



Public Document Pack Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Agenda

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

Wednesday 2 November 2022 at 7.30 pm

Conference Room 2 - The Forum

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 Harden	Councillor Oguchi
Councillor Adeleke (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Hollinghurst
Councillor Imarni (Chairman)	Councillor Barry
Councillor Su Mahmood	Councillor Ransley
Councillor Pringle	Councillor Dhyani
Councillor Durrant	Councillor C Wyatt-Lowe
Councillor Johnson	

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

AGENDA

1. MINUTES (Pages 4 - 8)

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. ACTION POINTS (Pages 9 - 14)

7. Q2 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

8. Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - HOUSING (Pages 15 - 27)

9. Q2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES (Pages 28 - 35)

10. HTIP WORKSTREAM DEEP DIVE; COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTING (Pages 36 - 40)

11. COMPLAINTS POLICY (Pages 41 - 56)

12. 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.

13. HOUSING SERVICES MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE (Pages 57 - 68)

Agenda Item 1

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 7 September 2022

Present:

Councillor Imarni (Chair)
Councillor Adeleke (Vice Chair)
Councillor Barry-Mears
Councillor Johnson
Councillor Mahmood
Councillor Harden

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe
Councillor Ransley
Councillor Hollinghurst

Portfolio Holder: – Councillor Griffith (Housing Services), Councillor Banks (Communities)

Officers:

Jon Maxwell	Interim AD Housing Operations
Natasha Beresford	Assistant Director - Strategic Housing
James Doe	Strategic Director
Sarah Pemberton	Deputy Chief Executive (Resident Services)
Nigel Howcutt	Assistant Director (Finance & Resources)
Kayley Johnston	Corporate & Democratic Support Officer (minutes)

HC/0/22 MINUTES

Cllr Imarni opened the meeting at 7.30pm. The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved.

HC/0/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Durrant

HC/0/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

HC/0/22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

HC/0/22 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO A CALL-IN

There were no such matters.

HC/0/22 Q1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

A representative presented the report on behalf of Fiona Jump. The report was summarised as follows:

There was a pressure of around £870k in two key areas. The first was reductions in car parking income and the second was pressure on waste services in terms of the cost of delivery. Action plans were being implemented in both cases.

There was a pressure of £1m on the Housing Revenue Account, with measures in place to mitigate this.

At present, no significant variances on the capital programme were forecasted, though it was stressed that negotiations remained underway with capital providers in this respect. Construction was one key area expected to experience significant pressure on prices in the current economic climate. It is likely that by Q2 and Q3 there will be significant pressure on the capital side.

The floor was then opened to questions.

Cllr Adeleke asked, given the current cost of living crisis, what the Council's plans were to assist tenants. In response, it was explained that a large amount of grants were being processed for businesses, while a cost of living symposium was being conducted for residents. An initial event would be held on the coming Monday, with a series of task and finish groups to follow, and a follow-up event on 10th October. Moreover, the provisional pay award for HRA was 6% for the current year, and was expected to be at least 4% for the coming year, and construction costs were expected to increase significantly. It was also highlighted that the current policy of increasing rent income by CPI plus 1% was unlikely to be feasible due to the current economic situation.

Cllr Adeleke then asked what the impact would be on the Council's finances, were rent increases to be frozen for the next year. In response, it was highlighted that the Council collected circa £50m in rental income, with every 2% increase representing around £1m. Such a freeze would therefore have a significant impact. Moreover, a large proportion of the Council's rental income was social rent, which represented a lower level of income.

Cllr Mahmood asked for a frank appraisal of the outlook for the HRA in the current economic climate. It was explained that with mitigating measures, there were no immediate concerns in the short term. However, escalating costs and the impact of the cost of living crisis on tenants' ability to pay rent, and also increasing construction costs would all increase pressure and would require further mitigating actions. In the short-term rising interest rates meant that the Council would receive greater interest on current funds, though this would become a negative impact in the long-term in respect of the Council's future borrowing.

Cllr Johnson asked a question in relation to the £1m allocated to property repurchase. In response, it was explained that assessments would need to be made to ensure that any repurchase represented good return on investment. Lengthy discussions had been held in relation to the figure to be allocated, and it was clarified that the £1m figure represented a starting figure to provide the facility to make such repurchases, and this figure would be continually reviewed.

Cllr Imarni then opened the floor to Deputy Chief Executive Sarah Pemberton and Interim Assistant Director of Housing Operations Jon Maxwell, who each introduced themselves as this was their first time in attendance.

HC/0/22 Q1 BUDGET REPORT – HOUSING SERVICES

Natasha Beresford introduced the report and opened the floor to any questions.

Interim Director of Compliance for Property and Place Mark Pinnell was also given the floor to introduce himself.

In response to a query from Cllr Wyatt-Lowe, it was explained that many repair works had been upgraded to emergency status given the backlog, which in the short term had produced a peak in the emergency repair workload, but this had been anticipated and these cases were quickly being worked through. This was therefore not expected to be an issue in the longer term.

Cllr Harden referred to the anticipated 60% of Ukraine housing sponsors were unlikely to continue the sponsorship scheme beyond its current expiration date. Natasha Beresford explained that this was a concerning position. A dedicated staff member had been appointed as Humanitarian and Response lead, and work was underway with various service representatives and organisations in this regard. The Council had been asked to respond more proactively in relation to rematching, though the Council's resources were stretched on this front. Conversations were underway regarding the most appropriate approach, with discussions ongoing regarding the establishment of a dedicated team.

Cllr Harden also asked how the Council planned to resolve the issue of damp in some properties. It was explained that extensive work was underway, and that cases were addressed on a case-by-case basis. In the longer term, a damp and mould strategy would be put in place involving education for both staff and residents, with a focus on empathy and resolution.

Lastly, Cllr Harden asked whether there were plans for more solo housing given the success of the current range of such properties. It was explained that several actions were being taken in this regard, as well as to support tenants in the current properties to embed themselves firmly in their local community.

Cllr Mahmood observed a large number of red items within the performance report. Natasha Beresford highlighted the work underway to address several such performance indicators, but that challenges in terms of volume of work and resource were being experienced. Cllr Mahmood asked whether the current performance might be attributed to working from home.

It was explained that a large proportion of the relevant services' workforce were predominantly based in offices and in the field, and those services were continually seeking ways to improve performance. Moreover, several of the current indicators in red might be attributed to factors intrinsic to the respective processes.

Cllr Griffiths added that the impact of COVID was still being reflected in the figures.

In response to a query from Cllr Adeleke, it was explained that work was underway to address the matter of rough sleeping, though this required a long-term and robust approach. In response to a further question, Natasha Beresford explained that the target was to reach zero rough sleepers, and it was incumbent upon the council to find innovative ways to break the cycle of learnt behaviour and to build trust among individuals sleeping rough. A new outreach programme was being implemented with, it was hoped, the support of a vehicle to aid service delivery, along with a 24hr service. Moreover, it was explained that those regarded as rough sleepers were individuals found to be bedding down or planning to bed down in public areas. Cllr Harden asked for information on the success of the Tap and Give scheme to aid rough sleepers. Natasha Beresford agreed to provide further information on this at a later date

HC/0/22 Q1 BUDGET REPORT – COMMUNITY & PEOPLE

The report was summarised, before the floor was opened to questions.

Cllr Harden asked for further information on the Your Town Fun Run. It was explained that, following its postponement, the run had been rescheduled for later in 2022.

In response to a further query, it was explained that the cost of living symposium and other related events and actions would like have an impact on the budgets of several services.

HC/0/22 HOUSING TRANSFORMATION & IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME BUSINESS CASS MANDATE

The paper and appendix were taken as read, the paper was summarised and the floor was opened to questions.

Cllr Mahmood challenged the HTIP model and asked for clarification on how it differed from previous approaches. It was explained that HTIP sought to improve upon several identified key areas. Cllr Griffiths replied that she was pleased to see the provision for a CRM system set out within HTIP, which she hoped would aid the issue of siloed working and which she felt would represent a step change in terms of service delivery.

Cllr Adeleke asked whether this plan might be rolled out to other services, should it be successful within Housing. It was clarified that the model was in line with similar models being rolled out across the Council.

Cllr Imarni welcomed HTIP, though she highlighted the need to ensure that the technology involved was as user-friendly as possible, particularly for residents, and advocated for a budget allocation for UX design. Natasha Beresford acknowledged this, and also pointed out that a customer service provision would be made for residents struggling to use the system.

It was also anticipated that HTIP would allow for an improvement to bidding for the housing register for residents who wished to be rehoused.

Concerns were raised that the digitisation of certain aspects of service delivery may make safeguarding more difficult. In response to this, Natasha Beresford pointed out that extensive work had been and continued to be underway in relation to communication with residents regarding any safeguarding concerns.

The work programme was agreed.

