/ S.151 Officer	CONTACT DETAILS	BACKGROUND INFORMATION
1.	21/07/20	Garages		02/07/20	Linda Roberts, Assistant Director of People, Performance & Innovation 01442 228979 Linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk	To update Cabinet on the progress of the Garages Review programme
2.	21/07/20	Appointment of a Principal Contractor for Coniston Road Development, Kings Langley.		02/07/20	Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing 01442 228855 Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk David Barrett, Group Manager Housing Development 01442 228252 David.barrett@dacorum.gov.uk	To seek approval to award the main contract and appoint a Principle Contractor to construct 10 Units at Coniston Road
3.	21/07/20	Medium Term Financial Update Plan		02/07/20	James Deane, Corporate Director Finance & Operations 01442 228278 james.deane@dacorum.gov.uk	To be provided
4.	21/07/20	Private Sector Assistance Policy		02/07/20	Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing 01442 228855 Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk	New policy to support the use of Disabled facilities grant and Better Care Fund and links between housing and health
5.	22/09/20	Appointment of a Principal Contractor for Eastwick Row Development, Hemel Hempstead.		03/09/20	Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing 01442 228855 Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk David Barrett, Group Manager Housing Development 01442 228252 David.barrett@dacorum.gov.uk	To seek approval to award the main contract and appoint a Principle Contractor to construct 10 Units at Coniston Road
6.	22/09/20	Climate Change		03/09/20	Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director Housing & Regeneration 01442 228575 Mark.gaynor@dacorum.gov.uk	To be provided
7.	22/09/20	Covid-19 Update		03/09/20	Sally Marshall, Chief Executive 01442 228213 sally.marshall@dacorum.gov.uk	To be provided
8.	22/09/20	Q1 Financial Report		03/09/20	Nigel Howcutt, Assistant Director Finance & Resources 01442 228662 Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk	A first quarter (April-June) review of the council's financial performance.
9.	20/10/20	Treasury Management Report		01/10/20	Nigel Howcutt, Assistant Director Finance & Resources 01442 228662 Nigel.howcutt@dacorum.gov.uk	A report on the 2019/20 treasury management performance.

Future Items:

- South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (J Doe)
- The Bury museum project (J Doe) - To update Cabinet on progress on options for delivering a new museum at The Bury, and seek agreement on the next stages of the project.
- Drug and Alcohol Support Commissioning (L Roberts & M Rawdon)
- Car parking supplementary planning document (J Doe)
- Local Plan update (J Doe)
- Constitution Update/Protocol on filming (M Brookes)
- Berkhamsted Sports Centre (M Brookes)



Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	23 June 2020
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy
Contact:	Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Natasha Beresford, Group Manager (Strategic Housing)
Purpose of report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide members with an overview of strategy development for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. 2. To provide members with an update on the key priority areas for homelessness in the next five years.
Recommendations	1. For cabinet to approve the 2020-24 Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy
Period for post policy/project review	This strategy will be reviewed and monitored annually, in conjunction with annual service plans and the HRA Business plan.
Corporate objectives:	Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those in most need.
Implications:	Failure to develop a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy would mean the Council were in breach of fulfilling its statutory requirements.
'Value for money' implications	The Council along with the Homeless Forum, monitors the housing service's approach to managing the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping service. In addition regular benchmarking of H-Clic data (data returns to central government) and other Hertfordshire County services is undertaken to ensure the service offers value for money
Risk implications	Failure to have an up to date Homeless & Rough Sleeping strategy is a contravention of statutory legislation.
Community Impact Assessment	Community Impact Assessment carried out on 12 May 2020 Attached as appendix 4
Health and safety Implications	Failure to appropriately delivery the statutory homeless service in line with legislation and guidance, could have serious health

	<p>& safety/safeguarding if the council does not ensure that eligible applicants receive appropriate assistance.</p>
<p>Deputy Monitoring Officer/ S.151 Officer Comments</p>	<p>Deputy Monitoring officer comments:</p> <p>Further to Section 2 of the HA, local housing authorities are required to review homelessness in their district and formulate a strategy based on the result of the review. A new strategy is required every four years.</p> <p>The proposed strategy meets the statutory duties under the HA.</p> <p>Deputy S151 Officer comments</p> <p>There are no direct financial implications as a result of this strategy.</p>
<p>Consultees:</p>	<p>Natasha Beresford, Strategic Housing Group Manager</p> <p>Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director of Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>Homeless Forum</p> <p>Multi Agency Response Panel/Homeless Action Review Team</p> <p>Herts County Council</p> <p>Tenants & Leaseholders Committee.</p>
<p>Background papers:</p>	<p>Appendix 1 Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy</p> <p>Appendix 2 Homelessness Strategy Update</p> <p>Appendix 3 Evidence base for homelessness and rough sleeping review</p> <p>Appendix 4 Community Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix 5 Current structure chart</p> <p>Appendix 6 Letter from MHCLG-next phase of accommodating rough sleepers</p>
<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	<p>Homelessness Act 2002 (HA)</p> <p>Homeless Reduction Act (HRA)</p> <p>Housing and Communities Overview & Scrutiny (H&OSC)</p> <p>Multi Agency Response Panel (MARP)</p> <p>Homeless Action Review Team (HART)</p>

	<p>Housing Quality Network (HNQ)</p> <p>Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)</p>
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Every Local Authority in England should by law have an up to date preventing homelessness strategy that sets out its plans to prevent and tackle homelessness. This is a statutory requirement as set out in Section 1(1) of the 2002 Act giving housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.
- 1.2. Local Authority homelessness strategies should have a lifetime of no longer than 5 years, and local authorities should keep their homelessness strategy under review, modify it from time to time in order to respond to new policy direction, caselaw, prevailing conditions in the borough and to comply with legal duties.
- 1.3. The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) brought along several challenges for local authorities including Dacorum. More staff were needed in the Homeless Prevention Team and this resulted in five additional Officers to the team, which were agreed at Cabinet in 2016. Current team structure attached as *Appendix 5*. We were also successful in a growth bid this year for two new posts, 1-year fixed term Homeless Prevention Officer and a Triage Officer. Service delivery has completely changed in terms of tasks for processing cases, this was outlined in previous report presented to members in July 2019.
- 1.4. One of the requirements upon local authorities following the implementation of the HRA was to complete quarterly data returns to central government via a new system called 'H-Clic' which has replaced the previous P1E reporting system. Since implementation last year, we have identified the following:
 - Approximately 40% of all approaches are made when the applicant is already homeless (known as relief cases).
 - A further 48% of all approaches are made when the applicant is threatened with homelessness (known as prevention cases).
 - Applicants that were not threatened with homelessness, and requiring basic advice and assistance in relation to their housing situation made 10% of all approaches.
 - 60% of all households that have approached the council are single with no dependents.
 - Of the above 60% a high proportion (about 80%) have an identified vulnerability or need such as mental health and/or drug and alcohol use. However, this does not necessarily translate to there being a

priority need for homelessness assistance or temporary accommodation

- Some of the challenges with H-Clic are mostly that it works on a very black and white basis and don't always allow accurate reporting when the cases don't follow the normal process.

1.5. The findings at 1.4 have been incorporated into the evidence based at *Appendix 3*, which have formed part of the review of the current strategy. The draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy replaces our 2016-2020 Homelessness Strategy previously reviewed by members. The new strategy will outline our key priorities for preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping in the borough from 2020-2024.

2. Review of the 2016-2020 Homelessness Strategy

2.1. Throughout the life span of the strategy we have engaged with our partners via the Homelessness Forum, Multi Agency Response Panel (MARP) and Homeless Action Review Team (HART), regular updates have been provided to members and Corporate Management Team. This engagement has to identify the trends of homelessness and worked with key partners to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping.

2.2. The current strategy runs from 2016 to 2020 and was updated in 2019 due to legislative change. The strategy highlighted the impact of Welfare reform, Universal Credit and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The strategy was based around five key commitments.

2.3. The Service has delivered a range of initiatives and services to fulfil the requirements set out in the 5 commitments of the 2016-2020 strategy and had also in this period been awarded the Gold Standard by the National Practitioner Support Service.

2.4. Key highlights through the delivery of this strategy document for the service have been:

- Maximise the use of temporary accommodation and were able to generate over £250k income for general fund.
- There has been continued prevention and no use of B&B for young children and families. In more recent times due to the unprecedented situation with COVID-19, the service has had to use B&B for single adults and couples to enable a successful response to the governments 'Everyone In' request.
- Introduction of a new Civica homeless system module.
- Success in securing additional tranches totalling over £300k of additional grant funding to support the homeless and the eradication of rough sleeping.

Full review of the strategy is attached as *Appendix 1*.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. To develop the new strategy, the service has worked closely with the Housing Quality Network (HQN), as we felt it was important to use an external specialist facilitator to draw out independent views from our partners and stakeholders. A consultation event was held in October 2019 with members of the Homeless Forum, which included a range of stakeholders including, the Police, Probation, Health, local Registered Providers, Charitable organisations, elected members, several local voluntary support services and staff from several key departments in the council.
- 3.2. Feedback was also given by the Tenants and Leaseholders via the Tenant & Leaseholder Committee on 21 November 2019.
- 3.3. Feedback from service users was gained by holding a focus group with those who have experienced homelessness.
- 3.4. The responses received through the consultation stages have been incorporated into the final document.

4. Working in Partnership

- 4.1. Our strong relationship with our partners and many other public sector and voluntary organisations enables us to deliver an excellent level of service whilst maximising resources and avoiding duplication of effort.
- 4.2. An example of some of our successful partnership working is with St Albans District Council and Hightown Housing Association in managing the Rough Sleeper Initiative project. This has led to the recruitment of a Housing First Project Lead, Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker, a Community Engagement & Recovery Worker and a Pathways and Outreach co-ordinator Officer who we are working closely with us to complement our statutory delivery and support us to eradicate rough sleeping in Dacorum.
- 4.3. This excellent partnership working, has seen us reduce the number of rough sleepers from 23 at the height of summer 2019 to 5 at January 2020. Each identified rough sleeper has a targeted action plan implemented by a multi-agency project group working together to achieve positive outcomes for all clients where possible.

5. Additional challenges

- 5.1. As members are aware, there has been considerable impact on the Homeless Prevention team as a result of COVID-19. The service is continuing to work closely with our key stakeholders and partners to monitor the impact of the virus and has taken a lead in work across the county, by jointly chairing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Cell. In line with *Appendix 6* the service is engaging with Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to develop a move on plan for all households placed into accommodation in line with the Dame Louise Casey ask to bring 'Everyone in'.

- 5.2. We have taken into consideration the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and in particular pre-empting additional challenges that may be faced as we start to move towards recovery. With this in mind, our strategic approach has been focussed on essential activity to ensure continued efforts towards preventing homelessness in our borough. We will continue to work closely with colleagues at MHCLG to deliver a consistent and co-ordinated response to guidance and legislation.
- 5.3. The service is working closely with colleagues across the County and within our Community Safety & Safeguarding team to review and monitor the progress of the Domestic Abuse Bill, which is predicted to receive Royal Assent in the autumn and is highly likely to place additional demands on the service and place additional requirements on the council in respect of managing a response. Our new proposed strategy reflects this and we have committed to undertaking a review of Domestic Abuse services in the borough in partnership with our Community Safety colleagues.

6. The commitments

- 6.1. Using this feedback and information, along with relevant legislation and requirements, H-clic data and council data we have set out our five commitments for the new Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. These are:
- 6.2. **Commitment 1: Continue to work with partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible.**
- There is already an active homelessness forum which is well participated by partners and has improved our partnership working to prevent homelessness. We however aim to improve on this and work towards earlier intervention and promote Duty to Refer particularly amongst hospitals and health sector organisations.
- 6.3. **Commitment 2: Improve access, security and stability within the PRS.**
- We have in previous years managed to improve our working relationships with Housing Benefit and that has led to increase in the use of Discretionary Housing payments to pay for deposits, while we use our Homeless Prevention grant to pay rent in advance when required. We are however in process of scoping a new scheme to support landlords and improve access to the private sector and reduce demand on social housing.
- 6.4. **Commitment 3: Increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness for those with complex needs (Mental Health, Drugs & Alcohol, Domestic Abuse & Modern Slavery).**
- Partnership working with work with health sector organisations has always been a challenge but we are committing to develop better relationships with them. Examples include current work with the

Clinical Commissioning Group to maximise impact of new services in preventing and tackling homelessness. We also intend to, with the support of our partners provide increased tailored support to those with complex needs.

6.5. Commitment 4: Provide tailored services to meet the needs of different groups.

- We aim to improve appropriate accommodation options that are available for young people by working in partnership with other providers. Additionally by undertaking continued review of our existing stock we will be able to increase take up and reduce homelessness in the older population.

6.6. Commitment 5: Eradicate rough sleeping.

- The service will continue during 2020-21 to work in partnership with Hightown Housing Association to deliver against the requirements set out in our Memorandum of Understanding from the Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to deliver a successful rough sleeper initiative. This initiative will be reviewed with further consideration given to the approach to be taken in 2021 onwards.

6.7. Conclusion

- To conclude the draft 2020-2024 strategy demonstrates Dacorum Borough Council's commitment to the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping. Throughout the five commitments, we outline how this will be achieved by providing a holistic service, which is individual and tailored to each person's needs.
- As a service, we understand that working with others helps us to provide a joined up service both internally and externally, sharing of intelligence helps to deliver greater efficiency, as a result we have improved and built upon existing relationships with our Community Safety & Safeguarding Teams. In doing so we have been able to make the best use of resources available, reduce wherever possible duplication and provide the best possible service to those who are at threat of homelessness or are rough sleeping.
- Finally, we acknowledge that to be successful we have to be adaptable, which we have a proven track record in doing as shown by our recent response in relation to the COVID-19 situation. That is why we are committed to continuously improve our services and taking an informed approach to service delivery so that we can continue to meet housing need in the future.
- The Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy was presented to H&OSC on 3 June 2020 and received very positive comments from Members.

7. Recommendation

- Cabinet members to offer feedback on the 2020-24 Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.
- For Cabinet to approve the new strategy.



All Local Authority Chief Executives in England

www.gov.uk/mhclg

28 May 2020

Dear Chief Executives,

Moving onto the next phase of accommodating rough sleepers

Thank you all for the work you and your teams have undertaken in recent weeks to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular, for your work to support vulnerable rough sleepers to self-isolate. Providing accommodation offers to the vast majority of rough sleepers and people who were in communal sleeping spaces is a truly remarkable achievement which has saved lives.

It remains important to continue to help and support vulnerable people as the virus continues to pose a risk. As the risk reduces and we look towards easing the lockdown restrictions, we begin to enter the next phase of this endeavour and need to make plans for the future. We must continue to focus on ensuring accommodation and support arrangements can be managed safely to protect the most vulnerable, including those with complex needs. At the same time we need now to start planning the next steps for accommodating and supporting people to move on from emergency accommodation. We are doing so, and that is why we announced £433m of funding for accommodation for rough sleepers last weekend.

The Government also announced, on 2 May, the appointment of Dame Louise Casey to lead a Taskforce on the next phase of the Government's support for rough sleepers. Through the Taskforce, backed by our existing MHCLG Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Advisers, we will be working to support you during this next phase. As part of this work I am now asking that you put in place a plan of support for all rough sleepers accommodated in hotels and other forms of emergency accommodation during the response to the pandemic.

I understand that designing and delivering these plans represents another big challenge, and that many of you have begun this preparation. We currently have an opportunity for an unprecedented level of engagement with individuals who might otherwise be sleeping rough. Understanding people's needs now and planning the next steps will be crucial for continuing to save lives and supporting some of the most vulnerable people.

In particular, I ask that you consider the following points closely:

- That as the pandemic continues you continue to be health-led and, working with health partners to take a clinical health-led response to the ongoing risk of Covid-19 during the next phase. This population will contain some people who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, some of whom will need to continue to shield in line with clinical advice and in accordance with guidance which can be found here:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>
 - <https://www.pathway.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19-Clinical-homeless-sector-plan-160420-1.pdf>

- That you work up your next steps plan with support from MHCLG. We, and the Taskforce, stand ready to work with you on this and that will require a full assessment of your cohort, the options you have available and where the pressures are
- You should carry out individual assessments and take decisions on who you can provide support to, which would include providing accommodation to vulnerable people sleeping rough.
- In terms of move-on accommodation all options need to be considered, we ask:
 - That you seek to encourage people, where appropriate and possible, to return to friends and family.
 - That you seek to find as many sustainable move-on options for people as possible. This should begin with an assessment of the availability of stock locally followed, where applicable, by work in partnership with Housing Associations to increase the supply of move-on accommodation available for your COVID-19 response, whether through acquisitions, repair and refurbishment or long-term leasing arrangements. Where appropriate, individuals should be supported to move into the private rented sector.
 - That, where sustainable move-on options aren't available, you put in place short term accommodation to ensure that people do not have to return to the streets whilst you work to find longer term options for them.
- Where appropriate moves into alternative accommodation can take place now. We ask that you seek to phase your move-on work so that you stagger exits from emergency accommodation as much as possible through the coming weeks.
- For some people a voluntary return to their country of origin may be the best outcome for them. Where an individual wants to return home, you can support them to do so.
- As ever, support for individuals ongoing physical and mental health is important. So we also ask that you seek to work with health partners to plan for continuity of care for people as they move out of emergency accommodation to support their ongoing physical and mental health, substance use, social care and housing needs.

Our expert Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Advisers have been working with your organisations during these challenging times to help support and shape your local plans. They will continue to do so and to work with your teams to agree how you might reconsider plans for existing funding, for example through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, to support this work now that the rough sleeping challenges you face have fundamentally changed.

We are asking for these initial plans to be set out by 11 June in a co-production process with our team. Where appropriate, you should start moving people into accommodation as soon as they are able to do so, following the completion of a joint housing, health and care plan. I know that several of you have already begun this planning in earnest and initial discussions have taken place.

I appreciate that these are challenging timescales and that your plans will develop over time – but we need this information so we can work with you to support your next steps work over the coming weeks.

Safety of your staff, those in the hotels and other accommodation and of residents will I know remain at the forefront of your minds. All organisations and people who work in homelessness, housing, health (including mental health) and social care have responsibilities to support people who are at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect (including self-neglect); to safeguard. We continue to ask that local authorities and partners adopt positive practice in safeguarding.

I do recognise that these are challenging times and that you may have accommodated people who would normally and otherwise be ineligible for support, making judgements based on risk to life. I wanted to take this opportunity to restate the government's position on eligibility relating to immigration status, including for those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). The law regarding that status remains in place. Local authorities must use their judgment in assessing what support they may lawfully give to each person on an individual basis, considering that person's specific circumstances and support needs. You will already be used to making such judgements on accommodating individuals who might otherwise be ineligible, during extreme weather for example, where there is a risk to life.

Many of you have also asked about funding. As you will be aware, the Government has announced an initial £3.2m fund for rough sleeping accommodation and services during the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, we have provided two subsequent rounds of £1.6 billion for local authorities to respond to COVID-19 pressures, including for services helping the most vulnerable, such as homeless people. We have also now announced that we have accelerated our commitment, made at Budget, to provide 6,000 units of accommodation for rough sleepers with 3,300 of these becoming available in the next 12 months. This will allow us to provide thousands more homes to be made available for vulnerable rough sleepers where they can get the support they need to recover from life on the streets. This unprecedented commitment is backed by £433m of Government funding, including a 37% increase in the total revenue support of the programme. We will continue to work with local government over the coming weeks to ensure you are managing as the pandemic progresses.

