



# Public Document Pack Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Agenda

*This meeting will be held remotely via the Microsoft Teams application. Should any members of the public wish to join this meeting, please contact [member.support@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:member.support@dacorum.gov.uk) by 5pm on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June*

**Wednesday 1 July 2020 at 6.30 pm**

**Microsoft Teams - Microsoft Teams**

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 Adeleke (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Bassadone  
Councillor England  
Councillor Imarni (Chairman)  
Councillor Mahmood  
Councillor Pringle  
Councillor Arslan

Councillor Durrant  
Councillor Johnson  
Councillor Oguchi  
Councillor Hollinghurst  
Councillor Barry  
Councillor Freedman

For further information, please contact Corporate and Democratic Support

## **AGENDA**

### **1. MINUTES**

To confirm the minutes from the previous meeting

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive any apologies for absence

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of interest

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered -

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest

becomes apparent

and, if the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest, or a personal interest which is also prejudicial

(ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter (and must withdraw to the public seating area) unless they have been granted a dispensation.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Members' Register of Interests, or is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal and prejudicial interests are defined in Part 2 of the Code of Conduct For Members

[If a member is in any doubt as to whether they have an interest which should be declared they should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer before the start of the meeting]

#### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

An opportunity for members of the public to make statements or ask questions in accordance with the rules as to public participation

#### **5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

#### **6. ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

#### **7. GARAGES** (Pages 3 - 7)

#### **8. EMPTY HOMES** (Pages 8 - 24)

#### **9. PRIVATE SECTOR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME** (Pages 25 - 40)

#### **10. WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 41 - 42)

## Housing and Community OSC

### Actions arising

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Action point</b>	<b>Responsible for action</b>	<b>Date action completed</b>	<b>Update on action point</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2020	HC/036/20 - Cllr England requested that the target was reinstated to 210 seconds and wanted it reviewed at Committee. Cllr Banks advised she would discuss with L Roberts and bring back to the next meeting.	Linda Roberts/ Cllr Banks		<p>The Council's performance meeting (Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and AD People, Performance and Innovation) annually review any suggested changes to KPIs. The changes to CSU KPIs were submitted to the board in April 2019 for the forth coming year (2019/20).</p> <p>The decision, in April 2019, was based on the fact that our current staff resourcing level was consistently not achieving a stretching target of 210 seconds call handing average wait time. The CSU were consistently achieving the average wait time for face to face meetings. So to balance the level of service achieved between face to face and call wait times, we reduced the target for face to face average wait times (8 minutes to 6 ½ minutes) and moved the average call wait times from 210 seconds to 300 seconds).</p> <p>We are constantly looking at how we can make our resources more efficient, so that the current level of staffing resource can help as many people as possible in a timely fashion, but we do not want to compromise the quality of the contact, so it is a fine balance. Our satisfaction feedback is typically very positive from customers and our quality assurance assessment from our internal customers is also positive. The number of formal complaints about our service is very low, in fact the last formal complaint was December 2017.</p> <p>The performance board agreed the KPI amendments.</p>
3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2020	HC/036/20 - The Chairman asked if streaming/online events could be investigated and also if people can book	Linda Roberts		<p>A paper will be at the 9 September 2020 meeting explaining how the OTH will operate within the latest social distancing guidelines. The time before the June and July meeting did not provide sufficient time to complete this work efficiently. The chair has agreed.</p>

	<p>tickets for next year, paying for the tickets now. L Roberts will investigate and provide a strategy to Committee.</p>			<p>The OTH doesn't live stream because it needs the correct license and the ability to film in a Covid safe way – (actors / tech/ staff all socially distanced).</p> <p>The OTH does not have the right technology, nor a reliable fast connection to the web. We would have difficulty setting up a secure paywall so the content would have to be free to all. For a live stream you would need to choose the right product in a market saturated with choice, pay the theatre company, buy the rights, invest in the technology and set up a secure pay wall or offer it free. Also bear in mind that a recent article in the Stage has already stated that the National theatre is winding down its digital offer next month.</p> <p>Tickets are not currently on sale for 2021 productions as there is still doubt about social distancing in theatres. The new seats are currently being installed – we can only model the required social distancing (currently 2m) and thereby work out the number of seats we can put on sale once this has taken place. When this has been done we can put that number of seats on sale – and then release more seats for sale when and if social distancing has been further relaxed.</p>
3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2020	<p>HC/041/20 – To discuss putting climate change onto the work programme</p>	<p>Cllr Imarni</p>		



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>1 July 2020</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Garage Programme Update</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrew Williams, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services</li> <li>• Linda Roberts, AD People, Performance and Innovation, Author/Responsible Officer</li> <li>• James Deane, Corporate Director (Finance and Operations), Garage Programme Sponsor</li> <li>• Fiona Williamson, AD Housing, Garage Programme Sponsor</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of the Garage Programme review.
<b>Recommendations</b>	Note the progress of the programme and the impact of COVID-19 on this programme.
<b>Period for post policy/project review</b>	Propose another update with proposed investment strategy in November 2020
<b>Corporate objectives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building strong and vibrant communities</li> <li>• Ensuring economic growth and prosperity</li> </ul>
<b>Implications:</b>	<p><u>Financial</u> The review is essential to ensure the garage asset maximises revenue and is appropriately aligned to demand, so that alternative use options can be considered for the generation of capital receipts or alternative revenue streams. The review is being funded from reserves on the basis of spend to save.</p>
<b>'Value for money' implications</b>	<p><u>Value for money</u> The review is being undertaken at market rates for this nature of professional services support.</p>

Risk implications	<p>There is an active risk register for this programme review which is managed by the Programme Board.</p> <p>The main risk for the Council relating to Garages is without any intervention they will be a continued decline of revenue. There is a reputational risk to the Council for the perceived poor management of the garage stock.</p>
Community Impact Assessment	Community Impact Assessment carried out on 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2020.
Health and safety Implications	There are no specific H&S concerns in this review as such. However Health and Safety implications will be full considered as part of the recommendations that will be developed once the review is complete.
Consultees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts from within Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesley Jugoo, Empty Homes Team Leader</li> <li>• Theresa Miles, Garage Management Officer</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lucy Tash, Accountant: Housing, DBC (for budgets)</li> <li>• Ben Trueman, GM - Technology &amp; Digital Transformation, DBC (for ICT systems)</li> <li>• Charlotte Courtney, Project Manager, Orchard Systems</li> </ul>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>CMT – Corporate Management Team</p> <p>CPW – Community Protection Warning</p> <p>CPN - Community protection Notice</p>