The meeting finished at 9.00pm

Housing and Community OSC

Actions arising – 2nd March 2022

Date of meeting	Action point	Responsible for action	Date action completed	Update on action point
<p><u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/014/22</u></p>	<p>SWhelan to acquire further analytics around bin collections</p>			
<p><u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/014/22</u></p>	<p>To gather further feedback around Town Hall attendance.</p>	<p>M. Rawdon</p>	<p>30/03/22</p>	<p>As Members may be aware arts and entertainment venues have been adversely affected by Covid 19, this was evidenced by extensive work undertaken by the Audience Agency which pointed to a trend of ‘less in – person attendances at cultural events’.</p> <p>Our programme commenced in July last year when all restrictions were eased – although mask wearing was still actively encouraged. Not unsurprisingly a lack of confidence amongst our older audience members in being in confined spaces, sitting next to strangers played a part in a lower than usual turn-out. The Old Town Hall is not alone in this and extensive work undertaken by the Audience Agency also points to a trend for “less in –person attendance at cultural events “.</p> <p>However, the numbers for the final quarter 2021/22 of this year have been positive and we saw an in person attendance to live shows of 69%. This is against a backdrop of Covid 19 and the squeeze on household budgets due to cost of living increases.</p>

				<p>We do, however, realise that we need to adapt to the changes in our audiences and the development of new audiences. Members may have noticed our new website – which we hope is more easily accessible and intuitive to users than the previous version. We are also working on a new marketing approach with four main objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase brand awareness of the venue and programme 2. Increase loyalty and attendance via membership and other promotional offers for existing bookers 3. Develop and increase audiences in the 25-55 age range 4. Create awareness of our inclusive programming and processes to increase diversity in our audience <p>The Council has also commissioned a review of the OTH to look at our future offer and vision to ensure we can continue to provide the best possible arts & entertainment provision to our residents. A report will be coming to Members later this year. So our plans are of course subject to the outcomes of this report.</p>
				<p>Key Insights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good working relationships between schools and producers/partners were cited across the board as a necessary pre-condition for success. • To Producers this meant ‘trusting, honest and truly co-creative’ with ‘flexibility, agility and genuine commitment to the test and trial spirit of the project’ (Dacorum). • Pro-active involvement of schools’ senior and supporting staff was also deemed invaluable (Stevenage). • Partnering with established organisations in the first

				<p>instance, who have their own organisational commitment to fostering strong creative pathways for young people could add value to the work as it did in Dacorum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the same vein, in Watford, the infrastructure, reach, expertise, physical spaces and ‘kudos’ that a local National Portfolio Organisation brings (an Arts Council funded, trusted venue with an established reputation for quality) can really scaffold delivery. • Time for research is invaluable. In Dacorum, producers were surprised by the wide range of creative practitioners they found locally, given the time to do the necessary groundwork to find them. The first phase mapping exercise in Letchworth highlighted the existing vibrant community of visual artists, but Producers felt they had insufficient time to research and interview these providers and share their potential with schools. • In Dacorum, a ‘shorter faster deeper’ model of activity proved to be more covid-proof for a school than longer form activity, despite the obvious benefits to schools and cultural partners having more time to build relationships. Secondary schools worked with were more motivated to develop relationships with local cultural industry employers to enable work experience and on-site visits for students that might meet other outcomes. • The other differences noted for secondaries were the increased number of competing subjects, multiple staff members managing the students on any given day and changing timetables –all of which make finding time for additional projects challenging. One producer stated that the focus on
--	--	--	--	---

				Gatsby Benchmarking, Arts Award and Arts mark in some of the briefs is not a high priority for schools at present due to the impact of Covid on pupils. Instead, they were keen to explore improved wellbeing outcomes for YP as a result of creative activity. Similarly, in Letchworth, the heads forum fed back to Producers that co-creation, although valuable, is not a priority outcome for teachers and therefore it is hard to justify the commitment of time to CPD on this. Key to this, however, is how Arts mark and co-creation are framed to schools. In Welwyn Hatfield, producers invited two museum guides and three volunteers to the CPD sessions based on the resources. This helped to raise awareness internally of the project and embed skills that the boxes are promoting across the organisation. Creative Producers here received positive feedback on this from museum leads.																
<u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/015/22</u>	RBarton to circulate full list of refurbishments carried out last year.		actioned	<table> <thead> <tr> <th>Location</th> <th>No.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Hammer Lane, Hemel Hempstead 13-78</td> <td>66</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Douglas Gardens, Berkhamsted 196 - 227</td> <td>32</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loxley Road, Berkhamsted 135 - 159</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ridgeway, Berkhamsted 31-80</td> <td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Croft End Road, Chipperfield 41-45</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Croft Close, Chipperfield 6-14</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Garages Refurbished</td> <td>187</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Location	No.	Hammer Lane, Hemel Hempstead 13-78	66	Douglas Gardens, Berkhamsted 196 - 227	32	Loxley Road, Berkhamsted 135 - 159	25	Ridgeway, Berkhamsted 31-80	50	Croft End Road, Chipperfield 41-45	5	Croft Close, Chipperfield 6-14	9	Total Garages Refurbished	187
Location	No.																			
Hammer Lane, Hemel Hempstead 13-78	66																			
Douglas Gardens, Berkhamsted 196 - 227	32																			
Loxley Road, Berkhamsted 135 - 159	25																			
Ridgeway, Berkhamsted 31-80	50																			
Croft End Road, Chipperfield 41-45	5																			
Croft Close, Chipperfield 6-14	9																			
Total Garages Refurbished	187																			
<u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/014/22</u>	Officer to provide timescale on Herts Cultural Education Partnership for feedback.	A Care	22/06/22	Due to staffing and capacity issues my action has not moved																
<u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/015/22</u>	RBarton to take Cllr Mahmood's suggestion of a 3-		Actioned	It is hoped that between the team we can clear the backlog within the next 3 months possibly without the need for a																

	month response time instead of moratorium back to the team.			<p>moratorium on new applications, although this will be monitored closely.</p> <p>The main reason for this is that the team has a new member of staff starting in June and although they will need to be trained on the systems, the team will keep the focus on reducing the backlog in addition to the business as usual.</p> <p>Garage team update –</p> <p>The team has appointed new permanent members of staff to cover the following roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Manager role (May 2022) • Garage Management Officers (May /June 2022) 															
<u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/015/22</u>	Cllr Adeleke to send RBarton a list of garages at risk for antisocial crimes, and RBarton to approach the team to make decisions about them.		Actioned	<p>Cllr Adeleke confirmed that the sites were in Maddox Road and Chaulden Terrace</p> <p>It is confirmed that the garage in questions in Maddox Rd has recently had a new door fitted and is now being rented and one of the other void garages has been offered to someone this week. Clean safe and green have been asked to attend the site to remove any shrubs and weeds and to clear any rubbish and this will be completed shortly.</p> <p>In regards to Chaulden Terrace this is a site that we have frequent issues with and it is on our list of possible sites we would like to develop. The garages have been boarded up again and additional visits are planned for this area.</p>															
<u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/015/22</u>	RBarton to present on increase in terminations at next Committee.		Actioned	<p>Since the beginning of 2022/23 the number of void garages being terminated is running at an average of 2.6%</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2021-22</th> <th>VOIDS</th> <th>TERMINATIONS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>April</td> <td></td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May</td> <td></td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>June</td> <td></td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>July</td> <td></td> <td>30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2021-22	VOIDS	TERMINATIONS	April		25	May		37	June		23	July		30
2021-22	VOIDS	TERMINATIONS																	
April		25																	
May		37																	
June		23																	
July		30																	

				<p>August 41 September 31 October 2,266 105 4.63% November 2,194 38 1.73% December 2,044 40 1.96% January 2,008 60 2.99% February 1,945 35 1.80% March 1,907 51 2.67%</p> <p>Total 516</p> <p>The reason why we had a high volume of terminations in October is due to the 8 development sites we did last year. For these developments to take place, we had to terminate the current tenancies and offer them a new garage. The volume of terminations can also fluctuate depending on the time of year, when people have time to sort out their garages.</p>
<u>02/03/22</u> <u>HC/017/22</u>	Cllr Freedman to share incidents of leaseholders being unfairly charged.			
<u>15/06/22</u> <u>HC/028/22</u>	update to be provided at a future meeting in relation to funding for Old Town Hall refurbishment works.	Allison Westray-Chapman		Alison has discussed this with James and Julie Banks and they have agreed that it will not be a meaningful update to bring this to the next meeting as the report will not have been fully considered, they are therefore proposing this be deferred to October.