Thank you very much for everything you are doing to save lives and provide care for some of the most vulnerable people in our society.



LUKE HALL MP

NPSS
National Practitioner Support Service

Local Authorities achieving the
10 Local Challenges ●●●●●

Peer-led Practitioner Prevention Partnership

GOLD STANDARD



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Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2020 – 2024

Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council’s housing service owns around 10,000 rented properties, as well as the freehold of approximately 1,700 leasehold flats.

Having secure and affordable accommodation is a key foundation for living well. Losing a home is a traumatic experience, which has a real and lasting impact on every member of the household.

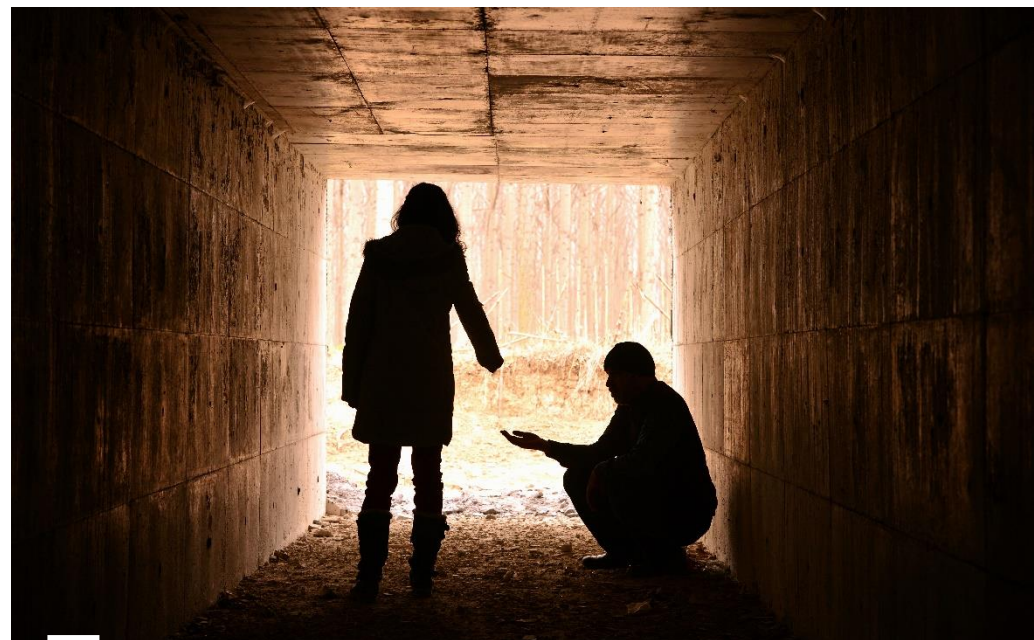
Each year, around 800 – 900 households approach the Council for advice and support to prevent them becoming homeless.

This strategy, reasserts Dacorum Borough Council’s corporate commitment to work with partners to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

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I am pleased to introduce our Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

This strategy sets out our approach to how we will effectively support those faced with homelessness.

We recognise that the impact of losing a home can be far reaching affecting amongst other things health, wellbeing, education, employment.

This strategy outlines how we will support and work with our Partner organisations to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in Dacorum.

Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths

Our vision

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 brought new statutory duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for every household threatened with becoming homeless.

It also encouraged partnership working with a new statutory duty to refer for many public sector organisations.

The new duties bring an increased focus on earlier prevention and a more proactive approach.

Our vision is:

People living in Dacorum have access to a safe, affordable home that meets their needs; advice and support is available for those threatened with homelessness; effective early intervention means that no-one becomes homeless or has to sleep rough

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This strategy supports the Council's corporate vision of

- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
- Building strong and vibrant communities
- Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

Building on our National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) Gold Standard for our work in preventing homelessness, and by promoting our Strategy for the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, we outline how we can support residents of Dacorum who are at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping to access appropriate settled accommodation.



National and local considerations

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 brought with it new statutory duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for every household threatened with becoming homeless. The Act also encouraged partnership working by introducing a new statutory duty to refer for public sector organisations.

The number of people threatened with becoming homeless has continued to increase for several reasons, a few of which are because family and friends are no longer able to accommodate them, or because an existing private sector tenancy is being ending.

Within the borough of Dacorum and the wider county of Hertfordshire, there is a shortage of social and affordable housing. Demand for the social and affordable housing there is continues to be high. There are nearly 6,000 applicants on the housing register for social housing in Dacorum. The greatest demand is for one and two-bedroom housing.

An increasing number of households are under threat of becoming homeless because of domestic abuse. The most common household type for those threatened with becoming homeless is single adults. Single parents are the next most common household type.

Caps on the Local Housing Allowance has had a significant impact on affordability; despite the cap being recently lifted there will continue to be a gap between market rents and the level of housing benefit payable, which will result in some affordable and private sector properties being unaffordable, in particular to single people or single parent families.



Continued...

Since the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, public sector cuts have continued which has resulted in fewer support services for vulnerable households. Changes in working practices and welfare benefits have affected the ability of many households to pay their rent.

The needs of those threatened with homelessness have continued to become more complex with around half of those approaching the Council for advice having one or more support needs; these include support with mental health, physical health and domestic abuse.

Complexity and lack of knowledge of the range of services provided by different organisations, and how to access them can make it difficult for households to access the support they need.

Partnership working in the Borough is already strong but there is potential to review and improve current relationships to maximise partner contributions, and outcomes for homeless and vulnerable households.

Due to the national pandemic COVID-19, local authorities have in these unusual times responded to the Dame Louise Casey ask to bring 'Everyone in'. This ask was to give rough sleepers and those in shared sleeping places, such as communal shelters, the very best chance of coping with the onslaught of Covid-19. The key driver has been ensuring that, if possible, they will have the same chances as other vulnerable people to self-isolate and receive the same care, protection and treatment where necessary.



Delivering a great service

Equality and Diversity

The council believes all residents should receive a good standard of service *regardless of*; age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment), race, religion or belief and sexual orientation (Equality and Diversity Act 2010). We are committed to being inclusive with our approach.

Value for Money

It is important to us that our residents feel they are getting good value for money. The Council, along with involved tenants and leaseholders, monitors the housing service's approach to managing the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping and seeks to ensure that we have the resources to deliver excellent services at reasonable cost. As a service, we are proactive in identifying and applying for grant funding to support the delivery of our service.

Working in Partnership

Our strong relationships with our partners and many other public sector and voluntary organisations enables us to deliver an excellent level of service whilst maximising resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

Working with other agencies

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 encourages partnership working between local authorities and public sector organisations. By working effectively with our partner's we will provide holistic support to those threatened with homelessness or rough sleeping.



The Commitments

To develop this strategy, the Council considered the views of a range of stakeholders. A consultation event was held with members of the Homeless Forum, which included a range of stakeholders including, the Police, Probation, Health, local Registered Providers, Charitable organisations, elected members and several local voluntary support services.

Feedback was given by the Tenants and Leaseholders via the Tenant & Leaseholder Committee.

A full public consultation was completed in February 2020. Feedback from service users was gained by holding a focus group with those who have experienced homelessness.

Using this feedback and information, along with relevant legislation and requirements, we have set out our five commitments for the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. These are:

Commitment One: Continue to work with partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible

Commitment Two: Improve access, security and stability within the private rented sector (PRS)

Commitment Three: Increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness for those with complex needs (Mental Health, Drugs & Alcohol, Domestic Abuse & Modern Slavery)

Commitment Four: Provide services tailored to meet the needs of individuals

Commitment Five: Eradicate rough sleeping



Commitment 1: Continue to work with partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible

We recognise the importance and benefits of effective partnership working, and through this strategy, we aim to focus on continuing to develop this.

To achieve this, we will:

- Provide an up to date directory of services for those threatened with homelessness;
- Continue to promote Duty to Refer particularly amongst hospitals and health sector organisations, including mental health. Extend a voluntary duty to refer to other organisations;
- With partners, work to ensure agile services which can flex to meet changing need;
- Work towards earlier intervention including predicting households at risk of becoming homeless;
- Research/pilot data-sharing approaches including shared support plans owned by customers who can share across agencies;
- Ensure the Homelessness Forum works proactively to ensure the provision of holistic services;
- Encourage Registered Providers to provide early notification of planned evictions from social housing.

Commitment 2: Improve access, security and stability within the PRS

We would like to ensure that private sector stock with the Borough is of an acceptable standard, and provides a stable and appropriate housing option.

To achieve this, we will:

- Launch a new scheme to support greater access into the private rented sector, drawing on recent stock condition survey and other information sources to ensure it is tailored to the needs of Dacorum;
- Maximise the impact of Better Care Funding particularly for adaptations; ensuring appropriate priority to households threatened with homelessness;
- Continue to work with landlords to promote good housing management and to enable tenants to remain in their homes;
- Continue to work with local lettings agents, seeking to influence them to accept households who have experienced homelessness;
- Explore a new incentive scheme to allow us to encourage Private Landlords to work with us to prevent and relieve homelessness;
- Utilise the Private Sector Assistance fund to enable people to stay in their own homes.

The Commitments

Commitment 3: Increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness for those with complex needs (Mental Health, Drugs & Alcohol, Domestic Abuse & Modern Slavery)

We understand that people threatened with Homelessness may sometimes have complex support needs, and we aim to provide a holistic service considering this.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop improved pathways for those with complex needs to prevent and tackle homelessness, supported by clear, documented and robust procedures;
- Educate staff to enable them to signpost to support agencies, and empower them to be confident to challenge when other organisations are not delivering;
- Work with mental health services staff to increase the number of referrals made under the Duty to Refer;
- Work with Herts County Council to ensure newly commissioned housing-related support services give an appropriate priority to those with complex needs;

Ctd:

- Work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to maximise impact of new services in preventing and tackling homelessness;
- Work with colleagues to deliver aspects of the Community Safety action plan, particularly building ongoing relationships between housing, homelessness and the prevention of crime;
- Review services for those suffering domestic abuse in light of the proposed new legal duties under the Domestic Abuse Bill;
- Working with our Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker, and Community Engagement & Recovery Worker we will continue to provide support to Dacorum's rough sleepers to access all the support services available to them.
- Continue to work with the Community Safety Action Group, to collaborate on public safety issues.
- Review services for those subject to modern slavery, including accommodation options.

Commitment 4: Provide tailored services to meet the needs of different groups

We are committed to providing holistic and inclusive services, which consider the needs of different groups.

To achieve this, we will:

- Promote greater awareness of range of services for young people;
- Provide appropriate accommodation options for younger people including specific Mother and Baby provision, including supported housing and working in partnership with registered social landlords;
- Review and promote homeless prevention services for older people, making the most of our sheltered accommodation;
- Working in partnership with prisons including HMP The Mount and Bedford to ensure that we have prior knowledge or any ex-offenders due for release to avoid them becoming street homeless.

Commitment 5: Eradicate rough sleeping

We are committed to eradicating rough sleeping within the Borough, by supporting those individuals to find a suitable and settled home. In line with the Dame Louise Casey ask to bring 'Everyone in' the council will seek to ensure that no one is at risk of returning to the streets.

To achieve this, we will:

- Continue No Second Night Out approach with partners;
- Through targeted work and recovery, engage with partners across the county to meet the needs of those at risk of rough sleeping;
- Identify move on opportunities for all households placed under the Dame Louise Casey ask to bring 'Everyone in';
- Evaluate Housing First model when current pilot ends in 2021;
- Work with Herts County Council to ensure new and existing housing-related support services meet needs of rough sleepers in the Dacorum area;
- Continue to coordinate the Multi Agency Response Panel to tackle rough sleeping, by providing support and ensuring agencies working a joined up way;
- Conduct a bi-monthly street count to monitor rough sleeping and identify homeless people who need support;
- Provide each homeless applicant with a Personal Housing Plan, to work actively with the applicant to prevent or relieve homelessness.

Conclusion

To conclude, this strategy demonstrates Dacorum Borough Council's commitment to the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping.

Throughout the four commitments, we outline how this will be achieved by providing a holistic service, which is individual and tailored to each individual's needs.

We understand that working with others helps us to provide a joined up service, which makes the best use of resources available, and provides the best possible service to those who at threat of homelessness or are rough sleeping.

Finally, we acknowledge that to be successful we have to be adaptable. That is why we are committed to continuously improving our services and taking an informed approach to service delivery so that we can continue to meet housing need in the future.

This strategy will be monitored annually by the Strategy, Improvement and Engagement team, in conjunction with annual service plan and the HRA Business plan.



Homelessness Strategy Update

We have undertaken a review of the Homelessness Strategy to ensure we are fully compliant with the requirements of the HRA. Below outlines the work undertaken to date on each commitment.

Commitment 1: Continue to build partnerships across different sectors and lead Dacorum's response to preventing and tackling homelessness

- Our homeless Forum is chaired by our registered provider Hightown. It was previously chaired by Wendy Lewington the CEO of DENS who is now the vice chair. There has been increasing engagement from the voluntary sector, social services, Members, Clinical Commissioning Group, local Community Mental Health services and Police in tackling homelessness issues.
- Pathways for clients have been developed and commitment from all key organisations, which relates to Hospital Discharge; - Mental Health; - Prison; - Care Leavers; - Ex Armed Forces; - Domestic Violence.
- An internal service audit of The Elms was carried out in June 2018 to ensure contract compliance. Areas of feedback were provided to supplier to aid service improvement; no significant performance issues were identified.
- A communications plan is currently being developed to ensure that our partners and residents are aware of our response to homelessness, which impacts on the whole community, this is in line with the service plan and key priorities.

Commitment 2: Work together with partners and residents to understand the causes of homelessness and increase the help Dacorum services can offer

- Funding has been awarded to enable development of a Housing First model to support people with complex needs experiencing homelessness into accommodation. This project is now up and running and has already housed some of the boroughs most complex individuals.
- This funding also included provision for a Dacorum outreach team that are working with rough sleepers. We also received separate funding for a dedicated outreach worker to work with rough sleepers with alcohol issues.
- The council's No Second Night Out Policy, which outlines our approach to tackling rough sleeping was reviewed in 2018 to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- The service awarded grants of £10k of homelessness prevention grants to one of our Voluntary Sector Organisations in 2018/19 to prevent and tackle homelessness through outreach work. This grant was linked to the Cold Weather funding from MHCLG, this grant was approved by MHCLG and therefore funds spent have been claimed back by the Council.
- We have had two rounds of cold weather funding now that has put in increased provision for rough sleepers during the cold weather months including the extension of day centre hours and increased emergency crash-pad provision.
- Launched Tenant Academy in 2017, which allows DBC tenants and leaseholders as well as homeless people living in the Council's temporary accommodation to access training and skills courses.

Commitment 3: Improve access, security and stability in the private rented sector and help Dacorum residents remain in their home

- Working arrangements with the Housing Benefit team have been improved. This has led to increased use of DHP to pay for deposits in the private sector.

- The Council had a contract with Westminster Drug Project and provided funding for Living Stable Lives to provide support in the private sector. They offered mediation and support for landlord/ tenant disputes to prevent homelessness.
- Following transfer of the statutory functions relation to private sector in January 2018, the team have been working closely with our internal and external partners to ensure that existing landlords with HMO properties adhere to the regulations, in addition we are currently increasing our level of activity in licencing properties under the new definitions. H&OSC have recently reviewed developments in this service area at committee in June 2019.
- The Council now pays rent in advance in addition to the deposits that was being paid.

Commitment 4: Empower Dacorum residents to make informed decisions about their housing options

- We improved our Enhanced Housing Options (EHO) toolkit so people can access housing advice at all times and ensured that all information is correct in line with HRA. Applicants can access the EHO and state what their housing issue is. The tool provides advice that is tailored to their needs and reduces need for direct contact with Officers.
- Clients are able to complete an online web form to gain a referral to Homeless Prevention and Assessment Team.
- The service is currently undergoing a review of the website content to make it easier for residents to access the EHO and information relevant to their situation.

Commitment five: Reduce the effect of homelessness on young people and families

- The service has continued to ensure that applicants are provided with access to safe, secure and suitable temporary accommodation, the service has not used bed and breakfast accommodation for young people and families with young children since June 2016.
- Funding is provided by the service to improve young people's understanding of 'living independently' by offering life skills workshops and housing eligibility. This funding also enables sessions in secondary schools to take place educating young people at an early stage about related homeless issues. This service is delivered by Herts Young Homeless and sessions are known as Home Truths & Next Steps. The aim of Home Truths is to raise awareness of the realities of homelessness and the support available, as well as to begin to consider the process of leaving home. The aim of Next Steps is also to prepare students for the realities of leaving home and moving to university or into their own accommodation. They also ensure young people have access to appropriate support following their experience of homelessness.

Dacorum Borough Council – evidence base for homelessness and rough sleeping review

Consultation draft

This draft document has been prepared by HQN to be shared with partners and customers as part of our consultation on the new homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. It includes the evidence base from which the new proposed strategy is drawn.

Contents

1. Geography and county-wide working
2. Corporate context
3. Current strategy for preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping
4. Data analysis
5. Allocations policy and Housing register
6. Consultation
7. Current prevention services, gaps and challenges
8. Emerging themes to take forward into strategy

Appendix One – feedback from survey

1. Geography and county-wide working

Dacorum BC covers the western area of Hertfordshire County. The main town is Hemel Hempstead. Despite its close proximity to London, 85% of the area is rural, with 60% being in the Green Belt.

There is county-wide working on issues relating to homelessness and rough sleeping. Housing related support services are commissioned by Herts County Council on a county-wide basis; new contracts are being commissioned in 2020. There is a county-wide Herts Head of Housing meeting to discuss strategic issues; team leaders also have a county-wide meeting to discuss more operational issues.