## Executive Summary

1. The Garage Programme review commenced in November 2019 with the appointment of an external Programme Manager to lead the review and implement improvements.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the completion of the development of a mobile tool to collect garage survey data. This is due to the supplier furloughing staff until the beginning of June and the Council's priorities were focused on the transition to remote working and the immediate response to the lockdown and new ways of working. Due to the availability of Orchard staff to work on this development the upgrade work will not be completed until it is done over the weekend 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July
3. Tenders were sent out to known external surveyors and the successful bidder was a local firm Aitchison Rafferty. They too had been severely impacted by the lockdown restrictions but will be able to start this work w/c 6<sup>th</sup> July. Based on the numbers of surveys to be done (6,855) they expect this week to be completed by 20<sup>th</sup> August.
4. The Garages team will continue to process garage application and returns whilst this work is being done. This will also help inform on the demand for

garages and if this changes as a result of the impact on the local economy of COVID-19.

5. Once the surveys are completed and the data mapped against demand this will inform and shape a garage investment strategy proposals and priorities.
6. It is planned to present this investment strategy for scrutiny and to Cabinet in October 2020.

## **Introduction**

7. There have been a number of issues with the rental and management of Garage assets in Dacorum. Constructed around 1950/1960 a lot of the stock requires maintenance and investment, but it has not been known where this should be best spent. Although the garages as assets belong to the General Fund, they have been historically managed by the Housing directorate of the Council.
8. The Garage Programme review commenced in November 2019 with the appointment of an external Programme Manager to lead the review and implement improvements.

## **Progress**

9. The approach and progress of the review was presented at the joint scrutiny meeting in February 2020. This report is an update of progress since February and shows the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had on this project.
10. The main focus of the programme at the time of the outbreak of COVID-19 was:
  1. Completing the development of an IT tool to collect garage survey data and feed it directly in the ProMaster system (part of the Housing system Orchard).
  2. Send out a tender to known external surveying firms to enable the surveys to be done much more quickly than just relying on our internal surveying capability.
  3. Continue to process applications and returns of garages and setup new rental agreements.

## **Development of a mobile applications to capture garage survey data**

11. The Council's contract Project Manager had instructed the software supplier (Orchard) in February 2020 about the changes that were required to enable the mobile application to work for DBC. In early March Orchard informed DBC that the tool would require an upgrade of the underlying database. The first part of this work was done w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> March but this coincided with the introduction of lockdown restrictions.

12. The Council's contract Project Manager was stood down on 30<sup>th</sup> March and at this time Orchard furloughed staff as we received emails with out of office message referring to them being unavailable until 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. We had no consultation with Orchard in regard to this and so the work was put on hold, as their staff were unable to work if furloughed. In addition Orchard was in the final stages of an acquisition by a US company MRI, which was announced on 31<sup>st</sup> March, so they were unlikely to make any adverse information in respect of the COVID impact public at that stage.
13. In addition to Orchard's availability the Council's priorities were focused on the transition to remote working and the immediate response to the lockdown and new ways of working. There was a need to suspend any development work to ensure that all IT was focused on the support of the current environment to ensure that wholesale homeworking and necessary resilience was delivered.
14. At the end of May (27<sup>th</sup> May) we resumed contact with Orchard as this coincided with their planned to return to work. At this point there was still much work to be done to complete the upgrade. We received an email with a planned return date of 22<sup>nd</sup> July due to limited capacity for the upgrade team which we replied was unacceptable. We have now had this scheduled for over the weekend of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July. This coincides with the wholesale survey work being starting w/c 6<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **Tendering for external surveying capability**

15. At the end of March a tender was sent out to three known firms of surveyors for them to bid to survey the garages on the Council's behalf. Surveying had continued with the internal team but it had made slow progress due to their other housing work commitments.
16. The tenders were reviewed in May as during April the Councils was focused on the transition to remote working and the immediate response to the lockdown and new ways of working.
17. Aitchison Rafferty (were successful with their tender and in consultation with them and the return of their staff to work it was agreed that the survey work would start w/c 6<sup>th</sup> July with an aim to complete all the garage stock that had not been updated (6,855 garages) by our internal team by the end of August. It was confirmed that this work can be done whilst maintaining COVID-19 guidelines.

#### **Continue to process applications and returns of garages and setup new rental agreements**

18. Although the development of the mobile tool was suspended during lockdown the Council's Garages Team continued to process garage applications and make garages available for rental. During this period (April to first two weeks



in June) there has been 263 e-form enquiries, 93 offers made, 60 commencements with 56 terminations. The DBC surveyors who have been unable to go into tenant buildings have carried out 756 inspections.

19. This is a good performance from the team that they have managed to respond to residents requests. However 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 programme and subsequent investment strategy.

### **Next steps**

20. A meeting was held this week (22<sup>nd</sup> June) between Orchard and DBC to finalise the arrangements for the work to be done on the upgrade and completion of the mobile tool. This will be closely monitored during the next couple of weeks to ensure that it completed on time.
21. There are plans for Aitchison Rafferty surveyors to come to The Forum to receive training in the mobile application before they commence with their surveys.
22. Once the surveys are completed and the data mapped against demand this will inform and shape a garage investment strategy proposals and priorities.
23. It is planned to present this investment strategy for scrutiny and to Cabinet in November 2020.

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>1st July 2020</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>Part I</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Empty Homes Review</b>
Contact:	Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder Housing Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing
Purpose of report:	To provide an update to members of the work that has been undertaken to review the empty homes process and identify improvements to reduce the key to key time.
Recommendations	1. That the Committee consider the empty homes review and provide comment on the recommended improvements.
Corporate Objectives:	The empty homes review contributes to the following corporate priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</li> <li>• Delivering an efficient modern council</li> </ul>
Implications:	<u>Financial</u>  The preliminary review work was undertaken using the budget for the new normal change programme, so contained within base budget. Once the improvements have been implemented it is anticipated that the improved rental income achieved through reduced key to key time will offset some of the consultancy costs and will have ongoing benefits to the Council.
Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for money</u>  The external consultants were appointed following a competitive tender process to ensure value for money and the review considers any efficiency gains that can be achieved through the re-engineering..
Risk Implications	Increased key to key times has a negative impact on the rental income and the high demand for social housing present a

	reputational risk of council owned properties being empty for long periods of time.
Equalities Implications	The review considered the existing process, which has been assessed for any equalities implications in line with the allocations policy.
Health And Safety Implications	Health and Safety is one of the key criteria when assessing work to be undertaken, both in terms of contractors and CDM and the tenants occupying the homes.
Consultees:	Mark Gaynor Director of Housing and Regeneration Linda Roberts Assistant Director, Projects Performance and Innovation Natasha Beresford, Group Manager Strategic Housing Jason Grace, Group Manager Property and Place Layna Warden, Group Manager Tenants and Leaseholders Oliver Jackson Team Leader, Supported Housing Lesley Jugoo, Empty Homes Lead Officer Tracy Vause, Strategic Housing Team Leader
Background papers or appendices	Appendix A Key to Key times Appendix B Empty Homes Report by Category Appendix C Sopra Steria Business Process Review
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	Faithorn, Farrell and Timms FFT