Housing & Communities

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Q1 Housing Performance Report
Date:	19 October 2022
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Mrs Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A Housing Portfolio performance Report
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	Housing Transformation Improvement Plan (HTIP) Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Department for Levelling Up Communities and Housing (DLUHC) House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Osbornes Property Service Ltd (OPSL) Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Report Author / Responsible Officer

Natasha Beresford, Assistant Director – Strategic Housing

Mark Pinnell, (Interim) Assistant Director – Property

Jon Maxwell, (Interim) Assistant Director – Housing Operations



natasha.beresford@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228840 (ext. 2840)

mark.pinnell@dacorum.gov.uk

jon.maxwell@dacorum.gov.uk

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

	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All wards
Purpose of the report:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide members with an overview of the performance of the Housing Service for Q1 2022-23 2. To present the interventions and actions undertaken to address any performance concerns
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That members consider the report and note the actions to address any performance concerns highlighted
Period for post policy/project review:	Quarterly performance reporting

1 Introduction/Background:

- 1.1 This report details the performance of the Housing Service during the first quarter of 2022/23, measured against the suite of performance indicators. The performance indicators are extracted from In-Phase and contained in Appendix A for the Housing Service portfolio.
- 1.2 The performance is reviewed on a monthly basis through the InPhase reports, which combined with any complaints and compliments received, provide an overview of the housing service. The service is progressing activity linked to the Housing Transformation Improvement Plan (HTIP), containing 8 work streams delivering activity that supports the HTIP vision: “To provide outcomes for residents in the Borough of Dacorum that enable them to live in the best possible homes that they are able to and to take part in a vibrant community, supported by the improvements and transformation the Housing Service will make over the next one to two years”. The HTIP programme is governed by the HTIP Board through periodical meetings and reporting to Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- 1.3 The Operational Risk Register is to be revised and aligned with the performance indicators and service plans. The register will be reviewed quarterly, to reflect any changes internally or externally that have impacted upon the identified risks. To reduce the potential of the risk occurring and the impact, mitigations are in place to reduce the risk’s likelihood and severity. The current operational risk register is under review with the Chief Housing Finance Officer in collaboration with the wider organisation to define strategic and operational risks.
- 1.4 This report also outlines any newly arising service pressures and feedback to Members on action taken to address matters arising.

2 Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:

- 2.1 Appendix A shows performance against the ‘Service Critical’ performance indicators for the Q2 of 2022/23 across the Housing Service. InPhase structures have been reviewed to align with Service Plan development and SLT key performance indicator reviews, to ensure focussed reporting. Further development will be undertaken to refine management information reporting and other relevant local performance indicators.

3 Performance highlights

- 3.1 Whilst the challenge of escalating costs and supply chain issues remain problematic as we strive to improve services for our customers, we have managed to maintain strong performance in some areas and positive improvements in others.
- 3.2 Whilst the challenge of escalating costs and supply chain issues remain problematic as we strive to improve services for our customers, we have managed to maintain strong performance in some areas and positive improvements in others. Whilst PP01 Gas Safety has dropped slightly compared to target and outturn for Q1 it is important to note that this reporting period includes the main summer holiday months, July and August. These months are always difficult to manage due to staff availability and no access into customers' homes, however despite this at the end of Q2 only 2 properties were out of compliance. In addition to the holiday period there has also been a number of Royal Mail strikes that could have impacted the delivery of time sensitive letters. To reduce the impact the team hand delivered the letters on the days of the strikes.
- 3.3 PP10 percentage of emergency repairs completed within 4 hours has improved significantly by 5.71% against Q1 and relates to the ability to respond to the most urgent repairs. PP12, Percentage of non-urgent repairs completed within timescales, although remaining as a 'Red' indicator has improved by 9.66% from 76.67% reported Q1 to 86.33% for Q2. This positive trend for repairs continues with PP13a, Percentage of responsive repairs completed within target, that has improved by 9.72% from 79.35% reported Q1 to 89.07% for Q2. There has also been a slight increase on the percentage of repairs completed right first time.
- 3.4 A query has been raised in relation to PP13b as this indicator is showing amber @ 85%, however the target has increased to 85.67% from 80.67%, it is therefore presumed that this is an error and indicator should be green. Similar for PP15 performance has increased but so has the target.
- 3.5 The percentage of the rent roll collected continues to be on track to be above 100% at the end of the financial year based on the information on previous year's trends. This performance is good when compared to other local authorities and registered providers. To continue the progress being made, an analysis of the arrears by geographical area and customer segment has been implemented and will continue to be evolved as the number and types of arrears cases changes. Where the tenancy sustainment team have involvement with those households in arrears the impact continues to be positive in reducing the arrears.
- 3.6 The Humanitarian Response Lead Officer continues to engage with colleagues from Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire district and boroughs in addition to the East of England, Strategic Migration partnership. This is to ensure a collaborative and consistent response to resettlement activity and re-matching, ensuring that full consideration is given to district and borough expenditure supporting funding discussions.
- 3.7 The Housing Service is proactively engaging with key stakeholders to co-ordinate activity linked to rising cost of living, ensuring a collaborative approach to service delivery and the development of a borough wide plan to support residents. A second stakeholder event will take place on 31 October bringing together partners to pledge their ongoing commitment to this extremely important cause.
- 3.8 The Homeless Prevention team have successfully mobilised new Rough Sleeper Initiatives during Q2 with the successful handover and opening of the Hampton Close modular units, new residents moved into the accommodation during August. A visit by Department for Levelling up Communities and Housing (DLUHC) was undertaken during the period, where positive feedback was shared with the service by the DLUHC Rough Sleeper Advisor who has recommended the service for a ministerial visit.

3.9 The Private Sector Housing Team have continued to undertake Ukraine accommodation Checks to that households arriving are occupying safe accommodation – as at end of Q2 2022/23 a total of 143 checks had been undertaken since commencement in April 2022. The service led a joint enforcement operation at a several privately rented properties in the Dacorum area with the support of the Police, Modern Slavery and Community Safety Team, resulting in identification of a number of regulatory breaches of the Housing Act 2004 and identification of unlawful House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) activity. As a result the unlicensed HMO's have been brought up to standard, following an enforcement fee and improvement works have been undertaken, safeguarding the residents concerned. Witness statements have been collected from occupants and the Council is now in liaising with the Legal Department to progress enforcement action against the landlord.

4 Performance challenges

4.1 Despite changes to streamline the processes relating to the repair of Empty homes, the supply chain issues are felt the most in this area due to the fact that the predominant source of labour that work on these properties, sub-contract to Osbornes Property Service Ltd (OPSL). Due to sector demand the sub-contractor market is extremely buoyant driving prices significantly higher than pre-pandemic. This has resulted in OPSL not being able to engage a consistent level of labour due to the contractually agreed commercial model being significantly lower than current market trend. SLT have recently approved a range of measures including a re-negotiation of the current commercial model, Improvements to the front end processes completed before handover to OPSL, shared contractor use of those currently commission directly by DBC and a pilot scheme that will see completion of essential repairs only whilst the property is empty and any required follow on works completed on occupation. There are a number of properties that have been empty for an extended period of time, which will impact the reported statistics until they work through the system to re-let stage. With this in mind we expect to see an improvement in current performance levels towards the end of the financial year.

4.2 The impact of the cost of living is being seen in the number and type of arrears cases being experienced. Typically there is an impact during quarter because of the summer holiday season and the increased costs parents experience due to school uniforms. The recent mail strikes have delayed the arrears letters being received by tenants and may have led to a delay in payments being received. Anecdotally, the cases being presented to the County Court for possession orders have not been progressed because of the Judge's concerns about the impact of inflation and other factors on a household's ability to pay. Although this has had a negative impact on the level of performance, this is recovered later in the year when there are rent free periods.

4.3 The current performance of Tunstall on the lifeline service has continued to be below the target in the contract, with a reduction experienced in the last quarter. Regular contract meetings are in place and discussions are focussed on the full range of performance indicators in the contract, of which the majority have been met.

4.4 The level of feedback on the anti-social behaviour (ASB) service continues to be low and the format will be reviewed as part of HTIP. The intention is to move from seeking satisfaction responses and a focus on the achievement by the team against a defined service standard and timescales. This will help focus on the service provided and the level of communication, rather than satisfaction with the outcome of the process which is more difficult to achieve in cases of ASB. This is in line with the good practice of other social housing providers and will help benchmarking to be completed.

4.5 Whilst prevention and relief activity is prioritised, this has become increasingly challenging due to the rising cost of living and growing concerns regarding affordability. As a result there has been an increase in homelessness applications to the service – as a result of prevention activity being unsuccessful. This has seen an increase of households occupying temporary accommodation, at the time of writing there are a

total of 173 households occupying temporary accommodation, including two households occupying Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

5 Interventions to address performance challenges

- 5.1 Discussions continue with Tunstall about the approach in place to address the current shortfall and their arrangements to achieve this through staff recruitment. The contract for this service is being reviewed and if the service continues to be outsourced the performance indicators will be reviewed, and consideration given to the use of penalty clauses where the core indicators are not met.
- 5.2 Preparation for an annual rough sleeper count is underway with district and boroughs across Hertfordshire, in collaboration with the Community Safety Partnership and Dacorum Outreach Team. This will see physical street count undertaken by Council Officers during November to identify and provide support to any identified households, with a view to bringing them safely into accommodation.
- 5.3 As new presentations to the service have increased, this increases the demand on the service and caseload numbers – as a result proposals have been submitted to SLT for additional grant funded resource to enable continuation of effective case management and minimise impact to service delivery.
- 5.4 The HTIP work streams continue to provide regular highlight reports to the HTIP Board identifying focussed activities that are ongoing in line with the overarching project plan.
- 5.5 Focussed Strategic Core Group Meetings have resumed with OPSL to ensure effective management of the contract, maintain relations, identify ongoing actions and improvements service delivery – improving service to customers. A focussed approach to identifying the root cause of complaints has been prioritised by the Interim Head of Asset Management and providing focussed support to key staff members, to ensure that issues arising are addressed promptly.