2. Corporate context

2.1 Awards

The council has won a number of awards for housing and related services including:

- National Practitioner Support Service Gold award for homelessness services
- Centre for Housing Support 3 star excellence standard
- TPAS Pro landlord accreditation
- ISO 9000:2015 quality management standards

2.2 Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan runs from 2015 to 2020 and includes commitments to:

- Deliver a £30m regeneration of the Hemel Hempstead town centre
- An economic development strategy with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the UK
- Work with the Hertfordshire Enterprise Partnership to deliver a local Enterprise zone bringing jobs and essential infrastructure
- Work with partners to reduce crime and the fear of crime
- Build 300 new affordable homes and continue to invest in the council's housing stock
- Deliver services through a mix of voluntary, private and public sector partners
- Deliver innovation and value for money

Other targets include:

- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Encouraging the use of green energy
- Increasing levels of digital inclusion and on-line literacy
- Ensuring residents are involved in the design and delivery of services
- Supporting an additional 500 new affordable homes through developer agreements and RPs
- Deliver 2,000 new homes on the open market

There are also specific targets to reduce homelessness in the Corporate Plan:

- Provide help and support to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- Support residents to access good quality and affordable homes in the private rented sector
- Continue to focus on preventing homelessness through proactive advice and assistance
- Increase the availability of temporary and permanent accommodation
- Use B&B accommodation in emergencies only

2.3 Housing strategy

A new housing strategy was adopted in 2018, for the period up to 2021. The strategy highlights some key challenges for Dacorum, including:

- Significant predicted increase in the number of older people (65+)
- Increasing difficulty for those on benefits to afford private sector rents, with benefit rates falling some 15 – 25% below private rent levels; a high proportion of those who are homeless come from the private rented sector

The strategy includes:

- A focus on developing a private rented sector which offers a safe and accessible housing option
- Ensuring that services take into account the different and varying needs of local people

The key priorities and actions are:

- Work in partnership to meet the demand for quality affordable housing
 - Implementing a new housing development strategy
 - More effective joint working with local housing associations
 - Redevelop under-used garage sites for new homes for social rent
 - Closer working with planning colleagues to maximise delivery through S106
- Proactively and effectively tackle poor conditions in private sector housing
 - Develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy
 - Work with landlords to identify and appropriately license all HMOs
 - Explore the option of developing a local lettings agency
 - Review approach to tenancy sustainment in private sector
- Understand our housing stock and use it to provide right homes to meet need
 - Drive forward asset management strategy
 - Carry out stock condition survey
 - Manage balance between under-occupation and overcrowding
 - Make smarter choices in how we manage disabled adaptations
- Support and empower our Council tenants
 - Implement new sustainable tenancies strategy
 - Develop robust approach to tenancy audits
 - Design target approaches for those most at risk of loneliness
 - Develop a new tenant involvement strategy

3. Current strategy for preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

The current strategy runs from 2016 to 2020 and has already been updated in 2019. The strategy highlights the impact of Welfare Reform and Universal Credit, and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The strategy is based around five key commitments, with identified actions as follows:

- Continue to build partnerships across different sectors and lead Dacorum's response to preventing and tackling homelessness
 - Increase the effectiveness of the homelessness forum
 - Offer holistic support by improving pathways between services
 - Review agreements between housing services and external organisations
 - Lead a borough-wide response to any national changes
 - Have a communication plan to ensure that partners and residents are aware of our response to homelessness

- Use our travel assistance to fund reconnection for clients with their local area
- Work together with partners and residents to understand the causes of homelessness and increase the help Dacorum services can offer
 - Use customer insight to map services against need
 - Develop a Housing First model for those with complex needs
 - Eradicate rough sleeping through a No Second Night Out model
 - Identify potential victims of domestic abuse and those with mental health problems to enable earlier intervention and prevention of homelessness
 - Support grass roots organisations to set up initiatives to tackle the causes of homelessness
- Improve access, security and stability within the private rented sector and allow Dacorum residents to remain in their homes
 - Improve access to information on housing rights
 - Work with private sector landlords to enable tenants to remain in their homes
 - Develop a scheme allowing people to access private rented sector
 - Increase support for mortgage repossession prevention
- Empower Dacorum residents to make decisions about their housing options
 - Easy access to housing options information
 - Improve Enhanced Housing Options toolkit and on-line information
 - Improve contact channels
 - Increase access to housing and options advice through outreach and pop-ups
- Reduce the effect of homelessness on young people and their families
 - Increase referrals to mediation services
 - Reduce use of B&B for young people and families with children
 - Offer workshops on life skills and housing eligibility for young people
 - Ensure children and young people have access to appropriate support following their experience of homelessness

4. Data analysis

In order to capture data on homelessness prevention and relief, MHCLG introduced a new monitoring system from April 2018, H-CLIC. This means that it is not possible to fully compare data from previous years with data collected post the introduction of the HRA.

The information below focuses on the period since the introduction of H-CLIC although some historic data (P1E data) has also been included to provide longer term trends.

4.1 Reason for approach

The tables below give the reasons for clients approaching the service, broken down by year. This shows the main reasons why people become at risk of homelessness, which are consistent across the last 20 months.

Table 1 – reasons why people become homeless (all approaches)

Reason	Number 2018	Number 2019 YTD
Family no longer willing to accommodate	221	119
End of AST	219	113
Other	115	59
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	82	53
Domestic Abuse	59	61
Friends no longer willing to accommodate	25	25
End of Social rented	30	23
Eviction from supported housing	18	19
Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment	14	13
End of private tenancy – not AST	11	13
Left institution with no accommodation available	6	6
Mortgage repossession	3	4
Disrepair	2	1
Fire/flood/emergency	2	3
Racially motivated violence or harassment	1	1
Left HM forces	0	2
Total	858	671

Source: DBC

If the number of approaches continues at the same level for the remainder of the year, the service will be dealing with 895 cases in total, a small increase on 2018.

It is noticeable that there have been more approaches due to Domestic Abuse in the year to date than there were for the whole of the previous year.

4.2 Duty owed

Table 2 – households assessed and duty owed (2018/19)

	Dacorum	%age	England	%age
Threatened with homelessness – prevention duty owed	358	53	145,020	51
Homeless – relief duty owed	287	42	118,700	41
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days	33	5	22,700	8
Total number of assessments	678	-	286,410	-
Total number where duty owed	645	95	263,720	92

Source: MHCLG live tables. Percentage column calculated using total number of assessments

Table 2 shows that prevention is working for around half of all cases. Dacorum figures largely reflect the national pattern; Dacorum has a slightly higher percentage of successful prevention cases and a correspondingly slightly lower percentage of relief cases – but these figures are still considered experimental and minor variations may not be significant.

4.3 Current accommodation

Table 3 - Accommodation at time of application for those for whom a duty is owed (2018/9)

Private rented sector	160
Living with family	169
No fixed abode	155
Social rented	52
Living with friends	49
Homeless leaving an Institution	8
Rough sleeping	9
Owner occupier (including shared ownership)	3
Temporary accommodation	6
NASS	-
Refuge	14
Other	23

Source: MHCLG live tables.

Table 3 shows that those who had previously been living with their families were the largest single group approaching the service, closely followed by those living in the private rented sector. The next largest group were those with no fixed abode, followed by those living in social rented housing.

4.4 Household characteristics

Table 4 – type of household owed a duty (2018/19)

	Prevention duty	Relief duty	Total
Single parent with dependent children (male)	8	6	14
Single parent with dependent children (female)	96	53	149
Single adult (male)	77	110	187
Single adult (female)	84	87	171
Couple with dependent children	56	13	69
Couple/two adults no children	29	15	44
Three or more adults with dependent children	3	2	5
Three or more adults no children	3	1	4

Source: MHCLG live tables.

Table 4 shows that the predominant household types approaching the service were single men, single women and women single parents. Of these, homelessness was prevented for nearly two-thirds of women single parents, and half of single female

adults. Men fared slightly less well, with successful prevention for just over half of male single parents and around 40% of single men. Homelessness prevention was also successful for the majority of couples whether or not they had dependent children.

Table 5 – employment status of main adult owed a duty (2018/19)

Registered unemployed	48
Not working due to long term illness or disability	45
Working full-time	93
Working part-time	48
Not seeking work/at home	60
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	24
Retired	16
Student/training	1
Other	35
Not known	275

Source: MHCLG live tables.

Table 5 shows that a significant proportion of the main adults in households where a duty was owed are working either full-time or part-time. The number of households where the main adult is retired is relatively small but this may increase as the proportion of older adults in the general population increases.

Table 6 – age of main adult owed a duty (2018/19)

16/17	2
18 - 24	134
25 - 34	209
35 - 44	145
45 - 54	89
55 - 64	41
65 - 74	17
75+	8

Source: MHCLG live tables.

The age range indicated in Table 6 generally reflects national statistics. The numbers of older adults are higher than the number shown as retired in the previous table, perhaps reflecting the fact that many people now work beyond 65.

4.7 Prevention and relief duty outcomes

The tables below show outcomes from the new prevention and relief duties. Figures in tables 7 – 10 include all post-HRA cases.

Table 7 – accommodation outcomes for all prevention cases

Secured alternative accommodation for 12 or more months	68
Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months	34
Secured existing accommodation for 12 or more months	19
Secured existing accommodation for 6 or more months	47
Grand total	168

Source: DBC

Table 7 above shows that the majority of cases where homelessness is prevented are through securing alternative accommodation; however a significant minority of cases (almost 40%) are able to remain in their existing accommodation for 6 months or longer.

Table 8 – outcomes for all prevention cases

56 days or more expired and no further contact	11
Contact lost	85
Homeless	224
Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided	2
No longer eligible	2
Refused suitable accommodation	1
Secured alternative accommodation for 12 or more months	68
Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months	34
Secured existing accommodation for 12 or more months	19
Secured existing accommodation for 6 months	47
Withdrew application/applicant deceased	28
Reason not given	1047
Grand total	1568

Source: DBC

Table 8 shows outcomes for all prevention cases. The high number of cases where the reason is not given make it difficult to draw firm conclusions, although it is notable that only around 15% of cases go on to be considered as homeless.

Table 9 – accommodation outcomes for all relief cases

Secured accommodation for 12 months	96
Secured accommodation for 6 months	51
Grand total	147

Source: DBC

Tables 9 and 10 show outcomes for relief cases. DBC has been successful in securing accommodation for a minimum 12 months for the majority of cases. Table 10 below also shows a high number of cases where the reason is not given.

Table 10 – outcomes for all relief cases

56 days elapsed	231
Contact lost	123
Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided	2
Local connection referral accepted by another LA	2
No longer eligible	6
Notice served due to refusal to co-operate	1
Refused final accommodation or final part 6 offer	1
Secured accommodation for 12 or more months	96
Secured accommodation for 6 months	51
Withdrew application/applicant deceased	43
Reason not given	1012

Grand total	1568
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Source: DBC

4.8 Main duty outcomes

Table 11 - Main Duty Outcome

Homeless and no priority need	39
Homeless, priority need but intentional	11
Homeless, priority need, not intentional, S193(2) duty	184
Lost contact prior to assessment	5
Not eligible for assistance	1
Not homeless	2
Withdrew prior to assessment	3
Not stated	1323
Grand total	1568

Table 11 above shows the outcomes for all cases proceeding to a main duty, including consideration of priority need and intentionality.

4.9 P1E data for earlier years

As noted above, P1E data and H-CLIC data are not comparable, but the older P1E data does reveal longer-term trends. As can be seen in Table 12 below, the number of homelessness decisions made had reduced significantly between 2015/16 and 2017/18 whilst the percentage of those who were considered to be homeless, not intentionally so and in priority need increased. This suggests that homelessness prevention was working even before the new duties required under the HRA. The post-HRA figure of 645 households who were owed a duty is not fully comparable but does indicate the additional work which Dacorum is now having to carry out.

Table 12 - Homelessness decisions

	Total number decisions	Homeless and in priority need	Homeless and in priority need as % of all decisions	Intentional	Not priority	Not homeless
2017/18	183	143	78%	14	12	14
2016/17	241	151	63%	20	47	23
2015/16	414	227	54%	40	91	56

Source: P1E data published on MHCLG live tables

4.10 Temporary accommodation

The tables below give a picture of how temporary accommodation (TA) is being used. Table 8 below gives the snapshot figure at the end of March for each year shown. As it is P1E data it only has figures to March 2018. It shows a small increase in numbers in TA over the three year period; this is prior to the HRA.

Table 13 - Households accommodated at end March

	Total	B&B	Hostels	LA/RP stock	PSL	Other
2018	91	-	22	31	-	32
2017	84	-	17	27	-	31
2016	81	-	14	40	-	22

Source: P1E data published on MHCLG live tables

Table 14 shows both the total number of households placed in B&B during each year, and the average number in TA at any one time. It also uses P1E data and shows a small year on year increase. Nationally the rise was much steeper, indicating that Dacorum have been able to manage demand for TA; it may also indicate that people are being moved on more quickly. Of particular note is the achievement of not using B&B style accommodation.

Table 14 – number of placements in TA

	Total number Of placements	Average number in TA at any time
2018/19	225	105
2017/18	188	78
2016/17	185	88

Since April 2019 226 households have been placed in temporary accommodation (figs at end October 2019.). If placements continue at a similar rate, this will be a significant increase on previous year figures. This is in line with our experience elsewhere, as a result of extended duties under the HRA.

The average number of nights in TA has been quite volatile, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15 – average number of nights in TA

	Average number of Nights spent in TA
2019/20 YTD	166 – 234*
2018/19	105
2017/18	146
2016/17	72 – 179*

*calculated on a monthly basis, lowest and highest averages given

DBC has recently carried out a review of TA and as a result are procuring a wider range of TA including some which will be suitable for those with more chaotic behaviour.

4.11 Support needs of applicants who are homeless/at risk of homelessness

Table 16 – Support needs of applicants

	2018	2018	2019 YTD	2019 YTD
Support need	Sole support need	More than one support need	Sole support need	More than one support need

At risk of/experienced abuse – non DV	2	13	5	11
Mental health	105	216	63	187
Care leaver	6	8	2	9
18-25 requiring support to manage independently	8	21	7	20
Alcohol dependency	5	21	4	19
History of rough sleeping	1	24	0	2
Offending history	8	26	2	25
Learning disability	4	14	4	10
DV	38	67	33	92
Care leaver 21+	1	3	1	10
Sexual exploitation	6			10
Young parent requiring support	2	7	7	11
Drug dependency	1	20	0	19
Physical health	88	174	58	148
Old age	8	17	3	15
No support needs	412		194	
Help with education	1	2	0	3
16/17 year olds	3	5	5	11

Source: DBC

Table 16 shows that in 2018 around half of households who were homeless or at risk had a support need; the majority of these had more than one support need. In 2019 to date, almost three quarters of those approaching the service had a support need, again the majority had more than one support need.

There were high numbers of people needing support around mental health issues, both as a sole need and with other support needs. There were a surprisingly high number of people needing support with physical health, again the majority had more than one support need. Other high areas of need include support for domestic abuse issues, young people needing support to live independently, alcohol dependency, offending history and drug dependency.

5. Allocations policy and housing register

The allocations policy was reviewed in 2017 and a new policy adopted from April 2018. This gives highest priority to those needing to move for extreme/high medical or welfare needs, households on a flexible tenancy which is being brought to an end, and under-occupation (in social housing). Homeless households are awarded a relatively small number of points, making it harder to access social housing. However, some households may be given direct offers, including those for whom a sensitive letting is appropriate. This may include some Care Leavers and those moving on from supported housing.

Numbers on the housing register provide an indication of housing demand; they should not be interpreted as providing the whole picture on housing need. Some of those who would like to be on the register may be excluded/ineligible and numbers may also be constrained if households who feel they would face a long waiting time

choose not to apply. In common with many local authority allocation schemes, households have to satisfy local connection criteria which include having lived in the Borough for a minimum of 10 years (at any point during their lifetime) or have a close family connection who has lived in the Borough for at least 10 years or be working for at least 16 hours a week in permanent employment which has lasted at least 2 years. Local connection criteria are not applied in certain cases, including those leaving a refuge and those in the armed forces. Additional criteria may apply in certain circumstances, such as age restrictions on sheltered housing and additional local connection criteria in certain villages.

Households are not able to apply to the register where legal or other serious action has been taken against them in a previous tenancy.

In the period Oct 18 to Sept 19, 2271 applications for the register were received. 747 households were housed during the same period.

Table 17 – applicants on housing register

Applicant type	Active	Suspended	Total
Home seeker	4123	643	4766
Homeless (applicants in relief stage or duty accepted)	200	75	275
Transfer from registered provider	281	74	355
DBC transfer	8	6	14
Transfer current landlord not advised	1194	207	1401
Total	5806	1005	6811

Source: DBC

There is a very high number of transfers where the current landlord is unknown; this would benefit from further investigation but this is outside the remit of the homelessness review.

Table 18 – number of applicants suspended broken down into reasons for suspension.

Reason	Home seeker	Transfer	Homeless	Total
Applicants request	3	2	0	5
Awaiting documentation	136	20	3	159
Direct offer	22	37	8	67
Homeless investigation in progress	49	4	13	66
Intentionally homeless	1	0	2	3
Other	159	54	13	226
Rent arrears	25	41	1	67
Under offer	131	53	34	218
Care leaver – may be registered before they are 18 as pending move on at later stage	22	0	0	22
Medical assessment in progress	30	41	0	71
No recent contact	7	1	0	8
Offer refused	23	20	0	43
Under investigation	28	9	0	37
No reason selected	8	5	0	13
Total	644	287	74	1005

Source: DBC

Table 18 above looks at the reasons why applicants may be suspended from the list. The majority of suspended homeless applicants are already in receipt of an offer. A small number are suspended while the homeless investigation is in progress, and a similar number for other reasons. Given the low numbers, no further unpicking of these figures is required.

Table 19 –applicants on direct offer list

	EPD	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	5+ bed	Total
Homeless duty acceptances	1	14	20	10	2	0	0	47
Adapted property	10	19	19	9	1	0	0	58
Panel decision	9	8	5	0	0	0	0	22
Total	20	41	44	19	3	0	0	127

Source: DBC

There is a significant number of applicants on the list for a direct offer – if we assume that all those being considered for a direct offer would be housed within a 12 month period, this would equate to 17% of lettings. However, the largest group are waiting for a suitable adapted property. Taking these out of the equation, direct lets would then account for less than 10% of lettings. Two-thirds of these would be to homeless households.

Table 20 below shows that those who are waiting for a direct offer of an adapted property tend to wait longer than households being considered for a direct offer because of homelessness or a panel decision. For homeless applicants, there are longer waiting times for 1 bed and 1 bed accommodation.

Table 20 – applicant /property type and dates of when the applicants who have waiting the longest were added to the direct offer list

	Homeless applicants	Adaptive need	Panel decision
EPD	18/07/2019	13/04/2017	13/06/2017
1 bed	20/11/2018	18/05/2015	01/08/2017
2 bed	23/03/2018	01/06/2017	28/06/2018
3 bed	28/02/2019	02/11/2015	
4 bed	29/05/2019	23/09/2019	
5 bed			

Source: DBC

Table 21 below gives bedroom size requirements for all those on the housing register. By far the greatest need is for 1 bed accommodation.

Table 21 – bedroom entitlements

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	7 bed	Total
Active	3848	1291	538	104	18	7	0	5806
Suspended	554	295	124	21	9	1	1	1005
Total	4402	1586	662	125	27	8	1	6811

Source: DBC

Table 22 below shows stock availability by type and bedsize. There are more 3 bed homes than 1 or 2 beds. Generally, however, turnover on 1 bed properties is higher than on 2+ bed properties so the mismatch may not be as great as initially appears (*would be good to include bedsize breakdown of lettings if available*)

Table 22 – properties in DBC stock as of 30th September 2019. N.B. bedsits treated as flats

	House	Flat	Bungalow	Total
1 bed	65	2525	516	3106
2 bed	1584	1124	22	2730
3 bed	3706	176	0	3882
4 bed	427	0	0	427
5+	10	0	0	10
Totals	5792	3825	538	10155

Table 23 shows that there are over 1100 households on the register where one or more people are over 60. The majority of these require 1 bed accommodation.

Table 23 – housing register applicants where one of more household members are over 60

		1 bed need	2 bed need	3 bed need
Active		729	182	14
Suspended		171	24	9
Total		900	206	23

Table 24 below shows that over half of households including someone over 60 are not expressing a preference for older person's accommodation.