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The key to key times for the turn-around of empty homes has seen an increase over the past two years. A number of factors were identified in contributing to this reduction in performance, but a wholesale review of the service had not been undertaken.
- 1.2 As part of the Council's "new Normal" change management programme, empty homes were identified as a complex process, which could benefit from a reengineering review as proof of concept pilot scheme.
- 1.3 Following a procurement process a firm of consultants, Sopra Steria were appointed to undertake a process review and identify any quick wins which would reduce the key to key time.
- 1.4 In addition the Council were reviewing the allocations policy and demand for all types of housing but specifically, supported housing, which is known to prove more challenging to let.
- 1.5 The report provides an oversight of the findings of the review and identifies a number of interventions, some which are designed to derive "quick wins" and

others which will form part of an ongoing investment strategy in the housing stock.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The council is committed to providing good quality homes for people at social rent and it is essential that properties are empty for the minimum periods to maintain rental income and address the high demand for these properties.
- 2.2 The performance of empty homes is tracked and measured against a number of key performance indicators, which are reported monthly and included in the quarterly report to HCOSC.
- 2.3 The performance indicators are separated out into three categories, general needs, sheltered and adapted properties as each has individual targets. The allocations process for general needs and adapted properties is predominantly using choice based lettings, whereas a number of adapted properties are let on a direct offer basis, due to the specialist nature of some of the adaptations and the preference to reuse rather than replace.
- 2.4 The empty homes process is complex and has a number of statutory elements that must be completed in all properties, including asbestos survey, domestic home energy survey to produce an Energy Performance certificate, electrical safety test and gas safety test, requiring a number of specialist trades as well as the main contractor to undertake the void works.
- 2.5 Appendix A provides the key to key times since 2014, during which Osborne commenced the Total Asset Management contract in July. The initial trend was an improving reduction in Key to Key time, from 40 days in June 2014 to 19 days in two months, August and September in 2016.
- 2.6 The positive trend was due to a number of factors including the performance of the contractor and the consolidation of all of the internal housing teams into one empty homes team.
- 2.7 Since 2016 there have been some changes to the reporting methodology for empty homes, whereby a move to measuring working days rather than calendar days and the inclusion of all major works properties were agreed.
- 2.8 Generally throughout the social housing sector, the average empty homes key to key data removes those properties requiring major works, as these can take a disproportionate amount of time to complete, especially if a period of structural monitoring is required in order to determine appropriate works. Therefore it is not possible to undertake like for like benchmarking with external social landlords. In years where there are a high number of properties requiring major works this can impact on the ability to achieve the targets.
- 2.9 Appendix B provides the number of properties that were completed in each of the empty homes categories, which are based upon the amount of work required and corresponding financial value. Those properties identified as category 4, i.e. requiring most work, would be classified as Major works and not included in other social housing benchmarking figures.

- 2.10 Irrespective of the methodology, there has been a net increase in the key to key times and therefore the further reviews undertaken internally by officers and by Sopra Steria, have identified a number of interventions to improve the overall performance.

### **3.0 Review findings – Sopra Steria**

- 3.1 Sopra Steria were commissioned by Dacorum to undertake a business process review of the empty homes process. Sopra Steria are a consultancy firm based in Hemel Hempstead who design, develop and deliver technology solutions and work across both private and public sector to deliver transformation programmes.
- 3.2 In January 2020, Sopra Steria conducted a review of the “as is” by holding a number of workshops with all involved staff, including those working for contractors involved in the empty homes process. The workshops enabled them to map the process and consider what elements could be changed to reduce the key to key times.
- 3.3 Appendix C provides the summary details of Sopra Steria’s business process review. The review identified a number of key issues effecting performance which were divided into three categories, operational, service and policy and technology.
- 3.4 Each area was considered in further detail to identify options to improve or deliver processes concurrently and also how the systems and operational approach would need to change to enable efficiencies to be derived.
- 3.5 The process review was nearing completion when the Coronavirus pandemic resulted in a lockdown of business as usual activity across the Country. As a result of the restrictions initially imposed, the teams had to adapt the empty homes process to address any terminations or lettings that were deemed essential and to respond to the need to get “everyone in” and ensure street homeless were accommodated.
- 3.6 Due to social distancing or infection control measures, a number of the revised ways of working required elements of the process to be changed to enable contactless or limited contact with tenants terminating or commencing tenancies.
- 3.7 The requirement to work remotely has ensured the migration of historically paper based surveys to be undertaken on laptops and reduced the timescale for information to be provided to contractors or tenants.
- 3.8 There are a number of “quick wins” that have been outlined in the summary provided by Sopra Steria and whilst in the longer term, these will have a positive effect on the key to key timeframes, this will be offset in the short to medium term by the impact of the lockdown
- 3.9 . The nature of the initial lockdown restrictions on house moves, resulted in all empty properties that were in the process during the week commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> March being subject to long delays

- 3.10 The need to maintain social distancing and have COVID secure sites, require less trades to be on site at any given time, and a shortage of some materials, will negatively impact the works time scales. The need to leave properties for 72 hours when keys are returned, to reduce the risk of infection, before surveyors can specify work, is also adding time to the process. Additionally some people in the higher risk groups are reluctant to move and the sign up process requires a change to reduce contact and ensure identities are verified.
- 3.11 There is also a backlog of Category 2 (communal facilities) sheltered properties that have become empty during the pandemic and in order to minimise the traffic in communal areas to reduce infection risk, works to these properties have been delayed.