6 Operational Risk Register

The Operational Risk Register has been revised and the updated risks for Housing Operations will be amended from the reporting for the 3rd quarter. The updated risk register has been revised and aligned with the performance information, management information and service plans.

7 Financial and value for money implications

Post pandemic, the sector are experiencing unprecedented price increases and a reduction in contractors available. These two factors alone will create a significant cost pressure on available budgets. For example with specific regard to planned and cyclical works, the programme of works may need to be rephased over a longer period of time leading to potential re-procurement or amendment of existing contracts.

8 Legal Implications

The Housing Service are required to comply with all statutory and regulatory legislation relating to the delivery of the Housing Operations and Strategic Housing Service. This includes the statutory functions for management of Compliance activity, Homelessness and interim (temporary) accommodation, Housing Allocations, Strategy and Private Sector Housing. This also includes the regulatory functions for the consumer standards and rent setting.

9 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

Community and equality Impact Assessments are developed whenever there is a requirement to change or create a new policy or procedure or significant change to service delivery

Human Rights – There are a number of services that are provided to tenants, residents and leaseholders which involve entering their homes. The policies adopted by the Council are subject to consultation or

oversight to make sure that the right to respect for private and family life is considered and balanced against other landlord responsibilities for health and safety.

10 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

Investment programmes are contained in the HRA Business Plan and include sustainability. The performance report includes the responsibilities of the Housing Service in relation to community safety and the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable tenants and residents.

11 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

The HRA and general fund stock management of the asset is undertaken across the housing service. In line with the HTIP further work is underway to develop a stock investment review process and programme, which will inform future investment decisions.

The management of health and safety related matters are reported into the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group.

12 Conclusions:

This report provides an overview of Housing Service performance, key highlights, challenges and interventions implemented to address any areas of performance below target. Any key performance challenges will be subject to ongoing monitoring via the Resident Services Board, ensuring a collaborative approach to service delivery and ongoing performance.

Housing Management

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
TL02	Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed (excluding current arrears brought forward)	95.87%	99.00%	98.86%	99.00%	96.98%	99.00%		
TL13a	Percentage of Community Alarm calls answered within 1 min	96.03%	97.50%	95.80%	97.50%	91.09%	97.92%		30 Sep 2022 Apart from last month's dip in performance, Tunstall had demonstrated an increasing positive performance for the last three months and hoped to achieve the TSA set KPI this month. It's worth noting that over the last several months when looking at Dacorum specific calls answered within 60 seconds the figures were above the TSA target.
15	Satisfaction with the outcome of Tenancy Enforcement investigation					45%			
55	% of tenants paying for their house or garage rent by Direct debit					54.00%			
TST02	Percentage of Tenancy Sustainment cases where rent arrears were reduced	83%		75%	70%	100%	70%		

Housing Property Services

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
PP01	Percentage of dwellings with a valid Gas Safety Certificate	99.98%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	99.94%	100.00%		
PP04	Percentage of properties passing QA checks Repairs and voids	99.07%	98.37%	99.83%	98.00%	99.53%	98.00%		
PP05	Percentage of properties passing QA checks Planned works	100.00%	98.67%	100.00%	98.00%	99.33%	98.00%		
PP10	Percentage of emergency repairs completed within 4 hours	99.47%	99.00%	93.76%	99.00%	100.00%	99.00%		
PP12	Percentage of non-urgent repairs completed within target	86.33%	94.00%	76.67%	98.00%	91.67%	98.00%		
PP13a	Percentage of responsive repairs completed within target	89.07%	89.00%	79.35%	97.00%	92.30%	97.00%		
PP13b	Percentage of responsive repairs completed right first time	85.00%	84.22%	83.67%	80.67%	84.33%	80.67%		
PP15	Percentage of tenants satisfied with the service planned and responsive works	96.33%	97.43%	95.67%	95.33%	100.00%	92.67%		
SH03a	Average time to re-let general needs properties	62	30	64	30	33	30		30 Sep 2022 With the ongoing delays within the repair process this is having an impact on the overall key to key KPI. Discussions are ongoing between DBC and OPSL on how this can be resolved due to the current market and lack of contractors available. The backlog of properties is constantly being monitored.

Page 22

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
SH03b	Average time to re-let adapted properties.	172	151	99	151	132	151		<p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>Due to the nature of the works to be undertaken we are often reliant on external agencies ie OTs availability and input into the adaptation works and confirming suitability for their clients, as well as lead times for material provisions such as through floor lists which DBC have no control over.</p> <p>Along with the delays with OP SL contractor availability/ pricing for works adds further delays and discussions have been ongoing with the current market and if any improvements can be agreed.</p>
SH03c	Average time to re-let sheltered properties	71	43	85	43	87	43		<p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>As well as the delay in the repair period having an applicant ready for the property will ensure the property is relet as soon as the repairs are completed.</p> <p>There are also some properties which have been offered more than once and in some instances after the properties have been ready and the offer is made up to 30 days after ready.</p> <p>There are some properties which require nomination from 3rd parties (Evelyn Sharp House) these nominations often take time to be provided and will delay the relet.</p> <p>Consideration also needs to be given to the number of adverts some properties undertake this information will be provided by allocations.</p>
SH04a	% of general needs properties re-let in target	4.88%	70.00%	0.00%	70.00%	18.75%	70.00%		<p>30 Sep 2022</p> <p>Targets have failed due to the time taken for the repairs to be carried out</p>

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
SH04b	% of adapted properties re-let in target	75.00%	70.00%	85.71%	70.00%	66.67%	70.00%		30 Sep 2022 A number of properties have failed due to the time taken for the works to be carried out, contractors availability and working with 3rd parties.
SH04c	% of sheltered properties re-let in target	17.78%	70.00%	10.81%	70.00%	26.32%	70.00%		

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
SH07a	Number of new housing advice cases received	580		484		784		n/a	30 Sep 2022 An increase in approaches this quarter is aligned with local and national pressures. A further rise is foreseen in the forthcoming quarter due to the commencement of the world cup, which is likely to see an increase in DA approaches. Additionally rising cost of living will impact all households, including those that have not previously sought the assistance of services. The Council is proactively engaging with partners to support residents impacted by these changes, in addition resource proposals have been submitted to SLT to ensure that the service is able to meet expected demands.
SH20e	Total household on housing register broken down by 1,2 ,3 and 3+ bedrooms			4,706		8,695		?	
SH33	Overall spend on engagement activity per property					£10.36		?	
SH34	Total number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) with a license	120		117		113		✓	30 Sep 2022 Increased HMO's licensed during the period, following successful assessment and fee payment.
SH35	HMO licence applications received	6		9		10		✗	30 Sep 2022 Reduction in licence applications received during the period, the service is proactively developing new approaches to identify HMO's that may not have submitted an application.

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
SH36	Number of illegal evictions prevented	1		0		1		n/a	Proactive support and information to landlords/residents raising awareness of legal obligations with a view to prevent illegal evictions. Where such action takes place tenants will be supported where possible to regain access, additionally where there is sufficient evidence enforcement action will be taken against the offending landlord.
SH37	Number of rough sleeper cases relieved	6		3		8		n/a	Introduction of the new Outreach service, working closely in partnership with the Homeless Prevention team and closely aligned with the single homeless pathway has seen positive results in this period. The service is working collaboratively with Hertfordshire district and boroughs to plan the annual street count for 17 November.
SH38	Number of main duty applications	42		31		26		n/a	30 Sep 2022 Increase main duty applications as a direct result of case progression where there has previously been stagnation. Service management are proactively supporting Officers to progress casework, this has been hindered by casework levels - proposals have been submitted for additional resourcing to enable more effective caseload management and support.

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
SH39	Total number of successful prevention	42		73		36		n/a	30 Sep 2022 Preventing homelessness has become increasingly challenging due to a number of factors, the primary being the rising cost of living - it is important that any identified accommodation to prevent homelessness is affordable to a household to prevent repeated homelessness. Rising cost of living is likely to see an increased number of households being unable to afford private, intermediate or affordable rent and therefore increasing pressure on social housing.
SH40	Total number of successful relief	52		39		42		n/a	30 Sep 2022 As with prevention of homelessness, relief has become increasingly challenging for the service due to the rising costs of living. Additionally relieving homelessness once a household is placed into temporary accommodation is increasingly difficult due to the preference to be accommodated in social housing - this can further extend time in temporary accommodation cause bed blocking, placing additional demands on the service. The service is working proactively with legal to progress cases where there is a lack of co-operation and engagement.



Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Quarter 2 Performance Report – The Old Town Hall and Community Partnerships
Date:	2 November 2022
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Julie Banks, Portfolio Holder for Community and Regulatory Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	N/A
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

Report Author / Responsible Officer

James Doe – Strategic Director - Place



Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All wards
Purpose of the report:	1. To provide the Q2 performance information for monitoring and information

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	1. That Members note the report and identify any areas where they require additional information
Period for post policy/project review:	N/A

1. Introduction

1.1. This paper will provide an update on service performance over Q2 2022/2023 for the Old Town Hall and Community Partnerships and also highlight key achievements over this same period.