Table 24 – applicants who have stated their preference regarding sheltered accommodation

	CRM State
If you or your partner are 60 years of age or over, would you like older persons' accommodation	Active
No	130
Yes	106
Grand Total	236

Source: DBC

Table 25 shows sheltered housing stock levels. As might be expected, the vast majority are 1 bed flats.

Table 25 - Sheltered Housing stock levels (presume this is DBC only?)

Property type	Number in stock
One bed bungalow	173
Two bedroom bungalow	1
One bed flat	1301
Two bed flat	35
three bed flat	5
Three bed house	1
Total	1516

Source: DBC

With around 17% of households on the register including someone over the age of 60, there is scope for older persons accommodation to do more to meet housing need. Given the significant predicted increase in the number of older people in the Borough, sheltered housing could be an alternative for older people unable to remain in their existing accommodation. More work is needed to understand why sheltered housing is not a preferred option for so many and what can be done to align existing schemes with the needs and aspirations of older people.

This is further illustrated in Table 26 below which shows the number of times some sheltered properties have been advertised to attract a successful bid.

Table 26 – number of times sheltered properties advertised

Number of adverts	Number of properties
2	29
3	30
4	13
5	13
6	8
7	9
8	4
9	0
10 or more	6

Source: DBC

Table 27 – number of offer refusals broken down by financial year

	April 2015 – March 2016	April 2016 – March 2017	April 2017 – March 2018	April 2018- March 2019	April 2019 to date
Area unsafe	1	0	0	1	0
Area unsuitable	12	14	6	3	1
Bedroom too small	13	3	5	1	2
Change of circumstances	16	2	7	5	1
Did not respond to offer	2	2	4	0	2
Did not want to move	6	1	1	1	1
Property not affordable	3	2	8	2	2
Garden unsuitable	1	1	0	0	1
Health reasons	1	0	2	2	4
Landlord not prepared to accept	3	1	8	6	3
Neighbours	0	0	1	0	0
Offer withdrawn	16	12	13	17	8
Property too far from amenities	5	5	2	1	0
Property too far from family/friends	4	1	4	0	2
Property too far from schools	5	1	3	0	1
Property too large		1	0	0	
Property too small	8	7	19	10	4
Property unsuitable	34	3	5	3	6

Wrong floor level	3	2	1	0	1
Other	55	99	103	40	23
Unreasonable refusal	0	0	0	5	5
Cannot afford to move	0	1	2	0	1
Total refusals	188	158	194	97	68

Source: DBC

The housing register is closely managed; applicants will be removed if they are not bidding. As with most CBL schemes, refusal rates are relatively low – and appear to have halved over the past four years. There is no obvious pattern to refusals, though it is notable that around 16% of refusals in the year to date are down to landlords either withdrawing an offer or not being prepared to accept the successful applicant. DBC should continue to monitor this closely.

Tenancy sustainment was not raised as a significant issue in consultation. There is a pre-tenancy discussion with all successful applicants about expectations, which should help to promote sustainability. Pre-tenancy training is on offer with an additional 5 points awarded when completed. In consultation, there was some discussion about whether the training should be made mandatory, either for all applicants or targeted at those where circumstances suggest the tenancy may be more likely to fail.

Table 28 below may indicate that local lettings schemes may be preventing properties in villages from meeting the highest levels of housing need. There may be little that DBC can do to about this, as it is likely that the lettings criteria are built into S106 requirements for these properties.

Table 28 – showing points village properties let on and highest points level based on bids received

		Points let on to village connection	Highest level of points based on bids received
5	Boundary Cottages	31	78
43	Buckwood Road	25	60
22	Buckwood Road	30	45
48	Buckwood Road	25	100
5	Corner Wood	17	100
9	Cowper Road	34	100
27	Croft Close	27	93
6	Great Park	26	94
48	Hyde Meadows	41	43
27	Hyde Meadows	15	54
16	Kings Close	45	50
14	Kings Close	17	30
4	Mary Cross Close	15	110
6A	Meadow Way	41	43

49	Parkfield	27	94
32C	Parsons Close	17	100
32D	Parsons Close	20	95
7	Parsons Close	10	94
3C	Singlets Lane	33	100
11	Sursham Court	25	60

Source: DBC

6. Consultation

A workshop was held with key partners to review what is currently working well, where there are gaps, and what the priorities for the new strategy should be. The workshop was attended by over thirty people representing many different organisations in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. Some partners were unable to attend: there were no representatives present from mental health services, or probation and the Domestic Abuse co-ordinator was also unable to attend.

This draft of the evidence base is being issued as the second stage of consultation before the new strategy is signed off by Members.

Consultation will also take place with customers during this period.

7. Current prevention services, gaps and challenges

7.1 Low/medium support needs

There is a wide range of services in place for those with low to medium support needs, with good partnership working, including sign-posting and referrals to other services. During the workshop it was acknowledged that cuts to other services have resulted in higher thresholds for accessing support, which can mean that those with low/medium needs are not given priority. Actions identified included:

- Ensuring all partners have access to information about other services to facilitate sign-posting and referrals
- Investigating role of community navigators who can help with sign-posting and giving people initial support to access services

7.2 Mental health

There is a range of services in place, including statutory and voluntary sector services. Again, it was felt that cuts to existing services and increased thresholds mean that many who need help are unable to access it. A key gap is services for those with a dual diagnosis/complex needs.

There is a DBC mental health working group looking to tackle this issue; this already has representation from homelessness team.

Key actions include:

- Influencing commissioning organisations (eg Herts County Council and local CCG) to focus on earlier intervention to prevent those with a mental health issue reaching crisis point

- Investigating options for a central healthy hub which can promote awareness of services and sign-post/refer as appropriate

7.3 Complex needs

This is a significant issue for the homelessness prevention service – the majority of clients have complex needs.

Services in place to meet complex needs are good, but many clients have difficulty accessing them. This may be to do with services being at capacity, or it may be that the client's needs are considered 'too high' for some services. There is rough sleeper funding for a community drug and alcohol officer but they have had difficulty recruiting to the post. CCG are running a project with 4 CGL nurses in A&E who can also work with people at home or in a small unit

Key actions include:

- Influencing review of support services to ensure appropriate provision for those with the highest support needs
- Investigating sources of accommodation for those with a high support need who cannot live in general needs accommodation (including temporary accommodation)
- Ensuring all agencies are aware of the Duty to Refer and using it at the earliest possible stage
- Review and clarify the pathway for people with complex needs
- Develop more awareness amongst all partners of the services available, criteria and how to access
- Investigate role of community navigators in supporting households to access services; review opportunities to create flexible provision to offer tailored support to households where other services are unable to meet the need

7.4 Rough Sleepers

There is a range of services to help prevent people having to sleep rough, and to get them off the streets as quickly as possible. Prevention services includes work with prisons. Moving people off the streets includes outreach work and street pastoring. A range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies are involved. The Council is piloting a Housing First approach with an RP.

Some of the challenges include helping those without recourse to public funds, people whose past behaviour impact on their ability to access housing and other services, and cuts in other services which lead to people falling through the net.

Actions include:

- Investigating funding and other resources to create more supported accommodation with outreach and associated services

7.5 Young people

DBC invests significant resources in education and training for young people; this is helping to prevent and tackle homelessness amongst this group. For young people asked to leave, there is a mediation service. DBC use a formal 'offer to resolve' – in effect a letter to the family asking them to keep the YP for a period of time while an alternative solution is found. Staff are more confident about challenging families where it appears eviction is being used to increase priority for housing.

There is a specific issue around Looked After children and the gap between ages 18 and 25.

There is a local hostel which provides good support for young people plus other services. There is good communication between organisations and a multi-agency referral form is in place. It was noted that some young people may need longer-term support that is currently available, to help prevent future homelessness.

A key challenge is resourcing these services – not just funding but also recruiting and retaining staff with the appropriate skills. Other challenges include the waiting list for CAMHS and the transition from child to adult services.

7.6 Domestic Abuse/modern slavery

There are services in place to meet the needs of these groups, but they are not well co-ordinated. Modern slavery is a big issue. DBC would like to fund a safe house and a DA co-ordinator, and is bidding for funding under the new legislation.

7.7 Debt and benefits/money advice

There is a wide range of services offering debt and benefits advice, from Citizens Advice, other voluntary sector partners including the Community Trust, and the Council. There are also services to help those struggling financially, including community cafes and a foodbank.

Key challenges include changing attitudes to debt, with payday loans available at the touch of a button, and lack of knowledge for many about what to do if they do get into difficulties. Digital exclusion and welfare reform were also highlighted as key challenges. It was also noted that an increasing number of households live with volatile and unpredictable incomes because of changes in employment patterns.

Key actions include:

- Continuing to promote awareness of services available and importance of tackling problems early on
- Continuing to promote financial well-being/knowledge through all appropriate channels

7.8 Access to and sustaining tenancies in the private rented sector

The Council has a prevention fund which can support the payment of rent in advance and/or a deposit. Licensing is used to promote high standards and enforcement action taken against landlords where required. Other agencies provide support with white goods and also with budgeting.

As with many areas in the South East, the key challenges are the lack of affordable private rented accommodation and landlords being reluctant to take people on benefits.

There are no specific actions for the homelessness strategy but actions being taken under the housing strategy will help to ensure a supply of accommodation at affordable rents.

7.9 Homelessness, crime and prison

There is a lot of joint working to prevent and tackle homelessness amongst those being discharged from prison. There is a dedicated resource to engage with those being released and support them to find housing (although there is only one post across the County); and a number of schemes/projects which include accessing housing as part of wider support. A significant proportion of referrals under the Duty to Refer come from the police/prison officers.

Despite this, there remain significant challenges in ensuring engagement with the right teams at the right time, and resources are also limited. There are fewer services for female clients, and for lower level offenders. There are also strong links between crime and drug and alcohol abuse and the latter need to be tackled alongside dealing with homelessness arising from crime.

Key actions include:

- Investigating options for a specialist hostel
- Continue to work in partnership to focus on earlier intervention, communication and joined-up services

7.10 Engagement and information sharing across organisations

There is already an active homelessness forum and a number of other forums and working groups, such as the MARAC and MARP. It may be helpful to clarify the role and remit of some groups and ensure there are clear actions arising from meetings, and clear accountability. It is also important that homelessness remains on the corporate agenda.

DBC has recently agreed an information-sharing protocol with key partners but this is still bedding in and the strategy will need to reflect this.

Key actions include:

- Partners providing feedback to each other following referrals
- Exploring a system for sharing client information across organisations – one suggestion was the client 'owning' the support plan and being encouraged to share this with all the organisations with which they are working
- Exploring best way to provide an up to date directory of relevant services which all organisations can access
- Explore ways of utilising available information to predict homelessness, both in terms of overall patterns and for individual clients

7.11 Earlier prevention of homelessness

The service is already working to prevent homelessness in the vast majority of cases. Examples of what helps with this included prompt payment of benefits, access to DHP and other funding, partnership working and strong relationships within and across sectors.

Strengthening partnership working will be key to preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the new strategy. While there is strong partnership working across many areas, this needs to move towards a shared collective responsibility with all partners.

There is also a need to reframe the relationship with RPs particularly on issues such as ASB, community safety and fire safety.

Key actions include:

- Capturing the risk of homelessness earlier due to effective sign-posting and referrals eg families with money worries
- Maximising attendance at partnership meetings such as the homelessness forum

8. Emerging themes to take forward into strategy

- Continue to work with partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible
- Improve access, security and stability within the PRS
- Provide tailored services to meet the needs of different groups
- Eradicate rough sleeping

Appendix One – feedback from survey

What barriers, restrictions or limitations do you currently face when delivering homelessness services?

- Complex behaviours
- Challenges in engaging key services due to lack of funding
- Drug issues, mental health and release from prison
- Lack of affordable rental options
- Stability of individuals / ability to manage their own budgets
- mental health & fear of 're-joining' society and the structure/rules/pressure it can bring - loneliness & isolation from community when in single occupation
- Relationship break down, loss of home due to rent arrears or security of tenure
- Mental health issues and difficulties in accessing services
- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Homeless and Adults with Complex needs indicates that mental health, physical health, domestic abuse and substance misuse are the most common causal factors of homelessness. This would also be the case for families facing homelessness or at risk if homelessness.
- In the case of some 16/17 year olds – extensive waiting lists to access services

Are there any additional barriers to delivering your homelessness service, which you expect to become a challenge in the next 5 years?

- Those without public recourse
- Addressing underlying mental health needs when GP surgeries can take up to 6 weeks to access
- 8 month delays for mental health and occupational therapy assessments
- Lack of uncertainty about funding
- Other agencies resource challenges, impacting on service delivery
- There has a steady increase in the numbers of rough sleepers across all districts/boroughs in the last 5 years, and this does not show any signs of slowing.

What kind of resourcing challenges is your homeless service facing and how do these impact on the delivery of your service?

- Move on placements, adequate accommodation once the short-term accommodation has been utilised.
- Increase time in temporary accommodation
- Effective engagement and information sharing with key statutory agencies

Moving forward what support or help would benefit your homeless service?

- Provision beyond the homeless provision
- Access to immediate mental health support, such as specialised resource.

Thinking about your current clients, what are your three biggest challenges in terms of homelessness?

- People with substance misuse soon fall victim to their dealers and we get reports of ASB
- Mental Health - too much "voluntary" involvement with services so no proper support packages
- Repeat offenders who are not receiving robust sentences going in and out of prison all the time
- Provision of a community from which individuals can get support on their whole journey (i.e. beyond simply housing them)
- developing closer working relationships with agencies / charities who are specifically tackling homelessness - bringing 'hope' to clients
- Mental/Physical Health Needs.
- Previous Tenancy Issues
- Move on placements.

What are your 3 key priority areas for homelessness in the next 5 years?

- Addressing disjointed pathways
- Lack of clarity about thresholds across different statutory services
- Limited affordable housing
- limited availability of specialist provision for those with complex needs
- Reducing rough sleeping
- Improving targeted resources
- joined up strategic approach from both upper tier and lower tier authorities
- Improving integrated working to include front line social work and housing practitioners

Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Template

Policy / service / decision

Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy

Description of what is being impact assessed

What are the aims of the service, proposal, project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?

Stakeholders; Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc

It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact

Every Local Authority in England should by law have an up to date preventing homelessness strategy that sets out its plans to prevent and tackle homelessness. This is a statutory requirement as set out in Section 1(1) of the 2002 Act giving housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district, formulate, and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.

Every Local Authority is required to set out commitments for the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping. After public and partner consultations we have set out five commitments and have outlined how this would be achieved by providing a holistic service, which is individual and tailored to each individual's needs.

The strategy will be monitored annually by the Homeless Forum, HART and Strategic Housing Service in line with the Housing Service and Business plan.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?

(include relevant national/local data, research, monitoring information, service user feedback, complaints, audits, consultations, CIAs from other projects or other local authorities, etc.). You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.

- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1996
- Housing Act 2004

- Localism Act 2011
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? *If you have not consulted other people, please explain why? You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

The Homeless & Rough Sleeping strategy was developed following multi-agency engagement with key stakeholders, staff, elected members and applicants who have lived experience of homelessness. In addition the strategy was open to consultation via our website and internal staff.

Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- *The PCs of Marriage and Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.*
- *Use “insert below” menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).*

Summary of impact		Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome
Protected group	<i>What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?</i>			

Age	The legislation underpinning the homeless service and strategy, which includes the Homeless Reduction Act confirms requirements to local authorities to provide advice and assistance for all who are eligible (16/17 year olds and upwards). Households who are under the age of 16 are the responsibility of the County Council and the local authority are required to engage with them in such cases.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability (physical, intellectual, mental) <i>Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness & Learning Disability Guide</i>	The service is duty bound to provide a tailored personalised housing plan, that meets the applicants needs and includes physical, mental and sensory disability. The council has worked closely with our Housing Development team to ensure clients who are less able, have access to suitable accommodation and as such decisions have been made to increase the stock of disabled accessible temporary accommodation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	There is no requirement within the strategy to obtain data with regards to an applicants gender as part of the application process, all applicants with a homelessness or advice need, will receive assistance irrespective of gender in line with the Strategy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Race and ethnicity	No barriers at all as for example if English is not first language we would always make sure interpreters are used. Personal circumstances and preference is taken into account when considering suitability of accommodation and the appropriateness such as shared facilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	Strategy will not discriminate against any applicant due to their religion or belief, however it may be necessary to make decisions or provision of alternative temporary accommodation to ensure that this does not prejudice an applicants religion or belief.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	All our accommodation is suitable for all sexes and in instances where an applicant is required to be placed into accommodation where they are not sharing with members of the opposite sex i.e.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

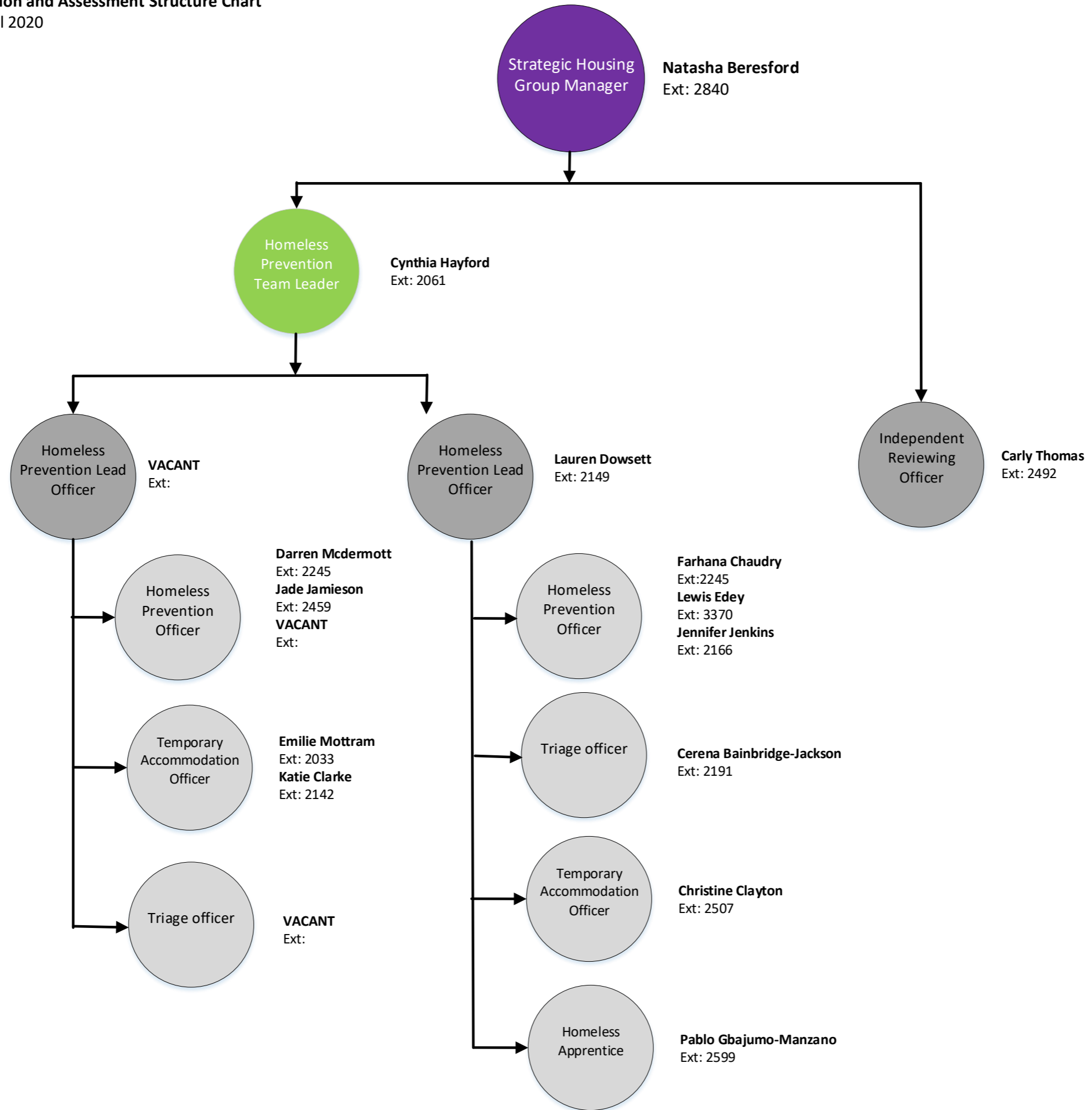
	womens refuge, then such arrangements are made and are readily available.			
Sexual orientation	Same advice given to all our clients regardless of their sexual orientation. The service is alert to such situations where a person could be prejudiced as a result of their sexual orientation and will ensure that any such behaviour is handled in line with our zero tolerance policy and applicants are not placed at risk.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.	We assess each case on its own merits, in line with the relevant legislation outlined above. Where applicants received a full duty letter, the letter outlines our regard to the PSED when doing so and the duty is discharged in line with relevant policy, such as the Housing Allocation Policy which gives additional priority to veterans, and homeless applicants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Negative impacts / outcomes action plan				
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.				
Action taken/to be taken <i>(copy & paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)</i>	Date	Person responsible	Action complete	
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.			
Completed by (all involved in CIA)	Cynthia Hayford – Team Leader Lauren Dowsett – Lead Officer		