#### 4.0 Review findings – Internal projects

- 4.1 To supplement the work undertaken by Sopra Steria, the strategic housing team did some analysis of the level of demand for certain categories of property.
- 4.2 The two tables below provide details of the percentage of properties let after the first advertising cycle for both general needs and Sheltered Housing Properties, for the current and past two years.

**Table 1 - General Needs**

Year	Advertising cycle let on								Total
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8+	
2018	260 ( 97.7%)	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	266
2019	192 (95%)	6	3	0	0	1	0	0	202
2020	69 (93%)	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	74

**Table 2 - Sheltered Housing Cat 1 and 2**

Year	Advertising cycle let on								Total
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8+	
2018	65 (45.4%)	26	21	9	6	5	3	8	143
2019	56 (46.2%)	29	15	4	4	7	2	4	121
2020	32 (61.5%)	7	5	2	1	3	0	2	52

- 4.3 The data shows that the majority of general needs properties are let after the first advertising cycle, with over 90% being recorded in all years. The position differs greatly when compared to the percentages let after first advert in sheltered schemes.

- 4.4 Further interrogation of the data has identified a number of schemes that have proved more difficult to let. These include:

Emma Rothschild Court  
Compass Point  
Elizabeth House

Phyllis Courtnage House  
Gilbert Burnet House  
Two Beeches

- 4.5 In order to understand these findings in greater detail the Supported Housing service undertook some further analysis of the demand data and a survey of the Category 2 sheltered schemes, by FFT was commissioned to establish the layout and condition of each scheme.

- 4.6 The demand data for the 12 month period between September 2018 and September 2019 was considered and the following detail established:

- Of the 105 properties advertised, 77 were for properties within Category 2 schemes. 28 were for dispersed properties.
- 60% of the dispersed properties were let after one advert cycle. Only 19% of Category 2 advertised were let after one cycle.
- 146 property adverts over the 12 month period received 0 bids – suggesting no demand. 139 of these adverts were for properties within Category 2 schemes, only 7 for dispersed properties.
- The data also identifies geographical trends in relation to demand. Of the 146 property adverts which received 0 bids, 75 were for properties based in Tring – an area which has undergone a demographic transformation since Supported Housing properties were built.
- As well as identifying areas with 0 demand, the data identifies those areas where there is a high demand. All properties advertised in the Adeyfield area received multiple bids for every round of advertisement. All of these properties were also dispersed properties.

- 4.7 It is evident that the nature and location of some of these schemes makes them less desirable than others and further information was collected by carrying out a survey of tenants who were asked the following:

*'Thinking of your supported housing the future, which of the following factors would you consider to be priorities. Tenants were asked to select their top three choices?'*

*The most popular choice was location (63.6%) ,closely followed by local amenities (53.3%) and public transport (45.5%).*

*Tenants were asked to select one factor that was most important to them when first applying to supported housing.*

*The top choice was a smaller more manageable property (33.3%) very closely followed by Closer proximity to friends and family (31%) and Added Security (22.1%).*

## **5.0 Interventions to address low demand**

- 5.1 The preliminary findings from the FFT survey of the category 2 sheltered schemes has been reviewed and there is an ongoing project to establish the long term future of those, which performed less well against the location, facilities and layout assessment. The details of the review will be presented to HCOSC in the autumn.
- 5.2 A review of all dispersed Category 1 properties to assess the long term viability and suitability of the properties has been concluded. The review looked at accessibility, proximity of local amenities, public transport links, sizes and layout of properties and identified where there was a mix of general needs and supported housing properties in blocks.
- 5.3 Demand data over the last three year period was considered and factored into the recommendations. The outcome proposed to re-designate 72 supported housing properties back to General Needs and for 39 general needs properties to be re-designated as supported housing, producing a net reduction of 33 supported housing properties.
- 5.4 Tenants have been contacted and where the individual has been willing to move so the property can be re-designated, these cases have been considered by the housing panel. It's worth noting that, significantly more people have been keen to move from supported housing properties that have been identified as not being suitable, than general needs properties that have been identified as being more appropriate as supported housing properties. The reason for this has largely been due to reasons stated above, proximity to local services, public transport links etc.
- 5.5 The savings threshold for applicants applying for sheltered accommodation was increased from £100K to £250K in January 2020, to attract those who may be moving from the owner occupier sector, but to date there has not been any difference in uptake of sheltered properties.
- 5.6 There are improvements in the information and photographs available on the website for sheltered schemes is being developed and the revisions to the Help to Move policy are designed to support those who are considering a move.

## **6.0 Next Steps**

- 6.1 The recommendations from the Sopra Steria and internal reviews will be implemented and the changes to the current process, which have been introduced following the lockdown and have proved beneficial, will be continued.
- 6.2 The impact of the COVID working practice restrictions will be considered and the time impact isolated, to determine if other measures are having a positive impact on the key to key times.
- 6.3 Conclude the category 2 sheltered scheme review and identify options for those with low demand.



- 6.4 Marketing campaign to publicise the benefits of sheltered accommodation in line with the factors that were identified as being important to tenants when choosing appropriate accommodation.

## APPENDIX A

### Average key to key

YEAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
2014-15	41	39	40	37	36	39	35	37	33	33	35	35
2015-16	25	26	32	31	29	23	32	37	26	24	24	26
2016-17	21	32	21	25	19	21	19	25	28	27	28	26
2017-18	26	25	28	27	28	28	30	29	35	27	34	43
2018-19	61	35	35	49	39	36	59	49	46	42	42	44
2019-20	54	40	51	39	61	37	48	45	49	57	54	43

**Note:** Timescales recorded in calendar days in 2014-2016 and working days thereafter.

## APPENDIX B

### Empty Homes repairs by category

<b>FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	<b>2014 - 15</b>	<b>2015 - 16</b>	<b>2016 - 17</b>	<b>2017 - 18</b>	<b>2018 - 19</b>	<b>2019 - 20</b>
<b>CAT 0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>CAT 1</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>CAT 2</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>CAT 3</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>CAT 4</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>TOTAL PROPERTIES REPAIRED</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>690</b>

Figures in 2014-15 lower as contract commenced 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014

CAT 0 is one roomed units in temporary accommodation



# Housing Voids Business Process Review

16 June 2020



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# How we approached the Business Process Review

The core activities for the project to-date are shown below.



The project **objective** is to minimise the period that properties are void e.g. key-to-key targets are met or bettered.