2. The Old Town Hall

2.1. The Q2 programme schedule is almost entirely made up of film screenings due to the relatively low cost of showing film as opposed to the cost of live performances. The Old Town Hall programme budget is used primarily for a live performance schedule from late September to late June (roughly nine months of the year). Also, audiences are generally lower during the summer holidays, historically.

2.2. Over the course of the 6 film screenings – an average capacity of 36% was achieved, which covers the cost of the film and front of house staffing.

2.3. There were 12 private hires in Q2 – from Dacorum Community Dance through filming hires to private parties.

2.4. The Gallery space has and is currently hosting an exhibition by artist Mike Bloor. All exhibitions continue to enjoy an array of visitors from the local community and has helped to inspire artists to enquire about future dates to exhibit at the Old Town Hall.

2.5. The Old Town Hall has taken responsibility for the organisation and the management of the Fun Palace event this year. On Saturday 1st October the Old Town Hall ran a selection of events for young people of all ages and their families to enjoy for free. Fun Palace has been an annual event in Dacorum for a number of years but this is the first ‘in person’ event since the pandemic.

2.6. The Old Town Hall Satisfaction Survey is sent out to customers a day after they have attended an event at the venue. These surveys are made up of twenty five questions in total covering topics ranging from customer service to venue satisfaction. Events covered by this survey would have taken place in the Main Theatre or The Cellar Club. Current feedback and performance is outlined below;

- Old Town Hall Front of House stewarding staff received a 91% excellent/good rating from our customers over the quarter
- Customer rating on the range of events on offer was a combined 83% for very good or excellent.
- Value for money was rated at 100% very good or excellent
- Over 90% of customers who attended our events would recommend us to family or friends.

2.7. The Old Town Hall Theatre Technician post has been filled and the successful applicant joins the Old Town Hall team on 26th September. Vacant posts outstanding are Venue and Operations Lead Officer and Front of House positions. In addition the Arts Team Leader post has been filled on a temporary basis by the current Marketing and Communications Officer.

3. Community Partnerships

Cost of Living Symposium

- 3.1 This was held on 10th Oct with Task and Finish groups with a range of Voluntary and Community groups, including Community Action Dacorum. . Task and Finish Groups, be led by the VCS, have identified current provision or support for 7 cohorts of the community. This highlighted any gaps in support where both the statutory sector and voluntary sector can work together to support residents through this time. The outputs from these groups were fed back and discussed at the symposium on October 10th and further planning and actions are being developed as a result.

Physical activity, Wellbeing, Arts and Culture

- 3.2 Plough Roundabout Subway Art project. A partnership project has been in progress for some time (delayed by COVID). This project has seen Osbornes tidy and repaint the subways / underpass under the magic roundabout. Frames have been bought by the Hemel BID for local artists to show their work. DBC has organised for the entrance to the subways to be painted by a local artist to offer a welcoming entrance to the Subway Art Project. The installation was regrettably the subject of graffiti and vandalism which is being addressed.
- 3.3 The Dacorum Heritage Trust Service Level Agreement for 2022/23 has been completed with DHT. Officers are working currently with DHT on the content of the SLA for the next business year.
- 3.4 Work ongoing with Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) regarding improvement of tennis courts in Tring and Hemel.

COVID Vaccine uptake

- 3.5 Saturday morning telephone calls have been successful with more people answering the phone, willing to talk and appointments made. Statistics will be provided next month.
- 3.6 Vaccine Tracing Total figures: 3,969 patients called (x3 attempts and messages left), conversations with 1,916; 444 already vaccinated, 326 planning to book, 874 declined (have got data on reasons), 15 other and 257 appointments made. One vaccinator has just made their 100th appointment!
- 3.7 Homeless people have been prioritised under the Protect and Vaccinate Grant and 12 supermarket vouchers have been issued.

Healthy Hub Progress so far in Q2

- 3.8 In partnership with Dacorum Family Centre Service the Healthy Hub Officer is attending Parent+ cafes in community centres to engage with new parents and offer services to this community group / cohort.
- 3.9 The Healthy Hub Officer also attending a West Herts College welcome event to engage with students and young people – this is a new cohort for the Healthy Hub to interact with.
- 3.10 Website figures: 139 visits (down from 279 last quarter); Facebook figures: 1,505 views; Newsletter Subscribers: 210 (204 last quarter).

3.11 The Tuesday and Friday sessions at the South Hill Centre remain very successful. The Healthy Hub Officer is working with the Job Centre Plus and attended a session there this month.

Community Grants

3.12 The summer round finished on August 31st with a total of 12 applications (10 standard grant application and 2 for small grants)

3.13 The Community Grants Panel met on September 16th to assess applications. Awards to the value of £15,100 were approved.

Neighbourhood Christmas lights

3.14 Work for the installation of Christmas lights in the usual five wards in Hemel Hempstead has begun.

Team

3.15 Health Inequalities Lead Officer – recruitment highly advanced.

3.16 Place Project Support Officer role now out for recruitment.

3.17 UKSPF Project Officer to be recruited to. Confirmation from Government awaited on approval of the Council's submitted UKSPF Investment Plan.

3.18 Community Partnerships and Wellbeing Officer (Sports and Physical Activity Officer) has left to take up a new position for the Herts Sports Partnership – recruitment to fill this is currently in progress.

Community Safety

Measure Code	Measure Name	This Quarter Actual	This Quarter Target	Last Quarter Actual	Last Quarter Target	-4 Quarters Actual	-4 Quarters Target	DoT	Comments
CSP03	Number of highlevel domestic abuse cases	49		36					
CSP2a	Total number of reports of ASB in period	106		100		17			
CYP01a	Number of young people attending Adventure Playgrounds			11,816		12,726			



HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	HTIP work stream deep dive; commissioning and contracting
Date:	2 nd November 2022
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	None
Background papers:	EYs Deep Dive Assessment of Compliance Data for Key Risk Areas
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	Housing Transformation and Improvement Programme – HTIP EY - Ernst & Young Global Limited

Report Author

Andrew Linden, Head of Commercial Development (Housing)

Responsible Officer

Sarah Pemberton, Deputy Chief Executive (Resident Services)



Sarah.Pembertong@dacorum.gov.uk

Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
-----------------------------	---

Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	To provide an update on the Commissioning and Contracting work stream within the HTIP
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	Members are asked to note the updates in the report.
Period for post policy/project review:	January 2023

1 Introduction/Background:

The purpose of the report is to provide members with an update on the Commissioning and Contracting Work stream in the Housing Transformation Improvement Programme (HTIP)

2 Background to the report:

In June 2022, the Council embarked on an improvement programme within Housing with the following vision:

To provide outcomes for residents in the Borough of Dacorum that enable them to live in the best possible homes that they are able to and to take part in a vibrant community, supported by the improvements and transformation the Housing service will make over the next one to two years.

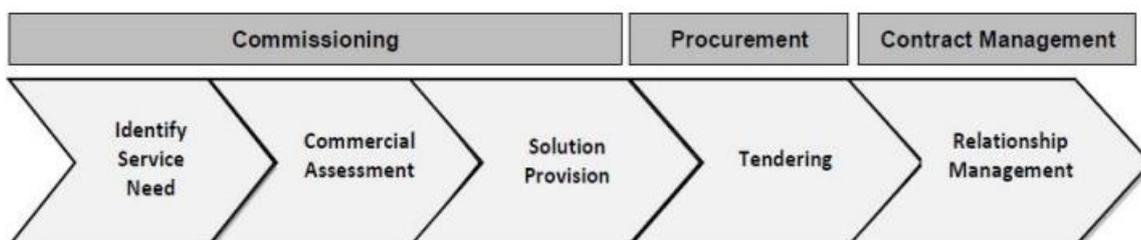
To help deliver this vision, a number of work streams were created which included Commissioning and Contracting. This work stream will be responsible for ensuring the Housing Service has robust commissioning and contracting processes in place and uses it consistently. Contracts currently in place will be reviewed and either supported to improve or recommissioned. The process will be updated to include current best practice, and recommendations from the EY report.

Initial priority will need to be given to Housing Compliance contracts which were the subject of EYs deep dive audit. These will be reviewed to ensure that they are compliant with current legislation and basic contract management processes, risk management and asset lists will be put in place to maintain these contracts. This work will form “Phase 1”.

The review will then look at Housing’s entire contract management and commissioning approach in line with best practice; staff will be trained and processes updated, with a focus on continuity planning. Contracts will be reviewed on a rolling basis and work will be done with suppliers to improve their performance on a range of measures. This will constitute “Phase 2”.

The Council’s approach to commissioning, procurement and contract management

The Council’s approach to commissioning & procurement follows the commercial cycle and is identified in diagram 1 below:



Commissioning is the first 3 elements of the commercial cycle and involves identifying the service need by reviewing the ‘as is’ provision and consulting with stakeholders to identify outcomes and forecast future demand, undertaking a commercial assessment by understanding the different markets and funding provisions that are available and by carrying out a solution provision that best meets the service needs.