Date	12/05/2020
Signed off by (<i>AD from different Directorate if being presented to CMT / Cabinet</i>)	
Date	
Entered onto CIA database - date	
To be reviewed by (officer name)	
Review date	



Homeless Prevention and Assessment Structure Chart
Last Updated: April 2020



Agenda Item 8



Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	23 June 2020
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Private Sector Housing Strategy
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Natasha Beresford, Group Manager (Strategic Housing)
Purpose of report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide members with an overview of the strategy development of the Private Sector Housing Strategy. 2. To provide Cabinet Members with an update on the key priority areas for Private Sector Housing over the next four years.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For Cabinet Members to approve the strategy
Period for post policy/project review	This strategy will be monitored annually by the service in conjunction with the wider Housing Service plan.
Corporate objectives:	<p>The Strategic Housing Service's responsibilities and activity in relation to the Private Rented Sector contributes to the following corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clean, safe and enjoyable environment • Building strong and vibrant communities
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Failure to actively regulate the private sector could have financial implications for the council in relation to prevention of homelessness and in relation to pressures on temporary accommodation provision. Additionally undertaking enforcement action to improve the standards of the private rented sector will require sufficient staff resource and additional legal input, which is costly.</p>

'Value for money' implications	<p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>Any income gained from activity related to regulating the private rented sector, is ring-fenced and must be retained for expenditure within the general fund to deliver an effective private sector housing service.</p>
Risk implications	<p>Failure to effectively regulate and enforce in the private sector could have a reputational impact for the authority and result in poor quality accommodation in the private rental sector.</p> <p>Risk assessment completed/reviewed* on completed within the Housing Service Plan risk register April 2020.</p>
Community Impact Assessment	<p>Community Impact Assessment carried out Attached at Appendix 2</p>
Health and safety Implications	<p>One of the key aspects of work with the Private Sector Housing (PSH) is to ensure that homes are safe to live in. Where problems with a health and safety implication are found in rented properties the landlord will be required to remedy these, or face enforcement action if they do not. This is guided by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-hhsrs-guidance</p>
<p>Deputy Monitoring Officer/ Deputy S.151 Officer Comments</p>	<p>Deputy Monitoring Officer comments</p> <p>Local authorities are under various statutory obligations in relation to the provision of, and standard of, accommodation in its district. The attached Strategy sets out how Dacorum will meet its obligations to ensure that accommodation in the private sector is maintained to the appropriate standard.</p> <p>Deputy S151 Officer Comments</p> <p>No direct financial requirements as a result of this strategy paper.</p>
Consultees:	<p>Natasha Beresford, Group Manager, Strategic Housing</p> <p>Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>Private Sector landlords and tenants</p> <p>HSMT – 18 May 2020</p> <p>CMT – 12 May 2020</p> <p>HOSC - 3 June 2020</p>

Background papers:	<p>Appendix 1 – Private Sector Housing Strategy</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Community Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Staff structure</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>Private Sector Housing (PSH)</p> <p>The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)</p> <p>Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)</p> <p>Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)</p> <p>Registered Providers (RP)</p> <p>Building Research Establishment (BRE)</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1. There is no statutory responsibility to deliver a Private Sector Housing (PSH) strategy, as a service there is a commitment to doing having one in place, as we feel it is important to provide structure and a clear overview of our approach to improving the PSH across Dacorum.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to provide members with an opportunity to provide comments on our draft Private Sector Housing Strategy. This new strategy will outline our key priorities to ensure we are offering a structured and consistent service, enabling household's access to suitable, affordable and secure housing in the borough. It is also felt that the strategy will provide clear guidance on the remit of the service and inform landlords and tenants appropriately.
- 1.3. We have continuously reviewed the transferring service, to ensure we are offering a structured and consistent service to allow households in the borough access to suitable, affordable and secure housing. It is important that the service is delivered with a balanced approach to providing advice, proactive engagement and only where necessary enforcement, as we recognise that the latter is a last resort and is resource intensive.

2. Context

- 2.1. In November 2019, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced additional grant funding. The Private Rented Sector Innovation and Enforcement Grant was made available to local authorities to support new, innovative, or targeted short-term initiatives to support the improvement of housing conditions and tackling rogue landlords.

- 2.2. The service submitted a bid in November 2019 to use this funding to commission a new stock condition report to support our service direction and implementation of the PHS strategy. Dacorum were successful and in January 2020 were awarded £69,017, being only 1 of 3 Councils from Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire to receive funding.
- 2.3. The council commissioned the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to deliver this area of work which was completed in April 2020. The new stock condition survey report and data, has been used to assist in the current understanding of the stock condition across Dacorum, reinforce our strategic direction, to assist with the implementation of this new strategy and the key focus for the service over the next four years.
- 2.4. The new data shows us there are 66,078 dwellings in Dacorum, 61% of which are owner occupied, 18% private rented and 21% social rented. Figures from the report estimate that there are 1,140 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) with an estimate of 234 that will require mandatory licensing. Dacorum currently have 89 HMO licenced and a further 36 applications pending.

3. Remit, Staffing and Resources

- 3.1. The team continue to demonstrate that they are committed to ensuring that all Dacorum residents live in homes that are safe and meet the required standards, but also recognise most landlords want to be compliant and provide a good standard of home to their tenants.

The tables below, shows a small reflection of the team work comparison of work over the past two years. The data in the tables, shows in many areas the figures in 2019/2020 have as much as doubled compared to the 2018/2019, and how the service has increasing demands on the team.

Year	Description	Jun	Sept	Dec	Mar
2018-2019	Number of licensed HMOs (monthly)	43	41	43	47
2019-2020	Number of licensed HMOs (monthly)	50	62	78	89
Year	Description	Jun	Sept	Dec	Mar
2018-2019	Number of inspections/visits undertaken (quarterly)	15	87	28	25
2019-2020	Number of inspections/visits undertaken (quarterly)	42	57	67	68
Year	Description	Jun	Sept	Dec	Mar
2018-2019	Number of service requests received & response times (quarterly)	Total = 48 0 to 3 days = 36 4 to 10 days = 10 Unspecified = 0	Total = 46 0 to 3 days = 42 4 to 10 days = 2 Unspecified = 2	Total = 42 0 to 3 days = 38 4 to 10 days = 2 Unspecified = 2	Total = 46 0 to 3 days = 42 4 to 10 days = 2 Unspecified = 2
2019-2020	Number of service requests received & response times (quarterly)	Total = 54 0 to 3 days = 54 4 to 10 days = 0 Unspecified = 0	Total = 58 0 to 3 days = 53 4 to 10 days = 0 Unspecified = 5	Total = 66 0 to 3 days = 62 4 to 10 days = 1 Unspecified = 3	Total = 100 0 to 3 days = 94 4 to 10 days = 1 Unspecified = 3

3.2. Following publications, social media updates and promoting the service the team have received an increase in referrals, HMO applications, enforcement work, this entailing an increase in inspections and service requests.

3.3 .The draft strategy has been available on our website for consultation and feedback from landlords, tenants, letting agents and other professional partners. All feedback received will be considered prior to the strategy being finalised.

4. The commitments

Using feedback received to date on the service, along with relevant legislation and requirements, BRE stock survey data and the council's own data we have set out our four commitments for the new PSH Strategy. These are:

4.1. **Commitment 1:** We proactively and effectively tackle poor conditions across Dacorum's private housing sector. We recognise the importance of proactively engaging with landlords and tenants to address property condition and support remedial action.

4.2. **Commitment 2:** We will continue to work with partners, Landlords and Registered Providers to ensure that homes meet required standards so that residents can thrive in safe and clean environments. The service has found that through proactive engagement and liaison we have been able to promptly resolve issues arising, without necessitating costly enforcement activity.

4.3. **Commitment 3:** We will work effectively to reduce the number of empty homes across the borough. The service is currently advertising a new 1 year fixed term post agreed as part of 2019/20 budget setting proposals, it is

intended that this post will enable the service to deliver a focussed approach to empty homes, which cannot currently be resourced.

- 4.4. **Commitment 4:** We will tackle unlicensed HMOs across the borough. We will tackle unlicensed HMOs across the borough. By addressing unlicensed properties, we will build confidence within the local community and improve the standard of accommodation in the borough.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. The strategy and supplementary report was presented to H&OSC on the 3 June 2020, receiving positive feedback on the structure of the report and strategy document.
- 5.2. The outlined commitments will underpin this strategy and ultimately enable us to deliver our vision of: “Ensuring that private sector housing in Dacorum is always a safe and suitable housing option”. Which we believe is pivotal to enabling us to deliver against the statutory requirements and start to prioritise key areas that are needed to improve the accommodation within this sector.
- 5.3. This reasserts the Council’s corporate commitment to work with partners to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, by helping increase the supply of affordable, decent rented homes in Dacorum.
- 5.4. The report informs Cabinet Members of the work that is on-going to regulate the service.

6. Recommendations:

- 6.1 Request that Cabinet Members approve the strategy

Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Template

Policy / service / decision

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2020-2024

Description of what is being impact assessed

What are the aims of the service, proposal, project? What outcomes do you want to achieve? What are the reasons for the proposal or change? Do you need to reference/consider any related projects?

Stakeholders; Who will be affected? Which protected characteristics is it most relevant to? Consider the public, service users, partners, staff, Members, etc

It is advisable to involve at least one colleague in the preparation of the assessment, dependent on likely level of impact

Our vision for Dacorum’s private sector housing is *“Ensuring that private sector housing in Dacorum is always a safe and suitable housing option. We will achieve this by tackling ‘rogue landlords’ who have a clear disregard for their responsibilities and the safety of their tenants, taking appropriate enforcement action and offering advice and assistance to home owners, landlords and tenants.”*

This strategy supports the Council’s corporate vision of *‘working in partnership to create a borough that enables Dacorum’s communities to thrive and prosper.’*

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service/decision might impact on protected groups?

(include relevant national/local data, research, monitoring information, service user feedback, complaints, audits, consultations, CIAs from other projects or other local authorities, etc.). You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.

There is no statutory responsibility to deliver a Private Sector Housing Strategy, as a service there is a commitment to have one in place, as it is important to provide structure and a clear overview of our approach to improving the Private Sector Housing across Dacorum.

We have reviewed the service and using data from Building Research Establishment (BRE), Office For National Statistics (ONS), Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s), Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS), Landlord & tenant surveys, complaints and

feedback to develop our approach and commitments with this Strategy to enable all PSH households access to suitable, affordable and secure housing across the borough taking regard to all protected groups.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? *If you have not consulted other people, please explain why? You should include such information in a proportionate manner to reflect the level of impact of the policy/service/decision.*

In addition to consulting with council staff, elected members and senior management. A copy of the draft strategy will be made available on the website for feedback from tenants, landlords, partner agencies and registered providers.

Analysis of impact on protected groups (and others)

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Dacorum BC to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service/decision will achieve these aims. Using the table below, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of these using the evidence that you have collated and your own understanding. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, **before** you have implemented any mitigation.

- The PCs of *Marriage and Civil Partnership* and *Pregnancy and Maternity* should be added if their inclusion is relevant for impact assessment.
- Use “insert below” menu layout option to insert extra rows where relevant (e.g. extra rows for different impairments within Disability).

Summary of impact		Negative impact / outcome	Neutral impact / outcome	Positive impact / outcome
Protected group	<i>What do you know? What do people tell you? Summary of data and feedback about service users and the wider community/ public. Who uses / will use the service? Who doesn't / can't and why? Feedback/complaints?</i>			
Age	Only those households who are legally able to hold a tenancy or legal contract (over 18) would be eligible to obtain advice and assistance from the service. Members of a household who are under the age of 18 may be affected by a private sector housing issue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability (physical, intellectual, mental) <i>Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness & Learning Disability Guide</i>	Any disability may affect how tenants/landlords interprets or receives communications with the council. Landlords may choose to exclude a tenant from a property due to suitability for impairment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gender reassignment	Customer may be offended if addressed by incorrect or preferred pronoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race and ethnicity	Potential language barriers if English is not first language or understood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	There may be occasions when access is limited due to religious events or celebrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	Tenant could have concerns with personal safety if alone with landlord, landlord representatives, members of staff and/or contractors- and/or another tenant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	Tenant may experience harassment or nuisance if resident in shared accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.	<p>People in employment/study may not be able to provide access during normal working hours (9-5 Mon-Fri)</p> <p>Landlords will have their own tenancy agreement to provide access during these times, given reasonable notice.</p> <p>The strategy is designed to protect all those in private rented accommodation regardless of income to ensure properties are all in safe condition, protecting all residents from rogue landlords.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Negative impacts / outcomes action plan			
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative impacts / outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.			
Action taken/to be taken <i>(copy & paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)</i>	Date	Person responsible	Action complete
<p>Religion or belief- Staff awareness of religious events and flexible servicing appointments.</p> <p>Staff to use interpreters to ensure messages are clear and concise for all regardless of race</p>	20/05/2020	Private Sector Housing Enforcement Officer/Support Officer/Environmental Health Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Race/Ethnicity – Signpost Language Line if appropriate. Provide communication in multiple languages where possible/required</p> <p>Staff to use interpreters to ensure messages are clear and concise for all regardless of race</p>	20/05/2020	Private Sector Housing Enforcement Officer/Support Officer/Environmental Health Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Disability – Providing we are aware of the disability or contact needs we will tailor our communication and service delivery accordingly. We will provide advice to our landlords in respect of undertaking adaptations to the home where possible.</p>	20/05/2020	Private Sector Housing Enforcement Officer/Support Officer/Environmental Health Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Gender Reassignment - Ensure customer is addressed by preferred pronoun	20/05/2020	Private Sector Housing Enforcement Officer/Support Officer/Environmental Health Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Where a member of a household under the age of 18 is impacted by property condition, appropriate advice and assistance will be provided to the tenant and landlord. Where improvements are required the landlord will be notified accordingly. If the household member is placed at risk, then a safeguarding referral will be undertaken.	20/05/2020		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date		<input type="checkbox"/>
If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.			

Completed by (all involved in CIA)	Lynne Hunt, Daniel Mason, Carly Thomas and Dwain Daniel
Date	20/05/2020
Signed off by (<i>AD from different Directorate if being presented to CMT / Cabinet</i>)	
Date	
Entered onto CIA database - date	
To be reviewed by (officer name)	
Review date	



Private Sector Housing Strategy

2020-2024



Introduction

At Dacorum Borough Council, we are committed to ensuring that all Dacorum residents live in homes that are safe and meet the required standards. We recognise most landlords want to be compliant and provide a good standard of home to their tenants.

This strategy outlines the council’s approach to regulating the private sector for all Dacorum residents as having safe, secure and affordable accommodation is a key foundation for living well. By identifying deficiencies in a dwelling, evaluating the potential risks to a person’s health or safety, including person’s physical or mental health we can ensure the relationship between housing and health is a continuing process to achieve well living and a required standard of housing.

The strategy mainly focuses on homes in the Private Rented Sector (PRS), but also considers owner-occupiers and Registered Providers (RP). Through ‘proactively and effectively tackling poor conditions across Dacorum’s private housing sector’, we can ensure that the private sector provides a safe and accessible housing option.

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I am pleased to introduce our Private Sector Housing Strategy 2010 – 2024. Throughout this strategy, we outline how we will work in partnership with landlords, residents and statutory bodies to understand the profile of homes across this tenure, provide up-to-date information, support and training to landlords and property owners and work to make sure that all homes meet or exceed minimum energy efficiency and safety standards.

We will tackle Dacorum’s rogue landlords to ensure that all homes within the private sector are safe and secure for their residents.

Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths

Our vision

Our vision for Dacorum’s private sector housing is “Ensuring that private sector housing in Dacorum is always a safe and suitable housing option. We will achieve this by tackling ‘rogue landlords’ who have a clear disregard for their responsibilities and the safety of their tenants, taking appropriate enforcement action and offering advice and assistance to home owners, landlords and tenants.”

This strategy supports the Council’s corporate vision of ‘working in partnership to create a borough that enables Dacorum’s communities to thrive and prosper.’ In particular, it will help to achieve the following corporate priorities:

- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
- Building strong and vibrant communities

We are committed to continuously reviewing and improving the private sector housing services we deliver by working with partners, other public bodies, Landlords and Registered Providers. Making sure that homes meet required standards means that residents can thrive in safe and clean environments.



National and local considerations

On a national scale, the private rented sector is the fastest growing housing tenure type, having more than doubled in size over the last decade. This growth, alongside the gradual decline of social rented stock due to policies such as the 'Right to Buy', means that private renting is increasingly becoming the primary option for addressing housing need across the country.