The **Business Process Review** identified the key reasons that targets are not being met and how processes, technology and other influencing factors can be redesigned or improved.

The **value add** for Dacorum of engaging Sopra Steria to deliver the review includes:

- The **impartial and independent** assessment of the end-to-end voids processes, **identifying problems, issues and duplication**
- The ability to **really challenge the current ways of working** and inefficiencies as independent experts in service redesign
- Created a **positive forum for staff to debate and agree new ideas and working practices**, and how these could be introduced easily to deliver immediate benefit
- Providing a **roadmap to deliver much broader improvements and benefits**



# Key Issues Affecting Performance

## Operational

- The **organisational structure enables teams to operate as 'silo functions'**, resulting in a disjointed working practices and delays to processes. This is because staff are primarily making decisions and changes within their area of control.
- The operational silos result in **isolated decisions or changes being made** without taking into account the end-to-end, service-wide impacts
- The void **processes are mostly executed sequentially**, resulting prolonged void periods.
- There is significant **duplication of effort**. For example multiple surveys are carried out at the same property by different teams each with a slightly different remit.
- At the time of the review **customers were unable to self serve effectively** and were encouraged to call or attend the offices. The voids team has adopted new ways of working due to CV19 that have created a strong foundation to build on once lockdown is lifted.
- Some Osborne activities and charges for works are **challenging for the voids team to control** and cause significant frustration to the team.

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## Service and Policy

- **Properties can only be let on a Monday**, requiring re-work and delay to tenancy commencement
- **Tenant obligations and expectations** are not always set effectively
- **Policy prioritises current tenants' needs** before the needs of applicants on the housing register

## Technology

- The **IT systems do not support the delivery of the service** effectively
- **IT alignment to support service needs to leverage technology is not good**
- Data is held in **multiple systems that are not integrated**, resulting in multiple sources for the same information

# Quick Wins Delivered So Far

## Include

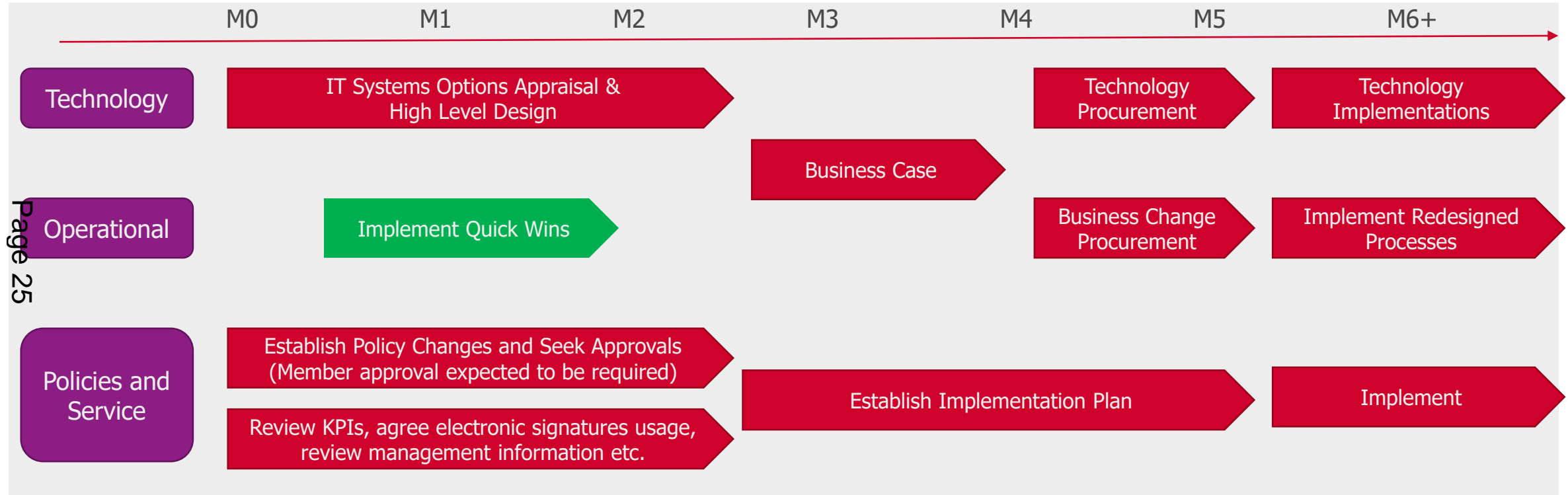
- Use of **key safes and contactless key return**, identified in the redesign and introduced rapidly to support safe working during lockdown
- New **processes are being run concurrently**, reducing the void period
- **Surveyors are using laptops to carry out surveys**, rather than paper and re-key.
- **Existing applications are being leveraged** to reduce manual activities and duplication, for example auto-notification of property changes issued to teams rather than constant checking and emails.
- **Once and done surveys** can be implemented quickly, reducing the number of surveyor visits, improving the information available to the wider team regarding the property (photos, floor plans, property information)
- **Have taken back control of specifications** from Osborne, giving better financial control and decision-making through use of new specification tool
- **Delays through aids and adapts process have been minimised** through inclusion in the once and done survey for voids
- Notification process will have **self serve option for tenants**, and ability for tenants to upload evidence without needing to visit the Council
- **Duplicated activities have been removed** from the process
- **Communication between teams is improved** and use of Microsoft Teams will be extended to share information

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# Next Steps to Achieve Full Benefits

The high level plan below illustrates the recommendations from the business process review of Voids. Due to Covid19 issues we progressed the quick wins as a priority.