Procurement is the tendering element of the cycle and includes i) the specific aspects of the commercial cycle that focus on the process of buying services, from initial advertising through to appropriate contract arrangements; ii) The purchase of goods, services or works by publicly funded bodies at the best possible total price, in the right quantity and quality, at the right time generally via a contract.

Contract Management refers to relationship management and includes managing the performance of the contract and the contractor and developing the relationship between the contractor and the Council to maximise the return on investment.

Re-procurement of the Council's Housing Repairs Contract:

The Council's Housing Repairs contract, titled "Total Asset Management" (TAM) is due to be replaced in July 2024.

The Council is in the process of reviewing its approach to its assets (both Housing and Commercial) in terms of their development and maintenance. It is considering a series of alternative models ranging from establishing in house services through a variety of development and partnership models.

As part of the review, the Council are considering which spend areas will be in scope and which will fall out of scope. To support this, the commissioning and contracting work stream will work closely with and feed into the current commissioning process to ensure in scope contracts are not committed beyond the current start date of July 2024.

3 Current progress on the Commissioning and Contracting work stream

Phase 1 of the Commissioning and Contracting work stream:

Phase 1 commenced in early September 22 with dedicated resource brought in to support the work stream. To date there has been the following progress:

- Spend analysis exercise carried out which has been feed into both phase 1 and phase 2 work streams and the Housing repairs commissioning process.
- Meetings with all key internal stakeholders.
- A project plan has been developed showing that key risks will be mitigated by end of January 2022.
- Contract Management scoping exercise undertaken and a review of existing contracts.
- Contract management plan developed which has identified gaps against the EY report and best practice approaches in the compliance areas.
- GDPR initial review completed with Housing departments. Information reviewed with the Council's Information Security Team Leader which has identify gaps to be addressed.
- Initial review carried out with internal experts on safeguarding and health & safety to identify gaps against current legislation, internal policies and best practice.

The initial priority for Phase 1 will be to review all current contract arrangements and then identify recommendations to ensure all contracts are compliant with current legislation and suitable contracts are in place. Out of this review, there is strong possibility that a number of procurement processes will be required so an options appraisal will be carried out on the different procurement routes open to the Council. Currently, the Council are unsure whether the Housing compliance contracts will be included in the future Housing repairs contracts so there will be an option within these agreements to end the contract prior to the new Housing repairs contract commencing.

The target is to have all key risks that have been identified in the EY report mitigated by end of January. Currently the project plan is showing that this is achievable.

Phase 2 of the Commissioning and Contracting work stream:

Phase 2 will be looking at shaping the commissioning and contracting approach in Housing to enable the organisation to deliver services that are not only compliant to the contracting regulations, but also provide services that are safe, legal and provide value for money.

Phase 2 is due to commence after the completion of Phase 1 however some preliminary works has already commenced including:

- Spend analysis to identify the contractors being used in Housing, the level of spend and what 'Proclass' classification each contract falls into.
- Working with colleagues in Housing to identify which categories of spend and contractors could be considered beneficial to include in scope for the re-procurement of the Housing Repairs contract and what might be more suitable to remain outside of any new contract. This will be fed into the Options Appraisal work for TAM contract re-commissioning.
- Commissioning and Procurement training sessions carried out with Housing Property Services. Further session to be carried out to capture staff unable to attend the original training sessions.
- Contract Management training booked in for November with key staff in Housing.
- Carried out a best practice visit to a local authority in Bedfordshire. This will be fed into both the commissioning and contracting work stream and the Housing Repairs re-procurement.

Phase 2 of the work stream is dependent on the scope of works for the Housing Repairs contract. When Phase 2 commences in January, we should have a better understanding of the scope which will allow us to push forward with a number of key tasks:

- For contracts which fall out of scope, carry out a commissioning process to identify what the service needs are moving forward and design the contract requirements around this.
- Carry out a review of contracts to ensure we are complying with our legal and legislative responsibilities and any identified risks are being mitigated.
- Using the spend analysis, identify opportunities to aggregate requirements, not only across Housing but across the Council to see where we could benefit for economies of scale.
- Using a number of procurement tools, including the kraljic matrix, to identify procurement strategies for Housing contracts.
- For any contracts that fall outside the Housing Repairs re-procurement, ensure that all contracts are in place, have owners, are legal, have defined commencement and end dates, comply to procurement rules and law, provide value for money, comply to GDPR, Safeguarding and are held centrally.
- Develop a contract management procedure which will set the foundation for a consistent approach to contract management across Housing.
- Conduct a skill gap analysis on commissioning and contracting to feed into employee development and recruitment. This will also feed into a review on any consultancy support currently used in Housing to see if these services could be delivered in house – either through current resources or additional resources.
- Work with colleagues in Housing to identify current and future requirements which will be feed into the Council's Procurement Forward Plan. This will allow the Council to ensure there is sufficient time allocated for the client department to go through a commissioning and procurement process.
- Ensure the Council's commissioning templates are used for all new contracts with a value over £75k. Officers who are going through the new commissioning process for the first time will be supported by the Head of Commercial Development for Housing.

- Continue to review best practice so opportunities to improve commissioning and contracting processes are identified and if possible, benchmarked against.
- Ensure that there is a lessons learnt process in place to understand which areas performed well and identify areas for improvement. The areas identified should be acted upon to make improvements for the future.
- Review how technology can support the Council's approach to commissioning and contract management.
- That social value is built into all commissioned and contracted services, as per current procurement policy.
- Put together a resourcing plan to ensure that any new contracts are appropriately managed. This includes any contracts that are included in the future Housing Repairs contracts.

4 Phase 2 work plan and resourcing

Between now and December, we will finalise the scope and project plan for phase 2. Currently we are looking to deliver this in house through the Council's Head of Commercial Development (Housing) with some support from the Commercial Contract Manager. This will also continue to need support from colleagues in Housing and other support services.

5 Conclusions

Phase 1 should be completed by January 2023 which will mitigate the risks that were set out in the EY report.

Phase 2 will commence once the scope of the future of the Housing Repairs Contract is agreed. In the meantime we will continue to work up and agree what the work plan for Phase 2 will consist of. At this stage the plan will be to carry out Stage 2 using internal resources.



HOUSING AND COMMUNITY Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Complaints Policy
Date:	21/10/2022
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Graeme Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Complaints Policy
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	DBC: Dacorum Borough Council CSU: Customer Service Unit EDI: Equality, Diversity, Inclusion
Report Author / Responsible Officer	
Aidan Wilkie, Strategic Director People and Transformation	
Hannah Peacock, Head of Transformation	
✉ 📞	
Aidan.Wilkie@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228569 (ext. 2569)	
Hannah.peacock@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228037 (ext. 2037)	

Corporate Priorities	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
Wards affected	All Wards
Purpose of the report:	To update Members on the new Complaints Policy
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That Members note the report, identify areas for further consideration.
Period for post policy/project review:	

Contents

1 Introduction:	3
2 New Complaints Policy.....	3
3 Implementation	4
4 Options and alternatives considered	5
5 Consultation	5
6 Financial and value for money implications:	5
7 Legal Implications.....	5
8 Risk implications:	5
9 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:	5
10 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety).....	5
11 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)	6
12 Conclusions:	6

1 Introduction:

1.1 One of the key work-streams within Dacorum Borough Council's Transformation Programme has been the development of our Customer Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in February 2022. The Customer Strategy outlined how we will engage with our customers to review where we have not met customer expectations, where we may be excluding customers and where we have low areas of customer satisfaction. The strategy set out how we will use the findings from this customer engagement to embed customer focus in everything we do and how we do it in order to achieve the overarching vision:

"To put the customer at the centre of our services in order to provide a positive and effective customer experience, and to empower our staff so they can deliver consistent and quality Council services."

1.2 During the development of the Customer Strategy, the project team reviewed the ways the Council engages with our customers. We completed a root-and-branch review of the current complaints process. This review identified several opportunities to improve the complaints workflow, increase communication at key stages of complaints, align the policy to revised Ombudsman guidance, and ensure customer feedback is fed into service improvement activities.

1.3 This review fed into the proposed draft Complaints Policy (Appendix 1). This paper will outline the key changes to the Complaints Policy and the reasoning behind the changes, before setting out how the revised Complaints Policy will be implemented across the organisation.

2 New Complaints Policy

2.1 The new Complaints Policy incorporates changes to:

- Response times
 - The updated response times have been implemented to align to the Housing Ombudsman changes (date of change). The process of a complaint response has been changed. From moment of receipt, the customer will receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days, and receive a Stage One response within 10 working days of receipt (longer in exceptional circumstances, discussed with the customer). If a customer is unhappy with the Stage One response, they have 28 days to respond to DBC requesting a Stage Two response. From moment of receipt for a Stage Two response, the customer will receive such a response within 20 working days (longer in exceptional circumstances, discussed with the customer).
 - Instead of setting out a variety of separate complaint response times for different Ombudsman complaint processes, we have chosen consistency by prioritising the quickest complaint response times as provided by the Housing Ombudsman. The Policy recognises that the Council needs to act quickly to investigate and respond to the customer's complaint.