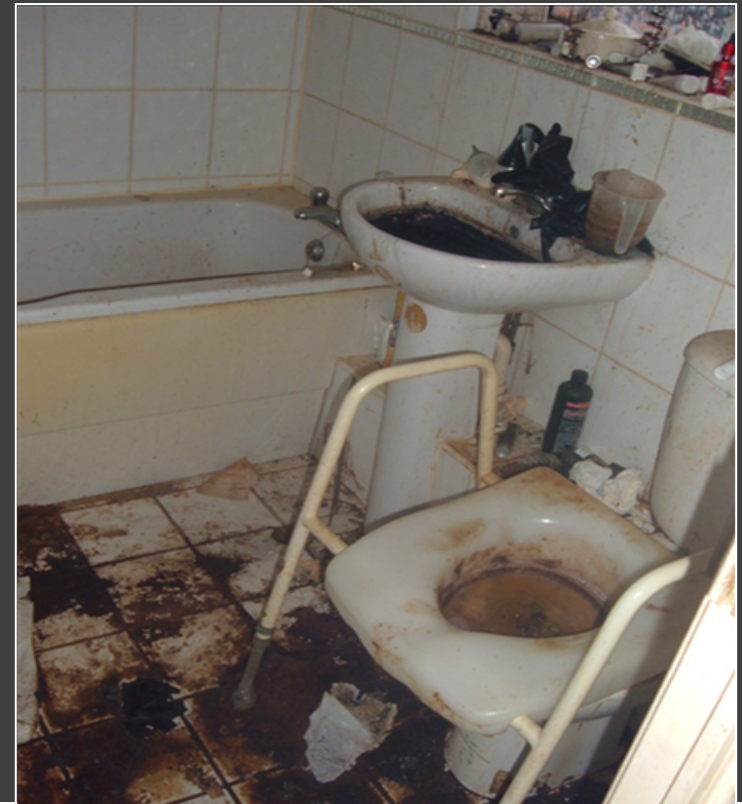
One of the key aspects of our work within the private rented sector is to ensure that homes are safe places to live. When problems causing a health and safety implication are found in rented properties, the landlord will be required to put these right, or otherwise face enforcement action. This action would follow guidance from the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

In early 2020, The Private Sector Team commissioned a stock survey of all residential property in Dacorum carried out by [Building Research Establishment \(BRE\)](#). This data shows us there are 66,078 dwellings in Dacorum, 61% of which were owner occupied, 18% private rented and 21% social rented.

Figures from the report estimate that there are 1,140 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) with an estimate of 234 that will require mandatory licensing.

Any rented property with three or more people living across two or more households and sharing common facilities is classed as a HMO. If the property has five or more people living across two or more households and sharing common facilities is classed as a large (HMO) and must be mandatory licensed.

A report from BRE in 2017, estimated 916 HMO's within the borough; this is a rise of over 200 properties, which the Private Sector Team will need to investigate to ensure each property meets the required standards to be safe places to live.



Continued...

The national statistics show a rise in Empty Homes; this is a statutory function with the team, which requires a structured and committed approach to enable this work to develop and to bring properties back into use.

We are working to raise our teams profile and Dacorum's residents awareness of Empty Homes, by raising awareness we are able to work with owners, businesses and others, to explore all options for bringing these properties back into residential occupation. Where we are unable to work with owners to reinstate their property, we will take the appropriate enforcement action, required to ensure the property meets all required standards.

The risks of leaving the premises empty for any extended length of time are great. Risks of leaving property unoccupied include vandalism, squatters, deterioration in condition and value, and complaints from neighbours.



Delivering a great service

Equality and Diversity

As a local housing authority, we believe all residents should receive a good standard of service *regardless* of; age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment), race, religion or belief and sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010). We are committed to being inclusive with our approach.

Value for Money

It is important to us that our residents feel they are getting good value for money. The Council monitors our approach to managing Private Sector Housing and seeks to ensure that we have the resources to deliver excellent services at reasonable cost.

Working in Partnership

Our strong relationships with our partners and many other public sector and voluntary organisations enables us to deliver an excellent level of service whilst maximizing resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

Working with other agencies

Collaborative working with other agencies helps us to ensure that we are kept up to date with developments in our community and the sector to keep residents, landlords and homeowners updated. It also means we can work in partnership to resolve identified issues promptly and prevent ill health, injury or homelessness caused by unsuitable housing conditions.



The Commitments

To develop this strategy, we considered a number of key areas in the private housing sector, on both a national and local scale, as well as the needs of the service. Through our housing stock condition survey, we are able to shape this further by identifying dwellings in the private sector and allocating them into categories, likely tenure, condition and household vulnerability of the stock and the geographical distribution of properties, which helps to understand the issues by tenure type across the borough. This helps to; establish the extent of dwellings suffering from the presence of a HHSRS Category 1 hazard, Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating bands, the number of empty homes across the borough and a robust approach to mandatory HMO licensing.

From this we have developed four outcome-based commitments:

Commitment 1: We proactively and effectively tackle poor conditions across Dacorum's private housing sector.

Commitment 2: We will continue to work with partners, Landlords and Registered Providers to ensure that homes meet required standards so that residents can thrive in safe and clean environments.

Commitment 3: We will work effectively to reduce the number of empty homes across the borough.

Commitment 4: We will tackle unlicensed HMOs across the borough.

These commitments will underpin this strategy and ultimately enable us to deliver our vision of: *"Ensuring that private sector housing in Dacorum is always a safe and suitable housing option."*



The Commitments

Commitment 1: We proactively and effectively tackle poor conditions across Dacorum's private housing sector.

This commitment focuses on the development of our approach to regulating and improving conditions in the private housing sector in Dacorum.

It is important that we build a robust approach to tackling rogue landlords and strive to ensure that the private sector offers a safe and suitable housing option for Dacorum residents.

To achieve this, we will:

- Take appropriate enforcement action when required, following our enforcement policy, that sets out how we will tackle rogue landlords and sub-standard property conditions;
- Work with landlords to identify and appropriately license all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the borough;
- Explore the option of developing a Local Lettings Agency to bridge the gap and provide supported access to the private rented sector;
- Review our approach to supporting tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector across Dacorum.

Commitment 2: We will continue to work with partners, Landlords and Registered Providers to ensure that homes meet required standards so that residents can thrive in safe and clean environments.

It is important that we continue to build good relationships and education for tenants and landlords.

To achieve this, we will:

- Ensure the Landlords Market Place Forum meets the needs of the Landlords, by providing a wide range of advice, education from a variety of departments, agencies and local services;
- Continue to work with landlords to promote good housing management and to enable tenants to remain in their homes;
- Review the information provided on our website;
- Publish regular newsletters for landlords;
- Carry out consultation surveys with tenants & landlords to promote education and to ensure we are meeting customer satisfaction.

The Commitments

Commitment 3: We will work effectively to reduce the number of empty homes across the borough.

Working effectively to reduce the number of empty homes across the borough and bringing them back into use for the community will assist in addressing the local shortage of affordable residential properties. This will also reduce the detrimental impact that empty properties can have on the local area.

Commitment 4: We will tackle unlicensed HMOs across the borough.

Tackling unlicensed HMOs across the borough proactively to ensure landlords are meeting the minimum housing standards, fire safety and management standards will ensure that this type of housing is always a safe option for those needing an affordable home of their own.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop a strategic approach to identify and investigate empty homes throughout the borough both reactively and proactively.
- Engage with owners to encourage and support them in bringing empty homes back into use.
- Consider rent schemes, grant programmes and other available options to assist owners in bringing empty homes back into use.
- Take appropriate enforcement action when required.

To achieve this, we will:

- Carry out proactive project work, including partnership working with other departments across the Council, to identify and investigate all suspected HMOs across the borough.
- Target enforcement work towards non-compliant landlords.
- Encouraging landlords to obtain accreditation to ensure good management standards and an understanding of legislation.
- Carry out proactive project work, including partnership working with other departments across the Council, to identify and investigate all suspected HMOs across the borough.
- Target enforcement work towards non-compliant landlords.
- Encouraging landlords to obtain accreditation to ensure good management standards and an understanding of legislation.

Conclusion

To conclude, this strategy demonstrates the Private Sector Housing Teams commitment to the regulation of the Private Rented Sector Housing across Dacorum.

Throughout the four commitments, we outline how this will be achieved to ensure we are giving tenants secure and affordable accommodation. Losing a home is a traumatic experience, which has a real and lasting impact on every member of the household. Each year, around 800 – 900 households approach the Council for advice and support to prevent them becoming homeless.

This reasserts Dacorum Borough Council's corporate commitment to work with partners to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, by helping to increase the supply of affordable, decent rented homes in Dacorum.

The Strategy Improvement and Engagement team (SIE) in conjunction with annual service plans, will monitor this strategy annually. (The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive an annual update).

This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy – [hyperlink required](#)

[Rogue Landlord Enforcement: Guidance for Local Authorities \(2019\)](#)

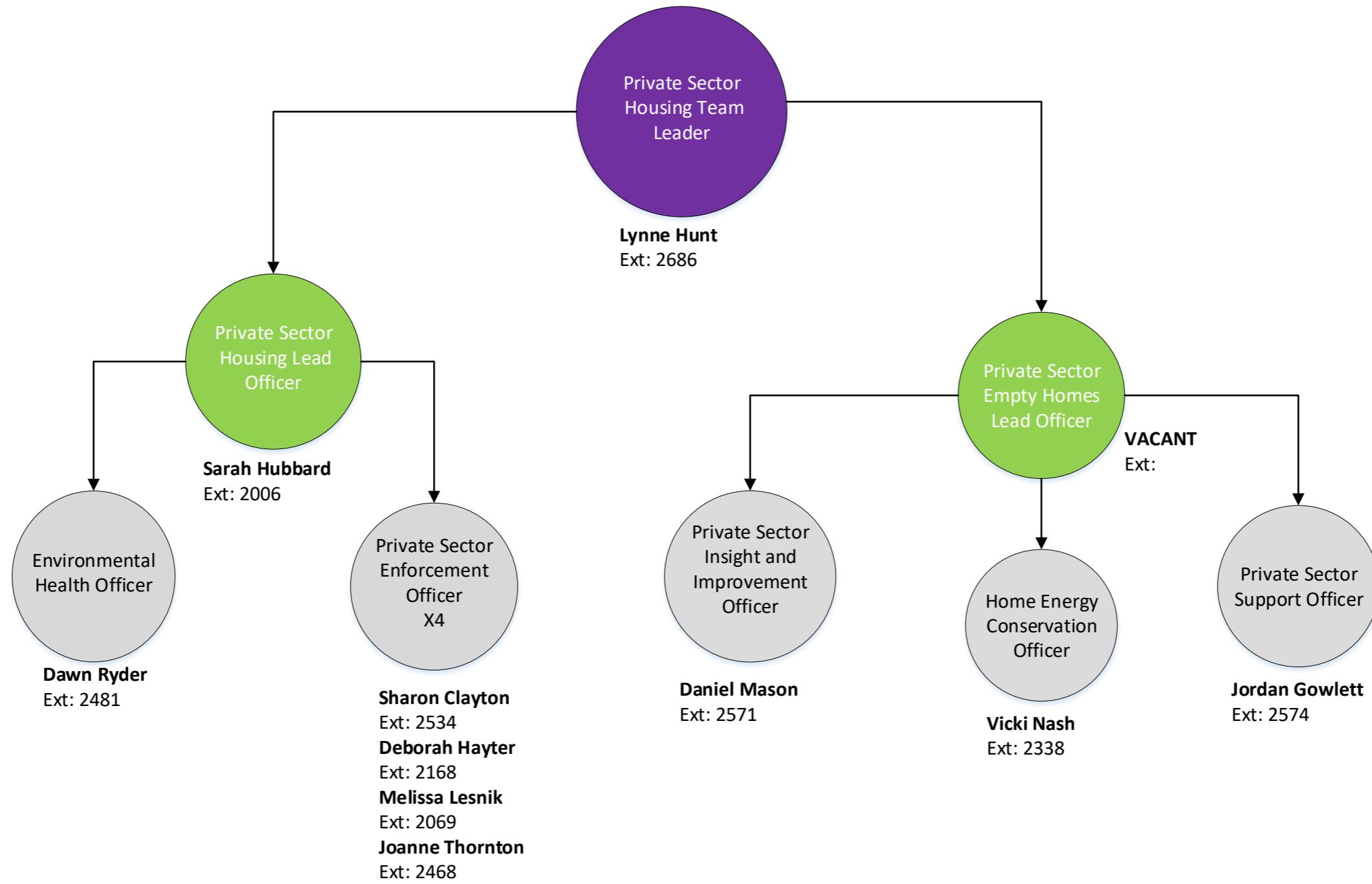




Private Sector Housing Structure Chart

Version 1

Last Reviewed: May 2020





Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	23 June 2020
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	COVID-19 IMPACT PAPER
Contact:	Andrew Williams, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Contracted Services Author/Responsible Officer: Sally Marshall Chief Executive James Deane Corporate Director (Finance and Operations) Mark Gaynor Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration) Mark Brookes, Assistant Director (Corporate & Contracted Services)
Purpose of report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide Cabinet with an update on the projected financial impact of Covid-19. 2. To set out a proposed Covid-19 recovery framework. 3. To highlight the work and support the Council has been carrying out across service areas in relation to Covid-19.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Cabinet note: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The projected financial impact of Covid-19 for 2020/21 as set out in section 1. (b) The proposed recovery framework as set out in section 2. 2. That Cabinet agree the extension of the voluntary sector contracts as set out in paragraphs 3.2 – 3.5 and the new one year contract to DENS as highlighted in paragraph 3.7. 3. That Cabinet agree the Covid-19 Strategic Risk annexed to this report.

Corporate objectives:	The financial impact and the Council's response to Covid-19 will impact all of the Council's Corporate Objectives.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> Financial Implications are covered in section 1.
'Value for money' implications	<u>Value for money</u> Covid-19 will have various value for money implications which will be assessed as proposals develop to respond to the issues raised. The Council's initial response has focused on continuity of service provision and support for key groups and organisations – the measures implemented are aimed at assisting the recovery and minimising the long terms impacts as much as possible.
Risk implications	Due to the significant impact of Covid-19, a new strategic risk has been entered into the Council's Strategic Risk Register, which is annexed to this report.
Community Impact Assessment	The Council's response to date has tried to ensure minimal service disruption to the community. The recovery phase of the Council's response will continually assess its impact on the community to ensure a balanced and effective response and this will be directed through the various recovery groups.
Health and safety Implications	The Council has acted promptly and put in place appropriate measures to ensure that staff, councillors and the community are protected from Covid-19 whilst trying to ensure minimal service disruption. This will continued to be assessed through the recovery stages.
Monitoring Officer/ S.151 Officer Comments	<u>Monitoring Officer comments</u> The Monitoring Officer continues to monitor the key issues raised by legislative changes and relevant government guidance and ensure that effective policies and procedures are in place to assist services to continue to deliver during the pandemic and subsequent recovery phase. <u>S151 Officer comments</u> The Financial Implications section of the report have been written by the S151 officer and will continue to be monitored as actual costs become clearer. Members will be regularly updated on the financial implications of Covid-19 as they develop.
Consultees:	Leader of the Council, Councillor Andrew Williams
Background papers:	Coronavirus Covid-19: Guidance for Local Government Procurement Policy Note 02/20 – Supplier Relief due to Covid-19
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 This section of the report identifies the financial pressures the Council is likely to face specifically as a result of the coronavirus. It does not include any other pressures that are likely to emerge over the course of the next 12 months.
- 1.2 Although some financial pressures have already begun to impact the Council, these are still relatively early days and the majority of the forecast pressures are estimates of how budgets might be affected over the longer-term. As a result, all of the forecasts in this report are subject to potentially significant change and should be considered high-risk.
- 1.3 Based on current information, DBC will face an estimated General Fund budgetary pressure in this financial year of around £5m resulting from the implications of coronavirus. This is a net position after £1.6m of Government support grants have been taken into account. Income is forecast to be down by c£5.6m and expenditure up by c£1m.
- 1.4 Currently, there are no indications that further Government support will be made available to local authorities. Whilst use of reserves may be an option for DBC to cover the predicted shortfall, they are all currently earmarked for future projects and their use would have longer-term implications for the Council's future ambitions. This will be modelled over coming weeks.
- 1.5 Collection rates for both Council Tax and Business rates are expected to fall over the coming months. The technicalities of these funding streams means that this is unlikely to impact the current year's budget, but it is likely to reduce future years' funding.
- 1.6 The HRA is currently forecasting a full-year pressure of c£500k. This is a net position, with falling income of £2.9m expected to be partially offset by reduced expenditure of £2.4m.

Pressure on General Fund income streams

- 1.7 In common with the vast majority of district councils, the financial pressure for DBC is driven more by lost income than increased expenditure. The 9 primary income streams within the General Fund are budgeted to generate £15.9m in 20/21, just over half the cost of running the Council's services. The extent to which they will be affected by coronavirus will be determined by several drivers, including:
- Duration of lockdown measures, e.g. car parking numbers, leisure
 - Ongoing health of local economy, e.g. commercial rents, planning applications, search fees
 - Service type, i.e. is it essential expenditure for a struggling business/individual, e.g. garages
- 1.8 Forecasting the full year impact at this stage is challenging because the impacts of the different drivers are likely to take effect over different timeframes, e.g. some may be extreme but largely concentrated within April to June, whereas others may continue to build over the full year.
- 1.9 The following estimates are based on information available at the end of May but are subject to change depending on future government guidance and/or the general health of the economy:

Income stream	Budget	Reduction	Duration months	Loss of income	Notes
Investment Property	£5.4m	50%	12	£2.7m	Arrears up by 60% (£350k) y-o-y. There is likely to be continued pressure on this income stream as tenants exhaust reserves and seek to arrange repayment plans, and as the expected recession threatens the survival of small businesses. Survey recently undertaken with tenants to ascertain business health and inform a targeted collection strategy.
Garages Income	£3.6m	25%	12	£900k	No material impact at this stage, but, depending on the severity of the recession, there is a risk that garages may represent an early cost saving for a household in financial difficulties. Garages relinquished now could have a medium-term financial impact on the Council as they may prove challenging to re-let. This will be factored into the ongoing garage project.
Car Parking	£2.8m	75%	6	£1m	Income down c85% as at the end of May. This income stream is heavily lockdown dependent - whilst restrictions are in place the reduction is severe, but it may bounce back quickly when restrictions are relaxed, particularly if demand/availability of public transport is reduced.
Planning Fees	£1.2m	50%	6	£300k	Down 20% on profiled budget as at the end of May. Significant reductions are anticipated for the remainder of the year due to impact on household incomes and developer nervousness over longer-term implications for the housing market.
Commercial Waste	£1m	50%	6	£240k	Anticipated pressure on income from businesses no longer operating and increase in bad debtors. This will be recession-dependent and will be monitored through the broader economic recovery.
Temporary Accommodation	£950k	0%	6	£0	Demand has increased dramatically, but unlikely to see significant increase in income as the Council's own TA capacity becomes fully utilised. Work continues with Estates to identify whether further income opportunities exist.
Leisure	£500k	40%	12	£200k	Management fee waived for the first 5 months of year as Supplier Relief (c£200k). Potential requirement for further Supplier Relief in future. Even when restrictions are lifted, it will take time for memberships to increase to pre-virus levels. High risk income stream.
Civic/Sports/APG hire	£300k	100%	6	£150k	Driven by the lifting of government restrictions. Recent announcements indicate that there is little chance of material income gains over the period before September. May see some, but may also see income depressed for much longer.
Search Fees	£230k	50%	12	£120k	Housing market likely to stagnate for at least the next 12 months as households await a more clearly emerging economic picture.
Total	£15.9m			£5.6m	At this stage it's estimated that DBC will experience 35 – 40% income reduction in 20/21.