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<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>1st July 2020</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>Part I</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Private Sector Assistance Policy</b>
Contact:	Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder Housing Fiona Williamson, Assistant Director Housing
Purpose of report:	To review the new Private Sector Assistance Policy
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Committee note the purpose and application of the policy</li> <li>2. That the Committee note the procedure for administration of discretionary grants.</li> </ol>
Corporate Objectives:	<p>The Private Sector assistance policy contributes to following corporate objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clean, safe and enjoyable environment</li> <li>• Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</li> <li>• Delivering an efficient modern council</li> </ul>
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>All grant payments will be subject to assessment using defined criteria and will only be considered if there is available and the grant satisfies the wider strategic objective to maximise the opportunities to assist with pressures on social care.</p>
'Value For Money Implications'	<p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>Any discretionary grant payments will be awarded following the assessment of alternative options and consideration of the costs of each, so that a demonstration of value for money can be ascertained.</p>
Risk Implications	The majority of the grant funding will be allocated through Disabled Facilities Grants and adherence to the procedure and policy will minimise risks.
Equalities Implications	A Community Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached in Appendix B

Health And Safety Implications	All discretionary grant awards will be made in line with health and safety legislation appropriate to the use of the funding.
Consultees:	Corporate Management Team David Barrett – Group Manager Housing Development Natasha Beresford, Group Manager Strategic Housing Jason Grace, Group Manager Property and Place Layna Warden, Group Manager Tenants and Leaseholders Gillian Malcolm Herfordshire County Council, Team Manager, Dacorum Older Persons Team Edward Knowles, Assistant Director, Health Integration (Herts Valleys) Oliver Jackson Team Leader
Background papers or appendices	Appendix A The Private Sector Assistance Policy Appendix B Community Impact Assessment
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)  Clinical Care Group (CCG)  Regulatory Reform Order (RRO)  Ministry For Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy sets out the types of assistance available to private occupants to improve their living conditions and enable independent living.
- 1.2 Private occupants are owner occupiers that have either bought their home outright, with a mortgage or own a share in their property (Shared Ownership), and those that rent from a private landlord.
- 1.3 In addition the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Top up Grant is available to tenants of Private Registered Providers of Social Housing as these tenants are eligible for DFG adaptations. Further the Disabled Person's Equipment and Assistive Technology Assistance is available to all disabled people in the borough regardless of housing tenure.
- 1.4 The Policy has been developed to support the objectives of the Better Care Fund, of which the mandatory DFG funding forms the majority of the allocation to the Borough, but this policy extends the scope to include discretionary grant payment, as detailed in the policy and this report.
- 1.5 It is important to note that the majority of any funding available will be used for the mandatory DFG funding and therefore the ability of the Council to provide any discretionary support will be dependent on the availability of any remaining funding.

## **2.0 Statutory Context**

- 2.1 This Policy has regards to the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO), the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996...
- 2.2 The power enables local authorities to give assistance to persons directly, or to provide assistance through a third party. Assistance can be given to pay for any fees and charges associated with the assisted works. Assistance given under the general power may be unconditional or subject to conditions, for example the requirement to repay a grant if the property is sold within five years.
- 2.3 The RRO also provides local authorities with a degree of flexibility in devising both its strategy for dealing with poor housing conditions and the policy tools available.
- 2.4 In order to use the powers provided in the RRO the Council must adopt a policy for the provision of the assistance. The Policy complies with that requirement.
- 2.5 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 - much of this Act was been repealed by the RRO. The remaining legislative framework contained within this Act provides the basis for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), which are financial grants to help with the cost of adapting a property to meet the needs of a disabled occupant.

## **3.0 Consultation**

- 3.1 The council have developed this policy in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council, Adult Care Services and The Clinical Commissioning Group for the Herts Valley Region, to consider the mechanism for referrals and how cases would be assessed in respect of priority need.
- 3.2 It is envisaged that the discretionary grants will be limited in number due to the majority of the annual funding from MHCLG being allocated for mandatory DFG works.
- 3.3 The policy enables the discretionary funding to ensure that residents in the private sector are able to live in properties suitable for their long term health needs and to ensure hospital beds are only used for those in need of clinical support, by providing options for ensuring hospital discharge to the private sector accommodation
- 3.4 The discretionary funding will be allocated based upon the assessment of each case and means assessed as the expectation is that where possible the costs will be borne by the owner. If the necessary adaptations involve specialist medical equipment this will be provided by HCC and is not covered in the scope of this policy.

#### **4.0 Recommendation**

- 4.1 The recommendation is that the Committee note the purpose and approach of the policy and Community Impact Assessment, as set out in Appendices A, 1 and 2.

# Dacorum BC Community Impact Assessment (CIA)

Policy / service / decision

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

## 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*

The aims of this policy is to improve the use of the Disabled Facilities Grant, Better Care Fund, by widening the scope to include access to grant funding, or adaptations to enable individuals to live independently in their own homes for longer and to reduce the impact on other social care services.

The policy will provide increased opportunities for individuals who require adaptations, alternative housing or support through grant funding, through a range of options available to service users and health care professionals.

The need to ensure the grant funding is allocated in accordance with the policy conditions will require some additional training or resource for those staff responsible for administration of the grant.

The policy will require approval from members and will be taken through the scrutiny and Cabinet approval process.

## 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.*

Legislation consultation papers, detail from Foundations a charitable organisation which works to improve lives of those with disabilities, details from officers within the housing service in respect of the widening of scope for the grant, data from the CCG and Adult social care and community interest groups.

Refusals reasons from clients applying for DFG grant due to means assessment.

By widening the scope of the grant it is aimed to provide more opportunities for those individuals who have vulnerabilities or disabilities as it requires engagement with health professionals or carers to facilitate improved access to the grant funding available.

**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.*

Housing Aids and Adaptations surveyors, Group Manager Property and Place, Assistant Director Finance and Resources, Housing Senior management team.

Portfolio Holder for housing, Cllr Margaret Griffiths.

Additionally CCG and Adult Social Care, current clients and those awaiting adaptations, or who have refused adaptations in the past due to the contribution requirements, Other Local government districts that have developed similar policies



**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>			
<b>Age</b>	D.o.B is recorded on any occupational health referral, but is only for identification purposes. The widening of scope will address some age related conditions such as frailty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Disability (physical, intellectual, mental)</b>  <i>Refer to CIA Guidance Notes and Mental Illness &amp; Learning Disability Guide</i>	All cases will be assessed and the policies overarching purpose is to improve the accessibility of the grant funding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	The conditions for the grant being awarded are assessed on a case by case basis and with the input of medical professionals or carers to support those who may have elected for a gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	The conditions for the grant being awarded are assessed on a case by case basis and with the input of medical professionals or carers to support those who may have elected for a gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Where requirements for religious reasons are requested i.e.need for a female chaperone, the service will accommodate such requests and ensure staff have appropriate awareness training so they can be aware of potential adjustments to the service.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sex</b>	There are similar numbers of male and female applicants for the DFG grants and it is anticipated that through the widening of the scope of the grant that this is likely to continue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Staff all receive Equalities and Diversity training and there is no detrimental impact on this protected group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Not protected characteristics but consider other factors, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, loneliness, rurality etc.</b>	The aim of the policy is to consider the opportunity to use the grant funding to support the overall wellbeing agenda. In so doing consideration has been given to issues such as social isolation and frailty. Carers will also be able to make applications for grant funding to assist with their caring responsibilities	<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.