- Levels of responsibilities for complaint responses
 - The new reporting structure moves responsibility for complaint responses down the corporate hierarchy. The current policy sees Heads of Service and Assistant Directors responding to Stage One and Stage Two complaints respectively. The new policy moves these tasks to Team Leaders (Stage One) and Heads of Service and above (Stage Two). The benefits of this are that staff responding to individual complaints have a closer connection to direct service delivery, and it expands the pool of staff available to provide complaint responses. This will speed up our response times. The Complaints Policy puts trust in Team Leaders across the Council to respond to customers quickly and professionally. This demonstrates corporate behaviours: “We will be honest and act with integrity; we will support each other and work together; we will be accountable to each other to get things done.”
- Customer contact
 - The priority of the new Complaints Policy is providing an effective customer experience that swiftly investigates and resolves the basis of their complaint. The Complaints Policy prioritises talking directly to residents over the phone in the first instance by the relevant officer. In every case, the responsible Team Leader will call the customer to talk directly on the telephone about their issue. If a complaint can be resolved quickly and informally, this should be pursued.

2.2 The customer can challenge a Stage Two response at the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) or the Housing Ombudsman Service, within 12 months after the customer first complained.

2.3 The previous Stage One complaints process followed a 15 working day target for a response, led by Group Managers. This is considered too slow, and the target has often been missed. If the complainant could demonstrate why the process or outcome of Stage One was unfair, the complaints progressed to Stage Two. This was an independent review, led by an Assistant Director from a different service area, who provided a formal response within 20 working days. Alongside other changes to the Complaints Policy, response times will improve and meet the new 10 day timescale for Stage One responses.

2.4 The Complaints Policy has been simplified. Firstly, it addresses complaints only. Previous versions incorporated compliments and comments, which will now be submitted via our website (subject to the same accessibility requirements). Secondly, we reviewed the Policy from a “plain English” point-of-view, to make it easy for customers to understand the process.

3 Implementation

3.1 Implementation of the new policy will require training for staff across the organisation. This is being designed by the project team and will be disseminated accordingly, prior to the launch of the new policy. Areas include:

- Introductions to the new Complaints officers and their responsibilities

- Demonstrations (in-person, Teams classes, and videos) on the new process for all Team Leads and Heads of Service
- Creating the role of a multi-directorate case owner for Ombudsman responses
- Leaver/starter notifications for Team Leaders and above from the HR service
- Staff-facing documents and processes for reference
- Incorporating new requirements into service plans, workflows, and team responsibilities

3.2 We will report and learn from the complaints received. This feedback will help us improve Council services, and should reduce the number of complaints we receive.

3.3 The launch date for the new policy is Thursday 1st December 2022.

4 Options and alternatives considered

4.1 One option considered was leaving the Complaints Policy unaltered, restricting change to the response times. However, this would put DBC in contradiction to the Housing Ombudsman which could find against the Council.

5 Consultation

5.1 The external project team (Ignite) is implementing the Customer Strategy, utilising their varied experience from other local authorities.

5.2 Key stakeholders at DBC have been consulted, such as the Customer Service Unit, and the new Complaints team within CSU, as well as services which currently receive higher proportion of complaints from residents, such as Property and Place, Development Management, and Waste.

6 Financial and value for money implications:

6.1 The new reporting structure moves responsibility for Stage One responses to team leaders, which will increase speed of response and efficiency of the process. There is an expectation that minor efficiency savings will be realised, which will contribute to wider benefits realisation from implementing the Customer Strategy.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 No Implications

8 Risk implications:

8.1 No implications

9 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

9.1 The EDI officer has been involved in the development of the new Complaints Policy. This has led to new information for customers regarding advocacy support and reasonable adjustments.

10 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

10.1 No implications

11 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

11.1 No implications

12 Conclusions:

12.1 The new Complaints Policy will change how complaints to DBC are dealt with. The focus is on the customer and ensuring their experience of interacting with us is positive whilst we investigate their complaint. No matter the result, the customer must feel assured that we have followed a fair, rigorous, and detailed policy (within reasonable timescales) that is consistent with national guidelines. The Complaints Policy empowers officers to contact customers directly to resolve issues informally, as well as setting out in detail how to conduct a formal complaint response.



Complaints Policy & Procedure

December 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We always aim to provide good services, but sometimes things go wrong. This policy explains how you can complain about a service, and how we will make sure we deal with your complaint fairly.

2. Purpose of this policy

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
- define what a complaint is
 - explain who can make a complaint
 - explain how to make a complaint
 - explain the process we follow when dealing with a complaint, so you know what to expect
- 2.2 In short, we will:
- show understanding about the issues you raise
 - treat all comments and complaints seriously, with an honest and open mind, and do everything we can to deal with them efficiently and effectively
 - be as flexible as we can within the limits of the laws and policies we follow
 - say sorry if something has gone wrong
 - aim to resolve complaints as soon as possible
 - keep you informed about the progress of your complaint
 - respond to all the points that you raise, provide evidence for our decisions and explain them, using simple language and avoiding jargon

3. Complaints Policy

What is a complaint?

- 3.1 We define a complaint as:

‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents’

- 3.2 Examples of complaints that we will deal with under this policy are:
- there has been a delay in providing a service
 - we have made a mistake in the way we have provided a service
 - we have failed to deliver a service - this could relate to quality, standard or service level
 - we have not listened properly
 - we have not followed our processes or policies
 - we have not met our legal, statutory or regulatory requirements
 - we have not delivered against a commitment or promise
 - our staff have not been helpful or have not conducted themselves correctly
- 3.3 You can complain about any of Dacorum Borough Council services, whether

they are delivered by our staff, contractors or other organisations employed by us.

- 3.4 It is helpful if you raise your issue with us as soon as possible, to help us to solve your complaint quickly. We will only accept complaints related to issues that happened more than six months ago in exceptional circumstances.

What is not treated as a complaint under this policy

Informal complaints

- 3.5 We encourage our staff to talk to customers and try to resolve problems first so that you do not need to submit a formal complaint.
- 3.6 Often, we can resolve an issue by putting the problem right straight away. We consider these types of cases as informal complaints and will resolve your issue using our established service request processes.
- 3.7 For example, you let us know that our waste collection team has not emptied your bin. If we have missed the bin, we would try to fix this by returning to empty your bin as soon as possible. We would not usually treat this as a formal complaint unless the problem happens repeatedly.

Conduct of a councillor

- 3.8 There is a separate process if you need to complain about the behaviour of local councillors (also called elected Members). This includes borough councillors and parish and town councillors within the borough of Dacorum. The Code of Conduct for Members describes the standard of behaviour expected of councillors. You can find the Code of Conduct and report an issue on our website:

www.dacorum.gov.uk/complaints-about-councillors

Statutory appeals

- 3.9 Some services have a separate appeal process if you think the Council has made the wrong decision. For these services, you should follow the appeals process instead of submitting a complaint. These include:
- **Appeal a Housing Benefit decision.** Our website has details on the procedure for appealing
www.dacorum.gov.uk/benefits-appeal
 - **Appeal a Homelessness decision.** Our website has details on the procedure for appealing

www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/housing/housing-advice-and-options/homeless-or-at-risk

- **Appeal a refusal of planning permission.** Our website has information about the appeals process:

www.dacorum.gov.uk/planning-appeals

- **Appeal a planning enforcement notice.** The government website has details of the appeals process and requirements:

<http://www.gov.uk/appeal-enforcement-notice>

Services not provided by Dacorum Borough Council

3.10 We cannot deal with a complaint about a service that the council does not provide. For example, Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for:

- Maintenance of roads and street lighting
- Adult Social Care provision
- Children's services and education

You can read the Hertfordshire County Council's complaints policy, and find out how to make a complaint on their website:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/complaints

Complaints about government legislation or policy

3.11 We will respond to complaints about Dacorum Borough Council policies. We will do our best to explain the policy and the reasons for it. For policy or legislation that is set by central government, we will direct you to your MP for a response.

4. Making a complaint

4.1 The quickest way to complain is by using our online form:

www.dacorum.gov.uk/complaints-form

4.2 If you cannot use our online form, you can call us on 01442 228000.

4.3 If you prefer to write to us, send your complaint to: Dacorum Borough Council, The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 1DN

5. What happens when a complaint is made?

5.1 Our complaints process has two stages.

Stage One - Initial Investigation and response

5.2 If you complain using the online form, we will send you an automatic email to confirm receipt.

5.3 If you complain over the telephone or via letter, we will send you a written acknowledgement within five working days of receipt.

5.4 The Team Leader responsible for your complaint will acknowledge and contact you after reading your complaint, to make sure we understand your concerns and what we could do to put things right. This will be within five days of receipt. If we can agree on a resolution with you at this stage we will close the complaint, subject to the agreed action being taken.

5.5 If we cannot agree on a quick resolution your complaint will be investigated and responded to by the Team Leader within the service responsible.