Pressure on General Fund expenditure

1.10 Additional cost drivers arising from the virus include:

- One-off costs to ensure work conditions are compliant with government guidance, e.g. partition screens on desks; head phones for remote meetings etc.;
- Service based costs incurred to maintain front-line services in the face of new challenges or increased demand, e.g. agency staff to replace vulnerable waste collection staff; and potential additional costs around increased demand for Revenues & Benefits, and Homelessness.

1.11 With detail still emerging, there will be further decisions to be made between Revenue and Capital, or General Fund and HRA, but an early, high-level estimate of additional cost to the Council in cash terms is shown in the table below:

Expenditure Type	Pressure	Duration (months)	Notes
Waste Services	£550k	6	Primarily due to increased agency costs arising from: over 20 staff isolated for 12 weeks in high-risk groups; rolling 2 or 3 on self-isolation; additional smaller truck required to access residential roads congested with increased numbers of residents working from home; additional truck hire to facilitate social distancing between crews on rural rounds; waste tonnages up by c30% due to increased working from home.
Office-based staff	£200k		Estimated figure across the council to cover future increased demand for services.
Facilitate compliant ways of working	£250k		This includes modifications to Council buildings e.g. screen dividers for desks; automatic door installations; investment in mobile IT, etc.
Total	£1m		

Supplier Relief

1.12 Central Government has issued guidance to local authorities (known as PPN0220) to provide 'Supplier Relief' (SR) to contractors at financial risk as a result of the virus. Essentially, the guidance is for councils to continue paying for services they would ordinarily receive, but that have had to be temporarily suspended due to social distancing restrictions.

1.13 The rationale behind the guidance is that alongside the broader economic benefits of company survival, the contractor will be able to recover more quickly after the restrictions, thereby reducing the risk of interruptions to public services in the longer-term.

1.14 Any payments made as SR are at the expense of the individual council, and future reimbursement from Government is not expected. It is incumbent on the supplier to demonstrate that they are in need of SR and at the discretion of the council as to

whether payment should be made. At this stage only the Council's leisure provider has received SR.

- 1.15 DBC has set up a governance process to assess each claim individually. Specifically, the Council is seeking assurance that the company has taken all appropriate steps to maintain service provision; that it has exhausted all alternative measures of support available to it; that SR is required to ensure its survival; and, that its potential demise would negatively impact the borough's residents. Final approval rests with the Chief Executive, advised by the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, through formal Officer Decision.
- 1.16 The use of public funds to benefit a private company is an extremely finely balanced judgement. In order to reconcile these competing interests, DBC has adopted an approach of providing support through interest-free loans rather than non-refundable payments. It should be noted that even an interest-free loan from the public sector to a private company represents a legally and ethically complex area, and any applications from contractors will be thoroughly scrutinised to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.
- 1.17 This approach meets the spirit of the guidance, i.e. supporting those companies at greatest risk to remain afloat in the short-term, whilst at the same time reflecting the Council's own financial pressures and the need for proper stewardship of public funds.
- 1.18 On this basis, whilst there may be a cash flow impact, other than the example of Leisure income foregone, it is not currently expected that any future Supplier Relief granted by the Council will have a material budgetary impact.

Pressure on Council Tax collection

- 1.19 At the end of April, Council Tax collection rates were only marginally down, at 10.10% of the annual total, compared to 10.73% at the same stage last year. Throughout May, however, the year-on-year collection rate continued to fall at roughly the same rate, and ended the month at 18.9% compared to 20.3% last year.
- 1.20 Whilst a 1.4% reduction in year-on-year collection rates at the end of May is a cause for concern, it's not yet possible to extrapolate it with any confidence into a forecast year-end position. At the start of the lockdown period, a significant number of residents sought to maximise the financial flexibility the DBC Council Tax policy offers – they chose to reduce from 12 monthly payments to 10, and to delay their first payment until June. As a result of these changes we would expect the collection rate to be lower at this stage this year than it was last year.
- 1.21 The Council will only be able to gauge whether these residents are able to make their updated payments, and consequently whether there is likely to be an ongoing collection problem, when the June collection data becomes available. It could be that all residents will make their payments on time and that the collection rate will catch up with last year's, or it could be that some are unable to make payments and we start to see a clear trend of increased arrears starting to emerge.
- 1.22 It is, however, likely that over the course of the year there will be an underlying trend of collection rates falling below budget for the following reasons:

- The Council's tax base over the course of the year, will be lower than forecast due to the supply of new homes falling below previously anticipated levels, and an increasing number of households qualifying for Council Tax Support; and,
 - Reduced collection rates are an inevitable consequence of the constraints on household spending that accompany a prolonged recession, which is universally forecast for the coming months and years.
- 1.23 The way the Council Tax Collection Fund works means that even with a collection rate below budget, there will not be a budgetary pressure for DBC in the current year. A reduced tax base will however reduce Council Tax income next year and continue to have funding implications into the medium-term. The Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions for future years will be reviewed as current year trends start to emerge and more accurate modelling can be undertaken.
- 1.24 It's worth noting that the same Collection Fund mechanism that protects DBC's Council Tax income in the current year also gives rise to a cash-flow risk for DBC. In common with DBC, the other Council tax preceptors in Dacorum will not be affected in the current year by a fall in the collection rate. This could have cash-flow implications for DBC in future months as we continue to pay budgeted amounts of cash over to other preceptors despite the fact that we have actually collected less money.
- 1.25 This risk is being monitored and is the subject of ongoing discussion across all councils within Hertfordshire. At present, the risk sits exclusively with district councils (who collect the Council Tax) rather than the County Council, which takes by far the highest proportion of the income (79% in Dacorum). In the event that a cash-flow problem does begin to emerge, one option is for the risk to be borne proportionately by preceptors rather than sit solely with the districts.

Pressure on Business Rates collection

- 1.26 Government has already covered the financial implications of the additional rate reliefs it has awarded to the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality sectors, but future Business Rates collection is likely to be impacted by the expected recession.
- 1.27 From a budgetary perspective, DBC will not be impacted in the current financial year by falling collection rates. This is because the grant DBC receives from Government is based on 'assessment of need', with a maximum of 7.5% (c£250k) of the grant at risk if Business Rates collection falls below a baseline level. The at-risk element is based on the previous year, so any contraction of the local economy won't impact DBC until next financial year.
- 1.28 The medium-term funding risk to DBC of an ongoing and severe recession will depend on the extent to which Government links individual local authority funding to local economic growth. Government was scheduled to roll out a new funding mechanism next year (based on its Fair Funding Review), but has recently announced that this will now be suspended for at least one year. Funding arrangements for next year have yet to be announced.

Government Support Grant

- 1.29 DBC has received grant funding of £1.6m from Government's Local Government support package of £3.2bn. There is not currently any indication that there will be

further funding. Indeed, Government has emphasised in recent announcements that councils will need to meet much of their own virus-related costs.

- 1.30 However, this is an evolving picture and councils are being asked to submit periodic returns to Government outlining the scale of financial pressures – the figures in this report will be submitted in mid-June. The nationally consolidated position is being used by the Local Government Association and the District Councils' Network to lobby Government for increased financial support.

Summary of General Fund budgetary position and potential mitigations

- 1.31 Based on the forecasts in this report, DBC faces a potential in-year Covid-related budgetary pressure of:

Increased expenditure	£ 1.0m
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Lost income	£ 5.6m
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Less Government funding	<u>(£1.6m)</u>
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Net financial cost	£ 5.0m
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- 1.32 Based on information available at the time of writing, the use of earmarked reserves is a potential option for the Council to meet these financial pressures within the current year. However, this would be at the expense of the future projects the reserves were created to support (in some cases to finance schemes which are fundamental to meeting future savings requirements). In extreme circumstances, use of reserves would plug the budgetary gap and keep the Council afloat.
- 1.33 The updated Medium term Financial Strategy is currently scheduled for July. However, depending on the timing of government announcements, and the establishing of more robust in-year trends, it may be recommended to reschedule for September Cabinet to enable the production of a more meaningful document. Members will be kept updated on modelling progress and the emerging financial picture over the coming weeks.

Housing Revenue Account

- 1.34 As at the end of May, the HRA is facing an estimated a much lower full-year net pressure of c£500k, comprising a rental shortfall of £2.9m partially offset by a reduction in expenditure of £2.4m.
- 1.35 Forecasting the full year impact based on the rent shortfall as at the end of May is problematic due to the increasing number of tenants moving onto Universal Credit, and the subsequent processing period of up to 5 weeks before new claimants receive payment.
- 1.36 One would expect that some of the current pressure is a timing issue that will catch up once the claims start to be approved, (there were over 200 new UC claimants in April alone). However, this catch-up element is likely to be offset by an underlying trend of increasing arrears that will accompany the impending recession.
- 1.37 Whilst the HRA will see some areas of increasing expenditure as a result of Covid (e.g. rent collection), in overall terms the necessary suspension of a significant portion of the non-essential repairs and maintenance within the homes is currently resulting

in a forecast revenue underspend of £2.4m (20% of budget). At this stage it is not anticipated that contractors will have the capacity to increase future planned works, even if restrictions are eased to permit previous levels of access.

- 1.38 The HRA capital programme of major works, e.g. bathrooms and kitchens etc, has also been affected by restricted access to homes, and is currently forecasting slippage of 30%, c£5.5m, into next financial year.
- 1.39 Members will be updated throughout the year.

2. COVID-19 RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1. This part of the report sets out a framework to commence the recovery phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. The framework detailed here provides broad parameters and objectives for the working groups once established and once partners and stakeholders are engaged.
- 2.2. Recovery is an integral phase of the emergency management process and can be defined as:
- “The process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency”*
- 2.3. As a Borough council we hold the statutory, regulatory and licensing levers to help start to rebuild the economy and help business to stabilise, adapt and grow. We also hold key relationships with the County Council, other borough and district councils, Hertfordshire Growth Board and bodies such as the Local Enterprise Partnership and Homes England, which means that we are very well positioned to collaborate and deliver a comprehensive recovery programme.
- 2.4. Recovery does not necessarily mean restoration to the normality that existed before the pandemic. It needs to recognise that things may not be the same again and acknowledge that it can be a long term process, but also develop the opportunities, which have evolved through the pandemic.
- 2.5. The process will also need to align with existing work streams such as the Council’s change management programme, ‘New Normal’ and an opportunity is also presented to realign the terms of reference for the corporate officer working groups to ensure that they align with the recovery programme and can continue post recovery phase.

Core Principles

- 2.6 The principles of our recovery phase should include:
- Ensuring that the process enables and supports our communities and economy to recover and develop from the pandemic’s impacts.
 - Consideration of the changing needs of affected groups over time, and allowing for a long term process.
 - Active participation from the affected communities, businesses and stakeholders.
 - Integration between the work stream groups with the county wide recovery structure

Linkages to Wider Local Resilience Forum Recovery Structure

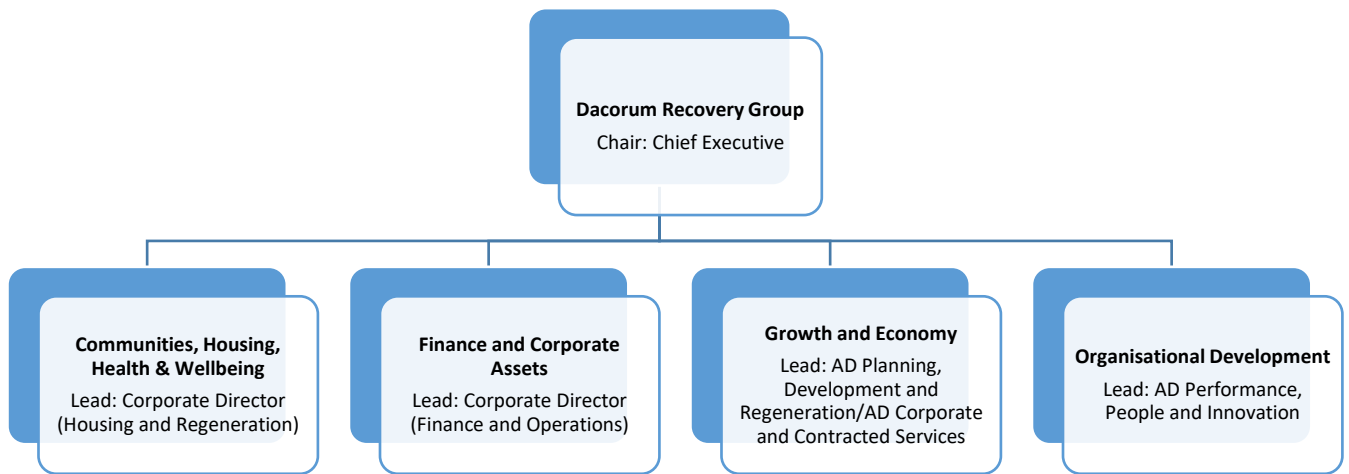
- 2.7 In respect of the current pandemic, a Hertfordshire wide Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) has already been established. The RCG is a multi-agency officer group with clear linkages and reporting lines to the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), and at an appropriate time, it will assume primacy.
- 2.8 Individual agencies will also establish their own recovery processes and internal groups, and it is important that the Council establish a suitable framework to enable us to link in to county wide structures, whilst leading a co-ordinated effort in respect of our own communities.
- 2.9 The Dacorum recovery structure will, like the county structure, have commenced work immediately but will then takeover from the Incident Management Team (IMT) which has been managing the pandemic to date at an appropriate time.
- 2.10 Continued and effective liaison between similar work streams at county and borough levels should be undertaken to ensure that objectives and work streams are aligned to ensure consistency

The Role of Members

- 2.11 Members will have a key role in the recovery process. The key aspects of Member roles include:
- Being a focus for community concerns and a conduit to recovery structures.
 - Identifying issues within their own wards.
 - Building/utilising local community links.
 - Providing visible community leadership.
 - Maintaining liaison with other local elected representatives.
 - Maintaining community and business liaison.
 - Encouragement and support to those working on recovery in their communities and businesses.
 - Consideration of recovery proposals and making appropriate democratic decisions connected to these.

Proposed Recovery Structure for Dacorum

- 2.12 The proposals for the delivery of the recovery strategy is set out in the structure on the next page, along with draft terms of reference for each group in appendix A-E.
- 2.13 The work of these officer groups will inevitably overlap with the current officer corporate working groups, Corporate Growth and Infrastructure Board, Community and Wellbeing, Property Management Board, the Climate Change and Sustainable Environment Group, therefore a review of the terms of reference of these groups will be undertaken to take account of this.



- The groups will be supported as necessary by appropriate teams, including Regulatory, Legal, Finance, Communities, Communications (and others as required) where appropriate.
- There may be officer task and finish work steams set up under each group.
- Portfolio Holders will be briefed regularly and reports will be presented to Cabinet for action as required.
- Finance and Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committees will have oversight of the whole recovery programme including budgetary impact. The Housing and Communities OSC and the Strategic Planning and Environment OSC will receive reports on their specific service areas.

3 RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY SUPPORT

3.1 This part of the report highlights some of key work and support that the Council has provided across its various services to ensure continuity of service and recovery resilience since the outbreak of Covid-19.

Support to Communities

Extension of voluntary sector contracts

3.2 Officers have been liaising with community and charitable organisations which provide services to residents in the borough to start to assess the short to medium term impact of Covid-19. The key issues highlighted are increased demand for services and requirement for additional funding to support the need.

3.3 The Council currently directly supports via commissioned contracts the following organisations:

- Citizens Advice Dacorum
- Age UK Dacorum

- Community Action Dacorum (in partnership with the Volunteer Centre Dacorum)
 - Relate Dacorum, Watford and Three Rivers (in partnership with Mediate Herts)
- 3.4 The combined annual value of these contracts is £481,000 and they all expire within the next 12-18 months. This is therefore the time that officers would normally start the re-procurement process.
- 3.5 In order to give these organisations greater financial security during these unprecedented times when demand on their service has and will continue to increase, it is proposed to extend their current contracts for a further 2 years from the end of their current term. This will provide financial security and enable focus on service provision rather than a new procurement process. The financial stability will also enable our partners to be in a stronger position when applying for future financial grants.
- 3.6 In addition to the above, the Elms Homeless Shelter management contract was awarded to DENS in May 2015 for a 5-year period, which expired at the end of April 2020. This has been extended for 2 months to take it up to the 30th June 2020.
- 3.7 It is proposed that a new 1-year contract is issued to DENS, with the option to extend this for a further year.
- 3.8 Hertfordshire County Council are undertaking a review of temporary accommodation countywide, as part of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Development Programme. The review will consider opportunities to address disproportionate demand and availability of accommodation and improve collaboration. One option that is being considered as part of the review by HCC is to centrally control and procure services across the County. If this option is adopted, it will be necessary to consider the impact of this on any future procurement of the Elms contract and therefore by providing a 1 year contract, it will enable the outcome of the review to be fully considered.
- 3.9 DENS have also been pivotal in supporting the Council at the current time in its response to the local homeless community in relation to Covid-19 and therefore the extension will give them greater security and enable them to focus on service delivery rather than a procurement process.

Community Grant Scheme

- 3.10 Support is granted to various community based organisations via the Council's Community Grants scheme. The scheme funds local voluntary and community sector organisations and grass roots groups to implement projects to benefit the community in Dacorum. The overall annual budget is just under £60k. There are two schemes, one is limited to £500 and a larger scheme for awards up to £3k. In exceptional circumstances applications can be made for up to £10k.
- 3.11 The existing application criteria would preclude Covid-19 related recovery projects, however, in order to support such projects that are solely related to Covid-19 recovery, it is proposed to amend the application criteria for applications submitted after the first round this year (closing date June 25th 2020) for the remaining bid rounds of financial year 2020/21.

Leisure

- 3.12 Officers have been working with the operator of Hemel and Berkhamsted Sports Centre, Everyone Active to prepare for reopening with appropriate health and safety measures in place.
- 3.13 A support package has also been agreed with Everyone Active to ensure continuity of service and protect local jobs as set out in the Officer Decision dated 31st March 2020.
- 3.14 Match funding has been confirmed from Sports England for consultancy support to assess the short to medium term impact of Covid-19 on our leisure facilities and subject to agreement with Dacorum Sports Trust this will also consider Little Hay Golf Club and the XC Centre.

Support to business and council contractors

- 3.15 In May 2020, Government announced a national fund of £617m to provide financial support for small and micro businesses affected by the coronavirus, which were not eligible for the Small Business Grant Fund or the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund. This is known as the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund (LADGF).
- 3.16 Local authorities were made responsible for delivering grants to eligible businesses, and each council was allocated funds equal to 5% of the grants issued to local businesses under the Government schemes mentioned in the paragraph 3.15. The DBC allocation was £1.45m.
- 3.17 The DBC scheme aimed to assist as many small and micro businesses as possible, as quickly as possible, and through a scheme designed to be as transparent as possible. The principles inherent within the DBC scheme and the rationale behind the design are available within the Portfolio Holder Decision published on 3 June: <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/council-democracy/portfolio-holder-decisions/decisions-2020>
- 3.18 Officers in the Economic Development Team have also started to identify the issues faced by business and have issued a short business survey to consider the impact of Covid-19. This will help to formulate the start of a recovery strategy and action plan working with stakeholder partners including the Local Enterprise Partnership, Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors and Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Business Improvement District. Particular focus will also be given to the borough's key retail centres noting that retail sector will likely be one of the worst affected by the pandemic.
- 3.19 The Council has been working with our main contractors throughout the pandemic to ensure that contractors are financially robust to recommence services as soon as restrictions are relaxed.
- 3.20 Payment restructuring of two construction contracts has taken place and financial support in the form of an interest free loans has been offered but not accepted in respect of two other major contractors. As noted above, a support package has also been agreed in respect of the Council's main leisure operator.

Support to Individuals

- 3.21 Officers continue to work with the voluntary sector, the County Council and the CCG/NHS on identifying individuals requiring additional support – which may be health, finance or safety matters – to provide assistance in the difficult transition back to a more normal life.
- 3.22 The Council is co-leading the Hertfordshire Accommodation and Recovery Cells, which primarily focusses on the coordinated response to homeless households placed across the County in relation to Covid-19. Each district has been asked to ensure that it continues to comply with the Dame Louise Casey request to bring ‘Everyone In’ and in Dacorum figures have fluctuated reaching a high of 185 households in temporary accommodation (though dropping as more voids have become available), a rise from 95 prior to the outbreak. Additionally districts have been asked to ensure that they are proactively engaging with all statutory and voluntary sector partners, to deliver a coordinated plan for recovery and ensuring that everyone who has been brought into interim accommodation during this emergency period, has a forward plan and offer of accommodation to prevent a risk of return to the streets.
- 3.23 All tenants of social housing, over 70 have been identified and contact made to offer support and obtain additional information in relation to those who are shielding. Food parcels have been delivered to those in need locally by officers from the Communities Team through both the County wide schemes Operation Shield and Sustain and also through the tenancy sustainment team. Sheltered schemes have had additional cleaning of all communal areas and regular telephone contact has been made with all residents who have requested support. Referrals have been made to the befriending scheme to reduce the impact of social isolation.
- 3.24 All lifeline customers across all tenures have been contacted and support and signposting to third sector partners and befriending services have been made and this work will continue whilst needed. The income team have been providing advice and support to those households in financial difficulty through the impact of Covid-19 and the numbers have increased month on month.
- 3.25 As part of our recovery plan, the Council are required to work proactively with all households placed into accommodation. Presently there is no indication of any additional funding that will be available to support with this. Dacorum were allocated £29,000 of MHCLG funding specifically to assist with homelessness (of which only half has been received) and, to date we have spent in excess of £39,000 on the immediate response.
- 3.26 As stated above the Council has experienced the highest numbers in temporary accommodation since 2016. Prior to lockdown there were 95 households in temporary accommodation and at the time of writing there are over 160 households. The Council’s Tenancy Sustainment team are contracted by Hertfordshire County Council under Housing Related Support funding to support 35 households in temporary accommodation and those in the first 6 months of their tenancy. Currently the team are supporting in excess of 200 households.
- 3.27 The Council will continue to provide a corporate coordinated response in relation to Domestic Abuse: Homelessness, Community Safety and Tenants & Leaseholders are all involved in engaging with residents in relation to this sensitive area. Domestic Abuse is on the rise and recent data provided by St Albans & Hertsmere Women’s Refuge, confirms that during the lock down period there have been 123 new domestic

abuse reports in Dacorum. In the 7 weeks prior to lockdown there were 62 DA referrals, for the same 7 weeks in 2019 there were 40 DA reports. It is imperative that the council develops and maintains a coordinated approach to support those households most in need and at a time when they are at most risk. As a result a review of Domestic Abuse services will be undertaken as committed within the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Forum/staff occupied buildings

3.28 Reviews have been carried out of all staff occupied buildings and changes proposed to ensure that staff can occupy buildings safely with appropriate distancing and hygiene measures when a phased return to the buildings commence. The main measures to be introduced include:

- Staff to sit diagonally from each other (4 staff on a bank of 8 – at the Forum).
- Maximum of 155 staff in the Forum (approximately 1/3 of full capacity) – Working from home rota to be agreed by managers
- Everyone entering the Forum will have their temperature screened and a process for what should happen if a high temperature will be agreed
- Shared seating areas and kitchens have been reconfigured
- Atrium and café to be open for takeaway only
- Visitor access to the Forum to be by appointment only – discussions are ongoing with the Library regarding their plans.
- Access to Forum to be via the pass door to the side of the main entrance and exit will be via the fire exit on the lower ground floor to ensure a one-way system can operate.
- One way system will be created around the Forum with appropriate markers
- Perspex screens (870 mm from desk surface) to be fitted to all desks and points of contact with customers/public (similar to what has happened in most shops).
- The use of lifts in the Forum are restricted to people that must use them and only 1 person is allowed in them at any one time.
- The opening hours for the Forum will be 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday to begin with and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- Appropriate 2 meter markings are placed on the floor at prominent parts of the building to remind everyone of the 'social distance' measures.
- Introduction of additional hand disinfectant/sanitising units around the Forum.
- Automated doors have been fitted to reduce the number of door handles needing to be touched.
- Staff will be responsible for their own coffee/tea mug and should keep it in their locker when not in use to ensure that only they use the receptacle.

- A Forum user etiquette has been prepared to ensure all users are aware of the behaviors that must be observed in relation to appropriate hygiene and social distancing measures when in the building

Shopping areas and public open spaces

3.29 Officers have developed an action plan for the main shopping areas across the borough including Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, Tring and Berkhamsted and neighbourhood centres. Proposed measures include:

- Safe distancing and hand washing signage
- Utilising the large screen in the Marlowes for visual messaging
- Continued closure of play areas
- Enhanced cleaning regimes
- Liaising with the Hemel Hempstead BID to ensure shops are managing queuing appropriately and are opening/operating safely
- Liaising with Hertfordshire County Council to consider traffic intervention measures

3.30 Safe distancing and hygiene signs have been placed at the entrance to parks and open spaces and play areas will remain closed until further notice.

Strategic Risk

3.31 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the operation of the Council's day to day business and significant financial consequences. Whilst the Council is entering into the recovery phase there is still a risk of a potential second wave of the crisis. Given the nature of the impact on the Council's operations and potential for a second wave of virus it is recommended that a new strategic risk is entered into the Council's Strategic Risk Register. A copy of the COVID-19 strategic risk is attached to this report.

Appendix A: Suggested Objectives – Dacorum Recovery Group

Act as a link with the county wide recovery structure.

Act as a link with the county wide SCG while it is running, feeding in recovery issues as required.

Provide strong, visible leadership.

Give a broad overview, ensuring that each agency's interests are represented.

Prepare community impact assessments that inform recovery priorities and activity work streams.

Set and monitor the borough wide recovery strategy, ensuring implementation.

Co-ordinate and monitor the work of the four recovery sub-groups, including their recommendations.

Agree the exit strategy criteria, and the timescales for achieving this.

Set and monitor the overall action plan arising from the recovery phase.

Communicate the work of the group and sub-groups to Members and other key stakeholders.

Appendix B: Suggested Objectives – Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing Sub-Group

Support and facilitate the recovery and ongoing welfare of residents who have suffered hardship, loss and trauma as a result of the pandemic.

Review and adapt public open spaces ensuring that they are clean, safe and secure for public use.

Revitalise leisure, parks, sports promoting modal shifts towards walking and cycling to promote healthy communities.

Review and work with public facing business from a regulatory perspective to re-open safely and maximise capacity for public use.

Collaborating with county and health authorities to support track and tracing of Covid-19 and similar initiatives.

Review and put in place mechanisms to identify those with ongoing vulnerabilities and a strategy for addressing these needs working with contracted and non-contracted service providers as appropriate.

Review and plan to approach some of the issues that have arisen during the Covid19 lockdown such as increased Domestic Abuse, isolation and mental health difficulties and financial difficulties.

Feed in the work of the Recovery Group and ensure that this is properly communicated.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

Monitor the data relating to those with ongoing support needs and work with other agencies to develop support interventions.

Identify funding opportunities to assist in the recovery process.

Deliver and support appropriate memorial and thank you events and initiatives. Provide community reassurance through effective community leadership.

Appendix C: Suggested Objectives – Growth and Economy Sub-Group

Work with partners to support the regeneration of businesses and the local economy through a jointly devised recovery strategy.

Provide support to local businesses in conjunction with partners (e.g. BID, Chambers of Commerce).

Reviewing existing planning and licensing powers to support business in the recovery process.

Collectively pursue relevant opportunities for funding.

Continue the work of the Growth and Infrastructure Board which has responsibilities for:

- Directing and overseeing the development of the Local Plan process
- Specifically focusing on the process and delivery of the major housing growth required both spatially and tactically
- Ensuring that the infrastructure that must accompany growth - transport, utilities, health, schools, open space, community needs and employment - are considered and delivered
- Development and delivery of an updated economic development strategy and action plan
- Monitoring housing and employment delivery and required actions
- Advising the use of resources available for infrastructure including CIL
- Reviewing the effectiveness of partnership arrangements
- Specifically leading on the development of the Enterprise Zone and relationship with the LEP
- Considering the potential of actual and possible very major development proposals
- Initial consideration and planning for the Council's own services to ensure future service needs can be met.

Planning and delivering direct market interventions such as new build Council housing to further kick-start the economy and support local business.

Review strategies for our town centres, including business development, attracting footfall and approach to key sites.

Review tourism strategies to attract visitors and assist and grow the hospitality sector
Work with the LEP Economic Resilience Cell

Act as a conduit to central government where there are unmet support needs for businesses.

Actions to seek and encourage inward investment in the Borough

Maintain ongoing dialogue with local employers.

Support initiatives intended to support the recovery of local businesses.

Feed in the work of the Recovery Group and ensure that this is properly communicated.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

Appendix D: Suggested Objectives - Organisational Recovery Sub-Group

Restore service delivery to agreed business in a planned way.

Identify opportunities and inform future changes, such as modernisation and transformation, linking to the existing New Normal programme.

Ensure all Council offices are compliant with latest guidance and best practice and safe for staff and the public to return.

Ensure the consistent application of appropriate policies during the recovery phase.

Ensure the management of backlogs, identifying any extra resources required to restore normal services.

Identify employee support needs and vulnerabilities.

Ensure that employees are supported and that efforts are acknowledged. Ensure effective communications with council employees.

Capture learning through a process of debriefing, both single and multi-agency.

Ensure that there are appropriate memorial events for colleagues/Members who may have passed away.

Contribute towards wider consultations on legislative change etc

Appendix E: Suggested Objectives – Finance and Corporate Assets Sub-Group

Review, monitor, project and report the financial impact of the pandemic on Council Finance.

Support and facilitate the recovery of tenants of council commercial properties who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic.

Continue the work of the Property Management Board assessing development opportunities, and monitoring progress of agreed development projects to ensure the most efficient use of Council land assets and to help drive economic recovery.

Oversee and monitor the delivery of grants to business and report on outcomes.

Identify and monitor funding opportunities.

Report work of the sub-group to the Recovery Group, including performance information.

Risk Owner: Sally Marshall	Portfolio Holder: Andrew Williams	
Strategic Risk for inclusion in the Council's Strategic Risk Register – Outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic would result in the Council facing additional demand for services in the short to medium-term; significant financial implications from lost revenue streams and increased service demand; and potential for a reduced workforce due to staff being illness or self-isolating. It will also have an impact to the local Dacorum economy in the short, medium and possibly long-term		
Inherent Impact	Inherent Probability	Inherent Risk Score
5	4	20
Mitigated Impact	Mitigated Probability	Mitigated Risk Score
4	3	12
Label Impact Title		
<p>Failure to respond to a COVID 19 pandemic outbreak of infectious disease incident involving death, harm or injury (or potential to cause these) could have catastrophic consequences to individuals, communities, businesses and the environment. A COVID 19 outbreak would spread further unmitigated through local communities and wider afield to cause a serious health risk if uncontrolled.</p> <p>Failure of service continuity, control of authority finances, methods of communication, ICT and staffing levels.</p> <p>On 15 March 2020 based on epidemiological forecasts, the UK government said everyone should avoid all "non-essential" travel and contact with others, avoid crowds, and work from home if possible. Those with symptoms, and their household, were asked to self-isolate. Pregnant women, people over 70, and those with certain health conditions were asked to self-isolate for longer.</p> <p>On 20 March 2020, the UK governments closed all schools, restaurants, pubs, indoor entertainment venues and leisure centres, with some exceptions. On 23 March 2020, the government imposed a lockdown on the whole population, banning all "non-essential" travel and contact with people outside one's home, and shutting almost all businesses, venues, facilities, amenities and places of worship. People were told to keep apart in public. Police were given power to enforce the lockdown, and the Coronavirus Act 2020 gave the government emergency powers including local authorities.</p> <p>As soon as legislation was enacted to allow virtual meetings the Council has introduced virtual member meetings via MS Teams to ensure that the democratic decision making process could be maintained.</p> <p>This unprecedented set of circumstances poses a significant threat to the Council both in terms of its ability to deliver core services in the short to medium term, and the impact of potential reduced Council income and increasing expenditure in the short to medium term. It is also likely to have a significant impact to the local economy in the short, medium and possibly long-term.</p> <p>A report was presented and approved by Council on 15 April 2020, this report set out arrangements put in place emergency measures and delegations as required to deal with the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <p><u>Financial Impact</u> The impact of the pandemic will have short, medium and potentially long term financial ramifications on the Council.</p>		

In the short term Covid 19 restrictions imposed by government will have impact on income generating services where these services are impacted by either a requirement to close or an inability to trade/operate during Covid 19 restrictions. The Council is also expecting to incur additional expenditure related to supporting strategic partners, increased staffing costs resulting from shielding and isolation, and costs incurred in facilitating and operating new ways of working.

In the medium and longer term the economic impact on Dacorum is likely to impact major funding streams to the Council such as Council tax and business rates levels.

Controls to manage the risk

Ensure there is sufficient resilience and expertise within the Authority to manage an incident and control the risks. Training carried out on a regular basis which covers roles and responsibilities. There are arrangements in place for other local authority mutual aid to provide cover in emergency. Any incident would be managed by the Incident Management Team (IMT) chaired by a member of Chief Officer Group.

IMT to follow and implement Government and Public Health England legislation and guidance where required or appropriate.

Ability to deliver services

Each of the service areas undertook a risk assessment to identify how statutory services could continue to be provided and what modifications to other services would be needed. These are held in the operational Risk Registers.

From 23 March 2020, all staff that were able to, where possible to work from home, this was achieved immediately due to technology infrastructure changes already made by the move into The Forum.

Over 450 staff have been regularly working from home and continuing to deliver services, however face to face services have been suspended as the Forum has been closed to the public since 23 March 2020.

Some staff are unable to deliver services from home particularly those from Neighbourhood Delivery who are based in the Cupid Green Depot, as well as staff who work in the Council's Adventure Playgrounds. Where possible staff have been redeployed to support core services. However there are a small number of staff that are unable to work from home and cannot go to their normal employment due to Covid-19 health restrictions.

All core strategic service delivery is being achieved by working remotely, making use of the newly introduced MS Teams for collaborative working and meeting and people covering for each other as we have had approximately 9% less staff due to self-isolation or sickness attributed directly to COVID-19.

Financial Controls.

The following controls aim to reduce the probability of there being a variance in the General Fund Revenue Budget by ensuring that there is strong challenge put to Budget Holders on the robustness of their assumptions, from a range of audiences.

It is intended that these controls will increase and incorporate the strong culture of financial management already in existence across the Council leading to continuous improvement in the setting of accurate budgets.

The ongoing monthly budget monitoring processes and quarterly reporting to members and scrutiny groups will continue with additional reports to members provided if the financial position has materially changed, or key decisions are required.

The Council is budgeted to hold reserve balances in excess of £17m in 20/21 and would be appropriate in the short term, to draw down on these reserves once all other revenue streams have been fully utilised.

The annual Medium Term Financial strategy (MTFS) will be updated in year, and the MTFS will include the projected financial impact of Covid 19 on the Council.

The budget-setting process consists of an ongoing scrutiny process and is augmented by the Budget Review Group (BRG), consisting of Chief Officer Group and representatives from the Portfolio Holder group, which provides early member-level challenge to ensure a robust budget is proposed to Council.

The Council's Financial Regulations provide a guide to all budget-holders and are subject to annual review.

Business Survey (Up to end April)

192 businesses from a cross section of sectors, sizes and locations within Dacorum have completed surveys (11 ambassadors) to gather intelligence to inform our recovery strategy to date.

- These businesses account for 4,365 jobs and 1,069 employees have been furloughed, with just 7 made redundant.
- Businesses that also rely on self-employed or agency staff reported that a total of 264 have been let go, with little knowledge of whether these staff did not qualify for financial support.
- The majority of businesses describe themselves as ticking over, but 22% are in crisis and 19% concerned about the potential closure of their business.
- Only 6.5% describe themselves as thriving.
- The most common reported concerns were cashflow & loss of productivity (c70%) and obtaining financial support (c54%). Of least concern were possible redundancies (13%) and only 9% do not see themselves returning to full staff numbers.
- 51.5% are able to work from home, 17.5% partially work from home and 30% are unable to work from home. Of those able to, 44% think they will continue to do so to some extent.
- 43% of business have been able to adapt their business model to some degree to meet the demands of the situation and around 64% of these businesses expect to incorporate these changes permanently to some degree going forward.
- Most businesses are finding it difficult to identify what support they would find beneficial in the future, other than general business advice.
- A common difficulty when answering questions is that businesses do not know when or how they will be able to start trading again.

Corporate Health & Safety

Corporate Health and Safety Team take a lead in supporting business continuity measures in the event of a pandemic including assisting with managing the PPE stock levels.

Evidence the risk is being managed

Mass COVID fatalities and cases are covered by centralised emergency plans. Local emergency plans tested on an annual basis.

Daily meetings of IMT for decision making and monitoring service delivery. Daily meetings were reduced to three times a week during late May, to reflect the measures put in place to manage the impact of the crisis, this will be kept under review and will increase to daily if required.

IMT to monitor all services, finance, ICT, communications, staffing levels and report to Council, Cabinet and appropriate Committees

In order to manage this strategic risk, on 17 March 2020 the Council established IMT meetings and these are held on a daily basis (now three times a week). The membership is composed of Chief Executive (Chair of IMT), both Corporate Director (Finance and Operations) - (Finance and Service Lead for Operations), Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration (Service Lead for Housing/Homelessness and Economic Recovery) Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services (Monitoring Officer), Interim Assistant Director Neighbourhood Delivery, Group Managers of Environmental and Community Protection (Health and Safety Leads), Group Manager People and Community (Human Resources Lead), Group Manager Technology and Digital Transformation (ICT lead) and the DBC Operation Shield/Sustain Lead Officer

There is a set agenda to cover all the services of the Council and the Group Manager Environmental and Community Protection provides an update from the Strategic Co-ordinating and the Tactical Co-ordinating Groups.

In addition to the IMT meetings the Chief Executive also attends the following meetings to ensure that Dacorum is aware and able to contribute to at a national, regional and county level:

- Secretary of State Teleconferences
- DCN Coronavirus conference calls – Leaders and Chief Executives
- East of England Chief Executive conference calls
- Hertfordshire Chief Executive Co-ordinating Group and Recovery Cell Group
- The Chief Executive and Group Manager Environmental and Community Protection also receive written briefings from Local Resilience Form and associated operational cells