<b>Action taken/to be taken</b> <i>(copy &amp; paste the negative impact / outcome then detail action)</i>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Action complete</b>
	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"/>

DRAFT

**If negative impacts / outcomes remain, please provide an explanation below.**

**Completed by (all involved in CIA)**

**Date**

**Signed off by** *(AD from different Directorate if being presented to CMT / Cabinet)*

**Date**

**Entered onto CIA database - date**

**To be reviewed by** (officer name)

**Review date**



# Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

October 2019

# 1.0 Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy overview

This policy is managed and adhered to by the housing service. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with government legislation, guidance and good practice.

## Contents

### Page 38 Policy overview

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Aim(s) of the policy
- 1.3 Links to the Council's corporate aims
- 1.4 Equality and diversity
- 1.5 Policy statement

### 2.0 Private Sector Housing Support Policy detail

- 2.1 Mandatory Assistance Disabled Facilities Grant
- 2.2 Better Care Fund – Discretionary Funding (DFG allocation)

### 3.0 Links to other corporate strategies and policies

### 4.0 Legislation

### 5.0 Supporting procedures

#### 1.1 Introduction

There have been significant changes to the way housing assistance is funded. The introduction of the Better care priorities of both national government and Dacorum Borough Council, this new Housing Support Policy has been developed to provide greater flexibility in the use of grant funding to support those in the private sector to maintain independent lives.

#### 1.2 Aim(s) of the policy:

The aims of this policy are to;

- Comply with all relevant legislation and regulatory guidance
- Provide clear guidance for Officers to enable them to carry out their roles with the team
- Provide details for residents to explain the discretionary financial assistance available to residents to reside safely in their own or privately rented homes.

#### 1.3 Links to Council's corporate aims:

This policy supports the council's corporate priorities which are set out in ['Delivering for Dacorum – Corporate Plan 2020-2025'](#).

This Policy relates to the following Corporate aims

- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
- Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need
- Delivering an efficient modern council

#### 1.4 Equality and diversity

The council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in all services and has procedures in place to ensure that all Applicants and Tenants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination. A Community Impact Assessment has been undertaken which outlines the approach.

#### 1.5 Policy Statements

We will assess all applications in line with the appropriate legislation and details as set out in this policy.

We will ensure a test of resources is undertaken for Disabled Facilities Grants

We will prioritise applications in line with clinical need and assess cases with a similar level of need in chronological order

We will work with other agencies to review discretionary funding through the Better Care Fund

We will undertake all necessary checks to validate the efficacy of any grant award

We can provide a management service to procure and oversee works for a fee

We will operate an appeals procedure for cases where a grant is not awarded

We will arrange for the management of repayment facilities, for cases where any grant conditions require a repayment of part or all of the grant

# 2.0 Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy detail

## 2.0 Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

### 2.1 Mandatory Assistance – Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Such grants are available to owners or tenants over 18 years to provide appropriate adaptations to enable access essential facilities within their home and allow better independent living.

This is a statutory grant and administrative process as set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated guidance. The maximum amount of grant is £30,000 (Disabled Facilities Grant Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008)

To be eligible for assistance an assessment must be undertaken by a suitably qualified Occupational Therapist. An assessment by the Council must also be satisfied that the works are “necessary and appropriate” and “reasonable and practicable” bearing in mind the layout and condition of the property

Renewal Grants (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2008.

2.1.2 For each application a test of resources will be undertaken in line with the requirements of the Housing Renewal grants Regulations 1996 and in the Housing

2.2.2 Calculations are based upon the regulations entitlement to housing benefit and council tax support. The income and capital of each relevant person (the disabled applicant and their spouse or partner) is taken into account in the assessment of financial resources.

2.1.3 In the case of families with a disabled child or young person under the age of 18 there is no means test and 100% grant is awarded up to the maximum limit.

Where all relevant persons are in receipt of pass ported benefit then 100% grant is awarded.

2.1.4 Repayment conditions are applicable to every DFG over £5000 under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and Disabled Facilities Grant (conditions relating to approval or payment of grant) General Consent 2008. Appendix A provides specific details.

### 2.2 Better Care Fund (BCF) Sourced Discretionary Funding (DFG allocation)

The Department of Health have stated that DFG funding will continue to be included within the BCF to “encourage areas to think strategically about the use of home/aids/adaptations, use of technologies to support people in their own homes and to take a joined up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing”

This has allowed greater flexibility for the use of the grant funding but all expenditure must be based on the requirements of the BCF and will achieve at least one or more of the core principles:

- Reducing or eliminating hospital admissions
- Allowing speedier discharge from hospital
- Considering the long term needs of individuals and reductions in associated treatments and social care costs; and
- Undertaking works, adaptations or provision of equipment that is not provided by another service.

2.2.1 Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant (DDFG) funding will be available for three specific areas

- Funding adaptations over the £30,000 maximum
- Relocation funding

DDFG funding is available to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria for a mandatory DFG and who require additional funding in order to pay for the adaptations or to move to another property more suited to adaptation (or already adapted)

Assistance may be refused in cases where an applicant is found to have an outstanding debt with the Council of any kind.

Appendix B & D detail the repayment conditions associated with all DDFG's.

# 2.0 Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy detail

**2.2.2 Top up Funding** For adaptations over the maximum £30,000, top-up assistance is solely for the necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practicable adaptations. If any higher specification is sought by the applicants this will not be covered by this assistance. The maximum top up assistance will be £30,000.

DDFG discretionary funding will not be able to be used for the purposes of an offset grant. An offset grant is one where Dacorum Borough Council agree a scheme but the applicant wishes to undertake a different more expensive or extensive scheme.

Tenants may be eligible for top up assistance but cases will be assessed on a number of factors such as the impact on rent ability, length of tenancy and agreement of the landlord.

Registered social landlords are able to apply for DDFG but any discretionary funding awarded would be on the basis of match funding by their registered social landlord.

All applications for top up assistance will be means tested, using the same criteria and methodology used for mandatory DFG's.

Any top up funding provided by this route will be repayable on disposal or transfer of the property to which it relates. A charge will be placed with land registry and local land charges. No charge can be put on a property owned by a RLS. An applicant will not normally be eligible for top up assistance where a relocation grant has previously been provided by the Council as any new property would have to be deemed appropriate for the disabled person's needs.

**2.2.3 Relocation Funding** This is available when a proposed adaptation via the mandatory route has been assessed by the Occupational Therapist and the Council and is not considered reasonable and practicable because of either cost and or extent of works involved. Funding will provide financial assistance towards the costs of moving to a more suitable property for the needs of the disabled applicant.

The suitability of the property will need to be confirmed by an Occupational Therapist and can be outside of the District.

The maximum amount will be £10,000 and can be obtained for the following:

- Estate agents fees (limited to 1.5% of the property value)
- Solicitors fees
- Valuation fees
- Stamp Duty (limited to the amount for a property valued at 15% of the value of the property being sold)
- Mortgage arrangement fees
- Removal costs

There is no repayment requirement linked to this discretionary funding

## 2.2.4 Accelerated Funding Grant (AFG)

Maximum grant of £7500 with repayment being considered between £5,000 and £7,500. The AFG will be considered for adaptations recommended by an Occupational Therapist that cost under £7500. Applicants must be owner occupiers, private sector tenants or RSL tenants, be registered or registerable disabled. No means test will be applicable for this grant.

Such a grant is appropriate in situations where low cost or urgently needed adaptations are required, that if not carried out, could directly affect the occupant's health, safety and welfare, or the health safety and welfare of the disabled applicant's carer.

The grant will only require one estimate and be limited to a maximum of £7,500. Any grant liable to exceed this amount will be required to apply for a mandatory DFG. A charge will be applied to such grants between £5,000 and £7,500 and will be those stated in legislation.

See appendix B for conditions appropriate for an AFG

## 2.2.5 Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)

This grant is solely to provide support for any individual being discharged from hospital and has a maximum value of £3,000.

Applicants for a HDG must be in hospital at the time of referral and awaiting discharge. Owner occupiers and private sector tenants are able to make an application for this grant and are not required to go through a means test.

The exact nature of works is not specified, however all works associated with the grant must be essential to enable the individual to be discharged from hospital back to their home. The works can include minor works, boiler repairs, deep cleaning or decluttering, purchasing of furniture, such as single beds can be considered for funding if this is preventing hospital discharge.



# 2.0 Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy Detail

An application form will need to be completed along with confirmation of ownership, or tenancy, confirmation from a member of the clinical team stating the work is required to enable hospital discharge.

## 2.2.6 Safe and Secure grant (SSG)

The maximum grant will be £1000 and is available to owners and private sector tenants with no repayment criteria being applied.

The Safe and Secure grant is designed to reduce admissions into hospital and promote independence. The grant can be used to undertake minor repairs or alterations to the security of the home and could include:

- Additional handrails to stairs
- Repairs or modifications to flooring
- Provision of additional security or modifications to a property for customers with a specific disability, diagnosed condition, including dementia or Alzheimer's, to improve the safety or security of their home.

Links with other agencies will enable referrals for the grant to be made by Community Care agencies, charities and family carers.

The grant is not subject to a means test and will require a written confirmation of the ill health diagnosis from a medical professional.

## 2.2.7 Enablement Grant for social inclusion

This grant is only available in instances where top up funding is received from government and can be accessed by organisations and institutions that deliver services in the community for vulnerable older people.

The maximum grant will be £1000

The grant is designed to provide financial support to enable organisations who support vulnerable and older people to improve their wellbeing by enhancing their social and community inclusion.

The exact nature of works is not specified, however all works associated with the grant must be essential to enable service users to access services provided by these organisations and can include minor works, purchasing of suitable furniture, such as higher or wider chairs or other options which increase the number of vulnerable or older people that can use the services provided.

These institutions and organisations may have links with will other agencies but will not be for-profit and the services they provide must be directly linked with the wellbeing agenda. Referrals can be made directly by the organisation or through links with other agencies such as Community Care agencies, charities and family carers.

### 3.0 Links to other corporate documents

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

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### 4.0 Legislation

The legislation listed below will be taken into consideration when implementing this policy:

- The Housing Act, 1985 and 1996
- The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002
- The Localism Act, 2011
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated guidance. (Disabled Facilities Grant Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008)
- The Care Act 2014

### 5.0 Appendices

The appendices listed below form part of this policy:

- Appendix A Repayment conditions – Disabled Facilities Grants

# Agenda Item 10

## Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme 2020/21

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

Meeting Date	Report Deadline	Items	Contact Details	Background information
9 September 2020	1 September 2020	Budget Monitoring Q1 report	Group Manager for Financial Services <a href="mailto:Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk">Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance
		Children Services and Community Safety Partnership, Customer Services, The Old Town Hall, Communications and Community Partnerships Q1 Performance Report	Assistant Director for Performance, People and Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance
		Housing Performance Q1 report	Assistant Director for Housing <a href="mailto:Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk">Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance
		Housing Housemark Covid Impact	Group Manager for Tenants and Leaseholders <a href="mailto:Layna.warden@dacorum.gov.uk">Layna.warden@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
		Old Town Hall Update	Assistant Director for Performance, People and Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	
7 October 2020	29 September 2020			
4 November 2020	27 October 2020	Budget Monitoring Q2 report	Group Manager for Financial Services <a href="mailto:Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk">Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	To review and scrutinise quarterly performance

		Children Services and Community Safety Partnership, Customer Services, The Old Town Hall, Communications and Community Partnerships Q2 Performance Report	Assistant Director for Performance, People and Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Housing Performance Q2 report	Assistant Director for Housing <a href="mailto:Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk">Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
<b>1 December 2020</b>	<b>23 November 2020</b>	Joint Budget <b><i>Ideally no further items to be added</i></b>		
<b>5 January 2021</b>	<b>28 December 2021</b>			
<b>2 February 2021</b>	<b>25 January 2021</b>	Joint Budget <b><i>Ideally no further items to be added</i></b>		
<b>3 March 2021</b>	<b>22 February 2021</b>	Budget Monitoring Q3 report	Group Manager for Financial Services <a href="mailto:Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk">Fiona.jump@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Children Services and Community Safety Partnership, Customer Services, The Old Town Hall, Communications and Community Partnerships Q3 Performance Report	Assistant Director for Performance, People and Innovation <a href="mailto:linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk">linda.roberts@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>
		Housing Performance Q3 report	Assistant Director for Housing <a href="mailto:Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk">Fiona.williamson@dacorum.gov.uk</a>	<i>To review and scrutinise quarterly performance</i>