5.6 **We will make a decision within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.**

5.7 If your stage 1 complaint is complex or requires a lot of investigation, we may need to extend this time limit. If we think we need more time to investigate, we will contact you to discuss and agree on a new date.

5.8 We will reply to you in writing (sent by email if we have your email address) and will clearly explain:

- the stage of the complaint
- the nature of the complaint made
- our decision
- the reasons for our decision
- actions we will take to put things right
- how to escalate the matter to stage two if you are not satisfied with the answer

5.9 If you are dissatisfied with our response when you receive it, you can escalate your complaint to stage two of the process, either by responding to the email we will send you or writing to us within **28 calendar days from receipt of our response.**

Stage Two - Internal Review

- 5.10 If you want to proceed to stage two you must explain why you are not satisfied with our response.
- 5.11 If you cannot demonstrate why the process or outcome at stage one was unfair, incorrect or incomplete we can decide not to proceed to stage two. We will write to you to explain our decision and we will give you details of the ombudsman if you want to take the complaint further. An ombudsman is an independent person, not connected with the council, whose job it is to investigate complaints.
- 5.12 If we do accept your stage two complaint, we will appoint a Head of Service, or another appropriate senior officer, to investigate. This person will work in a different service area from those associated with the complaint. **You will receive a formal response within 20 working days, at which point we will consider the complaint closed.**
- 5.13 If your stage 2 complaint is complex or requires a lot of investigation, we may need to extend this time limit. If we think we need more time to investigate, we will contact you to discuss and agree on a new date.

Escalation to the Ombudsman

- 5.14 Once a complaint has been through the Stage One and Stage Two complaints process, if you are still unhappy with our response, you can choose to contact the relevant Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will accept complaints for up to 12 months after you first complained to us.
- 5.15 **For complaints about our duties as a social landlord**, please contact the Housing Ombudsman. You can visit their website for more information on the process of escalating the complaint:
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- 5.16 **For all other matters**, please contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. You can visit their website for more information on the process of escalating the complaint:
www.lgo.org.uk

Involving a councillor, MP or another person in a complaint

- 5.17 Sometimes customers ask their local councillor, MP or another person to complain on their behalf. If you do this, we will follow our normal process and respond directly to that person.
- 5.18 If you have raised a complaint with us first and then asked your councillor, MP or someone else to get involved, we will continue to respond to you. We will also provide a response to the councillor MP where they are involved.

6. Unreasonable behaviour towards our staff

- 6.1 We will do our best to resolve complaints and you will be treated with respect throughout the process. We also expect our staff to be treated with respect and we do not accept any form of abuse or intimidation towards staff at any time, including the use of offensive language. Any abuse of staff will be dealt with robustly and the Council may report any incident to the Police or use the tools available to us to prevent further incidents occurring.

7. Reporting and learning from complaints

- 7.1 We are committed to learning from complaints and using complaints information to improve our services. We will look at:
- the type of complaint
 - the complaint outcome
 - the timescales agreed
 - whether timescales were met
 - equality information about complainants

We will then:

- publish (anonymised) a summary of complaints and their outcomes on the Council's website, including:
 - information on the complaint outcomes
 - lessons learnt and what we have done to make sure this doesn't happen again and how we have improved services because of the complaints we have received

8. Data Protection

- 8.1 When you make a complaint, we will log information about your complaint and your name and contact details. To investigate a complaint, certain customer information (like your name, contact details and details of the complaint may be shared with other Council departments so that a response can be given. We may also use this information to improve our services. Information may also be shared with the relevant Ombudsman if they have received a complaint. All personal data will be held securely and retained in line with the relevant

legislation. More information on how we use your information can be found here:

[Retention Guidelines for DBC \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://dacorum.gov.uk)

- 8.2 All complaints will be dealt with in line with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. The identity of the person making a complaint will only be made known to some or all of the parties stated above in order to consider the complaint.
- 8.3 The council aims to be transparent when responding to complaints but sometimes it is necessary to maintain confidentiality. Information will generally not be provided about third parties in line with the Data Protection Act unless asked to do so by a Regulator or Ombudsman.

9. Equalities and accessibility

- 9.1 We will ensure our complaints process is easily accessible to all customers.

Accessibility

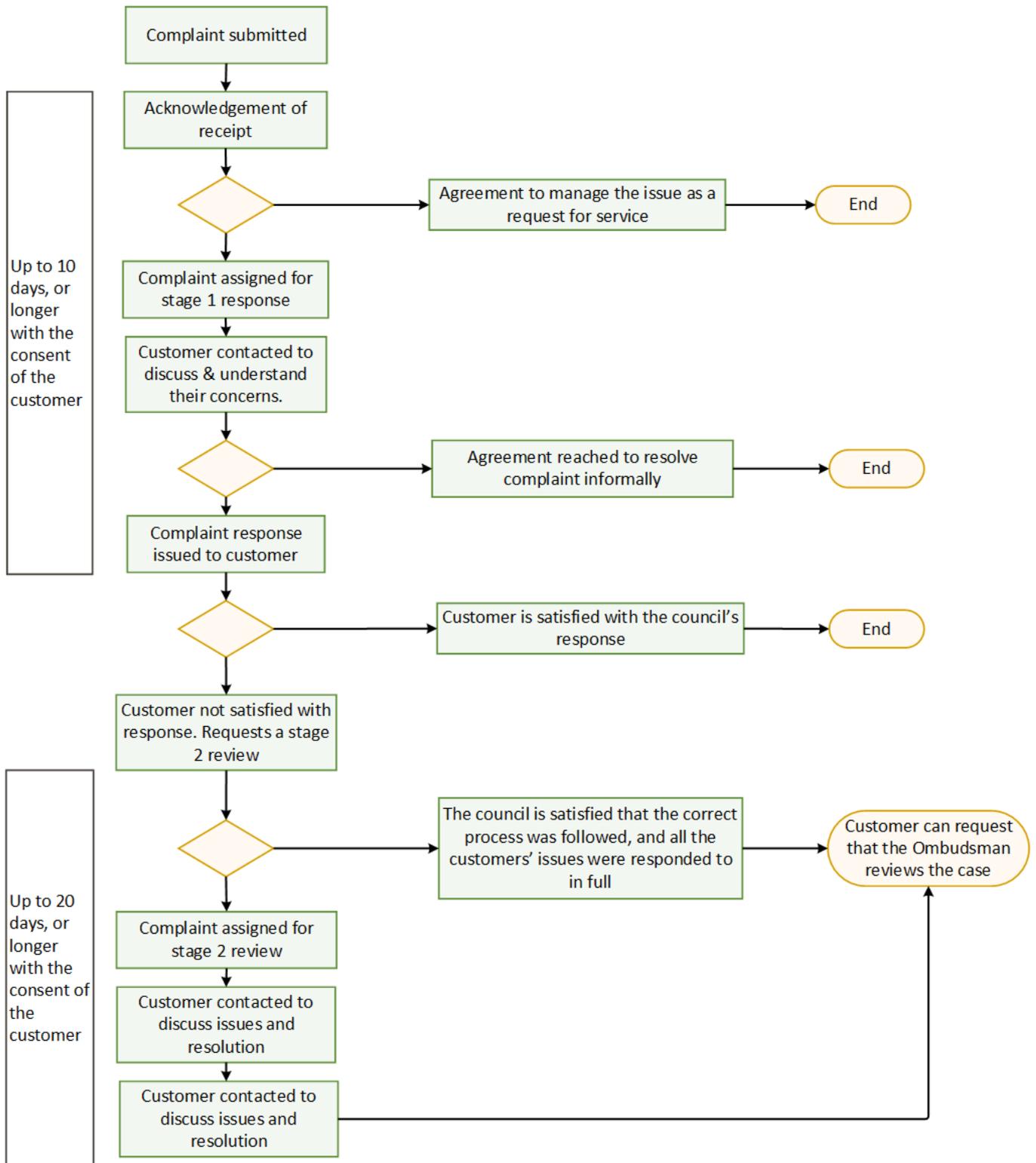
- 9.2 If a customer is unable to access the internet, and therefore cannot view the online version of the Complaints Policy and connected webpages (see list below), the Complaints Officer will share physical copies of the necessary documents with the customer. These will be shared by post or at an appointment.

The connected webpages include:

- Complaints about a councillor
 - Statutory appeals pages (Housing Benefit, Homelessness Decision, Refusal of Planning Permission, Planning Enforcement Notice)
 - Data retention guidelines
 - Hertfordshire County Council complaints
 - Housing Ombudsman
 - Local Government Ombudsman
- 9.3 We are committed to equality and diversity in employment practice and service delivery. We aim to ensure that all our customers are confident of receiving fair treatment and equality of opportunity. This is irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, race, sex, and religion or belief.
- 9.4 Our aim is to have an inclusive environment for everyone, identifying and removing barriers in our practices. Completing the Equality Monitoring Form will help us achieve this and will also help us meet our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

- 9.5 While it is voluntary to disclose this information, it will allow us to identify current and future needs, potential inequalities, including problems with accessing or using services and information.
- 9.6 Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will not be included as part of your complaint.

Appendix 1



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted